

An Initial Comparison of Chinese Teachers' Qualification and Qualified Teacher Status in England: Reflections and Lessons Learned So Far

CHEN Jun¹, XIAO Ao², ZHENG Yi¹

¹ Chongqing Normal University, Chongqing, China

² New York University, New York, USA

This paper seeks to compare the Chinese teachers' qualification (TQ) system with the Qualified Teacher Status (QTS) process in England, as potential improvements are currently an emerging concern. This research briefly reviews the two contexts, analyzing and reflecting on the strengths and weaknesses of the two systems while considering their underpinning philosophies. It reflects on the essence of teaching, discusses the challenges faced by the Chinese TQ system, and explores how the Qualified Teacher Status in England can inform the future development of new Chinese teachers' qualification processes. The outcomes of this research aim to make a valuable contribution to the debate and development of the next iterations of teachers' qualifications in China in the near future.

Keywords: teachers' qualification, qualified teacher status, training, education, reflection

Teachers play a crucial role in students' academic achievements and, consequently, contribute to the overall development of society through the provision of high-quality teaching. This is why the establishment of a teacher qualification system has gained worldwide consensus as a fundamental requirement for individuals aspiring to be teachers. According to recent statistics from the Chinese Ministry of Education, there are currently 15,860,000 primary and secondary teachers in China (MoE, 2022), with an annual increase of 300,000 projected until 2022 (Li, 2022). However, in comparison to the earlier implementation of Qualified Teacher Status (QTS) in the United States in 1825 (Fang & Xu, 2010) and in the 1840s in the United Kingdom (Li, 2012), China did not establish its initial teachers' qualification framework until the 1990s, with formal implementation commencing in 2000 (MoE, 2000). Despite the significant contributions the framework has made in improving the quality of student teachers over the past 22 years, prominent challenges still persist.

As highlighted in the government report by the Minister of Education (Huai, 2021), there have been notable improvements in student teachers' academic qualifications. The total number of qualified student teachers reached 2,615,800 in 2021, creating a substantial pool of teacher resources since the implementation

Acknowledgements: This research was funded by the Chongqing Social Science Association Program (Grant No. 2021NDYB120), and the Chongqing Higher Education Association Program (Grant No. CQJ21B027).

CHEN Jun, Professor, College of Languages and Literatures, Chongqing Normal University, Chongqing, China.

XIAO Ao, postgraduate student at the Steinhardt, New York University, New York, USA.

ZHENG Yi, Associate Professor, College of Languages and Literatures, Chongqing Normal University, Chongqing, China.

of the teachers' qualification (TQ) system in China. However, terms such as "teacher education", "professionalism", and "teacher qualification" were adopted from Western contexts in the 1990s and are rooted in distinct cultures and contexts. Therefore, in order to explore potential solutions and provide suggestions tailored to the Chinese context, this paper will compare the Chinese TQ system with the QTS system in England. It will initially examine the relevant policies and documents, as well as explore the implementation of the two systems.

The Status Quos of Chinese TQ and QTS in England

Reviewing QTS in England

Qualified Teacher Status (QTS) is widely acknowledged as the minimum requirement for individuals seeking employment in maintained schools and non-maintained special schools in England. Additionally, many non-maintained schools utilize QTS as a measure of teaching quality for their candidates, although it is not legally mandated for teaching in academies, free schools, and private schools. Qualified teachers from outside the UK are granted QTS exemption and are permitted to teach in England for a maximum of four years. Over the past 20 years, QTS in England has undergone significant changes to address global and national educational challenges.

Entry requirements and the routes towards QTS. Entrants to teaching need to have a first degree (or equivalent) and there are three main routes for awarding QTS: Apply¹, Assessment Only,² and Train to Teach³. Being the mainstream route, Train to Teach means that new entrants need to complete an Initial Teacher Training (ITT) program to become a qualified teacher in England and the successful trainees will be awarded Qualified Teacher Status (QTS). According to the latest census, the total number of new entrants to ITT was 37,069 with 31,233 postgraduate entrants and 5,836 undergraduate entrants in 2021/2022 (DfE, 2021). The training routes toward QTS are quite diversified as shown in Table 1 (DfE, 2021), out of the total number of 37,069 entrants in the academic year 2021-2022, 31,233 individuals opted for postgraduate programs to obtain Qualified Teacher Status (QTS). Among these, school-led routes such as School Centred Initial Teacher Training (SCITT), School Direct (fee-funded) (SDf), School Direct (salaried) (SDs), High Potential Initial Teacher Training (HPITT), and the Postgraduate Teaching Apprenticeship (PGTA) routes, in addition to the traditional university-led Post Graduate Certificate in Education (PGCE), accounted for 55% of the postgraduate programs. This marks a slight increase from 53% in the previous year (2020-2021) (DfE, 2021), indicating the growing popularity of school-led routes in recent years.

¹ Teachers who hold a teaching qualification from an EEA country, Australia, Canada, New Zealand, Switzerland, and the USA can apply to the TRA to have their professional qualifications recognised in England. Successful applicants are awarded QTS.

