

# Dilemmas and Countermeasures of Teacher Professional Development of Teacher Education in China: Case Study of Hubei Normal University

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**Abstract:** Teacher education is a cornerstone of the national educational system, crucial for producing new educators. Implementing the Action Plan for the Revitalization of Teacher Education and advancing the professionalization of the teaching profession is essential for the modernization of education in China. Consequently, the training requirements for education students, who are both 'students' meanwhile prospective 'teachers' in future, have become more stringent, with a strong emphasis on the professional qualities they must possess for their teaching careers. The professional development of these future teachers is of significant interest. Therefore, it is imperative to analyze the challenges, underlying causes, and strategies for their professional growth. This paper explains the importance of teachers' professional development, the reality of the dilemma and coping strategies from three perspectives to provide useful reference for the development of teachers' students in Hubei Normal University.

**Keywords:** normal student; teacher professional development; education majors in China

## 1. Introduction

Teacher education, as the cornerstone of the work of education, has a pioneering and fundamental strategic position. In January 2018, the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China (CPC) and the State Council issued "the Opinions on Comprehensively Deepening the Reform of Teacher Squad Construction in the New Era", and the Ministry of Education and five other ministries jointly issued "the Action Plan for the Revitalisation of Teacher Education (2018-2022)" in March of the same year, along with it. In February 2019, the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China (CPC) and the State Council issued "China Education Modernisation 2035". It is thus clear that the implementation of the Action Plan for the Revitalisation of Teacher Education and the acceleration of the professionalisation of the teaching profession are of great significance to the promotion of China's education modernisation. In this context, as the training object of teacher education, teacher-training students, who have the dual attributes of 'students' and 'teachers' in the future, the expected training requirements have been further raised, and the professional qualities that teacher-training students need to have when they embark on the teaching profession in the future have attracted a lot of attention. The professional qualities that teacher-training students need to have to become teachers are of great concern. Therefore, it is extremely important to analyse and study the dilemmas, reasons and strategies for the professional development of teacher-training students.

## 2. Importance of teacher professional development for teacher trainees

In accordance with the spirit of 'education is a major project, teachers are the foundation', accelerating the process of professionalisation of the teaching profession and promoting teachers' professional development are both the overall requirements of education in China in the 21st century and the fundamental tasks of future teacher training <sup>[1]</sup>. The centre and core element of education reform in today's world has gradually shifted to the development of the teaching profession. Globally, the awareness of the 'professionalisation' of the teaching profession and related research has been highlighted by the growing importance of the quality of the teaching force in improving the quality of teaching. As early as 1966, the UNESCO Recommendation concerning the Status of Teachers stated that the teaching profession is a 'profession'. Since then, more and more people have been involved in discussions and research on the themes of teacher 'professionalisation', 'teacher education' and 'professional maturity'. Since the 1980s, the issue of teachers' professional development has become

one of the hot issues in education reform worldwide. Domestically, the Teachers' Law promulgated in 1993 made this understanding clear, and the establishment of the teacher qualification certificate system in 1995 can be considered a key step in the practice of professionalisation of the teaching profession in China.

Entering the new era, the main contradiction in the priority development of China's education has shifted from universal development and expanding access to all levels and types of education to connotation enhancement and high-quality development. The strategic position of teacher team building in China's education reform and development has become increasingly prominent. The CPC Central Committee and the State Council's Opinions on Comprehensively Deepening the Reform of Teacher Construction in the New Era clearly state that 'the work of teachers should be placed in the key strategic areas of support for the development of education, with priority given to the planning of teachers' work, the safeguarding of teachers' work inputs, and the fulfilment of the needs of teacher construction'. At the same time, it is required to 'effectively strengthen the leadership and implement a system of responsibility' and 'the standing committee of the Party committee of each province, autonomous region and municipality directly under the central government shall study the work of building the teaching force at least once a year'. This fundamentally establishes, with the authority of the Central Committee of the Party, the priority status of the building of the teaching force in the entire educational endeavour.

