

# Exploration and Introspection: Policy Development on Teaching Faculty in Universities and Colleges in China Since the 21st Century

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**ABSTRACT.** *Teaching faculty in universities and colleges is of great significance and has been a hot issue in recent years. Focus on policy development on teaching faculty in universities and colleges in China since the 21st century. It can be found that many aspects have been improved including the quality and structure of teachers, ideological and moral construction, teacher training systems, teacher development institutions, teaching ability levels, institutional support and opportunity supply. However, the utilitarian-orientation of policy formulation is obvious, and the independence and autonomy of teacher development is still not enough. In the future, the formulation and implementation of teacher development policies require the combined and continuous efforts of all sectors of society.*

**KEYWORDS:** *Policy development, Teaching faculty, Higher education, China*

## 1. Introduction

Teacher development plays a crucial role in higher education construction. The healthy and continuous development of higher education needs high-quality and professional teaching faculty. Governments in many countries in the world examined the relationship between the input and output of teacher development in universities and colleges, and got that teacher development is not only a teacher individual growth and increment, but also affects the quality of the higher education, and even affects the development of science and technology, the competition of culture and strength of the countries.

This research focuses on policy development on teaching faculty in universities and colleges in China since the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Faced with a fierce international competitive environment, the coming of new era of knowledge economy, and the plan of country rejuvenation through science and education, China has promoted a number of major reforms in the field of higher education, with larger scale and far-reaching impact. Since the 21<sup>st</sup> century, the reform of teacher development policies in universities and colleges in China has shown the following characteristics:

## 2. Teaching Quality Has Been Valued and Improved

The 2003-2007 *Education Revitalization Action Plan* promulgated by the State Council officially proposed to implement the *Project of Teaching Quality and Teaching Reform in Higher Education*, which stated to further deepen teacher teaching reform and improve teaching quality assessment and guarantee mechanism. It was also proposed to encourage noted teachers to teach basic courses, recognize and select outstanding teaching teachers, standardize and improve the evaluation of teaching quality of different disciplines and majors, and gradually establish a professional evaluation system linked to the qualification of teachers and the professional career development.

In January 2007, *Opinions on the Implementation of University Undergraduate Teaching Quality Reform Project* took the teaching team construction and high-level teachers as important goals of quality engineering project. This was the first time that the state proposed to strengthen the construction of undergraduate teaching teams. It tried to promote the reform and research of teaching contents and methods through selecting and building a group of teaching teams with high teaching quality and reasonable structure. And establish an effective teamwork mechanism, promote teaching seminars and teaching experience exchanges, develop teaching resources, promote the combination of teachers of different ages, carry forward the role of experienced teachers, and promote the transmission of young teachers. This was a very useful attempt for the development of

college teachers.

### **3. Informatization of Teacher Development Have Been Enhanced**

With the advancement of science and technology, education in the 21st century has entered an era of informatization and networking. This provided a good condition for China to explore new methods for teacher development, but it also put forward higher requirements. The *2003-2007 Education Revitalization Action Plan* put forward the implementation of *Education Informatization Construction Project*, raising to build an education informatization public service system, a hardware-software sharing network service platform, and an online learning and other learning mutual communication system.

In October 2007, the Ministry of Education approved the higher education press to undertake *the Construction Project of Excellent Course Teacher Training Project* and set up a National Ministry of Education Network Training Center for university teachers. The center undertook nationwide network training for university teachers, mainly focusing on the training of national quality courses. The purpose was to make the national excellent courses play the due roles, to promote the widespread application and share high-quality teaching resources, and to continuously improve the teaching level of teachers.

In July 2009, the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Finance approved the establishment of a network training system for teachers in universities and colleges. The main contents of the project included: researching on the rules of teacher network training, exploring the mode of promoting teacher training with modern education technology; constructing software and hardware platforms for university teacher network training; developing various training projects and organizing various trainings; implementing a network training organization system construction, forming an efficient operation management mechanism and a sustainable development operation model.

