

A Narrative Research on the Training of Middle-school English Teachers Based on “Teacher Subject”—Taking Two English Teachers from a Junior High School in Zigong as an Example

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Abstract - Teacher training is an important way to promote the professional development of the English teachers of middle schools. The quality of teacher training will directly affect the teaching effects of teachers. However, the teacher training of middle school often deviates from the training needs of teachers themselves and ignores the dominant position of teachers. Based on the narrative study of two English teachers from a Junior High school in Zigong, the findings showed that we should establish a “Teacher Subject” training mode to provide theoretical and technical support, and finally promote the sustainable development of Teachers' professional ability.

Keywords: Teacher Subject, teacher training, narrative research

I. INTRODUCTION

The new curriculum reform in China put forwards that teachers should change the traditional “one person” teaching mode, shift the focus of English classroom from the traditional knowledge teaching to the all-round development of students' listening, speaking, reading and writing. At the same time, the proposal of “Key Competencies” clarifies what kind of people should be cultivated in English subjects and how to cultivate them, that is, “to cultivate social talents with national feelings, international vision and cross-cultural communication ability”. These new models of teaching reform put forward unprecedented requirements for the professional ability of middle school English teachers. In a word, teacher training is an important way to promote the professional

development of middle school English teachers in China.

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II. LITERATURE REVIEW

The study on teacher training in foreign countries started earlier, and the research results are relatively rich. They have finished related research on many aspects of teacher training, such as the goal, problems, and reform of teacher.

Early studies on foreign language teacher training mainly focused on contents and methods, such as what to teach and how to teach. The study on the quality of foreign language teachers began to turn to the acquisition of existing knowledge, mode of thinking and teaching ability in the 1990s. It was not until 1990 that the first monograph on foreign language teacher education, *Second Language Teacher Education*, came into being. In 1997, at the 31st annual meeting of the International Association for the Teaching of English as a Foreign Language, English teacher education and teacher development became one of the six major themes of the meeting. So far, the study of foreign language teacher development had been gradually rising, and the problems also had been paid attention to. These foreign achievements provides theoretical reference and experience support in China. However, due to the weak academic status of foreign language discipline itself, the research progress of foreign language teacher training is relatively slow.



China's teacher training can be traced back to the 1970s. The teacher training for primary and secondary school teachers has gone through different historical stages. Since 1977, the Ministry of education has issued a series of policies and regulations, such as "opinions on strengthening the training of in-service teachers in primary and secondary schools". In 2001, the Decision of the State Council on the Reform and Development of Basic Education specially put forward that "building a contingent of high-quality teachers is the key to the solid promotion of quality education." [1] Until 2011, the "opinions on vigorously strengthening the training of primary and secondary school teachers" specially stressed that teacher training should focus on improving teachers' moral quality and professional ability in an all-round way. These policies and regulations show that the state attaches great importance to teacher training. The current studies in China mainly focus on the following three aspects.

A. Research on the Content of English Teacher Training

Some researchers, such as J. K. Yang and W. Y. Zhang, believe that teacher training is still the old traditional style, lacking innovation [2][3]. Some researchers, such as E. Q. Zhang and W. B. Wang, think that the content of teacher training is too theoretical, ignoring the actual needs of teachers [4][5]; The training content lacks the attention to the cultivation quality.

B. Research on the Methods of English Teacher Training

At present, classroom teaching is still the most important method in teacher training [6]; Teacher training can be divided into national training, provincial training, county-level training and school-based training [4]; It can also be divided into school-based training mode, centralized training mode, action research mode and remote network training mode [7].

C. Research on English Teacher Trainer

Most of the training institutions for primary and secondary school training are normal universities, colleges of education and teacher training schools. These teachers are often isolated from the actual situation of primary and secondary education. [3][4]

Although the research on teacher training has been

fruitful, there is still a lot of room for the study of middle school English teacher training in China. Nowadays, few researches focus on the dominance of teachers in training.

III. METHODS

A. Participants

In this study, the subjects are two junior middle school English teachers from a Junior High School in Zigong. Through interviews, the researcher understand their educational experience, especially the influence of teacher training in the process of middle school teachers' professional development.

