Analysis on the Development of Teacher Education Policies in Modern and Contemporary China

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Abstract. Education policies have always played a crucial role in the evolution of teacher education in China. This article mainly focuses on the developing process of teacher education policies in modern and contemporary China and the factors influencing policy changes. In the past century, the development of teacher education policies in China can be divided into four stages: the Republic of China period (1912-1949), the early establishment of the People's Republic of China period (1949 1978), the reform and opening-up period (1985-1992), and the 21st century period (2000-now). The entire development process has been twisted and turned, experiencing exploration, transformation, decline, reconstruction and improvement. It can be found through research and analysis that teacher education policies in China are determined by the national conditions of a specific period and will be continuously revised and improved in practice. Overall, teacher education policies in China are presenting the characteristics of shifting from a focus on quantity to quality, from imbalanced to balanced, from borrowing from foreign countries to having Chinese characteristics, and reflecting a people-oriented educational philosophy. In the future, teacher education policies in China are expected to move from high-quality to extraordinary, emphasizing innovation while paying attention to educational equity.

Keywords: Teacher education, Education policy, Policy changes, Policy research.

1. Introduction

Education has been the principal basis of China's achievable causes over the period of one hundred years, and teachers have been the core factor of education. Therefore, regardless of the period, China attaches great importance to the development of teacher education and has issued a large number of teacher education policies to achieve this goal.

This article will divide the developing process of teacher education policies in modern and contemporary China into four stages: the Republic of China period (1912-1949), the early establishment of People's Republic of China period (1949-1978), the reform and opening-up period (1985-1992), and the 21st century period (2000-now). In each stage, the narrative will be further subdivided. Through research and analysis, this article will analyze the background, content, and achievements of teacher education policy formulation in each period.

This article aims to elaborate on the development process of teacher education policies of China (TEPC) in various periods of modern times, and analyze their internal logic and characteristics based on this. The study of the development process of TEPC can provide historical experience for the cultivation of the Chinese teacher system, promote the improvement and construction of the teacher education (TE) system, and propel the further development of TEPC.

Before starting, the definition of 'teacher education policy' need to be clarified. According to the basic tasks and educational policies of the party and the state during a particular historical period, teacher education policy refers to the action guidelines developed by state organs, political parties, and political organizations to achieve the goals and tasks of TE development and solve the problems [1].

Overall, the development of teacher education policies in modern and contemporary China has shown characteristics of shifting from a focus on quantity to quality, from imbalanced to balanced, from borrowing from foreign countries to having Chinese characteristics, and reflecting a people-oriented educational philosophy [2].

2. Four Periods

2.1. Republic of China Period (1912-1949)

The Republic of China period was the starting point of TEPC, which could be furtherly divided into three stages. There are the foundation stage (1912-1921), the transitional stage (1922-1937), and the improvement stage (1938-1949).

2.1.1 The foundation stage (1912-1921)

After the establishment of the Republic of China, the primary task was to establish the educational purpose and guide the development of the education industry accordingly. Cai Yuanpei, the chief education officer of the Nanjing Provisional Government at that time, put forward the educational policy of "simultaneous development of five educations", which he thought was suitable for capitalist development and a democratic republic [3]. The policy aimed to draw a clear line with feudal education in the late Qing Dynasty and provide direction for future policy formulation. The Education Purpose Order in 1912 was also based on this, ultimately determining the education purpose as "emphasizing moral education, supplemented by practical education, military and national education, and more importantly, completing its morality through aesthetic education".

Since there was a lack of experience, in order to quickly establish an education polity system in China, the Ministry of Education drew lessons from Japan. The "School System Order", "Regulations of Higher Normal School" and subsequent policies and regulations jointly formed the "Renzi Guichou School System", ultimately forming a policy framework for closed and targeted training. The School System Order stipulated that "after graduating from a middle school for four years, one can enter a university or a special school, or a higher Normal school." "Normal school graduates for four years with a bachelor's degree and one year with a preparatory course; higher Normal school graduates for three years with a preparatory course [4]." In addition, the promulgation of the Regulations of Women's Higher Normal School has promoted the development of women's education to a certain extent, and objectively promoted educational equality. Subsequently, various policies related to curriculum and management were gradually proposed, providing guarantees for the implementation of TEPC [4]. The implementation of this series of policies ultimately achieved the goal of transitioning from feudalism to the capitalist class in education policy, and laid a solid foundation for the development of TEPC in the future.

