

## The Teacher Education in Ewha Womans University: Current Situation, Characteristics, and Experience

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### Abstract

With the implementation of the reform of teacher education, carrying out teacher education in Comprehensive Universities has become an important trend in South Korea in terms of training teachers. This paper makes an attempt to introduce the current situation of Ewha Womans University including its training program, curriculum, teaching methods, and in-service training, so as to learn from its abundant experience and provide a useful reference for the development of the teacher education in China.

**Key words:** Ewha womans university; College of education; Teacher education

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### INTRODUCTION

As the most prestigious private woman's university in South Korea, Ewha Womans University is also the largest integrated woman's university in the world. It upholds the educational philosophy of "truth, goodness and beauty". After years of development, it has trained a large number of outstanding female talents and has made great contributions to the cause of South Korean education. In particular, it should be noted that Ewha Womans University enjoys a unique tradition and style

in terms of teacher education. Up until now, it is still the sole private institution of higher education in South Korea which provides pre-service training for primary school teachers.

### 1. ORGANIZATION OF TEACHER EDUCATION IN EWHA WOMANS UNIVERSITY

Ewha Womans University is equipped with complete institutions for teacher education. In addition to the College of Education and Graduate Schools that provide pre-service training for primary and secondary school teachers, Graduate School of Education and Ewha Teacher Education Center also offer post-service training. College of Education, which was founded in 1951, is dedicated to training primary and secondary school teachers. Generally, the length of study for undergraduates is four years, aiming to train qualified teachers at all levels of education (early childhood, primary and secondary education). Besides, it also seeks to train leaders in the field of education and other academic fields. College of Education includes eleven departments such as Department of Education, Department of Early Childhood Education, and Department of Elementary Education, as well as encompasses affiliated primary and secondary schools, teacher training institutions, learning guidance labs and education research institutes. Besides, the master degree program and doctoral degree program for undergraduate majors in the College of Education are approved by Graduate Schools. This is in order to provide a higher level of teacher education for the graduates in College of Education, and to train their professional competence and leadership skills in the field of education, thus making them competent teachers and education experts. In line with the major setting in the College of Education, Graduate Schools open ten educational disciplines and

two interdisciplinary cooperation projects. Graduate School of Education in South Korea takes the lead in providing training and re-education to education specialists in the field of education development and social education. To be more specific, it is oriented towards teaching, research, and social services, offers a variety of qualification authentication and training to potential teachers, and further broadens and deepens those teachers' knowledge of the subject that they are going to teach, as well as improves their professional competence. Meanwhile, Ewha Graduate School of Education focuses on the research of professional theories and technologies in all fields of education, and continues to design courses in line with the postgraduate education program, as well as improves the quality of teaching. Five semesters of evening courses are set for the master's degree program.

Ewha Teacher Education Center, founded in 1995, is a subsidiary of the College of Education. It is responsible for providing in-service training for primary and secondary school teachers. Operating committee, curriculum committee, department of curriculum operation, department of research and development, and office have been set in Ewha Teacher Education Center. Moreover, Ewha Teacher Education Center could train in-service teachers in terms of their qualifications and professional level, and provide them with higher vocational qualification training. Beyond that, it will research various issues related to teachers, exchange information with relevant agencies at home and abroad, as well as study other matters necessary for primary and secondary school teachers' training.

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## 2. BASIC CONTENTS OF TEACHER EDUCATION IN EWHA WOMANS UNIVERSITY

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The College of Education in Ewha Womans University is the main battlefield to train future teachers. It includes the Department of Education, Department of Early Childhood Education, Department of Elementary Education, Department of Educational Technology, Department of Special Education, Department of English Education, Department of Social Studies Education, Department of Korean Education, Department of Science Education, and Department of Mathematics Education. Fresh Students in the College of Education have to get registered under different majors. Then they should accordingly choose relevant courses in line with the requirements of majors and then obtain degrees.