² An assessment only route is designed for the qualified teacher with an overseas teacher qualification outside the regions prescribed in I, and unqualified teachers who are already working at non-maintained schools with more than two years of working experience.

³ In 2021-2022, the number of teachers awarded QTS by TRA via assessment only is 576, and the number of teachers awarded QTS who applied cognition is 3,551 in total, while the number via training routes is 37,077.

Table 1

Training Routes for the Award of QTS in England

Routes		Percentage ⁴		Number of new entrants in 2021-2022 (37,069 in total)
Postgraduate routes ⁵	University-led PGCE (Post Graduate Certificate in Education)	45%		31,233
	SCITT (School Centred Initial Teacher Training)	15%	55%	
	School Direct (fee-funded & salaried) ⁶	30% & 3%		
	High Potential ITT ⁷ (formerly reported as Teach First)	5%		
	PGTA ⁸ (Postgraduate Teaching Apprenticeship)	3%		
Undergraduate route	University-led	16%		5,836

Professional practice and assessment. Trainee teachers are required to undergo placements in a minimum of two different schools, with each placement lasting at least 24 weeks. These placements are typically guided by school mentors and higher education/university tutors collaboratively. Approximately two-thirds of the trainee teachers' learning occurs within the school environment, following an immersive model. This approach aims to deepen their understanding of teaching by integrating theoretical knowledge into real teaching practice. Trainee teachers observe other teachers, are observed by others, and engage in structured reflection under guidance. This mixed model, which fosters genuine partnerships between schools and universities, has proven effective for trainee teachers, regardless of whether they are following the undergraduate route that predates the 1970s, the postgraduate routes established after the 1970s, or the recently expanded school-led route (Golding, 2015; Carter, 2014). Program providers develop their own courses in accordance with the Initial Teacher Training (ITT) Core Framework (DfE, 2019), which aligns with the Teachers' Standards (DfE, 2011). Throughout the course, trainee teachers undergo rigorous and robust assessments against these Teachers' Standards in order to be awarded QTS. Those who demonstrate meeting all the standards through their assessment profile are granted QTS.

Comparisons With the Chinese Context

In comparison to the longstanding existence of the QTS system in Western countries, the full implementation of teachers' qualifications in China began in 2000 (MoE, 2000). While systematic teacher education had been in place for over 100 years, starting with the establishment of the first teachers' college in 1897, it was referred to as "Normal" education and followed a model dominated by "Normal" universities until the 1990s. Normal universities are specialized institutions designated by the Chinese Ministry of Education for

⁴ The ratios of different postgraduate routes are directly quoted from *Initial Teacher Training Census, Academic Year 2021-2022* by DfE, and the ratio of undergraduate route is not included originally, so it is calculated separately by the author.

⁵ Postgraduate fee-funded routes include HEI-led route, school-led SCITT, and School Direct fee-funded route. Postgraduate salaried routes include the School Direct salaried, HPITT and, since 2018/2019, PGTA.

⁶ School Direct (salaried) is for the entrant with at least a three-year working experience, and they will be paid during their training. School Direct (fee-funded) is for the entrants with no or a little working experience. They need to pay the fees and no salary will be paid to them.

⁷ HPITT was formerly reported as Teach First. The two-year programme is an employment-based route in challenging circumstances, which is aimed at high-quality graduates and career changers.

⁸ A PGTA is a one-year work-based route with QTS and a postgraduate-level qualification. Trainees will be paid with no fees being paid as an unqualified teacher. They must have no less than 20% off-the-job training alongside paid work with an end-point assessment (EPA).

teacher education. They typically offer four-year undergraduate programs and two-three year postgraduate programs for student teachers in various subjects and education (some also provide doctoral programs). Upon graduation, students obtained a bachelor's or master's degree, but there was no specific accredited teaching qualification associated with it. This model placed emphasis on student teachers as moral role models (Li, 2022), recognizing the profound impact their instruction and behavior had on their pupils' attitudes, values, and behaviors. This longstanding tradition continues to have a significant influence on the current TQ system, where normal universities remain the mainstream for teacher education, with a focus on developing student teachers as role models. Currently, in order to obtain TQ, student teachers must pass an examination organized by universities or local education authorities, in addition to holding a bachelor's or master's degree. Having a bachelor's or master's degree, along with TQ, is a requirement for entry into primary or secondary schools.

Entry requirement and the routes towards TQ. Due to rapid social and economic development, as well as a long-standing tradition of respect for teachers in China, the competition for teacher recruitment is intense on a national level. Currently, applicants for primary and secondary schools are required to have at least a bachelor's degree (or higher) (MoE, 2021). However, in contrast to the more diverse approaches seen in England, the pathways to obtaining TQ in China remain relatively limited, following a university-dominated educational model. This is summarized below based on information from the MoE (2022).

