

Strategic Examination on and Thinking of the Systematic Reform of Chinese Teacher Education¹

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The strategic transformation from traditional formal education to modern teacher education starting in mid-1980s has been initially realized in China, meanwhile, some problems still exist, which can be seen from the following five aspects: (1) The teacher educational function of normal universities or colleges has been more or less decreased; (2) The teacher educational task of comprehensive universities has not achieved completely; (3) The teacher educational resources of secondary normal schools have been lost seriously; (4) The level of teacher education of colleges in charge of teacher further education needs to be improved urgently; and (5) The teacher education model of all levels of colleges and universities remains outdated and simplistic. It is necessary to consult the process and trend of foreign teacher educational reform and development, seek countermeasures, lay emphasis on the system innovation and explore the modern teacher system of Chinese characteristic that aims to combine internationalization and localization, directionality and openness, professionalizing and generalization, teacher education's specialty-based feature and its realization in universities, stage-by-stage education and lifelong education, teacher education system's standardization and multiplicity, so that it can make some new historical contributions to the scientific development of China's education cause.

Keywords: normal education, teacher education, modern system of teacher education, reform, innovation

Introduction

Since the end of 1970s, the reform of teacher education in China has made tremendous achievements which caught the attention of the world. Along with the ever deepening of the reform in teacher education system and optimization of teacher education structure and its resources, the once closed and independent teacher education system becomes more and more open, a comprehensive and pluralistic pattern of teacher education has gradually come into being, and the transition from traditional teacher education system to a modern one has been initially realized, thus, making historical contributions to Chinese education, especially to the development of the elementary education. Of course, there are still many problems which need to be seriously reflected on and summarized.

¹The term "teacher education", evolved from the Japanese term "normal education", gradually became a term generally used in China at the beginning of 20th century. In late 1990s, the term "teacher education" was finally adopted in Chinese academic circles. In May of 2001, in the "Decision on Reform and Development of Basic Education" promulgated by China's State Council the term "teacher education" was officially used. In February of 2002, in its "Opinion of Teacher Education Reform and Development during the 11th Five-year Plan Chinese Education Ministry pointed out explicitly that "teacher education" is the generalized term for a teacher's pre-service education, education right after his or her entering teaching profession and in-service education.

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Several Major Problems Existing in the Process of Reforming Teacher Education System

Relevant documentation retrieval has led to the conclusion that the Chinese Communist Party and central government began to formulate and publicize a series of laws, regulations and policies of teacher education in mid-1980s according to the strategic concept of “opening the system of teacher education and maintaining the leading position of normal universities and colleges in the system at the same time” (General Office of the State Council of PR China, 1986). In September of 1986, the General Office of State Council of the PR of China in its announcement of transmitting “On Several Opinions of Implementing the Compulsory Education Law”, jointly issued by National Education Committee and other ministries, pointed out that “The higher education institutions that possess relevant conditions should fully tap their potentials and shoulder the task of educating and training teachers of primary and middle schools in an active and initial way” (General Office of the State Council of PR China, 1986). In December of 1996, the National Education Committee² in its “Several Opinions of the Reform and Development of Teacher Education” raised the task of that (Education Committee of PR China, 1996):

Completing and perfecting the normal education system in which independently existing normal universities and colleges of various kinds and levels are the main stream while other kinds of universities and colleges join their hands in educating and training teachers in a coordinated way.

In December of 1998, the National Education Ministry in its “Plan of Facing the 21st Century and Rejuvenating Education” pointed out that “The higher education institutions of relatively high capacities should make contributions to the cultivation of new teachers and teacher training” (Education Committee of PR China, 1996). In March of 1999, the National Education Ministry in its “Several Opinions of Adjusting the Deployment and Structures of Normal Universities and Colleges Throughout the Country” made the call “to further widen the channel for the source of elementary and middle school teachers, encouraging a batch of high level comprehensive universities to take part in educating elementary and middle school teachers” (Education Committee, 1998). In July of 1999, The Central Committee of the Chinese Communist Party and the State Council in their “Decision to Deepen the Education Reform and Push forward Quality Education in an All-round Way” made the proposal “to encourage comprehensive universities and non-normal universities or colleges to take part in the work of cultivating and training of elementary and middle school teachers, and to explore ways of opening up normal colleges within comprehensive universities with good conditions” (The Central Committee of Chinese Communist Party and State Council, 1999). In March of 2000, the national Education Ministry in its “Program of the Elementary and Middle School Teacher Further Education Project (1999-2000)” made the proposal “to encourage normal universities or colleges at all levels as well as comprehensive universities to participate in the further education of the elementary and middle school teachers actively” (Education Ministry, 2000). In May of 2001, the State Council in its “Decision on the Reform and Development of Fundamental Education” proposed “to consummate the open system of teacher education in

² Since the founding of the People’s Republic of China in October of 1949, a number of terms have been used to name the department in its central government in charge of education. In 1949, Education Ministry was established to lead and administer national education in a unified way. In 1952, Higher Education Ministry was established to be in charge of higher education. In 1958, Higher Education Ministry was annexed to Ministry of Education. In 1964, Higher Education Ministry was restored. In 1966, Higher Education Ministry was once again annexed to Education Ministry. In 1970, Education Ministry was replaced by Science and Education Group of the State Council. In 1975, Education Ministry was restored again. In 1985, Education Ministry was replaced by the State Education Committee. In 1998, the name Education Ministry was again adopted. The name has been used till now.

which the existing normal universities and colleges are the main stream, other higher education institutions join their hands in making a coherent linking between pre-service education and in-service training” (Important Documents on Education of PR China (1998-2002), 2003, pp. 887-892). In May of 2007, in its announcement of transmitting the National Education Ministry’s “Outline of National Development of Education in the Eleventh Five-year Plan”, the State Council proposed “to form an open, flexible, standard and orderly teacher education system gradually” (State Council of PR China, 2007). It is not difficult to find that the general strategy and policies of China’s teacher education reform remain persistent, explicit and conform to both the international mainstream and China’s own situation within 30 years. The problems lie in the links of implementing them and are reflected in the following five aspects.