### 2.1 Training Program

The College of Education in Ewha Woman's University has always upheld the Christian spirit and the educational philosophy of "truth, goodness and beauty", and has set

the goal of training creative and self-leading talents. In the past decades, early childhood education as well as primary and secondary education has earnestly adhered to this training mode, coupled with the implementation of globalized teacher education combining both theory and practice. With regard to the graduation requirements, College of Education has specified: students have to study for 8 to 16 semesters; their overall GPA must not be less than 1.7; they must obtain a minimum of 135 credits; and a graduation thesis should be submitted. There are also specific requirements for graduates' employment; for instance, students graduating from the Department of Early Childhood Education can obtain a second-level certificate for kindergarten teacher and a second-level certificate for childcare teacher. Besides, they can serve as teachers or principals in public and private kindergartens, can work as researchers in the Institute of Early Childhood Education, and also can get engaged in the management of early childhood education based on their own working experience. As for the students graduating from the Department of Special Education, they can obtain a second-level certificate for special school teacher. As a rule, they will become special education workers in primary schools, and can also work as researchers or special education specialists in the Special Education Research Institute or the Institute for Social Welfare Research.

### 2.2 Curriculum

In order to improve the quality and professional level of teacher education, Ewha Womans University developed the Ewha Standards for Teacher Education (ESTE) in 2005. The "Standards" could improve the pre-service education for teachers, and could enable the future teachers to be professional educators who will uphold the spirit of Ewha Womans University. The curriculum of Ewha Womans University has articulated the standards for designing pre-service training courses for potential teachers which are composed of four parts, i.e. pedagogy, subject content learning, subject pedagogy, and educational practice. Pedagogy is about learning the basics of education, which aims to recognize the purpose and value of education, to understand the basic philosophies and historical background of education, to appreciate social, cultural, economic and political background related to education, as well as to understand school's education and learners' own development and learning, and so forth. Subject content learning is to learn the basic academic knowledge about disciplines, including the knowledge structure study and academic knowledge study. The purpose of studying knowledge structure is to grasp the core concepts of discipline as well as to master the relations between the concepts. At the meantime, related knowledge will be probed into so as to accelerate the accumulation of expertise. As for the study of academic knowledge, it is research on curriculum knowledge, which

is conducive to explain school education and to form relevant expertise about school's teaching curriculum. Subject pedagogy is related to impart subject knowledge to teachers. So it is a comprehensive study on subjects, learners, teaching and other knowledge, in which teaching content could be regarded as the most important knowledge including a subject's specific issues, problems, controversies, and the needs and abilities of organizing students in a diversified manner, as well as the methods taken to impart knowledge to students. The educational practice held by College of Education is to test the learned knowledge through practices, thus improving the basic practical abilities based on knowledge. Meanwhile, educational practice has always gone hand in hand with education courses so as to deepen the understanding of knowledge.

### 2.3 Teaching Methods

In order to improve the effectiveness of teacher education in Ewha Womans University, teaching should take into consideration three issues, namely, the concept, practice, and complexity of teacher education; thus five basic criteria of teaching have been proposed: Firstly, reflective teaching should be carried out. We should reconstruct the concept of teacher education through critically studying and reflecting on the nature of teacher education so as to better understand the concept of pre-service education for teachers and formulate lesson plans; secondly, the traditional teaching methods focusing on lecturing and reciting should be abandoned, and we should concentrate on learning the core concepts related to teacher education, and then develop a systematic understanding of teacher education; thirdly, teaching should be guided through educational practice, that is, the knowledge gained in the classroom should be used in educational practice, so as to enhance students' basic skill of using knowledge. At the same time, during this process, students could verify the knowledge they have grasped through practices. This could develop their organizational skills of basic knowledge; fourthly, teaching should be carried out before understanding the complexity of education so as to improve students' metacognition. To put in another way, we could organize students to observe classroom teaching, and provide them with opportunities to analyze and interpret the teaching of teachers; fifthly, cooperative learning must be emphasized. We should teach students not only to concern about their own study, but also to show concern about the study of their classmates, so that a cooperative learning method could be established, so could a favorable learning atmosphere.

### 2.4 In-service Training

In-service training of teachers is uniformly provided and managed by Ewha Teacher Education Center. It not only aims to provide teachers with high-quality training

opportunities that are in dire need at this stage, but also emphasizes training high-quality professional teachers.

In July 2009, Ewha Teacher Education Center joined hands with the Research Institute of Distance Education of the General Federation of Teacher Groups in South Korea to develop and research new training courses. At present days, this training program has expanded and extended to the fields of early childhood education, elementary education and special education that South Korean Education attaches importance to. For example, Ewha Teacher Education Center has opened two distance training courses for in-service teachers, namely, understanding and practice of children's literature as well as creative thinking and writing.

