

# Obstacles and Breakthrough

## Selection of Path for Professional Development of Foreign Teachers in Universities

Jinghua Ma

School of Humanities and Law  
Northeastern University  
Shenyang, Liaoning, China 110819  
Shenyang Normal University  
Shenyang, Liaoning, China 110819

**Abstract**—Under the background of internationalization of higher education, when universities devote greater efforts to introduce foreign teachers, they shall pay close attention to development of foreign teachers. According to empirical investigation on universities in Liaoning province, sort out problems and reasons existing in training for foreign teachers, explore training systems that contribute to development of foreign teachers, use modern training means, rich training measures and diversified methods to meet the requirements of development of foreign teachers, and then improve quality of talents training in higher education.

**Keywords**—foreign teachers in universities; professional development of teachers; obstacles in professional development; path

### I. INTRODUCTION

University is the main base for our country to cultivate talents. The quality of teachers decides the quality of talent training. With development of higher education in our country, international communication and cooperation in universities deepen continuously. Internationalization of teachers in universities is one of the most basic conditions to ensure internationalization of higher education. An important goal of internationalization of higher education is to cultivate talents that can adapt to economic globalization with international consciousness, international thinking and international competitiveness. It has become important links of teaching development in universities to employ foreign teachers to give lessons and fully exert advantages of foreign teachers in discipline, major and language. Because of language and cultural difference, it is very difficult for foreign teachers employed to rapidly adapt to teaching and life in universities of our country, let alone professional development of them. Therefore, it has important significance in effectively managing foreign teachers and improving teaching quality of higher education through exploring scientific and reasonable training systems that contribute to development of foreign teachers.

### II. BASIC THEORY AND CONNOTATION

#### A. Foreign Teachers in Universities

Foreign teachers in universities refer to people with foreign nationality, working on teaching jobs in universities of our country. Universities in our country began to employ foreign teachers in the early days after the foundation of PRC. During this period, the quantity of foreign teachers employed by universities was relatively small. These foreign teachers mainly worked on language teaching. It belongs to start-up stage. After the reform and opening up, with integrated development of economy and society in our country, universities continuously strengthen international communication and cooperation and employ increasing number of foreign teachers to work on teaching jobs. Especially since “the 11th Five-Year Plan”, with acceleration of internationalization of economy and society in our country, the number of foreign teachers employed by universities increases obviously. According to statistics, it shows that the number of foreign teachers in universities in 2005 was 5,986; the number was 13,067 in 2010. The statistical results indicate: the number of foreign teachers in universities increases obviously. Meanwhile, the position and role of foreign teachers in universities are promoted unceasingly.

#### B. Specialization of Teachers

Profession often refers to work on an occupation requiring expertise. The occupation requires special intelligence and the purpose is to provide specialized social service. Specialization refers to the process that an ordinary occupational group gradually meets professional standard, becomes specialized occupation and acquires corresponding professional status in a certain period.

Specialization of teachers is a kind of specialization of occupation. In short, the so-called specialization of teachers refers to “the process for teachers to improve level of expertise and the process for teacher groups to strive for professional status of teaching profession”. In essence, the specialization of teachers emphasizes the process of growth and development, concretely including three levels: The first is the process to improve level of expertise of teachers; the second is the process to improve level of expertise of teacher

groups; the third is the process to establish and promote professional status of teaching profession. The three levels have close relationships, promote each other and make joint development.

### C. Professional Development of Foreign Teachers in Universities

Professional development of teachers refers to the process of continuous improvement in professional thinking, professional knowledge and professional ability of teachers as specialized persons. In broad sense, the concepts of "professional development of teachers" and "specialization of teachers" are interlinked, referring to the process to strengthen specialization of teachers. In narrow sense, certain differences exist between them: "specialization of teachers" mainly emphasizes promotion of external specialization of teachers group from the perspective of sociology; "professional development of teachers" mainly refers to improvement of internal specialization of teachers from the perspective of pedagogy.

Therefore, "the professional development of teachers" can be understood as "the process for continuous professional development of teachers, the process for teachers to unceasingly receive new knowledge and develop professional skill and the process for continuous maturity, promotion and innovation of professional ideal, professional ethics, professional emotion as well as sense of social responsibility of teachers".