The Function Played by Normal Universities and Colleges in Teacher Education Has Been Weakened

In the process of changing the enclosed type of normal education into an open type of teacher education, a great number of normal universities and colleges were upgraded into multi-disciplinary or comprehensive universities by internal or external means, such as expansion, annexation or transformation, with the result that the number of the normal universities or colleges dropped sharply. According to the statistics from 1992 to 2001, 169 nationwide normal universities or colleges were involved in the adjustment (retrieved from <http://www.Moe.edu.cn>). Among them, some were merged to other normal universities or colleges, some were reshuffled to perform a combined function of providing both the pre-service and in-service trainings, some were annexed to comprehensive universities, some absorbed other kinds of schools, some were upgraded into comprehensive universities, etc.. As a result, the relatively independent and specialized normal education system was basically broken up. During the giant leap of Chinese higher education’s transitioning from the elite-type to popularized one, normal universities and colleges played a huge and unique role. However, because this kind of reform and transition was carried out at quite a rapid speed, a large number of normal universities and colleges, attempting to get quick success, blindly upgraded or expanded themselves. This kind of collective action not only jumped over certain necessary phases of historical development, but also made schools lack their distinctive features and vitality. Because schools were involved in repetitive and disorderly competitions like a swarm of bees, not only was the chief role played by normal universities or colleges in teacher education weakened, thus, hindering the process of the reform of teacher education and stagnating its healthy development, but also the source of primary and middle school teachers with high quality as well as the development of national basic education were directly affected.

For a period after some normal universities or colleges were upgraded into comprehensive universities, they exerted all their efforts to fulfill the task of teacher education. However, their initiatives of doing this soon started to wane away. They have become a secondary college or department subsidiary to a university. The basic professional function of teacher education of such universities is downgraded into that of educational college, teachers’ college or education department subsidiary to them. Since annexation to or combination into each other, some normal universities or colleges have put their main efforts into external expansion trying their best to develop themselves into multi-disciplinary and comprehensive universities, showing a lack of interests in and paying little attention to making use of their solid foundation and rich experience in the respect of cultivation of primary and middle school teachers. In these normal universities, teacher education, likewise, is assigned to their teachers’ colleges or education departments subsidiary to them. What’s more, although the names of such schools are changed and their school types are transformed, their obsolete teaching modes which

are mostly based on the traditional normal education remain unchanged. Statistics showed that more than over 30 nationwide key normal universities of the provincial level or above have been embarked on the road of turning themselves into comprehensive universities. They have shown great interests in non-normal specialties, continuously expanded their scales of recruiting and cultivating students of non-normal specialties and tried their best to upgrade themselves and promote their comprehensive influences in the country. In such universities, the ratio of normal specialties and non-normal specialties has approximately reached 1:1. The original purpose of the national government's leading normal universities and colleges in making their transformations was to open and strengthen teacher education, further consolidate and expand the force engaged in teacher education, make them fully display their traditional advantages and characteristics in teacher education and further develop their abilities to train high qualified teachers on a higher academic and multi-disciplinary platform. However, in practice, the main professional functions these schools are supposed to fulfill are weakened, or, even, show a trend to be marginalized (Zhu, 2006).

The Duty of Teacher Education Has Not Been Fulfilled Completely by General and Comprehensive Universities as It Is Assumed to

In the process of transition of the type of teacher education from what is provided single-handedly by normal universities or colleges to what is jointly fulfilled by all kinds of universities and colleges so long as they have conditions and abilities to do so, some comprehensive universities set up education colleges or departments within them successively to take part in teacher education, annex to them some normal colleges or universities or construct secondary-level colleges to assume the task of teacher education. However, they are far from having a comprehensive understanding of the national reform of normal education system and the related policies of opening up teacher education. Their aims of setting up teacher education in their schools is to fill up the blanks in their lists of specialties so as to make them consummate, speed up their process of becoming more comprehensive in specialties, promote their comprehensive level and then push themselves into the rank of famous or first-rate comprehensive universities, but not to promote the level and the qualities of teacher education by taking the advantage of their possessing disciplines and specialties of comprehensive universities and their profound influence on liberal arts and sciences.

At the same time, their school-running tradition, which puts the academic and theoretic studies at the first place, also decides that they do not want to exert many efforts in the training of teachers of kindergartens, primary and secondary schools. Therefore, whether the teacher education's disciplines, specialties, curriculums, preparation of textbooks, promotion of teachers, or teaching research and accumulation of the practical resource are concerned, they have not made full preparations and have long been detached from the basic education. They know little of the teaching reality in kindergartens, primary and secondary schools, and are especially ill-informed of the "new curriculum reform" which has been enthusiastically carried on since 2001. They also lack teacher education practice and experience. This situation bears some resemblance to what was going on with the US teacher education and curriculum reform in 1960s. According to Bruno's analysis, the dominant reason why US curriculum reform of basic education turned out to be a failure was that too little stress was laid on the training of teachers at the first teaching front so that teachers of primary and secondary schools failed to learn and understand fully the aims and contents of curriculum reform and lacked adequate abilities to lead curriculums and teach activities. What the lesson gives us is profound and worth our attentions and thinking.

From the course of global teacher education, it is found to be an inevitable developing trend of history that

the independently conducted teacher education system should be replaced by an open, plural, comprehensive and standardized one, in which teacher education is assumed by education research institutes, teachers' colleges, education colleges or education departments set up inside comprehensive universities on the basis of their colleges of liberal arts or sciences. However, the teacher education pattern of a nation is always restricted by its specific culture and is seasoned with the degree to which its society, economy and education are developed in a certain period. The teacher education of modern China, starting in the Westernization Movement in its late Qing Dynasty and undergoing several decades' changes in the Republic of China as well as the large scale of adjustment in the beginning of the People's Republic of China, was gradually built into a teacher education system, which took advantages of the teacher education in the late Qing Dynasty and the Republic of China, and was developing towards perfection by the mid-1980s. In recent more than 20 years, this system has been put into a reform. However, up till 2005, 65% of the primary and middle school teachers of the country were still cultivated by its 154 normal universities and colleges whose names remained unchanged, and only 35% of the teachers of these schools were graduated from 206 comprehensive universities. Most of these so-called comprehensive universities came into being by means of changing their original names or annexation. The comprehensive universities, which made changes in their curriculums and assumed teacher education in reality, were still far and few in between and far from being able to meet the demands of raising the teacher education quality and professional level.

