

# The Role of Teachers in Children's Education at an Urban Village in Shenzhen

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**Abstract:** The “urban village” is a product born in the process of urbanization, and the education of the children who are living in those villages in the urban city. That is one of the serious problems faced by the social management of the urban village. The main reason for this problem is that the children of the villagers in the urban city have a poor learning foundation, weak ambition, a backward educational concept of their parents, and ignorance of the construction of values and outlook on life. The surrounding environment of the urban village is not optimistic, ignoring the improvement of culture and spirit. Because the children of the urban village live and study in school for a long time, based on the above situation, we conduct a questionnaire survey on the teachers who work in those schools to understand the learning status of the special group of urban village students and try to make a suitable mode for their education and teaching. In detail, we will conduct a special questionnaire survey on 100 teachers in a “urban village” Primary School in Futian District, Shenzhen.

**Keywords:** Urban village; Teachers; Children; Education

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## 1. Factors affecting the development of students in urban villages

Through the reading and analysis of relevant literature, the main factors that affect the growth of primary school students in urban villages are the following three aspects: school, family, and society. The growing environment of children is regarded as an ecosystem, which includes four layers of family, school, community, and society. The four layers supervise, penetrate, and link each other. Government is the core of ecological intervention system; through the different levels of child protection, when there is defect or failure, the government will mobilize all possible positive resources, form a confluence of multiple protection, and strengthen inter-departmental cooperation, so that children can get support in every aspect of the ecological system, namely, family, school, community, ecosystem, the trinity from intervention affect all aspects of children's growth and development. There are problems in the family, school, and community environments that affect the healthy growth of children<sup>[1]</sup>. Next, we will summarize the problems mentioned in the literature we collected.

### 1.1. The influence of family factors on the education of students in urban villages

The family has a very prominent influence on the learning of primary school students in urban villages. The parents' education style, the importance they attach to the students' learning, and the behavioral habits they establish since childhood all have a direct influence on the growth of children.

However, parents in urban villages lack education for their students due to their busy lives, work, their own low level of education, lack of cooperation and communication with school teachers, and lack of scientific means of education, resulting in a lack of education for students at home.

Qin *et al.* and Huang<sup>[2,3]</sup> mentioned the exploration of the current situation, problems, and suggestions of home-school co-parenting in urban villages through moral education. Moral education in schools in urban villages faces a challenge in achieving the goal of educating students with moral principles. To achieve good education results, support and cooperation from families are urgently needed. The results show that both parents and schools are aware of the importance and necessity of cooperative education. The communication channels between parents and schools are diverse, as well as the content of education. Parents' satisfaction with cooperative education is relatively high. Families attach great importance to children's education, and the tacit understanding of school formation education is different, and the expectation of children's future development is low. Therefore, schools should change their leading role in collaborative education, guide parents to establish a two-way communication mechanism for collaborative education, organize and carry out distinctive educational activities, systematically teach parents educational knowledge and methods, and create a harmonious home-school education environment. At the same time, change the concept of family education, so that parents can consciously implement a benign way of family education, reduce the differences in living and learning habits caused by different family backgrounds, so that urban village students can have the same growth opportunities as urban children.

Zhu<sup>[4]</sup> conducted a behavioral analysis of family education in urban villages in the context of educational urbanization and found four points. First, students in urban villages generally have poor grades and a lack of artistic skills. Second, most urban village parents are less educated and lack the methods to teach their children. Third, children's ambition is poor, mainly because parents have no requirements for their children. Fourth, the family environment is poor, and parents do not have a sense of role models. The author also discusses the causes of these problems, including parents' lack of educational methods, the failure of parents to play a role in demonstration, and the special social environment in urban villages. Chu also believed that the role of parents in the education of students is very significant. As educators, parents have certain particularity<sup>[5]</sup>. First of all, parents can combine with the character of their children to teach. Second, the education of children is more comprehensive. Third, the education of children begins at the earliest and lasts the longest. Fourth, parents and children are more likely to resonate, parents' behavior directly affects their children. Fifth, good communication and mutual learning between parents and children are more conducive to the harmony of family relations. Therefore, the author thinks that it is necessary to cultivate parents' right view of education and improve parents' scientific parenting knowledge and skills. Families in urban villages also experience the particular phenomenon of fatherhood deficit, Ding<sup>[6]</sup> analyzed the status quo of father's participation in family education in urban village families, pointed out the important role of fathers in family education from existing problems, and proposed to improve the effectiveness of father's participation in family education and to enhance father's sense of responsibility and role. It requires society, schools, and families to work together to create an all-round, multi-form, and collaborative education environment to solve this problem. Liao<sup>[7]</sup> put forward four strategies to guide parents to carry out effective family education from the perspective of students' growth, aiming at the characteristics of parents' lack of educational methods and strategies in family education in "urban villages." First, do a good job of top-level design to create conditions for parents to master the guidance strategies of family education; Second, run a good school for parents to learn family education methods; Third, expand the home-school contact channels, in the communication to enhance the ability of family education; Fourth, the establishment of parent-child school, parent-child activities in the use of guidance strategy. Emphasizing that family education is an integral part of the whole education system and children's growth, schools should build convenient management methods.

