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NARRATIVE INQUIRY AS A LENS: EXAMINING DEVELOPMENTAL PROCESSES OF NOVICE TEACHER EDUCATORS IN A CHINESE NORMAL UNIVERSITY

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ABSTRACT

For novice teacher educators, the starting point of entry determines their careers. This study examines how do novice teacher educators develop from the perspectives of professional knowledge, emotions, and spirits in a Chinese normal university. The conclusions of this study are summarized as follows. First, the developmental processes can be summarized as tentative phase, propulsive phase, and innovative phase. Novice teacher educators in the tentative phase are full of enthusiasm and energy; in the propulsive phase, they will deepen their mission step by step; they can spontaneously summarize the experience of interaction with students in the innovation phase, and generate subjective ideas on professional self. Second, the developments can be attributed to the change of ideas, emotions, and spirits. The change of ideas is reflected in the connection and transformation of theory and practice, emotion is reflected in understanding students and self-understanding in teaching, and spirit is reflected in teachers' professional self-identity and perception of self-positive changes.

KEYWORDS: Novice teacher educator; Developmental processes; Teacher education.

1. INTRODUCTION

Novice teacher educators are often granted heavy workloads tantamount to experienced teachers, with the lack of teaching wits, social experiences, and multiple tasks. In the beginning stage, novice teacher educators will realize the process of socialization, during which various tasks and training lectures follow hard at the heel, while they may feel unprepared with little time to accommodate. For these novice teacher educators without formal schooling experience, they undertake teaching from scratch, while more or less, they will perceive the overthrows and face the confronts. However, it may take years, decades, or even longer for novice teachers to grow up "naturally mature" reflexively and unconsciously. Therefore, listening to young teachers' inner voices, understanding their thoughts closely, and drawing a close-up of the status of professional developments and needs of young teachers can provide appropriate help and attention to novice teacher educators (Wen, 2017) [1].

2. Professional developmental processes

The process of professional development is not only conscious and continuous progress but also a systematic process, which is correlated firmly within institutional and socio-cultural contexts in schools or the society (Yang, 2020) [2]. Only by paying full attention to the development of teachers' professional knowledge and ability, spiritual and cultural development, and even "butterfly development" of life can teacher education truly "discover" teachers, so that teachers' spiritual attributes, rich character, and complete appearance can be fully demonstrated. That is to say, researches on teacher educators' professional development and their growth path have great value.

Nearly all teacher educators need to go through different stages of professional development, reflecting different professional standards. Swennen (2010) has made a metaphor that the way to grow up as an excellent teacher educator is like a journey with different routes to reach their desired destinations. He stated that many teacher educators follow a different road and take their professional development into their own hands and make it their main focus of research. In addition, many researchers have found that most teacher educators can be characterized as a heterogeneous group. In this professional growth path, teacher educators are facing different challenges or dilemmas and needs with different starting points and various destinations [3]. Specifically, Berry (2007) has claimed two different pathways of teacher educators: through academia and through classroom teaching, which corroborates the complexity of this process [4].

In the induction phase, teacher educators take the rudimentary steps in this period to become professions (Moradkhani, 2013) [5]. Teacher educators' professional development needs to combine them organically to realize the comprehensive development of teaching and learning in the scientific interaction, which has returned to the discussion of the mission and duties of teacher educators. Researchers have categorized the professional development of teachers based on different dimensions, which can be divided into professional emotions, professional ideas, professional ethics, professional knowledge, and professional ability (Lu & Zhou, 2015) [6]. Shagrir (2010) has mentioned in his study that for a teacher educator, the professional self was built when the ability to understand and speak the professional language was acquired [7].

3. METHODS

This study adopts the method of narrative inquiry to explore the mental process of novice teacher educators' professional development. Narrative inquiry requires researchers to explore, discover and listen to teachers' specific and subtle educational life experience as much as possible, explore dimensions that cannot be explored by traditional empirical research, and show the complexity and diversity of teachers' learning (Cui, 2014) [8].

