

# Research on the Teaching Style of Famous Teachers in China: Retrospect, Reflection, and Prospect

Jiapan Xu, Rumi Li

Nanjing Normal University, Nanjing, China

Famous teachers are representatives of the teaching practice level in their era, and their unique teaching style affects the future of countless students. Review the history, the researches on the teaching style of famous teachers in China have made some achievements in both the basic theories and the practical application; research themes are polyphic development; the characteristics, formation process, formation mechanism, comparative researches, and cultivation strategies of the teaching style of famous teachers have been fully discussed. However, there are still some problems, such as insufficient responses to “Internet + Education”, narrow research subjects, single research methods and insufficient inheritance and references need to be solved. Looking into the future, we need to actively respond to the requirements of the times of “Internet + Education”, pay attention to the combination of theory and practice, enrich the research perspectives, actively criticize and draw on the excellent research results of foreign countries, and constantly promote the development of the researches on the teaching style of famous teachers in China.

*Keywords:* famous teacher, teaching style, review and prospect

## Introduction

In 2010, the Ministry of Education of P. R. China (MOE of PRC, 2010) issued *The Outline of the National Program for Medium-and-Long-Term Education Reform and Development (2010-2020)*, which clearly stated that it was necessary to train backbone teachers, the dual-qualification teachers, academic leaders, and principals, and train a group of famous teachers and leading talents in disciplines. The construction of the famous teachers has been highly concerned by the national education departments, and the topics about the famous teachers have quickly become the focuses of researchers' discussion. Famous teachers are the outstanding teachers, and also the leaders and representatives of the teaching practice level in their era. Their unique teaching styles will greatly influence the future of the countless students. Therefore, the researches on the teaching style of famous teachers can not only positively influence the development of students, but also provide reference for the professional growth of other teachers. From the preliminary exploration in the early 1980s to the geometric growth in the last decade, the researches on the teaching style of famous teachers have achieved abundant results. Standing at a new historical starting point, it is necessary for us to comprehensively examine the researches on the teaching style of famous teachers in China, so that people can have a clear understanding of the achievements, shortcomings, and future prospects of the researches on the teaching style of famous teachers in China, and then continue to deepen the related researches.

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Jiapan Xu, doctoral candidate, School of Education Science, Nanjing Normal University.

Rumi Li, Ph.D., professor, School of Education Science, Nanjing Normal University.

### **Concept Definition**

The concept of “famous teacher” can be defined in a broad sense and a narrow sense, but no matter in a broad sense or a narrow sense, its connotations are similar. First of all, famous teachers are excellent teachers in the field of education and teaching. Secondly, famous teachers have made outstanding contributions in teaching practice and teaching research. Thirdly, famous teachers have advanced educational ideas and noble moral sentiment. Finally, famous teachers are given specific honorary titles by the national or local educational authorities.

As for the concept of teaching style, scholars have defined the concept of teaching style from different perspectives. Although they have different focuses and opinions, they have basically reached the following consensus: First, teaching style is formed during the long-term teaching practice; secondly, teaching style is the result of teachers’ individualized teaching; and finally, the explicit representation of teaching style is embodied in the application of teaching methods, skills, language, characteristics, etc.

Based on the above cognition of famous teachers and teaching style, this study believes that the teaching style of famous teachers refers to the effective, stable, and unique teaching views, teaching skills and it is gradually formed under the guidance of teaching theory and in the long-term teaching practice.

### **Literature Review**

Since the reform and opening up, the Chinese government has attached great importance to the development of education, and encouraged educational researchers and practitioners to vigorously carry out educational researches and teaching experiments. In the early 1980s, a number of famous teachers emerged in the field of teaching practice. Their unique teaching styles attracted the attention of the researchers, and the researches on the teaching style of famous teachers started accordingly. The researches on the teaching style of famous teachers in the past 40 years can be divided into the following stages: The first two decades was the preliminary exploration stage, the third decade was the steady development stage, and the latest decade was the comprehensive deepening stage. Reviewing the research process, the researches on the teaching style of Chinese famous teachers have made certain achievements in the basic theory and practical application, and the research topics are polymorphic. The following topics on the teaching style of famous teachers have been fully discussed by scholars.

