Research on the Professional Development Attitude of Minority English Teachers[*]

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Abstract—a total of 180 minority English teachers of different ages in middle schools are involved as quantitative research participants in this study. SPSS is applied to analyze the status quo and differences of their professional development attitude among different ages. The results show that they have the strong positive attitude toward their professional development, but teachers of different ages have significant differences in the dimensions of *Professional Teaching Knowledge, Flexible Task Goals Consciousness* as well as *Rigid Task Target Consciousness*.

Index Terms—minority English teachers, teachers' professional development attitude, differences in different age groups

I. INTRODUCTION

The professional development of FLT (foreign language teachers) has received increasing attention in the field of foreign language education in recent years. In the 1990s, the research on FLT education mainly focused on the teacher knowledge, teaching behavior and teacher learning, for instance, what was teacher knowledge, how to teach, and how to learn to teach. In terms of teacher's knowledge, it mainly analyzed the characteristics, construction and practice of teacher's knowledge from theory and practice (such as Richards, 1998; Wallace, 1991; Freeman & Richards, 1993; Johnson, 1996; Freeman & Johnson, 1998; Freeman, 1989); in terms of teaching behavior, it mainly focused on teacher's teaching behavior, decision-making and reflection (such as Lockhart & Richards, 1994; zeichner & liston, 1996; Woods, 1996; Borg, 1998; Ellis, 1997); in terms of teacher's learning, it mainly focused on the nature, approach, content and orientation of foreign language teacher's learning (such as Richards & Nunan, 1990; Freeman & Richards, 1996).

At the beginning of the 21st Century, the research on FLT was appeared "sociocultural turn" by the influence of postmodern trend of thought. Researchers studied FLT from the perspective of post structuralism, sociocultural theory, ecology and other emerging theories. They emphasized that the professional development of FLT couldn't be separated from the social and cultural environment. Therefore, as the participants, teachers needed in consultation with their social and cultural environment, paid more attention to their "inner self" in practice (such as Zembylas, 2003, 2005; Reeves，2009；Velez-Rendon, 2010；Lee，2013；Edwards & Burns，2016；Aneja，2016；Yuan, 2016; Ellis, 2016; Barkhuizen, 2016; Kasun & Saavedra, 2016). The trend of cultural turn in the field of FLT is the demand of the professional development of minority FLT, and has provided a new perspective and theoretical thinking for the study of the minority FLT's professional development as well.

Minority English teachers in middle schools are immersing in various cultural fields, such as the native culture, the mainstream culture as well as the foreign culture and so on, they may be puzzled by the differences in such multicultural situations. In addition, the unique professional emotions, the professional knowledge and the professional skills are taking shape in their educational practice because of the coexistence of different cultures, for instance, the sense of mission and responsibility of ethnic minorities can be constructed in teaching practice, and the multilingual teaching skills can be built due to their master multiple languages. Therefore, the research on minority FLT's professional development can better understand their inner psychological mechanism, improve the basic foreign language education in minority areas, stimulate their cultural consciousness, self-confidence as well as national identity, and improve their professional development.

II. RESEARCH DESIGN

A. The Research Objects and Problems

A total of 180 minority English teachers of different ages who come from Hunan and Guizhou in middle schools are involved as quantitative research participants in this study. The research questions of this study are: (1) What is the status quo of minority English teacher's professional development attitude in middle schools? (2) Are there any differences among different age groups?

B. The Research Tools and Processes

A Comprehensive Questionnaire on the Professional Development Attitude of Middle School English Teachers (Revised) (Xun, 2012) is used in this study as quantitative research tool. The revised version is consisted by 32 items in total, and including three sub questionnaires. According to the empirical test, the *coefficient* of *internal consistency of A Comprehensive Questionnaire on the Professional Development Attitude of Middle School English Teachers (Revised)* is α = 0.865, among which the first sub questionnaire *Instrumental Professional Development Sub Questionnaire' s coefficient* of *internal consistency is* α = 0.786, the second sub questionnaire *Subjective Professional Development Sub Questionnaire*'s *coefficient* of *internal consistency is* α 0.806, and the *coefficient* of *internal consistency of the* third sub questionnaire *Cultural Influence Sub Questionnaire* has not been analyzed by the reviser. In this study, the reliable data is obtained by the distribution, collection as well as statistics of questionnaires, and SPSS is applied to analyze the data to get the status quo of minority English teacher's professional development attitude and the differences of different age groups.

