Practical Research on the Program for Development of Teachers in Chinese Applied Universities: A Case Study of Xi'an Eurasia University

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Abstract: The development of university teachers is not only a crucial guarantee for the improvement of teaching quality in higher education but also an essential means to facilitate the achievement of school strategic plans. Thus, universities worldwide are actively exploring high-quality designs and implementations of institution-based teacher development programs. This study begins by investigating the key features of teacher development programs in various international universities and focuses on analyzing the design and implementation principles of Xi'an Eurasia University's "student-centered" teacher development program. This analysis encompasses aspects such as goal setting, target categorization, content design, format establishment, and the establishment of mechanisms for quality assurance. Finally, the study reflects on the characteristics that emerge from the program in terms of goals, processes, and outcomes.

Keywords: Applied Universities; Teacher Self-Motivation; Teacher Development; Student-Centeredness; Program Design

1. Introduction

As higher education becomes increasingly accessible in countries around the world, the absolute number and proportion of university teachers are rapidly increasing. In order to enhance the quality of higher education and improve the level of talent cultivation, universities globally have emphasized the need to strengthen the design and implementation of institution-based "teacher development programs" [1]. However, it is essential for teacher development programs to consider the autonomy and individualization of teachers' involvement in such programs, taking into account their own needs and aspirations. These programs should support university teachers in developing and growing their teaching abilities, professional expertise, and professional ethics, rather than being perceived as mere obligations or constraints that impede the quality of design and implementation [2].

Over the past three decades, universities worldwide have been engaged in organized research and practices related to teacher development programs. Through an investigation of teacher development program designs from more than 30 international universities, prominent characteristics have emerged regarding the target audience, program content, format, and feedback and evaluation mechanisms of these development initiatives.

1.1 Classification of Teacher Development Programs

1.1.1 Providing teacher development programs based on teachers' roles

Indiana State University offers teacher development programs that cater to various aspects of professional growth. These programs encompass teaching development for educators, professional development for staff members, organizational culture adaptation for faculty members, academic growth initiatives for scholarly individuals, and personal development programs for individual participants. The university's rationale for categorizing teacher development programs based on professional roles is rooted in its balanced human resource structure and the diverse range of teaching roles available within the institution.

1.1.2 Designing development programs based on different stages of teachers' professional career progression

Michigan State University, Beijing Institute of Technology, and other institutions offer teacher development programs that cater to different stages of teachers' professional careers, including pre-career, early career, mid-career, and late career development programs. The reason for adopting this classification system is rooted in several factors. Firstly, there is a significant proportion of newly hired teachers within the overall teaching staff, making it essential to provide targeted support for their career development. Moreover, the demand for career advancement among teachers is high, as evidenced by the emphasis on promotions and academic titles. Finally, there is a strong focus on ensuring standardized educational practices and instructional quality [3].

1.1.3 Establishing development programs based on a "career + project-based" approach
Universities such as the University of Cambridge, the University of Oxford, the University of Michigan, Central China Normal University, and Shanghai Jiaotong University offer development programs tailored to different stages of teachers' careers and specific roles within the profession [4]. The reasons for this classification can be summarized as follows: Firstly, these institutions have a well-structured human resource framework, with a significant proportion of newly hired teachers. Secondly, there is a diverse range of needs among teachers, and there is a concerted effort to focus on the development of all faculty members. Lastly, these universities possess abundant resources and a high level of maturity in their teacher development programs [5].

In summary, teacher development programs in various international universities exhibit diverse classification channels. Some programs are designed based on different stages of career development or the varying directions of professional roles. Furthermore, other programs integrate career development and professional roles to provide corresponding teacher development courses.

1.2 Content of Teacher Development Programs
Regardless of the classification method, teacher development programs generally cover similar content, which can be summarized into four aspects: instructional development, personal development, professional development, and organizational development [6].

Firstly, instructional development focuses on enhancing teaching capabilities and includes specific areas such as curriculum design, application of information technology, innovative teaching methods, and the selection of teaching techniques. Secondly, personal development aims at improving teachers' work efficiency and includes aspects such as career planning, time management, and communication skills. Thirdly, professional development aims to enhance academic influence and leadership. It encompasses areas such as improving leadership and management capabilities, as well as enhancing teaching and research abilities. Lastly, organizational development focuses on enhancing understanding of the organizational environment. It includes activities such as team building, introducing the school environment, and analyzing school policies and strategic positioning.

