

A Study on the Realistic Dilemmas and Countermeasures of Teachers' Professional Development Community

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Abstract: Teachers' professional development is not only the result of teachers' individual efforts, but also the result of team building. Teacher professional development community is an effective way to promote teachers' professional development by building a professional development arena with the participation of multiple parties, such as subject groups and grade groups within schools, educational authorities, higher education institutions and primary and secondary schools, and inter-schools between primary and secondary schools. However, the current difficulties in the operation of teacher professional development communities are mainly due to the fact that the operational mechanism has not been established. Therefore, theoretical reflection should be attached to the establishment of the operational mechanism of the teacher professional development community, based on the improvement of the top-level design, focusing on the community operational mechanism to establish countermeasures to cultivate more high-level teacher resources for the economic and social development of Hainan.

1. Introduction

“Teachers' professional development community” is a hot topic in education reform nowadays, and it has been generally recognized in theoretical studies at home and abroad that teacher education professional development community has become a key issue that restricts the quality of education [1]. For example, Grossman et al. of Stanford University have described and explained the connotation, characteristics and formation process of teacher professional communities based on case studies in detail, clearly pointing out the essential difference between “teacher professional communities” and “a group of teachers”. Perry, on the other hand, points out that the teachers' professional community is an intellectual group established in the process of teachers' professional development that shares the same goals and participates in the planning, implementation, and reflection of professional development. In contrast to foreign research, some domestic scholars simply equate teacher professional development communities with traditional forms such as collective lesson preparation, and many teachers are even unaware of the role that educational authorities should actually play in the construction of teachers' professional development communities? This lack of understanding has led to the failure to maximize the functioning of the various types of teachers' professional development communities in China [2]. How to run better? Theoretical reflection is needed to establish operational mechanisms to ensure that teachers'

professional development is taken to the next level.

2. Realistic Dilemmas Arising from the Operation of Teachers' Professional Development Communities

According to the time sequence of teacher education, teachers' professional development communities can be divided into two stages: pre-service and post-service. Pre-service teachers' professional development communities are mainly undertaken by high education institutions, especially teacher training colleges, while post-service teachers' professional development communities are mainly embodied in subject groups, grade groups, teaching and research teams led by teaching researchers, and master teacher studios, etc. The lack of top-level design is precisely what has led to problems in both vertical and horizontal linkages of teachers' professional development communities.

2.1 The Lack of Vertical Interaction: the Disconnect between Universities and Primary and Secondary Schools

Pre-service teacher training: a one-man show for universities.

In order to implement The Opinions of the Ministry of Education on Vigorously Promoting Teacher Education Curriculum Reform, The Teacher Education Curriculum Standards (Trial Implementation) (Teacher [2011] No. 6, hereinafter referred to as “Reform Opinions”) and “Curriculum Standards”), a Normal University in Hainan issued the “Teacher Education Curriculum Reform Program of a Normal University” in January 2013, which opened a new round of teacher education curriculum reform. In order to adapt to the newly adjusted curriculum system as soon as possible, teachers from various colleges involved in subject teaching formed their own teaching and research teams and conducted many discussions on how to implement the curriculum, offer elective courses, and evaluate the curriculum. Accordingly, several teachers' professional development communities have quietly formed. However, the operation of these gradually formed teachers' professional development communities revealed two major flaws [3].

First, most of the team members are university teachers, and there are few primary and secondary school teachers, which makes the whole reform seem like university teachers talking to themselves. Although some university teachers have daily communication with primary and secondary school teachers, these personal and distinctive communication cannot cover up the lack of institutional communication between university teachers and primary and secondary school teachers on teacher training. In other words, it is difficult to form a real community with occasional collisions, and even more difficult to ensure a stable, continuous, and in-depth operation of the community.

