A Comparative Study on the Professional Development of Teachers in China and British Universities

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Abstract. As global education reform continues to advance and the knowledge economy is booming, building a learning society has become an irresistible trend of social development. In this context, improving the professional development and literacy of college teachers will inevitably become a critical link and a significant force to promote the sustainable development of higher education, and it is an essential topic of higher education research in all countries in the world. This paper uses the approach of comparative research to study the historical evolution, connotation, and organization of teachers' professional development in Chinese and British universities. It found that the professional development of teachers in Chinese and British universities is macroscopically aimed at promoting the high-quality development of education and serving students and society. On the micro level, China pays attention to the integrity of the development of teachers in colleges and builds an education and training system from top to bottom, while in the UK, the government, professional organizations, and universities establish professional development institutions for teachers, which are independent and cooperative with each other; the financial support for teachers' professional development in the UK is flexible and diverse, while in China, the government allocates funds directly; the UK actively carries out international academic exchanges and cooperation for teachers' professional development, formulating rules and sharing experiences, while China pays more attention to domestic exchanges and cooperation for teachers' professional development, with less participation in international contacts.

Keywords: Chinese-English compare, University teachers, Professional development.

1. Introduction

The continuous development of higher education has put forward new requirements for the professional development of university teachers, and participation in continuous professional development activities has been identified as an indicator of the sustainable development goals of the United Nations. Only with a high-quality teaching team can the level of higher education be continuously improved, thereby promoting the progress of the entire society. Under the background of global education reform in the ascendant and efforts to build a learning society, the professional development of college teachers has become an important research topic for governments and educational professional institutions worldwide. The previous years, the professional development of teachers in British universities has made remarkable progress. The education community actively advocates the importance of teachers' professional development and is committed to improving teaching quality and innovation. In terms of teaching practice, colleges introduce advanced teaching methods to create a more interactive and participatory learning environment for students. In terms of teacher training, colleges set up special training courses to help teachers improve their classroom management, assessment, and feedback skills. In terms of teaching research, more and more teachers are devoting themselves to educational research, devoting themselves to discovering the best teaching practices and applying them in the classroom. Innovation in digital teaching has also received attention, and colleges and universities actively adopt advanced technological means, such as online learning platforms and virtual laboratories, to provide students with richer learning resources and experiences. In addition, colleges and universities provide teachers with diverse career paths, including promotions, leadership roles, and professional development programs, to support their growth in their professional paths. These efforts have jointly promoted significant progress in the professional development of teachers in British universities and positively contributed to the

cultivation of outstanding talents and the improvement of the quality of education. The professional development of teachers in Chinese universities has also made some progress, demonstrating their unremitting efforts in enhancing the standard of education, promoting innovation, and expanding the reform of teaching. Colleges and colleges keep bolstering the teaching force and enhancing instructors' instructional techniques and educational concepts by introducing outstanding talents, holding training courses, and carrying out exchange activities. Teachers actively explore innovative teaching methods, integrate the Internet and modern technology, carry out online and blended teaching, and create a more dynamic and interactive learning environment for students. In addition, colleges and universities also actively advocate interdisciplinary cooperation, promote exchanges and cooperation among teachers, expand the boundaries of education, and provide a broader platform for cultivating innovative talents. These comprehensive efforts and achievements have effectively promoted Chinese university teachers' professional development and played an essential role in cultivating outstanding talents and promoting social progress. Based on this background, this article will use a comparative method to sort out and analyze the historical evolution, connotation, and organization of the professional development of university teachers in China and the UK and provide constructive suggestions for further improving the quality and level of professional development of Chinese university teachers.

2. History of Professional Development of China and England Teachers

2.1. History of Professional Development of Teachers in the UK

In 1963, the British government released the Robbins Report, which focused on the professional development of teachers. In the context of the popularization of higher education, British universities have gradually begun to pay attention to the professional development of teachers. From the 1960s to the 1970s, British universities successively established teacher development institutions. In 1988, the British government promulgated the "Education Reform Act," which abolished the lifelong system of teachers and defined the relationship between schools and teachers as an employment relationship. Teachers need to improve themselves to meet the development of schools continuously. At the end of the 20th century, the government issued the "Deering Report," proposing establishing a diverse and effective teacher funding mechanism and a higher education quality assurance agency to evaluate the quality of disciplines and degrees in colleges and universities [1]. In the 21st century, global education and technology have rapidly progressed, and the British government has recognized the considerable challenges facing its higher education system. To this end, the Education and Skills Committee released the white paper "The Future of Higher Education" in 2003, clearly proposing promoting higher education's high-quality development, significantly improving teachers' teaching ability. The "Higher Education and Research Act (2017)" was passed by the UK government in 2017 to boost the sector's vibrancy and raise educational standards.

