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# Research on Teachers' Professionalization and the Development of Normal Education in China

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**Abstract:** In a broad sense, the professional development of teachers' profession means that teachers' profession has its own unique professional requirements and characteristics and has a special training system and management system. In a narrow sense, professional development of teachers' profession refers to the process of professional development of teachers in the whole career, which means that teachers acquire educational expertise and skills by virtue of professional organizations, implement professional autonomy, show professional ethics, and gradually improve their teaching quality as a professional educator after lifelong professional training. In other words, it means the process of professional development from "ordinary people" to "educators". Essentially, the development of teachers' professionalization is the process of teachers' individual professional development, the process of teachers' continuous acceptance of new knowledge and the process of increasing their professional ability. The professionalization of teachers in China has mainly gone through three stages: the cultivation stage of seniority and clergy, the normal education stage of teachers' professionalization and teachers' professional qualification certificate stage. Historically, the professional development of teachers' profession is closely related to the birth and development of normal education, which is accompanied by the emergence of social division of labor and the development of social productivity. The professional development of teachers' profession in China must be based on the improvement of teachers' professional status, the improvement of teachers' academic qualifications, the improvement of teacher training system and the optimization of curriculum structure. Educational and academic nature, closed orientation and open non-orientation are important characteristics of teachers' professional development in different periods. Teachers' professional development must combine the professionalization of normal education with the systematization of pedagogical subjects. At the same time, it promotes the renewal of teachers' educational and teaching concepts, and further promotes the effective solution of the contradictions between educational and academic nature, closed orientation and open non-orientation.

**Keywords:** Normal Education, Professionalization of Teachers' Profession, Educational Nature

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## 1. Introduction

Teachers' professionalization is the direction of teacher education development in the new period of China. The quality of professional development of teachers is closely related to the quality of educational development at all levels, the level of human moral growth and the harmonious coexistence of individuals and society. At present, there are many phenomena among all kinds of teachers at all levels in China, such as the lack of teachers' style, the poor ability of education and teaching, and the simple pursuit of academic qualifications [1]. In view of the above problems, many

training institutions and schools have carried out in-service training for some teachers, hoping to improve the professional level of teachers as soon as possible. Because people do not have a clear understanding of the problems related to teacher professionalization in theoretical research and practice, it is impossible for the development of teacher professionalization in China to reflect a strong sense of consciousness, purpose, order, profundity and effectiveness [2]. It is of far-reaching significance both in theory and in practice to explore the connotation of teachers' professionalization and normal education.

## 2. Historical Evolution of Professional Development of Teachers in China

### 2.1. Experience Imparting and Learning Imitation: The Cultivation Stage of Seniority and Clergy

Vocational formation is closely related to social division of labor, which often forms various types with the emergence of social division of labor. In primitive society, education is productive labor, and this kind of educational activity is mainly undertaken by the elders of the clan and clan tribes, and what's more they impart labor experiences and skills. At this stage, educational activities and productive labor are closely integrated, resulting in the emergence of the so-called "elders are teachers" and "teachers are elders" [3]. Therefore, education at this stage is not really education. With the continuous development of social productive forces, education has become an important branch of productive labor, resulting in the emergence of schools and teachers engaged in educational and teaching activities. However, this transformation has undergone a long evolution. As early as the Western Zhou Dynasty, there were teachers specializing in education, which was a system that combined politics with education. In addition, the Qin Dynasty implemented the educational policies of "officials are teachers" and "laws are teaching", which made the relationship between politics and education more closely [4]. In the Han and Tang Dynasties, the number of posts in central and local official schools had increased to dozens, such as *bo shi*, *ji jiu*, *zhu jiao*, *xue zheng*, *jian cheng*, *dian bo*, *dian ji* (They are posts which are in local and official schools in the Han and Tang Dynasties), which forms a system of "officials are teachers, teachers are officials", and the level of the official position determines the value of the teacher's position. Western feudal society of the Middle Ages is quite different from ancient Chinese feudal society, which religion is the sword of the feudal rulers. Monasteries and churches are schools, while monks, priests and pastors are teachers. The "integration of officials and schools" in the East is in sharp contrast with the "integration of teaching and learning" in the West. However, the development of teachers' profession in this period is still in the non-professional stage, and has great randomness, variability and imbalance.

