

# Research on the Implementation of Apprenticeship System in Primary School in Wuhan--A Study Based on Interview

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**Abstract:** *Apprenticeship is a common school-based training method for new teachers. Although the apprenticeship system is of great significance for the professional development of new teachers, and it has gradually become the main training form for training new teachers in primary and secondary schools, there is little research on the actual operation effect of the apprenticeship system. Aiming at this problem, the researchers visited the front line of teaching and selected new and old teachers at different levels of primary schools in Wuhan to interview, trying to understand the true situation of the apprenticeship system in primary schools in Wuhan.*

**Keywords:** *apprenticeship, primary school, implementation, interview*

## 1. Introduction

From the perspective of the development trend of global teacher education, teacher specialization has become the consensus of all countries. The study finds that new teachers face more complex and more difficult professional development problems than teachers in other stages. Faced with such situation, almost all countries have chosen the apprenticeship system as the method to guide new teachers in the new teacher induction plan. Many primary and secondary schools in China have also adopted the apprenticeship system as an important way for the professional development of new teachers.

The apprenticeship system has been running for a long time in the school-based training of primary school teachers in China. As an important way of professionalization in the beginning stage of new teachers, what is the actual operation of apprenticeship in education and teaching practice? Can teachers' professionalization be promoted? What problems should be solved in the implementation of the apprenticeship system? This study will take the new teachers and mentors in the primary schools carrying out the apprenticeship system in Wuhan as the research object, and do research on the apprenticeship system from the needs of new teachers, the appointment process of instructors, the ways and methods taken in the apprenticeship system, the evaluation of the apprenticeship system, the problems and difficulties existing in the implementation process and the suggestions of teachers, in order to know the specific implementation of the apprenticeship system in the primary schools of Wuhan.

In order to have a deeper understanding of the real situation of the apprenticeship system in primary schools in Wuhan, the problems existing in the apprenticeship system, and the voice of front-line teachers. After a large number of initial unstructured interviews with teachers in around 20 primary schools in each district, the researchers focus on several different levels and categories but representative primary schools in Wuhan.

Primary school A is an ordinary primary school in a well-developed area, but it has a long history. In recent years, the teaching quality has been continuously improved. Schools have made remarkable achievements in education and teaching, and obtained good social responses. In recent years, due to the continuous development of the school, teaching scale continues to expand, and new teachers become more and more. As its main way to cultivate new teachers, the apprenticeship system has begun to take shape. It is convenient to select the research target. And principals and other managers are very open and willing to accept this research, so the resistance of research is small. Primary school B is a model primary school in a well-developed area, also commonly known as "key primary school", with excellent school teachers and good social reputation. "Teacher-apprentice pairing" is also the main way

to train the new teachers. Primary school C is a window primary school in the new district. Primary school D is an ordinary primary school in an old district. Primary school E is an ordinary primary school in the new district. Primary school F is a key primary school in an old district, with extremely high-quality education resources. As Primary School F is a very famous high-quality primary school in Wuhan, there are not so many new teachers, and teachers are very busy. Thus, fewer samples are selected in this research process. I choose these different types of primary schools in order to facilitate comparison and analogy and make the research representative. 10 new teachers and 9 instructors are selected from these primary schools for interviews. There are overall 5 male teachers and 14 female teachers. A detailed interview is conducted on the new and old teachers from five aspects including the needs of new teachers, the appointment of tutors, the content of the apprenticeship system, the evaluation of the apprenticeship system and the problems existing in the apprenticeship system.

New teachers: Ms. Wang, whose teaching subject is mathematics, worked since September 2016, is now in charge of a second-grade class. Ms. Li, whose teaching subject is mathematics, has just participated in the work this year. He has been practicing for one month in June, and officially went to work in September without being in charge of any class. Ms. Zhang, whose teaching subject is Chinese, has so far worked for two years. She was in charge of a fourth-grade class previously and now is in charge of a first-grade class. Ms. Liang, whose teaching subject is English, officially went to work in September 2017 without being in charge of any class. Mr. Chen, whose teaching subject is mathematics, has just participated in the work this year without being in charge of any class. Ms. Liu, whose teaching subject is Chinese, has two-year work experience and is in charge. Mr. Jiang, a science teacher, served as secretary of the League branch, has been teaching for two years. Ms. Song, a mathematics teacher, has taught for two years. Ms. Ye, a Chinese language teacher, has been teaching for 3 years. Ms. Xiong, a Chinese language teacher, has been teaching for 3 years.

