

A Survey about Professional Abilities of Old Teachers of 45 and over in Junior Middle Schools under the New Curriculum Reform in China: Take Suzhou Anhui Province as an Example

ENQUETE SUR LES CAPACITES PROFESSIONNELLES DES ENSEIGNANT ANCIENNES DE 45 ANS ET PLUS DANS LES COLLEGES AU CADRE DU METHODE DE REFORME DE LA NOUVELLE CURRICULUM DE CHINE : CAS DE LA PROVINCE D'ANHUI

YIN Fang^{1,*}

¹Associate Professor, College of Teacher Education, Sichuan Normal University, 5#Jing'an Road, Jinjiang District, Chengdu, Sichuan, 610068, China.

*Corresponding author.

Address: Sichuan Normal University, 5# Jing'an Road, Jinjiang District, Chengdu, Sichuan, 610068, China.

Supported by the research subject "study on the improving of professional abilities of old teachers under the New Curriculum Reform" (10YBW13).

Received 13 December 2011; accepted 22 February 2012.

Abstract

Professional abilities of teachers have been challenged by the New Curriculum Reform from 2001. To find the present state of professional abilities of old teachers of 45 and over in junior middle schools, the investigation adopts questionnaire to inquire 127 junior middle school teachers in Suzhou Anhui province. The results show that the Chinese old teachers have basic skills for teaching with good basic abilities of education and can perform their "teaching" functions well by taking advantage of teaching abilities today. But there are some problems for them in abilities of teaching reflection, education cooperation, teaching innovation, education research and career planning, which are inconsistent with the ideas of the New Curriculum Reform in China. Facing the challenges from the Reform, the old teachers must seek for the improving of professional abilities. On one hand, the government and the schools should provide good outer support for them; on the other hand, the old teachers should set up their self-development consciousness.

Key words: Old teachers in junior middle schools; Professional abilities; The New Curriculum Reform in China

Résumé

Les Capacités professionnelles des enseignants ont été contestées par le nouveau curriculum.

Réformer à partir de 2001. Pour trouver l'état actuel des capacités professionnelles des enseignants de âgés de 45 ans et plus dans les collèges junior, l'enquête adopte questionnaire pour en savoir davantage, 127 enseignants des écoles intermédiaires junior à Suzhou province d'Anhui. Les résultats montrent que les enseignants de chinois anciens ont des compétences de base pour l'enseignement avec de bonnes aptitudes de base de l'éducation et peuvent exercer leurs fonctions «apprenant» et en tirant parti de qualités pédagogiques d'aujourd'hui. Mais il ya quelques problèmes pour eux dans les capacités de l'enseignement la recherche de réflexion, la coopération l'éducation, l'innovation pédagogique, l'éducation et de carrière planification, qui sont incompatibles avec les idées de la réforme du nouveau curriculum en Chine. Relever les défis de la réforme, les anciens professeurs doivent chercher l'amélioration des capacités professionnelles. D'une part, le gouvernement et les écoles devraient fournir un bon support externe pour eux; d'autre part, les anciens professeurs devraient mettre en place leur auto-développement de la conscience.

Mots clés: Anciens professeurs des collèges juniors; Capacités professionnelles; La réforme du nouveau curriculum en Chine

YIN Fang (2012). A Survey About Professional Abilities of Old Teachers of 45 and over in Junior Middle Schools under the New Curriculum Reform in China: Take Suzhou Anhui Province as an Example. *Canadian Social Science*, 8(1), 186-190. Available from: URL: <http://www.cscanada.net/index.php/css/article/view/j.css.1923669720120801.2120> DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.3968/j.css.1923669720120801.2120>

Since the New Curriculum Reform in 2001, many scholars have researched professional abilities of the young and middle-aged junior middle school teachers from theory and practice, but they have paid little attention to the old teachers of 45 and over. In fact, there are an extraordinary number of old teachers in elementary education according to the statistic from the Department of Normal Education

of the Chinese Ministry of Education. Especially in some rural junior middle schools, the aging of teachers has become a great obstacle to the development of school education. Under the New Curriculum Reform, what is the present state of the old teachers? Can they successfully deal with the New Curriculum Reform? To answer the questions, I had an investigation among junior middle school teachers by means of a questionnaire.