1.3 Forms of Teacher Development Programs
The organizational forms of teacher development programs in international universities are generally consistent. They mainly include workshops, seminars, teaching observations, guest lectures by renowned educators, academic conferences, teaching luncheons, expert-led demonstrations, and are typically conducted through a combination of online and offline formats. Additionally, these programs are designed to meet teachers' individual needs through a combination of self-study, elective, and compulsory formats [7].

1.4 Form of Feedback on Teacher Development Program Effectiveness
International universities emphasize feedback and evaluation of the effectiveness of teacher development programs through four main methods. Firstly, feedback questionnaires are used, where participating teachers are asked to complete surveys to provide feedback to the program providers. This helps assess the program's implementation and allows for improvements in future teacher development initiatives. Secondly, teachers are required to

earn credits by completing specified program components within a set time frame in order to qualify for professional advancement, ensuring a high level of participation. Thirdly, the establishment of teacher teaching portfolios allows for comprehensive documentation of teachers' development trajectories, supporting their capacity building and self-improvement. Lastly, teachers are required to participate in skills assessments before completing the teacher development program, ensuring the effectiveness of their participation [8].

From an overall perspective, there is a global consensus among various types and levels of international universities to support teachers' professional development. These institutions have explored and implemented diverse teacher development programs tailored to their specific contexts. Therefore, it is of great theoretical and practical significance to summarize the experiences of teacher development programs across countries and institutions, as well as to analyze the comprehensive framework of a university's teacher development program. This analysis will contribute to the scientific and rational construction of teacher development programs.

2. A Practical Case Study of Teacher Development Program at Xi'an Eurasia University

As an applied private undergraduate institution, Xi'an Eurasia University has always adhered to the teaching philosophy of "putting student development at the core, centering instruction on student learning, and emphasizing learning outcomes" in its educational practices. Since 2011, the university has established a partnership with Duquesne University in the United States and founded the Center for Teaching Excellence (CTE). The CTE, led by Professor Bo Long and his team, who was the Dean of the School of Education at that time, has been implementing teacher development programs focused on a "student-centered" teaching paradigm in applied undergraduate institutions for multiple years. Subsequently, Xi'an Eurasia University collaborated with renowned experts in teacher development such as Professor Zhao Juming from both domestic and international contexts to

establish a Teacher Development Center, continuously iterating teacher development program designs.

2.1 Demand survey and Target Setting for Teacher Development Programs

Xi'an Eurasia University conducted a demand survey for teacher development programs, focusing on the needs and preferred learning styles of over 1,000 teachers across the campus. The results are illustrated in Figure 1 and Figure 2.
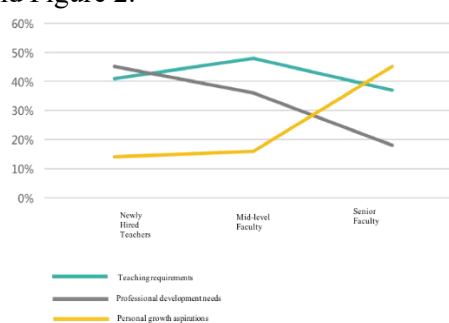

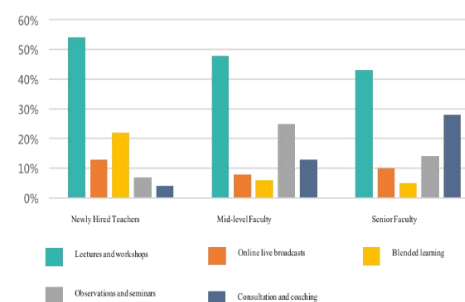**Figure 1. Survey Results of Teacher Development**

Figure 2. The Results of the Survey on the Form Tendency of Content Needs Teacher Development Programs

According to the research results conducted in Figure 1 regarding the four categories of teachers' development needs, it shows that as teachers gain more teaching experience and advanced professional titles, their demand for instructional and professional development decreases while their need for personal development in teacher development programs gradually increases. Regarding the research results presented in Figure 2 on teachers' preferred forms of professional development programs, it indicates that teachers tend to prefer interactive and experiential formats such as lectures and workshops. As teachers gain more teaching experience and advanced professional titles, there is an increasing emphasis on gaining experience through observing exemplary

teachers' classrooms. Senior-level teachers with advanced professional titles show a stronger inclination toward seeking consultations and guidance for teaching-related issues.