Table 2

Routes for the Award of TQ in China

Student teachers	Normal university-led	3-year postgraduate programme	Direct accreditation ⁹
		4-year undergraduate programme	
	Non-normal university-led	3-year postgraduate programme	
		4-year undergraduate programme	
Social entrants	Non-normal education students		National examination
	Others		

As depicted in Table 2, there are two primary routes for obtaining TQ in China. The first route applies to student teachers studying at normal universities and teacher education schools in non-normal universities. They must undergo three or four years of teacher education to earn a bachelor's or master's degree. In addition to the degree, most of these student teachers obtain TQ through university-based assessments, rather than taking the national examination, as per the latest policy by the Ministry of Education (MoE, 2022). This policy aims to preserve the traditional advantage of normal universities while granting more autonomy to non-normal universities in teacher education (MoE, 2022). Normal universities have long been the mainstay of teacher education, as evidenced by the fact that currently, three-fourths of the approximately 300,000 new teachers employed in primary and secondary schools each year come from normal universities (Li, 2022). Simultaneously, in order to attract high-quality individuals to the teaching profession and leverage the interdisciplinary strengths of non-normal universities, these universities, especially high-quality comprehensive institutions, are encouraged to offer teacher education programs. They are positioned as a complementary resource by the government.

⁹ To guarantee the quality of teacher education, since 2017, all those universities with teacher education need to take part in the assessment on the quality of their teacher education programs. The assessment is organized by MoE with three levels of accreditation: Level 1 is the basic requirement for all universities with teacher education, Level 2 is qualified, and Level 3 is good. From 2022, only those student teachers in the programs accredited with Level 2 or above can be awarded TQ via direct accreditation. Student teachers from those with no accreditation of Level 2 or above also need to sit the national examinations similar to the social entrants. The TQ awarded to them via direct accreditation should align with the subject and year stage stipulated in their program.

Consequently, universities have a dominant role in initial teacher education, while social entrants constitute only a small portion. Social entrants fall into two categories: The first category comprises university students with non-normal education who aspire to become teachers in the future, and the second category includes individuals from society, such as career changers. Social entrants are required to take the national examinations, and they are awarded TQ only upon successfully passing these examinations.

Professional practice (PP) and assessment for TQ. In China, only student teachers following Route 1 have the opportunity to engage in professional practice, as higher education institutions offering teacher education have established long-standing partnerships with schools. On the other hand, social entrants do not have this opportunity. Professional practice for both undergraduate and postgraduate student teachers typically lasts 18 weeks or more, with student teachers assigned to a single school, usually in the first half of their final academic year. Throughout the semester, student teachers remain in the schools, receiving guidance from in-school mentors and regular visits from university tutors. The TQ assessment for Route 1 students is a comprehensive system that combines process assessment and final assessment organized by universities. The process assessment focuses on the student teachers' performance during their three or four years of learning. It involves evaluating their morality, conduct, and scores in modules related to the theories and professional practices of teacher education. The final assessment centers on their overall professional ability, which includes a written test and an oral presentation conducted in their final year. Student teachers need to demonstrate their competence in teaching design, classroom teaching, and teaching assessment. Those who meet the requirements will be issued a certificate of professional competency for teaching by the chancellor. With this certificate, they will be directly granted TQ by local education authorities upon graduation, with a validity period of three years.

In contrast to student teachers in Route 1, social entrants are not obligated to undertake teacher education courses or engage in professional practice (as the current conditions may not meet their needs, particularly the need for professional practice). However, they are required to participate in the national written examination (usually held twice a year). Only if they pass the written exam can they proceed to the interview stage for the award of TQ. The criteria and syllabi for TQ examinations are issued by the Ministry of Education (MoE, 2011; 2013), aligning with the Teachers' Professional Standards (MoE, 2012) and the Curriculum Standard for Teacher Education (MoE, 2011). The content and administration of TQ examinations are organized and determined by provincial education authorities in accordance with the criteria and syllabus. Finally, certificates for TQ are accredited by either provincial or county educational authorities if applicants succeed in both the written examination and interview.

Comparison and the Underpinning Philosophies

Key Comparisons: Similarities and Differences

Based on the above, common points as well as differences exist in entry requirements, initial teacher education (ITE) routes, and assessment for awarding QTS or TQ.

Regarding entry requirements, both countries consider a first degree as a prerequisite for any applicant. The higher threshold for QTS or TQ serves as a necessary guarantee for recruiting potential high-quality teachers.

In terms of routes, China follows a university-dominated model, with normal universities continuing to play a major role. This model reflects the long-standing tradition of normal education rooted in Chinese Confucian culture, dating back 2000 years. However, compared to the university-dominated model in China, which requires a master's or bachelor's degree and a recommendation for TQ, the routes in the UK appear to be more direct,

diverse, and flexible. In the UK, all routes lead to the direct award of QTS by assessing trainees' documented performances during the learning process. As a result, the process of initial teacher training and assessment for QTS can be highly integrated. In addition to university-led routes, other school-led routes better cater to the needs of schools, trainees, and different regions. Schools are increasingly playing a robust role in initial teacher training, although this has raised concerns and debates regarding the potential impact on the education research infrastructure (UUK, 2014).

Regarding professional practice, both countries recognize the importance of placements for trainee teachers, but significant differences exist in terms of time allocation, the number of schools involved, and partnerships with schools. The system in England places emphasis on integrating trainees' theoretical learning into their teaching practice, with longer placement periods in two or more different schools based on the principle of workplace learning. In contrast, the Chinese system follows a theory-first, then practice model, with shorter placement periods usually in a single school due to the historical separation between universities and schools. Furthermore, social entrants do not have equal opportunities for systematic theoretical learning on education and professional practice placements.

