

The Development Process and Trend of Teacher Education in Nationalities University——Taking Southwest Minzu University as an Example

Xiaoxue He

School of Educational and Psychology, Southwest Minzu University, Sichuan Chengdu 610041

Abstract: Teachers are significant resource for education, and high-quality teaching staff is the important guarantee for the healthy development of education. As socialism with Chinese characteristics enters a new era, the economic and social development of ethnic minority areas has put forward higher requirements for teaching staff. Taking Southwest Minzu University as an example, this article reviews the development process of its teacher education, combines it with the adjustment and reform of teacher education, summarizes the development trend of teacher education in China, explores the future direction of teacher education in nationalities universities and provides reference for carrying out teacher education in nationalities universities in the new era.

Keywords: Nationalities university, Teacher education, Development process, Future direction

Teachers are the key to education. China has promulgated a large number of teacher education policies, comprehensively strengthened the construction of high-quality teacher teams. As a comprehensive university that transports teacher resources to ethnic minority areas, the establishment of teacher education by it not only meets the requirements of the times, but also has its own historical tradition. Taking Southwest Minzu University (hereinafter referred to as “SWMU”) as the research object, this article traces its development process of teacher education, combines with the development trend of teacher education reform in China, and explores the future direction of teacher education in ethnic universities, which is of great significance for the education industry in ethnic regions.

1. The Development Process of Teacher Education in Southwest Minzu University

From the college for nationalities, which focused on cultivating political cadres of ethnic minorities at the initial stage of its establishment, to the comprehensive university, which covers 87 undergraduate majors, SWMU has provided a plenty of teachers for the cause of education in ethnic regions, its teacher education has gone through the following three stages.

1.1 The Stage of Initiation and Development

In 1951, the First National Normal Education Conference clarified that the issue of teachers was the key to the success of education industry. Guided by the spirit of the conference, SWMU held the training course for teachers at the beginning of its establishment, to cultivate primary school teachers for Southwest Minority Areas. In 1956, SWMU began to improve the level of education by organizing normal junior college education, cultivating middle school teachers for ethnic areas in Sichuan Province. Since 1958, SWMU has upgraded the majors of normal junior college education to four-year undergraduate majors. In 1962, SWMU has substantially reduced its educational scale and merged the previous departments into one department of normal education.

1.2 The Stage of Stagnation and Recovery

SWMU once faced the risk of being revoked. It was not until the resumption of the National Entrance Examination for Higher Education in 1977 that SWMU re-enrolled undergraduate majors. In 1980, the Fourth National Normal Education Conference further emphasized the establishment of a sound teacher education system to vigorously promote the training of teachers in preschool education, primary education and secondary education. In the 1980s, on the basis of the original training of primary and middle school teachers, SWMU added a preschool education major. At this time, SWMU was a university for nationalities focusing on basic subjects, with a strong attribute of teacher education. Since the reform and open, in order to better serve the economic and social development, SWMU has vigorously promoted specialty reform (Table 1), leading to a gradually weakening of the teacher education attribute.

Table 1 The Specialty Reform of SWMU in 1986

Department Name	Results of Specialty Reform
	Politics→Administrative Management
Politics	add National Economic Management and Business Enterprise Management
Chinese	add Journalism, Secretary and Public Relations
Mathematics	add Finance and Accounting Statistics and Electronic Computer
Chemistry	add Applied Analytical Chemistry and Chemical Metallurgy
Physics	add Electrical Engineering, Mechatronics, Power System and Automation and Electronic Technology
History	add Finance and Economics

Data source: "History of Southwest Minzu University (1951-2001)"

1.3 The Stage of Adjustment and Return

At the beginning of the new century, the state encouraged comprehensive universities and non-normal universities to set up education departments, or courses required for obtaining teacher certificates. In order to actively respond to the demand for teachers in the economic and social development of Southwest Minority Areas, since 2004, SWMU has recruited undergraduate majors in Educational Technology and Preschool Education, and master's majors in Education Economic and Management and Education Management in succession, gradually returning its attribute of normal education. As of now, SWMU has established a total of 6 normal majors, continuing to deliver teachers with solid basic knowledge and outstanding professional skills to the Southwest Minority Areas.

2.The Development Trend of Teacher Education Reform in China

Looking at the overall process of teacher education reform in China, through sorting out the spirit of relevant conferences and policy documents, it can be found that there are some common development trends among them.