Experienced teachers: Mr. Zhan, whose subject is mathematics, is a teacher with 12 years of rich teaching experience without being in charge of any class. Ms. Huang, whose teaching subject is mathematics, participated in the work in 1999 with 12 years of rich teaching experience. She has brought several good apprentices. Ms. Hu, who teaches English and has 11 years of rich teaching experience, is not in charge of any class. Mr. Dong, whose subject is mathematics, is a teacher with 17 years of rich teaching experience. He was not in charge of any class in the previous several years but now he is. Ms. Wan, an English teacher and excellent teacher, has been teaching for 30 years. Mr. Liu, a science teacher, has been teaching for 20 years. Ms. Yang, a mathematics teacher, has been teaching for 15 years. Ms. Zhu, an English teacher with 13-year experience. Ms. Wang, a Chinese teacher, has been teaching for 20 years.

These interviews are set with the needs of new teachers, the determination process of tutors, the methods of apprenticeship, the evaluation of apprenticeship, and the problems, difficulties and suggestions of teachers in the implementation process. The interviews with tutors and new teachers are carried out respectively. The outline of the interview is shown in the appendix.

## 2. The needs of New Teachers

The instructor or counselor of the new teacher should adopt a targeted teaching method and teaching content for the new teacher to help the new teacher go through this transition period smoothly and establish higher teaching expectations. Therefore, the instructor should have a clearer understanding of where the new teacher is weak and where it needs help. The purpose of this interview is mainly to understand the confusion and needs of newly recruited teachers in the early stage of employment, what kind of guidance they hope to get from the instructor, and to explore the instructor's understanding of the needs of newly recruited teachers.

The American scholar Veenman has summarized 83 empirical studies in various countries from 1960 to 1983, and pointed out that the problems encountered by new teachers are mainly concentrated in 24 areas, including: classroom discipline, motivating students, dealing with individual differences, and evaluating homework, relationship with parents, organization of class activities, lack of teaching materials and equipment, handling individual student problems, excessive teaching burden due to insufficient preparation time, relationship with colleagues, formulation of teaching and teaching plans, effective use of various teaching methods, awareness of school policies and rules, determination of students' learning level, subject knowledge and administrative workload, relationship with principals and administrative staff, insufficient school equipment, dealing with students with learning difficulties, dealing with students from different cultures and disadvantaged backgrounds, effective use of textbooks and course guides, lack of leisure time, lack of guidance and support, and large class size.

From the interviews, the author found that the professional development confusion and needs of new teachers are mainly concentrated in teaching, class management, interpersonal communication and time allocation. This is basically consistent with Veenman's research, but under the Chinese education system, new teachers still have some "Chinese characteristics problem". For example, they seldom know how to understand the characteristics of students. New teachers lack parenting experience, and they are used to thinking about as adults. The problem is that it is impossible to accurately understand the needs of students. New teachers are not very clear about their own development plans, which should be caused by inaccurate positioning of themselves. These need to be guided by instructors. In recent years, as more and more parents participate in the daily learning and management of students, the confusion of new teachers is also concentrated in how to communicate effectively with the parents of students. In addition, there are doubts about the construction of class culture, the management of students with learning difficulties, the handling of emergencies in the class, and the relationship with students. Combined with the personal development plan, it is found that the needs of new teachers in the first year are basically to adapt to the environment as soon as possible, and then, they hope to form their own characteristics and have the opportunity to compete in teaching a lesson.

The instructors' demands assessment of new teachers is mainly obtained by talks, listening to classes, and checking of personal development plans. The demand assessment of new teachers is not carried out when they first enter the school, but in the process of instructing. However, when instructors evaluate the demands of new teachers, they still focus on diagnostics. When it comes to the teaching and class management of new teachers, the instructors usually concern their own requirements, but not the needs of new teachers. Therefore, there is certain degree of discrepancy in these two aspects.

### 3. The Appointment of the Instructor

The instructor plays an important role in the master-apprentice pairing. It can be seen from my interviews that when many new teachers and old teachers share their own experiences, they affirm that instructors play an irreplaceable role in the formation of new teachers' teaching habits and the shaping of teaching styles. Then, by what procedure are the instructors selected? What kind of person can act as an instructor in fact? What qualities do new teachers hope to instruct teachers? What do they expect from the instructors?