III. GENERAL DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS OF PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT ATTITUDE

A Comprehensive Questionnaire on the Professional Development Attitude of Middle School English Teachers (Revised) is composed by three sub questionnaires and nine dimensions, of which the sub questionnaire *Instrumental Professional Development Sub Questionnaire* containing five dimensions: *The Satisfaction of Professional Teaching Ability, Role Awareness, Professional Teaching Knowledge, Flexible Target Task Characteristics, Rigid Target Task characteristics*. The sub questionnaire *Subjective Professional Development Sub Questionnaire* is composed by three dimensions: *Systematic Thinking and Self-Transcendence, Improving Mental Models, Shared Vision and Team Learning*. The sub questionnaire *Cultural Influence Sub Questionnaire* only consisted by one dimension is *Cultural Influence*.

It can be seen from the table 3-1 that the mean value of sub questionnaire *Instrumental Professional Development* is 4.206, the mean value of sub questionnaire *Subjective Professional Development* is 4.116, and the mean value of sub questionnaire *Cultural Influence* is 3.514. It shows that the overall sample of the study has a high professional development attitude, that is to say, minority English teachers in middle schools hold a positive attitude to their professional development.

TABLE 3-1
THE DESCRIPTION STATISTICS OF PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT ATTITUDE(N=180)

	Min	Max	Mean	Std. Deviation
Instrumental Professional Development	1.00	5.00	4.206	0.692
Subjective Professional Development	1.00	5.00	4.116	0.732
Cultural Influence	1.00	5.00	3.514	0.868
Professional Development Attitude	1.30	5.00	3.945	0.764

What we can see from the Table 3-2 is the average value and standard deviation of each dimension in the professional development attitude of minority English teachers in middle schools. Among the eight dimensions, the lowest average score is 3.514, which indicates that the culture of English-speaking country has a certain impact on minority English teachers' thinking, but it is not very obvious (TableT3-3). The results are consistent with the findings of Xun (2012), but her research objects are English teachers in high school.

In addition, the mean value of other dimensions are higher than 4. Among them, the highest is 4.266, which is the dimension of *Rigid Task Goal Awareness*. The order of the average value of each factor is: *Rigid Task Goal Consciousness* (4.266) > *Professional Role Consciousness* (4.255) > *Professional Teaching Ability Satisfaction* (4.248) > *Improving Mental Model* (4.227) > Flexible *Task Goal Consciousness* (4.190) > *Systematic Thinking and Self-transcendence* (4.091) > *Professional Teaching Knowledge* (4.072) > *Common Vision and Team Learning* (4.029) > *Cultural Influence* (3.514).

TABLE 3-2
DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS OF THE MEAN AND STANDARD DEVIATION OF VARIOUS
DIMENSIONS OF THE PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT ATTITUDE(N=180)

Dimensions	Min	Max	Mean	Std. Deviation
Professional Teaching Ability Satisfaction	1.00	5.00	4.248	0.698
Professional Role Consciousness	1.00	5.00	4.255	0.677
Professional Teaching Knowledge	2.00	5.00	4.072	0.720
Flexible Task Goal Consciousness	2.00	5.00	4.190	0.688
Rigid Task Goal Consciousness	1.00	5.00	4.266	0.680
Systematic Thinking and Self-transcendence	1.00	5.00	4.091	0.750
Improving Mental Model	1.00	5.00	4.227	0.630
Common Vision and Team Learning	1.00	5.00	4.029	0.816
Cultural Influence	1.00	5.00	3.514	0.868

TABLE 3-3
DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS OF THE CULTURAL INFLUENCE SUB-QUESTIONNAIRE(N=180)

	Min	Max	Mean	Std. Deviation
Z30	1.00	5.00	3.183	0.899
Z31	1.00	5.00	3.422	0.832
Z32	1.00	5.00	3.938	0.872
Cultural Influence	1.30	5.00	3.514	0.868

IV. DIFFERENCE STATISTICS BY AGE CLASSIFICATION

In order to further explore the deeply significance which behind the data, the study uses the statistical method of one-way ANOVA to further analyze the differences of English teacher's professional development attitude from the age classification. Small probability proof method is used in this study, that is, taking the significance level as 0.05 significant difference, when significance level is 0.01, which means the difference is very significant (the difference is significant (i.e. when $t \geq t$ (DF) 0.05, $P \leq 0.05$, the difference is significant; when $t \geq t$ (DF) 0.01, $P \leq 0.01$, the difference is very significant); on the contrary, when the significance level is higher than 0.05, which means the difference is not significant (Zhang & Kuang, 2013: 3).

