

Research on Effective Ways and Influencing Factors of Junior Middle School EFL Teacher's Professional Development——Based on the Personal Practical Knowledge of Teacher

Hu Chenshuhan¹, Wu Chunrong²

¹ postgraduate in Sichuan University of Science and Engineering, China

² master supervisor in Sichuan University of Science and Engineering, China

Received Date: 12 April 2021

Revised Date: 14 May 2021

Accepted Date: 17 May 2021

Abstract: *Research on the professional development of a specific group of junior high school English teachers is still in its infancy in China. At the same time, there is a lot of room for exploration in the research of teachers' professional development from the perspective of personal practical knowledge. Therefore, from the perspective of teachers' personal practical knowledge, this article adopts narrative research methods to analyze the personal practice of a junior high school English teacher at different stages of teacher professional development so as to explore the influencing factors and effective ways of junior high school English teacher professional development. This research mainly focuses on two aspects: Based on the teachers' personal practical knowledge, what are the factors that affect the professional development of junior high school English teachers at different development stages? What are the characteristics of different stages? And what are the effective approaches? This research will help junior high school English teachers to further realize the importance of their own personal practical knowledge so as to fundamentally promote their own professional development.*

Keywords — *teacher professional development; personal practical knowledge; narrative research*

I. INTRODUCTION

Teachers' professional development is a hot spot in the current educational research field. China Education Modernization 2035 clearly points out that it is necessary

to strictly improve teachers' qualifications, develop teachers' quality, and strive to create a high-quality professional teacher team with noble morality, exquisite work, reasonable structure, and full of vitality. In the professional development of teachers, personal practical knowledge plays an irreplaceable role. Chen(2003) and Meng(2004) pointed out that teachers' personal practical knowledge is the knowledge base of teachers' professional development and an effective path for professional growth, which affects all aspects of teachers' work. However, in recent years, many scholars in China have actively studied teachers' professional development, but few have discussed teachers' professional development based on their personal practical knowledge. At the same time, under globalization, English has been paid more and more attention. Meanwhile, due to age, junior high school students' learning autonomy is relatively insufficient. Therefore, the responsibility of junior high school English teachers is even heavier. The professional development of junior high school English teachers directly affects the overall quality of English education, and their professional development has increasingly become the focus of national education. However, based on CNKI, using "Junior English Teachers' Professional Development" as the keyword, we can find that most Chinese scholars focus on the professional development of teachers in higher education, and there are few studies on the professional development of junior English teachers, with only 30 academic journals since 2000. This



study aims at the specific group of junior high school English teachers in order to arouse scholars' attention to the professional development of junior high school English teachers. In the 1990s, two Canadian scholars, Connelly and Clandinin, published a book *Narrative Inquiry: Experience and Story in Qualitative Research*, which set off the upsurge of studying educational narrative in the west. After that, the achievements of western educators' research on educational narrative also attracted the active attention of Chinese scholars. However, most of the narrative researches on teachers in China focuses on teachers' self-reflection. And in the aspect of "narrative research on teachers", there are few related types of research in China, and only Zhang, Fu and others are the representatives. At the same time, from the relevant data, it can be seen that there are not much researches on the personal practical knowledge of teachers in primary and secondary schools by Chinese scholars using educational narrative research methods. Therefore, my research objectives are the following: First, based on teachers' personal practical knowledge, this paper analyzes the related factors and characteristics that affect junior high school English teachers' professional development in different stages of teachers' development. Second, based on teachers' personal practical knowledge, build an effective way for junior high school English teachers' professional development in different stages of teacher development.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

A. Teacher Professional Development

Since the 1980s, the research on teachers' professional development has been paid more and more attention by scholars in the field of education. With the continuous development of research, the concept of teachers' professional development has undergone corresponding evolution and differentiation. Domestic scholars' research on the definition of teachers' professional development mainly falls into three categories. The first category is that Ye (2001) and Xiao(2002) deemed that teachers' professional development is not only the professional development process of teachers as a profession but also the process of teachers' professionalization and improvement of teachers' professional quality. The second category is that Liu(2003) and Han(2005) stated that

teachers' professional development is a historical process of taking teachers' profession as a profession. The third category is Cui(2013) and Yang(2020), who supported that teachers' professional development is the process of teachers changing from non-professional to professional. Teachers' professional development is the process of training teachers' professional knowledge, professional skills, professional quality, professional accomplishment, and professional emotion. This paper tends to understand teacher professional development as the third definition, that is, teacher professional development is a process in which teachers constantly improve their professional awareness, learn professional knowledge and improve their professional ability.