Second, communities are often college-based, and there is a lack of cross college communities. Since colleges are the most important secondary management units in universities, teachers' daily teaching and research work mostly depends on the administrative bodies at the college level in order to function properly, and the existing teachers' professional development communities in normal universities can hardly overcome the gaps between colleges, and there is indeed a lack of continuous, stable, and institutionalized communication mechanisms among teachers from different colleges [4]. It is the delay in building intercollegiate professional communities that will make it difficult for the established professional development communities to cope with the complex curriculum reforms in basic education.

Pre-service teacher training: the involvement of universities is not deep enough

In the practice of seeking to interface with primary and secondary schools, universities are not involved deeply enough, and their participation is mostly in the form of lectures, lessons (academic

classes), listening and evaluating classes, and research projects. A front-line teacher once told the group his view of the effect of such training-style lectures: “The heart surges when you listen, and the sound of the waves remains the same after you go back.” This view is quite representative. It can be seen that the more academic of universities, the more “ungrounded” they are in the eyes of primary and secondary schools; the rejection of the strong academic of universities by primary and secondary schools often leads to the criticism by university teachers that teachers in primary and secondary schools “don't know what they are doing” or “don't have ideas” and “don't have concepts” [5]. To some extent, this is the inevitable result of the separation between pre-service teacher training and post-service teacher professional development, and also the main reason why it is difficult to form a real professional development community alliance between primary and secondary schools and colleges.

2.2 Weak Horizontal Cooperation: Teachers' Professional Development Community is Difficult to Live Up to Its Name

The operation of teacher professional development communities in the post service stage can be briefly described in two dimensions: intra-school and inter-school. Communities based on regular organizational forms such as subject groups, school year groups, and teaching and research groups are the main forms of inter-school teacher professional development communities in Hainan Province; compared to inter-school communities, there are also not smaller dilemmas in the operation of inter-school communities in Hainan Province.

Inter-school level: the construction of teachers' professional community with the core of teaching and research staff needs to be urgently strengthened

For a long time, teachers' professional development community has been viewed as a fixed group of members who grow together over a long period of time through interaction and practice. Under this view, teacher professional development communities have become a relatively closed system in which only “insiders” can influence them, which can create a better professional atmosphere within the group but also easily lead to self-imposed stagnation. Therefore, in the operation of teacher professional development communities, it is important to break the restrictions of school districts and focus not on whether or not the members of the community are fixed members, but rather on institutional development.

Slow advancement of teacher professional development community with teaching and research staff as the core

There is no doubt that the teaching and researcher staff team is a key group in the construction of post-service teachers' professional development community. However, due to historical reasons, the construction of the teaching and research staff team in Hainan Province has been lagging behind for a long time. Although in 2009, the Hainan Provincial Government issued The Opinions on Strengthening the Teaching and Research Team in our Province, requiring cities and counties to provide teaching and research staff in accordance with the curriculum categories and sections stipulated in the National Curriculum Program, and various teaching and research institutions at all levels should employ a certain number of high-level part-time teaching and research staff according to actual needs. But the work of building a team of teaching and research staff has been slow to advance. If we say that the shortage of teaching and research staff directly leads to the difficulty of running the teachers' professional development community with teaching and research staff as the core, the uneven quality of teaching and research staff affects the operation of the professional development community even more [6].

Lack of teachers' professional development community system of the Master Teacher Studio

The emergence of the Master Teacher Studio as a professional development community between

schools has realized the pursuit of the educational mission of “master teachers leading, team work, resource sharing, and balanced complementarity”. With rich content, flexible forms and institutionalized assessment, the Master Teacher Studio is highly welcomed by front-line teachers. However, with the deepening of practice, the Master Teacher Studio has revealed some problems of lack of system in the process of specific operation.

First, the lack of leading demonstration. At the beginning of the establishment of each master studio, there is a comprehensive plan for the construction of the studio, and the planning arrangements for the annual activities, such as: helping twinning, sending teaching to the countryside, listening to and evaluating lessons, demonstrating teaching, etc. It is more at the level of “skillful leadership”, but not at the level of “expert leadership”.

