

# An Investigation into the Professional Development of Foreign Language Teachers from Science and Engineering and Colleges in the Background of “New Liberal Arts”

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**Abstract :** After an investigation into the influence factors of the professional development of and college foreign language teachers from three dimensions of ecosystem: macrosystem, mesosystem and microsystem by both quantitative and qualitative methods, the results show that social factors, working conditions and individual-level factors have a significant impact on the professional development of college foreign language teacher. On social level, deepening reform of education system, promoting social statue of foreign language teachers, creating a social atmosphere of respecting teachers and valuing education; On working condition level, promoting innovation of institutional system, guaranteeing resources, creating a positive working atmosphere; On individual level, customize personal career development planning, enhancing identity of profession, updating professional knowledge and occupational quality, can effectively motivate the sense of identity of colleges foreign language teachers. These are inspiring for foreign language teacher to devote themselves in professional developing, thereby improve work efficiency.

**Keywords:** New Liberal Arts; Foreign Language Teachers; Professional Development

## 1. Introduction

Report to the 20th national congress of the communist party of China proposed that education is the foundation of the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation, and the training of high quality teachers is the key link. As an important part of college teachers, college foreign language teachers play an extremely important role in the teaching work

of cultivating first-class talents. Despite there are a large number of foreign language teachers in China, their professional development is not satisfactory due to some internal and external factors, which has caused a series of issues. How can college foreign language teachers find a way out of this difficult position of professional development? It is particularly urgent to seek new solutions. An American psychologist Urie Bronferbrenner proposed the ecosystem theory in his book *Society Ecosystems Theory* in 1979. This theory emphasizes that “ecosystem” is crucial to the sound development of individuals. Individual development is influenced by the interaction of individual characteristics and system factors, and the later one ultimately affect individual development. This theory provides a new perspective and theoretical framework for the study of influencing factors of professional development of college foreign language teachers.

## 2. Current Research Status at Home and Abroad

Foreign research on the influencing factors of teacher professional development started in the 1960s. The initial approach was to consider the factors affecting professional development at different stages of teacher development, and representative research results include six mainstream theories: Teacher Concern Stage Theory, Teacher Development Period Theory, Teacher Development Stage Theory. Foreign representative figures on the influencing factors of teacher professional development are Fessler and A. Glatthorn. Fessler puts teachers in the context of social development, explores the factors faced by teacher development, and lacks the internal analysis of the special group of teachers. Gathorn focuses on the personal factors, life and work situation

factors of teacher development, and lacks the analysis of the macro background of society. Although the two scholars have their own priorities, they have not analyzed and interpreted within a theoretical framework.

After information retrieval on the factors influencing the professional development of college foreign language teachers from January 2010 to December 2024, conducted through CNKI of China, retrieval keywords were set as foreign language teacher development, foreign language teacher professional development, foreign language teacher research and foreign language teacher education, 75 CSSCI source journal articles were selected and the literature abstract and content were interpreted, it is found that many factors have affected the professional development of foreign language teachers, such as the lack of teaching knowledge, professional learning, occupational-burnout and development environment. However, the existing research mainly focuses on the development of teaching, scientific research and other aspects, and lacks the comprehensive analysis of the influencing factors of different dimensions under the guidance of theory. Based on the theory of biological ecosystem, this study attributed the factors influencing the professional development of college foreign language teachers from macro to micro to social environment, workplace and individual level, furthermore, filtered and analyzed the influencing factors based on the above three dimensions. In order to ensure the objectivity, fairness and effective indicators of the influencing factors, the screening scope and methods include: 1. Using relevant research results at home and abroad for reference; 2. Conduct questionnaire survey on experts in the field and conduct in-depth interviews with college foreign language teachers. 3. According to the relevant literature and survey data, the index system is modified and improved, and tries to explain the interaction of these three categories of factors in the professional development of university foreign language teachers in detail.

### 3. Research Design

On the basis of related research, this study adopts a three-step process to construct a model of influencing factors on university

foreign language teachers' professional development. The incremental steps include the design of an indicator system for influencing factors, the implementation of a questionnaire survey, and the establishment of theoretical model.

