

ELEMENTARY SCHOOL ENGLISH TEACHERS IN CHINA
TEACHER DEVELOPMENT

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Abstract

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Yuanyuan Zhang

Under the Supervision of Dr. Doug Adams

With the increasing attention to English learning throughout our globalized society, as a learner in English education and a parent of a current elementary school student, the author chose the professional development of English teachers in Chinese elementary schools as a topic for study. As the main body of English education activities, primary school English teachers' educational ability, English professional language application and personal professional development are related to the effectiveness of English learning .

This paper systematically analyzes the transformation of pre-service elementary English and in-service teachers, the professional standards as well as existing professional development channels of elementary English teachers, and the assessment of elementary education teacher training at home and abroad in the past decade.

From the perspective of professional development, this paper gives a complete realization route and reference program for pre-service and in-service English teachers in terms of how to become a qualified English teacher and how to improve their personal professional competence. It helps more people to join the group of English teachers in elementary schools, while improving the English learning outcomes of the whole society in China based on the improvement of personal English education competence.

Keywords: Teacher qualification system; Teacher professional development; Teacher evaluation; Elementary English Teacher in China

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Chapter I Introduction

When my third grade son, who attends a private elementary school, started to learn English in the second grade, I began to pay attention to my child's English instruction and their peers in public schools. As I studied the literature, I noticed that there was a strong direct correlation between child's education outcomes and teachers. At the same time, based on the transition of personal career planning, I hope to switch from Human Resources (HR) to English teacher, so the topic of this research is described as "Elementary School English Teachers in China: Teacher Development".

With the development of the world economy and society, the status of English as a *lingua franca* in China has also undergone significant changes. The ability to communicate in English is not only for exams or study in the US, the UK, Europe, and Australia, etc.

The importance of learning English is becoming more prominent in China. As a critical period of language learning, English education in elementary schools in China has also undergone corresponding changes.

In 2001, as a result of the global expansion of programs in English Teaching to Young Learners and China's rapid social and economic change, the Ministry of Education of China (MOE) initiated a curriculum innovation: the promotion of teaching English as a foreign language in elementary schools beginning in Year 3 (ages 9-10)(Ping, 2013, p.208).

The demand for elementary school English teachers is also increasing. The school-age of English learners has been adjusted from the first grade of junior high school to the third grade of elementary school, and the corresponding elementary school English teachers need to be supplemented. In this case, some elementary schools have adopted the method of adjusting in-service teachers' temporary substitute licenses, and teachers of other subjects (such as Chinese language and literature, mathematics.) will temporarily teach on behalf of English teachers, which is particularly prominent in rural areas. National education administration

institutions at all levels are also taking various measures to expand the number of elementary school English teachers, such as relaxing professional and academic requirements. Regarding the proficiency levels of English teachers, it shows that the English teachers are of uneven English language level and teaching ability. Meanwhile, their language teaching knowledge and cultural literacy needs to be strengthened. Equally as important, it also has significant differences in provinces and regions with different levels of economic development.(Zhang et al., 2016).

With the increased demand for English teaching, various English training institutions and English teaching methods have emerged, such as Crazy English, a Chinese English teaching method that helps many Chinese can speak fluently English which was invented by Li Yang. In addition, scholars have also studied the professional development of English teachers from different perspectives, such as improving the professional competence of pre-service and in-service teachers, broadening the channels of English teacher training, and improving the evaluation mechanism of English teachers.

Statement of the Problem

There is a shortage of professional elementary school English teachers. The professional standards for elementary school English teachers are as follows, that is,

小学英语教师不仅要具备一般教师的事业心、品质个性、教学能力、教育理论与教研能力等素质，同时也要具备语言教师特有的语言技能、语言知识以及学科教师特有的教学技能和小学英语教师特有的素质(Xiong & Han, 2014, p.43)。

They should not only have the qualities such as professionalism, quality personality, teaching ability, educational theory, and teaching and research abilities of ordinary teachers but also have the language skills, language knowledge, teaching skills to language teachers and qualities that are specific to English teachers)” (Xiong & Han, 2014, p.43).