2.2. History of Professional Development of Teachers in China

In the early 1980s, after ten years of turmoil during the Cultural Revolution, Chinese education needed to restore order and began to rebuild. In 1985, the central government issued the "Decision of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China on the Reform of the Educational System," proposing systematic education reform. In terms of teachers, it emphasized the development of teacher training and other activities to promote the development of the teacher group and gradually restore the level of education [2]. The same year, the State Education Commission established two national-level college teacher training and exchange centers: the Beijing Center and the Wuhan Center for College Teacher Training Exchange of the Ministry of Education responsible for college teacher training. In 1996, the State Education Commission formally proposed the establishment of six regional college teacher training centers in the "Notice of the State Education Commission on Establishing Teacher Training Centers and Training Points in Higher Normal Schools." After completing the college teacher training centers in the six regions, to implement the national college

teacher development policy, each province in China has established provincial College Teacher Training Centers year by year to cooperate with the work of the district College Teacher Training Centers. The "Opinions on the Implementation of the Institutional Teaching Quality and Teaching Reform Project during the "Twelfth Five-Year Plan" Period," published in 2011 by the Chinese Ministry of Education and Ministry of Finance, proposed that each college establishes a teaching development center with its own characteristics [3].

3. Comparison of Chinese and English Teacher Professional Development Connotations

Different countries have different interpretations of the connotation of teacher professional development.

3.1. Connotation of Professional Development of British Teachers

In the "Standard for teachers' professional development" issued by the British government in 2016, it is pointed out that the meaning of professional development is unclear. Many phrases can be used to express it, such as professional learning, continuing professional development (CPD), continuing professional development and learning (CPDL), etc [4]. The standard shows that teachers' professional development aims to improve students' academic performance by improving their professional practical ability. In the realm of academia, the meaning of professional development can be condensed into the following two features: (1) From the perspective of the individual, when conducting professional development, learners accept the influence of more academic ideas and the regulation of technical paradigms to acquire knowledge and personal career growth (2) From the perspective of cooperation and collaboration, professional development emphasizes the influence of society on learners and focuses on professional communities or collaborative teams [5]. According to the first statement, teacher professional development emphasizes improving teachers' knowledge and skills or describes it as "the activity of developing personal skills, knowledge" as a teacher's strengths and other characteristics [6]. The second argument focuses on constructing social relations in teachers' professional development, placing teachers in groups, receiving support from teams and institutions, and connecting with society. The above two points of view show that the connotation of teachers' professional development in the UK is defined from two perspectives: teachers' personal and social relations.

3.2. Connotation of Professional Development of Chinese Teachers

Professor Pan Maoyuan believes that the connotation of teachers' professional development primarily focuses on three areas: academic level improvement, teacher professional knowledge and skill development, and instructors' moral character development [7]. Taiwanese scholar Chen Bixiang believes that the development of teachers in colleges and universities mainly refers to the positive impact of teachers on their professional development through research activities and advanced training in the teaching process, including teachers' self-understanding and self-thinking, to realize teachers' service to society, teaching, and research. The enhancement of ability, and then effectively improve the overall quality of education based on the original [8]. Moreover, in the long-term process of teachers' professional development in China, the main body initiative of teachers' professional development has gradually begun to be emphasized. The development of teachers in colleges is the generation of teachers' self-meaning and the initiation of initiative. It is a conscious development and improvement, which includes their experiential learning and reflection, their participation in academic activities, the development of teachers' professional knowledge and skills, and the improvement of teachers' moral cultivation [9].