Hence, Xi'an Eurasia University, at the institutional level, aims to establish a teacher development program that aligns with the specific developmental needs and project requirements of Eurasia's teachers. This is achieved through the "implementation of a hierarchical and categorized teacher training curriculum, designed to foster a 'student-centered' teaching philosophy, enhance teaching abilities, engage in academic research, and ultimately enhance the learning outcomes of students. By creating and implementing such a student-centered teaching culture, the university strives to comprehensively cultivate and implement a student-centered instructional culture,

positively impacting the overall learning experience and results".

2.2 Target Classification of Teacher Development Programs

2.2.1 Hierarchical training based on teachers' career development stages

To implement the comprehensive teacher development program and provide targeted professional development content for teachers at different levels, the teaching career development stages of all teachers in the school have been categorized into four levels: Preparation Period, Exploration Period, Competency Period, and Maturity Period, as identified by Fu [9]. Each level of teachers' instructional competencies has been taken into consideration to define the specific focus areas for the training of each teacher group, as outlined by Guo and Wu [10]. The detailed illustration of these focus areas for each teacher group is presented in Figure 3.
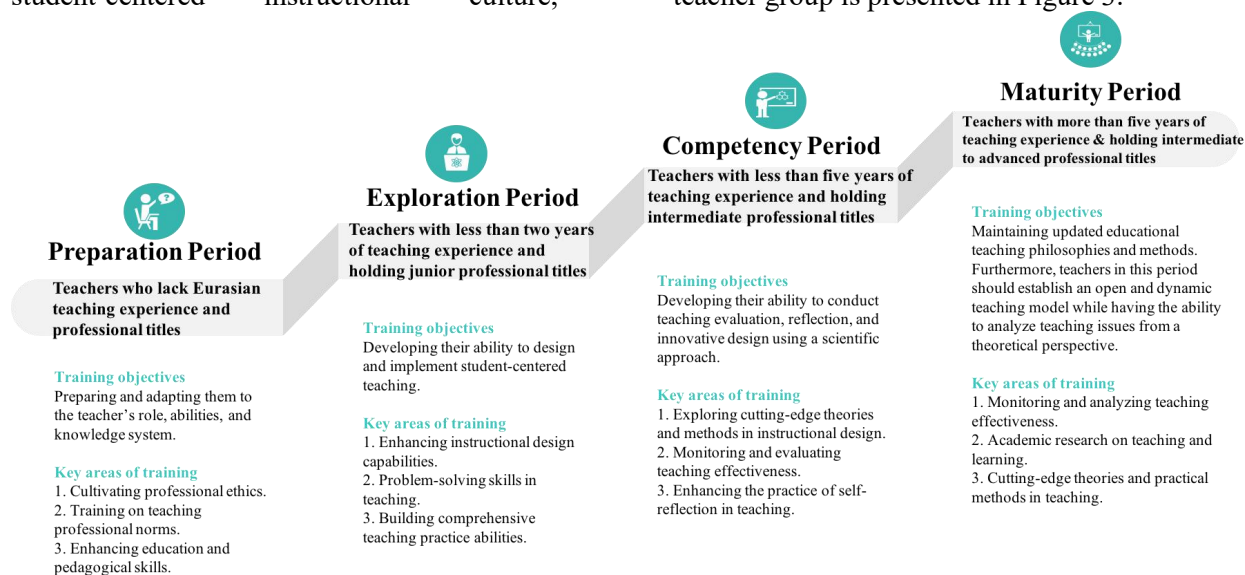

Maturity Period
Teachers with more than five years of teaching experience & holding intermediate to advanced professional titles

Training objectives
Maintaining updated educational teaching philosophies and methods. Furthermore, teachers in this period should establish an open and dynamic teaching model while having the ability to analyze teaching issues from a theoretical perspective.