According to the research of foreign scholars, in the principle of selecting instructors, it generally includes the following six aspects. First, one has strong teaching ability. It is generally believed that teachers with 8-15 years of teaching experience are the best. However, the strength of teaching ability cannot be judged only from the length of teaching years, but also the personal information resources of relevant instructors can be obtained through other channels for comprehensive judgment. Second is voluntary, responsible and enthusiastic. This is even the most significant. Third is capable to cooperate effectively with the others. First of all, the instructor should have swift judgment and the capability to listen to the others' voice. Then, the instructor should be an active member of the school's teaching team, so as to help the novice teacher to integrate into the teaching staff as soon as possible. Moreover, get the skills to manage pressure and be patient. Fourth is regarding teaching as one's own business. Fifth is reasonable collocation, including the grade and subject matching, having a consistent understanding of teaching and student views so that communication is convenient, convenient place and time, and same-sex matching? Sixth is the principle of flexibility. When instructors are not suitable for the new teachers, they should be re-arranged in time to avoid "guidance vacuum."

Through the interviews and investigations, it is found that the current primary school instructors are mainly administratively assigned, and they rarely apply for themselves. On the one hand, the new teachers have just entered the job, and the old teachers and new teachers are not familiar with each other. On the other hand, the instructors themselves are also very busy carrying out their work, so they are usually not very active. Some schools are more casual in the arrangement of instructors, and there is no opportunity for the two-way independent choice. The school assigns the instructor to follow the principles of excellent teaching ability, subject correspondence, similar personality, same teaching aspirations, and convenient location as mentioned in the above research, but it cannot follow the principle of flexibility well. The replacement of instructors involves many complicated factors such as interpersonal relationship, so it is very difficult to change.

In addition to the strong professional ability, initiative, patience and affinity, the instructors are also expected by the new teachers to not only have certain administrative powers to create opportunities for their future development, but also have time to guide them. In addition, the instructors are also hoped

to be able to complement their advantages.

#### **4. The analysis of the Content of the Apprenticeship System**

The responsibilities of the instructor are mainly embodied in the mentor-apprentice pairing plan and the mentor-apprentice agreement. But, how do the masters and apprentices understand these responsibilities in the actual operation process, and how do the instructors help new teachers grow? What do the new teachers learn from the instructor, and what content can't be learned through the pairing of mentors and apprentices?

Based on my interviews, it can be seen that the entire the apprenticeship system includes: 1. listening to classes to each other. The instructor is responsible for diagnosing the new teacher's class, and the new teacher is responsible for observing and learning from the instructor's class. This is the main form of mentor-apprentice pairing today. 2. Helping solve the problem in daily teaching. 3. Special guidance for open classes. Such general guide is very detailed. 4. Checking educational essays, reflections and teaching cases. 5. Exchanging of work methods of the class teacher. 6. Care for the life of new teachers. 7. The guidance of the instructor on the development plan of the new teacher. This performance is rather vague. It is usually interspersed in daily dialogues and exchanges, instructing teachers to make some requirements for new teachers, such as asking new teachers to actively participate in what activities. 8. Subtle influence on new teachers in the process of dealing with matters. This kind of influence is generally invisible, such as emotional, conceptual, and conviction. 9. Recommended articles, books, websites and videos outside of class. This is very rare, and only a few teachers implement it.

The teaching process is based on "discovering problems and then solving problems". There are generally three situations: 1. The new teachers find their own problems and ask the instructors for advice; 2. The instructors find the new teachers' problem, point it out, and give the solution; 3. The instructors find there are some issues in their own education experiences and remind the new teachers to pay attention.

#### **5. The Evaluation System of the Apprenticeship System**

Evaluation is the one, which belongs to a means of feedback. It refers to determining the meaning, value or state of the object through the detailed research. Effective evaluation has the functions of diagnosis, motivation and guidance. It can promote the development of apprenticeship. So in reality, how do schools evaluate the apprenticeship system when they implement it?

In essence, evaluation is a value judgment activity, which is the judgment of the degree to the object meeting the needs of the subject. In pedagogy, evaluation is usually divided into "formative evaluation" and "summative evaluation" according to its different purposes. Formative evaluation is the one that provides feedback information to ongoing educational activities by diagnosing the problems existing in educational programs or plans, educational processes and activities, so as to improve the quality of ongoing educational activities in practice. Unlike this, summative evaluation is a judgment on the educational effect after the occurrence of educational activities.