In terms of assessment for QTS or TQ, both trainees are evaluated with reference to Teachers' Standards, but the assessment methods differ significantly. Although the latest reforms in Chinese TQ assessment in 2022 aim to assess student teachers in a more formative manner by considering their learning process, the implementation at the university level is still in progress. For social entrants, there is a concern regarding whether the summative written examinations and interviews can effectively select quality teachers as intended. Since teaching is a professional career, students need to learn how to teach. Thus, compared to the relatively more summative approach, the assessment for QTS in England is integrated into the program learning process with structured guidance from mentors and tutors. Regular observations and reflections on their own and others' lessons are conducted, and the entire process is recorded in portfolios with the agreement of all parties involved. Trainee teachers need to demonstrate rigorous adherence to the Teachers' Standards to be awarded QTS, which appears to be a relatively more formative and scientific approach compared to the TQ Test in China.

The Underpinning Philosophies: Training vs. Education and What It Should Be

Training vs. education: The different philosophies towards teaching. The significant differences outlined above convey the contrasting underlying philosophies regarding the nature of teaching. This has sparked a long-standing debate on whether qualified teachers should be trained in the workplace or educated with the primary role of universities. By examining the terminologies used in relevant UK government documents, such as "trainees" and "initial teacher training" in Teachers' Standards (1998, 2002, 2007, 2012) and the ITT Core Content Framework (2019), it becomes apparent that the UK government tends to employ a training model that views teaching as a "craft". According to this perspective, teaching can be directly developed through structured observation and reflection in a workplace context and subsequently replicated by trainee teachers. This viewpoint is echoed in Michael Gove's speech, where he states: "Teaching is a craft and it is best learned as an apprentice observing a master craftsman or woman. Watching others, and being rigorously observed yourself as you develop, is the best route to acquiring mastery in the classroom" (2010).

From a historical perspective, the "apprenticeship model" based on workplace learning can be traced back to the monitorial system and later the pupil-teacher scheme in the 1840s, which aimed to address the challenges of public schooling (Dent, 1977). As documented in the Minutes of the Committee of Council on Education

1839-59 (Arnold, 1908), selected entrants aged 13 or older, who met the required conditions, were placed in primary schools as apprentices for five years. They were expected to teach during school days and receive instruction from masters before or after school hours for a minimum of 1.5 hours per week across five working days. Annually, they would undergo an assessment by Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMIs) and receive a certificate upon successful completion of the examination. Although higher education institutions once played a leading role in initial teacher education (ITE) in the early 20th century, schools have progressively gained more influence since the 1980s, and it increased central control of the professionalisation of teachers and of initial teacher educators (Nixon, et al., 2000). This view of teaching has faced criticism for its prescriptive and bureaucratic nature (e.g., Hextall & Mahony, 2000; Hargreaves, 2003) and its instrumentalism (e.g., Reynolds, 1998; Hallett, 2010). It has been accused of reducing teacher autonomy (e.g., Sunley & Locke, 2010) and lacking critical reflection (e.g., Bhatia, 1995; Meierdirk, 2016), leading to the “deprofessionalization” of teaching (e.g., Harris, 1997; Parker, 2015) and the erosion of the role of higher education (e.g., Whitehead, Harris, Maughan, & Menter, 1998; Golding, 2015). Furthermore, the adoption of marketing principles and differing models has caused frustration among tutors, confusion among school staff, and challenges for trainees in making choices (Allen et al., 2014; NAO, 2016; Whiting et al., 2018).

On the contrary, the Chinese context widely uses the terms “student teachers” and “teacher education”, which indicates a prevailing educative model in the Chinese TQ system. However, “teacher education” is largely synonymous with “normal education” in this model, as teachers are widely considered “moral agents” and “moral role models” for their pupils. A qualified teacher, as a “moral role model”, should undergo systematic education rather than being trained as an apprentice in the workplace. Student teachers are expected to develop a broad range of theoretical and pedagogical knowledge and cultivate their values based on specific educational philosophies. Universities are assigned a leading role and are required to establish partnerships with schools in initial teacher education. Therefore, teaching is highly regarded as a value-laden “moral practice” because its purpose is to develop students holistically. This viewpoint is deeply rooted in the long-standing tradition of normal education and the high respect for teachers in Chinese culture. It can be traced back to Confucius's earliest book on education in China, *Theories of Teaching and Learning*, which explicitly states that teaching is a priority for an emperor to govern the country, educate the people, and shape society. Teaching embodies the values of both social and individual development. Accordingly, teachers are not only expected to impart knowledge to the next generation but also to dispel doubts and cultivate virtues. However, the biggest challenge lies in the fact that teachers cannot be perfect individuals, and the fact that teaching is value-laden does not mean it is solely focused on morality. Placing high expectations on teachers as “moral models” may overwhelm student teachers during the initial stages. As a profession, teachers should not bear sole responsibility for everything. The excessive moral burden placed on teachers may harm the well-being of both teachers and students as citizens, and it may also obscure the future and undermine the professionalism of teaching.