### 2.2. Closed Oriented Training: The Normal Education Stage of Teachers' Professionalization

In the late eighteenth century, with the emergence of the first industrial revolution, compulsory education in the modern sense was born, among which Ferdinand Lassalle who founded the world's first teacher training school was called the founder of human normal education. During this period, many schools appeared in western countries at all levels, and the smooth implementation of compulsory education could not be separated from adequate education funds and well-trained professional teachers. In the nineteenth century, many western countries formulated compulsory education law and normal education law, which laid the legal foundation for the

standardized development of normal education. Meanwhile, normal universities at all levels emerged as the times required. They not only provided general education to teachers, but also trained teachers in professional skills of education and teaching. This kind of specialized education and training can effectively guarantee the realization of the quality of education. During this period, educators, mainly represented by Comenius, Rousseau and Spencer, appeared and their educational and pedagogical theories pointed out the direction for the formation and development of teachers' professionalization. This also indicates that teachers are really accepted as a profession, and teaching as a science is also accepted by the society, and then form a relatively independent system [5].

### 2.3. Open Non-oriented Training: Teachers' Professional Qualification Certificate Stage

After World War II, the third technological revolution put forward new and higher requirements for education, and also brought greater challenges to the development of education, during which developing countries began to implement and gradually popularize compulsory education and those developed countries with mature compulsory education started with the reform of extending the educational years. It requires teachers at all stages of education not only to have profound scientific and cultural knowledge, but also to undergo strict and standardized professional training and it also means that the professional development of teachers' professionalization has entered the stage of specialization and regularization: the third stage of open non-oriented training, which requires teachers to have profound professional knowledge, excellent professional skills and profound scientific research attainments. Teachers' task is not only education and teaching, but also education and scientific research, and education gradually develops into a multi-disciplinary group, which promotes the organic integration of educational, scientific and academic nature. For this reason, the academic level and status of teacher-training has also been widely recognized by the society and its main representatives are Kelov, Zankov, Sukhomlinski, Bruner, and Piaget and so on.

## 3. Necessity of Professional Development of Normal Education in China

### 3.1. Needs for the Reform and Development of Normal Education in China

Nowadays, both normal education and primary and secondary school teachers are facing serious challenges. The reform of basic education started in 1999 in some provinces and municipalities, and comprehensively implemented around the country in 2005, which marked the full implementation of the eighth basic education curriculum reform. The curriculum reform is based on the setting of curriculum objectives, the transformation of teaching methods, the construction of

curriculum structure, the renewal of teaching concepts, and the diversification of evaluation methods in the basic education stage. In this situation, teachers training colleges at all levels must adapt to the requirements of basic education curriculum reform and carry out all-round and multi-level curriculum and teaching reform. Only by following the objective law of the development of things and carrying out comprehensive reform in all aspects of curriculum and education and teaching can qualified teachers be trained to meet social needs, follow the law of education and teaching, and be fully qualified for the task of education and teaching. With the reform of basic education curriculum and education teaching, it is imperative to reform the curriculum and education teaching in normal colleges and universities, which are responsible for training basic education teachers. However, the current reform in this area is lagging behind and cannot go in the direction of the reform of basic education curriculum and education teaching, which is not conducive to the all-round and healthy development of normal education. Therefore, in order to make the reform of basic education curriculum and teaching go hand in hand with the reform of normal education curriculum and teaching in normal universities, we must put the adjustment and modification of normal education curriculum system in normal universities on the agenda [6].