Table 3-4 shows the analysis results of descriptive statistics and one-way ANOVA of minority English teacher's professional development attitude in different age groups. Based on the results in Table 3-4, it can be claimed that among the 9 dimensions, there are significant differences in *Professional Teaching Knowledge* ($P \leq 0.01$), *Flexible Task Goal Consciousness* ($P \leq 0.05$) and *Rigid Task Goal Consciousness* ($P \leq 0.01$), while no significant differences in other dimensions.

The dimension of *Professional Teaching Knowledge* in Table 3-4 is used to measure teacher's knowledge mastery level in foreign language teaching, for instance, understanding foreign language teaching method, comprehending the new *English Curriculum Standard* and their role. In this dimension, the highest mean value is 4.333, which appears in the group who over 50 years old. The next are those who between 41 and 50 years old, and the lowest mean value is 3.984, which in the group who under 30 years old. Compared with teachers at other ages, those who over 50 years old have the highest level as well as ability to master the related knowledge in the process of foreign language teaching, and they can understand the new *English Curriculum Standard* very well.

The dimension of *Flexible Target Task Consciousness* is to measure the ability that teachers adopt flexible strategies and methods in the process of completing the given teaching tasks. In this dimension, the highest mean value is 4.410, which in the group who over 50 years old. Compared with other age groups, those who over 50 years old have the strongest ability to adopt flexible strategies and methods in the process of completing the given teaching tasks.

Rigid Target Task Consciousness refers to the situation that teachers can't adopt flexible strategies and methods when completing the given teaching tasks. In this dimension, the highest mean value is 4.50, which in the group who aged 30 and below. The average value of teachers aged 31-41 and 41-50 are the middle level; and the lowest mean value is 4.012, which in the group who aged 50 and above. Compared with other ages, those who aged 30 and below have the lowest ability to adopt flexible strategies and methods in the process of completing the given teaching tasks. Furthermore, their ability to adopt flexible strategies and methods will increases gradually as the growth of age groups.

Ye & Bai (2001) divided the process of teacher's professional development into five stages: the non-attention stage, the virtual attention stage, the survival attention stage, the task attention stage as well as the self-update attention stage. Generally speaking, the special-grade teacher, senior teachers or teachers with more than 20 years of teaching experience are called expert teachers; those who have just worked for 1-3 years or with less than 5 years of teaching experience are novice teachers; and those who are in the middle stage are skilled teachers.

Based on the analysis of the qualitative interviews in the later period, it is learned that many expert teachers with the teaching age of more than 20 years are mainly in the stage of "self-update attention". Teachers at this stage are relatively free in teaching attitudes, behaviors as well as ideas, they don't follow the teaching plan or teaching materials completely while teaching, and the personal practical knowledge with their own characteristics has been constructed by reflection on the professional experience. They are able to fully consider the environmental variables to change the teaching plans and strategies, which make a strong transformation ability between practical knowledge and theoretical knowledge has been built.

Those who aged 31-50 are proficient teachers, most of them are mainly in the stage of "task attention", which is a stable and sustainable period of teacher's professional structures. Teachers take shape development plans and professional ideals with their own characteristics in this stage. They are familiar with all aspects and teaching strategies of teaching, and can carry out various teaching designs flexibly as well as creatively in teaching process. However, some teachers may suffer from "plateau phenomenon" in this stage, which refers to lack of motivation in their professional development.

Those who under the age of 30 are mainly the novice teachers with teaching age less than 6 years, most of them are in the stage of "survival attention". In teaching practice, they mainly focus on the relationship with students, and the management of student's discipline in classroom. They hope to be recognized by students, colleagues and superiors. However, some of them lack of internal thinking or deep thinking in teaching practice, and a tendency of foreign

language teaching is often used in their teaching.