#### **The Characteristics**

The teaching style of famous teachers has the general characteristics of the general teaching style, and it also has its own particularity. The formation of the unique and obvious teaching style of famous teachers is based on the long-term teaching practice, accumulation, and reflection of practitioners. The exploration and summary of the characteristics of the teaching style of famous teachers has a positive guiding role on new teachers or prospective famous teachers. Through conducting the research, Wang Qingsong (2003) believed that the teaching style of famous teachers had five basic characteristics, which were practicality, reflection, innovation, diversity, and demonstration. According to the representation of the teaching style of the famous teachers, the scholars discussed the characteristics of the teaching style of the famous teachers from the aspects of teaching language, teaching methods, classroom atmosphere, and teaching content. Several researchers respectively described the teaching language style characteristics of special-grade teachers, such as Li Zhenxi

and Zhang Yipeng (Sun, 2018; Zhang, 2009; Liang, 2016; Wang, Sun, & Sui, 2013). In the aspect of method, Wang Lianxiao's teaching methods contains the characteristics like subjectivity, development, inspiration, and wholeness (Zhang, 2000). The teaching methods of the teacher Ouyang Daina shows the characteristics of "beautiful, clever, alive, and practica" (Nie, 2019). Wu Xianxin's teaching methods focus on simplifying complexity, teaching students in accordance with their aptitude, and paying equal attention to learning and thinking (Liu, 2016). Sun Yonghe likes illustrating his points by quotation from a number of sources and is good at guiding the students to learn and think (Sui, 2013). Some researchers believe that the classroom atmosphere of Dou Guimei, a Chinese special-grade teacher, is infectious, while that of Wang Songzhou is "elegant and poetic", and that of Xue Fagen is relaxing and pragmatic (Song & Xu, 2017). Different famous teachers have different personalities, so their teaching styles also show the characteristics of diversification and individuation.

### **The Formation Process**

The formation of the teaching style of the famous teachers is not achieved overnight, but requires the famous teachers to experience a period of development in the long-term teaching practice, and the formation process can be divided into several stages. The theory of "Three Stages" and "Four Stages" about the formation of the teaching style of famous teachers have been widely recognized by most domestic scholars.

Using the method of "Targeted Sampling", two researchers (Song, 2016; He, 2006) selected special-grade teachers with outstanding teaching style as research objects for case analysis. They collected relevant materials through interviews, classroom observation, and physical analysis. On the basis of analyzing the collected materials, they divided the formation process of the teaching style of the research objects into three stages: imitation, innovation, and maturity. Some researchers (Dong, Chen, & Guo, 2008) believed that the formation of the teaching style of famous teachers could be roughly divided into four stages: the stage of imitative teaching, the stage of independent teaching, the stage of creative teaching, and the stage of teaching style perfection.

Although scholars differ in the division of the formation stage of the teaching style of famous teachers, the division is based on the same essence, and they all regard imitability as the starting point of the formation of the style, and stability as the symbol of the formation of the teaching style of famous teachers.

### **The Formation Mechanism**

The formation of the teaching style of famous teachers comes from both the internal factors of the individuals and the external and objective factors, which is the result of the comprehensive action of the internal and external factors.

Teacher teaching style is formed and developed in the long-term teaching practice. It is believed that the growth of famous teacher teaching style is influenced by endogenous factors and exogenous factors, and the endogenous factors include cultural foundation, psychological quality, professional quality, and conscious pursuit, while exogenous factors endogenous factors include teaching elements, external environment, key people, family atmosphere, specific system, etc (Zhou, 2018; Han, 2015). Personal practice and display platform are also the key factors in the growth of teachers' teaching style (Guo, 2008).

Different famous teachers have different personalities, but there are similarities in the internal mechanism of their teaching style formation. The internal mechanism of the formation of teaching style includes psychological mechanism, internal determinants, and internal development stages; the psychological

mechanism includes psychological perception, judgment, detection, decision-making, and other processes; and the internal factors include self-concept, independence, self-development, innovation, and aesthetic consciousness, while the development stage is a variety of transformations of explicit knowledge and tacit knowledge (Wang & Liang, 2008). Physiological quality and individual's pursuit of teaching style are also the internal factors that affect the formation of individual teaching style (Zhang & Li, 2009). Knowledge innovation also has an impact on the internal mechanism of the formation of the teaching style of famous teachers (Yan & Gu, 2013). The formation of teacher teaching style is the result of the interaction between internal and external factors. The internal factors play decisive roles, while the external factors play promoting or catalytic roles.