A certified English teacher first should be a qualified teacher, who not only has teaching ability, but also possesses the attitude of educating and cultivating students. Secondly, she needs

to meet the corresponding requirements in the English major at a university level and be able to impart knowledge to students as an expert(Xiong & Han, 2014). Based on the professional requirements of elementary school English teachers, Yao (2017) argued that the problems in the professional quality development of elementary school English teachers, in reality, were as follows. The professional development of English teachers is weak. Due to the lack of educational resources, such as qualified English teachers, teaching materials. An elementary school English teacher may be responsible for the English teaching work of a grade or even the whole school and has no time and energy for teaching ability and professional self-development. The teaching method of in-service English teachers is single. Classroom teaching is affected by traditional test-oriented teaching concepts, which lead to teachers with single teaching methods and “boring” classes. The professional competence of in-service English teachers is weak. In the narrow sense, the teaching ability is regarded as teaching, but the comprehensive ability system, including the ability to organize teaching with English proficiency, the ability to carry out teaching practice with the latest teaching means, the organizational ability of education management, the ability to compile textbooks, the high-end ability of curriculum development and scientific research, is ignored. The professional passion of in-service English teachers is gradually fading . When the career has no direction and no motivation to improve, the passion fades and no one cares about the professional development of teachers anymore.

The current training and development system for elementary school English teachers needs to be strengthened. Theories of teacher identity in teacher professional learning as follows provided a theoretical basis for teacher-training:

Seven theories (Wenger's Communities of Practice, a network that connects people interested in a particular area of knowledge, teachers too. Vygotsky's Socio-cultural Theory, "a

source of all socio-cultural and socio-cognitive theoretical propositions(Ahmad et al., 2019, p.4),” treated teachers' professional learning as cultural activities. Activity Theory is an approach for understanding human behavior from different perspectives, such as an individual, collective standpoint. The goal goes to different human activities. Positioning Theory believes that identity is constructed through discourse. Cultural Production and Practice Theory articulated that identity was formed by local contexts. Dialogical Self-Theory, made "a better conceptualization of the relation between self and society(Ahmad et al., 2019 ,p.6)". The Dynamic System Model of Role Identity, positions teacher role identity from self-image and the feeling of the teacher, without social-cultural contexts.) of teacher identity in teacher professional learning provide a theoretical basis for teacher training(Ahmad et al., 2019).

Scholars familiar with teacher education in China are proposing a number of adjustments to teacher-training and in-service programs. since 2010, the Ministry of Education has organized a national training program for elementary and secondary school teachers, which are also called the 'National Training Program'. Although there are different types of courses in the national training plan implemented by colleges and universities, the teaching content is all formulated by college teachers according to their own understanding. Taking the three courses of the ‘National Training Program' undertaken by the colleges and universities selected by Dai and Shi(2015) as an example:

课程设置比较重视小学英语教学特色，突出歌曲、简笔画与板书设计等技能在小学英语教学中的运用。但课程内容设置城市化取向明显，缺乏体现中国农村、尤其是中西部农村小学英语教学研讨的专题课程。农村教师来参加培训的目的不是希望天天去听教授们的理论讲座，而是想解决农村教育教学中的实践问题，如：农村教师的专业发展问题、没有多媒体的情况下课题的有效教学问题、大班教学问题，等等(Dai & Shi, 2015, p.71)。

The curriculum setting pays more attention to the characteristics of English teaching in elementary schools, highlighting the application of skills such as songs, stick figure and blackboard writing in English teaching in elementary schools. The curriculum content has

an obvious urbanization orientation, and there is a lack of special courses that reflect the English teaching seminars in rural elementary schools in China's rural areas, especially in the central and western regions. The purpose for rural teachers to participate in the training is not to listen to the theoretical lectures of professors every day, but to solve practical problems in rural education and teaching, such as professional development of rural teachers, effective teaching of subjects without multimedia, large class teaching issues, and so on(Dai & Shi, 2015, p.71).

To some extent, practical teaching problems and local differences are ignored, and problems in the teaching process of participating teachers are not vetted. In this case, the training is just a form, which means that the management organization organizes teachers to participate in the training, but it does not do a corresponding positive role in the improvement of teachers' professional ability (Dai & Shi, 2015).