Teacher Education Resources in Secondary Normal Schools Are Losing Greatly

During the transformation of normal education from the old three-leveled type to a new three-leveled or a two-leveled one, i.e., canceling normal education level and adding the post-graduate level, many excellent resources of teacher education were lost, which was highlighted by the way that the number of secondary normal schools was reduced greatly and new teachers of the primary schools were not so qualified as before. In mid-1990s, in order to raise the academic level of the teachers in the primary schools and kindergartens, great changes occurred in former secondary normal schools. Some of them were abolished, some were merged, some were upgraded to normal colleges, while some were changed into ordinary high schools, etc.. Almost all the secondary normal school resources, which started in the primary normal schools of late Qing Dynasty and were accumulated in the 100-year history, were depleted. What the primary school teachers need are broad and synthesized knowledge of humanities, sciences, arts and other aspects, as well as relevant abilities, personalities and cultivated emotional qualities. The requirement of a teacher's EQ (emotional quotient) is even higher than his/her IQ (intelligence quotient). It is especially in the aspects of arts. It is better for a teacher to have some special abilities, such as being good at dancing and chanting, adaptive to a child's active nature, understandable to kids' interests, full of love, caring for and kind to children, etc.. However, a normal college's nature of belonging to higher educational institutes, its curriculum, its profound-knowledge-oriented teaching objectives as well as its tradition, which highly regard knowledge-instillation but neglect the clinical practice and training of operational skills, are all quite different from the quality-oriented training mode of the secondary normal schools and contrary to the current international trend of advocating integrated education, unable to meet the requirements of education for primary school teachers and non-conducive to the cultivation of outstanding primary school teachers, either (Gu, 2006).

Although those who graduated from former secondary normal schools had not received enough education on basic knowledge, they were selected from the outstanding junior middle school graduates, underwent a series

of rigorous training at the secondary normal schools and obtained a relatively good mastery of knowledge and skills needed in the education of primary schools. Nowadays, students of normal colleges are those who have received relatively low scores in the entrance examinations held in the situation of popularized higher education and met only the low requirements set by such colleges. After they are admitted to the college, their learning ability, learning potentials, the degree to which they can be artistically cultivated, etc., are all lower than that of former secondary normal school students. When sent to work in primary schools, their professional skills and comprehensive quality related to education prove to be lower than the former secondary normal school graduates. Originally, the purpose was to raise the academic level and professional ability of primary school teachers, but the result turned out to be that a set of fine traditions formed in the long process of educating primary school teachers as well as very valuable resources related to this education, which should be combined in an organic way with higher normal education and the personnel-cultivation practice and made to be displayed and promoted further, were discarded. What is even more embarrassing is that the education adopted in normal colleges has been remaining at the initial stage, in which the basic knowledge education and the knowledge-applying education are employed in a mixed way. In a given period of time, the students should not only achieve enough credits related to the courses of liberal arts or sciences, but also finish learning the courses related to education specialty. Efforts are supposed to be put into both. However, the result is neither learned thoroughly. Not only the acquisition of knowledge of liberal arts or sciences can not be achieved satisfactorily, but also the ability to be engaged in education or actual teaching practice can not be trained fully. The education in these normal colleges has been remaining at an immature state, which is criticized by many people as “not fully developed specialty”, “developing specialty”, “semi specialty”, “quasi specialty”, etc.. No wonder many primary school principals say that the graduates from present normal colleges are even less adaptable to the education of primary schools than those from the former secondary normal schools.

The Educating Capability of the Schools in Charge of Teachers' Further Study Needs to Be Developed Urgently

In the process of developing from the stage which teachers' pre- and post- service training and in-service training were conducted in an isolated way and the emphasis was put on the former with a neglect of the latter to the stage when the two were coordinated and unified, many schools in charge of teachers' further education were annexed to normal universities or colleges, with an attempt to reach a result that the two are equally paid attention to and joined to each other. However, the greater effort of such normal universities and colleges after annexation is still put on the exploration, broadening and upgrading of teachers' pre-service training while teachers' in-service training is to be charged of a college of further study for adults or section performing similar functions affiliating to such normal universities or colleges, whose work is always focused on the whole society's academic credential making-up education including teacher education. The real in-service training for primary and middle school teachers is in a sideline status. The teaching plans, curriculums, teaching quality evaluations, etc., of such training are generally copied from those of the pre-service education and have no its special feature. The knowledge provided by such training is old-fashioned, with little practicality, and its form is closed. As a result, the previous training's advantage of being linked closely to the basic education disappears. What's more, driven by economic interests, such training usually takes on utilitarian feature. Because in such training, teachers' further education unrelated to obtaining a higher academic degree has dropped to a second place and made little substantial progress in improving teaching quality, the original

intention of overall planning and step-by-step implementing pre-service education and in-service education have not been realized after the annexation. A considerably large number of schools in charge of teachers' further education have not been annexed to common universities or teaching universities, and continue to carry out the task of providing teachers' in-service training. At the county level, there are a large number of county-level teachers' further training schools, some of which have been integrated with teaching-related units in counties, such as teaching research institute, TV (television) colleges and teaching guiding offices, and some of which remain independent. Together, they take on most of the tasks of training the primary and middle school teachers and their principals. Undoubtedly, in China's first 20 years or more, the restoration and development of such kinds of teachers' further education schools contributed greatly to the raising of teachers' academic levels by granting teachers' academic credentials and degrees. However, with increasing requirements made by teachers, the capacity of running such schools cannot keep up with times and the continual improvement of the standard of these colleges can not satisfy the necessity, especially the overall quality of the teachers of such schools, whether their theoretical level or practical abilities appear to be lagging behind day by day.