From the above, we can see that the area of children's education in urban villages is relatively unique. The education

of parents is crucial to the growth of students, and this has a profound impact on their development. How teachers should guide parents to do a good job in family education is a question that deserves our deep consideration, especially for parents in urban villages.

### **1.2. The influence of school and society on the educational development of children in urban villages**

Both society and the social environment are very important for the development of a person, both in character and behavior. The story of Mencius' mother moving three times is a typical illustration of the influence of social environment on personal growth. The school environment also has an extremely important influence on the physical and mental development of children. Learning is a very important stage in a child's life. At school, children learn knowledge through teachers and learn interpersonal communication through interaction with classmates.

The community environment has a certain degree of strengthening or weakening effect on the influence of the family environment, which is the most direct environment for children's growth. However, there are many problems in the village community, for example, the degree of harmonious integration of residents in the community is poor, the ideological consciousness of the community staff in the "village in the city" is relatively low and the work attitude is not serious, cannot carry out community services well, cultivate a good environment for children to grow up, and the community team construction in many cities is still lacking.

What effect does the environment of the urban village have on the growth of students? Jiao<sup>[8]</sup> pointed out that in terms of the education of villagers' children, there are mainly problems such as poor performance of villagers' children in urban villages, unreasonable parental education in urban villages, and unfavorable surrounding environment in urban villages. These problems are mainly caused by the role change of urban villages, including the change of children from poor to rich in urban villages, ignoring the construction of values and outlook on life. The transformation of parents from busy to idle in urban villages ignores the importance of family model education. The transformation of the village into the city from the broken to the new ignores the improvement of culture and spirit. To solve these problems in order to build an interactive solution mechanism, it needs the efforts of the whole society, including the government, the village committee, and non-profit organizations to cooperate to build a cultural atmosphere; family and school cooperate to build spiritual home; model college students and their children communicate in many ways to shape values together.

The theme of social practice activities of college students is also a very good way to improve the education of children in urban villages. Tian *et al.* explored the way of integrating college associations with the secondary classroom education in urban village primary schools. With the transformation of the urban village primary school, the development of the second classroom in the urban village primary school is not optimistic. With the help of university social practice activities, college students' community activities can be creatively combined with the second-classroom activities of urban village primary schools<sup>[9]</sup>. While improving the effect of college students' social practice, it can achieve organic integration with the second-classroom education of urban village primary schools, truly achieving a win-win situation.

### **1.3. The role of teachers in the educational development of children in urban villages**

Left-behind children are similar to children in urban villages. Most of them are also handed over to grandparents or relatives to raise them. Lack of family education leads to different degrees of educational deficiency in personality, emotion, lifestyle, and daily behavior habits. For them, the people who can give them the most education in many aspects are the teachers at school.

Qin *et al.*<sup>[2]</sup> studied the topic of "rural teacher in several explorations of left-behind children education" and pointed out that in the important period of development, left-behind children cannot obtain the correct thoughts and ideas of value of guidance from parents, and often will produce the error deviation behavior cognition and values, leading to abnormal psychological development. According to Qin *et al.*<sup>[2]</sup>, who has been working in primary schools in poor areas for a long time, they shared some educational methods: to be their "guardian," to really talk to them like parents, to understand their ideas, to help them establish correct thoughts and values, and to distinguish right from wrong; praise them more than criticize them, transform them through their shining points, satisfy their psychological need for respect, and inspire their

internal motivation to transform; be a mentor in your life, a friend in your soul, love them on a deep level, talk to them, be their friend, understand their problems, help them out<sup>[2]</sup>.