B. Teachers' Personal Practical Knowledge

According to the relevant literature, the author thinks that the research and development of teachers' personal practical knowledge abroad can be roughly divided into three main stages. The first stage is the 1980s; Canadian scholar Elbaz(1983) put forward that teachers' practical knowledge is a kind of special knowledge possessed by teachers in a unique way, which is highly experienced and personalized and is characterized by a specific practical environment and social environment. The second stage was from the mid-1980s to the mid-1990s; Clandinin (1992) first put forward the professional term "teachers' personal practical knowledge". He believes that teachers' practical knowledge reflects the previous knowledge of individuals and agrees with the situational nature of teachers' knowledge. The third stage was in the middle and late 1990s when Verloop(2001) and others began to expand their research on teachers' personal practical knowledge and turned their research perspective to the specific aspects of teachers' personal practical knowledge. Among domestic scholars, Xin(1999)、Shen(1999), and others first mentioned the concept of "practical knowledge". They think that teachers' practical knowledge refers to the classroom situational knowledge and related knowledge that teachers have in the face of realizing purposeful behavior. Subsequently, Chen(2003) put forward the concept of "teachers' practical knowledge" and discussed its rationality with the support of related ideas, and Since then, this concept has been

recognized by Chinese scholars. Meanwhile, Chen(2003) pointed out that teachers' practical knowledge plays an irreplaceable role in teachers' work because teachers' practical knowledge is the main knowledge base of professional development. Since then, Wang(2008) and others also believed that the process of acquiring and accumulating teachers' practical knowledge is the process of teachers' professional development, which lies in the attention, acquisition, and accumulation of teachers' unique practical knowledge. To sum up, teachers' personal practical knowledge is knowledge extracted from teachers' own experience. Because each teacher is different, each teacher's personal practical knowledge is unique and has its own characteristics. Moreover, teachers' personal practical knowledge plays a core role in teachers' professional development and is an important factor in teachers' professional growth.

III. Research design

A. Theoretical Basis

Burden, an American scholar, put forward the famous theory of teacher development stages after a great deal of research and data analysis. Burden(1979) divided the teacher professional development stage into three stages, namely, the survival stage, adjustment stage, and maturity stage. In this paper, Burden's theory of teacher development stages is taken as the theoretical framework and based on this theory, and a case study is made on Z to analyze what factors affect the development of his personal practical knowledge in different professional development stages. What are the characteristics of each other? From the aspect of personal practice, what are the specific ways of personal development?

B. Research Objects

The research object of this paper is an excellent female teacher (alias Z) who has been teaching in middle school for 24 years. Teacher Z has rich teaching experience, and she pays great attention to the development of her practical knowledge. She usually browses relevant books according to the problems she encounters in actual teaching so as to improve her teaching ability. Z has also won teaching awards and has made gratifying achievements in teaching. She is a model of excellent English teachers. Moreover, her teaching style is unique and interesting,

which is loved by students. At the same time, Z has always been enthusiastic about students and teaching; she has devoted herself to the educational career and has been developing herself and achieving herself in constant teaching practice.

C. Research Methods

In this paper, the narrative research method is adopted for the case study. Because Connelly(1979) and Clandinin(1979) believed that narrative research is a more effective way to explore teachers' knowledge than others by exploring personal practical experience. Therefore, this paper will explore the professional development of teacher Z through the narrative study of her teacher.

D. Research Problems

In the three stages of the teacher's survival, adjustment, and maturity, what are the factors, and how do they affect her personal practical knowledge?

What are the effective ways to develop Z's personal practical knowledge in different stages of teachers' professional development?

How did Z get professional development from her own experience?

E. Research Site

Go into Z's daily teaching and communicate with her.