2.1.2 The transitional stage (1922-1937)

Although the reforms in education policies during the early Republic of China achieved certain results, people quickly discovered the weakness of secondary education. The sole purpose of secondary education at that time was only for further education, while neglecting aspects such as vocational education, which limited students' development. Therefore, cultivating high-quality teachers to enhance the level of secondary education had become the focus of educational and teaching policies.

During the New Culture Movement, American Pragmatism thought had a great impact on China. Afterwards, the "School System Reform Plan" (the "Renxu School System") released in 1922 foreshadowed a shift from the "Japanese model" to the "American model", with the aim of building an open and non-targeted policy system for the promotion of higher education teachers [4]. Through long-term practice and exploration, the policy channel for Normal school to upgrade to ordinary universities has initially taken shape, and made teacher education no longer independent. The policy system provided two ways. One of the ways was to improve the running level of existing Normal school and make them reach the standards of comprehensive universities. The other was to merge higher normal colleges into ordinary universities through transformation. But this reform did not achieve expected results due to the limitations of China's economic and educational development at that time. Thus, there were continuous controversies about depriving Normal University of independence. Ultimately in 1932, the policy of higher Teacher education returned to the closed orientation mode, which was considered to be more suitable for China's national conditions [4].

2.1.3 The improvement stage (1938-1949)

The war brought about a significant change in TEPC once again. In 1938, the "Outline of the Implementation Plan for Education at All Levels in Wartime" proposed that "regarded as usual during the war", which means that everything still revolves around maintaining normal education. Once again, the crucial function of education in national development was emphasized. Eventually, the concept played a significant guiding role in constructing the TE system.

"The promulgation of the Regulations of Teachers Colleges" soon proposed the idea of dividing the country into regions and establishing teacher training colleges in each region. At the same time, learning from the previous lessons, the new system specifically emphasized the link between normal colleges and secondary education, and explicitly required Normal schools in all regions to provide help according to the actual needs of local secondary education [4]. This policy framework not only completely utilized the educational resources already in place to advance secondary education, but it was also capable of conducting a thorough analysis of the situation in secondary education, which it then used to advance the advancement of higher teacher education. The policy proved to be effective, and it marked the transition from the "American model" to a new stage of relatively stable and mature localization exploration, and also built a solid framework for the policy system construction of teacher colleges.

2.2. The Early Establishment of the People's Republic of China Period (1949-1978)

After the establishment of the People's Republic of China, the transformation of TEPC had more ups and downs. This period can be divided into two stages. During this period, China's teacher education policy went through two stages: the reconstruction stage and the landslide stage.

2.2.1 The reconstruction stage (1949-1958)

When the People's Republic of China was just established, various undertakings were in need of revitalization, and education policies urgently needed to be updated urgently. In order to make adjustments to the TE system in old China as soon as possible, the main goal of TE policies had been determined to transform old schools and cultivate the teaching staff of the new China. For example, the Provisional Regulations of Beijing Normal University released in 1950 put forward clear requirements for the basic tasks, teaching principles, student training, teaching organization and administrative organization of new China's Normal school. The subsequent documents established the educational system and curriculum arrangement of New China's education [5]. These policy documents had been released to address the serious shortage of teachers. To sum up, the teacher education policy at that time was to combine short-term training with formal teacher education.

Under the slogan of "comprehensively learning from the Soviet Union", The Soviet paradigm was slavishly replicated in the reformulation of teacher education as well. In 1953, China had undergone the first large-scale national adjustment of higher education institutions and departments since the founding of the New China [6]. After the adjustment, the number of education departments set up in ordinary universities had sharply decreased, while teacher training colleges had increased significantly. In addition, from this period onwards, teachers' in-service training began to receive attention, and corresponding systems were initially established.

2.2.2 The landslide stage (1958-1978)

In the previous seven years, with the development of a large number of policies, the establishment of the TE system in New China had achieved initial results. Unfortunately, in 1958, with the progress of the "Great Leap Forward", the eager educational development goal had led to the disorderly expansion of all kinds of Normal school, which obviously went against the natural development law of education. Unrealistic goals violated the law of educational development, causing making teacher education backward instead of advancing.