Name	Working Years	Gender	Qualification
Mrs. Luo	8 years	female	bachelor
Mrs. Tan	22 years	female	bachelor

Fig. 1 A table of personal information

B. Instrument(s)

The data were collected through narrative research. In the research of teachers' education and teaching experience, narrative research is one of the most important ways to study teachers' understanding of education and to tell others what they know about education. Educational narrative is both humanistic and constructive. It respects the voice of teachers and allows them to tour their rights and abilities as reflective practitioners. "The main means is to record and reflect on the teaching process, analyze the existing problems, and find the best solution, so as to improve the efficiency of teaching management and promote the professional development of teaching management." [8]

C. Research Questions

Accordingly, this study focuses on the following issues: 1) whether the school attaches importance to training; 2) whether it benefits from the training process and what it gains; 3) what are the suggestions for teacher training. The following will sort out their views on teacher training.

D. Interview Procedures and Contents

The interview was recorded with notes and tape recorder. And the contents are:

a) Mrs. Luo:

Mrs. Luo graduated from Sichuan Normal University, majoring in English. After graduation, she has been working in this school for 8 years. She believes that her school attaches great importance to teacher training.

"I have participated in too many teacher training, which I can't remember clearly, but what impresses me most is that in 2015, my school sent me to train in Peking University for one month. In the whole process, I have to speak in English, and I can't speak any Chinese from morning till night. Although I felt very tired that month, I grew up a lot, and my professional ability improved a lot, so that I became more confident."

She thinks that teachers can have more development if they want to learn and push themselves to a certain extent. She thinks that teacher training has benefited her a lot, especially in the novice period.

"After training, I have a clear understanding of the design of teaching materials and learn how to deal with the unexpected situation in the classroom."

At the same time, she also puts forward her suggestions for teacher training.

"I hope to carry out more practical training in the future. We need theoretical training, but not limited to theoretical training. Especially for the novice teachers, what they need more is practical training."

Luo also stressed the importance of model lessons. She believes that middle school English teachers, especially novice teachers, can learn a lot from that. Mr. Luo often goes to Chengdu for training.

b) Mrs. Tan:

It has been 22 years since Mr. Tan started to work in 1998. As the leader of Junior Middle School English Studio in Zigong, she described her teacher training experience as follows:

"At that time, I started working in a rural school in 1998. I didn't receive any training. I just picked up the teaching materials and began to take classes. When I worked in the city, my school pay more attention to

training. My school will arrange various levels of training for teachers, including school level, district level, municipal level and provincial level. Teachers will be arranged to participate in all activities, but due to the limited funds, only a part of them can be selected each time."

Due to the lack of funds, family support and other reasons, many teachers who need to improve their teaching ability lack the opportunity to participate in the teacher training. Tan thinks that the guidance of experts is very instructive in the process of training, so she puts forward:

"Today's teacher trainers need more "backbone teachers" with practical ability, not "illustrious" experts. Although some teachers have so many awards, their classes are not superior to those of novice teachers."

IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

A. Results

It is found that although the two English teachers have different working years and different views on the training of middle school English teachers, they are very helpful to explore the common problems existing in the process of teachers' professional growth and development and the common problems of teacher training.

a) The contents emphasis theory, but ignore the actual needs of teachers.

Malcolm. S. Knowles, an American adult educationist, puts forward that adult learning has the following four basic characteristics: in the psychological needs of learning, it is more inclined to autonomous learning; in the cognitive process of learning, it is more likely to use experience to understand and master knowledge; in the task of learning, it is more likely to improve their own social role through learning; in the purpose of learning, they are more willing to solve practical problems and meet practical needs by using the knowledge they have learned before[9].

According to Adult Learning Theory, teacher training should be "task-based" and "problem-based". However, in fact, the current content of teacher training is too old-fashioned, and the curriculum has been set up for decades, so it can not meet the needs of the renewal of educational concepts and the development of teachers. At

the same time, training institutions and trainers pay little attention to the real needs of teachers. Meanwhile, some teaching theories are too advanced, which seriously deviates from the actual level of teachers. For novice teachers, it is more important to solve practical problems such as how to master the pace of the teaching, how to deal with the unexpected situation in the classroom, how to carry out effective communication between teachers and students and so on. Therefore, "how to correctly deal with the actual needs of teachers is the key to the success of training." [3]

b) The form of training is single, which can not meet the personalized needs of teachers.

