

# The Professional Development Path of Senior High School English Teachers under the Background of Core Literacy

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**Abstract:** Under the background of international globalization, core literacy education has become the focus of attention of most countries. By summarizing the connotation of subject core literacy and teacher professional development, this paper introduces the present situation of professional development of senior English teacher in China, then analyzes the factors that affect the professional development of senior English teachers from two aspects: individual internal factors and external environmental factors. This paper puts forward the professional development path of English teachers in senior high schools under the background of core literacy: formulating unified basic principles, strengthening teacher training programs, and promoting teachers' self-development.

**Keywords:** Core literacy; Senior English Teacher; Teacher Professional Development

## 1. Introduction

In the 21st Century, the global fundamental education reform pays more attention to character cultivation and key ability cultivation, and the concept of core literacy has come into being. With the promulgation and implementation of "English Curriculum Standard for Ordinary Senior High School (2020 Edition)", core literacy has become a hot word with high frequency, which provides a more precise direction for students' English learning and future development. More and more research documents on the cultivation of students' core literacy. As the community of cultivating students' core literacy, English teachers play a vital role in improving students' quality and ability. Therefore, it is necessary to study English teachers' professional development. As highest stage of basic education in senior high school, senior high school has laid a solid cultural foundation and thinking foundation for students to become adults and talents. English teachers in senior high school are the mainstay of education reform and the inexhaustible motive force to support the sustainable development of school and society. Their professional development is of great significance to the reform of basic education. This paper combines the present situation of professional development of English teachers in senior high schools from the perspective of core literacy, to analyze the deep reasons behind it, and explore feasible ways suitable for professional development of English teachers in senior high school.

## 2. Related Notions

### 2.1. The Connotation of Subject Core Literacy

In the 21st Century, educational organizations worldwide have different definitions of the core literacy that students should possess. UNESCO pointed out the importance of lifelong learning. It is necessary to cultivate students' core literacy by guiding lifelong learning. Core literacy can be acquired through school education and the interaction between human and society. The "International Student Assessment Program" launched by OECD in 1997 pointed out the connotation of students' core literacy at three levels: The ability to use tools interactively; The ability to act independently; The ability to interact in different social groups. In March 2002, the European Union put forward eight-core literacy: communication in mother tongue, communication in foreign languages, mathematical literacy and basic science and technology literacy, digital literacy, learning to learn, social and civic literacy, initiative awareness and entrepreneurship, cultural awareness and cultural expression. In September 2016, China promulgated the Core Literacy of Chinese Students' Development, with the core aim of

cultivating "all-round development people," pointing out that the Core Literacy Framework of Chinese Students' Development consists of three areas: cultural foundation, independent development, and social participation, covering six literacy systems: humanistic heritage, scientific spirit, learning to learn, healthy life, responsibility, and practical innovation [1]. English Curriculum Standard for Ordinary Senior High School (2020 Edition) proposes that the core literacy of English subjects includes four dimensions: language ability, cultural awareness, thinking quality, and learning ability [2]. With the reform in recent years, the new series of textbooks has strengthened students' core literacy examination and penetration.

## **2.2. The Connotation of Teacher Professional Development**

Teachers' professional development refers to how teachers, as independent individuals, consciously promote their comprehensive ability from immature to relatively mature after joining the post. It emphasizes that teachers promote the development and promotion of their quality and teaching ability through autonomous learning and reflection, which is a relatively active process. English teachers should possess systematic professional knowledge and comprehensive professional ability and become popular knowledge transmitters among students, combining their professional experience with corresponding subject knowledge and combining book knowledge with students' real life and emotional state, so that they can form autonomous learning ability and the perspective of world culture, and thus become socialist builders and successors with international vision.