F. Collecting Data

Ask questions according to the interview outline and record keywords、observe the situation in the classroom、browse the teaching journals.

G. Organize and Analyze the Data

Convert the on-site dialogue text into written text, and at the same time ensure the authenticity and validity of the data, respect the facts and avoid excessive subjective consciousness.

IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

A. The Teacher's Story

In an in-depth interview with Z, the author learned that she loves English very much, and because of the influence of her teacher, she chose to become an English teacher. Z has been teaching for 38 years, of which 24 years have been teaching English in middle schools. In junior high school and senior high school, Z liked to learn English in advance and was used to reciting new words

by analyzing phonetic symbols and memorizing grammar knowledge by analyzing sentence structure. During this period, she has accumulated enough subject knowledge. During her college years, Z learned relevant teaching methods and laid a solid theoretical foundation for her teaching career. Before officially becoming a teacher, the school provided pre-service training for Z. This pre-service training influenced Z's future teaching methods, macro thinking, and reflection methods. At the same time, Z thinks that on-the-job training is also extremely important because it can improve the level of teaching, education, and management.

In daily life, Z will use their spare time to browse books about teaching and enrich her teaching knowledge. She also reflects on her teaching practice and actively communicates with colleagues and students. Because Z thinks that colleague evaluation is the most instructive, followed by student evaluation, especially in open classes, she will listen to colleagues' opinions to improve teaching and will conduct regular teaching and research activities with colleagues. After class, Z will listen to the students' suggestions in time to understand the students' learning motivation and learning needs.

Now that teaching has entered a new era, Z closely follows the national education policy, integrates curriculum ideology and politics into the English classroom, and infects students with her own personal experience. If necessary, she will help students to establish correct ideas with the help of internet resources such as movies so that English can become a powerful tool for transmitting Chinese excellent traditional culture. Z also mentioned that the school's reward system is very effective for teachers.

When talking about teachers' professional development, Z pointed out that teachers' professional development is staged. Therefore, at different stages of professional development, her concerns are quite different. In the stage of seeking survival, she paid more attention to her own survival and development. When she was teaching, she wanted to teach students as much knowledge as possible but ignored the students' practical level and acceptable ability. In the adjustment stage, she actively participated in open classes and constantly studied teaching methods and skills. After class, she reflected on their grasp of time, students' reactions, and their mastery of knowledge

points. In the mature stage, she focused on the students, especially the poor students, and uses various effective methods to make students realize the happiness of learning English. At this stage, Z gained the trust of parents and established close ties with them to ensure the consistency of teaching.

At the end of the interview, Z talked about the balance between family and career. Family and career support each other, and a happy family can provide material conditions for career development.

In this interview, we can see that Z is an excellent teacher who loves teaching very much and has a sense of responsibility and self-motivation.

B. Influencing Factors and Development Ways of Personal Practical Knowledge

At different stages of development, the factors affecting personal practical knowledge and the ways of development are different. As Yuan(2003) said, teachers, have different professional development levels and needs at different stages of development. The following analysis will be based on Burden's theory of teacher development stages and Z's actual situation, and discuss the factors affecting junior high school English teachers' personal practical knowledge in the survival stage, adjustment stage, and maturity stage, the characteristics of each stage and the corresponding effective development ways.

a) The stage of seeking survival

Teachers in the survival stage have just entered a new environment and need to spend a certain amount of time adapting. Teachers' professional development at this time has the following characteristics: First, they are highly enthusiastic, proactive, and receptive, but they are prone to blundering and making mistakes and lack flexibility. Second, as Yin(2012) illustrated, novice teachers usually reserve a large amount of theoretical knowledge of disciplines, and they are used to imitating explanations in teaching and prefer to record their achievements by means of comprehension and essays. Third, pay more attention to their own development, to a certain extent, ignore the attention to students. In the face of some unexpected classroom situations, you may be at a loss. Z's survival stage is the first two years after she

entered the school.