What should teaching be? The ongoing debate about teaching revolves around the question of what teaching should be. If we agree that teaching expertise needs to be learned and that student teachers are also adaptable learners, we must first delve into the questions of why to learn, what to learn, and how to learn.

Since teaching is for the outcome and well-being of pupils, and it plays a crucial role in shaping their future, student teachers' learning should encompass two purposes. Firstly, as prospective teachers, they need to learn how to teach for the benefit of their pupils. Secondly, as learners themselves, they also need to develop and fulfill

their own potential by finding intrinsic satisfaction in being a teacher (Lortie, 1975). Therefore, teacher learning serves the well-being and fulfillment of both pupils and student teachers, creating a “poetic dwelling” (Heidegger, 1971).

If teacher learning serves a dual function for both pupils and teachers, then the answer to “what to learn” is not limited to workplace skills. It should encompass three levels of knowledge: what to teach and how to teach, why to teach, and how to be. Regarding what to teach and how to teach, student teachers need to develop expertise in the knowledge and skills outlined in the Teachers’ Standards, which is primarily practical knowledge. For the knowledge about why to teach, student teachers need to develop their own philosophical insights and deep understanding of what and how to teach. They should continuously renew their teaching knowledge and beliefs to gradually develop professional autonomy, as expertise is a dynamic process. This level of knowledge is largely theory-oriented and evidence-based. The first two levels of knowledge are focused on becoming a qualified professional teacher, while the third level is about becoming a better individual. However, being a professional teacher is intertwined with being a better self, as teacher learning involves understanding oneself and one’s values in relation to others (Tschannen-Moran, 2009).

Heidegger defines “dasein” (being) as a dynamic and developing process in a specific context, rather than a static state. He argues that “Being is in such a way that one has an understanding of Being” (Heidegger, 2005). Based on this idea, we can agree that teacher learning is always dynamic, with teachers actively constructing knowledge in their specific contexts. Therefore, the three levels of teacher knowledge mentioned above should be actively constructed through reflection by student teachers themselves. Reflection occurs with guidance from school mentors and university tutors while incorporating theories into practice. It should go beyond technical reflection (Schon, 1987) to critical reflection and reflexivity (Finlay, 2002; 2008). Technical reflection focuses on practice in the workplace and helps achieve the first level of knowledge about what and how to learn. Critical reflection focuses on underlying philosophies and social structures, fulfilling the second level of knowledge about why to learn. The highest level, about how to be, is realized through reflexivity, with teachers exercising autonomy and contemplating the meaning of their career and existence. However, deep reflection is built upon a well-founded knowledge base (Brown & McNamara, 2011) and is rooted in educative processes (Bhatia, 1995; Harrison, Lawson, & Wortley, 2005), rather than narrowly focused on craft training. Therefore, it is evident that teacher development needs to go beyond training and embrace education, recognizing the multifaceted values inherent in education (Goodlad, 1994). Consequently, teaching is not just a craft or a moral practice, but also an art. Good teaching is a purposeful educational endeavor imbued with truth, virtue, and beauty. It goes beyond imparting facts and encompasses values, individual styles, and the wisdom of teachers (Chen, 2020).

Challenges for the Chinese TQ System and the Lessons Learned So Far

The Chinese TQ system attempts to embrace an educative model while upholding the tradition of “normal education” described earlier. However, this system was imported from the West as a component of teacher education in the 1990s. Terminologies such as “teacher qualification”, “teacher education”, and “professionalism” are deeply rooted in Western culture, which differs significantly from the tradition of “normal education” in China. As a result, challenges have emerged due to these contrasting traditions and underlying philosophies. This contrast can be observed in the following aspects:

The Summative Model of Teacher Assessment for TQ

For most applicants in China, the TQ examinations, based on the Teacher's Professional Standards, are conducted after a four-year undergraduate program. These examinations consist of written tests followed by interviews, rather than being integrated into the trainee teachers' long-term learning process. Postgraduates and individuals from outside the education sector have the flexibility to take these examinations at any time they prefer. Additionally, as mentioned above, some applicants may be exempted from the examinations and/or interviews. The summative nature of these assessments poses challenges in accurately evaluating applicants' actual teaching abilities, particularly their attitudes, values, personal traits, and moral ethos. These aspects are difficult to assess through written examinations alone or fully captured in a single interview session. As a result, the reliability of the examinations and interviews may be called into question. Furthermore, the summative model of teacher assessment for TQ separates the teacher education process provided by universities from the final assessment for TQ organized by the government. This separation significantly diminishes university autonomy and, consequently, the quality of teacher education. Last but not least, there is an issue regarding the assessment of social applicants. Although social applicants constitute only a small portion of the total applicant pool, they lack a background in normal education and have received no training in professional teaching practices as required. Nevertheless, some of them have successfully passed both the written examinations and interviews and have been awarded TQs. This situation raises the risk of exposing students to unqualified teaching since the pedagogy of teaching requires learning accompanied by sufficient practice based on underlying philosophies before individuals can become qualified teachers.