3.3. Comparison of Connotations of Chinese and English Teachers' Professional Development

Through comparison, it is found that the connotations of the professional development of teachers in Chinese and British universities are different. First of all, from the definition perspective, the British expound and define the professional development of teachers from the perspective of individuals and groups; China defines it from the three dimensions of knowledge system, capability structure, and professionalism. Secondly, from the point of view of the definition method, the UK tends to present the specific content and methods in the definition from a micro perspective, while China makes a more abstract generalization from a macro perspective. Finally, from the description of the content, the professional development of teachers in China is influenced by traditional Chinese culture, focusing on constructing the spiritual level and emphasizing the improvement of teachers' morality, while the British do not involve the content of the spiritual level. The connotation of the development of Chinese and British university teachers is similar. In terms of goals, the ultimate goal of the professional development of Chinese and British university teachers is to promote the academic development of students by improving teachers' professional knowledge and teaching skills; in terms of methods, the development of teachers in Chinese and British universities both pay attention to the internal driving force and external support of teachers' professional development. The inner driving force emphasizes the initiative of teachers' personal development and the process of independent learning and reflection, while the external support refers to the support given by the government or professional institutions. In terms of form, both emphasize the personal development of teachers and their relationship with society and groups.

4. Comparison of Professional Development Institutions for Teachers in Chinese and British Universities

4.1. Government Organizations

4.1.1 United Kingdom

The UK government established the Office for Students (OfS) in 2018, which is the official UK higher education regulator. The agency is regulated and funded by the UK government. OFS is responsible for overseeing and promoting the quality and equity of higher education in the UK, aiming to ensure that all students have access to high-quality education and are adequately supported throughout their studies [10]. At the same time, OfS regards promoting the professional development of higher education teachers as a critical goal, mainly including providing financial support and establishing an evaluation system for the professional development of university teachers. Such as the Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF), an assessment guide for universities and colleges. It is stipulated in TEF that all universities and colleges regulated by OfS need to meet the minimum requirements for course quality and student achievement and define three ratings: "gold," "silver," and "bronze." Universities or colleges that meet the rating can receive additional funding and awards, and universities or colleges that fall short are rated as "needs improvement [11]." At the same time, the evaluation results of TEF can also be used as a competitive advantage for college teachers in the recruitment and promotion process. This assessment standard provides direction and impetus for the professional development of British universities and university teachers.

4.1.2 China

As Figure 1 shows, in China, the professional development of teachers follows a three-level training system in colleges and universities [12]. This includes training at the national, regional, and provincial levels. The first-level university teacher training system refers to two national training centers: Beijing Center and Wuhan Center for Teacher Training and Exchange in Higher Education of the Ministry of Education, which are directly answerable to the Ministry of Education. The second-level university teacher training system is the six regional training centers, whose responsibility is to organize and coordinate the provincial training centers in their regions to perform relevant tasks

according to the instructions of the Ministry of Education and national training centers. Regional training centers are located at the grassroots level and are the leading executive agencies.

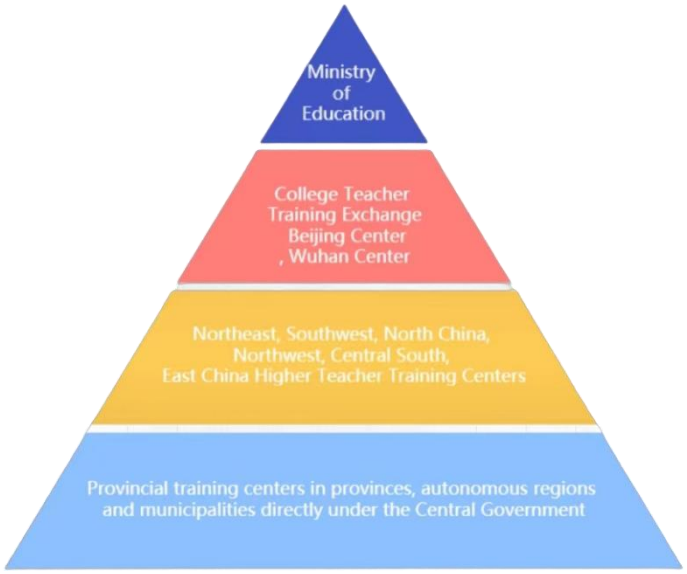

Figure 1. The three-level training system (Picture credit: Original)

The national university teacher training and exchange center aims to improve the teaching ability, scientific research ability, teacher morality, and management level of university teachers and carries out multi-type, multi-level, and multi-dimensional policy training and high-end training in a planned and targeted manner [13]. The training center carries out domestic and foreign training projects. Among them, domestic training is the focus, and projects such as pre-job training for college teachers, educational technology training, teaching ability training for young teachers, and scientific research ability are carried out.

