

# The Road to the Development of Teacher's Professional Autonomy

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**Abstract:** Teachers' professional autonomy is the ultimate goal pursued by the current teacher professionalization, but teachers' professional autonomy cannot be spontaneously realized in the process of teachers' professionalization. Due to the influence of professionalism, externally imposed doctrinal reform programs, the ever-increasing pressure for reform, and the indifference to teachers' practical knowledge, teachers' professional autonomy is obviously insufficient. Starting from the internal and external conditions necessary for teachers' professional autonomy, exploring the paths of professional autonomy is far-reaching to promote the process of teacher professionalism. From the internal and external conditions required for teachers' professional autonomy, exploring the path of autonomous professional development of teachers is of profound significance to the process of promoting teachers' professionalization.

**Keywords:** Teacher Professionalization; Autonomous Development; Professionalism

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## Introduction

Teacher professionalization has become the main trend of teacher education reform in China, but with the gradual deepening of teacher professionalization, the problem of teachers' lack of professional development autonomy is becoming more and more prominent in professional development.

Teacher professional development is a process of professional growth in which teachers, throughout their professional careers and relying on professional organizations, apply their professional knowledge and skills in education through lifelong professional training, gradually improve their quality of teaching, and eventually become a good educator. For schools, teacher professional development is the core of education quality improvement and the root of school cultivation; for teachers, teacher professional development is the life of their profession and the foundation of their work. Teachers' professional development provides impetus for education reform, lays the foundation for improving education quality, and provides support for enhancing school cohesion.

## 1. Teachers' professional autonomy development: tasks and objectives of teacher professionalization

Autonomy of professional development is a necessary requirement for professionals and one of the most fundamental characteristics of the profession. For the teaching profession, autonomy of teacher professional development is a fundamental characteristic of the profession. Teachers' professional development autonomy means that teachers are responsible for their own professional development. Teacher professional development and teacher professionalization are two different concepts. "Professionalization" includes both process and outcome components. Teacher professionalization is first and foremost a process of transformation in which individual teachers become members of teaching and learning and take on increasingly mature roles in teaching and learning.

## 2. Reasons for the current lack of autonomy in teachers' professional development

While the current movement towards teacher professionalism has led to a significant increase in the professionalism of the teaching profession and in the professionalism of individual teachers, it has also led to an increasing lack of freedom in the professional life of teachers, ultimately, to a complete loss of their professional autonomy. The reasons for this are, in our view, mainly the following:

## **2.1 Professionalism prevails**

Today, it seems unproblematic for the teaching profession to be regarded as a profession, albeit one that is still rather immaturely professionalized compared to professions such as doctors and lawyers, but which at least has a quasi-professional dimension. In order to increase the professionalism of teachers, and hence their status, there has been an upsurge of professionalism in teacher education, which has emphasized the treatment of teachers as professionals, with a strong focus on pedagogical professionalism, and the practice and mastery of advanced pedagogical theories, tools, and techniques.

## **2.2 Externally imposed reform programs**

Looking at the course of teacher professionalization in countries around the world, we cannot completely deny the role of the professional development needs of the teaching profession itself as it develops along with society as a driving force for teacher professionalization. The movements of professionalization have come from outside, and are characterized by statism and syndicalism.

The professionalization of teachers in China is also under the double pressure of the trend of teacher professionalization in the world and the requirements of domestic education development for the teaching profession.

## **2.3 New Challenges of Artificial Intelligence for Teachers' Professional Development**

### *2.3.1 Subject extension*

Subject extension refers to the fact that in the context of AI, the teacher, as the only adaptive teaching subject, becomes two teaching subjects, the teacher and the AI (like Chat GPT), because Chat GPT can also become the student's teacher and take on part of the educational work.

### *2.3.2 Loss of sovereignty*

The introduction of Chat GPT suggests that knowledge-based education will face serious challenges, which, if not handled properly, will lead to a gradual squeeze of technology on the pedagogical space of education and promote the phenomenon of reverse domestication of technology in education. The phenomenon of reverse domestication of technology in education refers to the reversal of the subordinate relationship between education and technology.

## **3. Paths to achieving teacher professional autonomy**

Looking at the history of teacher professionalization in China, teachers have always been deprived of power and subject status, and their professional development is at a very inadequate stage. How to highlight the main position of individual teachers in the process of professionalization, mobilize teachers to participate in the initiative of professional development, and realize the independent development of teachers' professionalism is a problem that must be solved in the process of teachers' professionalization. In view of this, the author tries to put forward the following suggestions.

### **3.1 Fostering the concept of individual education for teachers with a positive professional mindset and a sense of professional autonomy**

Teachers' individual concept of education refers to the individual views on education formed by teachers in their daily life, educational practice and theoretical learning in a certain historical and cultural context, based on their subjective understanding of the characteristics of students' development and the laws of educational activities. These views directly influence teachers' judgment on an educational issue and then affect the implementation of their educational behaviors.

### **3.2 Promoting the transformation of teacher education reforms from an exogenous to an endogenous model**

Throughout the world, teacher education reforms have been top-down, external and internal governmental initiatives. From the viewpoint of the reform process of teacher professionalization, like all other reforms of education from the outside-in, it has encountered specific

objective and even subjective rejection. Therefore, how to reform the professional development mode of teachers under the existing circumstances and accelerate the transformation from an exogenous mode to an endogenous mode is the key to the reforms. In the author's opinion, the focus of this transformation is to create and provide teachers with the opportunity to develop their professionalism. Emphasize the right of individual teachers to make choices in the process of professional development.

### **3.3 Supportive environment for teachers' professional autonomy.**

#### *3.3.1 Policy environment*

Create incentives for teachers to develop professionally, and try to equalize their inputs and benefits. Pressure can be both a resistance and a motivation to change, and the amount of pressure generated depends largely on the participants' perception of the consequences of change. The pressure on teachers to professionalize is closely related to the lack of clarity about the benefits and inputs of professional development, because professional development requires teachers to invest more time and energy than they can afford.

#### *3.3.2 Organizational cultural environment*

It is important to build a learning organization that is school-based and in which all teachers participate and cooperate. The independent development of teachers' profession not only requires teachers to have the autonomy of professional development and the ability to develop professionally, but also importantly, the initiative of teachers to participate in professional development, and the play of this initiative is closely related to the school environment in which they work - the organizational culture of the school is an important factor affecting the professional development of teachers.

## **4. Conclusion**

High-quality education requires a high-quality teaching force.<sup>2022</sup> The Ministry of Education and other eight departments issued the Strong Teachers Plan for Basic Education in the New Era, which clearly states that efforts should be made to create a high-quality, professional and innovative teaching force in the new era, and provide a strong guarantee of teachers for accelerating the realization of the modernization of basic education; enhancing the level of teaching and learning of teachers requires teachers to actively conduct research on teaching and learning and to further promote teachers' professional development.

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