### ***3.2. Needs for Innovative Educational Idea and Lifelong Learning***

“Job burnout” is a phenomenon that occurs in all social and professional fields. Research shows that after five to six years of teaching, teachers will have the phenomenon of patternization and stylization in teaching. If we do not renew and change the educational thoughts and ideas at this time, and accept continuing education so as to enhance the value, individuality, ideas, methods and means of education and teaching in an all-round way and get rid of the functional stubbornness of the old educational ideas, methods, means, realistic interests, psychological habits setting and so on by repeated learning, which will show the stubbornness of personality, the rigidity of career structure, the complacency of thought, and the atrophy and stagnation of creativity in our daily teaching work. Nowadays, society is developing rapidly in economy, culture, knowledge, science and technology, the cycle of knowledge renewal is becoming shorter and shorter and lifelong, universal, individualized and popular education has become a general consensus. The normal education is not only limited to pre-service education, but also pays more attention to post-service training and promotion, prolongs the duration of continuing education as far as possible, and expands the space for teachers’ post-service training and promotion.

### ***3.3. Needs for Removing the Drawbacks of the Existing Curriculum System and Inadequate Education and Teaching***

There are many drawbacks in the existing curriculum

system in China such as too many similar majors, single and unreasonable curriculum structure, stylized curriculum type, outdated course contents, insufficient teaching practice time and low teaching efficiency, which are increasingly unable to meet the needs of the modernization of teaching contents in normal education. Moreover, the curriculum system ultimately leads to the imperfection of students’ knowledge system, poor social adaptability and insufficient development potential. In addition, the curriculum design of normal universities cannot well reflect the characteristics of “normal education”. The theory teaching is not in place, the skill training is not solid, the knowledge of humanities and social sciences is not comprehensive, and the curriculum design cannot combine professional knowledge with humanities and social sciences knowledge, neglect the cultivation of students’ comprehensive ability, cannot link up well with the basic education curriculum, and cannot combine pre-service education with post-service training. In the meantime, the professional attributes of teachers’ profession based on the normal education system have not been widely recognized, and the professionalization characteristics of normal education have not been fully highlighted.

## **4. Teachers’ Professional Development Is the Inevitable Choice for the Reform and Development of Normal Education in China**

### ***4.1. Extending Teachers’ Educational Years and Improving Teachers’ Educational Level***

It is an inevitable requirement for the development of the times to realize the gradual transfer of teacher education from junior college education to undergraduate education. The 1980s and 1990s witnessed the rapid development of normal education in China, during which the educational level of teachers in primary and secondary schools was clearly demanded, that is, teachers in primary and secondary schools should have secondary, tertiary and undergraduate degrees respectively. Subsequently, in order to improve the professional level of teachers and meet the requirements of the development of the times, Chinese government began to vigorously develop the education of master’s degree in education. However, due to the influence of various factors at home and abroad, the professional development of teachers in China still lagged behind that of Western countries. In the 1990s, the qualified rate of primary, middle and high school teachers at all levels in China has been significantly improved. However, due to the low starting point of the educational level of primary and secondary school teachers in China, it is still very difficult to catch up with the developed countries in a short time. In any case, primary and junior high school teachers have university degrees, while senior high school teachers have graduate degrees, which has become a requirement of the times. Sure enough, in the process of upgrading the educational level of primary and secondary

school teachers, we should improve their educational level according to the actual situation of different regions, and gradually form a new three-level education of normal education for junior college, undergraduate and master of education.

#### **4.2. Improving the Training System and Implementing Various Forms of Teachers' Education Training Model**

Faced with the new situation of the development of normal education at home and abroad, it is imperative to break the closed system of normal education. We should carry out oriented and non-oriented professional training and regular and non-periodic skills training in normal education, implement a new system of normal education training in various forms, and promote the professional training of teachers in China to be in line with international standards. At present, the rapid development of basic education in China puts forward stricter requirements for teachers' educational and teaching abilities, which makes the majority of teachers feel more pressure. It requires that normal education should be given priority to in the future, the proportion of non-normal education should be strengthened, and primary and secondary school teachers should be actively involved in on-the-job educating and training. Additionally, we should give full play to the advantages of comprehensive universities and train qualified teachers for other secondary professional schools [7]. Meanwhile, non-normal graduates and social citizens are encouraged to actively participate in the training and identification of teachers' professional qualifications, and to compete in education and teaching after obtaining teachers' qualifications through the identification of teachers' qualifications and assessment of teaching practice.

