

## The Plight and Solution of the Professional Development of Young Teachers in Secondary Vocational Schools

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### Abstract

This paper provides possible solutions to the problems of young teachers' professional development in secondary vocational schools based on the professional teacher's standard. The students should first decide the orientation and design the plan, and then improve their own literacy in order to meet the professional teachers' standard, entering firms to practice and improve educational and teaching competence. In response to the teaching practice, they could apply reflective teaching. The secondary vocational school should increase investment to build a security and assessment mechanism.

**Key words:** Secondary vocational school; Young teachers' development; Problem; Solution

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### INTRODUCTION

With the economic and educational development of China, the vocational education develops rapidly. Secondary vocational education has occupied almost two thirds of vocational education and a half of the high school education in China. There are 12,000 secondary vocational schools with nearly 21 million students and 880 thousand teachers. The development of secondary vocational

education turns of number's increasing to intrinsic improving. *Outline of National Medium-and Long-Term Program for Education Reform and Development (2010-2020)* put forward that secondary vocational education should be strived to develop especially improving quality. In the background, vocational schools must centralize personnel training, which depends on high literacy teaching staff. Therefore, China enacted *Professional Standards for teachers of Secondary Vocational Education (Trial)* (hereinafter referred to as "professional standards") in 2013, which raised requirements from three demission: professional concept and teachers' ethics, professional knowledge and professional competence. Professional standards cover overall aspects like teaching, practical training, managing, assessing and researching, aiming to cultivate versatile teachers. What is the present situation of young teachers' professional development in secondary vocational education and what is the approach of development? This paper will discuss on it. Young teachers in this paper refer to begin teachers who have teacher certification, employed by schools, with 1 to 5-year teaching experience. Initially stepping into teaching, they may have several questions which impede their professional development. However, the stage is so important that it exactly influences their career orientation, deciding their professional competence and whether they will devote the whole lives to education.

### 1. INVESTIGATION AND ANALYSIS OF CURRENT SITUATION OF SECONDARY VOCATIONAL SCHOOLS YOUNG TEACHERS' PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPEMENT

This research is aimed at learning of education background as a secondary vocational school teacher experimental

teaching, Teaching reflection and their understanding of teaching etc. by individual interview. According to the interview, the respondents are asked to reply to a set of questions that are designed from the situation of secondary vocational school teacher's professional development on the basis of both "professional standards" and the survey about the current situation of primary and secondary school teachers' professionalization. By this way, we can have a rough idea of secondary

vocational school young teachers' professional development current situation and the plight we are faced with.

The subjects were the young teachers of three representative secondary vocational schools in Sichuan. 124 questionnaires were administered. There were 108 valid questionnaires and the valid returned rate was 87%. The basic information about secondary vocational school teachers as follows:

**Table 1**  
**The Schedule of the Basic Information About Secondary Vocational School Teachers**

Amount	Gender		Education background			"Double-qualified"	
	Male	Female	College	Bachelor	Master	Yes	No
Beginning teachers (numbers)	37	71	8	91	9	49	59
Proportion (percent)	34.2	65.8	7.4	84.2	8.3	45.3	54.7

From those data, we can make a conclusion in the following: Firstly, the young teachers in secondary vocational school have met the basic requirements. Compared with previous years, the percent of masters has increased by 8.3%, which creates more academic atmosphere. 84.2% of secondary vocational school's teachers are undergraduates. It reported that the problem of education background has almost been solved in recent years. Secondly, the main goal of teacher training in China's current situation is educating teachers to be "double-qualified". The proportion of "double-qualified" teacher is only 45.3% less than fifty percent of the total. And some of 18.2% of teachers have failed to get teacher certifications or prepare for it. There are 57.6% of teachers without vocational qualifications or any teaching experience or practice. Being a "double-qualified" teacher is a first step we have made. We still should work on it.