From the analysis of previous studies, it is found that there are various factors affecting the formation of the teaching style of famous teachers, but the formation of the teaching style of famous teachers must be the result of the interaction of internal and external factors. The formation of a teacher's teaching style is inseparable from the teacher's personal physiological basis, personal learning, cultural accumulation, active pursuit, teaching philosophy, and practice reflection, as well as the influence of school culture, social environment, government system, and other factors.

### **The Training Strategies**

The cultivation of famous teacher teaching style cannot be separated from the personal efforts of teachers, and it is gradually formed from the cultivation and support of the outside world. Many scholars have put forward a series of strategies and suggestions to promote the formation of famous teacher teaching style, and have also conducted relevant practical researches.

The cooperation between universities and schools (UAS) is a strategy to shape and enhance the teaching style of famous teachers, which requires university experts to go to the front line of teaching to observe the classroom teaching, interview teachers, and carry out interactive cooperation (Sun & Zhang, 2014). Local educational departments should strengthen the training of famous teachers, build communication platforms, and expand the influence of existing famous teachers. Schools should create a harmonious atmosphere, implement loose management and establish an open evaluation system (Yu, 2013). Optimizing the training concept, program, and process of the training base is helpful to improve the quality of teacher training and the formation of the teaching style of famous teachers (Lu, 2013). The formation of the style of a famous teacher is not accidental. The guarantee of external force is the condition and the key role of its smooth formation.

In addition to the characteristics, formation process, formation mechanism, and cultivation strategies of the teaching style of famous teachers mentioned above, some other contents have also attracted the attention of scholars. Some researchers pay attention to the teaching style of preschool teachers, while others use methods, such as classroom observation, questionnaires, and interviews, and literature analysis to study the teaching style of specific teachers and specific subjects in primary and secondary schools.

### **Reflection**

Although the existing researches on the teaching style of famous teachers have achieved abundant results, due to the influence of subjective conditions and the restriction of objective conditions, there are still many shortcomings in the research. The analysis of these deficiencies will help us to recognize the crux of the problems and provide help for further researches.

### **The Insufficient Response to the “Internet + Education”**

In recent years, the deep integration of information technology and discipline teaching has become a trend of education development. Under the background of “Internet + Education”, teaching problems, such as discipline teaching and students’ learning have been or are changing. The new digital technology and education technology provide rich resources for teachers’ teaching, and provide much convenience for the professional development and literacy improvement of teachers.

In the past 10 years, massive open online courses (MOOCs) have developed rapidly in China. In just a few years, the total number of MOOCs in China, the participating schools, and the number of learners have taken a leading position in the world, and China has become a major country of MOOCs. At the beginning of 2020, China was deeply affected by the COVID-19 epidemic, and China carried out unprecedented-scale online teaching activities. Whether in MOOCs or other online courses, a number of famous teachers with unique teaching styles have emerged over the years, many famous teachers’ classroom teaching observation activities or quality class teaching competitions of different levels and disciplines have been carried out all over the country, and many famous teachers’ classroom teaching styles are worth learning and studying. However, according to the existing researches, most of the researches on the teaching style of famous teachers focused on the few special-grade teachers in the past. The studies of a few national famous Chinese teachers of the 1980s and 1990s are too concentrated. In particular, the researches on several famous Chinese teachers in the 1980s and 1990s were too concentrated and even repeated, but the above excellent courses and famous teachers with contemporary characteristics were not excavated enough and the response was insufficient.

### **The Narrow Scope in Research Subjects and the Ignorance of Practice**

According to the teaching division of the study objects, the objects of the researches on the teaching style of famous teachers include the teaching style of famous teachers in kindergartens, primary, and secondary schools, and the teaching style of famous teachers in universities. The research subjects should include specialized teaching researchers and front-line teachers. However, according to the existing researches, most of the results of the researches on the teaching style of famous teachers come from teachers of normal universities, master and teachers themselves and other front-line teachers seldom conduct in-depth researches on this aspect.

In the existing studies, researchers mainly discuss the teaching styles of famous teachers based on their teaching materials, written records, and other materials. There is an obvious tendency of scholastic researches, and researchers seldom conduct field researches on the teaching life of famous teachers. Theoretical researchers and teaching practitioners haven’t formed a real integration. The theoretical researches on the teaching style of famous teachers have no significant guiding significance for the reforms of educational practice. The “lack of practice” of the teaching style theory of famous teachers is still hindering the further deepening of the researches.