### **4. Teacher Morality Construction Has Been Payed High Attention**

In 2007, *the Outline of the 11th Five-year Plan for the Development of National Education* proposed that firmly hold the fundamental thought to educate people, constantly strengthen the teacher moral education, ideological and political working team construction, strive to build a high-level team of counselors and teachers. In 2010, *the Outline of the National Medium-long Term Education Reform and Development Plan (2010-2020)* also proposed to strengthen the education of teachers' professional ideals and ethics, and enhance the sense of responsibility and mission of teaching and education. In 2012, *the Outline of the 12th Five-year Plan for the Development of National Education* proposed that the performance of teachers' ethics should be taken as the basis for teachers' qualification recognition, regular registration, performance appraisal, employment of posts, evaluation of titles. And a one vote veto system for teachers' ethics should be implemented. Meanwhile, teacher moral education should be integrated into the whole process of occupational training, teaching access, and working management. In the same year, *Several Opinions on Improving the Quality of Higher Education in An All-round Way* put forward that the professional ethics of university teachers should be formulated and the moral education of teachers should be strengthened.

In 2014, *Establishing and Improving Long-term Mechanism for Teacher Morality Construction in Universities and Colleges* issued by the Ministry of Education pointed out that we should strive to strengthen the cultivation of teacher morality, develop teachers with four merits, four guides, four unifications and four services. In 2016, *the Guiding Opinions on Deepening the Reform of University Teachers' Assessment and Evaluation* issued raised the principle of "teacher ethics first, teaching and research as the foundation, and development as the basis" as the basic requirement for the teacher assessment and evaluation reform.

### **5. Independent Teacher Development Institutions Have Been Set Up**

On the basis of studying and drawing on the experience of effectively promoting teacher development in world-renowned universities, the State Council launched the construction of national teacher teaching development demonstration centers in 2011, and supported the construction of 30 national teacher teaching development demonstration centers in universities under the central ministries and commissions.

After several years of exploration, it has been generally promoted to universities and colleges across the country, and teacher development centers have sprung up in major universities. This policy has enabled several important changes in teacher development. The first was some universities started to set their own teacher

development institutions. This was fundamentally different from the university training centers previously established. Secondly, teacher teaching development centers played very different organizational functions. The function of the university training centers previously was mainly to organize centralized training. Focusing on providing support for teacher teaching development, the function of the teacher teaching development centers was expanded to many fields, including conducting teaching consulting services, conducting teaching reform research, conducting teaching quality assessment, and providing high-quality teaching resources. The third was the change of teacher's individual professional development consciousness, which has changed from "passive participation in training" to "actively seeking for development".

## **6. Professional Training System for Newly Recruited Teacher Has Been Enhanced**

In the new era, the quality innovation and assurance system of teaching faculty has become an important part of the policy. In 2010, *the Outline of the National Medium-long Term Education Reform and Development Plan (2010-2020)* proposed to focus on young and middle-aged teachers and innovation teams, build a high-quality teaching faculty in universities and colleges, and carry out full training for teachers every five years to improve their professional level and teaching ability. In 2012, *the Outline of the 12th Five-year Plan for the Development of National Education* proposed to establish a number of university teacher training bases based on high-level universities, promote the cooperation between universities and enterprises, and strengthen the practical training of engineering professional teachers.

In August 2012, the State Council of China issued *Opinions of the State Council on Strengthening the Construction of the Teaching faculty*. The opinions raised definite goals, missions, requirements and solutions to comprehensively strengthen the construction of teaching faculty, innovate administration system, reinforce the weakness and improve the conditions. It was a programmatic document with strong policy, pertinence and operability, and committed to guild teaching faculty construction better.

In 2016, the Ministry of Education initiated the implementation of *the National Training Demonstration Project for Newly-enrolled Teachers in Universities and Colleges*, which aimed to lead the provincial education administrative departments and training institutions to explore the establishment of a new model of newly recruited teachers training in accordance with the actual conditions in the region. The training content was designed around three modules: "professional concepts and norms", "teaching theory and skills", and "information technology and application", highlighting practical teaching of basic skills in education and teaching.

## **7. Internationalization of Teaching Faculty Construction Has Been Enhanced**

Since the 21st century, the degree of internationalization and international exchanges has been increasingly important in the cultural competition of various countries. To promote the internationalization of higher education, attract foreign talents and broaden international vision of local teachers became the trend of teaching faculty construction. In 2007, *the Outline of the 11th Five-year Plan for National Education Development* proposed that teachers should be supported to host or participate in major international scientific research programs and high-level international academic cooperation researches, so as to enhance their influence and competitiveness in the academic field. And it has been decided to support universities and colleges to introduce world-class academic masters and top scientific and technological talents.

