

# The Dilemma of Young Teachers' Professional Development in Ethnic Colleges and Universities

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**Abstract:** Due to the differences in the natural environment and social humanities, the development of higher education in ethnic areas in China is significantly different. In the research on the theory of teachers' professional development, there is a relative lack of research on young teachers in colleges and universities in ethnic areas. Through a questionnaire survey, this paper explores the professional development of young teachers in ethnic colleges and universities from the three levels of individuals, schools and societies, and explores the dilemmas of insufficient understanding of ethnic cultures, overburdened teaching tasks, insufficient financial support, and unclear career planning, so as to put forward the suggestions of carrying out diversified training and exchange activities, establishing a mentor system, encouraging cooperation of the teaching team, and strengthening the connection with enterprises.

**Keywords:** ethnic colleges and universities; young teachers; teacher professional development

## 1. Preface

Teachers' professional development is the result of the interaction between individuals and the real space environment (Wang, 2011). Due to the differences in the natural environment and social humanities, there are obvious differences in the development of higher education in various regions of China. The level of higher education in ethnic regions is uneven and the competitiveness of higher education is weak. Under the influence of such an external environment, the teaching and communication platforms of ethnic colleges and universities become extremely narrow, and young teachers are unable to obtain resources favorable to their career development (Fu, 2001). At present, the theoretical research on the confusion in the career development of young teachers in colleges and universities is fragmented, especially the research on the career confusion of young teachers in ethnic colleges and universities has not been perfected. By presenting the question of confusion in career development of young teachers in ethnic colleges and universities as a whole, it can provide certain reference for anticipating the career development of young teachers and reducing the confusion in their career.

## 2. Literature review

Ethnic colleges and universities are relatively special schools in China, and they are general colleges and universities of various levels and types that have been built in different periods of development to solve the problems of the many ethnic groups in China. This paper proffers a conceptual definition of the comprehensive general colleges and universities established by the state for the development of ethnic minority compatriots in China, including two types of colleges and universities directly under the State People's Committee (SPC) and those jointly established by localities and the SPC, with the names of the colleges and universities being generally named as "So-and-so University of Ethnic Minority Studies (College)".

William H. Berquist and Steven R. Phillips in 2005 proposed a new model of development based on their previously proposed model of faculty development in higher education (W&G, 2010). This model integrates pedagogical development, personal development, and organizational development with structures, processes, and attitudes, with each component overlapping and interacting with the other, all of which are accomplished in a certain institutional environment. For this reason, they specifically put forward the concept of "community development", meaning that the development of university teachers is closely linked to the institutional environment in which the organization is located, and that the development of university teachers needs the support and recognition of the external institutional environment.

The representative viewpoints in the domestic viewpoints mainly emphasize that the main problem facing the professional development of teachers in colleges and universities in ethnic areas is that the education department and colleges and universities do not pay enough attention to the professional development of teachers, and it is difficult to jointly form a strong support system in terms of funding, environmental systems, etc. (Chen, 2019).

According to the literature review and combing, there is almost no model to develop a special study on the professional development of young teachers in ethnic colleges and universities, therefore, drawing on the model proposed above and the analysis of the influencing factors on the professional development of young teachers in ethnic colleges and universities in the literature, this paper tries to sort out the predicament of young teachers in ethnic colleges and universities that is different from that of young teachers in other colleges and universities from the perspectives of the teacher's own factors, the school environment, and the social environment.

## 3. Research methodology

This paper uses a questionnaire survey as a research tool to prepare China's "questionnaire on the professional development of young teachers in ethnic colleges and universities", which adopts the scale from Xu Yanhong's "Questionnaire on the Professional Development of Young Teachers in Universities" (Xu, 2018), and adds new topics on the basis of the original scale, taking into account the characteristics

of ethnic colleges and universities. This study adopts the scale in Xu Yanhong's "Questionnaire on the Professional Development of Young Teachers in Universities" (Xu, 2018), and adds new questions on the basis of the original scale, taking into account the characteristics of ethnic colleges and universities, and the dimensions involved include cultural identity and traditional customs in personal factors, the training of the characteristics of ethnic colleges and universities at the level of the school environment, and the education policy of colleges and universities in ethnic minority areas at the level of the social environment. The total number of questions in the scale is 25, and 195 questionnaires were collected through the online platform, and 23 invalid questionnaires were excluded due to factors such as vacant bases of the questions and out-of-scope conditions, resulting in an effective recovery rate of 88%.

## **4. Analysis of Factors Affecting the Professional Development of Young Teachers in Ethnic Colleges and Universities**

### **4.1 One's own factors**

At the individual level of young teachers in ethnic colleges and universities, six questions were designed: "having high ideological and moral qualities, always feeling energetic at work, being willing to accept new educational concepts and implement them in teaching, actively learning modern educational technology and applying it in teaching, often incorporating local traditional customs and cultural elements into teaching practice, and personal cultural identity affecting teaching style and teacher role shaping". influence teaching style and teacher role modeling", targeting ideological and political qualities, personal physical qualities, professional knowledge level, modern educational technology, and cultural identity. Among them, 91% of the young teachers in ethnic colleges and universities believe that they have high ideological and moral qualities, and that they are able to take root in ethnic areas and serve the ethnic policies of the Party and the State. 75% of the teachers have good physical qualities, and ethnic areas are also located in areas with a relatively harsh natural environment, so paying attention to the physical qualities of the teachers in the ethnic areas is a very important element. 72% of the young teachers are concerned with the incorporation of new teaching Seventy-two percent of the young teachers are concerned about the integration of new teaching concepts and modern educational technology into their teaching to enhance the attractiveness of the classroom. 89% believe that personal cultural identity affects the shaping of their own role as teachers, but only 52% of them will incorporate local traditional customs and cultural elements in their teaching practice.