The Isolation Between Normal and Non-normal Universities in Teacher Education

Although non-normal universities have been encouraged to participate in normal education by offering programs for student teachers, several challenges hinder the actual development of teacher education in these institutions, particularly in high-quality comprehensive universities (Li, 2022). These challenges include the difficulty in recruiting qualified teacher educators, the long-standing tradition of normal education with its enclosed model, and the historical separation between normal education and other higher education institutions. Consequently, the integration of the strengths of other disciplines in comprehensive universities, their expertise in academic research, and their social influence on teacher education is not effectively realized. However, it is essential to recognize that education itself should be cross-disciplinary in nature. Furthermore, the collaboration between normal universities and high-quality comprehensive universities has become an inevitable trend in order to enhance student teachers' cross-disciplinary competency. The question remains: How can this collaboration be achieved? Currently, there are few noteworthy examples available for learning, leaving ample room for exploration and experimentation in this area.

Poor Partnership Between Universities and Schools

Since the university-dominated route has a long history, universities are often regarded as more authoritative, while schools find themselves in an unequal and weaker position within the partnership. Additionally, schools derive minimal benefits in terms of their teachers' academic and professional development. This inequality and weak partnership significantly hinder student teachers from effectively integrating theoretical learning into teaching practice. The problems stemming from this poor partnership can be observed in the following aspects: Firstly, the duration of professional practice, which spans 16 weeks within a semester, is insufficient compared to the three or four years of program learning for postgraduates and undergraduates. This limited timeframe poses

challenges for student teachers to effectively bridge the gap between theory and practice. Secondly, school mentors may lack the necessary qualifications, engagement, and expertise, similar to the situation highlighted in the Carter Review (Carter, 2015). While there are no official statistics from the Ministry of Education in China regarding mentors, student teachers' responses indicate that approximately 53% of mentors are considered unqualified. School mentors often carry heavy workloads, such as teaching around 20 lessons per week, including both morning and evening sessions. Moreover, within the school environment, there is intense competition among teachers who teach the same course at the same grade level, as student scores are an important metric for assessing teachers. This heavy workload and competitive environment dissuade many in-school mentors from providing student teachers with ample opportunities to practice teaching due to concerns about their own inexperience and potential inefficiency. Furthermore, there is currently no national standard for selecting mentors, and there is a lack of training, instructions, and assessments for mentors. This absence of support and development opportunities for mentors contributes to a situation where they often rely solely on their own experiences and personal judgment when guiding student teachers. Consequently, the poor partnership between universities and schools has a severe impact on the quality of student teachers, impeding their ability to attain the expected level of development. Overall, the inadequate collaboration between universities and schools greatly undermines the potential growth of student teachers, hindering their ability to gain the necessary skills and experiences.

Lessons Learned So Far and Suggestions for the Chinese TQ System

A comparison between the UK and Chinese TQ systems reveals certain pitfalls in both approaches. However, it is important to recognize that there is potential for the development of a more effective and flexible system by integrating the merits of the UK model into the Chinese context.

Integrate the Present Separated Four-Year Undergraduate Program and Three-Year Postgraduate Program Into One “4+2”-Year Model for Student Teachers

Given the long-standing tradition of normal education and the important role of universities, it is feasible to integrate the currently separated four-year undergraduate program and three-year postgraduate program into a “3+2”-Year Model for student teachers. This integration aligns with the recent trend in initial teacher education (MoE, 2022). The first four-year phase of learning would primarily focus on trainee teachers' subject knowledge, liberal arts curricula, and gain an initial understanding of education. Regular school visits would be conducted to observe expert teachers' teaching and management, thereby laying a strong foundation of knowledge. The subsequent two-year phase of learning would emphasize student teachers' academic competency and their ability to integrate theoretical learning into teaching practice, primarily in school settings. Mentors and tutors would provide guided reflection to support this process. The current separation between undergraduate and postgraduate teacher education is time-consuming and inefficient. Firstly, it places significant demands on undergraduates to acquire expertise in both subject knowledge and subject-specific pedagogy, not to mention integrating cutting-edge educational research into their teaching practice. For postgraduates, the inevitable overlap in learning content over a total of seven years may lead to decreased enthusiasm and hinder the achievement of truly high-quality, evidence-based teaching. By adopting a “3+2”-Year Model, the integration of undergraduate and postgraduate teacher education can address these challenges, providing a more streamlined and efficient pathway for student teachers to develop the necessary knowledge and skills.

Embed the Summative One-Go Assessment Against Standards Into the Whole Course Learning

Formative assessment of trainee teachers through the use of portfolios containing evidence collected during their placements, aligned with the Teachers' Standards and guided by a structured framework, is a prominent feature of the UK model. To enhance the quality of TQs, it may be necessary to require all applicants to fulfill a minimum level of placement within a specified timeframe at different stages of their training. Their performance would be observed and assessed against the Teachers' Standards using diverse methods and involving multiple parties. To ensure transparency and accountability, the results of TQ assessments should be evaluated by an independent third party on an annual basis, allowing for prompt adjustments. The annual report should be made accessible to researchers, educators, supervisors, and other stakeholders. To facilitate this process, the government should take the lead in coordinating and regulating the functions of various parties, including universities, schools, and research institutions. Furthermore, it is crucial to strengthen national standards and training for school mentors. Currently, there are no unified standards in place for assessing school mentors, and specific training for mentors is lacking, despite their pivotal role in the professional development of student teachers. Overall, by implementing these measures, the formative assessment of trainee teachers, involving portfolios, reference to the Teachers' Standards, and multi-party participation, can be effectively incorporated into the TQ system. The involvement of an independent third party and the enhancement of mentor standards and training will contribute to the overall quality and effectiveness of teacher education.