This study focuses on 7 novice teacher educators, who teach different subjects and courses in different colleges in a Chinese normal university. The technique of purposive sampling can select qualified

samples as a specific group in a certain context more effectively. In order to protect the anonymity, participants have been identified by specific codes, as A to G. This study has investigated seven teacher educators in total, which are selected based on their genders (three males and four females), working experiences (three novice, two in middle stages of the career, four in latter stages of the career) and working institutions (same normal universities, different colleges, mainly as branches of education). To some extents, they can represent novice teacher educators in different departments of normal universities.

Table 1. General information of participants

Participants	Gender	Service Years as Teacher Educators (years)	Experience as Teacher (years)	Qualifications
A	Female	1.5	1.5	PhD in Developmental and Educational Psychology
B	Male	1.5	4.5	PhD in English Education
C	Female	5	8	PhD in English Education
D	Male	0.5	0.5	PhD in Paleography (Ancient Chinese Characters)
E	Female	5.5	5.5	PhD in Management
F	Female	3	15	PhD in Literature and Art Studies
G	Male	0.5	0.5	Postdoctoral Degree in Pure Mathematics

Qualitative data in this study were collected using semi-structured in-depth interviews. Within this semi-structured format, the interviews were as open as possible, allowing the interviewer to pursue any unexpected responses and to reflect on each interviewee's experiences and perceptions of her/his real career lifespan, as well as their professional developments, which amplify the exploration of context-bound issues.

In-depth interviews with seven novice teacher educators from three different colleges of a normal university were conducted. Each interview was conducted face-to-face or online in the form of one-to-one. The language is Chinese and each interview lasts no less than 30 minutes. All the interviews were recorded with the consent of the interviewees, and transcribed verbatim for analysis, 57,508 characters in total. After reading the interview materials repeatedly, topic coding was conducted in

NVivo 12.0. By the usage of open coding, the data collecting from the interviews were subjected to content analysis, which generated a certain number of categories according to these two aspects on research questions. The resulting codes were refined by repeated analysis and then used to define recurring themes and patterns, resulting in the creation of core categories. This inductive process enabled unexpected elements of the data to be analyzed.

4. FINDINGS

This study will focus on the developmental processes of seven novice teacher educators, that is, tentative period, propulsive period, and innovative period. According to the service years of seven interviewees, they were divided into early stages (0.5-1.5 years), middle stages (2-3 years), and later stages (5-5.5 years) and discussed respectively.

4.1 Tentative Phase (0.5-1.5 years)

This study has extracted character fragments to sketch the silhouettes of three novice teacher educators and has presented them in the form of subtitles, hoping to delineate the "real" state at the beginning of the career path (0.5-1.5 years) through narrative inquiries, based on the texts of in-depth interviews, through multiple perspectives.

4.1.1 D : Solitary and perceptual

D is a doctoral student who graduated from a distinguished comprehensive university of the 985 Project. His main research field is ancient Chinese, specializing in the study of unearthed documents. After graduation, D went directly for work in a normal university in Beijing. He is separated geographically from his wife and he likes to write songs as a panacea when he feels lonely. In his first semester, he taught standard courses of ancient Chinese for undergraduates, additionally, he also undertook adult education and training courses of the college.

The researcher interviewed him just after the end of his first semester, taking the opportunity for him to review the final examination papers. D wore a blue plaid shirt with a pair of black-rimmed glasses. He spoke softly and seemed like a student. As a southerner, he came along to Beijing for his pursuit of postgraduate and doctoral education, while several years of student career have made him more acquainted with Beijing. D recalled his university as "a strange place, where teachers and students are superior and eminent" and he claimed that it was hard to achieve self-identification there. However, the normal university where D currently works is not like the competitive and rigid academic environment, namely, "if there is no promotion, then you are fired", especially in universities of southern parts of China. He doesn't need to worry about "losing his job" or even "worsening his health" due to the substandard academic output. "Living for a long time under great pressure, your body will go worse, so I don't want to live that kind of life." But for him, his solitary life in Beijing is still under great pressure, yet playing guitar, writing songs, and singing after work, as his hobby and a part of his current life goals are ways to relieve the pressure.