Key areas of training
1. Monitoring and analyzing teaching effectiveness.
2. Academic research on teaching and learning.
3. Cutting-edge theories and practical methods in teaching.

Competency Period
Teachers with less than five years of teaching experience and holding intermediate professional titles

Training objectives
Developing their ability to conduct teaching evaluation, reflection, and innovative design using a scientific approach.

Key areas of training
1. Exploring cutting-edge theories and methods in instructional design.
2. Monitoring and evaluating teaching effectiveness.
3. Enhancing the practice of self-reflection in teaching.

Exploration Period
Teachers with less than two years of teaching experience and holding junior professional titles

Training objectives
Developing their ability to design and implement student-centered teaching.

Key areas of training
1. Enhancing instructional design capabilities.
2. Problem-solving skills in teaching.
3. Building comprehensive teaching practice abilities.

Preparation Period
Teachers who lack Eurasian teaching experience and professional titles

Training objectives
Preparing and adapting them to the teacher's role, abilities, and knowledge system.

Key areas of training
1. Cultivating professional ethics.
2. Training on teaching professional norms.
3. Enhancing education and pedagogical skills.

Figure 3. Hierarchical Training Model for Faculty Development at Xi'an Eurasia University

2.2.2 Categorized training according to job requirements

In addition to designing the hierarchical training dimensions based on teachers' career development stages, we have also established categorized training programs that teachers can choose to participate in, aiming to meet the needs of teachers' teaching competence development in the process of carrying out key educational and teaching tasks at the university. By developing a diverse range of teaching competence development programs, teachers are given the opportunity to select programs aligned with their own teaching development needs and career aspirations.

2.3 The Main Elements of the Teacher Development Programs

The theoretical research on instructional development of university teachers [11] generally acknowledges that the enhancement and development of teaching competence necessitate a fundamental approach encompassing "theory + practice + reflection". This comprehensive framework aims to improve teachers' understanding and operational proficiency in both teaching theories and practices. Therefore, in the latest version of the teacher development program, the basic structure is built upon "theoretical

training" + "practical assessment" + "reflection documentation".

Within this framework, the main components of theoretical training include educational values, teaching competence, and teaching scholarship, each with corresponding course modules. More specifically, educational values refer to university teachers' understanding, attitudes, and evaluation of teaching values, which are subjective reflections of the value inherent in teaching. This component includes two course modules: "Foundations of Education Theory and Learning Science" and "Eurasian General Literacy". Teaching competence pertains to the ability of teachers to design, implement, and evaluate instruction. It encompasses five course modules: "Study of Talent Development Programs and Instructional Design", "Teaching Models & Methods", "Teaching Assessment", "Educational Technology", and "Teaching Observations" [12]. Teaching scholarship refers to the capacity of teachers to engage in scholarly research related to instruction. It consists of

two course modules: "Teaching Scholarship Research" and "Guidance for Teaching Scholarship Research".