In July 2018, the General Office of the Central Committee of the CPC and the General Office of the State Council issued *the Opinions on Deepening the Reform of Project Evaluation, Talent Evaluation, and Institutional Evaluation*. It was proposed to strengthen the top-level design, coordinate and streamline three-evaluation work, simplify optimization processes to ease the burden on scientific researchers and institutions, and form long-term mechanisms. Moreover, it was necessary to ensure the project review is open and fair. In the application and review of the project, the actual capabilities of the person in charge, the team, and the project requirements should be comprehensively considered. These policy measures were aimed at creating a loose, free, fair and reasonable teacher development environment, so that teachers would not be abducted by various management evaluation systems, which could help university teachers concentrate on teaching and scientific research, and achieving effective professional growth.

## **8. Conclusion and Introspection**

Since the reform and opening up in 1978, the CPC and Administrative Departments of Education at different

levels have attached great importance to higher education and teacher development. Thus, a series of effective policies have been issued to help and promote teachers, and achieved historic achievements. It can be seen that in the last 20 years, the policies on teacher development in universities and colleges in China were changed from general management to modern governance, from scale construction to quality improvement, from key support to coordinated development, from stressing educational background to selecting the better one. Now China has formed a diversified, opening up and comprehensive teacher development system, which has provided a basic guarantee for the cultivation of high-quality and professional teachers. The state has selected and cultivated a large number of academic leaders in different disciplines and majors with first-class abilities, large number of excellent innovation teaching and research teams, as well as young and middle-aged backbones with solid academic foundations, outstanding abilities and development potentials, which enhanced the overall quality of the teaching faculty.

There are also some problems and deficiencies in the policy making on university teacher development, which need to be seriously considered and introspected.

Firstly, the utilitarian-orientation of the policies on university teacher development is obvious. The formulation of teacher development policies was largely driven by external factors and it was already instrumentalized. Under such influence, teacher development may become a means to serve for provincial first-class, national first-class or world-class university construction to cope with global competition. But this just ignored teachers themselves development. Actually, the goal of university teacher development is the premise and foundation of the goal of university organization. The pursuit of an organization in universities and colleges is internally consistent with the individual goal of teacher. However, the universities often deviated from the true value because of the utilitarian reality, thus separating the internal consistency between teacher development and organizational development. Unconsciously, it also led university teachers to pursue the utilitarian goal, which in turn caused substantial damage to the organizational development.

Secondly, the independence and autonomy of university teacher development is not enough. By examining the teacher development policies, it could be found that teachers were always in relatively passive states, dominated by administrative officials in government departments and administrative faculty in universities and colleges. It should be noted that the power and rights among the administrative and academic system are unequal. In most cases, administrators lacked of academic and professional experience teachers have, and there were fundamental differences between their perspectives and those of teachers. Meanwhile, most of teacher development policies were formulated and implemented in a top-down way, lacking a bottom-up policy formulation paradigm. And administrators often presented in front of teachers as commanders or supervisors, while teachers were always receivers or executors. In the process of policy making and implementation, teachers were often absent, which was not conducive for policies meet the actual needs of teachers. Some even seemingly perfect policies may run counter to the desire due to the lack of teacher understanding.

Thirdly, there is a lack of policies that benefit all teachers. The policies on teacher development in universities and colleges in China mostly focused on the elite-groups such as subject leaders or academic backbones. The elites actually played well the leading roles, but most teachers in the middle or bottom of the teacher pyramid were ignored. As a large number of opportunities and resources were given to a small number of elites, the enthusiasm of most ordinary teachers was extinguished. It is improper to rely on a small number of elites to develop the whole education. The most ordinary teachers are the solid and reliable forces in fact. Therefore, policies that can benefit most teachers and pay attention to the professional growth of ordinary teachers should be formulated in the future.

In the future, the formulation and implementation of teacher development policies require the combined efforts and continuous efforts of all sectors of society. Researchers and practitioners should continue to pay attention to this theme and strive to further promote teacher development in China.

### **Acknowledgement**

Special Research Project of Philosophy and Social Sciences of Guangdong in 2019 “Dilemma and Transcendence: An Empirical Study on Novice Teacher Development in Applied Universities and Colleges in Guangdong Province” (2019GXJK193); Quality Engineering Comprehensive Education Reform Project of Dongguan University of Technology “New Liberal Arts in Universities of Science and Technology: Logic, Planning and Path” (201902033); Higher Education Research Project of Dongguan University of Technology “Research on the Professional Development of Young Teachers of New High-level Universities of Science and Technology”.

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