2.1 Opening Training Mode

In 1952, with the gradual completion of departmental adjustments, China established an independent and complete third-level normal education system consisting of secondary normal junior college, higher normal junior college and higher normal undergraduate college. In the early stages of reform and open, the Ministry of Education issued policy documents such as "Opinions on Running Secondary Normal Education", laying the institutional foundation for the rapid development of secondary normal schools.^[1] In 1986, the former National Education Commission clearly stated that "comprehensive universities and other qualified universities should regard cultivating teachers for secondary education as an important task", which opened the door for normal education system to move from independent and closed to pluralistic and open. In 1993, the "Teachers Law" stipulated that "non normal universities should undertake the task of cultivating and training primary and secondary school teachers", which established the openness of the cultivation of primary and secondary school teachers in China for the first time in legal form. At the beginning of new century, the concept of teacher education was first reflected in national policy text. In 2003, the National Non-Normal University Teacher Education Collaboration Association was established, promising to work together with normal universities to strengthen communication and exchange, form complementary advantages, and improve the quality of teacher education.^[2]

2.2 High-level Educational Structure

The third-level normal education system established in the early days of the founding of the People's Republic of China cultivated teachers for preschool or elementary education, junior high school education and high school education.^[3] In order to improve the quality of teacher cultivation, the state encourages comprehensive universities and non-normal universities to get involved in teacher cultivation. Afterwards, normal education in China has ushered in a golden period of reform and development for structural adjustment and level improvement, which was manifested in the upgrading of normal junior colleges and the development of normal undergraduate colleges towards a comprehensive direction.^[4] In 2018, the "Action Plan for Revitalization of Teacher Education (2018-2022)" clearly stated that "high-level comprehensive university should be encouraged to set up teacher education colleges, focusing on the cultivation of masters of education and cultivating doctors of education moderately". According to the relevant data of "China Education Statistical Yearbook" from 2012 to 2021, the number of primary, middle, and high school teachers with a bachelor's degree or above has respectively increased from 1.819 million, 2.51million, and 1.538 million to 4.641 million, 3.576 million, and 2million, with the growth rate of 155.14%,

42.47%, and 30.04%. The quality of teachers has been continuously improved, and the educational structure has been continuously optimized.

2.3 Integration of Pre-employment and Post-employment

Based on the “Decision on Reforming the Educational System”, China has established a closed-oriented traditional normal education system with normal colleges as the main body of cultivating. This system includes not only secondary normal junior colleges, higher normal junior colleges and higher undergraduate colleges engaged in pre-service cultivation of full-time teachers, but also education colleges and teacher continuing schools engaged in post-employment training of teachers.^[5] It can be seen that there is a disconnect between pre-employment cultivation and post-employment training in traditional normal education system. With the continuous deepening of reform and open, the concept of lifelong learning in the West continues to pour in. The major developed countries in the West, represented by the United States have completed the transition from “normal education” to “teacher education”.^[6] Influenced by the concept of lifelong learning, China has begun to focus on strengthening the communication between normal colleges and local primary and secondary schools, gradually building a new teacher education system that connects pre-service cultivation and post-employment training.^[7] In 2002, for the first time, a clear definition of “teacher education” was given in official documents, which emphasized the integration of pre-service cultivation and post-employment training of teacher education.

3.The Future Direction of Teacher Education in Ethnic Universities

In order to meet the dual needs of basic education for the quantity and quality of teachers, China has established an open teacher education system. The establishment of teacher education in ethnic universities is a major measure to conform to the development of the times, an important cornerstone to assist in rural revitalization and an endogenous driving force to promote the formation of a new pattern in the Western Development.

3.1 Compling with the Development of the Time

Since its inception, universities for nationalities have shouldered the special historical mission of cultivating high-level talents for ethnic minorities and regions and promoting economic and social development. At present, universities for nationalities should take the initiative to meet the new requirements of high-quality development in the new era, conform to the new trend of transformation and development, accelerate the process of integration of professional structures, and cultivate high-level inter-disciplinary talents for ethnic regions. At the same time, teacher education is based on the integration and development of basic arts and sciences, education and other disciplines. Basic arts and sciences are the tradition and foundation of the development of ethnic universities, providing the possibility for them to establish teacher education and deliver high-level teachers to ethnic regions, thereby promoting the prosperity and development of education industry in ethnic regions.

3.2 Assisting in Rural Revitalization

The key to rural revitalization lies in education. The root to the revitalization of rural education lies in rural teachers.^[8] The quality of basic education has a very important impact on the educated of shaping the moral character, cultivating comprehensive abilities, and even on the economic and social development of ethnic minority areas. Ethnic universities have a large number of ethnic minority students, who are not only more familiar with the local customs, language and culture of their hometowns, but also have expectations for the revitalization and development of their villages. Universities for nationalities should make full use of the unique advantages of ethnic minority students to deliver a large number of high-level basic education teachers for ethnic minority areas, promote rural education, and assist in rural revitalization.

3.3 Promoting the Formation of a New Pattern in the Western Development

The ethnic minority areas of the Western Development account for 96.7% of the total area of ethnic minority areas in China. There are a total of 15 comprehensive ethnic universities in China, of which 11 are located in the western region.^[9] The special historical mission undertaken by universities for nationalities determines that talent cultivation should closely focus on the needs of industrial development in the western region, not only to cultivate future builders, but also to provide a driving force for talent sources. Due to its unique geographical location and educational purpose, ethnic universities can enjoy dual policy support from the state for ethnic minority education and western education at the same time. Therefore, it is necessary to vigorously revitalize teacher education, enhance the overall level of teacher education in the western region, support the high-quality development of basic education and promote the formation of a new pattern of Western Development.

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Author Introduction: Name: Xiaoxue He (born in February 1990), Gender: Female, Title: Studying Master, Unit: The School of Educational and Psychology, Southwest Minzu University, Major: Education Economy and Management

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