In fact, the teaching profession is a specialised profession. Teachers need to undergo specialised teacher training, acquire specialised knowledge and skills, and through training achieve the goal of serving society. In other words, teachers are professionals entrusted by a certain society to engage in educational activities and cultivate qualified personnel for a certain society, and the social responsibility assumed by teachers determines their role as 'social advocates'<sup>[2]</sup>. The social function and social value of teachers are mainly reflected in the irreplaceable objectivity of teachers' labour. Teachers are the disseminators of human civilisation and bear the important responsibility of civilisation transmission. The teacher's professionalism is the basic requirement for teachers to take up teaching positions in the future. Teachers' professionalism can be understood as a collection of professional ability, professional character, professional emotion and professional concepts about teaching that teachers possess. Professional competence reflects the teaching level of teachers; professional virtue corresponds to the teacher's moral cultivation, which determines the degree of his/her efforts in teaching in the future; professional emotion corresponds to the self-feeling and sustainability of teachers' teaching; and professional concept reflects whether the direction of teachers' efforts in education and teaching is correct or not<sup>[3]</sup>. Teachers' competence determines the civilisation of a society and its ability to create culture. Therefore, in order for students to be able to make greater progress, it is necessary to develop the teacher profession in a sustained and high-quality way.

### **3. The reality of the dilemma of the professional development of teacher trainees in our schools**

According to the author's personal observation and reflection, the reality of the dilemma of teacher professional development of teacher trainees in our schools is mainly reflected in three aspects:

#### **3.1 School Level**

Schools do not pay enough attention to the teacher training profession, secondary school pedagogy, teachers and teacher professional development of teacher trainees. This is manifested in the following ways: the goal of building first-class teacher training colleges and first-class teacher training programmes is not strong; the implementation of the new requirements for teacher ethics education and the enhancement of the effectiveness of teacher ethics education are not sufficient; the efforts to classify and formulate curriculum standards, make full use of modern information technology, enrich and innovate the forms of curriculum, and classify and push forward the reform of the mode of teacher training are not strong; the collaborative nurturing of people and the construction of an all-rounded educational practice content system are not timely; the reform of the teaching and learning reforms of the basic education curriculum is not integrated; the reforms of the basic education curriculum have not been put in place. The joint efforts to build an all-round education practice content system and the curriculum and teaching reform of basic education have not been timely; the revitalisation of teacher education has not been included in the school planning as a comprehensive deepening of the reform of the construction of a new era of the teacher corps, and there has been insufficient investment in this area.

### **3.2 Teacher level**

Some teachers are indifferent to their own professional development, and have a poor understanding of professional norms, cycles and the laws and values of professional development. This is reflected in their unwillingness to participate in various pre-service and in-service teacher training and further education, or even if they do participate, there is a clear lack of initiative, poorly planned or erratic behaviour, etc. These people can be divided into three types according to their different mentality and performance. One is the lack of enthusiasm for the cause of education, not wanting to be a teacher at all, but being forced to join education due to the choice of career, social development or external pressure; after joining the profession, they cannot feel at ease in teaching, have a negative attitude, have a low level of professional ambition, and are indifferent to the dynamics of the education reform and the level of their own qualities. Another kind of bias belongs to the understanding and belief that the teaching profession itself does not have obvious professionalism and exclusivity, and that teaching is subjective and uncertain, with a greater degree of dependence on experience. At the same time, there is a lack of dialectical understanding of the relationship between teaching and learning, a failure to establish a lifelong education concept, and an inability to put up a fight. There is also a tendency to be impatient and impatient in professional learning due to too much emphasis on promotion and merit assessment at work, and not being able to calm down to systematically and comprehensively check and fill in the gaps, thus affecting the long-term professional development.

### **3.3 Student level**

Students are not interested in teacher training, teaching skills are not solid, practical teaching and hands-on ability is too poor, the application of information technology is not enough, the spirit of hard work and struggle is not enough, and the idea of 'lying down' is serious and so on.

## **4. Response Strategies for Teacher Professional Development of Teacher Trainees**

### ***4.1 The school party committee should strengthen the organisational leadership and clarify the main body of responsibility***

The revitalisation of teacher education as a major initiative to comprehensively deepen the reform of teacher training in the new era is included in the important agenda, and the plan is effectively put into practice. All departments should work closely and proactively to perform their duties and responsibilities, and work together to create a good rule of law and policy environment for the revitalisation and development of teacher education. Party committees at all levels should put the reform and development of education on their agenda, coordinate and mobilise all aspects of power to jointly promote the modernisation of education, and form a good atmosphere in which the whole society cares about, supports and actively participates in the modernisation of education. We need to establish a sound educational leadership system with unified leadership by the Party Committee, joint management by the Party and the government, and responsibility of each department. It is necessary to increase the financial investment in teacher education and improve the level of teacher education security. According to the development of teacher education as well as the financial situation, the average allocation standard for teacher students should be raised at the right time. Schools should make teacher training an important direction for funding in major educational development projects. At the same time, it actively seeks social support and establishes diversified financing channels. The relevant state departments organise special supervision and inspection of the implementation of the action plan for the revitalisation of teacher education to ensure that the various policy initiatives are put into practice. Advanced models will be recognised and rewarded in accordance with the relevant state regulations, and those who fail to implement the plan and work perfunctorily will be held responsible for the leadership of the relevant department heads.

