

# Chinese Teachers' Whole Book Reading Under the Concept of Key Competencies\*

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**Abstract**—The Chinese Curriculum Standard for Common High School (2017) takes the key competencies of Chinese students as the starting point of the curriculum design, and puts forward learning task groups for Chinese curriculum based on the age characteristics of students and the specific goals of the subject; whole book reading and discussion is one of the task groups. This paper expounds the connotation and development route of whole book reading, and points out that the whole book reading of individual Chinese teachers should choose different reading methods as per the specific reading direction. When reading the whole book for promoting key competencies development of students, Chinese teachers should adopt analytical reading and inquiry reading combined method; when reading the whole book for leading their own professional development, they should adopt study typed reading method and pay attention to reading and finally putting it into use.

**Keywords**—key competencies; Chinese teacher; whole book reading

## I. INTRODUCTION

Around the 21st century, many international organizations such as the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), and the European Union (EU) successively carried out researches on key competencies. Affected by it, the United States, Britain, France, Germany, Finland, Japan, Singapore, and China also actively developed their respective key competencies framework. Key competencies refers to the necessary characters, key abilities and common literacies that students gradually form in the process of receiving education, in order to adapt to their lifelong development and social development. It is also the common literacy for students to achieve a successful life and adapt to personal lifelong development and social development. On September 13, 2016, the results of research on the development of key competencies of Chinese students were released. The framework centers on the cultivation of "all-round developed person" and is divided into three aspects such as cultural foundation, independent development and social participation, as well 6 comprehensive literacies and

18 basic points. [1] Subsequently, when revising the general high school curriculum standards for each discipline, key competencies are defined as an important goal of education, and a key competencies-oriented teaching reform gradually began. The Chinese Curriculum Standard for Common High School (2017) points out four aspects of the key competencies of Chinese, and on this basis, puts forward the learning task groups for Chinese curriculum. As one of the learning task groups, whole book reading and discussion penetrates through students' Chinese learning in high school stage; combing the connotation and development route of whole book reading and reviewing its new requirement for Chinese teachers are conducive to implementation of this learning task group.

## II. CONNOTATION AND DEVELOPMENT ROUTE OF WHOLE BOOK READING

Whole book reading means reading the whole book or a complete set of books. The study of this task group runs through the compulsory, selective compulsory and elective courses of Chinese curriculum. The proposal of this task group is conducive to promoting the reform of Chinese teaching through practical reading activities. On the one hand, it promotes the transformation of teachers' teaching methods from teaching a part or segment of a literary work to providing students with in-depth guidance and support; on the other hand, it promotes the transformation of students' learning methods from passive and segmented learning to active learning and thinking and system construction. Reading is a process of linguistic construction and application. Students can enhance their aesthetic appreciation and creativity in reading, develop logical thinking and imaginary thinking, realize cultural understanding and inheritance, and promote the cultivation and improvement of their key competencies in Chinese.

Tracing to the source, "reading the whole book" is an important part of Ye Shengtao's Chinese curriculum conception. In 1941, Ye Shengtao pointed out in the "On the Revision of the Standards for Chinese Language Courses in Middle Schools" that Chinese reading should "put the whole book as the main body and supplement it with intensive reading of single short chapter". In 1949, the "Standards for Chinese Language Courses in Middle Schools" clearly pointed out that "in middle school, Chinese textbooks, in addition to incorporate single piece of text, should also adopt

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a section or a chapter of a book; in high school stage, the textbook should adopt an the whole book in modern Chinese" [2]. Ye Shengtao believed that "reading the whole book" are the fundamental way to achieve the goal of Chinese curriculum. In middle school stage, Chinese textbook should adopt a whole book or take the whole book as the main body. Teachers should be able to lead students to "read the whole book" to gain Chinese proficiency and develop a study habits. Ye Shengtao gave meticulous guidance from the curriculum conception, textbook compilation, teaching guidance, and how to choose a book and how to get a book.