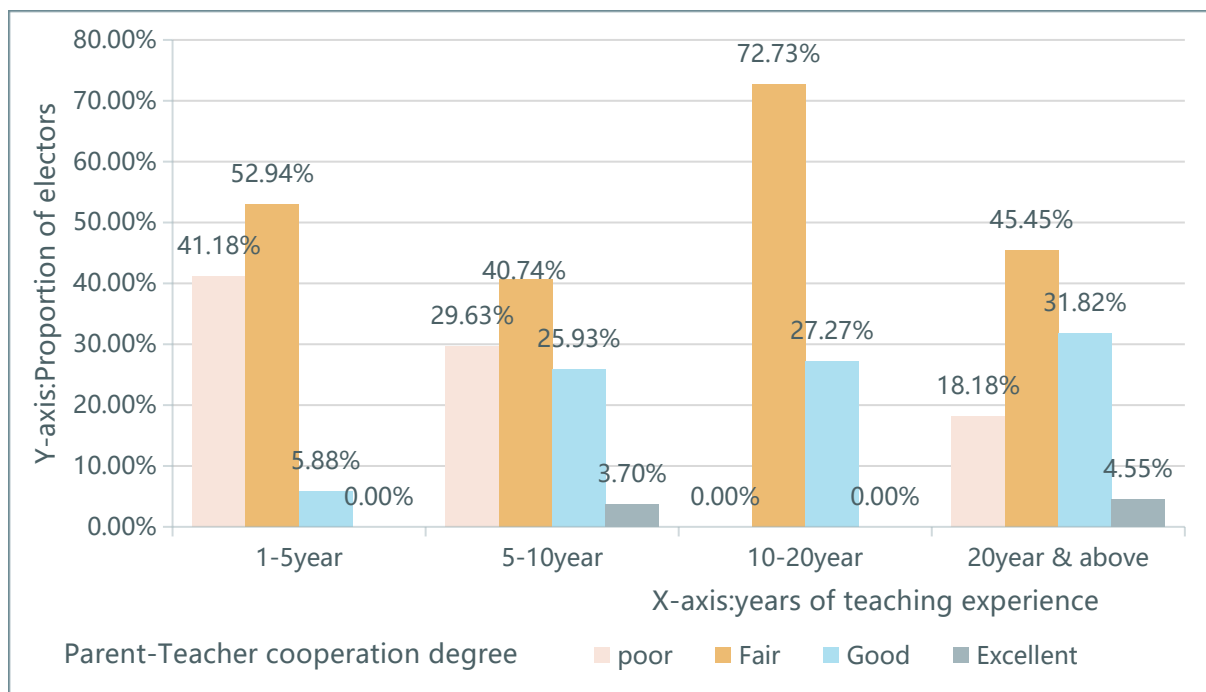
The educational development of children in urban villages and left-behind children cannot rely on the efforts of teachers in school, but also needs the cooperation of families. Only through home-school cooperation can they improve their healthy growth. Chen mentioned both in the “communication: set up a bridge between teachers and students, parents” and “focus on left-behind children, strengthen the communication between family—16 and 20 apple” that the all-round development of students cannot do without the joint efforts of school and family, only teachers’ sincere communication can help to communicate effectively, and help parents to change science education conception, improve the level of quality education in family<sup>[10]</sup>.

## 2. Data analysis

This study adopted a quantitative research method to investigate teachers’ perceptions of students’ performance at school and their parents in five urban village schools, namely Gangxia Primary School, Shangsha Primary School, Xiasha Primary School, Zhongfu Primary School, and Meili Primary School in Futian District, Shenzhen. A total of 207 questionnaires were sent out online through the WeChat group, of which 115 were collected, representing a recovery rate of 55%. Among these, 115 questionnaires were valid, with an efficiency rate of 100%.