#### **4.3. Optimizing the Course Structure and Highlighting the Normal and Academic Nature of Normal Education**

To realize the professional development of normal education, it is necessary to highlight the importance of curriculum design. Faced with the importance of curriculum design, we should absorb the experience of curriculum reform in other countries, and combine the strengthening of general education, the strengthening of academic discipline and professional teaching with the emphasis on the study of educational theory and the strengthening of teacher-training in educational practice. For example, the transformation of the American normal education model brings us many enlightenments, that is, taking comprehensive universities or liberal arts colleges as the main body to educate teachers in basic education stage can well highlight the normal and academic characteristics of normal education. Furthermore, the study of educational theory and educational probation and practice for normal school students will continue to be strengthened. In this way, it not only strengthens the pedagogical nature of normal education, but also consolidates its academic nature. As far as normal education itself is concerned, in order to train qualified teachers, we need to rely on subjects with profound curriculum accumulation and

perfect teaching system, which is also a reflection of the overall teaching level of higher normal education.

#### **4.4. Establishing the Thought of Lifelong Education and Achieving the Integration of Teacher Educating and Training**

In the middle and late 20th century, British educator Porter clearly integrated normal education into three stages: basic education, professional education and on-the-job training. Two years of basic education in a university or college of education learn the basic theoretical knowledge of social sciences and natural sciences and then two years of professional education on teachers' profession and training are carried out. In the first year, students learn general knowledge about education and practice in education and teaching, and then they have teaching practice in the off-campus practice base for one year, during which they receive the joint guidance of teachers in their school and college instructors. Besides several years of continuing education, teachers must insist on the on-the-job training throughout their educational career in order to expand their knowledge, improve their professional ability and deepen their understanding of educational theory and technology. The organic combination of the three stages is indispensable. The *Recommendation on the Change of Teachers' Role and Its Impact on Teachers' Pre-service Education and In-service Education* adopted by UNESCO in 1975 focused on the unification of pre-service training and post-service learning of teachers, emphasized its importance and necessity, and put forward concrete implementation measures. Since the reform and opening up, China has gradually formed a new multi-level and multi-channel training model for in-service teachers in educational research institutions, such as education institutes, teachers' refresher schools, training departments or correspondence departments of teachers' colleges, radio and television universities and so on. However, how to strengthen the connection, overlap and integration between in-service teacher training and pre-service education, so that they are interrelated and mutually reinforced, instead of being disconnected, isolated and fragmented, which is the arduous task before us. It can be predicted that teachers' professional development in the new period will be carried out in the whole process of teachers' professional development. Normal education, as the integration and extension of traditional "normal education" and "teacher in-service education", will become more and more standardized, scientific and professional after experiencing the "seniority and clergy" in ancient times, the "closure and orientation" in contemporary times and the "professionalization and openness" in modern times.

## **5. Conclusion**

In a word, the development of teachers' professionalization in China has gone through three stages: the cultivation stage of seniority and clergy, the normal education stage of teachers' professionalization and teachers' professional qualification certificate stage, which have become more and more

systematic and perfect. Especially in today's knowledge-based economy and rapid development of information technology, normal education system in China should seek development in reform and survival in development to meet the needs of the current professional development of teachers. Normal education must absorb new teachers' educational concepts such as professionalization of teachers' profession, integration of pre-service and post-service life-long education concepts. The professional development of teachers depends on the efforts of teachers themselves and the improvement and perfection of the development mechanism of teachers' professionalization [8].