Second, the assessment system is not sound. On the one hand, there is no standard for the consideration of participation in the activities, and the results of the sign-in sheets and interviews of the preliminary activities show that it is difficult for the studio to carry out activities with full participation, because one is that the studio activities conflict with the working hours of the members at school; the other is that some teachers take chances to dodge. On the other hand, value quantity but ignore quality, which makes some teachers complain about participating in the studio activities and think that it harasses the people and wastes money.

Third, there is no mechanism for school-based teaching and research. School-based teaching and research is an important support for the survival of the master teacher studio. However, since the members of the master teacher studio are from different regions or different schools, the school-based teaching and research on which the studio depends is scattered in each school on its own, and there is no unified coordination mechanism.

Intra-school level: subject communities work separately

At present, simply from the perspective of the permanent organizational structure of grade groups and subject groups in primary and secondary schools in Hainan Province, each school basically believes that only within the subject can a real community be built. In the teachers' professional development community built by universities and primary and secondary schools, the emphasis is on the professional “correspondence ratio” between them, and it is also believed that only the subjects corresponding to primary and secondary schools can build a real professional community with them. However, in scientific research, the increase of interdisciplinary fields has become an inevitable development trend, and universities have responded to this trend by piloting the enrollment of large category to help students better understand and adapt to the study in adjacent majors or fields. In the new curriculum reform of primary and secondary schools, the addition of integrated courses based on the past subject-based curriculum is actually a response to the increase in interdisciplinary fields. But more teachers are not fully aware of this, and the possible result of this is an inability to adapt to future trends of curriculum reform changes and an increasingly narrowed field of expertise.

3. Measures to Promote the Establishment of the Operating Mechanism of Teachers' Professional Development Community

As mentioned above, the difficulties encountered by the various forms of teacher professional development communities have already affected the teachers' individual professional development. Therefore, it is necessary to establish the operational mechanisms of each teachers' professional development community in order to create a peer-to-peer environment for teachers to develop collaboratively in an environment of dialogue and communication.

3.1 Do a Good Job of Top-Level Design and Promote the Construction of a Tripartite Cooperation Mechanism among the Government, Universities and Primary and Secondary Schools

To overcome the problems of vertical disconnection between universities and primary and secondary schools and weak horizontal cooperation, the top-level design requires the construction of a tripartite cooperation mechanism among the government, universities and primary and secondary schools, the development of group norms, the formation of an organizational mechanism of mutual dependence, and the coordination of the interests of all parties.

Generally speaking, in the operation of teachers' professional development community, the education administration should take the leading position, which represents as follows: Firstly, in terms of conceptual guidance, guiding universities and primary and secondary schools to change their concepts and establish the awareness of cooperation, fully realizing that both pre-service and post-service teacher professional development are inseparable from the in-depth cooperation and joint participation of universities and primary and secondary schools. Without the participation of primary and secondary schools, the pre-service teachers' professional development is easily detached from the front-line teaching reality and falls into the dilemma of "Self-Talk", which makes it difficult for the teacher-training students to adapt to the front-line teaching practice in primary and secondary schools and makes them appear to be "Have Grandiose Aims but Puny Abilities". The post-service teachers' professional development without the participation of colleges and universities is easy to lose the direction and difficult to get rid of the shackles of "Examination-Oriented". Secondly, the functions and positions of universities and primary and secondary schools in the pre-service and post-service teachers' professional development should be clarified. It is not a simple question of functional orientation whether universities or primary and secondary schools should be given priority to. It will also involve different stages of teachers' professional development and different contents, which need to be analyzed according to the actual situation of education and specific problems. Third, in the establishment of collaborative mechanism, the government should come forward to build a platform for dialogue and cooperation and exchange between universities and primary and secondary schools, based on informal teacher groups and inter-school exchanges, and bring them into an organized and institutionalized track.

