

The Evolution of Primary and Secondary School Teacher Standards in China: Analysis of Policy Texts from 1978 to 2022

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Abstract. The primary and secondary school teacher standards are an effective tool for a country to select, evaluate and train primary and secondary school teachers which are clearly stipulated in teacher qualification, evaluation and education policies. Therefore, the structure and evolution logic of primary and secondary school teacher standards can be clarified by text analysis. Based on the text analysis of the main teacher policy texts in China from 1980 to 2022, it is found that the primary and secondary school teacher standards are composed of six basic elements which are political ideology, teacher morality, education and teaching skills, professional knowledge, educational background, physical and mental health, and four core elements which are educational concept, personal moral, curriculum ability and lifelong learning. The structure of it is constantly optimized and the content of it is constantly enriched. The evolution can be divided into three stages: 1980 to 1999, 2000 to 2007 and 2008 to 2022. The first and third stages are characterized by obvious three-year cycles, and the second stage is a smooth transition. Educational realities are the direct basis for evolution of teacher standards while education reform events and educational institutions indirectly impact the teacher standards.

Keywords: Teacher Standards, Text Analysis, Evolution Logic.

1. Introduction

Teacher competence is a worldwide focus. In order to promote teacher professional development and improve the quality of education and teaching, various countries have developed and revised teacher standards adopt to their situation. Teacher standards are composed of different teacher professional competence. There generally formed three viewpoints on teacher professional competence [1]. Structure-system theory which regards it as a structural system composed of a series of elements. Public-individual theory which regards it as a combination of public and individual competence. Stage-dynamic theory which thinks it change with the different professional cycles of teachers. In China, primary and secondary school teacher standards are contained in the relevant policy texts of teacher qualification, teacher evaluation and teacher education. It is only one part of teacher standards to specify the access conditions for teachers which is the function of teacher qualification policies, a country must also pay attention to the professional development of teachers if its education wants to develop continuously. Periodic changes in policies have prompted changes in teacher standards. Although the policies emphasize different requirements for teachers who have different professional titles which can reflect their different stages of development, a series of gradual and general elements can be found in the evolving policy texts which have the function of accessing, selecting, evaluating and training teachers.

The term teacher evaluation appeared for the first time in the late 19th century and early 20th century [2]. From Thorndike's "Whatever exists at all exists in some amount. To know it thoroughly involves knowing its quantity as well as its quality" [3], to Taylor's "The process of education is essentially the process of determining to what extent the educational objectives are actually being realized by the program of curriculum and instruction" [4], and then to staufferbim's "The approach stresses that an evaluation's most important purpose is not to prove but to improve" [5], with the emergence of the forth generations evaluation [6], the purpose of teacher evaluation has changed from measurement, description and judgment to response-negotiation and constructivism. Teachers' role in evaluation has changed from passive acceptance to subjective cognition after the exploration of

theory and practice. Teacher evaluation today is not just a kind of value judgment, but an interactive negotiation and common construction, which provides external standards for not only selection and appraisal, but also teacher development.

If teacher evaluation indirectly trains teachers with the external standards, then teacher education directly trains teachers by bring them internal standards. The term teacher education has changed from normal education before 1930s to pre-service training, induction training and in-service training of teachers based on the concept of lifelong education [7]. Teacher education influences teachers' perception and judgment, and then influences their teaching behavior [8], which provides teachers an internal standard for teachers' beliefs, attitudes and their growth.

Policies usually exist in the form of text which refers to the laws, regulations and rules issued by the state [9], and education policy is a standard of conduct formulated by a political party or national government to achieve the educational task of a certain period [10]. Text analysis usually take written text as the analysis object [11]. Therefore, text analysis method can get the information of time evolution objectively, analyze the external influence mechanism and internal logic of evolution. Teacher evaluation and teacher education have brought generalized standards to teachers and the specific content of policy texts related to them have made clear provisions on teacher standards. Any education policy is a kind of political implementation in education field, which represents or contains the government's value selection for education affairs and education issues, that is what to do or not to do, what to encourage or to prohibit [12]. Although text analysis of educational policy is static [13], the value of the content is the substantive value of the policy.

In the past 40 years of reform and opening-up, the educational institution reform in China has undergone different stages of development, including the restoration and reconstruction of the educational institution, the comprehensive educational system reform, the experiment of market-based institutional change to promote the educational development, the shift of the educational policy focus from efficiency to equality, and promoting the comprehensive reform in the field of education to accelerate the modernization of the system and capacity of the education governance [14]. Extracting and analyzing policies related to teacher qualification, teacher evaluation and teacher education from educational institution can clearly sort out the evolution process and logic of teacher standards.