As a novice teacher educator, D gradually finds his position. *"To some extents, you have a certain degree of attachment with your university or your tutor, right? You are now independent. When I went back to pay a visit to my tutor, he told me that he would not criticize me anymore, because I am a teacher now."* From "students in the school" to "teachers in the eyes of students", entering a new working environment have great impacts on novice teachers. The superficial transformation of roles is a socialization process with new birth. (Wang, 2014) [9] *"The transformation of your identity from a student to a teacher indicates the independence of personality. Because we are also economically independent."* The socialization of his role from "student to the teacher" runs through the growth of his "teaching" in the half-year. In retrospective of his growth in the past six months, D said, *"maybe there will be more senses of responsibility as a teacher, and I can really feel that as a teacher, he has some responsibilities through this semester's teaching."* When standing in the same position with his tutor, D gradually understood his tutor's difficulties in that year, was in deep remorse for his troubles, hoped to teach by words and deeds, and imperceptibly "inherit" the way his tutor taught him. *"When I became a teacher, I understood that saying, 'It's a very happy thing to be a person who has educated talents in the world'."* In teaching, D doesn't like the so-called "false emptiness". He sincerely and directly regards teaching as a process of expressing himself. D defined himself as "humanist" and "very emotional". The shaping and formation of this character were also influenced by his doctoral supervisor. This unique "self" character style will be brought into the classroom imperceptibly, and the complete "self" will be put into his teaching. By continuously deepening the ideal form, the professional self will be gradually formed, and the role of self and teaching will be better integrated. *"I personally think that the podium is a stage to fully show a teacher's personal temperament. In a reasonable and legal situation, it's a place where we can fully display our personal style and personality under the various frameworks we need at present."* During his schooling, D once participated in a project to teach senior high school students a general course related to ancient Chinese characters in the Affiliated Middle School for a period of time and grasped the current students' ideas and ways of getting along with them through this experience. However, D encountered teaching difficulties at his entry point, insufficient contacts with pre-service teachers, and a lack of understanding of students. D claims that he will actively face such difficulties and take the initiative to consult with experienced teachers, and senior teachers in the same teaching and research office have given D some understandings and care to help D construct his understanding of students. *"Since we are all teachers and I'm younger than them, they treat me as a child. I still feel a lot of care and love."*

In outlining his future developmental path and looking forward to his expectations, D hopes to *"make some modest contributions in his own research field."* *"I don't have that grand ambition, what kind of scholar can I become, but I hope I can become a qualified and capable scholar, and don't disgrace my own tutor."* His current self-position is closer to a single "scholar" identity, rather than a "teacher educator" or other professional identity. At the beginning of his employment, the leader in charge of teaching in the college reached to him, respected his current research interests, and did not require D to make a rapid shift in the research field. This tolerance made D feel very considerate and useful. At

this stage, he doesn't want to rush to transform to educational researches, but still wants to continue to pay attention to his own research. *"After so many years of reading, I finally graduated, and I don't want to put aside my knowledge. We hope to do something within our reach. Although it may be insignificant or trivial, we still feel that we can afford to pay for these years. People who graduated from Ph.D. sometimes have some obsessions."* However, he claims that his personality is relatively "lax". Referred to his description, he may be "lack of ambition". His hobby of writing songs may delay academic research, resulting in less writing of academic papers and less progress.

D didn't care much about the teacher's evaluation results at the end of this term. In his opinion, *"I think it will affect my mood to see the bad ones anyway. I'm too lazy to watch them. I don't care. As long as the leaders don't bother me, I don't think it matters. I don't have any teaching accidents myself. I just be myself and I think I'm serious and responsible."* *"As long as the courses and workload are not so large and people feel bored, I think I still enjoy. Of course, if you ask me to substitute every day, I can't stand it. You have to prepare for lessons and take lessons every day. I think I can't resist it. My body can't resist it."*

4.1.2 G : rational and ambitious

G is a postdoctoral student who graduated from a famous university of the 985 Project in Beijing. His main research field is basic mathematics. He has experienced busyness, panic, little time to rest, and the feeling of being overwhelmed. After entering the post, G undertook the teaching of two undergraduate elective courses. Since he has never been exposed to the teaching materials, he still needs to devote more time and effort to the preparation of the courses and serves as the headteacher, providing guidance and other college work at the undergraduate graduation opening meeting.