#### 3.1 Research Question

Based on the theory of biological ecosystem and teacher professional development theory, this study summarizes and analyzes the theoretical categories and influencing factors of college foreign language teacher professional development.

Scientific construction of the index system of influencing the professional development of foreign language teachers influence factor measurement index system, thus is the premise of comprehensive evaluation of the professional development of college foreign language teachers. This study will use a combined theoretical and empirical approach to construct the index system of the influencing factors of college foreign language teachers.

Demonstrate a model of professional development of college foreign language teachers. At present, there are many theoretical speculation studies and few empirical studies in the research on the professional development of college foreign language teachers. In the existing empirical studies, there is especially a lack of accurate research on the factors influencing the professional development of college foreign language teachers and the role of various influencing factors in promoting the professional development of college foreign language teachers. This study will use the questionnaire of relevant experts for reference, compile the questionnaire scale of the professional development of university foreign language teachers, and demonstrate the factors influencing the professional development of college foreign language teachers.

#### 3.2 Research Sample

This study sample (See Table 1) covers college foreign teachers with different occupational traits in three university and college from different area from Lanzhou, which can comprehensively, objectively and truly reflect the relevant status quo of the professional development of college foreign language

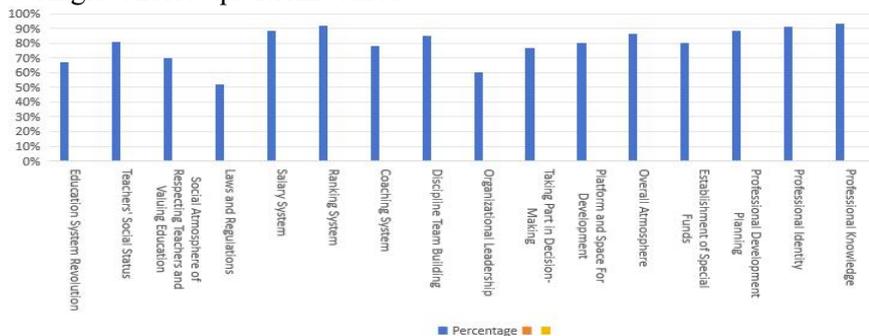
teachers, and reveal the influencing factors and existing problems in the professional development of college foreign language teachers. The respondents involved 207 college English teachers from the above-mentioned universities. A total of 207 questionnaires were distributed, and 193 valid questionnaires were collected, with a recovery rate of 93.24% and an effective rate of 100%. The in-depth interviews were five backbone teachers from three schools at different stages of the teacher career cycle. They conducted in-depth exploration on the relationship between the influencing factors in different dimensions of teacher professional development, which provided valuable research materials for this study.

Subject	Genre	Percentage
Gender	Male	41%
	Female	59%
Age	Under 30	23%
	31-40	47%
	41-50	18%
	Above 51	12%
	Doctor	14%
Diploma	Postgraduate	52%
	Bachelor	34%
Professional Title	Professor/ Associate Professor	27%
	Lecturer	73%

**Figure 1. Information about the Respondents**

**3.3 Research Methods and Content**

According to the scheduled research plan, the research group adopted the questionnaire survey method and the in-depth interview method in the research process. The questionnaire used in this study is a Likert scale. In order to ensure the reliability of the questionnaire, under the guidance of related theory, group members proceed from the actual situation of college foreign language teachers professional development, used foreign language teachers professional development of related literature for reference, determined 30 single choice questions based



**Figure 3. Factors Affecting Teacher Professional Development**

on the theory of biological ecosystem, including 7 social environmental questions, 13 work environment questions, 10 individual level questions. Volume B contains 5 interview questions. The questionnaire solicited the opinions of experts in the field for several times, modified the questionnaire design for several times, and finally determined the survey dimensions and interview questions.

**4. Data Analysis**

The project leader used SPSS software to analyze the 30 variables included in the questionnaire. The Cronbach's  $\alpha$  value of the overall variables was 0.802, and the Cronbach's  $\alpha$  value based on the standard items was 0.814. The Cronbach's  $\alpha$  value of the three dimensions was above 0.7, and the overall credibility of the questionnaire was high.