In the stage of seeking survival, the first factor that affects the development of personal practical knowledge is one's own character. Z is cheerful, full of enthusiasm for education, and has positive professional consciousness. Wu(2008) claimed that loving education and students' personality are some of the factors that contribute to the professional development of excellent teachers. At the same time, role models play a vital role in one's development. Z's former teachers set her up the idea of becoming an excellent teacher. Wang(2011) also pointed out that the influence of teachers in their own student days is considered to be one of the most important influencing factors. Secondly, the solid professional theoretical knowledge makes the teachers who are seeking survival time more confident and able to adapt to the new environment quickly. However, in the survival stage, teachers will find that teaching theory can not be directly applied to teaching practice and lack practical teaching experience, which will lead to self-doubt and loss of self-confidence. In fact, pre-service training can help teachers who want to survive to adapt to the new environment as soon as possible and have a preliminary understanding of actual teaching.

First, English teachers should maintain their enthusiasm for education, strengthen their professional beliefs, enhance their educational ability and actively participate in teaching practice. Just as Ye(1998) put forward that professional teachers should have the educational ability and research ability under the guidance of the spirit of the times and scientific-educational philosophy, and condense the generated educational wisdom in practice. Second, the school needs to provide pre-service training so that novice teachers have a psychological transition period. Third, with excellent teachers as the goal, there will be corresponding motivation if there is a goal. Fourth, we should accumulate rich professional knowledge and other theoretical knowledge to lay a solid foundation for practice, just as Bian(2020) thought that teachers' professional knowledge and subject background are important factors that affect teachers' professional development.

b) Adjustment stage

In the adjustment stage, teachers have abundant teaching experience, highlighting the discipline specialty. Teachers' professional development at this stage has the following characteristics: First, as Yang(2013) stated, this stage is the fastest and most critical period for improving professional ability, but teachers bear a large workload and are under double pressure from schools and teachers of the same age. Secondly, Yin(2012) pointed out that experienced teachers pay more attention to subject teaching knowledge, are used to learning from other people's teaching methods and improving them, and prefer to sum up the experience. Third, we can grasp the key points of teaching materials and design detailed teaching steps around them. Z's adjustment period is from the second year to the fourth year of her teaching.

In the adjustment stage, family support is an important factor. Liu(2004) once pointed out that for teachers whose work time and space boundaries are blurred, professional development can obtain family support, and teachers will have a sense of professional ease and give full play to their creativity. At the same time, teachers in the adjustment stage can realize their own strengths and weaknesses more deeply, which will help teachers enrich their professional knowledge. Secondly, the exchange and reflection among colleagues in school make teachers' professional ability grow continuously. Wang(2008) professed that reflection is of great value to teachers' professional growth and the improvement of education and teaching quality. Regular teacher training provided by the school enables teachers in the adjustment stage to learn the most advanced educational concepts and more diversified teaching skills. The reward system of schools is also a great driving force for the development of teachers' personal practical knowledge. However, in some schools, the rules and regulations are bureaucratic, and teachers pursue fame and gain but pay no attention to the development of their practical knowledge. For example, Wang(2011) once emphasized that administrative management restricted the sharing of teachers' knowledge and the inheritance of successful experiences to a great extent. Finally, public trust in society has an important influence on teachers in the adjustment stage, and sufficient public trust will make

teachers strengthen their professional beliefs. At the same time, the social environment also has some negative effects. For example, the social atmosphere of exam-oriented education makes many schools give priority to achievements, so teachers only pay attention to coping with exams while ignoring the improvement of their practical knowledge.

Firstly, teachers should strive to balance the relationship between family and career so as to make sure that both family and career are correct. Second, with the help of school resources, study further and observe high-quality courses so as to learn new educational concepts and improve their practical knowledge. Teachers can also communicate with colleagues, evaluate each other and get feedback in time so as to improve their professional ability. Third, schools should conduct regular teacher training to provide teachers with learning opportunities and enrich their practical knowledge. Xiong(2017) stated, a professional teacher needs lifelong learning, and the school has the responsibility to provide opportunities for every teacher's professional development as much as possible. Fifth, we should create a good social environment, enhance teachers' social status, and give teachers the motivation to increase their personal practical knowledge. Yang(2002) once pointed out that in an atmosphere of public trust and support, teachers will show confidence and drive and regard teaching as a pursued cause. In this atmosphere, teachers will try their best to expand their practical knowledge.

