

The External Path of Professional Development for Old Teachers Under the New Curriculum Reform in China

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Abstract

The New Curriculum Reform in China from 2001 has not only made new demands for teachers in primary and secondary schools, but also offered new opportunities for teachers' professional development. Many research results show that the co-effect of a variety of factors contributes to teacher's professional development. So for old teachers in primary and secondary schools who are in the late career and lack of motivation, it is difficult to achieve professional development only by their personal power. The school administrators should provide old teachers with external support by implementing the humanized management, eliminating the policy discrimination in schools, building a platform for achievements and constructing teacher culture based on cooperation.

Key words: Old teacher; Professional development; Management

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In primary and secondary schools in China old teachers are the precious resources. They not only have practical wisdoms, educational experiences and working abilities,

but also form their unique teaching arts in the course of educational practice. When facing the challenges of the New Curriculum Reform in China from 2001, however, many old teachers persist in handling matters according to the past experiences and old habits in teaching because of kinds of reasons. They usually go on their own ways in managing a class, pay attention to oral teaching in teaching methods, and abide by the teacher's authority in dealing with the relationship between teachers and students (CHENG & LUO, 2010, p. 3). Obviously, the above behaviors are quite alien to teacher's professional development. Especially under the New Curriculum Reform in China, teachers' professional development has become an important power for curriculum implementation. Old teachers, as a part of the group of teachers, should have the necessity of professional development.

According to the Circle Theory of Teaching Career advanced by Fessler, the professor in The Johns Hopkins University in the United States, what influences teacher's professional development can be divided into two main factors: one is the personal environment, which includes positive critical incidents, family, crisis, individual dispositions, avocations, interests and life stages; the other is the organization environment, which includes school regulations, management style, public trust, societal expectations, professional organizations and unions (YANG, 2002, p. 35-38). That is to say, the co-effect of a variety of factors contributes to teacher's professional development. As for old teachers in primary and secondary schools, who are in the late career and lack of motivation, it is difficult to achieve professional development only by their personal power. To some extent, the organization environment in schools, such as campus culture, school regulations, management concepts, can provide external support for the development of old teachers.

1. IMPLEMENTING THE HUMANIZED MANAGEMENT

The traditional instrumental management pursues the maximized interests. The administrators in primary and secondary schools often think that a teacher should complete his/her teaching task with high quality, high standard and high efficiency. Teachers have become a tool to realize school goals. What teachers can do in schools are just to prepare lessons, go to class, correct students' papers, attend meetings and organize some activities. However, teachers' personal pursuits in their life such as interests, needs and life experiences are usually put on the shelf. In the instrumental management pattern, old teachers who are in the stabling stage career or degenerating stage career have a lot of confusions or discomforts in teaching. Most of them think that they have reached the career peak and also been content with the status quo. So on the premise of fulfilling their teaching tasks, they are keen on spending more time and energy on caring their families, connecting with their friends and doing something interesting.

In the book "The Challenge to Care in Schools: An Alternative Approach to Education", American educators Nel Noddings said that "Care and concern is the basic human needs" (YU, 2003, p. 1). Care for others and being cared by others make us become wholesome people and then live happily. In schools, old teachers perform in the roles of "caring", at the same time, they are the ones who should be cared about. Especially in the bureaucratic management, the caring from school administrators will undoubtedly be powerful spirit motives for professional development of old teachers. Nevertheless, what is the real caring? It is not just that school administrators check up on whether old teachers have finished their teaching tasks according to related regulations, but that school administrators should not only regard themselves as listeners or observers to feel and accept all information transmitted by old teachers, but also put spiritual "caring" into practice activities and the humanized management.

First, school administrators should pay more attention to old teachers' health of body and mind. They can provide old teachers with regular physical examinations, often carry out such recreational activities as singing competition, fun games, tea parties and chess match to enrich spiritual world of old teachers. Meantime, they should use kinds of ways, for example daily observation, seminars, letters, going into the families, to find out the problems or difficulties that old teachers may have in the life and work and then remove their worries.

Second, school administrators should respect individual subjectivity of old teachers and give them some rights in teaching autonomy and professional development. On the premise that school administrators offer systems, ideas and resources, old teachers may have superior power and influence in teaching in order to express their desires,

needs or thinking of education freely and fully, which includes selecting teaching contents, organizing teaching activities, choosing teaching methods, evaluating teaching effect and developing curriculum resources.

Third, old teachers should have time at their own disposal. After finishing teaching tasks, old teachers should be allowed to spare more time on their interests so as to achieve a proper balance between work and leisure.

In a word, for old teachers, the humanized management does good to realize the coordination of their work, study and life, at the same time it does good to develop their positive career motivations and education emotions.

2. ELIMINATING THE POLICY DISCRIMINATION IN SCHOOLS

The Curriculum Reform from 2001 has not only challenged teachers' qualities, but also provided a new space for their professional development. Nowadays kinds of teacher training, such as School-based Training, Backbone Teachers Training, Leading Teacher Training, Beginning Teacher Training, are following each other in rapid succession. This, to some degree, has developed teachers' professional qualities and abilities. However, "the same policy written in black and white by the departments of education and research is that who can take part in the teacher training must be under 45 years old" (CHENG & LUO, 2010, p. 3). In fact, teaching training has become the patents of young teachers, and old teachers can only act as "training spectator". In addition, many school administrators think that young teachers can give schools more permanent return because they are the main forces and the hope for schools' development. So the development platform for old teachers is narrower than that for young teachers, and thus old teachers fall behind gradually in curriculum concept, teaching methods, professional abilities because of the lack of necessary training.