The questions in the questionnaire involved in the sense of professional development and professional concept can contribute to those conclusions as follows: 72.2% of young teachers in secondary vocational school are confused by the concept of "double-qualified teachers", and 11.8% of teachers they don't know the precise meaning about "double-qualified" where they have read it from school assessment materials or policy documents. 57.2% of teachers long for becoming "double-qualified" and being a head of the related field. 22.6% think they will be satisfied as long as being entitled to teach. Only 10.1% of teachers want to be a teacher at the municipal level or provincial level reach to the national level. It reflects that individual attitudes towards professional growth can give us a better understanding of the preference to begin teachers on professional concept. In another question "have you ever made a plan for your professional growth in the following 5 to 10 years?", only 19.8% answered "yes" without doubts and they even knew what their plans were while 65.4% showed they had thought about it but could not find a specific goal, and 12.3% didn't have clear professional orientation. 2.5% of teachers had never made a plan. We can find that most of young teachers don't have a strong

sense of development but they pay more attention to their futures. Only few teachers have a clear professional orientation and specific goals. In the opposite, it indicates the majority of beginning teachers are lacking in a sense of professional development and planning.

The qualities of a vocational teacher in professional knowledge and skills are including Vocational and Technical Education, Vocational Education and Psychology, and academic specialized knowledge. It is reported that: 78.2% of teachers have been given some subjects such as education, psychology foundation during the undergraduate or graduate. However, 11.6% of teachers show they didn't be trained until orientation. Only 4% young teachers have a training of the degree course and orientation owing to being short of the skill improving in specialized knowledge. In addition, the number of young teachers who are conscious of latest specialized knowledge and know well about the system is only 16.7%. They agree that their professional knowledge is connected with school training.

63% of young teachers are concerned about the teaching plan and practice in education and teaching competence. Moreover, they also pay attention to create innovative concept and skills of education, which implies young teachers are weakness of those fields. However, after-class feedback and summary make contribution to improve educational skills which 6.2% of young teachers approved of and put into practice. 66.9% of classes have moral education and 43.92% of those even target classes with one-on-one attention. Nerveless, 5.2% of teachers don't know how to deal with students. Therefore, those two factors make a great influence on adolescent education. Furthermore, looking into the teaching quality of young teachers, we find that young teachers have the advantage of applying multi-media to practice but they can't appeal to students to focus on their classes well owing to lack of teaching experience. In fact, young teachers are not good at introducing students to put the knowledge into effect so that most of the students can't adjust to the career life after graduation from school.

Currently, teaching and scientific research plays a vital role in educational reform. On the one hand, 18.8% of young teachers have published two papers or above. On the contrary, 78.2% are less than one. There are still 2% of young teachers said that they didn't intend to study recently on education and teaching research. On the other hand, 16.2% of them have published paper which contains 2.6% of university-enterprise cooperation at the provincial level or has in hand. Most of papers are theoretic. In conclusion, we still need to work on teaching and scientific research though we don't set a clear goal.

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## **2. THE PLIGHT OF YOUNG TEACHERS' PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT IN SECONDARY VOCATIONAL EDUCATION**

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### **2.1 Weak Sense of Professional Development**

With development of secondary vocational education, many schools make efforts to teach staff construction, including requirements of education background, academic degree, professional title, classroom teaching, teaching research and curricula construction. However, they failed to realize it from the perspective of teacher professionalization and did not give scientific guidance to young teachers. Most young teachers just graduated from universities, received simple pre-job training and be pushed on the job before they fully separated from student lives. They did not recognize the coming role of secondary vocational teacher clearly and did not complete the role changing. Their teaching-oriented concept leads to their over attention to how to teach and less attention to self-professional development. Their weak sense of professional development makes them ignore scientific development plan. Some young teachers just equal professional development to degree and knowledge increasing, and some beginning teachers confuse "double-qualified" with "double-title" and "double-certificate". The blur causes a bad influence on their whole professional planning and development.