c) Mature stage

The golden period of teachers' professional development in the mature stage. Teachers have richer teaching experience and accumulated more personal practical knowledge. Teachers' professional development in the mature stage has the following characteristics: First, Hui(2019) emphasized that teachers in this stage have formed their own teaching style, have certain teaching achievements, and have the right to speak in this field. Secondly, Yang (2013) pointed out that teachers' teaching and practical skills at this stage are obviously more skilled than those at the first two stages, and the sensitivity of teaching monitoring is obviously better than that at the first two stages, and they also master certain scientific research

methods. Third, students' feelings will be paid more attention in teaching, and they will have a firmer educational belief. Z has gradually entered the mature stage since he became a teacher in the fifth year.

Teachers at the mature stage pay more attention to the student's situation, but the poor students' foundation will affect teachers' smooth teaching; because students' English foundation is poor, some designed classroom activities can't be carried out, so teachers can only teach language knowledge first, and then display classroom activities in their spare time. In the mature stage, teachers are also more concerned about the national education policy, so good policies can create a good teaching environment for teachers, and teachers can implement more effective teaching methods under the guidance of policies. Secondly, the management style of school leaders will affect teachers' professional development. If teachers in the mature stage have sufficient autonomy, they will be able to express their unique views on the subjects they teach and actively develop curriculum resources according to the actual situation, which will provide many opportunities for the development of teachers' personal practical knowledge. Teachers in the mature stage will also conduct school-based teaching and research, which plays an important role in the development of teachers' personal practical knowledge. Because as Wang(2008) claimed, school-based teaching and research is not only the way to develop schools but also the fundamental way to promote teachers' professional development. However, because teachers at this stage have the basic qualities of excellent teachers, parents and society have high expectations for their society, which will bring great pressure to teachers, fear of failure, dare not challenge new things, and hinder the further development of personal practical knowledge.

First, teachers should pay attention to the actual situation of students and set out from reality to formulate teaching strategies that meet the students' level. Secondly, teachers should pay close attention to the national education policies and apply the appropriate policies to their own practice. Han(2008) pointed out that the national policy plays a guiding role in teachers' careers, and teachers should plan and develop their careers according to the national policy. Third, when necessary,

the school needs to create a learning community of colleagues and professional leaders for teachers, with professional guidance, so that teachers can learn new methods and new ideas through interaction with experts and colleagues. Zhu(2014) believed that teachers' professional development is completed in the learning community, and no teacher will leave the learning community and get development. Fourth, teachers should insist on lifelong learning. Just as Zhou(2017) and others emphasized the foundation of teachers' growth, an important way for teachers to acquire knowledge and skills, and an important tool for teachers to achieve their goals and accept challenges is lifelong learning.

V. CONCLUSIONS

In the development of education, the construction of teachers is the key, and the professional development of teachers is particularly important. In recent years, teachers' professional development has been the focus of educational research at home and abroad. Teachers' professional development depends on the construction of teachers' personal practical knowledge. At the same time, the process of teachers' personal practical knowledge accumulation is the process of teachers' professional development. From the perspective of personal practical knowledge, this paper discusses the factors and characteristics that affect teachers' personal practical knowledge and the corresponding effective development approaches in the three stages of teachers' professional development.

First, due to the lack of time, the collected data is very limited, which can not fully show the teaching practice of Z. If you have enough time, you can conduct repeated interviews, observe many times in class, and read teaching logs and teaching plans in an all-round way to get more accurate data. Secondly, because only one teacher is selected as a case for analysis, to a certain extent, her teaching practice cannot represent the teaching experience of all English teachers. If conditions permit, more excellent junior high school English teachers can be studied from more aspects. Third, due to the limitation of the length of the article, it is impossible to reproduce the teaching experience of Z completely, and some details may be slightly lacking.