**Figure 1** shows that most teachers think they have a fair cooperation with parents. Among them, teachers with 10–20 years of teaching experience account for the highest proportion at 72.73%. As can be seen from the data, among the old teachers with more than 20 years of teaching experience, 4.55% of them have excellent parent-teacher cooperation. The shorter the teaching experience, the fewer teachers reach a high level of cooperation. 41.18% of teachers with 1–5 years of teaching experience think that the degree of cooperation with parents is poor, which accounts for the most among the four teaching age groups.

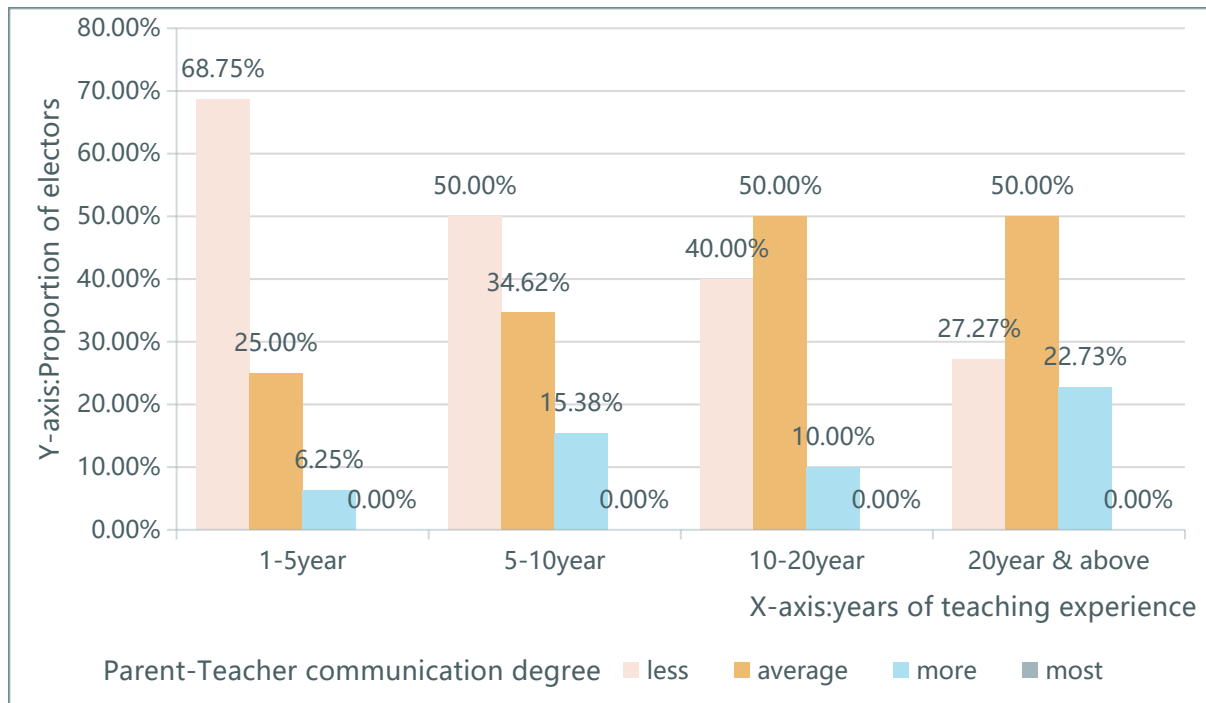
From the analysis of the above data, we can see that there is a greater relationship between teachers’ teaching experience and parental cooperation. Experienced teachers have a higher level of cooperation with parents.



**Figure 1.** The relationship between parent-teacher cooperation and teaching experience

### 2.1. Experienced teachers have a higher communication rate with parents

We have also screened the answers to this question for main subject teachers (Chinese, Mathematics, English, and Science subjects) because of the need to communicate more closely with parents than with teachers of other subjects, given all the factors involved in assigning homework and the need to be responsible for organizing examinations from time to time. Comparisons were made through four groups of teaching experience (1–5 years, 5–10 years, 10–20 years, 20 years and above). The results of the comparison are shown in **Figure 2**.