Based on the above discussion, this article collates Chinese policy texts related to primary and secondary school teachers from 1980 to 2022, extracts teacher standards among them to form a more systematic understanding of China's primary and secondary school teacher standards. Then grasp the characteristics and evolution logic of primary and secondary school teacher standards in China, and lay a foundation for the follow-up research of teacher generalized standards.

2. Methodology

2.1 Sample Information

Three principles are clarified to sift policy texts which are authority, relevance and comprehensiveness. All policies on teacher qualification, teacher evaluation and teacher education issued by government (the State Council and the Ministry of Education of China) in an authoritative and open way since 1980 (such as laws, regulations, inner-party materials, departmental documents etc.) are retrieved, and 44 directly related policy texts and 42 indirectly related (which also put forward requirements for teachers) containing the content of requirements for primary and secondary teacher standards are selected and analyzed finally.

2.2 Coding and Variable Setting

This article uses N-vivo12.0 to encode and analyze policy texts. After open coding, axial coding and selective coding, 87 nodes and 512 references are generated. Based on this, the basic category of content analysis is formed. Content variable is the basic component of primary and secondary school teacher standards in China. Time variable is the evolution of primary and secondary school teacher

standards in China from 1980 to 2022. Attribution variable is the evolution logic of primary and secondary school teacher standards in China. The evolution logic consists of external influence mechanism and internal logic.

3. Results and Discussions

The content of the standards can be distinguished from the minimum access standards and the maximum improvement standards. According to the two perspectives, policy texts present the basic elements and core elements in the form of teacher standards.

3.1 Six Basic Elements of Teacher Standards

Text coverage is an important reference for text analysis, which can reflect the importance and concentration of the subject content or nodes. From the perspective of the minimum access standards for primary and secondary school teachers, as while as considering the classification of teacher competencies by Schulman and Richardson [15,16], six concept groups of teacher standards can be found: Political Ideology (65.37%), Teacher Morality (245.2%), Education and Teaching Skills (125.75%), Professional Knowledge (51.04%), Educational Background (43.45%), Physical and Mental Health (17.46%). The number in brackets is the total text coverage of 30 years policy texts.

Teacher Morality has the highest text coverage and is the most important component of primary and secondary school teacher standards which requires teachers from both positive advocacy and negative punishment. The fundamental purpose of teacher morality is to let primary and secondary teachers put morality as the basic of self-cultivation, learning, teaching and educating. Compared with other five basic elements, it is more stable in the evolution process. What remains constant is the requirement of being a role model for not only students but also all human beings, holding the concept of loving students and dedication.

Political Ideology refers to teachers' political stand and political literacy. Support the leadership of the Communist Party of China, love the cause of socialist education, guide by Marxism and deeply study the ideas of leaders in each period is the main content of Political Ideology. In policy texts, it often appears together with Teacher Morality and has the basis of other education policies.

Education and Teaching Skills which can be also called general pedagogical knowledge is the main body of teacher standards. It reflects the most relevant part of teachers' teaching ability, and so its text coverage is in the second place. Education and teaching skills includes the abilities of teaching and researching, teaching assessment, teaching reflection, training and guiding new teachers, information technology, verbal expression and other basic teaching skills like writing standardized Chinese characters on blackboard. Teachers also need to be able to guide family education and have the to provide after-school services. The content of education and teaching skills is almost unchanged in the evolution.

Professional Knowledge is mainly based on subject matter content knowledge and curricular knowledge. It is also characterized by renewal and expansion which constantly covers new piece of knowledge over time, such as psychology, law, science, Chinese culture, art, labor, national conditions, drug prevention, etc. The increased content is accompanied by the policy of cultivating students' corresponding abilities (they can be called "main policy"), therefore, the content of professional knowledge is affected by other education institutions and decisions. If there is no complementary text to the main policy with a period of time, the content of teachers' professional knowledge will not be emphasized, that is, a specific professional knowledge will not last for long.

Although the text coverages of educational background and health are not high, it is indeed essential for teachers' accessing and rating. After the promulgation of the Teacher Qualification Regulations and its implementation measures in 1995, teachers' educational background and health are no longer directly mentioned except for the policy relevant to the teacher personnel system reform. Teachers should meet the requirements of the qualification regulations become a more common script.