Definition of Terms

National Training Plan: The National Training Plan for elementary and Secondary School Teachers (hereinafter referred to as the National Training Plan) is a series of training plans and programs for improving the overall quality of elementary and secondary school teachers, especially rural teachers, which were fully implemented by colleges and universities in 2010, organized by the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Finance(Dai & Shi, 2015).

Crazy English: A unique Chinese English teaching method invented by Li Yang. He advocated speaking English crazily and reading English crazily (Jia, 2014). For example, one can shout loudly and practice oral English anywhere. By the accumulation of reading aloud and reciting sentences, the learners' English ability can be improved significantly in English listening, speaking, reading and writing. Through the practice and imitation of a lot of English listening and speaking materials, English learners will no longer worry about pronunciation problems and have the courage to communicate in English, and many people have improved their English communication skills with the help of this method. The emergence of this teaching method has

changed the situation of many Chinese with "high score and low ability" and "dumb English" to a large extent(Jia, 2014) .

Significance of the Study

Considering that English plays a key role in economic and culture today, this study's findings will benefit pre-service and in-service English teachers in elementary school. With the improvement of English teachers' professional ability, students can build a good foundation for English learning from elementary school, and the English ability of the whole society can be improved accordingly. English teachers, together with school, students, etc., as one of the principal bodies of education, the number and professional development of English teachers is increasingly concerned by various groups. However, how to expand the group of English teachers? How to make English teachers get better professional development? These problems need to be further discussed. On the basis of summarizing the existing relevant research, this paper hopes to give some enlightenment to teachers and educational management institutions who pay greater attention to these problems.

Methodology

Over the course of this study, I analyzed the relevant research at home and abroad in the last 10 years by searching the keyword "Elementary School English Teacher Development" in CNKI and Web of Science.) The research about English teachers in primary school in China is limited, according to my parameters , the author divided the researches into the following parts, contemporary moment and suggestions of teacher qualification system in China, teacher quality and professional standards for primary school English teachers, and teacher professional development and training. With the previous studies, my primary goal is to analyze the teaching

qualification system taken in China, which is the necessary condition to be an in-service teacher. Compared with Liu and Yu(2018) indicated about the system, the teacher qualification system in Taiwan provides a reference for Chinese mainland's teacher qualification system reform. My secondary goal is to make a comprehensive analysis of the current challenges those primary school English teachers in China facing. My third goal is to analyze the problems those English teachers encountered in their professional development and give some inspiration. Fourthly, my goal is to enhance teacher professional development by improving English teachers' evaluation and management. Thus, it can help them to improve their English education ability and their professional development.

Chapter II Review of Literature

As a member of a Chinese teacher group, elementary school English teachers have a lot in common with other teachers. Therefore, proceeding from the current teacher qualification system, this paper analyzes how to better expand the teaching staff. Secondly, combined with the professional requirement that English teachers are independent teachers, this paper analyzes the results of existing research on English teachers' professional development from the perspective of individual teachers and teacher management institutions. Taken as a whole, this paper discusses how English teachers can better enter the English teaching team and promote the professional development of in-service English teachers.

The current situation and suggestions of teacher qualification system in China

Teacher qualification is the basic requirement for those who are ready to enter the teaching profession in China. Only those who have teacher qualifications (in the form of those who hold a teacher qualification certificate issued by the state) can serve as teachers.

There are many problems in China's teacher qualification system, including low academic requirements for applicants, and holders of higher level qualifications can be applied downward. For example, holders of a high school English teacher certificate can teach junior high school English, simple types of certificates, cross-applicability in local areas, simplistic recognition of teacher qualification for normal university students, incomplete examination subjects for non-normal university students, and incomplete assessment of education and teaching practice ability(Pan & Zou, 2012). Through the changes of the content of teacher qualification assessment and the relaxing the professional and academic requirements, China's teacher qualification system has been improved, and more groups who want to engage in the teaching profession have joined the education industry. However, compared with some measures of teacher selection and

training in Taiwan as indicated by Liu and Yu(2018), such as the specific steps from a pre-service teacher to an in-service teacher we can see that there is still room for improvement in the mainland's teacher qualification system. Educational management institutions at all levels are constantly revising and improving the teacher qualification system with the emergence and solution of the problems.