Evaluation is an important link and guarantee of teacher apprentice pairing. However, according to my interview, it can be seen that the school does not have much evaluation on the implementation of the teacher apprenticeship pairing. If there is, it is also based on summary evaluation, lack of formative evaluation, and there is no corresponding incentive policy. Through the interview, it is found that new teachers and instructors are very contradictory about the evaluation. On the one hand, they feel that it is very necessary for the school to promulgate the corresponding apprenticeship evaluation system and incentive; on the other hand, they are worried that it will increase their work burden and pressure. At the same time, they are also worried that the evaluation system will be unfair, which is more beneficial to the instructors and their apprentices who have the administrative power or are in the high position in school.

#### **6. Problems reflected in the Implementation of Apprenticeship System**

From my interviews, we can see that in the actual operation process, the biggest difficulty encountered by the apprenticeship system is the time shortage and time conflict between new and old

teachers. The instructors have so much work to do that they have no time and energy to guide the new teachers. New teachers have heavy tasks and busy in daily work, so they don't have time to implement the instructor's suggestions. New and old teachers have conflicts in time, and there is less matching time to listen to and communicate with each other. In addition, the instructing content is not based on the needs of new teachers. Besides, there is a general lack of guidance on the psychological problems of new teachers. The instructors' teaching method is relatively single. There is no perfect evaluation system of apprenticeship system, and there is also a lack of corresponding rules and regulations of apprenticeship system based on the characteristics of their school. The cooperation culture of apprenticeship system is relatively lack. As for the view that the apprenticeship system questioned by some people will hinder new teachers from forming their own teaching style because they imitate the instructor's teaching style, after investigation and interview, it has been unanimously denied by new and old teachers. In my opinion, this view actually denies the exertion of new teachers' subjective initiative, and I also hold a questioning attitude.

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## Appendix

The interview outline:

(1) Interviews with new teachers

1. As a new teacher, what difficulties and confusions have you had in teaching so far, and what are the main focus areas?

2. Do you think new teachers need induction training? What are the methods of training new teachers that you have been exposed to?

3. As a new teacher, what do you think you are lacking compared with experienced teachers?
  4. What qualities do you think a qualified teacher should have? Have you made a personal professional development plan?
  5. What kind of guidance did the instructor give you and what specific forms of guidance did you have?
  6. Do you seek help from the instructor when you meet some difficulties? Do you think the guidance of the instructor can help you solve these problems you have encountered?
  7. Do you think the instructor is helpful to the growth of new teachers? What is the biggest help? Are you qualified for education and teaching now? What are the positive effects of mentorship on your growth?
  8. What procedure did your instructor determine? Do you think he is of great help to you as your instructor? Are you obedient to his advice and guidance or a rational choice? What do you think are the advantages and disadvantages of this kind of pairing?
  9. Do you think you will have the shadow of your master in the future education and teaching? Will you teach in accordance with his teaching style?
  10. What kind of guidance do you want your instructor to give you? What does he teach you to do? What have you learned from your instructor? Do you think there are any things you can't learn? Why? Do you think his class knowledge and his skills are completely open to you without any reservation? Do you think he gives you all that he knows?
  11. Do you think your pairing is successful? Do you achieve the desired effect? Have the goals set by the school been achieved? (If the expected effect is not achieved, what are the reasons?)
  12. Talk about your suggestions to the instructor?
  13. Talk about your suggestions for improvement in the future?
  14. Talk about the suggestions for school management in the aspect of "master-apprentice pairing"?
- (2) Outline of the interview with the instructors
1. What difficulties do you think new teachers will encounter at the beginning of their employment? What are their professional development confusions?
  2. Do you think it is necessary to arrange an instructor for the new teacher?
  3. As an instructor, are you administratively assigned or voluntary?
  4. Does the school have specific regulations on what duties the instructor should perform? What are the difficulties encountered during the operation? Are your class skills and lesson plans fully open to your students? How do you feel about your apprentice? What aspects do you think your apprentice is worthy of recognition, and which aspects are lacking?
  5. Do you enjoy the cooperation? What are the factors that make you happy? If it is unpleasant, what are the reasons?
  6. Can you elaborate on the content and method of your teaching?
  7. How does the school assess the work of instructors? Are there corresponding assessment procedures and incentive measures? If there are, what are they? Are you satisfied with the school's evaluation of you as an instructor?
  8. Do you think that the mentorship system will cause your apprentices to completely follow you and try to solve the problems in education and teaching according to your thoughts?
  9. Do you think this way of masters and apprentices can help new teachers develop their professions well? To what extent do you think it meets the professional development needs of new teachers?
  10. Do you have any effective suggestions and opinions for improving the apprenticeship system?