3.2 Four Core Elements of Teacher Standards

After three-level coding, the number of nodes for different competences reflects the importance and persistence of the teachers' abilities. Primary and secondary school teachers are professionals directly engaged in education and teaching in schools. From the perspective of the maximum improvement standards, four teachers' core qualities can be summarized: Educational Concept (198), Personal Moral (93), Curriculum Ability (31) and Lifelong learning (138). The number in brackets is the total nodes of 30 years policy texts. The figure below shows the composition of core elements.

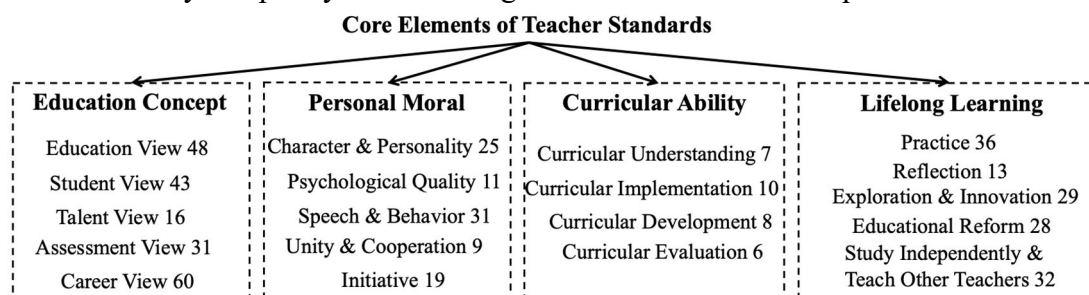


Fig. 1 Composition of Four Core Elements

Education Concept includes four parts. The education view refers to teachers' basic concept of educational activities, the student view refers to teachers' understanding of the relationship between teachers and students, the talent view refers to teachers' concept of educational results on students, the assessment view refers to teachers' choice of ways to assess students, and the career view refers to teachers' understanding of teachers' professional nature and significance.

Personal Moral includes five parts. Teachers should cultivate compassion, responsibility, patience and carefulness, be able to regulate their emotions and maintain a peaceful attitude, pay attention to their own words and deeds, cooperate with their colleagues, actively participate in the construction of national education.

It has to be explained that the nodes of Curricular Ability for primary and secondary school teachers which includes understanding, implementation, development and evaluation of curriculum mainly come from several policy texts of curriculum reform while other policies put the requirements for curricular ability to local education governments or primary and secondary schools, so the number is not much.

Lifelong Learning includes five parts which combine education and teaching theories with practice, constantly reflects on teaching behavior, actively explores and innovates education models, learns new knowledge by themselves, and learns from cadre teachers.

3.3 The Evolution of Teachers Standards

The evolution of primary and secondary school teacher standards can be described in two aspects: form and substance. From the aspect of form, the evolution is explained by counting, that is, whether an element appears in a certain year (nodes) and how much it appears (text coverage). From the aspect of substance, the evolution is explained by investigating the changes in the content of policy texts which have mentioned teacher standards in different years.

The formal evolution of each basic elements of primary and secondary school teacher standards is showed in figure 2, annual basic elements is showed in figure 3. The changes of each basic elements are quite different with Teacher Morality and Education and Teaching Skills changing more frequently. The periods with frequent changes in basic elements are mainly before 2000 and after 2008. The change cycle of basic elements before 2000 and after 2008 is roughly three years, and between 2000 and 2008 are irregular. Based on the three time periods identified above, the evolution of the four core elements is shown in Figure 3, and the distribution of the node number in 3 period is shown in Table 1 which shows the emphasis on the requirements of core elements has been strengthened.