The dynamic and complex career starting point, various tasks that can't be fulfilled, intensive training, and lectures made G feel busy and even "panic". *"At the beginning, I wanted to make a better plan. I finished everything every day for several days a week. But suddenly, a lot of things came, which also disrupted my plan. Yet, my plan is good, but it's not easy to finish each one of them, and then it's disordered if I do several at the same time."*

After listening to many lectures, G began to *"have a new position on this kind of teaching post in colleges and universities, which is not as simple as previously thought"*. At the beginning of entering a new life, the busy state is gradually relieved through active adjustments. G, who also lacks educational research background and basic school teaching experience, can't find his own focus and has some difficulties in arranging curriculum contents. He took the initiative to ask for help from experienced teachers in the same teaching and research office. *"Teachers who had taught this course before gave me some information, the PowerPoint he used in this lesson, and then told me how he taught, including how to check the scores of students and other issues. It has given me this kind of great help, then in a moment, I know which direction to work hard!"*

G's love and persistence in his own field has made him firmly believe in the idea to become a college

teacher. This idea has been buried and entrenched in his heart since he went to university. The exemplary role of the doctoral supervisor continues to promote him to pursue his ideal career. When it comes to the first thought, he *"wants to teach his own methods, his own things and knowledge to others, because learning mathematics itself is a very lonely thing, if more people can add their own discussion team, it will be warmer."* Excellent teachers have made a breakthrough in teaching and life, reflecting the characteristics of teaching life and teaching in life (Guo & Chen, 2015). [10] G vividly told the researchers the story of his doctoral tutor using the complex mathematical principle of *"E' Mei Mountain to see the Buddha light"* in his life and told his own conviction and worship for the tutor in teaching. Although there is no formal basic school teaching experience, G used to teach a primary school student mathematics as a private teacher. When talking about that family teaching experience, he felt that only from the perspective of primary school students can it be more in alignment with students' cognitive level. The college G works for is mainly engaged in primary education, and that experience also inspired him after he really started teaching undergraduate students.

In G's view, teacher educators should have "dedication". G is very respectful of his doctoral supervisor, who has also made outstanding achievements in education and has such a dedication. He told joyfully that his tutor wanted to live another 500 years and teach another 500 years. His senior tutor, who is full of enthusiasm for teaching, is still trying a relatively new video teaching form, which also inspires G a lot. *"I have to be willing to do this. If I just want to get paid to do this kind of work, I don't think I can realize my life value. I think I have to have this dedication spirit, and I can get some happiness and some happiness from it."* On the one hand, this kind of happiness comes from the research of *"making what the predecessors didn't know, creating the frontier research which can promote social development"*. On the other hand, it comes from the teaching to cultivate good students. Cultivating students better than others' cultivate will bring a sense of achievement. At the beginning of G's career, he was full of energy and wanted to teach, and lead his students well as well as to conduct good studies.

G talked about his current difficulties that he *"may feel limited energy, feel that although there are a lot of ideas, they are too slow to achieve, that is, the solitude of no team and no help."* *"The idea of my research can't be realized well."* The state of doing academic work is different. When we finish scientific research together with the team in the past, we need to face scientific research projects alone, which leads to a certain psychological gap.

G is an aspiring young novice teacher educator, who can make clear his professional development and self-planning in the next stage, and has sufficient motivations for self-development. Nearly ten years of long-term scientific research training has nearly made G feel that he is "just being proficient" in academic research. *"Scientific research has been accumulated before, and it is more leisurely in this respect."* But for the blank of background knowledge in the field of education research, he realized that it would take decades to accumulate his own achievements in teaching or education researches, *"it's impossible to be a 'fat' all of a sudden! It's also a stage of self-learning."* G has also planned a

clear landscape for his next development, and has high expectations for himself in the aspects of professional title evaluation, teaching awards for young teachers, and instructions of postgraduates.