Subsequently, the outbreak of the "Cultural Revolution" led to the extinction of TE. TE was criticized as "the product of capitalist system". The number of Normal school declined sharply, and

the status of teachers was extremely low during this period. This was an unprecedented landslide in China's History of education [6].

2.3. The Reform and Opening-up Period (1978-2000)

TEPC had gone through 3 stages since the reform and opening up. From then on, TEPC has finally been on the right track. The three stages are: the restoring and adjusting stage (1978-1984), the exploration and enhancement stage (1985-1992) and the transformation and improvement stage (1993-2000).

2.3.1 The recovery and adjusting stage (1978-1984)

During the process of the Cultural Revolution, the construction of China's teacher education suffered serious damage. At that time, not only was the education level of teachers low, but the number of teachers was also severely insufficient. The education of the whole country was in urgent need of repairing and improving. To solve this problem, the Party proposed: "In the field of education, we should work hard and accelerate the development of all kinds of schools, expand the scale of development, and bolster the quality of TE [7]." So in this stage, the TE policy focused on restoring and strengthening the pre-service training function of Teacher education.

In 1978, the Opinions on Strengthening and Developing Teacher education was released, and it marked the beginning of the teacher education policy in the recovery and adjustment period. Then, in 1980, the Fourth National Conference on Teacher education established the task of TE, reaffirming the plan to establish a three-level system and train teachers from different stages. The three-level system meant that senior high school teachers, junior high school teachers, primary school teachers and kindergarten teachers are specially trained by undergraduate teachers' colleges, junior teachers' colleges and secondary Normal school respectively [2]. Besides, an in-service training system for secondary school and primary school teachers and initially established.

2.3.2 The exploration and enhancement stage (1985-1992)

In the construction process of the previous period, China had already gained some experience in developing its own education. In 1985, the release of the Decision of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China on Education reform brought China's TE to a new stage [8].

On one hand, a series of policy documents represented by the 1986 "Opinions on Strengthening the Training of in-service Secondary school and primary School Teachers" indicated the direction of teacher education policy reform during this period: further strengthening teacher training, especially in-service training of the teaching staff [8]. On the other hand, this period began to promote the institutionalization and standardization of relevant policies through legislation. The Compulsory Education Law of the China was the first legal text with overall influence in the domain of education after the reform and opening up. In addition, there were different policy documents that separately regulate the job standards of teachers of higher education institutions as well as secondary school and primary schools. At the same time, on-the-job training for secondary school and primary school principals had also begun to receive attention. By providing them with systematic training, the academic qualifications, moral literacy, and educational level of secondary school and primary school principals had been upgraded.

2.3.3 The transformation and improvement stage (1993-2000)

TEPC had made great progress in the exploration and enhancement stage, and during the transformation and improvement period, the importance of TE was furtherly emphasized. In 1993, the "Outline for the Development and Reform of Education in China" was issued. It proposed that "the hope for revitalizing the nation lies in education, and the hope for revitalizing education lies in teachers", which fully demonstrated the importance China attaches to cultivating teachers.

At the same time, the rapid development had also gradually exposed some problems in teacher education. Therefore, The Education Law and the Teacher Law were released to provide legal protection for teacher training. These policy documents had made specific plans and arrangements

for the cultivation and training of teachers, making China's teacher training system more perfect. It had been a continuous strengthening and improvement of the continuing education system for secondary school and primary school teachers, and also a scientifically complete continuing education system for secondary school and primary school teachers has been established and formed [9].

What's more, policymakers had been aware that the sustainable development of teacher education needed to be established on a balanced basis. They believed that the focus of popularizing nine-year compulsory education had shifted to rural areas, therefore, it was of great urgency to strengthen the in-service training for teachers in impoverished rural areas [8]. This viewpoint had been proven to be correct, and the proposal of various policies had also promoted the long-term development of TEPC.

2.4. The 21st Century Period (2000-now)

After entering the 21st century, China's teacher education policy had been injected with new vitality and had been thriving to this day. The period is subdivided into two small stages, the open development stage (2000-2011) and the innovation stage (2012-now).

2.4.1 The open development stage (2000-2011)

Under the influence of globalization, the traditional single closed teacher training model could no longer adapt to the changes of the times, so the formulation of teacher education policies had also begun to develop towards diversification and openness. In 2001, starting from the release of the Decision on the Reform and Development of Basic Education, TEPC went into a new stage of open development.