Among them, 60 hours are set for the course of understanding and practice of children's literature; the training target is the teachers in kindergartens and primary and secondary schools in South Korea as well as educational professionals; the objectives of this course are: first, to let them have a basic command of children's literature and education drama, and enable them to teach and learn in diverse activities after understanding the whole language education; the second is to let them master the teaching skills after learning and practicing the theories related to children's literature so that they could enhance children's creative thinking in practical activities; the third is to promote the physical and mental development of children, and work to help children grow into the talents needed by the social community. The content of this course includes understanding the education of children's literature, selection criteria of literary genres and works, new ideas in children's literature, pre-reading, while-reading and post-reading activities for children's literature education, and annual plan of reading children's literature.

As for the course of creative thinking and writing, it has a total of 30 hours of study. The training target is also the teachers in kindergartens and primary and secondary schools in South Korea as well as educational professionals. The general objective of this course is to enable them to deal with problems arising in teaching through learning how to guide students to write in terms of teaching theory and practice. The course content includes new paradigm of teaching writing, thinking and writing, reading and writing, discussing and writing, principles of making writing assessment, writing assessment and principles of revising writing, guiding principles of writing course, experiential and comprehensive guidance for writing, guidance for writing papers about humanities and society, guidance for writing science papers, guidance for writing multidisciplinary papers, classroom discussion conducted for writing, as well as writing course for entering a higher school and implementation of oral class. In addition, Ewha Teacher Education Center also offers a number of qualification training courses, which intend to

provide in-service training for teachers in terms of other subjects.

### 3. CHARACTERISTICS AND EXPERIENCE

Based on the introduction and analysis mentioned above about the teacher education in Ewha Womans University, we can see that South Korea's comprehensive universities have made a contribution to the development of teacher education, and have established a comprehensive and specialized system for training teachers integrating development, training and research. It has well faced up to the challenges of the times for specialization of teacher education, and has formed its own characteristics. So we can learn from the experience.

#### 3.1 Combing Concreteness and Specificity When Setting Educational Objectives

According to the Article 44 of South Korea's "Higher Education Law", the College of Education and Department of Education in Universities of Education and Comprehensive Universities should have the following three basics in terms of teacher education: first, teachers should have firm values and sound ethics; second, teachers should have the philosophy of experiential education and should grasp specific practicing methods; third, teacher education should ensure that teachers will establish lifelong quality of being teacher and will have strong energies. Ewha Womans University indeed adheres to the basics, and upholds the educational philosophy of "truth, goodness and beauty". Moreover, it has designed targeted training goals for all its majors. For example, the major of Early Childhood Education in Ewha Womans University aim to develop professionals in the field of early childhood education, with particular emphasis on the future kindergarten teachers' understanding and developing children's language, body, cognition, and creative thinking. Students majoring in early childhood education must obtain certain credits, and must do internship teaching and accomplish thesis before sitting the examination to get the second-level certificate for kindergarten teachers and the second-level certificate for childcare teachers; The same is true for special education major. Due to the lack of special education teachers and the introduction of "Special Education Promotion Plan", private and public colleges of education in South Korea attach more importance to developing special education teachers. As is revealed by the objective of Ewha Womans University's special education major, the development of teachers needs to consider the reality of the current special education, and needs to focus on the formation of students' abilities of guiding, researching and managing. At the same time, the objective calls for developing special education programs that are in line with the

needs of future society, so as to form students' ability of appropriately using special education information. Special education major requires students to complete four years of academic learning tasks before graduation through graduation exam. Graduates could receive a second-level certificate for special education school teachers, and could become special education workers in primary schools. Therefore, it is apparent that such objective setting has enabled the College of Education in Ewha Womans University to enjoy a more clear goal in teacher education, and that each institution has its own specific educational objective without departing from the overall educational philosophy.

#### 3.2 Combing Diversity in Science When Offering Pre-Service Training

When offering pre-service training, the teacher education of Ewha Womans University has combined diversity with science so as to accelerate comprehensive development of students. In this sense, Ewha Womans University has formed a relatively complete system of teachers' pre-service education. The details are as follows:

##### 3.2.1 Curriculum is Professional and Practical

The curriculum set by Ewha Womans University in terms of pre-service education for teachers not only attaches importance to improving students' academic level, but also focuses on enhancing their professional level. First, it has designed education courses which combine theory and practice, in order to enhance students' basic academic performance and professional accomplishment. According to South Korea's "Education Law", the curriculum of universities and colleges should include general education courses and academic courses, and it has specified the credits and hours that students have to accomplish. General education courses encompass the humanities, social sciences, natural sciences, Korean, second language and other subjects. This is the same with Ewha Womans University, whose College of Education has opened general education courses composed of basic education and core education. Furthermore, Ewha Womans University has regarded general education courses as the core areas of knowledge. So, considerable attention has been given by Ewha Womans University, in the hope of guiding students to master basic academic skills and basic research methods. With regard to academic courses, they aim to impart a wide range of disciplinary expertise to students, so that diversity could be achieved, avoiding sameness. At the same time, they will pave the way for students to acquire the basic qualities and professional skills necessary for being a teacher, and guide students to develop passion for the teaching work. All these could lay good foundation for their future professional education. Second, Ewha Womans University shows great concern to students' educational practice, and regards it as an important part of teacher education. In fact, the College



of Education at Ewha Womans University has established a complete system of educational practice. It not only includes the basic education on how to observe students as well as the regular internship training about how to guide primary and secondary school students, but also covers the appropriate education services. All these have been through students' whole learning period, so as to develop students' sense of mission and dedication towards education. Therefore, we could safely state that Ewha Womans University has enabled students to learn while participating in educational practices, and has made them continuously understand and study the actual situation of education. To some extent, students could constantly improve themselves in terms of teaching and could master teaching skills. And this could lay good foundation for their future work of being primary and secondary school teachers.

### 3.2.2 Teaching Methods Are Scientific and Diversified

In order to improve the quality of teacher education and promote professional training of teachers, the College of Education at Ewha Womans University attaches great importance to updating teaching methods. It has worked out a series of scientific teaching standards and thus has implemented a variety of teaching methods in the process of pre-service education for teachers. To be more specific, based on the three issues of teacher education, namely, the concept, practice and complexity of teacher education, Ewha Womans University has put forward five basic standards of teaching. Moreover, in order to make the standards more scientific and effective, it has taken a wide variety of teaching methods to develop students' expertise and abilities, thus improving the basic qualities required for students majoring in education. At the same time, the emphasis on teaching methods has also urged Ewha Womans University to continuously carry out interdisciplinary research activities. On the one hand, the College of Education actively carries out all kinds of interdisciplinary research and cooperation projects, and provides adequate financial and technical support, in order to adapt itself to the world which is becoming more international, sophisticated and informationized. On the other hand, the College sets up a number of research institutes, research centers and laboratories, gives support to teachers and students to carry out various studies and researches, and provides a wide range of scientific research services to the country's education. Such interdisciplinary teaching method not only increases students' choices, but also provides an opportunity for students to further their education and learning.

### 3.3 Combing Flexibility and Professionalism When Offering in-Service Education

The significant feature of Ewha Womans University's in-service education for teachers is flexibility in training

methods. It develops remote network teaching, group discussion, field work, delivering cases and others without using the traditional lecturing method. For example, Research Institute of Distance Education makes advantage of new technologies such as integrated audio-visual technology and network technology to conduct distance training for primary and secondary school teachers. Also, it tests the effectiveness of training through site inspection or on-line inspection. This allows teachers to learn and to do research according to their own conditions at different time and place. In this sense, such a flexible training method not only creates convenience for teachers and improve teachers' teaching skills, but also makes South Korea at a relatively higher level in terms of teachers' in-service training. In addition, the training content of Ewha Womans University is set by Ewha Teacher Research Institute, who is responsible for carrying out training program, according to the objectives and requirements of training. Ewha Teacher Research Institute has designed diverse and specific training courses, and each course has been set with limited learning hours and required credits. Moreover, the Institute also offers diversified training programs for teachers, so that teachers can learn what they want to learn by participating in these training programs, and can fully grasp the specific knowledge in this regard, broaden their academic horizon, and improve their professional level.

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## CONCLUSION

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After reviewing the characteristics of Ewha Womans University's teacher education, our universities and colleges should be more student-oriented when designing curriculum for students majoring in education, and should set general education courses focusing on basic qualities as well as set a wide variety of academic courses. Besides, in relation to teaching methods, our universities and colleges should improve students' self-learning ability, carry out a variety of interdisciplinary research projects, and ignite students' interest in researching. In terms of educational practice, we should run practices through students' training process, and set credits. With regard to the in-service training, we should give more attention to both the theory and methods, as well as avoid disconnection between theories and the actual research work.

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