4.1.3 A : calm and good at reflection

When the researcher entered A's office, A was calmly communicating and discussing problems with a colleague who had made great achievements in the field of teacher education in the same teaching and research office. Before accepting the interview with the researcher, she guided her postgraduate students' thesis writing. In the early stage, after understanding the researcher's research questions, she expressed great interest and readily agreed to accept the interview of the researcher.

A graduated from a normal university directly under the Ministry of Education in Beijing. Her major background is psychology. At this stage, she has undertaken the psychology basic courses of masters of education, such as class management, mental health, some career planning courses for undergraduates, and the training of in-service teachers.

Having a year and a half of working experience made her think differently from the other two novice teacher educators at the entry point. Similar to D and G, A also likes to engage in research work, so the Institute and higher education institutions are her alternative workplace. A likes the feeling of being a teacher. The process of preparing for a class will make her feel fulfilled. Similar to D, she needs a sense of time flexibility and independent space arrangement. She actively adapts, sticks to her original intention, tries to make adjustments and adaptations, and actively grows up. *"Whether it is in space from one environment to one environment, or from the stage of life, from one stage to another, it will certainly change. It must be adapted again. I think you have problems if you haven't changed. So when you get to another new time and space, the change you make is actually a process of adaptation. I think I'm pretty good right now, but I think my adaptation process is that I have adapted to it, and I'm adapting to this process in a good direction and adapting to this field."*

After coming to the practical field of teacher education, A, who has a psychological background, pays attention to *"putting the individual on the congruity with the college's development, and then considering the issue of personal development, which is actually an issue of twice the result with half the effort"*. Her active growth and intentional combination are embodied in harmony with the college's ecological environment, the change, and exploration of her subjective initiative. In terms of research, she explored the interdisciplinary perspective of cross research, *"personal practical experience will feedback to my theoretical research"*. She pointed out that *"I begin to think about how to do the best effective teaching, the nature of education, in fact, only after coming here."* The recognition of her own identity and the perception of the overall atmosphere of the college made her decide to step forward and form her own research expertise in this field by changing herself and better interacting with the college's ecosystem. *"When you come to teacher education college, as teacher educators, naturally you need to do some research in the field of teacher education, so I need to start again in this respect."*

Referring to the difficulties at this stage, she said, "*maybe she is not diligent enough, sometimes it will be delayed, maybe there will be some ineffective and inefficient working methods, maybe there will be some trial and error in the process of exploration.*" Novice teacher educators do many jobs for the first time and will take some detours. Similar to G, time for academic research is not as abundant as that of the doctoral stage. However, the work of the college is the main task, and the self-development is suitable and coordinated with the development of the college environment. "*The efforts invested in scientific research is certainly not as much as that of it when I was a doctoral student, therefore there may be a distribution proportion problem in it, which may need to be adjusted, or may not be appropriate, or how to allocate it most efficiently, which may be a little adjustment in the process of exploration.*"

4.1.4 Summary

The adaptation period for novice teacher educators shows that they have no idea what they should do, and after slow exploration, they will get to know what they need to do, and what their tasks are. When getting involved in the teacher education field, some of them claim that they accept and enjoy these changes. These changes have made them have a broad understanding and profound self-reflection of the teacher education field by accepting their working contents and taking preemptive measures for adjustment. Novice teacher educators during their induction period will find that their entry point is so laborious and busy with little time to rest with various toilsome works and tasks. They firmly asserted that when they went through this adaptation gradually, they would feel calm and overcome "panic". When smoothing through this adaptation period, they will be more positive about their changes and regard them as a "boon".

Early-stage can be generalized into the "tentative phase". Novice teacher educators will be confident and optimistic. With enthusiasm and an open mind, they will actively seek experiences and problem-solving methods from experienced teachers through trial, although they will also encounter confusion or challenges. They will change through certain imitation, and gradually the feeling of teaching self-confidence and competence will rise.