Ye Shengtao's idea of "reading the whole book" was gradually formed on the basis of inheriting Chinese traditional education. In the ancient Chinese language education, the "Four Books" and "Five Classics" were always the whole books necessary to be read by scholars. "Reading Classics" and "Teaching Classics" were the main methods of traditional Chinese language education, including the thought of reading the whole books. After appearing the vernacular, different scholars have different views on which the whole books are necessary to be read and which language versions shall prevail (classical Chinese or vernacular). Liang Qichao and Hu Shi provided a bibliography of books for "reading the whole book" from the perspective of reading classical Chinese. He Zhongying, Lin Yixi and et al's discussion on using "Vernacular Novel" Chinese textbook laid a direct foundation for the thought of "reading the whole book". Xia Mianzun concerned very much on "reading the whole book" and has published many papers showing his opinions on what to read and how to read. Of course, there are also refutation opinions. For example, Zhu Ziqing did not agree with the idea of taking the whole book as textbook. Yu Guanying thought that it didn't matter whether the textbook was the whole book or a single article and there is no difference whether taking the whole book as textbook or extracurricular readings [3].

In the field of curriculum construction, the Chinese curriculum standards before 1949 paid more attention to "reading the whole book". The Chinese curriculum standards or syllabus after 1949 less mentioned this reading thought. By 2001, in "Teaching suggestions" under the Standards for Full-time Compulsory Education of Chinese Courses (draft), it is pointed out that it is necessary to "cultivate students' extensive reading interest, expand their reading scope, increase their reading quantity", and "read more books, be good at reading books, read excellent books, and read the whole books; to this end, the thought of reading the whole book was clearly proposed [4]. Until the issue of the Chinese Curriculum Standard for Common High School (2017), the target, content and method of "whole book reading" was clearly specified in Chinese curriculum content and learning requirement under the Standard; to this end, whole book reading became the learning task of Chinese curriculum. In the field of textbook construction, there is no textbook system taking the whole book as the main body. In the field of research, with the increasing in rational thinking of traditional education, the introduction of foreign reading thought and method and the clear statement on whole book

reading in Chinese curriculum standard in recent years, the research on whole book reading has attracted widespread attention, while most of the current researches focus on how teachers instruct students to read the whole books, and there is very few researches on the teacher's personal reading of the whole books.

### III. THE CONTENT ORIENTATION OF WHOLE BOOK READING FOR CHINESE TEACHERS

Whole book reading is a learning task group proposed for Chinese curriculum in high school stage, and its specific teaching is undertaken by Chinese discipline. In fact, the cultivation of students' reading ability is not a one-step process. Whole book reading is also not the problem to be concerned by high school Chinese teachers only. Only when reading is treated as "learning" task in all stages of Chinese learning and even in all stages of all disciplines and whole book reading is taken as the basic requirement for the teaching of all disciplines can students' reading ability be truly improved. However, in order to provide students guidance in reading the whole books, teacher should take the initiative to read the whole book. If teacher does not read it himself, how can he recommend it to students, let alone the implementation of the problem design and activity arrangement in the teaching of whole book reading, and even let alone the continuous professional development of teachers themselves?

Chinese teacher should pay attention to students' whole book reading tasks and read such the whole books as conducive to enhancing students' key competencies. The whole book reading contents of students should be selected according to the basic characteristics and rules of students' reading. Generally speaking, in primary school stage, the reading content should mainly select fairy tales, fables and the like literary forms; in junior high school stage, the reading content should mainly select narrative literary works; in senior high school stage, the reading content should mainly select thoughtful literary works and cultural works. The Chinese language curriculum standards have certain provisions for the task quantity and specific content of the students' extracurricular reading. Chinese textbooks also have certain requirements for the specific articles to be read by students. For example, the contents relevant to outline of great books are arranged in the newly compiled Chinese textbooks; the outline introduces specific works to stimulate students' interest in reading and guide students to read. The Common high school curriculum standard points out that the whole book reading of high school students in the compulsory stage should complete the reading of a novel and an academic work [5]. In reading full-length novels, Chinese teacher should grasp the content, purport and writing characteristics and other elements of the whole book, and interpret and analyze it in combination with the stylistic features of the works, refer to existing analytical comment articles, obtain relevant expansion materials and so on and think in combination with the reading experience. Only after making a study reading on the works, having own opinions and views on the works and having an extensive understanding of the creation background of the works can Chinese teacher make teaching design in combination with

the actual recognition level of students and truly guide and boost students' reading of the whole book. Meanwhile in reading academic works, its contents cover the academic works in many fields.

