

# Investigation and research on the development status of practical knowledge of senior high school English teachers ——a survey in a province of eastern China

Liang Songlin, Xie Min

*School of Foreign Languages, Ganan Normal University, Ganzhou 341000, China*

**ABSTRACT.** *In this study, we investigated the current situation of practical knowledge of English teachers in senior high school using a mixed-methods approach. A total of 164 senior high school English teachers completed questionnaires on their understanding of practical knowledge, and most of them participated in one-to-one interviews. Results showed that senior high school English teachers did not have a deep understanding of the concept of practical knowledge. The development of their practical knowledge had its own unique characteristics in the aspects of creation subject, developing path and influencing factors. Through the investigation of the status quo of practical knowledge of English teachers, this study aims to understand the problems and influencing factors of their practical knowledge, which is conducive to further research.*

**KEYWORDS:** *Senior high school English; Teaching; High school*

## 1. Introduction

### 1.1 Participants

In this study, 164 senior high school English teachers in an economically underdeveloped area in a province of eastern China were selected as the subjects to investigate their perception and understanding of the basic contents of practical knowledge. The following table shows the basic information of those teachers.

*Table 1 Participants' information*

Number	Gender		Teaching experience			Degree	
	Men	women	Less than 4 years'	5-10 Years'	More than 10 years'	Bachelor's degree	master's degree
164	44	120	31	104	29	141	23

### **1.2 Interviews**

We conducted interviews with three prepared questions, all related to the development of practical knowledge. The purpose is to further clarify the general English teachers' views on the practical knowledge. (1) which ways do you think can effectively promote "practical knowledge of English teachers"? (2) what is the environment of practical knowledge creation for English teachers in your school? What are the main problems? (3) what factors do you think affect the generation of practical knowledge for English teachers?

### **2. Questionnaire**

A questionnaire survey was conducted on English teachers with self-compiled "basic information table" and "questionnaire on practical knowledge of English teachers". Both tables focused on objective questions. "Table 1 Participants' information" referred to teachers' gender, teaching experience and educational background, aiming to have a specific understanding of the overall situation of this group as the basis for subsequent analysis. "Questionnaire on practical knowledge of English teachers" was composed of two items: one was a survey on the concept and category of practical knowledge of English teachers, which was intended to understand the self-perception of high school English teachers on practical knowledge. The second item mainly involved the concrete content of the creation of practical knowledge, including the creation subject, the generation way, the influencing factors and the creation environment.

In this survey, 164 questionnaires were distributed and 158 were recovered, among which 156 were valid. In addition to the questionnaire survey, we also conducted in-depth interviews to have a comprehensive and accurate grasp of the relevant situation.

### **3. Data Analysis**

Teachers' general understanding of the basic content of "practical knowledge". Through the survey (see table 2), it was found that 45% of English teachers were at the level of "knowing but not clear" about the concept of "practical knowledge", only 10% of them clearly knew its meaning, and as many as 13% of them had never heard of "teacher practical knowledge". The kinds of practical knowledge questionnaire statistics (table 3) showed that the vast majority of teachers thought that practical knowledge was both explicit knowledge and tacit knowledge, 47% of the teachers thought that tacit knowledge was the main body of practical knowledge and explicit knowledge was secondary, 38% teachers thought that explicit knowledge was the main body of practical knowledge, tacit knowledge was secondary.

*Table 2 Concept perception distribution of "teacher's practical knowledge"*

level	number	percentage
Clearly knowing its meaning,	16	10%
knowing but not clear	70	45%
Just hearing of	50	32%
Having never heard of	20	13%

*Table 3 The knowledge category of "teacher's practical knowledge"*

Item		number	percentage
Pure explicit knowledge		8	5%
Pure tacit knowledge		16	10%
both explicit knowledge and implicit knowledge.	Implicit knowledge is the main body, while explicit knowledge is the secondary	73	47%
	Explicit knowledge is the main body, while implicit knowledge is secondary	59	38%

The main body of practical knowledge generation of English teachers. Teachers' answers to item 2 of questionnaire "questionnaire on practical knowledge of English teachers" indicated that most teachers believed that teachers were the creative subjects of their practical knowledge, and that any training program of teacher education could only be supplementary.

Effective approaches to the realization of practical knowledge for English teachers. Through the analysis of related data, the vast majority of teachers thought that the most effective way to promote the practical knowledge was "grade preparing group activities", followed by the teacher and pupil in pairs, then in turn was: school English educational research group activities, intercollegiate peer exchanges of teachers, teaching competition, the last was teaching for discussion.