4.2 Propulsive Phase (2-3 years)

4.2.1 B : "Be true and honest to students"

B is the only participant with four and a half years of experience in high school. The high school he once worked in is famous for its excellent qualities. Later, because of his further learning needs, he proposed to resign and become a student again. He returned to the university where he got his bachelor's and master's degrees, mainly teaching core courses of master students in English education.

Previous work experience makes B confident enough to cope with the new environment. In his opinion, the biggest change in himself is a kind of identity switching. Teachers in basic education are more of a practitioner's identity, while university teachers are more of a researcher's identity. When talking about his current situation, B said, "*I think it's still very smooth for me to instruct graduate students,*

and the academic progress of students in all aspects is not bad. In addition, I have taught several courses of teaching and learning evaluation, which have been highly praised by students. Students are very satisfied with my class. "

In teaching, he said, *"I think I have a set of understanding of education, be true, honest, do not play tricks, and treat students sincerely and frankly."* *"Since my students will be teachers in the future, I hope my students can learn their lessons well conscientiously."* As for him, it is more important to promote the development of students than to figure out who he is.

4.2.2 F : “Be timely rain to quench their thirsts”

F's work route is very complex and various. She has been a full-time counselor for a long time in the normal university she currently works for. For her, the biggest change is that her application level is transferred to the academic level. As a full-time teacher, in class, in her own articles, as well as in scientific research, her energy is almost focused on these three aspects, and there are other missions related to teacher education, such as how to take interns as a link between the university and the internship school, how to be a teacher educator to train teachers at all levels during the semester. F took other tasks into consideration meticulously. *“As a teacher education expert, what are the aspects involved in instructing and enlightening academic research, the writing of their thesis paper, as well as their roles as teachers or class teachers, how to integrate with students? ”*

Although she has had a long working experience as a psychological teacher, F still encountered some problems after she became a teacher educator. *"To be honest, we have to constantly explore all aspects of things involved after induction. We don't know what we are going to do and how to do it at the beginning."* Only by deepening her missions did her professional landscape became clearer and clearer. *"In the process of conducting the project, we are combining with basic school teachers. I'm speaking exactly from the needs of students and teachers, which are actually the awareness of the real problems from the basic education arena. And then it will promote the thoughts and reflections of our academic researches."*

F has undertaken a lot of work in the training of famous teachers' studios. In the real interaction with front-line teachers, she mentioned that *"we have no more than one goal to achieve, how they educate people. The final goal is to return to educating people, how do they educate people as teachers."* She said that the courses they jointly developed were tailor-made, and they did "conscience work". *"Have we found out in practice that this ability of empathy is very important? Can you realize it? Just as he realized himself, the most specific problem is their problem. Experience them as you experience yourself."*

4.2.3 Summary

This stage can be summarized as the “propulsive phase”. At this stage, novice teacher educators can start to generate personalized cognition and understanding of their own work, have a certain sense of identity with their own mission, and perform their own work step by step. At this stage, teacher

educators' cognition of individualization in this field has germinated, which can be represented by teachers' reflective review.

4.3 Innovative Phase (5-5.5 years)

4.3.1 C : “Life symphony”

The emotional world constructed by C is very delicate. After her graduation, she had three years of college English teaching experience. She "rooted" herself in an affiliated school and did the same missions as a middle school teacher. The accumulation of these experiences enables her to understand students from multiple perspectives. In her view, *"the extent to which the students you come into contact with can be measured is not a quantitative process."* More importantly, *"whether you will leave him any trace, what kind of touch you will give him, what kind of agitation and vibration you will give him."*

Teacher educators must regard the situation of teaching and learning as that teachers or normal students and themselves narrate their experiences in an interactive way (Xu & Conelly, 2008)[11]. The individual is distinct, and everyone has a certain experience. In talking about her relationship with students, she said, *"Many of my students cried in front of me, and then opened their hearts to me, and then told me something pensive in life."* This kind of communication between my life and their lives not only pays attention to students' knowledge acquisition and skills training but also pays attention to the existence of future teachers as "people".