### ***5.1. Cultivating the Consciousness of Teaching and Research and Realizing the Mutual Promotion of Teaching and Research***

Teaching is not only the basic function of teachers, but also one of their basic duties. However, to be an excellent teacher, it is vital to have not only noble moral sentiment, solid professional knowledge, excellent basic teaching skills, but also strong scientific research ability. By carrying out researches in teaching, teachers can deeply clarify educational problems, and on this basis, they can effectively acquire educational knowledge and significantly improve educational ability [9]. That is because teachers are in the front line of classroom teaching, they are naturally the "Insider" of teaching research. They can have the most direct and sincere perception and recognition of the phenomena and problems of education and teaching, and thus obtain the most reliable and authoritative knowledge [10].

### ***5.2. Strengthening Teaching Practice and Striving to Become an Expert in Teaching Practice***

Teachers' professional knowledge and educational ability formed in the practice of education and teaching is a kind of knowledge and ability which embodies practice orientation and serves practice and is full of practical wisdom [11]. For example, the knowledge of subject teaching method (PCK) that teachers should master only when knowledge, educational knowledge and specific teaching situation are integrated can they be produced [12]. It can be said that the rich wisdom of teaching practice is an important symbol of the difference between teachers and subject teaching experts, teaching theory experts and curriculum theory experts. Only in this way can teachers obtain equal dialogue with educational theory experts.

### ***5.3. Improving Social Status of Teachers and Forming Professional Identity***

Teachers' professional development is not only reflected in the persistent pursuit of the proficiency of their professional knowledge and skills and professionalism are more reflected in teachers' professional identity. Teachers' professionalization can only achieve its goal of promoting teacher development and improving education quality when it becomes a conscious action based on teacher identification

[13]. Teachers should have a sense of awe and reverence for their professions, a profound understanding of their professional values, and the ability to recognize and reflect on their own identity roles. More importantly, teachers should be accustomed to the knowledge of "what to teach" and "how to teach" in their daily practice of functional activities and consciously upgrade it to "why to teach" introspectively.

### ***5.4. Perfecting the System of Education and Renewing the Concept of Education***

Teacher education is a new requirement for teachers' professionalization. We should break the independence and closeness of the school-running system of normal education, expand the scope of talent flow and academic exchange, and advocate the integration and blending of different disciplines, and train compound and innovative talents. It is vital to establish and improve the unity of teacher cultivating and training, amend the concept of overemphasizing teacher pre-service cultivating and neglecting teacher post-service training and lifelong education. Meanwhile, in order to facilitate the smooth development of teachers' professionalization, it is more important to straighten out the relationship between cultivating and training, the emphasis of normal education on the professional basis of disciplines, academic ability and educational professional skills. The development of normal education should integrate theory with practice. The teaching idea, content, method and means of normal education should be organically combined with the teaching practice of primary and secondary schools, and be connected with the reform of basic education curriculum so as to strengthen communication and exchange and promote mutual development [14]. It not only emphasizes the teacher-training nature of normal education, but also attaches importance to the academic nature of normal education, effectively promotes the follow-up professional development of normal graduates, and then establishes the new concept of teacher education so as to realize the renewal of the concept from "normal education" to "teacher education".

### ***5.5. Actively Promoting the Innovation of Teacher Education System and Adjusting the Curriculum Structure of Teacher Education***

It is vital to construct the quality guarantee system of teacher education and perfect Teacher Profession Standards, qualification standards of teachers' educational institutions, curriculum standards and quality standards, build a system of teacher education standards, establish a system of teacher education access, and form a monitoring mechanism of education quality. Moreover, it is necessary to build National Teachers training base in some Normal Universities and focus on the innovation of training mode [15]. The teachers' professionalization is an important way to improve teachers' quality and education quality, and course setting is the central link to reflect teachers' professionalization. Although different scholars have different opinions on the basic composition of teacher education curriculum, there is consensus on the basic

aspects, that is, the basic structure of teacher education curriculum is generally composed of general culture curriculum, discipline curriculum, pedagogical curriculum, educational skills curriculum and educational practice curriculum. General culture curriculum and discipline curriculum are the basic and necessary courses for teacher education and pedagogical curriculum, educational skill curriculum and educational practice curriculum are the symbolic and necessary courses for teacher education [16]. Only when a teacher has the knowledge structure of these five aspects can he become a qualified teacher.

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