Although old teachers have rich teaching experiences and high professional spirits, when facing updated curriculum ideas and increasing education obsession, they also need to keep pace with the time to enhance their professional qualities with professional training. School administrators should respect the individual values and education needs of old teachers, encourage old teachers to take part in the New Curriculum Reform, and also provide them with more opportunities to go out to study. That will help old teachers to understand the Reform aim, to adjust their education idea, teaching methods, professional selves and personal qualities consciously, and to improve their qualities to adapt to the Reform in teaching practice. Meanwhile, school administrators should try to look into the difficulties that old teachers may encounter in the Reform by means of questionnaire, symposium, interview, and etc., and then provide old teachers with different

training according to their education needs. For example, school administrators may offer some educational monographs about the New Course Standard for old teachers who are backward in education idea, provide teaching training about computer multimedia technology for those who are not skilled in abilities of making courseware, using network or operating computer, and invite some experts to help old teachers who lack abilities of education research in theoretical support and practical guidance.

As far as the choice of training forms are concerned, school administrators should pay more attention to case study, participating learning or inquiring learning than to theory teaching. Because the former are more scientific, targeted and practical, which can help old teachers obtain more direct joyful experience, motivate their learning enthusiasm, and strengthen their educational believes.

3. BUILDING A PLATFORM FOR ACHIEVEMENTS

The positive educational emotion is a kind of important educational factor. It provides a teacher with spiritual motivation in his/her professional development. But many old teachers lack positive work spirit and specific developing targets in teaching because of their age and abilities: some of them are unwilling to take part in opening class or teaching competition, some seldom attend activities organized by schools, and others refuse to participate in the New Curriculum Reform on the ground of their age.

According to the Two-Factor Theory proposed by American Psychologist Fredrick Herzberg, there are two factors that form individual motive: one is Hygiene Factors, for example, work environment, personnel relations, salary, and welfare; the other is Incentive Factors, including personal accomplishment, performances being recognized, realizing personal potential. In Fredrick Herzberg's opinion, in order to arouse workers' work passion, the administrators should provide them certain Hygiene Factors to prevent workers' dissatisfaction, and more important, should make full use of Incentive Factors to stir up their working enthusiasm (WU & DU, 2006, p. 116-118).

As a result, school administrators should attach more important to incentive factors, provide old teachers with more platforms to demonstrate their education wisdom, so as to strengthen their education passion and self-efficacy:

(1) Organize more activities such as showing wonderful courses, introducing successful experiences, holding special lecture, to show the teaching styles and education experiences of old teachers.

(2) Establish a team composed of young and old teachers in which old teachers may play a role in teaching guiding and thus realize their values.

(3) Encourage old teachers to take part in teaching

competitions to strengthen their sense of urgency and their desire to self-development.

(4) Let old teachers play a key role in collective working and display their education wisdom fully.

(5) Open more forums to exchange educational thoughts and encourage old teachers to express their ideas for school development.

(6) Set up a number of foundations to raise funds for scientific research and writing books for old teachers.

4. CONSTRUCTING TEACHER CULTURE BASED ON COOPERATION

Teacher's professional development needs the teacher culture to nourish and cultivate. The traditional teacher culture calls for individualism. It says that a teacher is usually in a closed classroom life with personal idea of self-sufficiency. Teachers seldom talk to each other about education and are unwilling to make a substantial evaluation on education activities of their colleagues. Long-term isolation leads to the lack of effective cooperation between teachers. Especially for old teachers, in the face of the closed teacher culture, teaching competition, aggravation of physical and mental burden and the status of being marginalized, many of them feel incompetent and usually hope to retire to enjoy their own life. So in the final stage of career, they usually select sealing themselves off or keep silence. They rarely communicate or work with others, and prefer to go it alone to wait for retirement.

Teachers' professional development of ecological orientation suggests that "teacher's professional development not only relies on himself, but also needs cooperation with others" (REN, 2010, p. 62-66). Therefore, school administrators should take full advantage of the existing resources in schools to construct teacher culture based on cooperation, harmonious and democracy, in which old teachers may achieve their professional development by interacting with other teachers. First, schools administrators may take old teachers as examples with bulletin boards or broadcasts, and also lead the way to respect and learn from old teachers. Consequently old teachers will intensify their master's consciousness as the subjects of school development and no longer be out of groups of teachers (WANG, 2010, p. 25-26). Second, school administrators should encourage old teachers to set up Teacher Learning Community with other teachers to do research study according to their professional development levels and their difficulties in education practice. Schools may provide them with places, equipments or research funds, and also invite some educational experts to provide theoretic direction for Teacher Learning Community. Third, school administrators should invite old teachers to attend a variety of workshops, seminars, conferences

and symposiums, in which the professional qualities of old teachers can be improved with sincere dialogue and bouncing ideas. Fourth, school administrators should change the traditional “System of Teachers and Students”, let excellent young teachers help old teachers update their educational ideas and improve their educational qualities by means of education seminars, demonstration lessons or School-based Teaching and Research. As a result, two-way growth model will be formed in schools, in which young and old teachers will help each other and make progress together.

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