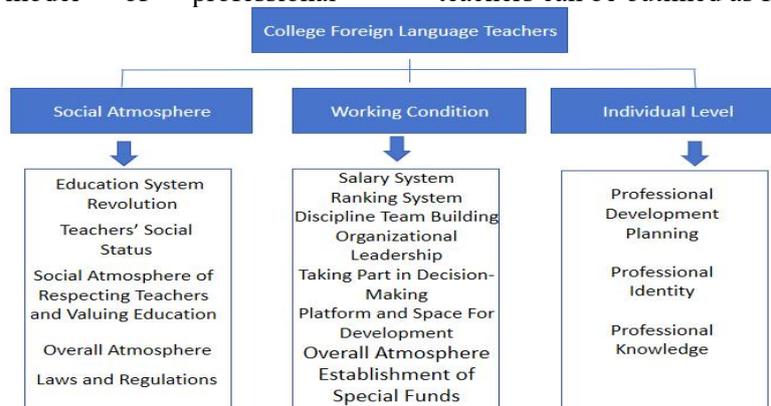
Questionnaire	Social Environment Factor	Working Condition Factor	Individual Level Factor
Cronbach's $\alpha$ value	0.798	0.821	0.784

**Figure 2. Cronbach's  $\alpha$  Values of the Questionnaire Influencing Factors of Professional Development of College Foreign Language Teachers**

After factor analysis of 30 variables included in the questionnaire, The KMO test coefficient was  $0.836 > 0.5$ , the chi-square statistic value of Bartlett's Test of Sphericity was 0.03,  $sig < 0.05$ , and high questionnaire validity (See Table 2).

Based on the questionnaire results show that social factors, working conditions and individual level factors have a significant influence on the professional development of foreign language teachers. As shown in the figure, the professional development of college foreign language teachers is a multi-dimensional concept, and the weights of the 16 most important influencing factors included in the three dimensions are as follows:

According to the above questionnaire data analysis, the model of professional development of college foreign language teachers can be outlined as follows:



**Figure 4. Model of Professional Development of College Foreign Language Teachers**

## 5. Countermeasure and Strategies

### 5.1 Analysis of the Influencing Factors at the Social Environment Level

Five main social factors affecting the professional development of university foreign language teachers are analyzed, conclusions are drawn as follows: Deepening the reform of the education system, promoting the social status of foreign language teachers, creating a social atmosphere of respecting teachers and valuing education, and improving laws and regulations can effectively stimulate the identity of foreign language teachers in colleges and universities, and then promote foreign language teachers to participate in professional development and improve their work efficiency.

#### 5.1.1 Promote the "resonance" between universities and the government

In the relationship between the government and the university, the government is in a guiding position and is the main force to promote the reform of the higher education system. With the continuous improvement of the governance system and governance capacity of colleges and universities, the reform of higher education system has gradually entered a more different phase. To continue to deepen the reform of higher education system, a set of complete, feasible and efficient system of higher education laws and regulations is needed. In recent years, in coherent with the spirit of General Secretary Xi Jinping's series of speeches on education in the new era, the education department has issued a series of rules and regulations, comprehensively deepened the reform of

higher education, and clearly put forward the goal of "new liberal arts, promote public understanding of foreign language, and training international complex talents". It provides a clear goal, path, way and guarantee for the professional development of college foreign language teachers. On the premise that the government respects and grants the autonomy of college and university education, according to the orientation and the goal of teacher development centers, strengthen the training of college foreign language teachers, optimize the structure of foreign language teachers in college and university, comprehensively improve the college foreign language teachers' educational quality, subject quality, teaching quality, scientific research literacy and information literacy, to implement the educational task of training people by virtue and strive to become a qualified teacher with firm ideals and beliefs, moral sentiment, and solid knowledge and benevolence.