### **2.2 The Lack of Professional Knowledge**

Vocational education is job-oriented, which means excepting essential educational and teaching knowledge, teachers must also know the professional orientation, occupational qualification and standard, employment standard of graduate counterparts and job responsibility. Professional standards propose four domains of secondary vocational education knowledge: education, professional background, course teaching, and generals. But most young teachers have not received systematic teachers' education, lacking educational knowledge, such as basic concepts, course design, teaching characteristics of vocational education, the psychological characteristics

of secondary vocational students, and the specialty and peculiarity of secondary vocational education. What are the differences between the students of secondary vocational and general education? Whether should it be different from other education of the educational goal and teaching method? What competence should vocational school teachers have? They surely had no chance to deeply think questions above, letting alone the employment standard or industrial standard.

### **2.3 The Lack of Educating and Teaching Ability**

After graduation many young teachers are employed directly to secondary vocational schools to teach. Without any teaching experience or practice, they receive bad educating and teaching effect. Bader (2000) thought future teachers can hardly teach in practice by action system instead of discipline system, because the universities cultivate future vocational school teachers based on discipline system. The young teachers have only learned abstract, discipline systematic structural knowledge, so they cannot skillfully combine subject knowledge with practice to convey more purposeful and practical knowledge to students, neither can they effectively manage them. Although most secondary vocational schools will provide related training for young teachers, the training is either too short, or with too simple contents and single method. Secondary vocational school students are unrestrained, rebel, and having study problems, bringing too many questions to teachers. While many young teachers shoulder heavy teaching tasks, so they have little time for teaching reflection or improving teaching competence.

### **2.4 The Lack of Research Ability**

In response to reform of secondary vocational education, teachers should be excellent in research besides with professional knowledge and skills. There are three aspects reflecting the lack of research ability of these young teachers. First, they fail to realize the importance of it. The purpose of making research is improving professional technical position, if not they would rather work on classroom teaching. Second, although they attend to some research, lacking professional practical experience, they prefer theoretical ones. Third, limited cooperation between school and enterprise impedes their attendance in technical research and development or product promotion.

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## **3. SOLUTIONS TO SECONDARY VOCATIONAL SCHOOL TEACHERS' PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT**

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### **3.1 Clear Professional Orientation and Make Plan to Develop "Double-Qualified" Teacher**

A proper plan help teachers fast devote them to work, so they will not lose faith or leave office because of

frustration. In the beginning of the job, they will make plan for the whole professional career and clear the orientation. Young teachers should make plans as soon as they can in the guidance of tutors by self-study and practice. They should train their professional skills and systematically learn professional development and planning. For instance, they can attend training before working, including educational and teaching theories, the role of teachers in the new age, professional characteristics of teachers, interpersonal relationship and mental health education. The schools should instruct young teachers to work in experimental teaching and research teams for help, and to learn from experienced teachers, supporting their self-professional development.

### **3.2 Improve Competence Meeting the Professional Standards**

*Professional Standards for teachers of Secondary Vocational Education (Trial)* provide the orientation for teachers from several aspects below: a) Teachers should establish professional ideas, correct student concept, education concept, teaching concept and basic concepts of vocational education, complying with professional ethics of teachers; b) They should master professional knowledge and skills, comprehend latest development of the profession, know post setting, business process, technical regulations, and improve self-practical skills; c) They should practice valid teaching methods and educational skills; D) Based on characteristics of students age, they should learn class management, practice being class adviser, communicate with students' parents, guide students, response to emergency and maintain management of daily class life.

### **3.3 Practice in Firms and Improve Educational and Teaching Competence**

*Outline of National Medium-and Long-Term Program for Education Reform and Development (2010-2020)* enacts "Perfect regular teacher-to-firm practice system", and "schools arrange teachers to practice in firms to accumulate experiences and improve teaching ability". Secondary vocational schools produce similar requirements for teachers' practice in firms. So young teachers should actively exercise themselves in firms, learn company culture and new knowledge, master new crafts and skills. By using professional knowledge into work teams for product trial and equipment installation, teachers engage themselves in firms and improve skills, which in return increase contents to teach, making it more effective.