1. THE RESEARCH METHOD

The survey adopted a questionnaire to inquire some random old teachers in junior middle schools in Suzhou Anhui province. A total of 130 questionnaires were sent out and 127 available questionnaires were retrieved. Meantime, some of the respondents were interviewed to find out their present state of professional abilities.

1.1 The Basic Situation of the Respondents (See Table 1)

Table 1
The Basic Situation of the Respondents

Respondent Variable	Sex		Age			Teaching age			
	Male	Female	45 to 49	50 to 54	55 to 60	15 to 20	21 to 25	36 to 30	31 and over
The number of teachers	54	73	92	26	9	8	73	31	15
The percentage of teachers (%)	42.5	57.5	72.4	20.5	7.1	6.3	57.5	24.4	11.8

1.2 The Dimension of the Questionnaire

On the basis of the existing research results, teachers' professional theory and the ideas of the New Curriculum Reform, this survey suggests that the professional abilities of old teachers are the ones that fit for teaching formed in the course of education practice, including: (1) basic abilities of education, which are the requisites for teaching, mainly composed of language ability, blackboard-writing ability, communication skill, cooperation ability and ability of guiding students' development; (2) teaching abilities, namely all kinds of abilities of achieving teaching aim and promoting students' development, mainly including ability of designing teaching, ability of teaching organization and implementation, ability of teaching evaluation, self-reflection ability, ability of classroom management; (3) abilities of education innovation, which are necessary in creative teaching, mainly including ability of curriculum development and ability of teaching innovation (such as innovations in teaching thought and teaching content); (4) abilities of self development, namely needed to update education thought or professional knowledge and enhance professional accomplishments, mainly including ability of career planning, ability of education research, ability of psychological adjustment and learning ability. Around the above dimensions, 66 questions are designed in the

questionnaire. The analysis of the questionnaire is made by using SPSS16.0 software.

2. THE RESEARCH RESULTS

2.1 Basic Abilities of Education

Most of the respondents have good abilities in language expression, blackboard-writing and guiding students' development. They can often communicate with their students and colleagues, and also cooperate with their colleagues and the researchers in education research. The respondents of 50 to 54 can better use different kinds of language forms to convey teaching information than those of 45 to 49 ($p=0.0434$), and the longer the respondents teach, the better language abilities they possess. The reason may be that they are quite familiar with teaching contents and well-experienced in teaching (See Table 2). In addition, the respondents whose teaching age are 26 to 30 do better than those with teaching age of 15 to 20 in blackboard-writing ability, communication skill and cooperation ability ($p=0.022, p=0.010, p=0.027$). The respondents whose teaching age are more than 31 years offer students more instruction in how to be a man and how to learn (See Table 3).

Table 2
Variance Analysis in Language Ability
 Dependent Variable: language ability
 LSD

(I) Teaching age	(J) Teaching age	Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig.
15 to 20	21 to 25	-.3716*	.15395	.017
	26 to 30	-.4476*	.16393	.007
	31 and over	-.5139*	.18097	.005

*The mean difference is significant at the .05 level.

Table 3
Variance Analysis in Ability of Guiding Students' Development
 Dependent Variable: ability of guiding students' development
 LSD

(I) Teaching age	(J) Teaching age	Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig.
15 to 20	31 and over	-.4361*	.19604	.028

*The mean difference is significant at the .05 level.

2.2 Teaching Abilities

In the ability of designing teaching, the respondents, especially those whose teaching age are 45 to 49, are good at design of teaching aim, arrangement of teaching content and choice of teaching method. However, it is difficult for 31.5% of the respondents to choose appropriate teaching media. Male respondents do better than female respondents in the ability of teaching organization and implementation ($p=0.012$), what's more, 27.5% of the respondents can not flexibly apply modern multimedia in teaching. In the ability of teaching evaluation, many respondents are cognizant of the importance of teaching evaluation, and emphasize the diversification of evaluation method and evaluation content.