On the one hand, because of their nature of adult education, these kinds of schools lack ordinary colleges' or universities' width, solidity, depth and thickness of the scientific, humanistic and cultural base, vigorous atmosphere of doing academic research, strict and regulated tradition of both imparting knowledge and cultivating students and further study systems of teachers. Therefore, in such aspects, the current and potential capability of doing teaching and research work, renewal of knowledge and development of theories can not be compared with the latter. On the other hand, because of staying in a leading position and having not been engaged in teaching activities for a long time, organizers of further education courses are less familiar with subjects being taught and teaching reform going on in primary and middle schools than the trainees who are teachers of primary and middle school. In fact, soon after teachers of primary and middle schools take teaching posts, the education and other on-job studies taken by them in their long careers are closely related to their work and professional development, major links of pre- and post- educations of teachers and fundamental elements of life-long education of teachers. Compared to the pre-service education of the teachers, such post-service education takes longer time and is more difficult to organize, hence, making higher requests of the organizers and teachers of such studies. Looking back at the educational reform of the past few years, the result contrary to the original intention can be found. A large decrease in terms of capability has occurred in the organizers of teacher education. It should be mentioned in particularly that, according to the statistics revealed by Chinese Education Ministry in 2007, the total number of teachers in primary and middle schools is taking on a declining trend and that the percentages of qualified teachers in terms of their academic degrees obtained are above 96% and 98% respectively, the percentage of qualified high school teachers being approximately 90% (Education Ministry of PR China, 2007). Although considered from the world scale, China's requirements of its teachers' academic credentials and academic degrees are still relatively low and such a rapid rise in teachers' academic qualification rate enables the whole country to be emancipated from the plight of having to adopt make-shift measures to make up for the teachers' low level of academic credentials, provides a good condition for concentrating its efforts on raising its teachers' teaching proficiency and creates a good opportunity for most institutes offering teachers' further study to transform from the type of offering academic credentials education to that of offering post-service education, strength the cooperation with primary and middle schools, establish basic education unions and combine teachers' post-service education with their self-development in an organic

way. However, viewed from the general situation of all kinds and levels of the institutes for teachers' further study, they are far from being able to meet the needs of such challenges and requests.

The Teacher Education Mode Adopted by Schools of Various Kinds and at Different Levels Is Outdated and Simplistic

In the process of changing from the traditional type of teacher education to the modern one, there are no systematic and practicable design or corresponding measure to guarantee the realization of such designs in terms of the reform of teacher education curriculum system and mode, establishment of teacher education discipline and specialties, evaluation of teacher education proficiency and quality, admission and approval of teachers' professional standard and qualification, independent and continuous development of teaching specialty, etc.. Except a small number of normal universities, such as Beijing Normal University and Nanjing University, where a "4 + x" long curriculum system with a two-phase cultivating mode, i.e., according to the teacher-cultivating mode of ordinary universities, the first phase of four years are spent for the education of basic knowledge of liberal arts and sciences as well as specialties, the following phase of one, two or three years for teachers' professional training and teaching specialty education (of course, between the two phases of four and x, there is an issue of how to link and integrate to each other), with a purpose of strengthening the establishment of teacher education discipline and specialties. Most teachers' universities and colleges continue their originally adopted four-year bachelor's degree curriculum with a low-level mode of mixed education, i.e., finishing the general knowledge education, education of a specialty of liberal arts or sciences, education of teaching specialty as well as indispensable teaching probation and teaching practice within four years. Therefore, it can be said that there is no substantial achievement made or significant measures adopted in the reform of teachers' universities or colleges so far, as such aspects as the teachers' education curriculum reform and extension of study period of teaching specialty, setting up of specialties, teaching and learning mode. Especially in the establishment of teacher education discipline and specialties as well as building of practice courses, things are even more unsatisfactory. All these show that the reform of such universities and colleges can hardly keep up with the demand made by teachers in the development of basic education.

There are also a lot of problems accumulated in teacher qualification admitting and approving system which is adopted based on foreign experiences and open to the whole society, especially in the checking system of qualifications of teachers graduated from other normal universities or colleges. Since the stipulation that "nationwide the teacher qualification evaluating system should be established and qualified teachers proffered with qualification certifications" made in "the Compulsory Education Law" passed and publicized by the National Standing Committee of the People's Republic of China in April of 1986, a series of relevant laws and regulations have been passed and adopted, including "Experimental Measures to Be Adopted in Proffering Certifications to Qualified Primary and Middle School Teachers" issued by China's Education Committee in September of 1986, "The Teachers' Law of the People's Republic of China" passed in October of 1993, "Regulations of Teachers' Qualifications" adopted in December of 1995 and "Practical Measures of Applying Regulations of Teachers' Qualifications" adopted in September of 2000. However, since its starting in an all-round way, the work of admitting and approving of teachers' qualifications has not been effectively linked to the education of teachers' specialty. Standards of teachers' evaluation are set too low, the contents are made too narrow and simple, and the form is monotonous. Besides, once a teacher's certification is obtained in one place, it will remain valid everywhere and forever. The academic credentials that teachers are required to

possess remain at the level required in 1990s. Only a small number of subjects, such as “pedagogy”, “psychology” and “Putonghua” (Beijing dialect) are selected to be tested on to provide reference for teachers’ certification, and a limited number of forms of examination, such as interview, practicing teaching and talking on a lecture, are adopted. In such evaluations, there are no inspections on teachers’ teaching activities or comprehensive examinations on basic knowledge and abilities related to liberal arts and sciences, education specialty knowledge, educational philosophy and ideas, basic teaching skills and practical teaching abilities. There are still less special kinds of checks held according to conditions of different areas, different specialties and different levels of teachers. In teachers’ certifications, there are no distinctions indicated as to the level or type of a teacher’s qualification, nor are indications of their periods of validity. There are no systems of regularly holding evaluations and replacing certifications, either. In a word, the work of admitting and approving teachers’ qualifications have, so far, not played enough of its guiding and leering functions of helping to raise teachers’ professional abilities and promoting the development of teaching specialty. The system of admitting and approving teachers’ qualifications needs to be improved urgently.

The above-mentioned five problems reflect the fact that the teacher education reform currently going on in China has not only derailed from its original designs and ideas, but also been detached from the basic conditions of the country. The reform of teacher education system is a complicated and systematic project. Therefore, it can only be settled by applying new strategic concept and seeking scientific methods.

Exploration of Establishing a Modern Teacher Education System With Chinese Characteristics

Education is a great project, of which teachers constitute the core. The hope of a nation’s thriving lies in education, while the hope of education’s thriving lies in teachers. Teachers are the primary source of education development, while teachers’ education plays the function of a machine-producing machine. If the mid-1980s can be said to be the period in which the emphasis was put on the breakthrough from the old teacher education system and the slogan of transitioning from traditional teachers’ education to modern teachers’ education was raised timely, after the great reform practice and rational reflection of more than 20 years, it is very necessary now to explore how to establish a modern teacher education system with Chinese characteristics, emphasizing the system’s reform, getting rid of its current warts misfits, strengthening teacher education’s such features as being the base and guidance of the education development in accordance with “the Law of Education” and “the Law of Teachers”, putting priority on the development of teacher education and deepening teacher education reform.