At present, centralized training is still the main way of teacher training, which determines it will be a "one speech" teaching process, and learners hardly have the opportunity to ask questions. Although this form can solve the problems of large number of people, limited time and meet the need of improving efficiency, it can not fully consider the actual teaching situation of teachers. The research shows that the teachers prefer to use unstructured knowledge to solve the problems encountered in the actual teaching situation, so as to build their own knowledge system, rather than accept the "cramming education" and be "deprived" of the right to speak. The general teacher training is also a kind of short-term training, which often focus on the training process, but ignore the development of teachers, and the long guidance for teachers' professional development. The survey shows that middle school English teachers are more inclined to accept various forms of training, and hope to apply the teaching theory in the real situation. Therefore, one of the tasks of teacher training reform is to change the boring and traditional way of teacher training, so teachers can actively participate in, and realize the construction of knowledge.

c) Teacher training often take "trainer" as the center, which lack front-line teaching experience.

Today's trainers mainly use the most boring language to tell teachers how to avoid boring lectures in class, to tell teachers to pay attention to the subject status of students. They are people who have never had education and teaching experience, but tell teachers how to be good

teachers. Due to their speaking privilege, university teachers also dominate in post-training. Research shows that middle school teachers believe that the trainers should be the front-line teachers who have been engaged in teaching for a long time, rather than "experts" from universities and training institutions. There are two main reasons. First of all, most of the contents taught by the trainers are pedagogy and psychology which is far away from the teachers. What the trainers solve is only the common problems encountered in teaching experience. Secondly, teachers' professional ability should not only include the mastery of theoretical knowledge, but also the practical ability. Therefore, only the front-line teachers can provide the demonstration and guidance for middle school teachers.

d) Training institutions ignore the needs of teachers and lack of technical support.

Nowadays, few institutions pay attention to the demand survey of teachers before training. Even if there is a demand survey, most of the questions provided mainly rely on their previous experience and the questions are also closed. Of course, there are also some open questions. "But the idea of this behavior is to solve the problem based on the problem, and the assumption is that the menu provided does not suit the taste of the trainees, and then more options are listed for the trainees to choose. " [10] Although it can save time, but also has shortcomings. First of all, the design of the questionnaire is often floating on the surface, ignoring whether the training content matches the needs of teachers. Secondly, according to teachers' professional development theory, teachers in different stages have different purposes of learning. It is found that because the teachers come from different regions and schools, the teaching equipment and teaching resources provided by schools are uneven, and the problems faced by teachers in the teaching process are also different. They prefer to receive focused training and combine the relevant theory with the actual situation.

B. Discussion

Teacher training is an important way to realize the professional development of English teachers. According to the interviews, it is found that the problems in teacher

training seriously affect the effectiveness of training. However, most of the training models ignore teachers' own needs, which makes teachers in a marginal position. "Teacher training should be based on practice and problem, combined with the guidance of theory, so as to make theory and practice fit better and promote the professional development of teachers." [5] Therefore, we need to explore practical and effective strategies to improve teacher training, help English teachers solve real problems, and promote the development of middle school teachers' ability. In the final analysis, the main reason for the above problems is the neglect of the dominant position of teachers. The training of middle school English teachers should be "Teacher Subject".

a) Pay attention to the "endogenous" needs of teachers.

According to Knowles' Adult Learning Theory, the primary purpose of teacher learning is to solve the problems in reality. Their needs are based on their own experience, such as, shorting the gap between the current stage of knowledge, skills and attitudes and the expected goals. According to Constructivism, teachers' learning is not a process of passively accepting knowledge, but a process of combining original experience with new knowledge and actively constructing their own knowledge structure.

"Most of the existing teachers' participation in training is based on the assumption that middle school teachers need to be promoted and trained, and they need to receive the guidance of trainers and the theoretical knowledge from university professors, and research personnel" [5]. But the trainers forget a fact: do teachers have the willingness to learn? The primary task of training institutions is to pay attention to the "endogenous" training needs of teachers.