REFERENCES

- [1] Bian Xiangrui. Literature Review of College Teachers' Professional Development, Education and Teaching Forum. 11 (2020) 22-24.
- [2] Connelly, F. M., Clandinin, D. J. Teachers as Curriculum Planners: Narratives of Experience, New York: Teachers' College. (1988).
- [3] Clandinin D. J. Narrative and story in teacher education, In T. Russell & H. Munby(eds.), Teachers and Teaching: From Classroom to Reflection, London: The Falmer Press. (1992).
- [4] Chen Xiangming. Practical knowledge: the knowledge base of teachers' professional development, Peking university education review. 01(2003) 104-112.
- [5] Cui Li, Guan Bo. On the connotation and value orientation of teachers' professional development, Adult Education in China. 21 (2013) 188-190.
- [6] Elbaz. F. Teacher Thinking: Study of Practical Knowledge, London: Croom Helm. (1983).
- [7] Han Dongyun. Connotation, Problems, and Trends of Teachers' Professional Development, Liaoning Education Research. 03 (2005) 65-67.
- [8] Han Geping. On the stages of teachers' career development, Theoretical Guide. 10 (2008) 116-117+124.
- [9] Hui Zhidong, Wei Yuzhu. Stage characteristics, problems, and suggestions of professional development of PE teachers in primary and secondary schools, Physical Education. 39 (11) (2019) 56-58.
- [10] Liu Xiujiang, Han Jie. Explanation of the connotation of teachers' professional development, Educational Science Research. 04 (2003) 3-6.
- [11] Liu Jie. On the basic factors affecting teachers' professional development, Journal of Northeast Normal University. 06 (2004) 15-22.
- [12] Meng Xianle. Practical knowledge: the new knowledge base of contemporary teacher specialization, Global Education Outlook. 10 (2004) 52-55.
- [13] Neman K, Burden P. & Applegate J. Helping teachers examine their long-range development, The teacher educator. 4 (1979)7-14.
- [14] Verloop. N. ,etc. Teacher Knowledge and the Knowledge Base of Teaching, International Journal of Educational Research. 5 (2001).
- [15] Wang Jian, Xu Libo. Connotation and approach of teachers' professional development-taking practical knowledge as the core, Journal of Huazhong Normal University (Humanities and Social

- Sciences Edition). 03 (2008) 125-129.
- [16] Wu Yian. On the professional development of foreign language teachers, *Foreign Language Studies*. 03 (2008) 29-38+112.
- [17] Wang Yan. A Case Study on Practical Knowledge of Excellent Foreign Language Teachers, *Foreign Language Teaching Theory and Practice*. 1 (2011) 68-76.
- [18] Xin Tao, Shen Jiliang, Lin Chongde. On the reform of normal education from the perspective of teachers' knowledge structure, *Research on Higher Normal Education*. 06 (1999) 12-17.
- [19] Xiao Liping. A Review of Research on Teacher Professional Development at Home and Abroad, *Chinese Journal of Pedagogy*. 05 (2020) 61-64.
- [20] Xiong Suchun. The shaping of teachers' growth by institutional environment—the growth narrative of a senior high school English teacher, *Educational Academic Monthly*. 09 (2017) 81-89.
- [21] Ye Lan. On teachers' professional quality in the new century, *Educational Research and Experiment*. 1 (1998) 41-46,72.
- [22] Ye Lan et al. A New Probe into Teacher's Role and Teacher's Development, Shanghai: Educational Science Press. (2001) 222-224.
- [23] Yang Xiumei. Comment on Fessler and Grathorn's exposition of influencing factors of teacher development, *Foreign Education Research*. 05 (2002) 35-38.
- [24] Yuan Guiren et al. *Theory and Practice of Teacher Professionalization*, Beijing: People's Education Press. (2003) 21.
- [25] Yin Feng. Analysis of the characteristics and diagnostic path of teachers' professional development stage, *Modern Primary and Secondary Education*. 03 (2012) 43-45.
- [26] Yang Shanjiang. Stage characteristics and mode selection of teachers' professional development in higher vocational colleges, *China Vocational and Technical Education*. 18 (2013) 87-91+95.
- [27] Yang Luxin, Zhang Ning. Research on the professional development of experienced English teachers: review and prospect, *Foreign language teaching*. 02 (2020) 51-58.
- [28] Zhu Xudong. On the theoretical model construction of teacher professional development, *Educational Research*. 06(2014) 81-90.
- [29] Zhou Min and Yang Changyong. A narrative study on the growth of an expert teacher in special education, *Educational Academic Monthly*. 05 (2017) 47-54.