4.2. Specialized Agencies

4.2.1 United Kingdom

Advance HE is a non-profit professional development organization for teachers in the UK. Its goal is to support higher education institutions in the UK and worldwide to improve teachers' professional competence and teaching quality. Advance HE is committed to providing UK and global partners with expertise and advanced experience, including professional development programs, training programs, awards and fellowships, surveys, and consultancy services [14]. For example, the Professional Standards Framework 2023, which is a set of standards jointly researched by scholars from 24 countries, is used to evaluate and develop the ability of educators and can be adopted by higher education institutions in different countries and regions, help them establish consistent teaching quality standards and expectations [15]. This framework provides unified standards and sets goals for the professional development of university teachers worldwide but also strengthens exchanges and references between countries to promote international educational development. In addition, outstanding scholars who meet the standards in PSF can also apply for four types of scholarships, Associate Fellowship, Fellowship, Senior Fellowship, and Principal Fellowship, in recognition of their positive educational impact [16].

4.2.2 China

Because China implements a three-level system of teacher training in Chinese universities under the unified leadership of the state, there is no independent and influential specialized agency to study the professional development of teachers.

4.3. School-based Organization

4.3.1 United Kingdom

In addition to government agencies and professional institutions, each university has established its own Center for Teaching and Learning (CTL) to promote the professional development of university teachers. CTL offers a wide range of services, including personalized consultative support for teaching staff, multi-subject structured learning courses, educational technology training, teaching development funds, and coordinates or encourages exchanges among faculty groups [17]. Such as the Advancing Teaching and Learning (ATL) program by the Center for Teaching and Learning of Oxford University. ATL is a teaching program that offers opportunities for teachers who want to advance their profession. Eligible individuals who complete the program are awarded Associate Fellow of the Higher Education Academy (AFHEA) post [18]. The Center for Teaching and Learning (CCTL) at the University of Cambridge has specially set up scholarships for teachers' professional development to encourage teachers: The Pilkington Prize, Outstanding Student Contribution to Education Award, Technology-Enabled Learning Prize, and Student-Led Teaching Awards [19].

4.3.2 China

Since 2011, Chinese colleges and universities have gradually established teacher-teaching development centers. The teaching development center of college teachers aims to promote the development of teachers' teaching abilities. It takes teacher training, teaching consultation, teaching academic exchanges, teaching seminars, and other activities as activities [20]. It offers a lot of support for instructors' professional growth. For example, the Teacher Development Center of Fudan University has launched a teaching development seminar using the combination of "online and offline," "knowledge learning, practical experience, independent reflection," "individual learning. The three-combined hybrid training mode combing ", peer review, and team discussion" has enriched and innovated the teacher training mode and promoted the enthusiasm of teachers for development [21]. In addition, the teacher development centers in different universities have different forms of activities. Still, the overall goal is to improve universities' overall teaching quality by promoting teachers' teaching and research level.

4.4. Comparison of Professional Development Institutions for Teachers in Chinese and British Universities

4.4.1 Institutional Construction

There are various types of construction subjects in British institutions, including teacher professional development institutions established by the government, professional organizations, and universities, which are independent and cooperative with each other; The construction of institutions in China has a single type of main body, only the hierarchical professional development institutions for college teachers led by the national government, and the teacher development centers at the national, regional, provincial, and college levels are unified with the Ministry of Education in charge and implement its orders.

4.4.2 Management Model

Teacher professional development institutions in the UK are independent and have their mission and willpower. Whether it is a professional institution or a teacher development center established by British universities, they can make flexible adjustments according to their education and teaching progress and reality. Government agencies mainly play the role of supervision and promotion; China's teacher development organization is a three-level teacher training system led by the state, "Beijing," "Wuhan Center" and the six major university teacher training centers affiliated to the Ministry of Education are information transfer stations and executors of orders, conveying the demands of the Ministry of Education to the training centers in various provinces and cities and implementing the notices issued by them.

4.4.3 Teaching Functions

British institutions have a wide variety of functions, and each institution is constantly innovating, implementing activities that adapt to its current education quality, and carrying out various teaching and training programs, evaluation projects, scholarship establishments, and international exchange activities; Chinese institutions have more traditional and single functions, mainly focusing on teacher training to carry out teacher professional development, emphasizing the transfer of theory and experience.

4.4.4 Financial Support

The financial support methods of various institutions in the UK are flexible and diverse, which is reflected in the establishment of multiple funds and various scholarships. Universities with higher teaching quality can receive more financial support; China directly allocates funds from the government through allocations, special funds, Daily office expenses, infrastructure investment funds, and subsidies are issued in the form of other methods, which are not linked to the teaching quality of colleges and universities.