Adopt a Mixed U-G-S Model to Enhance and Balance the Partnership Between Universities and Schools

The professionalism of teachers is widely recognized as being closely linked to knowledge, knowledge production, and knowledge application. According to a survey conducted with trainee teachers, love for teaching, knowledge, and the ability to think critically were ranked as the top three traits of professional practice. These qualities are effectively developed through professional practice itself (Traunter, 2019). As highlighted in the Carter Review (2015), effective coordination among universities, governments, and schools, particularly through close cooperation between trainee teachers' university tutors and school mentors, is a key factor in the development of trainee teachers (Carter, 2015). In the Chinese context, a U-G-S (University-Government-School) model should be adopted, whereby the cooperation between universities and schools is coordinated and guided by relevant governmental authorities, given the historical control the government has exerted. In this model, schools should be empowered through appropriate government policies to play a more active and robust role in the teaching and learning experiences of student teachers, as well as in their own professional development. Schools could be granted additional rights to select, train, and assess the performance of student teachers in practical contexts. Universities, on the other hand, should take the lead in establishing a teaching, learning, and research community in addition to their traditional functions. Under this model, the first three years of learning would be directed by the university, while the following two years would primarily take place in school settings. Only when all parties involved can derive benefits from initial teacher education (ITE) will it be possible to foster a stronger partnership between universities and schools.

References

- Allen, R., Belfield, C., Greaves, E., Sharp, C., & Walker, M. (2014). *The costs and benefits of different initial teacher training routes*. London: Institute of Fiscal Studies.
- Arnold, M. (1908). Minutes of the Committee of Council on Education 1839-59. In *Reports on elementary schools 1852-1882*. Retrieved from <http://www.educationengland.org.uk/documents/cce/minutes.html>

- Bhatia, V. (1995). *Analysing genre: Language use in professional settings*. London: Routledge.
- Brown, T., & McNamara, O. (2011). How teachers learn: A review of research. In T. Brown and O. McNamara (Eds.), *Becoming a mathematics teacher: Identity and identifications* (pp. 31-48). Dordrecht: Springer.
- Carter, A. (2015). Carter review of initial teacher training (ITT). London: DfE. Retrieved from <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/carter-review-of-initial-teacher-training>
- Chen, J. (2020). The Connotation, manifestation, and construction of virtuous classroom instruction. *Curriculum. Teaching Material and Method*, 442(8), 60-65. DOI: 10.19877/j.cnki.kcjcjf.2020.08.010
- Department for Education (DfE). (2021) *Initial teacher training (ITT) census: 2020/21 to 2021/22*. Retrieved from <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/statistics-teacher-training>
- Department for Education (DfE). (2011) *Teachers' standards*. London: DfE.
- Department for Education (DfE). (2012a). *Michael Gove: Speech at the National College Annual Conference*. Retrieved from <https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/michael-gove-at-the-national-college-annual-conference>
- Department for Education. (DfE). (2012b). *Teachers' standards*. London: Crown Copyright.
- Department for Education (DfE). (2019). *ITT core content framework*. London: DfE.
- Department for Education and Employment (DfEE). (1998). *Standards for the award of qualified teaching status (Circular 4/98)*. London: Author.
- Department for Education and Skills (DfES). (2002). *Handbook of guidance on QTS standards and ITT requirements*. London: DfES.
- Dent, H. C. (1977). *The training of teachers in England and Wales 1800-1975*. London: Hodder and Stoughton.
- Fang, Y., & Xu, L. P. (2010). The comparative research on Chinese and American teachers' qualification certification systems and revelations. *Journal of Huzhou Normal College*, 32(5), 131-134.
- Finlay, L. (2002) Negotiating the swamp: The opportunity and challenge of reflexivity in research practice. *Qualitative Research*, 2(2), 209-230.
- Finlay, L. (2008). *Reflecting on reflective practice (PBPL Paper 52)*. Milton Keynes: PBPL/The Open University.
- Golding, J. (2015). What has the coalition government done for the development of initial teacher education? *London Review of Education*, 13(2), 113-125.
- Goodlad, J. I. (1994). *Educational renewal*. San Francisco: Josey-Bass.
- Gove, M. (2010). *Speech to the National Annual Conference, Birmingham*. Retrieved from <http://www.education.gov.uk/inthenews/speeches/a0061371/michael-gove-to-thenational-college-annual-conference-birmingham>
- Hallett, F. (2010). Do we practice what we preach? An examination of the pedagogical beliefs of teacher educators. *Teaching in Higher Education*, 15(4), 435-448.
- Harris, A. (1997). The deprofessionalization and deskilling of teachers. In K. Watson, C. Modgil, and S. Modgil (Eds.), *Educational dilemmas: Debate and diversity* (Vol. 1). London: Cassell.
- Harrison, J. K., Lawson, T., & Wortley, A. (2005). Mentoring the beginning teacher: Developing professional autonomy through critical reflection on practice. *Reflective Practice*, 6(3), 419-441.
- Hargreaves, A. (2003). *Teaching in the knowledge society*. Maidenhead: Open University Press.
- Heidegger, M. (1971). *Poetry, language, thought*. (A. Hofstadter, Trans.). New York: Harper & Row.
- Heidegger, M. (2005). *Being and time*. (J. Macquarrie & E. Robinson, Trans.). London: Blackwell.
- Hextall, I., & Mahony, P. (2000). Consultation and the management of consent: Standards for qualified teacher status. *British Educational Research Journal*, 26(3), 323-342.
- Huai, J. P. (2021). The government report of the State Council on the construction of teaching staff and performance of the teachers' act. Retrieved from www.npc.gov.cn/npc/c30834/202110/d565bbbf94534b1482a12c47a4d78f3d.shtml
- Li, J. Y. (2022) Innovation of the era and trend of development of Chinese teachers' qualification certification reform. *Teacher Development Research*, 6(1), 1-12.
- Li, M. (2012). UK's teachers' qualification certification system and revelations. *Journal of Hubei TV University*, 32(6), 116-117.
- Lortie, R. (1975). *Schoolteacher*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.
- Ministry of Education (MoE). (2000). *The measures for the implementation of "Teachers Qualifications Regulations"*. Retrieved from http://www.moe.gov.cn/srcsite/A02/s5911/moe_621/200009/t20000923_180473.html
- Ministry of Education (MoE). (2011). *Teacher education curriculum standards (the trial version)*. Retrieved from http://www.moe.gov.cn/srcsite/A10/s6991/201110/t20111008_145604.html