Teachers and normal students are not passive recipients. When talking about her process of educating people, she said, *"Since teachers are adults, it is a role of understanding, accompanying and staying abreast with them together."* This reflects the characteristics of adult learning. Teachers are adults, and adult learning has its own characteristics, for example, have rich personal experience, need to be activated and integrated into the new learning activities; self-directed, have a clear learning purpose; pay attention to problem-solving, do not like abstract, profound, unrelated to teaching theoretical knowledge (Chen, 2014) [12].

4.3.2 E : “Groping teaching methods”

E mainly teaches the course of pedagogical principles for students who major in history teaching. In her five and a half years of teaching, she has consciously carried out teaching innovation. At this stage, she has completed the assessment of associate professor's title and generated a set of subjective understanding of students, namely, *"Understand the self you are teaching"*.

The special or important experience of novice teachers in their personal life history often shapes the early personal value orientation and belief of new teachers through the process of personal subjective feeling and interpretation and understanding, and then profoundly affects the professional practice and development of teachers. E talked about that through many years of exploration and attempt, she explored the curriculum orientation and classroom organization mode suitable for normal students with the subject background. She said, *"Although she was graduated from education discipline, only*

through continuous activities and exercises of these projects can she understand more about the significance and value of becoming an educator as well as a teacher. I think these have touched me a lot. "

In her opinion, her conscious and spontaneous professional growth is a combination of imperceptibly promoting students' growth, helping students solve difficult problems, and sharing important moments of life. In this process, she *"felt that she could go further and understand the value of her work, which shone a great sense of achievement."* *"Sometimes you will feel that when you really use your major in pedagogical teaching, and then use your own efforts to help this kind of young students grow up professionally, and then in addition to professional growth, there are many other students who sometimes chat with me, you share and communicate with him, and then you yourself will experience later, you will still feel that you can go further and understand the value of your work. I think that's a great sense of achievement. "*

Teacher educators need to understand the living space of teachers and listen to the opinions of teachers or normal students. Teacher educators need to imagine themselves walking into the river of life and living together with students (Xu & Connelly, 2008) [13]. Through teaching, D has contact with students of different majors, and with vivid characteristics. In the process of getting along with students, she keeps perceiving the wisdom and the appropriate to sympathize with students. Naturally, there are also challenges for her. "There must be a lot of differences between you and your peers when you get along with them after 1990 or 2000, including their discourse system, including their thinking modes. I think these are challenges, but the challenge is that you will soon explore the way and path of getting along in the process of accumulating practical experience. "

4.3.3 Summary

As for novice teacher educators in their induction period, their prime concerns are to amass professional knowledge available for them as teacher educators, and to be more skillful in teaching which is pertinent to students' needs and expectations. However, for novice teacher educators in their middle careers, they take more highly of interior qualities, which is compatible with their students' own developmental trajectories and sympathize with their students' growth. They attach their professional growth to students, that is say, the knowledge they impart conforms to students' needs, the skills they cultivate stem from basic education arena, which will help their students embrace their future career as in-service teachers, the emotional bonds they build with students are to enlighten and touch inner parts of students, triggering life contact with students. Together with dynamic environments, inner strength and their self-image sustain their commitments in making a difference to their interaction with students. However, inner qualities exert the leading force to play a decisive role in exterior behaviors. When they are aware of the conglomeration of these ideal qualities, they will progress through and gradually deepen their own developments as a teacher educator. In the innovative phase, we can spontaneously summarize the experience of interaction with students and generate the subjective thinking of professional self.

5. DISCUSSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

The result of the development of seven novice teacher educators is constantly in the process of dynamic changes, mainly reflected in the change of ideas, emotions and spirit. The change of the idea level is reflected in the nexus of theory and practice, the change of the emotional level is mainly reflected in the understanding of the relationship between teachers and students, and the change of the spiritual level is mainly reflected in the change of self-awareness.