### **The Superficial Problem Analysis and the Single Research Method**

The formation of teaching style has a long-term practice basis and an extensive theoretical basis. Theoretical disciplines, such as philosophy, pedagogy, psychology, physiology, art, aesthetics, sociology, system theory, and so on, all have impacts on the formation of teaching style. Among the existing research results on the teaching style of famous teachers, there are many discussions based on the philosophical perspective, and the analysis of many problems is superficial, and there are few in-depth studies on the teaching

style of famous teachers from other perspectives. The perspectives of the study on the teaching style of famous teachers are relatively single, lacking of multiple theoretical sources.

For the application of the research methods, the qualitative research method is favored by the researchers. The existing researches mainly discuss the characteristics, formation process, influence mechanism, and cultivation strategies of the teaching style of famous teachers through qualitative methods and inductive research paradigms. Among the few applied researches, there are also the case methods, comparative analysis, life history, and text analysis of famous teachers, while the quantitative researches on the teaching style of famous teachers are relatively lacking. The researches on the teaching style of famous teachers involve numerous and complicated influencing factors. If the differences and causalities among the factors are discussed, quantitative statistical methods should be chosen to ensure the objectivity and scientificity of the research results.

### **The Weak Historical Researches and Insufficient Inheritance and Reference**

Reviewing the ancient and modern, there were many famous educators and famous teachers in the world, and their thoughts and educational research achievements have played a positive role in promoting the development of education and teaching in the world. However, according to the existing research results, the researches on the teaching style of famous teachers in China pay insufficient attention to the historical characteristics. These studies lack a historical perspective to grasp the historical change of the teaching style of famous teachers, which is embodied in the lack of famous teachers before the 1980s in the research objects.

Under the background of economic globalization and education internationalization, we should inherit Chinese educational tradition and establish the “Chinese discourse” of the teaching style of famous teachers on the basis of criticizing and learning from the excellent foreign research results. The researches on the teaching style of famous teachers seldom involve foreign famous teachers. In the few discussions about the teaching style of foreign famous teachers, it is basically only a simple discussion, without in-depth analysis and study. The introduction of foreign teachers’ teaching style and its researches needs to be further strengthened.

In addition to the problems presented above, the researches on the teaching style of famous teachers still need to be improved in some other aspects. For example, the research objects of famous teachers are mainly famous teachers of Chinese, and the researches of other disciplines are weak. The research content is mainly should be, but the actual researches are insufficient. There are many theoretical deductions, while the generalizations based on practice are also insufficient. In the study of relationship between teachers and students, the perspective of students is absent.

### **Prospect**

Reviewing the history, affirming the achievements and discovering the problems are to better predict and grasp the future. Under the background of the deep integration of information technology and discipline teaching, we should face up to the problems existing in the study of the teaching style of famous teachers, and try to look into the future research trend, so as to further clarify the research paths and basic trend of the core issues of the teaching style of famous teachers.

### **Attaching Importance to the Auxiliary Role of Information Technology**

The digital era brings rich research materials and new research means and methods for education and teaching researches in the new era. The rise of “Internet + Education” has made various changes in the field of

education and teaching, and has enriched the teaching methods, learning methods and the interaction methods between teachers and students. In the face of the new changes brought by information technology to education and teaching researches, what should we study on the teaching style of famous teachers? How to study it? These should be topics that attract researchers' attention and require positive response.

Therefore, it is necessary to actively respond to the requirements of the times of "Internet + Education". Teaching researchers should actively pay attention to the teaching style researches of famous teachers in the new era. Firstly, establish research consciousness suitable for the era of educational informatization and big data, and change the traditional research concept. Secondly, improve the research ability in the digital era. Researchers should take the initiative to learn and master the abilities to operate mobile tools, network management, network data collection, database operation, and digital information analysis. Thirdly, be good at cooperating with information technology experts. Based on big data and the National Public Service Platform for Education Resources, carry out researches on the teaching style of famous teachers with data experts jointly, collect excellent lessons from big data, and analyze and study them from various aspects and perspectives.

### **Strengthening the Combination of Theoretical Researches and Practical Exploration**

The teaching style of famous teachers is gradually formed by famous teachers in the long-term teaching practice. This practical character determines that the only way to study the teaching style of famous teachers is to combine theoretical researches with practical exploration. For the researches on the teaching style of famous teachers, the objects and contents of the researches are from classroom teaching practice, and also from the historical life practice of famous teachers, which can provide educational context and real materials for specific problems in classroom teaching practice, as well as general and regular knowledge for related researches.