Professional development of foreign teachers in universities refers to the process that foreign teachers in universities base on requirements of specific occupation post, continuously update knowledge system through theoretical learning, training and practice and improve professional knowledge, teaching level and professional ethics to unceasingly meet the requirements of teaching job in universities.

### III. OBSTACLES EXISTING IN PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT OF FOREIGN TEACHERS IN UNIVERSITIES AT PRESENT

The current research selects 40 foreign teachers who teach in ten geographical universities of Northeastern University, Dongbei University of Finance and Economics, Dalian University of Technology, China Medical University, Liaoning University, Shenyang Jianzhu University, Shenyang Aerospace University, Shenyang University, Shenyang Normal University, Dalian University of Foreign Language, makes questionnaire survey on training situation of foreign teachers, including six teachers from Britain, fifteen teachers from America, six teachers from Australia, three teachers from Philippines, nine teachers from Canada and one teacher from South Africa. It issues 40 questionnaires in total, including 39 valid questionnaires and one invalid questionnaire, with effective rate of questionnaire of 97.5%; it issues 100 questionnaires to students in universities with 96 valid questionnaires and effective rate of 96%. The questionnaires issued to foreign teachers and students adopt the five-grade marking system. The options from one point to five points

refer mean totally disagreeing, not agreeing very much, neutrality, relatively agreeing and totally agreeing correspondingly. On the basis of questionnaire, interview some administrative staff in universities and foreign teachers and sort out problems and reasons existing in training of foreign teachers in universities through analyzing results of questionnaire and interview.

### A. Deficiencies and Defects of Foreign Teachers in Universities of Our Country

According to empirical investigation on foreign teachers working on education and teaching in geographical universities in Liaoning province, it is found that foreign teachers have deficiencies and defects in many aspects, which influence teaching efficiency to a certain degree.

1) *The education background is too low: The results of the survey show that:* Among 39 foreign teachers, four have medium diploma level, accounting for 10.2%; sixteen have bachelor degree, accounting for 41.1%; fourteen have master degree, accounting for 35.8%; three have doctor degree, accounting for 7.6%; the rest account for 5.1%. It can be seen from the results that: There are few foreign teachers with doctor degree in universities. The education background of foreign teachers is low in general. According to article 11 in Law of the People's Republic of China on Teachers stipulates: "To obtain the qualification of teachers in universities, it shall have the graduate degree or bachelor degree or above." At present, except for special specialty, most teachers in universities of our country have graduate degree or above. Few of them have bachelor degree. Because the overall background of foreign teachers is low, the scientific research level is not high and innovation ability is not strong.

2) *The specialty is inconsistent:* When foreign teachers answer the question in questionnaire that "whether universities in Liaoning of China can offer posts that conform to my specialty", only seven of them choose yes, account for 19.6%. It can be seen from the results of interview that most foreign teachers working on teaching in our country study in specialty of biology, law major or specialty of histology. Few of them study in specialties of psychology, pedagogy and linguistics. Because the specialty is inconsistent, the education and teaching of foreign teachers in universities are limited.

3) *Lack experience in teaching:* When answering the question in questionnaire that "whether you can master the level of students through test in teaching", fourteen foreign teachers who remain neutral, relatively disagree and totally disagree, accounting for 43.6%. Foreign teachers working on education and teaching in universities of our country are young in general. Some teachers do not have experience in education and teaching in their own countries. Besides, many foreign teachers are unfamiliar with national conditions of China and do not know about learning status of students in China, lack teaching experience and teaching methods. Therefore, it restricts teaching jobs of foreign teachers to certain extent.

4) *Adaptive capacity is not strong*: When answering the question in questionnaire that “adapt to life in China and overcome homesickness”, 29 foreign teachers remain neutral, relatively disagree and totally disagree, accounting for 88.9%; when answering the question that “adapt to climate and living environment in China”, 19 foreign teachers remain neutral, relatively disagree and totally disagree, accounting for 59.7%; when answering the question that “adapt to the diet of China”, thirteen foreign teachers relatively agree and totally agree, accounting for 38.8%; when answering the question that “adapt to teaching environment of China”, twelve foreign teachers relatively agree and totally agree, accounting for 36.5%. According to the investigation result, it shows that foreign teachers cannot adapt to aspects in teaching in China, which influence the implementation of teaching of foreign teachers to a certain degree.