#### 5.1.2 Create a social culture of respecting teachers and valuing education

Social environment is a complex and huge system, and different systems and groups achieve dynamic balance through interaction and mutual influence. In a narrow sense, the social environment refers to the specific environment in which organizations and individuals survive and develop. As a member of the society, the working attitude, working belief and working methods of college English teachers are inevitably affected by the overall social environment. Respecting teachers and valuing education is the traditional virtue of the Chinese nation. As early as in the Warring States Period, the concept of respecting teachers and valuing education was proposed

in the Book of Rites. In modern times, despite its own domestic trouble and foreign invasion, China carried forward this tradition, and produced numerous internationally renowned educators and cultivated a number of well-known experts and scholars at home and abroad. General Secretary Xi Jinping clearly regards teachers as “the foundation and the source of education”. Education departments continuously improve teachers' salary and social status, advance the teacher treatment from the end tiers of all industry to the first several, greatly improve the teachers' sense of acquisition, happiness, a sense of accomplishment and sense of honor. These real changes for the development of teachers provides the atmosphere and environment, and gradually accumulate perfect social recognition values and behavior patterns, contribute to the formation of social culture that respecting teachers and valuing education .

## 5.2 Analysis of the Influencing Factors at the Working Environment Level

As a subsystem of the social system, colleges and universities has a unique working environment and academic atmosphere, which provides a platform and space for the professional development of foreign language teachers. Social environment is the external environment that influence the professional development of college foreign language teachers, and the working environment is the internal environment or direct environment that affects the professional development of teachers. It mainly involves the construction of institutional system, organization and management system construction, resource platform construction and the construction of positive working atmosphere.

### 5.2.1 promote institutional innovation in colleges and universities

Innovating the system and mechanism is the key point of the university reform. With the spreading stage of higher education started in China, the university teachers have entered the stage of rapid growth, and the interest demands of the teachers are complex and diversified. As a code of conduct and norms jointly observed by teachers and staff, the system is guiding and motivating the professional development of teachers. Modern university system should follow the principle

of higher education development. At present our universities gradually reform from the traditional system to modern university system. Colleges and universities should break down the traditional and rigid system and promote institutional innovation. Promoting institutional innovation can stimulate the vitality of colleges and universities and fully explore the potential of the professional development of foreign language teachers. The system of promoting the professional development of foreign language teachers mainly includes salary system, promotion system, training system, etc.

The establishment of a performance-based salary system is conducive to the development of foreign languages in universities. According to Froome's Expectancy Theory, individuals expect that a certain behavior leads to a particular result, which means individuals tend to adopt certain behaviors if a particular result is attractive to them. Therefore, the establishment of a set of performance-based reward mechanism can effectively stimulate the enthusiasm of college foreign language teachers for professional development.

The promotion of professional title is directly related to the personal development and salary of college foreign language teachers, and it is one of the most concerned issues for them. Whether the promotion system of professional title in colleges and universities is reasonable or not is directly related to the enthusiasm, initiative and creativity of college foreign language teachers, and it plays a directive role in the professional development of university foreign language teachers.

Colleges and universities should establish and improve the training system for college foreign language teachers according to the orientation of education and talent training objectives, and actively guide teachers to participate in pre-service and on-the-job training. Through pre-training research training needs -- develop training plan in training -- Post-training evaluation training effect -- feedback assessment needs this closed-loop training mode, continue to optimize the faculty of college foreign language teachers, improve their teaching and research ability, promote them to adapt to the new situation of higher education, promote the professional development of college foreign language teachers and achieve a virtuous circle of

teaching and research.

System and atmosphere are complementary, coexistence and interaction. A sound, standardized and scientific system plays an external role in encouraging and promoting the professional development of university foreign language teachers. Atmosphere is the embodiment of culture, it is the external expression of emotional sustenance and value pursuit of college foreign language teachers, and it is guided through common value goals, playing the role of “cultivating people by culture” and “educating people by culture”. The system is the carrier of culture, culture is the supplement to the system, the two complement each other.