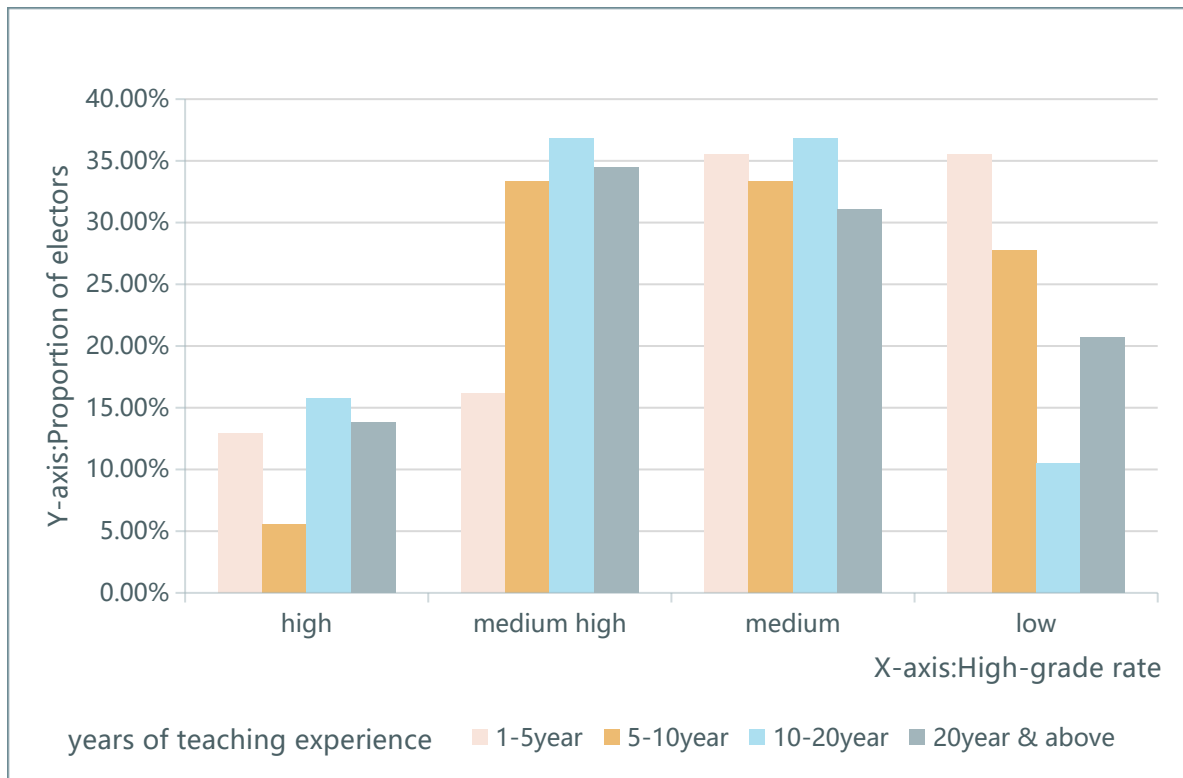
**Figure 2.** The relationship between parent-teacher communication rate and teaching experience

As can be seen from **Figure 2**, 68.75% of teachers with 1–5 years of experience said that they communicated less with the parents every month, and the low communication rate was the highest among all the teaching experience groups. Half of the teachers with more than 10 years of teaching experience can reach the average level of communication, but only 25% of the teachers with 1–5 years of teaching experience can reach the average level of communication. When compared with the communication rate of more among all teaching age groups, those with 1–5 years of teaching experience take only 6.25%, with 5–10 years of teaching experience takes 15.38%, with 10–20 years of teaching experience takes 10%, and teachers with more than 20 years of teaching experience account for the largest proportion, 22.73% <sup>[11]</sup>.

From the two questions of parental cooperation and parental communication rate, we can find that the higher the rate of communication with parents, the higher the rate of cooperation with parents; the longer the years of teaching experience, the higher the rate of communication and the level of cooperation with parents; teachers with 1–5 years of teaching experience have a significantly lower rate of communication with parents and therefore a lower level of cooperation with parents.

### 2.2. There is little relationship between students' grades and teachers' teaching years

For this question, we chose the results given by all the teachers surveyed. Comparisons were made from four groups of teaching experience (1–5 years, 5–10 years, 10–20 years, 20 years and more). The results of the comparison are demonstrated in **Figure 3**.