5.1 Idea : “interface” of theory and practice

To become a true supporter of teachers' professional development, teachers' educators need to have a profound theoretical basis and rich practical experience, and be able to freely walk between the two to promote the symbiosis of the two(Yang, 2018)[14].

From the perspective of research transformation, novice teacher educators realize that they have involved in new working environments, where they need to conjure up the particularity and complexity of the labor of teacher education, and perceive the practical characteristics of teacher education field, which voluntarily lead to the tendency of research transformation. We generalize into two aspects of their research transformation: (1) More attention to the theory-practice nexus; (2) Pedagogical perspective. When immersing into the field of teacher education, teacher educators will find “practicality” as one of the prominent characteristics. As they are immersed in this field and instill passion into this field, they will notice that “*personal practical experience will feed back to theoretical research*”. Some respondents have emphasized that combined with the educational reform and the real situation of basic education institutions, production of academic researches should take the promotion and optimization of educational practice as the foothold. On the basis of these, novice teacher educators gradually realize that paying heed to the theory-practice nexus, namely striking a chord and be united in concert by the alignment between personal professional development and developments of teacher education institutions, will help them cultivate their students, including pre-service and in-service teachers.

5.2 Emotions

The transitions when entering the field of teacher education and the attitudes towards these changes can also reflect teachers' perception and insight into personal growth. The transformation of mentality includes understanding and understanding self. Among them, it is not quite easy to understand the spiritual world of students and the difficulties or quandaries of school-based teachers. Meanwhile, it is a two-way process to understand both students and themselves. Empathic understanding of students' urgent and authentic needs can react on the adjustment and reorganization of teaching content of teacher educators, and the innovative improvement of pedagogy. Besides, it will fortress the emotional linkage of their relationships, which will assuage the qualm of teacher educators when their teaching cannot be understood or accepted well by their students. Hence, empathic understanding of students

fills the gap between higher education institutions and practice fields, making teacher educators be more capable to understand “teachers” as a vocation, understand the value and meaning of their work, gain self-identity, achieve the sense of achievement and self-actualization.

5.3 Spirits

As for novice teacher educators, develop and nourish the budding identity as a teacher educator is of pivotal role. A previous study of teacher educators has identified a quadripartite mission underpinning work and identities, consisting of the following elements: taking pride in teaching students; being recognized as scholars and researches; continuing to have professional credibility or recognition in the school sector; and service to the university. Novice teacher educators do not just face challenges and difficulties; they also experience joys and rewards and these help them to develop their identities as teacher educators. Knowledge of the ‘discipline’ or ‘subject’ of education and the pedagogical knowledge of how to teach that ‘subject’ in higher education are inseparable for teacher educators. Novice teacher educators do not consider teaching to be a point of confusion for themselves. Most of their confusions exist in the problem that the field of teacher education is not compatible with their prior knowledge background, experience or professional knowledge. Therefore, they need to learn a certain area of teacher education by themselves and appropriately change their research direction so that their research can be transferred to the field of teacher education. From this, they can discover their research interests and strengths and form their own theoretical system, since knowledge output can guide practice. Non-traditional teacher educators may lack sufficient understanding of local teaching practice and school systems and culture, and therefore they are likely to encounter challenges in designing and implementing effective and relevant teacher education tasks as well as communicating with pre- and in-service teachers about their their learning needs and progress. Therefore, the lack of experience in this area needs to stimulate the occasional spontaneous self-learning of novice teacher educators.

The identity of teacher educators is a mixture of subject, teaching and research knowledge. Among them, subject identity is the foundation, teaching identity is the key, and research identity is the consolidation and promotion, which triangulates three missions of teacher educators. In particular, for novice teacher educators, their doctoral education charge them with concrete subject identity and research identity, yet their teaching identity has been a nascent process with little previous experience. It is important for novice teacher educators to develop awareness of and abilities to reflect upon and analyze their various identities in relation to their work contexts. In this induction period, they may come across the deficits or conflicts between their actual identities as well as ideal identities. Self-agency will be triggered and exercised to provide them opportunities for self-exploration (Yuan, 2019) [15].

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