### **4.2 The school factor**

External motivation mainly comes from the policy and financial support from the state, government, school and other levels, as well as the working environment and job requirements. For example, Sorcinelli (2013) and others believe that teachers need policy support and financial security in order to have professional development motivation. The school's perspective mainly designs questionnaires from the aspects of regulations, teaching tasks, educational facilities, evaluation system, teacher-student relationship, and specialty training. They mainly include: whether the promotion system of positions or titles is reasonable, the appointment system of the school is relatively fair and just, young teachers can participate in the decision-making of the school, the school provides sufficient teaching and research funds, the working atmosphere of the school is relaxed and harmonious, the teaching tasks are moderate, teachers and students get along with each other, the school carries out the training of special knowledge of ethnic colleges and universities (casting the consciousness of the Chinese national community, the national theory and policy, the history of minorities, customs and habits), the school carries out thematic training on the teaching and management of ethnic minority students. At the level of title and position promotion and the school's appointment system, 72% and 65% of the teachers think that it is relatively fair and just, and the school's working atmosphere is relaxed, with 82% of the teachers choosing "very much in line with" and "very much in line with". In the development of special training 84% of teachers gave the option of high support. In terms of adequate teaching and research funding provided by the school, only 28% of the teachers chose "meet", and in terms of teaching tasks, according to the statistics of teachers' teaching tasks, the per capita amount of classroom hours of the teachers participating in the research exceeds 210, which is too heavy a teaching task, and they are also facing the situation of excessive pressure on scientific research. In the open-ended questions, most of the young teachers hope to have professional and targeted research guidance.

### **4.3 social factor**

According to the social support theory, the stronger the social support network a person has, the better he or she can cope with various challenges from the environment. At the level of factors in the society, according to the combing and analysis of the literature, based on the analysis of the literature and scholars' research, social recognition, educational policies and regulations, and the social atmosphere are taken as the reference variables of the social environment, which include: for example, the introduction of the Opinions on the Modernization of Higher Education in Ethnic Areas, the Teachers' Law, the Higher Education Law and other relevant laws and regulations affects the development of the young teachers; the teachers of the ethnic colleges and universities have a higher social status; the atmosphere of society respecting knowledge and valuing education is favorable to the development of young teachers. Among the three influencing factors, the most significant influence is the influence of social respect for teachers and knowledge on young teachers in ethnic colleges and universities. 86% of the teachers think that the atmosphere of respecting teachers and valuing education can promote professional development, and 78% of the teachers agree that the relevant policies and laws can examine their own development and improve their own professional level.

## **5. Suggestions for Responding to the Confusion of Young Teachers' Professional Development in Ethnic Areas**

### **5.1 Recommendations at the individual level**

According to the analysis above, cultural identity is a key issue in the professional development process of young teachers in ethnic colleges and universities. In order to enhance the cultural identity of young teachers, diversified training and exchange activities are carried out: schools and relevant institutions can organize training activities such as traditional cultural studies, understanding of ethnic customs, and courses on regional specialties to help young teachers gain a deeper understanding of, and integrate into, local ethnic cultures. At the same time, a mentor system is being established, whereby schools can invite teachers with rich teaching experience and cultural backgrounds to serve as mentors for young teachers, guiding them to better understand and accept local ethnic cultures.

Young teachers face the dilemma of career planning in ethnic colleges and universities and need better support and help. Schools can carry out regular career development training to help young teachers understand career development paths, academic research directions and ways to improve teaching ability. At the same time, schools should encourage young teachers to actively participate in academic exchanges and research programs, and provide corresponding rewards and support to enhance the visibility and status of young teachers in the academic field.

### 5.2 School-level recommendations

Young teachers in ethnic colleges and universities often face the dilemma of heavy teaching loads, and it is recommended that schools strengthen the reasonable distribution of teaching loads. Schools can consider increasing teacher preparation and optimizing course schedules to ensure that young teachers have enough time and resources for teaching preparation and reflection. In addition, schools can encourage young teachers to participate in teaching teams to share resources and experiences and reduce the teaching pressure of individual teachers. Funding support is an important guarantee for the professional development of young teachers, and schools should increase funding for young teachers in ethnic colleges and universities. Schools can set up special research programs for young teachers, provide financial support and research conditions, and encourage young teachers to carry out scientific research. In addition, the school should strengthen cooperation with the government and enterprises for more project funding and sponsorship to provide better economic support for the professional development of young teachers.

### 5.3 Recommendations at the social level

Social recognition is an important reference standard for evaluating the performance of individuals and organizations, and it is also a key factor in the professional development of young teachers in ethnic colleges and universities, and year teachers need social support in their professional development in ethnic colleges and universities. Ethnic colleges and universities should

Establishing close contact and cooperation with all walks of life: schools can cooperate with local enterprises and institutions to provide practice opportunities and industry-university-research cooperation programs to help young teachers expand their social network and career development space. Improve social cognition and respect: the society should strengthen its attention and recognition to young teachers in ethnic universities, and through media publicity, award selection and other forms of publicity, improve social cognition and respect for them, and encourage them to play a greater role in the field of education in ethnic universities.

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