4.4.5 Participation Willingness

British teachers' professional development organization stimulates the needs and motivation of self-development of colleges and universities and teachers through various methods such as scholarships and evaluations. It also encourages them to improve their professional and scientific research levels continuously. The teacher's right is to decide whether to participate in the teacher's professional development project. In China, however, as a system, teacher professional development activities are mandatory. Most training activities require teachers to participate in a unified way. It is their right and obligation for college teachers to participate in teacher training or training.

4.4.6 International Exchanges

The professional development of teachers in the UK expands its horizons to the global scope, actively carries out international academic exchanges and cooperation, formulates a standard framework applicable to the world, and learns from each other to share successful experiences; the professional development of teachers in China is mainly domestic training and exchanges, involved little in international discussions.

5. Enlightenment and Suggestions for China

5.1. Establish a Sound Evaluation System and Strengthen the Supervision of Teacher Development

A well-designed and efficient evaluation system is crucial to ensuring that teachers can continuously improve their professional skills at a high level. The United Kingdom has established various comprehensive evaluation systems, such as the Professional Standards Framework, a unified evaluation standard jointly formulated by the United Kingdom and its partner countries, while China does not have a similar evaluation system. Therefore, China should learn from the United Kingdom and establish a sound evaluation system. In formulating the evaluation system, first of all, the main body of the formulation should be clearly defined. Professionals and teachers from the government, localities, universities, and parents of students should participate in the discussion, drafting, and formulation process and combine the diverse needs and goals of different groups to establish an efficient system, a scientific evaluation standard. Secondly, to clarify the evaluation subject, based on the evaluation criteria, in the formative evaluation, it is necessary to combine the assessment of universities, students, and teachers themselves, continuously promote the adjustment and improvement of the professional development of college teachers, and give full play to the supervision and promotion functions of evaluation standards. Finally, based on the evaluation results, formulate comprehensive and effective punishment and improvement measures for colleges and universities that fail to meet the evaluation standards, and establish a professional team to conduct

on-the-spot investigation and analysis, investigate their problems and formulate unique solutions, and follow up continuously.

5.2. Create a Variety of Incentive Mechanisms to Stimulate Teachers' Endogenous Needs

A rich and diverse incentive mechanism is an effective means to promote the high-quality professional development of teachers. British institutions have innovated various grants, funds, and scholarship systems, while China only has centralized government grants, which are not competitive and hierarchical. China should innovate the funding system for colleges and universities. In the process of appropriating funds for colleges and universities, the government should allocate funds according to the evaluation standards and the overall achievements of teachers in colleges. For those below the standard, the funds shall be usually allocated and recorded, and the focus shall be on supervision to promote their development. When colleges and universities encourage teachers to develop, they should innovate bonus projects, such as setting up student-led scholarships, in which students select excellent teachers; teachers recommend scholarships, and colleagues recommend each other to vote. This creates competition, stimulates the internal motivation and needs of teachers' development, and effectively promotes the high-quality development of teachers.

5.3. Carry Out Rich International Activities to Promote International Exchanges and Cooperation

The exchange of teaching methods and experiences between different countries is conducive to the high-quality development of the teachers' profession. British institutions and universities actively conduct various foreign teacher training activities and seminars. In contrast, Chinese universities' training content mainly focuses on mutual learning and exchanges between domestic universities and rarely holds foreign activities. China should focus on carrying out international teacher seminars and invite education professionals from other countries to exchange meetings. Or organize teacher groups to participate in teacher development activities in developed countries actively, learn from the successful experience of other countries, promote the high-quality professional development of teachers in colleges and universities, and keep up with the development of world education.

6. Conclusion

By comparing the professional development of teachers in Chinese and British universities, the article can conclude that: in terms of the connotation of professional development of teachers, China and the UK have different definitions of it, but the overall goal is the same; Professional institutions, China is mainly dominated by the government. The professional development of college teachers in China is still in its infancy, without a perfect scale and system, and there is a large room for development. The country should take the initiative to adapt to the general trend of global education reform and development, actively learn from the successful experience of developed countries in education, stimulate the enterprising spirit of Chinese university teachers, and promote the high-quality and sustainable development of higher education. Although this article summarizes the benefits and drawbacks of China and the UK in the professional development of university teachers and puts forward constructive suggestions for the two countries to learn from each other, there are still many deficiencies, especially in further improving the professional development institutions, systems and specific aspects of university teachers. Measures are rarely involved, and these are the directions of our future research efforts.

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