To improve the practical orientation of the teaching style researches of famous teachers requires researchers to strengthen the combination of theoretical exploration and practical exploration. On the one hand, teaching experts should carry out teaching researches in the teaching practice field, study the teaching style of modern famous teachers from the real situation, and use advanced educational concepts to guide front-line teachers to carry out teaching practice. On the other hand, the front-line teachers should strengthen their own theoretical learning, improve their professional quality consciousness, combine their own actual situation, learning from others, form their own unique teaching style, improve the effectiveness and artistic quality of their teaching to achieve the combination of theoretical learning and teaching practice in the process of studying the teaching style of famous teachers. In addition, teaching experts and front-line teachers should cooperate with each other, strengthen communication and exchange, and jointly develop the theory and practice of teaching style researches of famous teachers, and finally improve the teaching quality and talent cultivation.

### **Enriching the Research Perspectives**

In view of the problems that the philosophical perspective is more than the other theoretical perspectives, the researchers should strengthen the consciousness of filling in the gaps and comprehensively examine the teaching style of famous teachers from the multi-dimensional theoretical perspectives. The physiological conditions affecting the formation, development, and activities of the teaching style of famous teachers should be analyzed from the perspective of physiology; the psychological mechanism of the teaching style of famous teachers should be explored from the perspective of psychology; the external conditions of the formation of the teaching style of famous teachers and how to optimize the training strategies of the teaching style of famous teachers ought to be explored from the perspective of sociology; the relationship between teachers' teaching

style and students' learning style is necessary to be explored from the perspective of relations; discuss the artistry of teaching methods, teaching languages, classroom atmosphere from the perspective of art, etc. Researchers should enrich the perspectives of the researches on the teaching style of famous teachers and give full play to the comprehensive role of the researches on the teaching style of famous teachers.

In view of the problems that there are many researches on the teaching style of famous teachers in Chinese, but not enough researches in other subjects, researchers should pay more attention to this phenomenon. Researchers with related background should consciously focus on discipline development dynamic, look for ancient and modern famous teachers of different subjects, explore the formation mechanism of teaching style, its type, cultivating path and function from multiple disciplines and multi-dimensional perspectives, summarize the commonness of the teaching style in interdisciplinary teaching, find out the differences among different subjects, make the teachers seek common ground while put differences aside in teaching style, and to make the research serve the teachers' professional promotion and the students' all-round development.

### **Inheritance and Reference**

Under the background of education modernization and international development, we need to deal with the relationship between inheritance and development, criticism and reference, and construct a teaching and research system with Chinese characteristics.

First of all, it is necessary to find the roots of the traditional culture of the country, deeply interpret the teaching styles of famous teachers in the history of Chinese education development, and take it to adapt to the essence of today's education development. Examining the present situation of education and researches, researchers need to explore, transform and innovate the teaching style of the previous famous teachers, combine them with the contemporary teaching practice and research practice, expand and enrich their new connotation, and reflect the requirements of the Chinese cultural subject consciousness and cultural self-consciousness. Secondly, look to the world, strengthen the researches on the teaching style of foreign famous teachers and critically draw on the excellent results of the related researches. In the development history of education in the world, there have been many famous teachers, and there are a large number of famous teachers in the world today as well. Their teaching styles contain something that needed to be learned from. Rich teaching research results brought about by education globalization should be made use of effectively, learned from in criticism, digested, and integrated in reference, adapted to Chinese teaching practice and Chinese cultural soil, which will be helpful for developing the researches on the teaching style of famous teachers in China. It also plays a significant role in promoting the effectiveness of classroom teaching and the improvement of teaching quality.

### **Conclusion**

The famous teachers are the excellent representatives of the teaching team. Their excellent teaching style can positively promote the professional growth of young teachers and the all-round development of students. In the past forty years, Chinese researchers have made some achievements in the study of the teaching style of famous teachers. After sorting out the research literature, this paper finds that the research topics include the characteristics of the teaching style of famous teachers, the formation process, the formation mechanism, comparative research, training strategies, and so on. At the same time, the following problems have been found in relevant researches, such as insufficient response to "Internet + Education", narrow scope of research



subjects, single research methods, and insufficient inheritance and reference. In future researches, researchers need to actively respond to the requirements of the era of “Internet + education”, pay attention to the combination of theory and practice, enrich research perspectives, actively criticize and draw on foreign excellent research results, and constantly promote the development of researches on the teaching style of famous teachers in China.

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