In the ability of classroom management, the respondents with longer teaching age can do better. They can pay attention to classroom rules, distribute teaching hours effectively, and also deal with incidents in class successfully. By comparison, the respondents of 50 to 54 may control the classroom more flexibly and effectively than those of 45 to 49 ($p=0.043$).

The respondents have some shortcomings in self-reflection ability: 24.4% of them seldom write teaching postscript and 44.1% of them are not in the habit of writing teaching log. The analysis of variance shows that the respondents with teaching age of 21 to 30 prefer to sum up experience and then improve teaching through self-reflection (See Table 4).

Table 4
Variance Analysis in Ability of Teaching Reflection
 Dependent Variable: ability of teaching reflection
 LSD

(I) Teaching age	(J) Teaching age	Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig.
15 to 20	21 to 25	-.5475*	.24424	.027
	26 to 30	-.5736*	.26007	.029

*The mean difference is significant at the .05 level.

2.3 Abilities of Education Innovation

Most of the respondents have awareness of innovation and skills. They usually form their own teaching styles and encourage students to express their own ideas. Those who own longer teaching age can perform beautifully in this

area. (See Table 5) .But influenced by traditional teaching model and personal experiences, a small group of the respondents (23.2%) are willing but unable in innovation of teaching method and means.

Table 5
Variance Analysis in Ability of Teaching Innovation
 Dependent Variable: ability of teaching innovation
 LSD

(I) Teaching age	(J) Teaching age	Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig.
15 to 20	21 to 25	-.4058*	.18877	.034
	26 to 30	-.4395*	.20100	.031
	31 and over	-.5750*	.22190	.011

*The mean difference is significant at the .05 level.

Many respondents are in a puzzle about ability of curriculum development .23.6% of them can't select valuable curriculum resources from schools, the society or students' life; 3.5% of them don't know how to

combine schools with students' needs to develop school-based courses. The analysis of variance shows that the respondents with different teaching age have different abilities of curriculum development (See Table 6).

Table 6
Variance Analysis in Ability of Curriculum Development
 Dependent Variable: ability of Curriculum Development
 Tamhane

(I) Teaching age	(J) Teaching age	Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig.
15 to 20	26 to 30	-.5464*	.16447	.033

*The mean difference is significant at the .05 level.

2.4 Abilities of Self Development

There are some drawbacks for the respondents in abilities of self development: 29.1% of them are not satisfied with

their current work state, and 33.7% of them have no clear plans for their career development. Also, the respondents with different teaching age have different abilities of career planning. (See Table 7)

Table 7
Variance Analysis in Ability of Career Planning
 Dependent Variable: ability of career planning
 Tamhane

(I) Teaching age	(J) Teaching age	Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig.
15 to 20	26 to 30	-.6915*	.33665	.042

*The mean difference is significant at the .05 level.

As a whole ,the respondents are not very ideal in ability of education research.40.2% of them can rarely find research topics from teaching practice,44.9% can't often take part in research work,29.2% lack the basic knowledge and skills for education research. For the question "I can write research papers",46.5% of the respondents choose "general",11.8% choose "not very accord with",0.8% choose "completely not accord with". In addition, the mean score of research ability is the lowest for the respondents of 55 to 60, which perhaps is that they are lack of study motivation as they are due for retirement.

In the learning ability, most of the respondents are willing to take part in different kinds of training activities and often improve their knowledge structure by reading books or journals. Those aged 45 to 49 have the highest mean score in learning ability, so they are more active in learning. However, 35.4% of the respondents rarely exchange learning experience actively with some experts or their colleagues; instead they tend to learn by themselves. This study shows that many respondents can adjust their own state of mind when they face different situation.

3. ANALYSIS AND SUGGESTION

This survey shows that the score of professional abilities from high to low is basic abilities of education, teaching abilities, abilities of education innovation, self-development abilities. The longer their teaching ages are, the stronger basic abilities of education and teaching abilities they have, particularly those with teaching age of

26 to 30. The older they get, the lower level of abilities of teaching innovation and self-development abilities they have. To be specific, in the dimension of basic abilities of education, the score is the lowest in cooperation ability; in the dimension of teaching abilities, the score is the lowest in teaching reflection; in the dimension of abilities of education innovation, the score is the lowest in ability of curriculum development; in the dimension of self-development abilities, the score is the lowest in ability of education research, and next is career planning ability.