#### B. *Deficiencies Existing in Training for Foreign Teachers in Universities*

The investigation shows that the restriction of various factors make teaching work of foreign teachers in universities of our country exist many deficiencies and defects. Therefore, it is important for education administrators in universities to strengthen training for foreign teaching and improve vocational ability of foreign teachers. However, it shows that many deficiencies exist in training for foreign teachers in universities.

1) *Universities pay inadequate attention to training for foreign teachers*: It leads to the fact that the training for foreign teachers becomes formalistic and cannot improve vocational ability of foreign teachers. According to results obtained through interviewing forty foreign teachers, some universities only carry out simple language guidance on foreign teachers; some universities require foreign teachers to write simple written materials and put forward related job requirements; some universities arrange simple training formally; only nineteen foreign teachers receive formal training, and the training time does not exceed three month.

2) *Training for foreign teachers in universities lacks of pertinence*: At present, most training for foreign teachers in universities of our country is general without pertinence. The contents of training are diversified and flexible. The training for teachers does not vary with each individual. Besides, universities do not arrange training according to nationality of foreign teachers and differences of foreign teachers in attention and interests. The efficiency, effect and flexibility of training without pertinence are not satisfactory.

3) *The contents of training for foreign teachers in universities are insufficient*: Foreign teachers need to acquire information of many aspects when teaching in universities, such as Chinese language application, general conditions of universities, course content, course system, local laws and regulations, folk culture and nationality difference. The training shall involve all the above information. However, training contents of some universities only cover some parts. When asked the question that “is the pre-job training

comprehensive”, only four among 29 respondents give positive answer, accounting for 13.7% of the total number. This shows the contents of training for foreign teachers in universities lack of richness.

4) *Training for foreign teachers in universities is not systematic*: As members who work on education and teaching jobs in universities of our country, in order to ensure continuous promotion of teaching level, foreign teachers should have received complete and systematic training, which should be a systematic engineering. However, universities of our country divide the complete and systematic training for foreign teachers. Many universities only pay attention to pre-job training and think little of the training in the process of working, neglect medium and long term development of foreign teachers. Therefore, the systematic training for foreign teachers needs improvement.

5) *Forms of training for foreign teachers in universities are single*: At present, the training for foreign teachers in many universities of our country mainly adopts classroom teaching, namely training teachers teach face to face. Under the general background of globalization of education, foreign teachers may come from different countries and areas all over the world. It is unrealistic to let all foreign teachers come here to participate in the training, so the training effect is not good. Besides, traditional training means will be always influenced by objective environment, lacking flexibility. Therefore, it is very difficult for training to achieve the anticipated effects.

#### IV. SELECTION OF PATH FOR BREAKTHROUGH— STRATEGIES AND SUGGESTIONS TO IMPROVE PROFESSIONAL QUALITY OF FOREIGN TEACHERS IN UNIVERSITIES OF LIAONING PROVINCE

##### A. *Pay Attention to Employment Management of Foreign Teachers and Avoid Blind Introduction*

Employing high-level foreign teachers is the premise to guarantee the quality of foreign language teaching in universities, so firstly, we shall strictly control the “permission” of employment of foreign teachers in universities. Regulations on Chinese-Foreign Cooperation in Running Schools clearly stipulates that, “Foreign teachers and foreign administrative staff shall have bachelor degree or above and corresponding vocational certificate as well as more than two years of experience in education and teaching”. Vocational certificate mainly includes TEFL (Teaching English as a Foreign Language) and TESL (Teach English as a Second Language). People who hold the above certificates have the qualification to serve as English teachers in non-English-speaking countries. [6] Under the background of globalization of education, the source of foreign teachers is diversified. Related requirements for employment shall be strict. The employment conditions shall be perfect. Meanwhile, it is necessary and important to check whether these foreigners have Vocational Certificate. Secondly, pay attention to checking education background, value orientation, thought accomplishment, professional quality, working experience, ideological trend and related employment record of foreign teachers through ways of sending emails, calling up,

interviewing and trial teaching, to evaluate comprehensive quality of foreign teachers and ensure the quality of foreign teachers employed.