### **3.4 Take Reflective Teaching Based on Teaching Practice**

The knowledge of teachers is constituted by knowledge, conditional knowledge, and practical knowledge which highly educated young teachers lack. Practical knowledge has individuality, situationality and openness, received

by reflection of teaching practice. American famous educationist Dewey put human actions into Regular Activity and Recollect Activity. He believes that regular activity is conforming. It does not result in corresponding changes in behavior. However, recollect activity is a person cognize and evaluate of his action spontaneously. In the course of teaching, beginning teachers reflect on time can help themselves to develop to a higher level, teachers should focus on their own teaching process, and all-sidedly collect the information about their own teaching process. With a critical eye looks themselves, and analyze the process what he decided and the result.

Reflective ability is a main mark of teachers' professional development. Reflective teaching is an effective way of teachers' professional growing. The first step for growing and development is the self-reflection, self-evaluation and self-improvement of the teachers. Their development can only complete in teaching practice by continuous reflection. Young teachers should find problems in teaching, make pre-class plan and post-class analysis, discover the cause, summarize the experience and absorb them as practical knowledge to fulfill growing and development.

### **3.5 Invest More to Build Security and Assessment Mechanism**

Though the teachers' professional development is initial cause of teachers, the external environment support for young teachers is necessary. The development is not closed and isolated, but a continuous and long term process, needing professional organization help it operating. The institutional construction of young teachers' professional development provides a platform. Through the platform, teachers communicate with each other, complete knowledge structure, improve competence and finally reach the purpose of professional development. Adequate funding is importantly secure for development, if there is not, it cannot develop effectively. The secondary vocational schools should invest more for related construction. They should also build and complete assessment standards and title assessment system based on professional standards, guiding teachers to master their professional development goals and orientations and helping them to become qualified teachers.

### **3.6 Enhanced Peer Interaction, Provide Communication Platform for Young Teachers**

School should offer the platform to young teachers for their professional development. Firstly, full use of the power of teaching groups and enhance peer interaction, guiding beginning teachers professional development, through the combination of old and new teachers partner, set the "shadow teachers plan" which makes Beginning teachers under the guidance of experienced teachers learning teaching management experience, Completed as soon as possible to promote their role change; secondly, by observing teaching methods to enhance professional

exchanges between the teachers, to promote Beginning teachers' skills and professional development, stimulate the beginning teacher motivation to work. Thirdly, Enhance interaction between the schools, carry out activities to help beginning teachers to quickly complete the role change, combining theory and practice, they can find their own professional orientation in the process of observation and communication

### 3.7 Participate in All Levels of Teaching Basic Skills and Skills Competition

Vocational education system often holds a lot of skill games. Young teachers, especially teachers of vocational schools should regularly participate in teaching skills and professional skills competitions which can make them develop. Teachers participated in the basic game and skills competition, in this platform, whether States, lesson plan preparation, use of multimedia tools, and practical hands-on, Teachers can fully display their abilities, both a contest and exchange. This kind of activity not only exercise specialty teachers' teaching ability, but also increases their self-confidence to teach students. After the competition, there will be a team of teaching and technical experts come to the fore. Schools can recommend higher levels of these teachers organized by specialty teachers' teaching and skill games, it can greatly inspired teacher's enthusiasm, through the material and moral incentives to encourage more teachers are on their own to take part in various competitions, and put their skills to the students. In recent years both teachers and students of the school in various provincial and national skills contest to get a good result.

### CONCLUSION

Secondary vocational education is the type of education cultivate high-quality workers and skilled personnel, high-quality "double-qualified" teacher is the basic guarantee for the quality of personnel training. To strengthen the construction of vocational education connotation, and

strive to improve the level of vocational education school, need high-quality "double-qualified" teachers to guide. Young teachers as a new force in the secondary vocational school who are in a critical period of professional quality development, they have to face with many difficulties and challenges. From three aspects: national, schools and teachers' efforts, pre-service combined with post, through positive and effective strategies, in order to enrich the connotation of the professional constantly and improve professional structure, improve professional ability and professional level of growth and development. Eventually, every young teacher in secondary vocational school should grow up to become a meet "professional standards" qualified vocational education and the teaching of "double-qualified" teacher. That is a process of development in the direction of the final effort.

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