- Ministry of Education. (MoE). (2012). *Teachers' professional standards (for trial)*. Retrieved from http://www.moe.gov.cn/srcsite/A10/s6991/201209/t20120913_145603.html
- Ministry of Education (MoE). (2013). *Interim measures of teachers' qualification examinations*. Retrieved from http://www.moe.gov.cn/srcsite/A10/s7151/201308/t20130821_156643.html
- Ministry of Education (MoE). (2021). *Teachers' act of People's Republic of China (revised draft)*. Retrieved from http://www.moe.gov.cn/jyb_xwfb/s248/202111/t20211129_583188.html
- Ministry of Education with seven other authorities. (2022). *Youqun Ren: Introduction on plan to strengthen basic education teacher force at the press conference*. Retrieved from http://www.moe.gov.cn/fbh/live/2022/54369/mtbd/202204/t20220415_618125.html
- Meierdirk, C. (2016). Is reflective practice an essential component of becoming a professional teacher? *Reflective Practice*, 17(3), 369-378.
- National Audit Office (NAO). (2016). *Training new teachers*. London, NAO. Retrieved from <https://www.nao.org.uk/report/training-new-teachers>
- Nixon, J., Cope, P., McNally, J., Rodrigues, S., & Stephen, C. (2000). University-based initial teacher education: Institutional re-positioning and professional renewal. *International Studies in Sociology of Education*, 10(3), 243-261.
- Parker, G. (2015). School direct: A critique. *Power & Education*, 7(1), 106-112.
- Reynolds, M. (1998). Reflection and critical reflection in management learning. *Management Learning*, 29(2), 183-200.
- Reynolds, M. (1999). Standards and professional practice: The TTA and initial teacher training. *British Journal of Educational Studies*, 47(3), 247-260.
- Schön, D. A. (1987). *Educating the reflective practitioner*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- Sunley, R., & Locke, R. (2010). Exploring UK secondary teachers' professional values: An overview of the literature since 2000. *Educational Research*, 52(4), 409-425.
- Teacher Training Agency (TTA). (2002). *Qualifying to teach: Professional standards for qualified teacher status and requirements for initial teacher training*. London: Department for Education.
- The Training and Development Agency for Schools (TDA). (2007). *Professional standards for qualified teacher status and requirements for initial teacher training*. London: Crown Copyright.
- Traunter, J. (2019). Reconceptualising early years teacher training: Policy, professionalism and integrity. *Education 3-13*, 47(7), 831-841.
- Tschannen-Moran, M. (2009). Fostering teacher professionalism in schools: The role of leadership orientation and trust. *Educational Administration Quarterly*, 45(2), 217-247.
- UUK (Universities UK). (2014). The impact of initial teacher training reforms on English higher education institutions. In *The Funding Environment for Universities 2014*. London: Universities UK.
- Whitehead, J., Harris, A., Maughan, S., & Menter, I. (1998). Diversity in principle and practice: Addressing the problem of teacher supply. *Educational Research*, 40(3), 267-281.
- Whiting, C., Whitty, G., Menter, I., Black, P., Hordern, J., Parfitt, A., ... Sorensen, N. (2018). Diversity and complexity becoming a teacher in England in 2015-2016. *Review of Education*, 6(1), 69-96.