Trainers should provide teachers with personalized materials, conduct a survey on their demands, select the appropriate learning content according to the teachers' feedback, and reasonably arrange the courses according to the characteristics of middle school English teaching. Under the guidance of teachers' needs, curriculum should also play down the proportion of theoretical knowledge, but pay attention to the cultivation of teaching practice ability. And can not ignore the importance of activating

teachers' active learning interest, which can drive teachers to constantly reflect, learn and innovate.

b) Determine different training contents according to different teacher development stages.

Based on the five stage theory of teacher professional development put forward by Berlin and Steffi in the 1980s, the study found that novice teachers (0-5 years) pay more attention to how to get along with students, how to deal with the unexpected situation in the classroom, how to control the classroom time, and so on. They hope to accumulate teaching experience while they are familiar with the actual situation of teaching. When they reach the competency stage (5-10 years), they are more interested in teaching English more flexible. Teachers in the proficiency period (10-15 years) and the expert period (15-20 years) can adjust the teaching pace according to the feedback of the students, and guide the students to achieve the teaching goal according to their own speed and began to explore how to meet the needs of their own development.

The training of middle school English teachers should be based on the characteristics of teachers at different stages to arrange the teaching contents and to guide the teachers to combine theory with practice, so as to fully develop the teachers' professional ability.

c) Combined with modern information technology, build a more convenient online training platform.

The advent of the era of "Internet plus" has provided people with a large amount of learning resources, and network teaching also has been applied to teaching in a large scale. Trainers combine traditional offline teaching with online training, and make full use of MOOC, Nailing and other network platforms. On the one hand, they can break the time and space constraints, reduce the training costs of schools and regions, and expand the scope of training; on the other hand, teachers can download their interesting classes and review them at any time. Online training can help middle school English teachers to establish a network communication platform to carry out collaborative research and mutual assistance.

The epidemic in 2020 has brought a huge impact on China's education. Teachers have to change the traditional classroom teaching to online teaching. However, due to

the fact that online education is not popular in China, and most teachers have not received training before, the teachers interviewed think that online teaching can not achieve their teaching objectives. Therefore, teacher training should also carry out technological training to improve the ability of teachers to use modern information technology in online classes, and effectively improve the effect of teaching.

d) Change the past short-term training into a long-term and continuous training.

The dual professional characteristics of English subject determine that teachers' professional ability can not be effectively improved only by one or two weeks of training. Therefore, we should choose different training methods according to teachers' different needs. For example, a teacher in charge of a class can choose the form of group discussion, remote training and independent study to flexibly arrange the time. The training place is not only limited to the classroom, but also can create a real situation for teachers, go deep into the real teaching, make full use of teachers' own experience and advantages. Teachers' professional development is a dynamic and lifelong process, so teacher training should be carried out from beginning to end.

e) Create equal communication opportunities for teachers.

Teachers and trainers should be in a partnership of equal cooperation and take problem solving as the common training goal. "Learners are the subject of learning, and trainers play the role of coaches, helpers or supporters." [11] Based on the needs to solve practical problems, teacher training should encourage teachers to have an open discussion on the problems set by trainers, freely express their views, exchange personal experience in a wider range, realize the collision of thinking in communication, give full play to teachers' creativity and initiative in learning, to help teachers to reflect on themselves and realize the new and old ideas. In order to deepen the professional understanding of middle school English teachers, teachers should enhance their own experience and promote their professional development.

f) Establish learning community and implement "Double Tutors" system.

The "Double Tutors" system comes from the innovation of BFSU Teachers Development Project, that is, to implement the mode of "academic tutors" and "practical tutors". On the one hand, famous foreign language teaching experts at home and abroad are invited to give lectures for middle school teachers to learn advanced and international teaching concepts, so as to improve English teachers' teaching theory literacy; on the other hand, a multi-year teaching team is established. The authoritative front-line teachers of learning experience can provide positive and effective practical guidance for middle school English teacher. At the same time, in the face of the current phenomenon of insufficient educational resources, training institutions should cooperate with universities and front-line teachers to develop high-quality and different educational resources for teachers to choose, and form a shared educational resource system. This new teacher training mode requires teachers, authoritative experts and front-line teachers to establish a learning community, which create a positive and harmonious learning atmosphere, explore ways to solve problems and grow up together.

g) Set up teacher development portfolio and pre-test and post-test.