The Teacher Education System of Combining Internationalization and Domestication

Looking around the teacher education practice, you can find that whether in major developed countries, such as US, Japan, UK, Germany, France, and Australia or in the vast majority of developing countries, including Brazil, Russia, India and China, which are called “BRICS” by American Sachs, the so-called “four Asian little dragons”(South Korea, Hong Kong, Singapore and Taiwan that became famous because of rapid economic development within a short period of time) as well as some African countries such as, South Africa and Nigeria, education shares a common feature, i.e., the optimum jointing point also called the golden jointing point between two extremes, namely internationalization and domestication, which has been sought. The internationalization means expanding one’s own vision, paying full attention to reforms of other countries’

teacher education, trying to follow or even lead the world's trend and actively learn others' methods and experience. The domestication means selecting the road for teacher education development suitable to the actual condition of one country or district. For example, since 1990s, US, a country paying special attention to the market's modulating function and check-and-balance of powers, has been making reference to the administrative modes of teacher education in European countries, such as France and Germany, endeavoring to strengthen the federal government's guidance to and control over macro policies of teacher education, showing great concern for the improvement of teacher education quality listed into one of its legislative objectives. In their processes of opening universities for cultivation of teachers, UK, France and other countries have both paid attention to learning from the US type of open system of teacher education and adopted a mixed type of teacher education system, preserving a large percentage of and a big scale of teachers' education institution. From these, it can be seen that to explore an organic integration of internationalization and domestication is both a trend of global teachers' education development and of great significance to the establishment of modern teacher education system (Mei, 2007).

As a subordinate concept of the modern education system with Chinese characteristics, the modern teacher education system should necessarily be a collection of items, such as internationally advanced concept, information, teaching mode and resources of teacher education with Chinese teacher education tradition, teaching organizations, teaching practice and experience, a unity of policies, laws and regulations, procedures, norms, principles, modes, systems and organizations related to teachers' education, which has the linkage of the teachers' education system unifying pre- and post- service education to the system of admitting and approving teachers' qualification and replacing regularly certifications of qualities, such as its base and the promotion of professionalism of the teaching career as its core, system series including such systems which are coherently integrated as professional education system, specialty education system, oriented education system, open education system, comprehensive education system, college education system, practical education system, life-time education system, multi-component education system, their respective academic programs, discipline-building system, course-exploring system, teaching and learning management system, quality-evaluating system and academic qualification admitting and approving system. Therefore, in establishing the modern teachers' education system with Chinese characteristics, a close attention must be paid to the up-to-date trend of the development and reference to it must be made. For example, recently, governments of various countries are attaching more importance to teachers' education, regarding it as a public utility, placing it in a strategic position to be developed in a preferential way, making great efforts in reinforcing its legal system, ensuring its high quality, raising all of its levels, promoting such processes as making it become domesticated, open to the outside, comprehensive, higher-education-based, life-long time multi-faceted, standardized, information-rich and capable of unifying pre-service, in-service and post-service education, leading it to meet the reality in the elementary education, tightening its linkage with primary and middle schools and paying more attentions to the teaching practice before teachers taking on their job and their freedom of developing their own specialties after taking on jobs. All these good methods deserve to be imitated. However, full considerations should be given to the reality of Chinese social, economical and educational conditions, their different developing phases as well as specific and uneven features within each phase. The developing strategies to be adopted should be open and multi-faceted. In transplanting the foreign experience, the actual condition of China, its different provinces, districts or even different schools must be fully considered.

Foreign measures should be rooted in China as well as localized, thus, avoiding copying blindly from others and making fewest mistakes as possible.

The Teacher Education System Combining Closeness and Openness

Having an overview of 100 years of changing history of China's teacher training, you can find that this independent and special-aim-oriented training system has its profound historical and cultural basis. Although in recent years following the international trend we have been endeavoring to open our teachers' raining system and making a large-scale reform of the traditional teachers' training system, the result obtained from searching various websites showed that there were still 144 normal universities or colleges as well as 56 colleges mainly providing teachers' further education programs in the country up till the end of 2007 (retrieved from <http://www.huaue.com/gxmd.htm>). These normal colleges or universities, plus some comprehensive universities originally named normal universities, are precious resources for training teachers. No matter in the past, at the present or for a considerably long period in the future, or no matter to what degree our teacher education will be open, this huge and specialized system will remain the main force engaged in teacher training, the precondition and starting point of the reform of teacher training system as well as the basis and driving force of our nation' enduring teacher training development. The heavy task of training teachers will fall in a new form to the higher layer of the system. This system will also be endowed with a higher mission and duty, which is both a historical arrangement and a realistic choice, proved by more and more open international teachers' training practice. Relevant information shows that it even took such a country as US that adopted a typical open type of teacher-training system of 40 years to finish its process of making its teacher-training system completely open (Xu & Ji, 2007). From this, it can be seen that the process of opening a teacher-training system is rather time-consuming and that, as an important component of the modern teacher-training system of China, the teacher training system with its relatively specific aim will exist for a long period of time. Therefore, in addition to taking into consideration preserving in a selective way and perfecting the specially established teacher training system when the macro development strategies and policies are made, normal universities and colleges themselves should also see clearly various demands of the teacher training system made by the national and local governments in their development, seize every possible opportunities, hold their own ground steadily, take an objective view of themselves, give full play to their own traditional advantages, seek more space for their own development and try to provide services with their own characteristics.