3.2 Improving the Internal Regulation Mechanism of Teachers' Professional Development Community

A system is "a set of rules of behavior that address social, political, and economic behavior" that provides an "order-based" trust to establish "rules that prohibit unpredictable and opportunistic behavior", a institutional arrangement that provides a structure that "enables the cooperation of its members to obtain some recoverable income that cannot be obtained outside the structure". Through the leading role of education administration, the institutional construction related to teachers' professional development community is established and improved, so that the collaboration between universities and primary and secondary schools, as well as the collaboration between schools, can find its basis and guarantee from the system, but also form a mutual restraint relationship, forming a series of institutional arrangements with incentive, organization, coordination and evaluation as the core.

First, in terms of incentive mechanism, the establishment of such behavior rules can strengthen the interdependence between universities and primary and secondary schools in the pre-service and post-service professional development of teachers, so that both sides realize that the other side is indispensable at different stages of development. Thus, the cooperation and communication between universities and primary and secondary schools is not only to fulfill the administrative

orders of education administration, but also to complete the transformation from “Ask me to cooperate” to “I want to cooperate” based on the internal needs of teachers' professional growth.

Second, the establishment and improvement of organizational systems. Teacher professional development communities, from intra-school to inter-school, require the establishment of a series of organizational systems to regulate the organizational goals, organizational structure, and organizational rules of teacher professional development communities. It enables people to clarify what is considered to be a real teacher professional development community operation activity. For example, through the construction of a master teacher's transmission system, the role of preaching, teaching and solving problems at the professional level is played more often; through the construction of a school-based teaching and research system, a combination of centralized and decentralized form is adopted, and the topics are broken down into several sub-topics in the coordination, which are completed by members in each school.

Thirdly, to establish a coordination mechanism. On the one hand, it is to strengthen the tripartite collaboration between universities and primary and secondary schools, and universities and primary and secondary schools belong to different departments, so the establishment of coordination mechanism should firstly rationalize the internal relationship between education authorities, colleges of universities and primary and secondary schools; secondly, it is to coordinate the relationship between primary and secondary schools, such as master teacher studios, and think about the consultation and cooperation among members, etc., which are all inevitable for the operation of teachers' professional development community fundamental issues.

Fourth, the improvement of the appraisal system. Once a teachers' professional development community has been established, it should be incorporated into the appraisal system. This is because our goal is not just to formally establish a teachers' professional development community, but to seek to make it, once established, properly embedded in the institutional structures already in place and to form a healthy collaboration with other institutional arrangements. For example, the evaluation system here includes the evaluation of the education administration's promotion of teacher professional development communities, the assessment and evaluation of the relevant heads of universities and primary and secondary schools, the assessment and evaluation of the heads of master teacher studios, the evaluation of the professional development of teacher members, and so on.

3.3 Strengthen the System of “Feed-Back” from Primary and Secondary Schools to Universities

Generally speaking, although the pre-service teachers' professional development is dominated by universities, the universities themselves do not exclude primary and secondary schools from it, but actively explore ways to build a platform for cooperation with primary and secondary schools. In the process of pre-service teachers' professional development, it is necessary to “come up” (with theoretical vision) and “go down” (with practical action). In “go down” regard, primary and secondary schools have accumulated a great deal of practical experience, which is a necessary and useful complement to the pre-service teachers' professional development, mainly in universities. In terms of effectiveness, these forms are generally well received by teacher educators. Teacher trainees are eager to be integrated into the professional life of primary and secondary schools as soon as possible due to their clear career orientation, and the “feed-back” of primary and secondary schools to universities responds to this demand.

4. Conclusion

There are three measures to promote the establishment of the operating mechanism of teachers'

professional development community. First, do a good job of top-level design and promote the construction of a tripartite cooperation mechanism among the government, universities and primary and secondary schools. Second, improving the internal regulation mechanism of teachers' professional development community. Thirdly, strengthen the system of "feed-back" from primary and secondary schools to universities.

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