The notice of the Ministry of Education on the implementation of "the National Cultivation Plan" in 2019 proposes that "it is necessary to effectively record the training and changes of teachers, and carry out the comparative evaluation of the ability improvement before and after the teacher training".

First of all, the trainers should test the theoretical basis and level of teachers before training, so as to have a clear understanding of the starting point of teachers, and arrange the training courses pertinently. Trainers should go deep into the classroom and evaluate the teachers from multiple dimensions, including not only the teachers themselves, but also the mastery of the students' professional knowledge, skills and emotional status.

Secondly, we should know that teachers' professional development is a dynamic and continuous process. When the training is over, we should track and guide teachers

and do a good job in post-test. With the help of modern information technology, experts and teachers can monitor whether teachers use what they have learned to solve real teaching problems, and provide help at any time, so as to implement targeted guidance.

h) Give summative evaluation and formative evaluation.

Cuba and Lincoln put forward that the purpose of evaluation is not only to obtain results, but also to promote and use the results. Nowadays, most of the teacher training is based on summative evaluation. Summative evaluation regard results and effects as the standard, which is mainly reflected in the final examination with a single form. Formative assessment mainly evaluates the application and practice of teachers' knowledge in the process, mainly in the form of tests and stage assignments. Teacher training should not only pay attention to what teachers have learned, but also pay attention to how teachers learn, how to continue to learn, whether teachers' learning enthusiasm is mobilized, and whether teachers can achieve self professional development. Effective teacher training should play the role of summative evaluation and formative evaluation in guiding and regulating teachers' professional development, and combine quantitative evaluation with qualitative evaluation, so as to comprehensively evaluate the effect of teacher training.

i) Make teachers become active learners through evaluation.

"Teacher's learning is a process of individual active construction and situational learning. However, it is not enough for learning to be active in isolation. Reflection is also a necessary thing in teacher's learning." [5] Based on the theory of teacher development, this paper puts forward the formula of teacher training as follows:

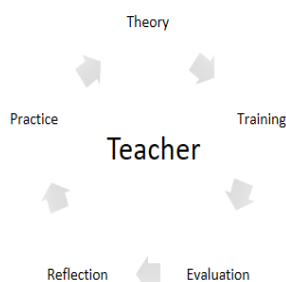


Fig. 2 The formula of teacher training

In short, teacher training is a subjective process, which makes teachers from the owner of theoretical knowledge to the applicator with practical ability to lifelong learners. Specifically speaking, the teachers who take part in the training have mastered certain teaching theories, and then they take part in the training with a strong purpose (that is, to solve the practical problems encountered in real teaching). After the training, teachers realize the integration of new and old ideas, adjust their teaching strategies according to the evaluation of colleagues and experts, and constantly reflect on their own work, so as to become active teachers. Finally, learners can use what they have learned to solve specific problems and establish a connection with their own teaching situation, so as to improve their professional ability.

V. CONCLUSION

China's new curriculum reform and other policies put forward the requirements for professional development of middle school English teachers. Teacher training is not only to improve the professional abilities of middle school English teachers in China, but also to cultivate the next generation of international talents for the country. In view of the problems, the establishment of a new teacher training system based on "Teacher Subject" is the most critical way to achieve it.

Through narrative research, this study analyzes the current situation of middle school English teacher training from the perspective of "Teacher Subject", and enriches the relevant theories of teacher professional development by focusing on the actual needs of middle school English teachers. This results finds out some relevant suggestions to solve these problems, so as to provide practical and effective strategies for the improvement of teacher training for policy makers, and arouse the attention to the subjective position of middle school teachers. It is primary to determine the training content according to the training needs of teachers. Second, the institutions should promote the diversification of teaching methods and pay attention to the development needs of teachers. Then, an open and equal learning community to realize common development is need to be created. Finally, it should establish a evaluation mechanism of teacher training to achieve effective teaching.

However, the study has some limitations. Due to the sensitive characteristic of teacher training, the interviewees may refuse to answer the questions and modify the image of their school. And the sample is small, which may affect the reliability and validity of this study to a certain extent. In the future, we can interview several male teachers and use diachronic research to track them.

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