As early as the 1990s, policymakers realized the importance of educational equity. After entering the 21st century, how to achieve balanced development had become the first and foremost issue. Facing the uneven development of education in the East and West, China established the "Special Post Teacher Plan" to attract more talents to engage in rural education [10]. On the other hand, the employment of students majoring in TE had become more flexible, from targeted allocation to having more choices. This decision added flexibility to the teaching staff. At the same time, information technology was also encouraged to be applied in education.

2.4.2 The innovation stage (2012-now)

After 2012, the development of TEPC entered a prosperous and emerging stage with innovation and breakthroughs as the focus. The number and professional competence of teachers at all levels and types are continuously improving. As a result, higher requirements are put forward for teachers' professional ethics and educational quality [11]. In 2014, the leader of the country first put forward the concept of "four haves" when giving a speech at Beijing Normal University, which means that a good teacher should have ideals and beliefs, have moral sentiments, have solid knowledge and have benevolence. This requirement is still continuously urging Chinese teachers to improve themselves to this day. In 2018, the Action Plan for Revitalizing Teacher Education made policy provisions on the ethical code of conduct for teachers in the new era, once again emphasizing the importance of teacher ethics. Nor is the all, the teacher training system has been constantly improved, and the teacher management system has also become increasingly reasonable in the process of practice.

3. Inspiration

3.1. The Imitation of Foreign Countries

China has got a long tradition which put much emphasis on respecting teachers and valuing education, but the modern concept of teacher education originates from the West. Developed countries such as Japan and the United States are ahead of China in exploring and building teacher education. Therefore, learning from foreign teacher education systems seems to be an inevitable choice.

The primary choice for policymakers was Japan. Due to the similarity of China's national conditions to Japan and the low cost of learning, a large number of international students were sent to Japan to study and inspect their education system. They translated a large number of books and materials for domestic learning, including the system of TE. At the beginning of the establishment of the Republic of China, there was insufficient experience in handling TE. In addition, the higher TE system that inherited the "Japanese model" in the later years of the Qing Dynasty had to continue to adopt the "Japanese model" higher teacher education system during this period. This system had shortcomings at the beginning of its formulation and has been criticized by many scholars [3].

If the imitation of Japan was a helpless move, then the study of Education in the United States's education policy system was more deliberate. During that period, Chinese scholars mistakenly attributed the problems in the development of secondary education to the insufficient quality of teachers. Then, the impact of TE in the United States on China led to the transformation of TEPC to the American model. But at that time, there was a significant difference in the national conditions between China and the United States. One of the biggest differences was that the teaching staff in the United States was already sufficient, and although each state had certain teacher education policies, they were all built and developed under nationally recognized unified standards. Under such a policy system, teacher education in the United States has shown a thriving trend [3]. However, policymakers overlooked this and blindly promoted the "American model", resulting in a lack of unified standards in various regions during actual implementation, leading to poor results.

Another large-scale reference to foreign teacher education policies was in the early days of the founding of New China. After the establishment of New China, China's political and economic system has undergone fundamental changes, and the former Soviet Union, as a socialist system, naturally became the target of China's imitation in this situation. At that time, the adjustment of higher education departments was based on the former Soviet model, aiming to abandon educational models that were believed to be left behind by the old society and Europe and America [6]. National leaders and policymakers believed that the 'Soviet model' was perfect and could meet China's national conditions at the time. But no model could be perfect, and the Soviet model was also the same. Therefore, despite achieving certain results, the "Soviet model" in China had not gone far.

3.2. The Key Points of Policy Formulation

Throughout the past hundred years, the development process of TEPC has been full of difficulties and twists. The breakthrough in teacher education policies in modern and contemporary China from scratch and from imbalanced to balanced is a feat. By analyzing its characteristics, it is not difficult to see that suitable policies are closely related to the national conditions at the certain time. In the whole development process, policy makers have drawn on foreign experiences more than once, but these attempts have all failed. The reason for this is that policy makers did not take into account China's national conditions, such as the quality of teachers and the economic situation. Also, their imitation of foreign countries was only superficial, without in-depth analysis of the reasons why other countries did so. To formulate a teacher education policy suitable for China, it is necessary to consider various factors such as China's economic strength, cultural background, management system and educational foundation, teacher status, teaching equipment, and school size [3].