### ***4.2 Vigorously strengthen the construction of teacher ethics, the implementation of the new requirements of teacher ethics education, enhance the effectiveness of teacher ethics education***

As the primary criterion for evaluating teacher quality, teacher ethics and demeanor not only promote the long-term and institutionalized construction of teacher ethics but also strengthen the cultivation of teacher ethics education. We can require and guide the development of teachers by using 'Four Good Teachers', 'Four Guides', 'Four Unifications', and 'Four Services'. Schools should further

improve and implement it into their teacher education programmes, guiding teachers to be virtuous, to learn with virtue, to teach with virtue, and to educate with virtue<sup>[3]</sup>.

Teacher ethics education is carried out throughout the whole process of teacher education, as a compulsory module in the training of teacher trainees and teacher training programmes. Rule of law training programmes for teachers are being developed, and rule of law education is being carried out to enhance teachers' knowledge of the rule of law and their ability to teach in accordance with the law. Education in Chinese outstanding traditional culture is being widely carried out among teacher trainees and in-service teachers, with an emphasis on cultivating teachers' morality through Chinese outstanding traditional culture, drawing on the essence of culture and passing on the Chinese way of being a teacher through the recitation of the classics, the offering of special courses, and the organisation of thematic training. The university invites model teachers and outstanding front-line teachers and headmasters into the classroom, and adopts the methods of organising public welfare teaching and volunteering to cultivate teacher trainees' identification with the teaching profession and their sense of social responsibility. We use the media platform to organize a series of activities for teacher trainees on "The First Lesson in Teacher Ethics". You can also take advantage of Teachers' Day every year, the week after to carry out "Teachers' Moral Activities Week". Through this activity, we aim to discover advanced models of teacher ethics, promote the style of contemporary teachers, and vigorously promote the image of outstanding teachers in the new era who are sunny, beautiful, dedicated, and silently dedicated<sup>[4]</sup>.

#### ***4.3 Teachers' professional development has taken a new turn from subject pedagogical knowledge (PCK) to subject pedagogical cognition (PCKg)***

Teachers, as a professional, must have certain knowledge in order to teach effectively. PCK, as a special term, is the abbreviation of Pedagogical content knowledge (PCK), which was first proposed by Lee Shulman, a professor of education at Stanford University in the United States. Shulman believes that subject content knowledge and general pedagogical knowledge are insufficient to support specific teaching, so he proposed a new form of knowledge that includes subject knowledge and its teachability aspects, that is, subject pedagogical knowledge (PCK). Specifically, this subject matter pedagogical knowledge refers to a teacher's understanding of how a specific topic, problem or argument is organised, expressed and adapted to suit the different interests and abilities of learners, and to teach it, through an organic blend of the subject matter and pedagogical principles of the subject matter taught. In essence, however, PCK is a static body of knowledge that ignores the subject's initiative in perceiving and understanding subject matter and pedagogical knowledge. In light of this, Cochrane et al. revised PCK in terms of emphasizing the dynamic nature of concepts, which in turn expanded the understanding of the concept and led to a more comprehensive concept, Pedagogical Content Knowing (PCKg for short). Specifically, Pedagogical Content Knowing (PCKg) consists of four areas of knowledge: content knowledge, pedagogical knowledge, knowledge about students, and knowledge about learning contexts. No single teacher development or training programme can cover all the elements of PCKg needed by teachers. Therefore, the development of PCKg should be an important part of teachers' daily activities. In the context of school education, the formation of a learning community through cooperation, dialogue and interaction is an important way for teachers to construct subject teaching cognition. The formation of a cooperative and sharing organizational culture through cooperation, communication and interaction among teachers will certainly promote teachers to better improve their subject teaching cognition.