## **3. The Present Situation of Professional Development of English Teachers in Senior High Schools**

Based on the definitions of teachers' core literacy by countries and educational organizations worldwide, teachers' core literacy can be divided into two-dimensional, three-dimensional, four-dimensional, and integration theories [3]. The two-dimensional theory holds that knowledge and skills constitute the core literacy of teachers. The three-dimensional view explains teachers' core literacy from three aspects: from the perspective of different fields, it is divided into professional fields, teaching fields, and school fields; From different roles, it can be divided into professional knowledge, professional practice, and professional participation. From the perspective of teachers' professional standards, it can be divided into professional ideas and ethics, professional expertise, and professional ability. The four-dimensional theory defines teachers' core literacy from four aspects: cognitive literacy, introspection literacy, interpersonal literacy, and teaching literacy. According to the fusion theory, teachers' core literacy results from the comprehensive action of various factors, which can be generally explained from the perspective of teachers' orientation and the combination of teachers and students. Teachers' literacy directly affects students' physical and mental development, which is the total of teachers' psychological qualities that affect students' physical and mental development. It mainly includes professional ideals, knowledge level, educational concepts, teaching monitoring ability, and teaching behaviors and strategies. Jiang Yu and Xin Tao put forward that the core literacy of teachers includes knowledge literacy, ability literacy, ethics literacy, and practical wisdom [4]. Lin Chongde proposed that language teachers' professional quality should include teaching theory, communication skills, reasoning, decision-making skills, subject professional knowledge, social culture, and professional background knowledge [5]. Jiang Yiqin found through investigation that the core literacy level of English teachers in senior high schools in China is relatively high, and there is no significant difference in title. School infrastructure, training opportunities, self-improvement awareness, colleagues' mutual assistance, teaching seminars, and other factors affect the development level of their core literacy [6].

### **3.1. Weak in Professional Ability**

Due to the special geographical location and traffic conditions, English teachers in senior high schools in rural areas are weak, and the entry threshold for teachers is low. Their educational level is concentrated in junior colleges and technical secondary schools, and there are fewer teachers with bachelor's degrees. Their professional titles are generally low, mainly focused on the first and second-class titles, with fewer senior titles. Moreover, English teachers in rural high schools are primarily substituting teachers, and most of them have not received professional training. In addition, the centralized training time for teachers provided by schools is short, and the content is straightforward, which leads to their lack of teaching ability. All in all, English teachers in rural high schools are weak in professional competence.

### **3.2. Lack of Quality Education Concept**

Senior high school is the key period for students to form their outlook on life and values. Teachers should play an exemplary role and guide them to establish a correct outlook on life and values. English is different from other subjects in that students will come into contact with the cultures and social phenomena of English-speaking countries in learning English knowledge. Therefore, as disseminators of knowledge and culture, high school English teachers should not only pay attention to students' acquisition of language knowledge but also consciously cultivate their cultural awareness and thinking quality, help them form multicultural awareness, and promote the formation of their excellent character and comprehensive quality. However, the survey found that English teachers in senior high schools generally only pay attention to the explanation of superficial English knowledge, neglect the comparative input of Chinese and foreign cultures, and typically neglect the cultivation and development of students' thinking ability. For example, when teaching an article about the origin and customs of Christmas in the West, teachers often only explain the keywords, sentence patterns, grammar knowledge, and so on in the article, without realizing that some cultural comparison tasks should be added, such as comparing Christmas in the West with Spring Festival in China, so that students can improve their ability of comparison, analysis and summary through contrast, to rationally look at the cultural differences between China and the West and enhance cultural self-confidence.

### **4. Factors Affecting the Professional Development**

Factors affecting teachers' professional development can be divided into internal and external environmental factors. Internal factors include teachers' knowledge level, ability to process information, ability to adapt to new things, self-improvement motivation and power, and ability to deal with the relationship between people and society. External factors mainly include social and ethical standards, social needs, the evaluation mechanism of teachers' professional level, students' knowledge and ability needs, and the relationship between teachers and society.

From the analysis of teachers' internal factors, teachers' knowledge level should include subject knowledge, teaching method knowledge, culture, religion, and social science knowledge. Australian Teachers' Professional Standards points out that teachers should have diversified knowledge to fully understand students' backgrounds and better realize knowledge transfer. Jiang Yiqin pointed out in the investigation and research on the core literacy of English teachers in senior high schools that male teachers scored higher than female teachers in the subject teaching knowledge of integrated technology (TPCK), which showed that gender factors influenced teachers' ability of information processing; The adaptability of older teachers to new things in the times is lower than that of younger teachers [6]. The fundamental driving force of teachers' development lies in their self-improvement consciousness and ability. Teachers' ability to deal with the relationship between man and nature, man and society and man and self also affects their professional development.