Pan & Zou (2012) put forward some targeted and theoretical improvement directions based on the existing problems of the teacher qualification system. Combined with the teacher qualification system in Taiwan, (Liu & Yu, 2018) found that "The experience from Taiwan could be a lesson for the reform of the teacher qualification system in elementary and secondary schools in mainland China"(p.111). (Liu & Yu, 2018) analyzed the teacher qualification system in Taiwan from the following perspectives. Student selection criteria, after application and selection, students have a clear goal of becoming teachers. Curriculum system, based on the requirements of education reform and the direction of teachers' professional development, teacher education institutions pay attention to the cultivation of students' professional abilities such as subject knowledge, teaching and curriculum planning. Teacher training, through pedagogical practice , the teaching ability of pre-service teachers is strengthened. Certificate examination, theoretical study and teaching practice enable pre-service English teachers to quickly adapt to the job requirements and become a qualified English teacher.

The setting of pre-service education certificate provides experience guarantee for these teachers to go to teaching posts, so that they can adapt to the new role of in-service teachers more easily, so as to make continuous progress(Liu & Yu, 2018).

With research on teacher qualification systems and pre-service and in-service teacher education programs, Choi & Lee (2007) shows that the problems with teacher qualifications are

similar in 16 Asian countries, such as China, India, Indonesia, Korea, Japan, Singapore etc. and the suggestions also can be used in Asian countries(Choi & Lee, 2007).

By evaluating the successful aspects of Taiwan's teacher training program, we can try to get some ideas using in mainland China. For example, we can select students who are really interested in teaching to join the free normal university student group. Before teachers take up their posts, the requirements on teaching practice should be strengthened to ensure that pre-service teachers who have obtained the teacher qualification can quickly enter the teaching state and have the corresponding teaching ability.

Professional standards for Elementary school English teachers

On the basis of teacher identity recognition, Xiong and Han(2014) pointed out that the framework of professional standards for elementary school English teachers includes the following views. Teacher-student view, which pays attention to students in time and takes students as the center. Teaching view, besides clear language teaching, Elementary school English teachers should also use all kinds of teaching methods to improve the efficiency of teaching. Language view, students can form the ability to use language through a large number of language input and lay the foundation for the language exchange of knowledge. Curriculum view, comments on the ability and knowledge structure of Chinese and western culture of Chinese and western culture, the integration of curriculum resources, broaden the channel of learning English, through the learning of English national culture to raise the level of language.

吸取国内外相关研究成果的合理因素，依据中国学者的话语方式，本研究认为小学英语教师专业素养是指小学英语教师从事教育教学工作所需的专业信念、专业知识、专业能力和专业精神的综合体(Zhang et al., 2016, p.76)。

Absorbing the reasonable factors of relevant research results at home and abroad, and based on the discourse style of Chinese scholars, this study believes that elementary school English teachers' professional quality refers to the integration of professional belief, professional knowledge, professional ability and professional spirit that elementary school English teachers need to engage in education and teaching(Zhang et al., 2016, p.76).

According to the above theoretical framework of elementary school English teachers' professional quality in China, (Zhang et al., 2016) formed a scale of elementary school English teachers' professional quality to evaluate elementary school English teachers' professional quality in China. The scale included factors as follows, Self-belief, perceptions of personal teacher identity, self-development and self-efficacy aspects. English language application ability, listening, speaking, reading and writing ability of English language and classroom organization ability. Educational research ability, ability to apply research knowledge to solve problems in the English language educational process. However, investment in English education varies greatly among regions with different levels of economic development. The professional standards and evaluation programs for elementary school English teachers need to be adjusted according to the actual situation of the region. For example, teaching program design cannot be used for uniform evaluation between urban areas where educational resources are sufficient and rural areas where teaching materials are lacking.