**Figure 3.** The relationship between high-grade rate and teaching experience

Before collecting the questionnaire survey data, we guessed that the higher the teaching experience of the teacher, the higher the rate of excellent students in the corresponding subject or class would be. However, by analyzing the questionnaire data collected, we found that our hypothesis did not apply to teaching in urban primary schools, where we found little relationship between student attainment and teachers' years of teaching experience, and we hypothesized that this phenomenon was most likely due to the generally poorer learning base of urban village students.

To improve this phenomenon, it is necessary to comprehensively improve the overall learning quality of students in urban village primary schools and to develop good learning habits. At the same time, it is necessary to teach them according to their abilities, to improve their learning performance step by step, to build up solid self-confidence for children's self-perception and to mobilize their desire to learn and their subjective motivation.

### 2.3. A high job completion rate does not result in a high excellence rate

When analyzing student work completion rates, we found that both low- and high-level teachers reported very high rates of student work completion, but this was not matched by high student attainment rates: high completion rates did not yield high attainment rates.

Homework plays a role in consolidating knowledge, developing thinking, and developing good study habits, and students who take homework seriously tend to do better on their final tests. A high completion rate does not mean that the quality of homework is also high. In urban village families, parents often miss out on children's after-school homework help because they do not have time to spend with their children. Children who complete homework independently may choose to do so with their peers, but this inevitably leads to copying or looking up answers online, and they lose the ability to learn and think on their own as they discuss with their peers, thus failing to improve their academic performance<sup>[12]</sup>.

In response to this phenomenon, schools can intervene appropriately in the after-school homework time of students in urban villages. For students whose parents do not have time to attend after-school homework tutorials at home, they can concentrate on completing their homework at school under the supervision of teachers to improve the quality of homework

and students' learning efficiency.

#### 2.4. A high job completion rate does not result in a high excellence rate

For this question, we have again chosen the results given by all the teachers surveyed. Comparisons were made from four groups of teaching experience (1–5 years, 5–10 years, 10–20 years, 20 years and above). The results of the comparison are presented in **Figure 4**.



**Figure 4.** The relationship between the focus rate in class and teaching experience

When comparing the rate of attentive students in class with the age of the teacher, we found that the higher the years of teaching experience of the teacher, the higher the rate of focused students in class. We assumed that this is because teachers with more years of teaching experience have more experience in teaching and know how to control the pace of lessons, motivate students, and manage discipline during lessons better than teachers with fewer years of teaching experience.

### 3. Science is neglected

Among the suggestions we collected on the education of children in urban villages, the attitude of teachers in one subject was very different from the others. While teachers of main subjects such as Chinese, Mathematics, and English generally felt that the class workload of students in urban villages was adequate, some Science teachers felt that the amount of homework for students needed to be increased. They said in the suggestion in the questionnaire: *“More homework.”*

#### 3.1. The existing problems and their causes

The reason behind this is the vigorous implementation of science education reform in China. The Science Curriculum Standards for Compulsory Primary Education, issued by the Ministry of Education in 2017, states that: From autumn 2017



onwards, the starting grade of the primary school science curriculum will be adjusted to Grade 1; before the Ministry of Education organizes the revision of the Experimental Program for Curriculum Development in Compulsory Education, Grade 1 and 2 of primary school will be arranged in accordance with no less than one lesson per week, and the number of lessons for Grades 3 to 6 will remain unchanged.

The 2017 science education reform brings many opportunities for development, but presents few challenges as well; it caters to the trends of the times while also pushing the status of science subjects to another level. In several of the schools we surveyed, science has been included in the Primary One examinations. However, due to traditional beliefs, neither students nor parents pay enough attention to science as a subject. They still believe that only the three subjects of Chinese, Mathematics, and English are the most important, and such a perception undoubtedly adds to the difficulty of meeting the teaching objectives of primary science.