TABLE 3-4
ANALYSIS OF VARIANCE IN ALL DIMENSIONS OF PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT BY AGE GROUPS

Dimensions	Ages	N	Mean	St. Deviation	Between Groups Mean Square	F	Sig.(2-tailed)
Professional Teaching Ability Satisfaction	30 and below	44	4.2727	0.3343	0.018	0.134	0.940
	31-40	71	4.2310	0.3441			
	41-50	39	4.2410	0.4134			
	Over 50 years old	26	4.2615	0.4070			
Professional Role Consciousness	30 and below	44	4.2879	0.4104	0.307	1.677	0.174
	31-40	71	4.1737	0.4675			
	41-50	39	4.2906	0.3912			
	Over 50 years old	26	4.3718	0.3924			
Professional Teaching Knowledge	30 and below	44	3.9848	0.4250	0.840	4.467	**0.005****
	31-40	71	4.0047	0.4197			
	41-50	39	4.1197	0.4555			
	Over 50 years old	26	4.3333	0.4521			
Flexible Task Goal Consciousness	30 and below	44	4.2500	0.4610	0.696	3.544	**0.016***
	31-40	71	4.1315	0.4345			
	41-50	39	4.0855	0.4758			
	Over 50 years old	26	4.4103	0.3807			
Rigid Task Goal Consciousness	30 and below	44	4.5000	0.3333	1.373	10.105	**0.000****
	31-40	71	4.3192	0.3961			
	41-50	39	4.2308	0.3346			
	Over 50 years old	26	4.0128	0.3941			
Systematic Thinking and Self-transcendence	30 and below	44	4.1136	0.4086	0.085	0.483	0.695
	31-40	71	4.0775	0.4443			
	41-50	39	4.0449	0.3755			
	Over 50 years old	26	4.1635	0.4297			
Improving Mental Model	30 and below	44	4.2773	0.2932	0.049	0.392	0.759
	31-40	71	4.2085	0.4006			
	41-50	39	4.2205	0.3488			
	Over 50 years old	26	4.2077	0.3123			
Common Vision and Team Learning	30 and below	44	3.9924	0.4954	0.032	0.118	0.950
	31-40	71	4.0376	0.5150			
	41-50	39	4.0342	0.5712			
	Over 50 years old	26	4.0641	0.5251			
Cultural Influence	30 and below	44	3.5227	0.5768	0.783	2.265	0.083
	31-40	71	3.5869	0.5208			
	41-50	39	3.5556	0.6980			
	Over 50 years old	26	3.2436	0.6004			

** p<0.01   * p<0.05

In order to further understand the reasons for the differences in professional development attitude of minority English teachers in different age groups, the study analyzes three dimensions of *Professional Teaching Knowledge* ($P \leq 0.01$), *Flexible Task Goal Awareness* ($P \leq 0.05$) and *Rigid Task Goal Awareness* ($P \leq 0.01$) with one-way ANOVA.

At the dimension of *Professional Teaching Knowledge* in Table 3-5, item 5 "In teaching, I prefer to summarize the personal teaching experience" has a very significant difference because of the $P = 0.000$ (< 0.01), which is the main reason why the difference exists. In item 5, we can see that the lowest mean value 3.477 is appeared in the group of teachers who under the age of 30, the middle level 3.676 is showed in the age of 31-40, and the highest is the age of

over 50 with an average of 4.692. Compared with teachers of other ages, the age over 50 years are more inclined to summarize the personal teaching experience, they can integrate knowledge of curriculum, teaching strategies as well as personal experience during the process of teaching, while teachers who under 30 years old are relatively weaker than other groups in the ability of summarizing personal teaching experience.

At the dimension of *Flexible Task Goal Awareness* in Table 3-6, item 18 "I have the ability to choose and use teaching methods correctly", in which P = 0.000 (< 0.01) is the main reason for the difference. In item 18, the highest mean value 4.69 is appeared in teachers who over 50 years old, compared with other age groups, teachers over 50 years old can use and select teaching methods flexibly, and constructs their ability to select and use teaching methods correctly in teaching practice.