#### ***4.4 Comprehensively implement the fundamental task of establishing moral education, and comprehensively improve the comprehensive quality and ability level of teacher trainees***

We should widely carry out education on ideals and beliefs, cultivate patriotism, strengthen moral cultivation, increase knowledge and insight, cultivate the spirit of struggle, and continuously improve students' ideological level, political awareness, moral quality and cultural literacy. We should enhance the comprehensive quality of teachers, establish the educational concept of health first, comprehensively strengthen school physical education work, and promote the spirit of labor<sup>[5]</sup>. It is necessary to cultivate more teachers at the undergraduate level for compulsory education schools who have received high-quality teacher education and who are well-qualified and skilled in their work; to substantially increase the number of 'dual-teacher' teachers with excellent practical skills for secondary vocational schools (including technical schools, hereinafter referred to as the same); and to cultivate a large number of teachers specialised in pre-school education for kindergartens who care about young

children and are good at child care and education, so as to improve the quality of education.

#### ***4.5 Strengthening the construction of practical training platforms for education and teaching skills, and promoting the reform of the teacher training model in a classified manner***

Focusing on collaborative education, basic teaching skills training and practical teaching, continuous updating of curriculum content, and information technology application capacity, a new form of teacher education has basically taken shape. The sense of social responsibility, innovative spirit and practical ability of teacher trainees and in-service teachers have been continuously enhanced. The 'Excellent Teacher Cultivation Programme' will be implemented in depth, first-class teacher training colleges and first-class teacher training programmes will be constructed, and practice-oriented reform of the content of teacher education courses and changes in teaching methods centred on teacher trainees will be promoted. The programme will clarify the objectives and tasks of educational practice, build an all-round content system for educational practice, connect with the curriculum and teaching reforms of basic education and vocational education, and strengthen the training of teacher trainees in basic pedagogical skills such as 'three words and one dialogue'. The construction of a curriculum and teaching materials system will be strengthened, the curricula of primary, secondary and university schools will be scientifically planned, curriculum standards will be formulated in different categories, and modern information technology will be fully utilised to enrich and innovate the forms of the curriculum. [6]The national textbook system will be improved, with a focus on coordination, integration and classification, to enhance the ideological, scientific, national, contemporary and systematic nature of the textbooks, and to improve the mechanisms for preparing, revising, reviewing, selecting and withdrawing textbooks. We need to strengthen the promotion of innovative talent cultivation methods, such as inspirational, exploratory, participatory and cooperative teaching methods, as well as modes of teaching organization such as the classroom system and the course selection system. Innovative models of teacher education are needed to better prepare future teachers for excellence.

#### ***4.6 'Internet + Teacher Education' innovative action to improve teacher training students' information literacy and information-based teaching ability***

The construction and application of informatization and teaching service platforms for teacher education have been promoted by using new technologies such as cloud computing, big data, virtual reality and artificial intelligence. Teaching methods mainly characterized by autonomy, cooperation and inquiry have been adopted, and the online open course construction plan for teacher education has been implemented to promote the wide application and sharing of online open courses. It is also necessary to implement the capacity of primary and secondary school teachers in the application of information technology, and to lead and drive primary and secondary school teachers to effectively utilize modern information technology in education and teaching as well as in school management. It will study and formulate standards for teacher trainees' IT application ability, and improve their information literacy and IT teaching ability. Relying on the national teacher management information system, it will strengthen the information management of in-service teacher training and build a 'credit bank' for teachers' professional development. We need to build an intelligent campus and an integrated and intelligent teaching management and service platform. Utilizing modern technology, the reform of the talent training model has been accelerated, achieving an organic combination of scaled education and personalized development. Not only has it speeded up the formation of a modern educational management and monitoring system, but it has also promoted the precision of management information systems and the scientification of decision-making.

## **5. Conclusion**

In a nutshell, the path to revitalizing teacher training programs is complex but essential for the future of education. By prioritizing comprehensive reforms, fostering a culture of professional growth, integrating ethical standards into teacher education, and ensuring strong leadership and accountability, we can create a robust educational ecosystem. This will not only enhance the professional development of teachers but also enrich the educational experiences of their students, equipping future generations with the skills, values, and knowledge essential for success in an increasingly complex world. Ultimately, the commitment to fostering high-quality educators is a commitment to the advancement of society as a whole, ensuring that we cultivate innovative and responsible citizens equipped to meet the challenges of the future.

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