From the analysis of external environmental factors, social and ethical standards affect the values conveyed by teachers in teaching. Social needs reflect what kind of people need to be trained. The evaluation mechanism of teachers' professional level involves the motivation of teachers' professional development. A perfect evaluation mechanism can arouse enthusiasm for teachers' development and stimulate their potential. Students' knowledge and ability needs also affect teachers' professional development levels. Communication and competition among colleagues will also affect the professional development level of teachers.

### **5. The Professional Development Path**

The path of teachers' professional development should not be determined solely by students' development needs. School education is an activity in which teachers influence students purposefully, plan and organize according to specific social conditions and the laws of their physical and mental development, and urge them to develop and change in the desired direction. Therefore, the development path of teachers' subject knowledge should not be completely determined by students' core literacy. However, the essence of education is always to cultivate people's social activities. Therefore, the development path of teachers' subject knowledge should be determined based on teachers' core literacy and students' core literacy, combined with the factors affecting the development of teachers' subject knowledge.

### ***5.1. Formulating Unified Basic Principles***

Countries worldwide have introduced detailed rules for teacher training programs based on core literacy in recent years. For example, to promote teacher training more effectively, the United States has successively issued a series of policy documents: Professional Development: A Guide to the Implementation of Core Literacy in the 21st Century, Professional Development of Teachers in the 21st Century, and Knowledge and Skills of Pre-service Teachers in the 21st Century; Japan has formulated relevant documents on core literacy and subject curriculum development and put forward the integrated measures of integrating teacher training, admission and further study. The National Institute of Education of Singapore has published the 21 Practical Teacher Education Model, and so on. China has explored and introduced new curriculum standards in recent years' education reform and pointed out the core literacy content of students. Although many educational scholars have published teacher training programs based on core literacy in educational forums and educational achievements, there is still a lack of unified basic principles and instructions nationwide. Only by issuing a unified guiding principle of teacher training based on core literacy can teachers' professional development be effectively promoted.

### ***5.2. Strengthening Teacher Training Programs***

All schools should provide convenient conditions for teachers' professional development, increase support for offline practical activities, and improve academic exchange methods and opportunities. If front-line teachers are separated from students, their professional development level can only stay at the theoretical level. On the one hand, teaching activities can better deepen teachers' understanding of academic knowledge. On the other hand, they can test their professional development. School teaching activities should reflect the importance of core literacy. The administrative department of education should make overall arrangements, improve the training mechanism, rationally allocate and integrate resources, improve teachers' awareness and ability to use modern teaching facilities, and promote exchanges among teachers of different ages, genders, educational backgrounds, qualifications, schools, and regions. The administrative department of education should strengthen the implementation of online training programs and encourage teachers to use vacation time to conduct theoretical studies and summarize phased achievements. At the same time, the education administrative department should formulate a comprehensive evaluation mechanism for teachers' professional development and implement pre-service training based on core literacy to promote teachers' professional knowledge development. In teaching practice, teachers should modify and adjust their learning tasks according to teaching objectives, form personalized classroom learning activities, and incorporate core literacy into classroom activities to influence students and improve their core literacy level.

### ***5.3. Promoting Teachers' Self-development***

Teachers' professional development has subjective initiative. Rigid external forces will inevitably fail to promote the development of teachers' internal professional level. Therefore, teachers should change the concept of responsibility, correctly analyze the main factors that affect their professional development, deeply understand the connotation of literacy and the externalization of ability, and realize that the more effective self-development based on teachers' internal needs, the more effective self-development based on teachers' fresh experience, and the more effective teaching results that learners reflect on themselves. Teachers need to improve their professional level and self-development awareness through critical thinking mode in complex teaching activities and realize that teaching based on core literacy is conducive to the improvement of students' core literacy, the infiltration of subject knowledge, the edit of students' learning level, the progress of society and the development of national education.

## **6. Conclusions**

A strong country must first strengthen education, and a vital education must first enhance teachers. In the new era, English teachers' professional development faces many opportunities and challenges, and core literacy puts forward higher requirements for them. Under this background, high school English teachers should constantly improve their professional ability, actively explore, diligently summarize, be good at reflection and actively innovate in teaching, pay attention to the all-round development of students, and make themselves have broader development prospects.

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