#### *B. Intensify Training and Improve Teaching Ability and Professional Level of Foreign Teachers*

- Establish correct training concept. Base on characteristics and demands of different foreign teachers in aspects such as training methods, training contents and training evaluation, adopt flexible and diversified measures on methods and create conditions for improvement of professional quality of foreign teachers, to make training truly promote professional growth and development of foreign teachers.
- Adopt diversified training methods. Form diversification of training methods through combination of gathered training and distributed training, as well as combination of pre-job training and on-the-job training. Through training of teaching skills, education and teaching idea and traditional culture, let foreign teachers know about connotation characteristics and law of development of university education of China, clearly know property and function of educational curriculum and understand individual differences of students in China and foreign countries, grasp learning characteristics of modern college students, improve teaching ability and quality of foreign teachers and gradually set up outlook on talents, conception of teaching and concept of quality suitable for national condition of China.
- Carry out colorful teaching activities. For example, organize Chinese and foreign teachers to discuss, inspect and learn from each other through activities such as forum and teaching observation, let foreign teachers know about national condition of China, grasp educational system of universities and law of education, know about actual demands of students, to reach the best teaching effects and improve teaching level of foreign teachers.

#### *C. Deepen Cultural Communication and Avoid Cultural Conflicts*

Influenced by traditional Confucian culture, Chinese students show respect to teachers and attach great importance to education, think teachers and teaching materials have very high authority and seldom doubt teachers. Traditional teaching mode in China takes classroom teaching as the main teaching form, instead of positive discussion between teachers and students. Different cultural background and language environment, different educational concept and unrealistic cultural expectation are easy to lead to cultural conflicts. Therefore, it is necessary to guide foreign teachers to actively learn Chinese language and traditional culture. Schools shall strengthen communication and exchange with foreign teachers, guide foreign teachers with short teaching span and less teaching experience to learn from Chinese teachers with rich teaching experience, invite foreign teachers to participate in design of teaching links, take part in extra-curricular activities

of students, avoid cultural conflicts and promote harmonious development of campus culture.

#### *D. Pay Attention to Humanistic Care, Create Good Teaching and Living Conditions for Foreign Teachers*

- Respect cultural difference and promote cultural integration under the premise of respecting cultural difference. Under the premise of not violating laws and regulations of our country, adopt different coping styles for foreign teachers from different countries, respect our national culture as well as contain foreign cultures, understand values of different cultures, do not compare and judge foreign culture blindly, and reduce contradictions and problems brought by cultural difference.
- Create good teaching and living conditions for foreign teachers. Foreign teachers come here to work on educational work, far away from their country and family members, face different social environment, living habit, cultural custom and heavy work stress. Teaching and administrative staff in universities of China shall positively and actively help them, let them adapt to Chinese culture as soon as possible and changes in environment, solve actual difficulties in working and life, and let them devote themselves to teaching jobs wholeheartedly.
- Improve comprehensive quality of administrative staff of foreign teachers in universities and realize scientific management. Management of foreign teachers in universities has become an important part of teacher management in universities of our country. The comprehensive quality of administrative staff has an important influence on development of foreign teachers. Except for having basic common knowledge in law and service consciousness, administrative staff shall pay attention to strengthening emotional exchange and communication with foreign teachers, create harmonious humanity atmosphere, let foreign teachers have sense of belonging, take psychological characteristics of foreign teachers into full consideration and fully exert the function of foreign teachers.

#### V. CONCLUSION

The promotion of professional quality structure of foreign teachers in universities is higher requirement of higher education of our country in the new period for foreign teachers as well as inexorable trend of professional growth of foreign teachers. Practically improve overall quality of foreign teachers in our country, further strengthen communication, cooperation between Chinese and foreign teachers, complementation and integration of teaching ideas, further promote the process of professional development of foreign teachers in universities, and then improve the quality of talents training of higher education in our country.

## REFERENCES

- [1] National Education Association .Faculty Development in Higher Education :Enhancing a National Resource[M].A Booklet in the Series to Promote Academic Justice and Excellence .Washinton , DC, 1992: 11-12.
- [2] Gaff, J.C. Toward Faculty Renewal: Advances in Faculty, Institutional, and Organizational Development [M].San Francisco: Josses-Bass, 1975:14.