Certainly, to emphasize the normal universities or colleges' independence, their specific orientation of aims and pedagogical functions do not mean to engage in regression or close the door of teacher education reform which has been already opened up. The essence of teacher education reform in the past 20 years can be generalized in one word, i.e., "opening-up", which means to change the teacher education of a low level and one dimension into one of a high-level and multiple dimensions. The opening-up of teacher education is an irreversible rector. There is no outlet for turning it back. Currently, among over 3,400 comprehensive universities in US, there are more than 1,200, each of which has an educational school or department attached to take the responsibility of training primary and secondary school teachers. In the 1990s, Australia began to abolish independent and specifically oriented normal universities or colleges and turned to comprehensive universities to recruit teachers the country needed, thus, making a fundamental change in its structure of teachers' sources. Therefore, we must stand at the highest position to have an overview high of the global development and reform of the teachers' education. While continuing to inherit the one hundred years old fine

tradition of teachers' education, follow the rules that make it function and have the existing teacher education system display its advantages, we must also further open this system, widen the channel for teacher education, adopt a policy of combining the specifically-oriented aim and non-specifically-oriented aim as well as integrating teacher education and other educations take place together, fully absorb and effectively integrate various resources of teacher education while facing society and basic education. While encouraging and guiding comprehensive universities to shoulder the task of training teachers, improving the teacher training structure and strengthening the cooperation with primary schools in educating teachers, we should also make a bigger investment in building and expansion of normal universities and colleges and establish an expanded, flexible and open teacher training system in which normal universities and colleges are the back bone.

The Teacher Education System Combining Specific-Professionalism and Comprehensiveness

Professions are products of social division of labor, while the teaching profession is a product of industrial civilization. During the long period of ancient society, a kind of education system was in practice in which the old, capable or knowledgeable were regarded as teachers, an official could be a teacher and a monk could be a teacher as well. So, in such an education system, teaching was not taken as a profession. It was only in the modern society, accompanied by the implementation of compulsory education system and establishment of classroom teaching that teaching gradually changed from a part-time job to a full-time one, from an activity taken by individuals separately to an enterprise taken collectively and further to an ordinary profession performing a specific mode of work in social life. In 1684, the French Catholic priest J. B. de Lasalle established his teacher workshop, marking the beginning of the professional teachers' training. In the following 300 years, the professional training of teachers developed gradually from that of a low degree to that of a high degree, from that based on experience to a scientific and specialized one, and the content and form of teachers' training as well as institutions organizing such training also underwent changes, the general developing trend being from one in the form of masters' passing experience to apprentices to that of systematic and theoretic training and finally to a life-time one in which the three kinds of education, i.e., pre-vocational education, education provided right after one took a job and incumbency education. However, the basic nature of such training remained unchanged. China's new teacher-training system was established one century later than the West. However, it also has shown an excellent tradition of professional training during its development of an odd 100-year. Especially since Zhan Jian founded Tongzhou Private Normal School in 1902, which has made great achievements in cultivating great deal of talents both in education and in other fields for the country and formed their own special features as well (Gu, 2005) because of adoption of the professional training system including consistent entrance examinations organized for selecting students, wide training calibers, as well as strict and integrated evaluations.

From this, it can be seen that a basic characteristic of teacher education is its professionalism. It is decided by the teachers' role that teachers' training and education must be of the nature of professionalism. In keeping up with times, the characteristic has gradually developed into some new mainstream characteristics, such as comprehensiveness. During the odd ten-year after the World War II, Western developed countries basically finished the process in education of making coexist the education-oriented by a specific subject and the integrated and comprehensive education, combining one-dimensional knowledge-passing activities and multi-dimensional activities in which teaching and learning sides learn from each other, enabling generalization and individualization to compensate each other, thus, realizing the strategic transition in education at a high

level. America is one of the countries in the world that initiated the educating mode of making teachers' basic knowledge of liberal arts and sciences mastered separately and in a different stage from abilities to apply skills into teaching practice. However, since 1990s, in order to solve such problems as the split between theory learning and teaching practice, the teachers' lack of systematic mastering of basic knowledge and the fall of their professional abilities, the country had to make the separated two items united again. The teaching profession, as a career in the modern society, bears the basic responsibility of passing knowledge and educating people. A teacher is supposed to possess his/her ideal, knowledge construction, norms to be consciously observed, skill and technology related to teaching profession. A teacher is required to master basic theories of passing knowledge, imparting instructions and helping to solve puzzling problems as well as teaching strategies and techniques of giving instructions to students in accordance with their individual aptitude. A teacher needs to know not only what to teach but also how to teach. As a teacher, he/she has to be an imparter of knowledge, an explorer of programs, an administrator of teaching and learning activities, a guide of morality, an edifier of methods, an opener of heart windows, conductor, a communicator of emotions and a cultivator of spirit, will and faith. Teachers training, as the first important thing of modern education, accordingly, should reflect these complex and comprehensive requirements of teachers and embody the direction of realizing a comprehensive integration in such areas as the setting up of disciplines and specialties, construction of curriculums and teaching plans, arrangement of teaching practice and practice and exercise and establishment of checking and evaluating system so as to raise teachers' scientific, humanistic and artistic qualities in a comprehensive way.

The Teacher Education System Combining Its Specialty-Based Property and Its Realization in Universities

Specialties were first separated from common professions in Europe in the 17th century. A specialty refers to a special profession that demands special professional training and education requires mastery of special scientific knowledge and skills, accords with special kinds of professional conditions and requirements, possesses independent and non-replaceable functions and features and has obtained its corresponding status quo and resources. To be of specialized property is not only the inevitable requirement of teaching profession in its development towards specialization, but also the natural extension of teachers' professional character in modern time. In 1930s, Chinese scholars once pointed out that teaching is not only an occupation, but also a specialty similar to that of a doctor, lawyer or engineer, etc.. In 1966, UNESCO (United Nations' Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization) and ILO (International Labor's Organization) officially put forward that teacher is a professional occupation and teaching should be regarded as a specialty in proposals on teachers' status. In *A Dictionary on General Classifications of Professions in the People's Republic of China* published in 2000, teachers are classified as scientific and technical personnel. In summarizing 100-year experience of the development of Chinese teachers' education, one basic rule can be found, i.e., along with the development of the elementary education, professional specification of teachers education should be continuously raised just as a boat is raised when water carrying it rises. In the general survey of the evolution of teacher education of various countries in the world, there can also be found a general rule, that is, gradual shift from other kinds of schools to universities for realization of teachers' education is accompanied by escalations of degrees of compulsory education. During this shift, the cultivating modes are improved, steps for practice intensified and the whole teachers training system are developed from being of a middle-level to a high-level, from being of a single form to a synthesized form, thus, realizing the gradual rise of both teachers' academic degree indicating

their reception of formal education and their teaching proficiency. The report entitled “National Preparation for Teachers of 21st Century” published by American Carnegie Education Promotion in 1986 pointed out that the following measures should be adopted: (1) to cancel the bachelor’s degree in the education specialty; (2) to make obtaining a bachelor’s degree in sciences or liberal arts as the prerequisite of the training of teaching specialty; and (3) to divide obtaining a master’s degree in education specialty in two stages that undergraduate stage during which the education of sciences and liberal arts as well as basic training for the completion of professional study are undertaken and post-graduate stage during which the training for education specialty is undertaken and master’s degree of education specialty is offered. Actually, by the end of the 1960s, 100% of the teachers of American elementary schools had obtained bachelors’ degrees and above 20% of them had finished postgraduate study. Among them, by 1996, 55% of its teachers in primary and middle schools had obtained master’s degrees. In 1989, “the Law of Guiding Educational Directions” was passed in France, according to which education of primary school teachers in France has been made into IUFM (Institut Universitaire de Formation des Maîtres) education. In 2006, Japanese Educational Consultation Conference agreed to establish the system of graduate study system of teaching specialty in its universities so as to train teachers of high professional proficiency and make them become the ones of practical type.