Accordingly, the Chinese old teachers have basic skills for teaching with good basic abilities of education and they can perform their "teaching" functions well by taking advantage of teaching abilities today. But there are some problems in their abilities of teaching reflection, education cooperation, teaching innovation, education research and career planning, which are inconsistent with the ideas of the New Curriculum Reform in China. Having changed thoroughly the original curriculum system and conception, the reform requires that a teacher in junior middle school should take three main roles, namely, a promoter of the learning activities, an initiator of the curriculum resources and an educational researcher. In order to change the role successfully, the old teacher should improve and perfect personal professional abilities by continuing professional development.

On one hand, the government, especially the schools, should provide good outer support for the old teachers. First, more chances of leaning and communication should be given to the old teachers. Although 45.7% of the respondents in the survey say they often take part in kinds of training activities, the fact in China is that teachers

who can participate in the training programs by different education departments must be under 45 years old or even lower. Compared with the young and middle-aged teachers, the development platform for the old teachers seems a little narrow. The government and the schools should respect the value and needs of the old teachers and provide them with more chances of training and vocational studies. In this way, the old teachers may better understand the aims and the ideas of the New Curriculum Reform so as to jump out of the traditional education model to strive to make more inventions in education. Second, the school should encourage the old teachers to participate in open class, teaching competition or academic and research activities. Influenced by the traditional individualism of teacher culture, many old teachers tend to be in self-seclusion in the final stages of career. They are unwilling to exchange teaching experiences with others and always limit themselves in “a teaching world to himself”, which hinders the development of their professional abilities. It is thought by some psychological researches that the appropriate competition and cooperation may help to inspire a person’s motivation. So the old teachers should come out of their own “small worlds” and participate actively in teaching competition or academic and research activities, which not only can show education wisdoms of the old teachers, but also help them to find their shortcomings by self-analysis so as to form a good habit of teaching reflection. In the end, the schools may invite some education researchers to carry out education lectures for education awareness and knowledge of the old teachers, encourage them to find research topics from education practice, and provide places, equipment or funds for their research.

On the other hand, the old teachers should set up self-development consciousness. The teacher is the main part of the new curriculum implementation, namely, without the professional development of the teacher, there would be no the development of the curriculum. Now in order to be the master of professional development

and improve professional abilities, the old teachers must seek for autonomic development. First, the old teachers should reshape themselves in their professional self-concepts. They need establish their professional status and professional roles as the masters of the New Curriculum, analyze objectively their advantages and disadvantages, then adopt clear development goals and work out feasible plans of action for career development. By this means, the professional abilities of the old teachers are improved step by step during the teaching actions gradually. Second, the old teachers should strengthen lifelong learning. Faced with the new demands and new challenges by the development of the society and the New Curriculum Reform, lifelong learning is a great way for the old teachers to do their duties. They should n’t confine themselves to their own circles on grounds of their ages, but they should be a learner to pursue progress by more reading, more self-reflection or more communication with others. Only in this way, can the old teachers deal with different changes from The New Curriculum Reform by more perfect and more consummate professional abilities.

REFERENCES

- CHENG Mo, LUO Man (2010, February 24). What are the Difficulties for Old teachers to Adopt to the New Curriculum Reform? *China Education Daily*, pp.3.
- REN Qi-ping(2010). On the Ecological Cultivating Pattern of Teachers’ Professional Development. *Educational Research*, 367(8), 62-66.
- WANG Peng(2010). The Burnout of Vocational Emotion and the Lighting of Education Passion of Old teachers. *Journal of Teaching and Management*, 4(10), 25-26.
- YANG Xiumei(2002). Review on Fessler’s and Glatthorn’s Theory of Factors Influencing Teacher Development. *Studies in Foreign Education*, 29(5), 35-38.
- YUAN Chunlin(2010, September 4). The Young and Middle-aged Teachers Have Become the Main Body in Primary and Secondary Schools. *China Youth Daily*, pp.4.