At the dimension of *Objective Consciousness of Rigid Task* in Table 3-7, item 12 "my teaching plan is very detailed, and I complete the teaching task according to teaching plan in class completely", in which P = 0.000 (< 0.01) is the main reason for the difference. We can see that the lowest mean value 2.923 is appeared in the group of teachers who over 50 years old, the next is teachers between 41-50 years old, and the highest is 4.431 for teachers under 30 years old. Compared with other age groups, teachers over the age of 50 may not follow the teaching tasks in accordance with the teaching plan, on the contrary, they always choose teaching methods flexibly, and change the teaching plan flexibly accord to environmental variables.

TABLE 3-5
VARIANCE ANALYSIS OF PROFESSIONAL TEACHING KNOWLEDGE BY AGE GROUPS

Items	Ages	N	Mean	St. Deviation	Between Groups Mean Square	F	Sig.(2-tailed)
Z5	30 and below	44	3.4773	0.8209	9.879	20.118	**0.000****
	31-40	71	3.6761	0.7126			
	41-50	39	4.1282	0.6561			
	Over 50 years old	26	4.6923	0.4706			
Z7	30 and below	44	4.3182	0.5612	0.776	1.671	0.175
	31-40	71	4.0282	0.6963			
	41-50	39	4.1026	0.7537			
	Over 50 years old	26	4.1154	0.7114			
Z15	30 and below	44	4.1591	0.5682	0.361	0.800	0.496
	31-40	71	4.3099	0.6231			
	41-50	39	4.1282	0.8328			
	Over 50 years old	26	4.1923	0.6939			

** p<0.01   * p<0.05

TABLE 3-6
VARIANCE ANALYSIS OF FLEXIBLE TASK GOAL AWARENESS BY AGE

Items	Ages	N	Mean	St. Deviation	Between Groups Mean Square	F	Sig.(2-tailed)
Z16	30 and below	44	4.1136	0.7840	0.194	0.334	0.801
	31-40	71	3.9859	0.7268			
	41-50	39	4.0513	0.7236			
	Over 50 years old	26	4.1154	0.8638			
Z17	30 and below	44	4.4773	0.5493	0.682	1.948	0.124
	31-40	71	4.2254	0.6368			
	41-50	39	4.2821	0.5595			
	Over 50 years old	26	4.4231	0.5777			
Z18	30 and below	44	4.1591	0.7453	3.127	6.810	**0.000****
	31-40	71	4.1831	0.6826			
	41-50	39	3.9231	0.6643			
	Over 50 years old	26	4.6923	0.5491			

** p<0.01   * p<0.05

TABLE 3-7
VARIANCE ANALYSIS OF OBJECTIVE CONSCIOUSNESS OF RIGID TASKS BY AGE

Items	Ages	N	Mean	St. Deviation	Between Groups Mean Square	F	Sig.
	30 and below	44	4.6136	0.4925			
	31-40	71	4.5634	0.4995			
Z3	41-50	39	4.7436	0.4423	0.310	1.334	0.265
	Over 50 years old	26	4.6923	0.4706			
	30 and below	44	4.4318	0.5865			
	31-40	71	4.1831	0.7232			
Z12	41-50	39	3.6667	0.8377	14.874	26.732	**0.000****
	Over 50 years old	26	2.9231	0.8909			
	30 and below	44	4.1364	0.5536			
Z29	31-40	71	4.2394	0.6428	0.403	0.893	0.446
	41-50	39	4.1538	0.8441			
	Over 50 years old	26	4.3846	0.6373			

** p<0.01   * p<0.05

V. CONCLUSION

A total of 180 minority English teachers of different ages in middle schools are involved as quantitative research participants in this study. SPSS is applied to analyze the status quo of their professional development attitude and the differences among teachers of different ages. The research findings as follows: minority English teachers in middle school have a strong positive attitude toward their professional development, and different ages have significant differences in the dimensions of *Professional Teaching Knowledge, Flexible Task Goals Consciousness* as well as *Rigid Task Target Consciousness*. The inadequacy of this study lies in the fact that due to the limited space, it is not able to present the detailed data of the quantitative research and in-depth interviews in detail. The follow-up research can focus on the impact of the professional development of ethnic minority foreign language teachers and the solutions to their confusion in teaching practice.

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