Chinese teachers should pay attention to their own professional development and read such the whole books as conducive to leading individual's professional literacy. Only by constant development and growth in the teaching career can teacher adapt to the new requirements of the times for teachers. After undertaking education and teaching work after entering the vocation, teachers mainly have two forms of professional development paths such as self-learning and uniform training. Teacher's self-learning is one of the most convenient and common self-development paths. Reading professional books is one of the effective methods for teachers to learn independently. The professional literacy of teachers includes four dimensions: professional awareness, professional philosophy, professional knowledge and professional competence. The improvement of literacy in any one of the dimensions will help to promote the overall improvement of teachers' professional literacy [6]. For Chinese teachers, reading education and teaching theory research related the whole books is conducive to the construction of their professional ideas, and the change in teachers' professional ideas will lead to the change of their educational and teaching behaviors, and further promote their professional competence. When reading the Chinese education and teaching based the whole books written by famous Chinese teachers such as Yu Yi, Han Jun, Li Zhenxi and Dou Guimei, Chinese teachers may feel the strong professional awareness of the famous Chinese teachers and further enhance their professional identity awareness, awake their professional development awareness; meanwhile, enhancing professional awareness is conducive to the development of their attention to their professional knowledge reserve and professional competence.

#### IV. SELECTION OF WHOLE BOOK READING METHODS FOR CHINESE TEACHERS

Chinese teacher should provide students reading method guidance for whole book reading; in the teaching of whole book reading, the teachers should consider how to stimulate students' interest in learning, how to timely advance in the process of reading, and how to communicate and discuss after reading, and the like questions. In order to read relevant books on the basis of the dimensions of personal professional literacy, Chinese teachers also need to adopt certain reading method. Specific selection of reading methods depends on the orientation of teacher's whole book reading content.

Teachers' reading of such the whole books as promoting the development of students' key competencies is not only a demonstration of the reading methods, but more a development of course resources and an exploration on the teaching forms; hence, the reading should be carried out by a combination of analytical reading and inquiry reading methods. The purpose of teachers' reading of such the whole books is not only to obtain relevant knowledge, but more importantly to provide students effective guidance in students' reading process. For the whole books of different

texts, the process of reading by teacher is a method exploration and behavior demonstration on the reading form. On this basis, the teacher should determine the teaching goal of whole book reading, and think about the meaning for students to read this book, the learning resources that can be obtained from the reading, the way of combining and integrating those learning resources in the reading process and the way to adopt suitable teaching forms based on students' features. When reading such the whole books, teacher should make specific analysis and exploration on the corresponding reading strategies. For example, Mr. Huang Houjiang led the students to read "The Analects of Confucius". On the basis of analyzing the existing reading methods, he used the method of vertical reading, and took students as the points to make comprehensive reading of it; through teacher-led co-reading between teachers and students, he published the monograph "Reading People' Characters from the Analects" and guided students to write many papers in combination with the reading [7].

Teachers' reading of such the whole books as available to lead their professional development is not only beneficial to the acquisition of professional knowledge, but also conducive to the overall improvement of their professional character and literacy; hence, with respect to such books, teachers should read it in review based method and pay attention to put the reading experience into use. The process of teacher's whole book reading is not only the process of cognizing the book content, but also the process of thinking and reviewing. For example, when reading education and teaching based the whole books, teachers should analyze the education and teaching concepts in the book, and review their own educational concepts, and check whether there is a gap between their own beliefs and its application to see whether the education principles to be abided by are truly put into practice. Through reading, contrasting and reflecting, the individual education and teaching concepts of teachers are actively self-constructed. Teacher's professional literacy contains multiple dimensions. No matter in which dimension, the literacy promotion is inseparable from self-reflection and active construction after cognizing from learning, while whole book reading is right one of the most convenient professional growth paths. When reading such books, teacher should not be only satisfied with reading and reflection, but also understand the ideological spirit in the works, and use them appropriately in their educational and teaching practices, and generate educational wisdom in the process of application. Only in this way can the practical role of whole book reading be truly played.

#### V. CONCLUSION

Effective whole book reading can improve students' language literacy and promote teachers' professional development. The teacher's reading direction determines the choice of specific reading methods. Students are not professional readers. Reading the whole book needed for student development, the teacher's first reading is a kind of guidance and demonstration, and then goes to the students' self-reading and the teachers and students to read together. The teacher is also the planner and practitioner of self-professional growth. The whole book required for the

professional development of teachers is the inner appeal of the individual development of teachers.

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