Factors influencing the generation of practical knowledge for English teachers. This study investigated various factors that might influence the formation of teachers' practical knowledge. (table 4).

*Table 4 Factors influencing teachers' practical knowledge*

Item	percentage	item	percentage
English learning experience	70%	English professional quality	52.3%
English teaching experience	67%	personal personality	46%
School environment	65%	gender	13%
teaching years	62%	professional titles	11.5%
Personal attitude	54%	Academic experience	10%

Results showed that more than half of the teachers thought personal English learning experience, teaching experience, the school environment, teachers' teaching experience, personal attitude and professional quality had a great influence on the generation of, at the same time, individual character was also a more important factor, a small number of teachers think that gender, job title and degree affect the generation of practical knowledge.

The environment for the creation and development of practical knowledge of English teachers. The environment for the creation and development of practical knowledge was actually the environment for the creation, transformation, sharing and use of knowledge. It could refer to both material space, virtual hypermaterial space (such as Blog, BBS BBS) and spiritual space (such as Shared experience, concept and ideal), or the combination of these types of space. The results of the questionnaire interview showed that although most teachers had a relatively fixed place or activity form to share and exchange practical knowledge, due to various reasons, teachers could not fully and freely express their personal experience, and as a result, the communication between teachers was often insufficient. Moreover, teachers were faced with a kind of depressed and restricted communication environment. Virtual space such as the Internet was a very convenient tool for teachers to communicate with each other. However, the interview content showed that it hardly played a role in the generation of teachers' practical knowledge.

#### **4. Results and findings**

The following conclusions are formed on the basis of data analysis:

The teachers second language (foreign language) learning and teaching experience have an important influence on the development of their practical knowledge[1]. In terms of teachers' learning experience, their knowledge of language is more from the informal learning environment, such as through extracurricular watching foreign film and television works, listening to foreign music, communicating with others in the real environment and other means to get to use the language knowledge, so in foreign language teaching in the future, he will encourage students to use these learning strategies in order to make students use the language knowledge. If a teacher learns a foreign language in a formal classroom environment as a student, it is likely that he or she will follow this teaching model in the future[2].

In the process of knowledge sharing, ordinary teachers, especially novice teachers, lack initiative[3]. No matter the activities of the lesson preparation group or the English teaching and research group, the right of speech basically belongs to the skilled teachers and expert teachers, while the novice teachers are often the audience or the critics, and seldom have the opportunity to express their views.

Teachers pay attention to acquiring practical knowledge from the teaching site, ignoring the important role of modern information technology, especially modern information network (Internet) as the path to acquire teachers' practical knowledge. The interviews show that in senior high school, the main ways to promote teachers'

practical knowledge development are: class preparation group activities, teacher-student pairing activities, senior English teaching and research group activities, inter-school peer teacher exchanges and teaching competitions, etc. These activities are not separated from the front line of teaching fundamentally, while modern information technology, which greatly promotes teachers' practical knowledge, hardly plays a role[4].

Teachers' individual initiative exerts great influence on the effectiveness of practical knowledge innovation. In the interview, when asked "what are the main reasons for the differences in the effectiveness of practical knowledge among English teachers? When, the vast majority of teachers think it is caused by the different degree of teachers' subjective initiative. The difference between teachers' sense of responsibility and professional identity is the main reason that affects the exertion of subjective initiative[5]. In addition, the personal character and leaders' recognition of teachers also affect the development of some teachers' practical knowledge.

## 5. Conclusion

Firstly, the practical knowledge of English teachers is complicated in reality. On the one hand, some teachers, especially the old teachers, have a high evaluation of their own practical knowledge; on the other hand, the actual situation of teachers' practical knowledge is obviously lower than teachers' self-evaluation. Most teachers cannot clearly understand the concept of "teacher's practical knowledge", and they simply understand "practical knowledge" as knowledge of subject content, knowledge of classroom teaching and management, while ignoring implicit aspects such as self-knowledge and educational belief. Secondly, there are many factors influencing the development of practical knowledge of English teachers. There is no doubt that individual teachers are the key internal factors for the development of practical knowledge[6]. However, the external environment also affects the improvement of teachers' practical knowledge. External factors such as national policy, social support and school environment also influence the generation of practical knowledge[7]. This shows that the generation of teachers' practical knowledge needs to be generated in a specific environment and positive atmosphere. In addition to teachers' own efforts, it is also an important factor for the country and place to provide good material and spiritual guarantee for teachers' professional development.

To sum up, in the face of reality, it is one of the core links to develop English teachers' professional quality to establish the concept that the generation of "teachers' practical knowledge" is the guarantee of teachers' professional development, and to provide teachers with free breathing time and space.

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