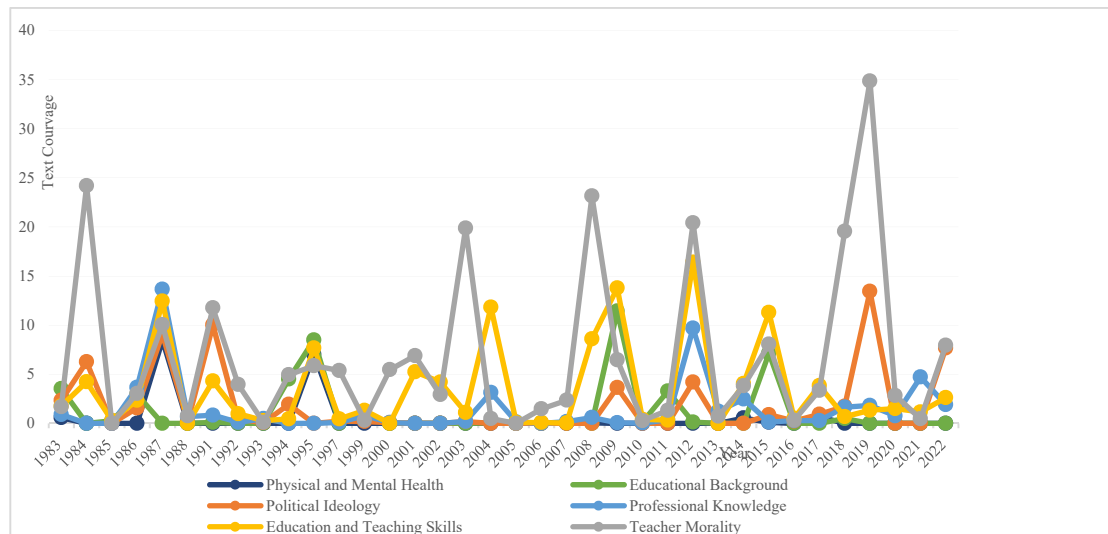


Fig. 2 Evolution of Each Basic Elements

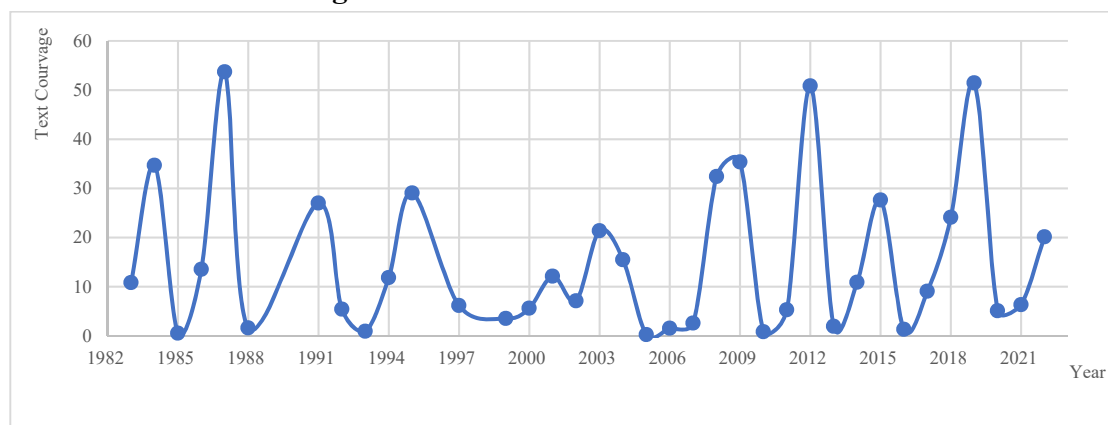


Fig. 3 Evolution of Basic Elements

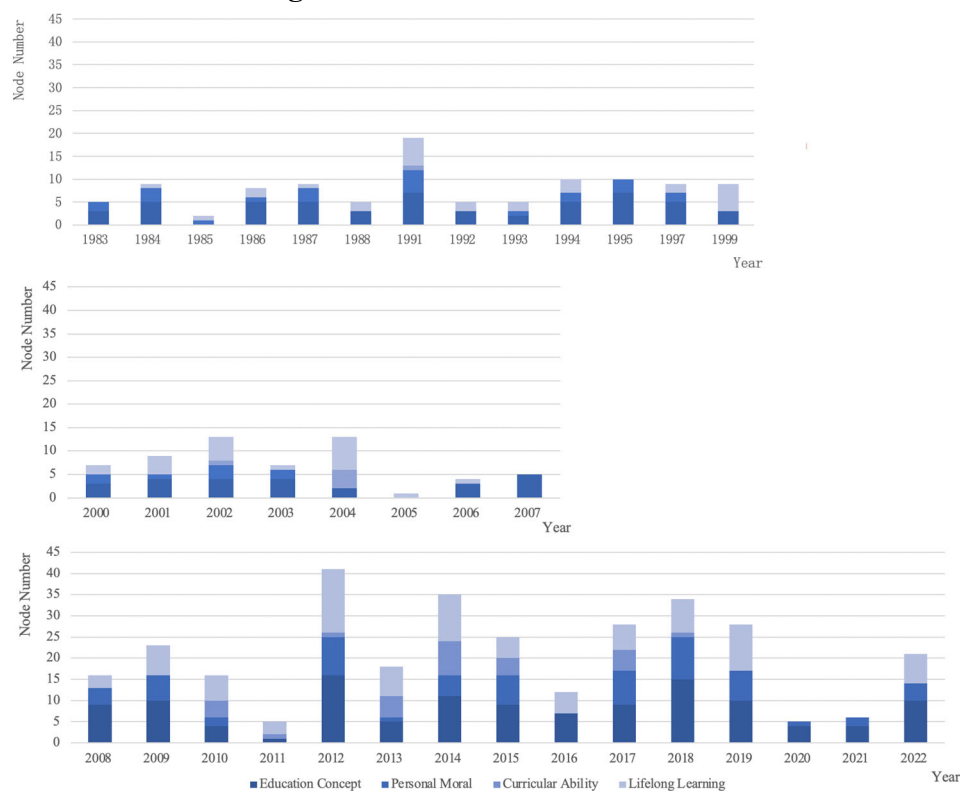


Fig. 4 Evolution of Each Core Elements

Table 1. Distribution of four core elements in three periods

Year	Education Concept	Personal Moral	Curricular Ability	Lifelong Learning
1980-1999	53	23	1	28
2000-2007	25	8	5	21
2008-2022	124	66	29	94

Since 1980, China has introduced some policies on teacher team building in 1983, 2003, 2012 and 2018. In 1983, China wanted to “build a stable and qualified team of teachers ... to make this team capable and orderly, reasonable structure, reasonable subject arrangement, sufficient cadre teacher, personnel quota and proper arrangement” [17]. In 2003, China emphasized the management and professional morality education of the teachers and proposed to “build a high-quality and professional teacher team” [18]. In 2012, it was put forward that “by 2020, a high-quality professional teaching team with great moral and business skills, reasonable structure and dynamic will be formed” [19]. In 2018, China put forward the idea of “building a high-quality, professional and innovative teacher team that the Party and the people are satisfied with” [20].

3.4 The evolution logic of Teachers Standards

Before 2000 and after 2008, there was an obvious three-year change cycle. The *Training Objectives of Secondary Normal Schools (First Draft)* in 1987, the *Code of Professional Ethics for Primary and Secondary School Teachers* in 1991, the Regulations on Teacher Qualification in 1995, the *Code of Professional Ethics for Primary and Secondary School Teachers* revised in 2008, the *Professional Standards for Primary and Secondary School Teachers (Trial)* in 2012, the *Deepening the Reform of the Professional Title System for Primary and Secondary School Teachers* in 2015, the *Opinions on Strengthening and Improving the Construction of Teachers' Ethics in the New Era* in 2019, several policies have caused the emergence of peaks, and each peak is accompanied by educational reform events and the introduction of other educational institutions. In 1999, China implemented the compulsory education curriculum reform, so this stage began to explore the teacher standards to adapt to the new education requirements. Until 2008, the reform of the performance pay system for compulsory education teachers redefined the teacher standards.

China's policies on teacher qualification, teacher evaluation and teacher education are obviously pragmatism oriented, but instead of involving little description of the current situation, more directly clarifies the value orientation and approach. That is because the current situation description is generally in various government work reports, education development reports, and teacher development reports. Therefore, the internal logic of teacher standards evolution is the value judgment among policy texts generated from the work reports. The continuous evolution of teacher standards is affected by educational reform events and other educational institutions which are the external influencing factors of evolution. As a result, the evolution logic of primary and secondary school teacher standards in China can be showed in the figure 5.