### **3.2. Strengthening the importance of primary science is the way to solve the problem**

To solve this problem, increasing the amount of homework is not an effective way. If we want to fundamentally improve the standard and quality of science teaching in primary schools, we should address the core issues, mainly by increasing the attention and understanding of school administrators and parents to the teaching of science in primary schools. School administrators must pay attention to and support the primary science curriculum, break through the boundaries of primary and secondary subjects, and resolutely break through the influence of exam-oriented educational thinking to make the primary science curriculum as important as other subjects. In terms of the allocation of teaching resources, attention should be paid to the selection of teaching materials and the good use of more scientific, interesting, and forward-looking teaching plans and content. In terms of teacher deployment, more specialist science teachers should be employed as lecturers in an effort to improve the standard and quality of teaching in the science curriculum. In terms of improving teaching facilities, more investment and budget should be made to constantly update and improve science laboratory teaching equipment to provide material support for the teaching of science courses.

### **3.3. Communication between teachers and parents is crucial**

Communication is a discipline and an art. The so-called communication, we mean the sum of coordinating and handling various interpersonal relationships in the process of human interaction, and it is one of the most important channels for people to get in touch with each other<sup>[10]</sup>. As teachers, they should take the initiative to cooperate with parents, share information with them, and scientifically reflect on students' growth and performance, so that parents can understand their children<sup>[13]</sup>. Teachers should discuss with parents the purpose of basic methods and approaches to educate, transform, and improve students. It is necessary for both sides to communicate, trust, support, and cooperate with each other to form a harmonious relationship, so that "information" can be circulated to achieve the purpose of home-school education<sup>[14]</sup>. In order to establish a harmonious interpersonal relationship with parents, teachers should first start with themselves and take the initiative to communicate more with parents, starting from the following aspects<sup>[13]</sup>.

### **3.4. Paying attention to the growth of new teachers**

The training of new teachers should also be stepped up. The main difficulties faced by new teachers in the first five years of their careers include discomfort with educational work, discomfort with student management, and difficulties with interpersonal relationships. Due to the special nature of the teaching profession, novice teachers are unlikely to be able to adapt to teaching and learning from the day they become teachers<sup>[15]</sup>. Faced with changing and developing educational targets and constantly evolving educational contexts, novice teachers inevitably encounter a variety of practical difficulties in the early years of their careers, which can lead to problems and sometimes affect the normal conduct of their teaching and learning. A great deal of research and practice has shown that the difficulties and problems encountered by novice teachers in the induction period are more complex than those encountered by teachers at other stages of their careers<sup>[12]</sup>. Whether or not novice teachers can be helped to solve these problems has a direct impact on whether they can successfully



transform from student to qualified teacher, as well as on the growth of the students and the development of the school <sup>[13]</sup>. There are a number of ways in which the growth of new teachers can be facilitated.

## 4. Conclusion

In addition to parents, teachers also play a very important role in the development of students in urban primary schools. They act as a bridge to communicate and interact, not only to educate students, but sometimes even to instill a series of scientific concepts of family education in parents.

In general, teachers are an integral part of the education of children from urban villages, as teachers who impart knowledge to their students, as role models in life who implicitly influence the worldview, outlook on life, and values of children from urban villages, and as their friends who care about the inner changes of children from urban villages and give guidance and encouragement <sup>[16]</sup>.

However, teachers in urban primary schools are not only dealing with ordinary primary school students, but also with a relatively special group of students. When dealing with urban primary school students, they need to have more patience and higher professionalism than other teachers, as well as to have a deeper understanding of their family environment, to give spiritual guidance and help when necessary, and to treat them equally in teaching <sup>[17]</sup>. They should also have an in-depth understanding of their family environment, provide spiritual guidance and assistance when necessary, teach in a way that is fair to all, and care for each student according to his or her ability. Of these teachers, the most important is the growth of the novice teacher, who faces greater professional changes and challenges than the average teacher. In the development of novice teachers, schools should be mindful of the need to guide them to recognize their own weaknesses and adapt quickly to their roles through the arrangement of experienced teachers leading novice teachers <sup>[18]</sup>.

In the process of educating children in urban villages, teachers also face many difficulties and challenges, such as the educational reform of science subjects and poor home-school cooperation <sup>[19]</sup>. In response to these two more prominent problems, schools should take timely and effective measures to improve and solve them, and communicate effectively with parents through parent seminars, etc. Both teachers and parents should take the initiative to shoulder the important responsibility of educating their children. Only the combined efforts of the community, schools, teachers, and parents can create a better future for children.

## Disclosure statement

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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