Teacher professional development and training

In the context of China's curriculum reform, the professional development of teachers has also caught the attention of scholars. Through a questionnaire survey, (Lei & Medwell, 2020) analyzed the acceptance of professional development among teachers and the content of professional development (such as improving teaching ability through teaching reflection, the relationship with student output, continuous learning, etc.). From the perspective of the teachers' development, teacher professional development was the “key to changing how teachers teach and develop their knowledge (Lei & Medwell, 2020)”. However, in-service teachers focus more on the school's requirements for teachers' various teaching activities and do not pay enough attention to professional development.

As a national teacher training program for primary and secondary school teachers, it is also a reference standard for teacher training for provincial and municipal education management institutions, "National training plan" shows the current situation and problems of China's teacher training system. Similarly, Peng et al.(2014) combining with the research of teacher teaching, the authors analyzes the shortcomings of the current training system, and points out that more effective and practical professional training should be carried out for in-service teachers. Meanwhile, through a questionnaire survey of in-service elementary school English teachers, the teaching demonstration of teachers' professional development in Taiwan was traced. Combining with the effectiveness of various work, such as formal professional dialogue among Elementary school English Teachers, carried out by Taiwan's education department to improve elementary school English teachers, a reference for the professional development path of elementary school English teachers in mainland China was provided(Chien, 2018; Chien & Barton, 2017). Although the professional development problems faced by elementary English teachers are different in provinces and cities due to different economic development conditions, the ideas of professional development for elementary English teachers in Taiwan can be tried to be applied to areas with similar economic conditions in mainland China.

Teacher Evaluation

Assessment is another important component of professional development for in-service English teachers. Through teachers' self-evaluations, colleagues' evaluations and students' evaluations, teachers can have a clear understanding of their own advantages and disadvantages in the teaching process, develop their strengths and avoid their weaknesses, find their individual shortcomings in time and adjust them.

The teaching objectives, teaching effects, and teaching abilities of elementary school English teachers are evaluated through students, colleagues and self-reflection. Combined with the sources of professional development of elementary school English teachers, many efficient ways, such as regular teaching seminar inside and outside school, excellent teachers' open class, etc., were tried to promote professional development of teachers so as to improve effective teaching. Through the evaluation, teachers can establish the concept of lifelong learning and constantly improve their professional quality, so as to meet the small problems, new requirements and new challenges brought by the new round of curriculum reform(Liu et al., 2018; Wei, 2013).

Summary

In the past decade, scholars have conducted a variety of studies on the development of elementary school English teachers. However, elementary school English teachers are only a part of the English teacher workforce in China . Existing research is more reflected in the development of College English teachers and the practical classroom teaching methods. These studies can be used as a guide for the professional development of English teachers in elementary schools with the aspects of teacher identity, professional ability and personal development. However, social environment of elementary school students require that the professional development of elementary school English teachers will have some independent thinking, such as how to improve the learning interest and enthusiasm of the younger children. Personal professional development is long-term in the elementary school English teaching field in-depth development or to the senior grade conversion. These are rarely seen in the existing research system.

The purpose of the studies is to effectively promote the professional development of relevant elementary School English teacher China, improve teachers' teaching ability and improve the overall educational level of society. As societies continue to change, theoretical research also needs to be adjusted constantly, so as to better achieve the purpose of research.

Chapter III Conclusions and Recommendations

As for the professional development of elementary school English teachers, scholars have not only analyzed the problems in the progress of teacher development in China, but also tried the reliable and positive methods of English teacher development in countries such as New Zealand(Gao, 2012).

While learning from the professional development experience of teachers in other countries, Chinese elementary school English teachers will also make some modifications according to the national conditions, so as to constitute a set of teacher development plans suitable for China's national conditions. Education itself is a process of continuous learning, and teachers should continue to improve their professional ability.

As far as I can see, with the increasing importance of English schooling, schools and families are paying more and more attention to English education. Elementary school English teachers are also no longer confined to the various trainings arranged by schools and educational management agencies, but form learning communities on their own to discuss problems in the teaching process, as well as share materials . Although this is only the individual behavior of a small group that I participate in, we can see from it that individual teachers' concern for professional development has increased, and as a group of members muddle through, more members will join subsequently, thus forming a virtuous circle.

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