#### 5.2.2 Provide a guarantee of resources and conditions

It is the responsibility of the government and schools to promote teacher professional development. Since 2010, the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Finance have launched a national training program to provide professional development training for primary and secondary school teachers and leading teachers in the central and western provinces. In the past 10 years since the implementation of the National Training Plan, more than 85% of primary and secondary school teachers participating in the training said that they have updated their teaching theories, understood the curriculum standards and teaching materials, expanded their subject knowledge, and greatly improved their professional quality. School-based training for primary and secondary school teachers is in full swing. Unfortunately, so far, the national level has issued no training document for university foreign language teachers. Although the education department commissioned Center for Scientific Research and Development in Higher Education Institutes, Foreign Language Teaching and Research Press, Shanghai Foreign Languages Education Press and other institutions using winter and summer vacations and weekend university foreign language teacher professional development training, but in the training span, training scale, training level, training effect, funds guarantee far from comparing with the national training program, even facing the risk of becoming something that is not worth the effort. Therefore, colleges and universities should set up teacher development centers to

provide resources for teachers' professional development, including funds, books, networks, workshops, etc., so as to ensure the and systematization of the professional development of college foreign language teachers.

### 5.3 Analysis of the Influencing Factors at the Individual Level

#### 5.3.1 Customize career development plans

It is very important to develop the professional development of foreign language teachers. Career development planning is an important path for college foreign language teachers to realize their own life value and sustainable development, and plays a leading role in the professional development of college foreign language teachers. By formulating career development plans, clarifying the stages and paths of personal development, and promoting the development of actions and reflection, college foreign language teachers can effectively enhance the pertinence and operability of professional development, ensure the progress and quality of professional development, and be conducive to the realization of professional development goals. To colleges and universities, college foreign language teachers professional development plan can fully explore their potential, maintain their stability, the construction of high quality college foreign language teachers, hence improve the quality and level of colleges and universities, realizing the virtuous cycle of college running and foreign language teachers' professional development. If not, the professional development of college foreign language teachers will be in a chaotic state, which cannot improve their teaching and research ability, nor is it conducive to the construction of college foreign language teachers, thus hindering the improvement of the quality and level of colleges and universities, and affecting the realization of the goal of higher education talent training.

#### 5.3.2 Stimulate a sense of professional identity

Professional identity as a psychological concept, refers to an individual's opinion on the value, goal and other factors of to an occupation is equivalent to other society members' opinion. The community of college foreign language teachers has both social attributes and individual attributes. From the perspective of social attributes, college foreign

language teachers build their professional identity through the interaction with the society and universities. At present, the society's professional identity of teachers is becoming stronger and stronger, and the teaching profession has become the "red-hot" in the job market. The frequent competition of human resources in universities across the country also confirms the professional identity of teachers from the side. From the individual level, the existing research results show that teachers' professional identity is significantly associated with factors such as teacher burnout and teachers' mental health. Although the job burnout and work pressure of college foreign language teachers are at a low level, job burnout has become an important factor affecting teachers' professional development. In order to overcome the influence of the above negative factors, college foreign language teachers should expand the scope of interpersonal communication, focus on strengthening self-management, improving self-efficiency, and realize professional identity and their own professional development.

### 5.3.3 Update professional knowledge and accomplishment

Teachers are the key to the education reform, and the professional development of university foreign language teachers is also one of the key factors. How to realize the development and growth of the professional knowledge and accomplishment of college foreign language teachers? Chinese scholar Wu Yi'an believes that the professional quality of excellent foreign language teachers includes four dimensions: foreign language teaching ability, foreign language teachers' professional concept and professional ethics, foreign language teaching concept, and foreign language teachers' learning and development concept. Foreign language teaching ability and the deepening of subject knowledge, development, improve is a long-term, gradually progress process, university foreign language teachers need to set up the correct education and career concept. In the social, educational, school environmental background, constantly update the cognitive development process, learning new theory in the interaction with society, school, peer, and construct new knowledge.

## 6. Conclusion

The professional development of college foreign language teachers is a systematic project, which is influenced by three factors: society, school and individual. Therefore, to solve the problem of teacher professional development, we need to adopt effective strategies from the above three levels. The state deepens educational reform and promotes the synchronous development of schools and society; and takes multiple measures to create a society that respects teachers and values education atmosphere. The school innovates the system and mechanism, breaks the old system and mechanism that restricts the professional development of college foreign language teachers, and provides resource guarantee for the professional development. The individual of college foreign language teachers should stimulate the internal motivation of their own development, formulate career development plans, constantly update their professional knowledge and accomplishment, improve their self-efficacy and professional identity, and realize their own professional development.

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