The practical assessment component is designed to evaluate the realization of teacher development objectives at different stages of their teaching careers, with tailored assessment contents. This comprehensive assessment aims to assess the achievement of goals at various levels of teacher development. On the other hand, the reflection documentation requires teachers to read instructional books and record reflections on their teaching practices within the specified timeframe based on their career level. Additionally, the teachers' trajectory of educational and instructional learning, as well as the results of practical assessments, are continuously updated in their teaching competence development portfolio. Through these self-guided components, teachers are guided to engage in continuous reflection and improvement of their teaching abilities. Please refer to Figure 4 in the specific plan for further details [13].
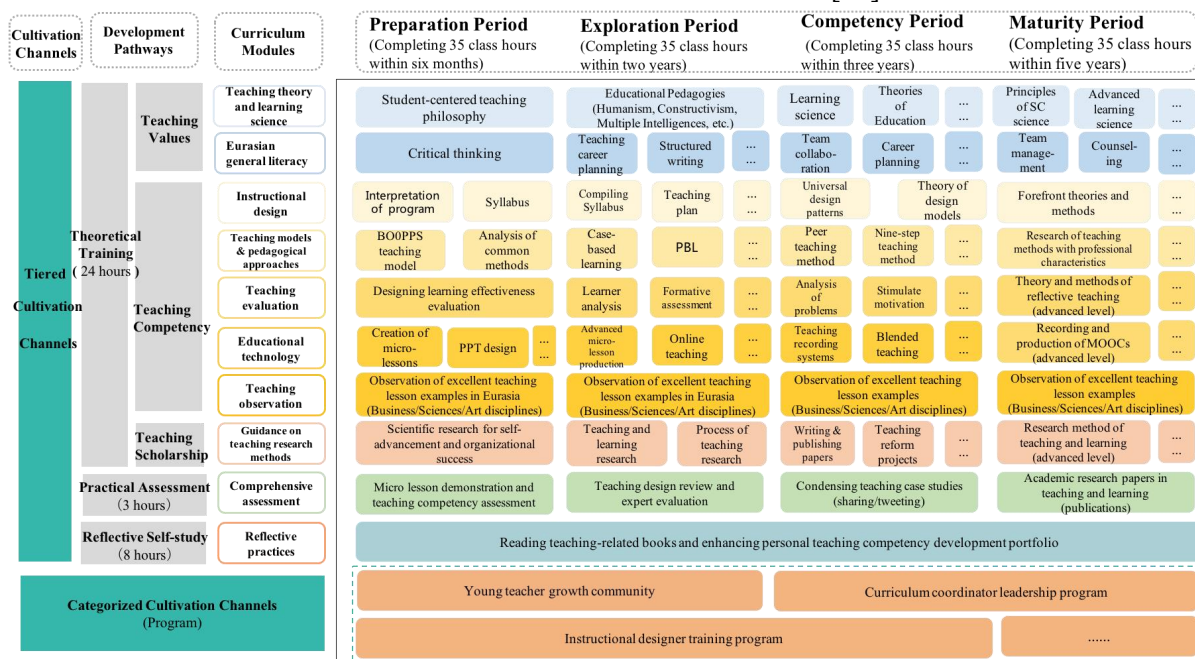

Figure 4. Roadmap of Teacher Development Program of Xi'an Eurasia University

2.4 The Main Form of Teacher Development Programs

2.4.1 Offering compulsory and elective courses based on the key areas of teacher training at different levels

In the case of pre-service training, the curriculum consists of both compulsory and

elective courses. The compulsory courses focus on imparting knowledge and essential skills related to the school's teaching philosophy, talent development programs, and teaching methodologies. These courses are designed to ensure that teachers possess the necessary understanding and competence in

these areas. On the other hand, there are two elective courses available for the academic research and application-oriented research modules, which cover topics such as teaching research methods. Teachers have the option to choose one of these courses for further study and enhancement. For the other levels of teacher development, courses are offered in the form of electives. However, the number of elective courses varies depending on the specific focus areas of each level of training.

2.4.2 Employing flexible and diverse approaches of teacher development programs tailored to teachers' schedules

Courses focused on theoretical knowledge and academic perspectives are delivered through online resources, such as live or recorded sessions, allowing teachers to flexibly manage their learning time. As for courses that combine theoretical learning with practical application, the total duration of offline teacher development programs is compressed. The theoretical components are provided through online self-study, while the practical application is facilitated through collective discussions and sharing in an offline setting. This approach not only alleviates the time pressure on teachers participating in teacher development programs but also encourages them to prepare for small-group discussions by self-studying in advance. By adopting this approach, the effectiveness of teacher development programs and the learning experience for teachers can be enhanced [14].

2.5 Quality Assurance Mechanisms for Teacher Development Programs

The teacher development programs at Xi'an Eurasia University also emphasize that achieving effective results in any university's teacher development initiatives relies not solely on the quality of the programs themselves, but also on the collective efforts of personnel, systems, finances, technology, and the institutional culture within the university. These elements work together to ensure the quality operation of the programs.

2.5.1 Personnel and workflow support

First and foremost, in terms of personnel support, it is necessary to establish a team dedicated to teacher development programs, form a working group for teacher development initiatives, and establish an expert review panel. These entities should participate in and review the process and outcomes of designing, implementing, and assessing the courses within the teacher development programs. Additionally, regular invitations should be extended to third-party quality assurance teams to conduct audits on the design, implementation, and effectiveness of the teacher development program.