For a long time, China has been adopting a mixed type of cultivating mode in its normal universities or colleges whether providing bachelor’s degrees or not. Because in such a mode, the basic knowledge of liberal arts and sciences and requirements of education faculty are mixed and there has been a debate over the issue whether priorities should be laid on its academic properties or educational properties. Being examined with the modern teachers’ educational view, both academic properties and educational ones belong to the teachers’ education specialty. The former is concerned with “what to teach”, that is, basic education of disciplines and their related specialties of liberal arts and sciences. The latter is concerned with “how to teach”, that is, the applied education of specialties of the education discipline. They are two indispensable components of the teacher education discipline. The first and second criteria required by US Federal Ministry of Education of teachers to meet in its 2005 annual report of the qualities of teachers are “to master thoroughly knowledge related to the discipline” and “to use appropriate teaching strategies”. If it can be said that, as a specific historical phenomenon, the mixed mode of teacher education in normal universities or colleges is an insurmountable stage in the development of teachers’ education, and then, in recent years, accompanied by the fall of China’s birth rate, decline in the number of in-school kids and teenagers, the unprecedented great demand of high-level teachers made by the rapid development in the basic education and the trend in which teaching profession requires teachers to obtain higher academic degrees and be more specialized, especially with the raising of the teachers’ own educational level and need, there is an urgent need to revise the standards for requirements of education levels and academic degrees of the teachers engaged in basic education teachers made in the end of the last century and raise the lowest requirements of their academic qualifications according to actual conditions of different places. At the same time, there is an urgent need to reform the existing educational systems for teachers, extend the training periods, adjust the professional structures, improve the curriculum, strengthen the practical teachings, lift the central part of the teachers’ professional education level, and make teachers obtain bachelor’s degrees or post-graduate academic degrees, so as to cultivate teachers of kindergartens and primary schools who are all-round developed as well as middle or high school teachers who have mastered many skills while being majored in one specialty (Li, 2007).

The Teacher Education System of Combining Stage-by-Stage Education and Lifelong Education

The combination of stage-by-stage education and life-long education is closely related to teachers' life and career. It embodies the idea of lifelong education and reveals the openness and unity of teachers' pre-service and in-service cultivation, the systematic property of the development of teachers' theoretic and practical trainings, the continuity and unity of teachers' education and professional development and so on. Early in the 1970s, an English scholar, named James Poter, divided teachers education into three stages: fundamental education, professional education and further education. In 1975, a resolution was passed in the 35th UNESCO conference, which emphatically pointed out the necessity of combining teachers' pre-service and in-service education. In 1985, a dictionary was published in Japan in which teachers' education is explained as a comprehensive concept of trinity of pre-service cultivation, induction training and in-service study. A school is a place for students' study as well as for teachers' development. Teaching is a learning profession. Teaching and learning process is one in which both students and teachers achieve success. The true value of teachers' development lies in its being the prerequisite for promoting students' development. Students grow in the development of teachers while teachers develop in the growth of students. According to sociologist on professions, there is a plateau period in the development of any occupation. Teachers who have gone through the pre-study and practice before taking up the new occupation and have a number of years of teaching experience which is officially admitted must be provided with further in-service education so as to promote them to improve their ability to practice introspection and make self-development, otherwise, their occupational character, their conception and cognition are very likely to become closed and conservative, which would in turn cause occupational fatigue, weariness and laziness. It would not only prevent them from fulfilling their duty related to their occupation, but also would have a direct affect on the quality of their teaching.

Teachers' knowledge is a kind of practical knowledge. It has its origin in practice and guides practice at the same time, which is testified time and again in teaching practice. Modern teachers' education is neither the one that occurs in school once for all in the traditional way, nor is it a one composed of two separated stages of pre-service training and in-service training. It is a life-time one, in which highly practice-oriented pre-service and post-service trainings are organically unified and pre-service training and post-service-training themselves are conduced according to different learning stages, principles, levels and types. Therefore, according to different degrees, types and requests on various education stages, it is necessary to strictly tick to the principles related to education and development of teacher education specialty and the principle of combining theoretic studies and practice, systematically design teachers' professional development plans, put the all-round series of teachers' education into practice step by step and establish a study-oriented, life-long teacher education mechanism, in which pre-service education and in-service education, degree education and non-degree education, school education and distance education combined well. Meanwhile, the contents of courses should be timely updated according to the modern philosophy, the latest achievement of researches in natural sciences, social and humanistic sciences, and educational science should be timely transferred into the contents of educational courses and a curriculum system in which post-service training, education received upon entering into a new post and in-service training should be coherently linked to each other and directed to a teacher's life-long education in which the teachers' own development is the main concern. In pre-service training, education on general knowledge of liberal arts and sciences, education on specialties, education on teacher education specialty, cultivation of teachers' ethics and beliefs and training of basic teaching skills should be

strengthened. In education upon a new teacher's entering his/her post, the teacher newly graduated from a teaching university or college should be given more chances for practical training so as to accelerate his/her transition from the role of a student to that of a teacher and to speed up his/her knowledge's transfer from subject-involved knowledge and conditional to practical knowledge, thus, shortening the period of his/her adapting to work and becoming qualified in teaching and suitable for his or her post. In the in-service education, the system of providing off-job training and on-job post-graduate programs should be made to perfection gradually, and communities for college teachers, middle school teachers and primary teachers should be made to have practice in a joint way established, so as to lead teachers in reflecting their own teaching processes, summarizing teaching experience, conducting teaching research, and improving teaching quality.