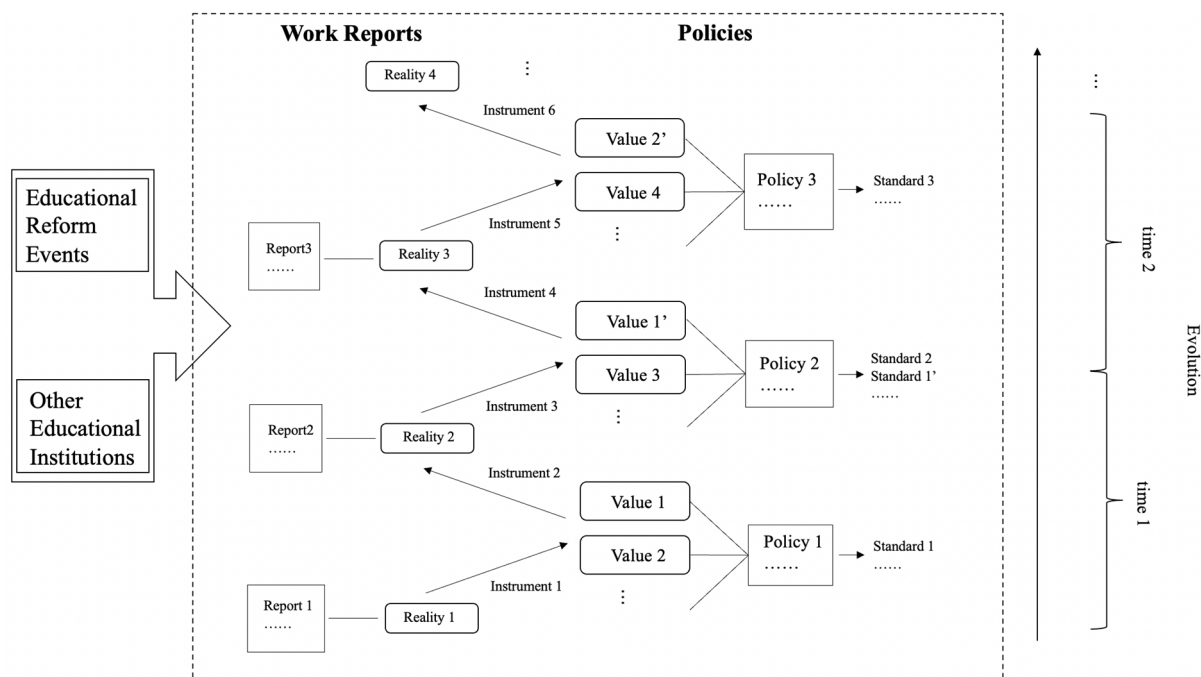


Fig. 5 Evolution Logic of Primary and Secondary School Teacher Standards

The educational realities presented in the work reports show the number, structure, educational background, age, professional and technical titles, political countenance and other information of primary and secondary school teachers. The annual changes of reality reflect the implementation effect of previous policies which can be used by decision-makers to adjust their value judgments and formulate new policies by some instruments, including new standards for teachers. Both the value judgment and standard are just fine-tuned and so they have continuity. At the same time, decision-makers also need to adjust teacher policies according to recent educational reform events and other educational institutions to meet the characteristics of the times.

4. Conclusions

Through the text analysis of the teacher standards in China's policies related to teacher qualification, teacher evaluation and teacher education from 1980 to 2022, some conclusions on the evolution of primary and secondary school teacher standards can be drawn.

The structure is constantly improved and the content is constantly enriched of primary and secondary school teacher standards. The periodic changes standards provide a generalized standard for the selection, evaluation and training of primary and secondary school teachers. From the perspective of teachers' access, six basic elements, which are political ideology, teacher morality, education and teaching skills, professional knowledge, educational background, physical and mental health, stipulate who can be a teacher. From the perspective of teachers' professional development, four core elements, which are educational concept, personal moral, curriculum ability and lifelong learning, determine the space for teachers to improve. All kinds of elements reflect that China's teacher standards have developed a relatively mature standard system in terms of both quantity and content.

The evolution of the standards for primary and secondary school teachers in China can be divided into three stages: 1980-1999, 2000-2007 and 2008-2022. The first and third stages are characterized by obvious three-year cycles, and the second stage is a smooth transition. The evolution was influenced by the changing educational realities, educational reform events and other educational institutions. National curriculum reform, teacher personnel system reform, establishment of teacher qualification system, innovation of teacher education system, and change of national education goals constitute the external influence mechanism of teacher standards.

The ultimate goal of primary and secondary teacher standards in China is to cultivate educators. Selecting and cultivating a high-quality teacher team is the fundamental guarantee for a country to run education well. In 2014, Xi Jinping clearly put forward that “Four Haves” good teachers, which means a good teachers should have ideals and beliefs, moral sentiments, solid knowledge and a heart of benevolence. Especially at the stage since 2008, the core elements of teacher standards have increased dramatically, reflecting that China has begun to attach importance to the professional development of teachers. Whether teacher qualification, teacher evaluation or teacher education, the aim of teacher policy in China is ultimately cultivating a group of educators.

Besides the above findings, there are several limitations of this research. This study mainly focuses on the primary and secondary school teacher standards in the Chinese policy texts. However, the education process also includes preschool education and preschool teachers need to be concerned. The upward trend of the popularization of higher education needs to pay attention to higher education teachers. At the same time, what are the standards for teachers from the perspective of teachers have to be presented. The globalization trend also requires the research on teacher standards focused on the comparative study with other countries. Future Studies are suggested to focus these limitations.

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