



Narrative Research on U-shaped Teacher Training: Based on Success Stories of the Education Graduates of Normal Schools in Western China

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Abstract: Based on Theory U, this study used narrative inquiry to analyze the success stories of 12 education graduates from three normal schools in western China, and analyzed their subjective meanings and interpretations in teacher training. It revealed that training and educational background are the foundation of successful teachers. It was found that successful teachers face challenges brought by continuous learning pressure, heavy teaching workload, fierce professional competition, and changing teaching environment. In order to overcome these challenges, the strategies and experiences they adopted are: firm educational beliefs; high self-control, self-discipline, self-confidence and self-improvement personality traits; make full use of existing resources, listen to suggestions and seek help and support, maintain positive psychological cues, build harmonious like-minded interpersonal relationships, gain self-efficacy and collective efficacy, and be flexible and self-adjusting.

Keywords: U-shaped teacher training, narrative inquiry, pre-service teacher education, post-service teacher training

Introduction

China's compulsory education has gone through a process of universalization, balance and high-quality development. At present, it has built the world's largest basic education system and has become a recognized basic education power [1]. "The high-quality development of education has put forward higher requirements for the comprehensive quality of teachers. To this end, it is necessary to innovate the teacher training methods and cultivate new teachers that meet the requirements of the new era." The "New Era Basic Education Teacher Strengthening Plan" points out that it is necessary to "strengthen cooperation between the east and the west, counterpart support, etc., increase the construction of normal colleges and teacher development institutions in the underdeveloped areas of central and western China, and increase the training of high-quality teachers, and increase the supply of teacher training in scarce and weak areas." In recent years, with the strong support of the government, teacher training in western China has achieved remarkable results, providing a Chinese solution for teacher training in other regions and even the world. Therefore, exploring the success cases of normal school education graduates in western China and listening to their success stories will play a positive role in creating new teacher training programs.

In view of this, this study attempts to explore the following three issues:

1. How do teachers describe their journey to become successful teachers in terms of: Downloading, Seeing, Sensing, Presencing, Crystallizing, Prototyping, Performing?
2. What strategies do successful teachers employ to overcome challenges during their journey?
3. What role do training and educational experience play in the narrative of successful teachers?

Literature Review

Teacher training is an eternal topic of teacher professional development and one of the issues of global teacher education. So far, all countries have formed a relatively complete teacher training system, which reflects their own training characteristics. In general, the teacher training system in developed countries is more complete and in-depth, the goals and types of teacher training are more diversified, the teacher training system is regulated by law, the training content is oriented to the teacher's work process, and is committed to improving the professional skills of teachers. At the same time, the evaluation mechanism of teacher training is more mature. Undoubtedly, these will provide a model for developing countries to learn from in changing teacher training programs. There is no doubt that China also attaches great importance to teacher training and has formed a teacher training system with Chinese characteristics and in line with China's development conditions.

Looking at relevant research at home and abroad, although the teacher training models are diverse and the teacher training goals are subjective, directional, realistic, and social, there are many commonalities in the content and methods of training. For example, in terms of training content, it focuses on the cultivation of professional training and personal growth needs and interests, and in terms of training methods, it presents a multi-mixed training pattern, aiming to provide teachers with more convenient continuous learning opportunities.



Unfortunately, previous studies tend to explore the ideal state of teacher training from the perspective of school education, such as the path and quality of pre-service teacher training, the goals, content, and methods of in-service teacher training, the model of pre-service and in-service integrated teacher training, and the measures to improve its quality and efficiency, etc., while ignoring the fact of deconstructing and reconstructing teacher training from a systematic perspective, especially the lack of analyzing "successful" cases in the form of narrative inquiry and summarizing individual successful experiences. Therefore, this study uses Theory U as a logical guide and the "success stories" of education graduates in western China as an index to try to describe their success process, and through narrative inquiry, deeply analyzes the strategies of teachers to overcome challenges on the journey to success, thereby providing a reference for teacher training.

Research Methodology and Participants

This study adopted a qualitative research design, specifically narrative inquiry. The development of qualitative research methods has brought about a change in the way knowledge is produced, enabling researchers to better capture the subjective meanings and experiences of individuals and groups [4]. Any kind of "experience" has its own unique meaning and content. It is precisely because of the affirmation of "experience" that every teacher has the possibility to engage in educational research, and educational research also has a broad research field and object [5]. The participants were 12 in-service primary and secondary school teachers of different genders, different teaching years, and different teaching subjects who graduated from three normal schools in western China. This facilitates the analysis of the "research text". As shown in Table 1, S1-01 represents the 01 teacher who graduated from the S1 normal school, and so on for identification, which enhances the readability of the research content and research results.