The Teacher Education System Combining Standardization and Multiplicity

Standardization is the core of a system construction, in while rich and various standardizations exist in every step of the modern teaching education system. It is a common practice adopted by the countries in the world to intensify the standardization of teaching education so as to guarantee its quality. In 1969, America published its "Law of Teachers' Further Study". Since 1980, each state of America has established its standards of teachers' education following one another. A working group of Carnegie Forum on Education and the Economy published a report on establishing the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards, so as to make sure in a high standard way what the teachers should know what to do and how to do them. The NCATE (National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education) published the accreditation criteria of teacher education institutions and criteria of students' graduation. Meanwhile, NBPTS (National Board for Professional Teaching Standards) carried out the evaluating criteria of excellent teachers. In 1984, the Britain government established the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education and released "Teacher Education Curriculum Standard", teachers' certificate and tenure system in 1989. In 1998, its Department of Education and Employment published "the Requirements of Teacher Education Courses". In 1997, South Africa government published the "Norms and Standards of Teacher Education" to standardize teaching behaviors of its teachers and stipulate teachers' seven roles in education. In 2004, German Culture and Education Ministry published the resolution on teacher education standards, raising the requirement that a student's teaching proficiency in the teaching practice stage and in the stage of preparing for entering the teaching career should be able to be coherently linked to that after taking up a teaching post. In 2006, Japanese Education-Evaluating Council Conference announced the system of teacher qualification renewing system, stipulating that a teacher's qualification certificate be renewed after each ten years. Although, in recent years, the French government has been gradually releasing administrative powers from originally possessed by higher-level authorities to lower-level authorities, its control over teacher education standards has never been loosened.

The standardization of Chinese teacher education has its long cultural history. As early as in the West Han Dynasty, Yang Xiong, in his book *Rules in Teaching Practice*, raised his argument that "Teachers are models of human beings". From the late 19th century when contemporary education came into being till the beginning of the 21st century, the teacher education has been called normal education by the Chinese people. Because the emphasis of teacher education in China is put on the objectives of teacher education and the modeling character of the teaching profession, the teacher education system in China seems different from that in the above-mentioned countries where the teacher education is conducted in accordance with laws. However, in reality, the two kinds of teacher education systems have much in common. Modern teacher education is not

only the process of admitting and approving teachers' professional qualifications and promoting their professional qualities, but also the process of systematizing and standardizing of the teaching specialty. Therefore, great efforts should be made to inherit the fine traditions of teacher education of our country. Meanwhile, to revise and complete corresponding laws and regulations makes reference to measures in teacher education adopted recently by other countries and to strengthen the building of such basic and essential standards is related to teacher education as the specialty standard, curriculum standard, teaching standard, quality standard, evaluation standard as well as those standards related to teachers, such as standard of academic proficiency, standard required to be reached by general professional workers, standard of teaching profession and standard of assessing. Academic program system of teaching specialty should be deepened. It should be stipulated that obtaining the bachelor degree of liberal arts or sciences is the prerequisite for entering the study in teaching specialty or participating in teaching-qualification training and that testing on skills required by teaching profession should be held regularly and systematically and minimum requirement for entering this profession should be raised. At the same time, the system, in which formulation of teacher qualification standards and related examinations for approving and confirming such qualifications, conferring of teacher certificates and renewing such certificates as well as further education are linked and made to drive each other, is to be made to perfection gradually. The system of cultivating teacher-cultivators and training of teacher-trainers should be strengthened. And the system of approving and admitting qualifications of teacher education organizations and teaching education workers should be consummated (Wang & Tang , 2004).

Finally, it should be specially pointed out that history always develops forward and that things are of diversity. "The World Declaration on 21st Higher Education: Vision and Action", passed in World Higher Education Conference held by UNESCO in 1998 in Paris, pointed out that "Quality of higher education is a multidimensional concept" and that "The diversity should be taken into consideration so as to avoid adopting a unified standard to measure the quality of higher education". The modern teaching education, in essence, is of multi-dimensions, multi-levels and multi-specifications. It is personalized and differentiated. Its objectives and demands, structures and functions, contents and forms, evaluation and assessment, systems and regularities, etc. will all vary according to the changes of time and place. China is a developing country. There are current more than ten million primary and secondary school teachers in China. This teaching community is the largest professional body in China and bears the heaviest mission of teaching primary and secondary students in the world. The typical characteristic of the development of teacher education is its being non-balanced, especially in rural and underdeveloped areas, where the development of education is far behind that of cities and developed areas. Therefore, it should never do to apply standards and modes of urban and developed regions indiscriminately to rural and underdeveloped areas. Similarly, difference exists at different levels of schools, such as kindergartens, primary and secondary schools and in different types of education, such as general education, vocational education, special education and minority education. In different stages of education development, requirements for educational qualifications and qualities of teachers cannot remain the same. Teacher education institutions and schools are also different at aspects, such as their nature, type, level and division of functions. Therefore, it is important to reflect scientifically the differences existing in regions, such as that between urban and rural areas and at different levels and types of education, to have an over-all and coordinated plan for the general development of education but different guidance, district planning and step-by-step implementation for different districts, to consult publicized teaching paradigms of foreign countries, such as knowledge paradigm, ability paradigm, emotional paradigm, constructivist theory paradigm, critical theory paradigm and reflective paradigm

according to different training objectives, so as to actively explore and build a teacher education and development model in which standardization and multiplicity are unified.

Conclusions

To sum up, the system of teacher education in modern China set afoot in the late 1890s and is matured in the mid-1980s after undergoing changes on a magnificent scale for over 80 years. The passed 20 and more years have witnessed a new situation of China's modern teacher education. It is necessary to systematically look back into its course of the development, to consciously sum up its success and failure, gain and loss, in the way of not only having a foothold in reality, but also having the eyes on the future and taking the whole world in views, to build the system of modern teacher education with Chinese characteristics through exploration and creativity so as to promote the scientific development of national education, to construct a powerful nation with strong human resources, and to make great contribution to the rejuvenation of China.

In 2008, Chinese Education Ministry promulgated its "Revised Ethical Norms Related to Primary and Secondary School Teachers' Profession", its 6th norm being that a teacher should embark on a "life-long education".

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