Among numerous factors, the economy plays the most important role and is the fundamental driving force for promoting the refinement of TEPC. Economic strength restricts the scale and speed of teacher education development, and the educational structure will change with the changes in various industrial structures [6]. The failure of China's TE system to transition to the "American model" during the Republic of China period proves this. After entering the 21st century, the dramatic economic growth is also an important reason why teacher education can enter a prosperous and emerging stage. To formulate policies that conform to China's national conditions, policy makers need to fully consider the needs and direction of the new era, and clarify the new goals and needs of Socialism with Chinese characteristics education in the process of modernization.

Also, it could be seen that in the process of transitioning from the "Japanese model" to the "American model", there had been issues of imperfect systems and a lack of key guidance documents. The lesson that can be summarized from this is that during the critical period of policy system transformation, it is necessary to make sufficient investigations and preparations to ensure the completeness of its system. Only with the support and guarantee of a sound policy system can policy construction gradually advance and play its regulatory role according to the expected route, promoting the development of education.

It can also be seen that the development of TE requires a stable and coherent policy environment. If the continuity of policies is poor, or if the formulation and interpretation of policies before and after are totally different, it will lead to a deviation in the understanding of TE by the educational entities, ultimately affecting the development of TE. Policy changes are often the result of conflicts of interest between multiple entities. The different needs generated by changes in national conditions can also cause relative changes in policies. To achieve stable and orderly policy changes without fragmentation, a stable political environment is often required. Socialism with Chinese characteristics has entered a new era, and China's TE reform has gradually entered a new stage. At such a critical moment, the development of TE requires more innovation in the policy system than ever before [3].

Furthermore, reasonable educational goals can guide the formulation of appropriate educational policies, which was most evident during the landslide stage from 1958 to 1978. The development of teacher education is not achieved overnight, but has its own speed and rules. The formulation of educational goals cannot go against its own development laws. If the policymaker is eager for success, it will not advance but retreat. The failure during the Cultural Revolution also warned the policymakers that, like all other policy decisions, the proposal of education policies cannot be based solely on the words of one school. This way, when the education policies go wrong, they can be promptly reminded to return to the right path.

Last but not least, the formulation of teacher education policies is not static, but should develop with the development of society. Many issues only emerge after policies are promulgated and implemented, so education policies need to be constantly updated and adjusted in practice. This requires policymakers to play a monitoring role, identify problems in a timely manner, and make modifications. Through the study of relevant literature, it is also easy to find that the teachers, who are always the direct targets of policies, make the most direct response to them. The policy issue and suggestions reflected by the teachers need to be taken seriously. The government and educational organizations need to take the advice of the people, and that is the unchanging center of TEPC - "people-oriented".

4. Conclusion

The role of teacher education in China’s development is unquestionable. Over the past few decades, the teacher education policies of China have gone through a long way. This has been a process of growing from scratch.

In this process, policy makers blindly copied the experiences of other countries at first, and then formulated teacher education policies with Chinese characteristics based on the national conditions of each period. The focus of policies has gradually shifted from pursuing quantity to placing equal emphasis on quantity and quality. With the continuous development and refinement of TE in China, the issue of educational equity is also receiving increasing attention and is reflected in TEPC. All policy formulation has followed the core idea of "people-oriented", paying attention to teachers, who are the direct targets of policies.

With the continuous development of the national economy and the increasing improvement of people's living standards, people's pursuit of high-quality education is also becoming increasingly strong. Especially after entering the era of Socialist market economy, the idea of lifelong education has been widely spread, so the traditional closed and targeted teacher training model can no longer meet the needs of education. Therefore, in order to adapt to the changes of the times, it is necessary

to continuously improve the overall level of the teaching staff and gradually establish a more open and diverse high-level TE policy system. TEPC needs to comprehensively analyze the demand for teacher education behind this trend, taking national conditions as the starting point, and continuously improve and develop the policy system for teacher education.

All in all, the teacher education policies in China have kept pace with the times and have been constantly improving through reform and optimization. Although the development speed has been relatively fast, it still requires continuous innovation in policies. Therefore, this is a complex and long-term project. Nowadays, TEPC have got into a new stage of prosperity and innovation. In the future, TEPC are expected to move from high-quality to excellence, balancing equity and quality, and making education truly the foundation of the country.

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