As for workflow support measures, it is crucial to monitor and make joint decisions regarding the data related to the design of teacher development program proposals and content, the implementation process, and the assessment and analysis of program effectiveness. Collaboration with international organizations focused on the development of teaching capabilities in higher education institutions is also important. Regular third-party quality assurance of the Eurasia teacher development program should be conducted in partnership with these institutions.

2.5.2 Institutional assurance

To ensure the institutional guarantee, the establishment of a "school-level accreditation mechanism" is essential. This mechanism aims to make participation in and the successful completion of teacher development programs a fundamental requirement for assuming relevant positions, thus ensuring the standardized implementation of these programs. Additionally, for teachers engaged in self-study teacher development projects, corresponding incentives and financial resources should be provided to foster greater engagement and participation.

2.5.3 Cultural assurance

The ability of universities to foster a culture of respect, care, inclusiveness, trust, empowerment, and commitment within teacher development activities is a crucial factor that significantly influences the effectiveness of such programs. Creating a learning community culture that embodies these values is essential in harnessing and inspiring teachers' intrinsic motivation for professional growth.

Therefore, the teacher development program at Xi'an Eurasia University adheres to the principles of "minimal management and assessment, avoidance of directive tasks, emphasis on guidance and motivation, and promotion of collaboration and support". With personnel and instructional systems as

the driving force and teaching professional development goals and prospects as the motivators, the program aims to continuously stimulate teachers' intrinsic motivation and foster the formation of a diverse and collaborative learning community culture.

3. Summary and Reflection on the Characteristics of the Teacher Development Program at Xi'an Eurasia University

3.1 Diversification of Development Channels

The teacher development program at Xi'an Eurasia University is designed to cater to the different stages of teachers' professional career development. Building upon a hierarchical approach, the program establishes multiple development channels that align with the developmental characteristics of the school and college in terms of educational and instructional work. It also addresses the specific training needs of different groups of teachers based on their teaching abilities. By transitioning from the traditional "two-dimensional" hierarchical training model to a "three-dimensional" model that incorporates both hierarchy and categorization, the program further diversifies and refines the pathways for teacher development, making them more inclusive and targeted.

3.2 Personalization of Development Programs

The teacher development program at Xi'an Eurasia University incorporates personalization into its program content. Firstly, within each curriculum module, there are required courses, elective courses, and self-study courses, allowing teachers to select suitable content based on their teaching abilities and development needs. Moreover, considering the entire hierarchical and categorized curriculum system, as teachers gain more teaching experience and higher academic titles, the program offers an increasing range of personalized choices and options in terms of content and proportion.

Furthermore, regarding the format of the teacher development program, various forms are employed by leveraging digital resources platforms and technologies. These include offline teacher development programs, online teacher development programs, as well as blended formats that combine both online and offline elements. The blended learning approach of "online self-study + offline seminars" serves multiple purposes. On the one hand, it reduces the time commitment and scheduling pressure for teachers participating in the offline development programs. On the other hand, the shorter and more efficient "small-group" offline practices and discussions promote the active engagement and commitment of participating teachers, thereby enhancing the effectiveness of the teacher development program.

3.3 Visual Representation of Development Effectiveness

The assessment and presentation of the "Teacher Development Program's effectiveness" is a common challenge faced by all universities and has often been referred to as the "black box" of teacher training efforts. To address this issue, Xi'an Eurasia University's Teacher Development Program utilizes visual representation of development outcomes. Specifically, within each level and module of the training system, dedicated practice assessment modules are designed to evaluate and ensure the achievement of teacher development objectives [15].

3.4 Nurturing Teacher Autonomy for Continuous Growth in Educational Instructional Abilities

Teacher development and enhancement should not be viewed as a one-time task or job but rather as a dynamic process that requires continuous drive and attention from all teachers and educational organizations at various levels. In light of this, the Teacher Development Program at Xi'an Eurasia University not only focuses on short-term assessment of teachers' development outcomes but also establishes a self-study module. This module guides teachers to engage in educational book reading, reflection, and the creation of personal portfolios documenting their professional growth in teaching abilities. By continuously guiding teachers' attention towards teaching reflection and tracking their own development trajectory and effectiveness, the program aims to motivate teachers to sustain their long-term

commitment and drive for professional competence development.

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