NO.	Sex	Number of years in teaching	Current teaching	Normal school
01	F	6	Primary school mathematics	School1 (S1)
02	F	15	Chinese language	
03	M	5	Primary school mathematics	
04	F	21	Primary school music	
05	F	7	Primary school English	School2 (S2)
06	M	8	Secondary school biology	
07	M	12	Secondary school mathematics	
08	F	3	Primary school Chinese	
09	F	5	Primary school Chinese	School3 (S3)
10	M	10	Secondary school history	
11	F	9	Primary school morality and rule of law	
12	F	13	Secondary school Chinese	

Table 1. Participants profile

Research Results

The researchers presented participants' journeys to success through several narrative segments that followed the seven basic elements of Theory U. The results of Research Question 1 show that during the teachers' journey to success, they gained valuable experience and also encountered some challenges. We have a firm belief in education and always uphold the educational mission of teaching and educating people. "Positive psychological quality shows a partially significant mediating effect between school supportive atmosphere and occupational happiness" [6]. Maintain an optimistic professional mentality and establish harmonious interpersonal relationships and teacher-student relationships. Adhering to independent learning and lifelong learning, taking the initiative to seek help and support, and always maintaining the personality qualities of self-control, self-discipline, self-confidence, and self-improvement are the experiences of teachers in their journey to success. At the same time, teachers are also facing difficulties and challenges brought about by continuous learning pressure, heavy teaching workload, fierce professional competition, and changing teaching environment.

The results of Research Question 2 show that the common challenges encountered by teachers during their journey to success include continuous learning pressure and work pressure. Teachers' strategies to overcome challenges mainly include the following aspects: First, firm confidence and courage enable them to maintain self-control, self-discipline, self-confidence and self-improvement. Second, be flexible and actively seek help and support to find resources or ways to succeed. Thirdly, teachers will use the Internet, review literature, observe open classes and teaching competitions, and participate in educational seminars, peer exchanges, etc. to maintain continuous learning pathways. Finally, teachers will use positive psychological cues to self-regulate and release stress, and always maintain a good attitude whether they succeed or fail. At the same time, teachers are also keen on building harmonious interpersonal and teacher-student relationships to enhance self-efficacy and self-confidence. As previous research has shown, "the positive psychological

quality of rural primary and secondary school teachers has a significant positive prediction on professional achievement.”。 Research question 3 shows that educational experience and training are the main contents of successful teacher narratives, that is, teachers generally believe that their success is inseparable from pre-service teacher education experience and in-service teacher training. These educational experiences and training have helped them innovate teaching methods, stimulate students' interest and enthusiasm in learning, and form their own teaching style. In addition to these obvious learning and training, teachers also conduct a lot of independent learning, such as reading books, watching excellent teaching videos, modeling excellent teaching cases, and seeking help and support from colleagues, students, and parents. Existing studies have shown that "the focus of teacher training is not the training itself, and the real problem to be solved is not the simple motivation for training, training content and form, but the motivation for teachers to continue learning."。

Conclusion and Suggestion

This study provides a more comprehensive view of U-shaped teacher training by exploring the success stories of 12 education graduates (in-service teachers) from three normal schools in western China.

These data strongly resonate with Chen Xiangming's "practice-reflection" teacher training model, which emphasizes that teacher trainers and their institutions should conduct in-depth exploration of teachers' responses to real problems, allowing teachers to have a thorough epiphany and become more reflective and capable of action [9]. It is obvious that pre-service teacher education, in-service teacher training, autonomous and continuous learning to form a teacher training community, and educational narratives are crucial for successful teachers.

This study reveals firm educational beliefs, high self-control, self-discipline, self-confidence and self-reliance, making full use of existing resources, seeking help and support, listening to suggestions and summarizing experiences. Maintaining positive psychological cues, building harmonious like-minded interpersonal relationships, being flexible and self-adjusting, and gaining a sense of self-efficacy and collective efficacy are strategies for teachers to overcome challenges and achieve success. At the same time, it was also found that continuous learning pressure, heavy teaching workload, fierce professional competition, and changing teaching environment are challenges that successful teachers have always faced. To overcome these challenges, it is necessary to strengthen pre-service teacher education and in-service teacher training. Specifically, teachers should be helped to develop educational beliefs, cultivate professional identity, depict professional visions, and achieve self-realization.

The findings of this study provide valuable insights into what normal schools and teacher educators should teach, how education administration departments should manage teacher training, what normal school students, in-service primary and secondary school teachers and primary and secondary schools should do, and what future researchers should study and how to study. To this end, the benefits of effective cooperation are very obvious.

Normal schools should incorporate the cultivation of educational beliefs into formal courses and second-class activities to enhance the willingness of normal school students to teach. Normal school students should strengthen their awareness of autonomous learning and strive to improve themselves in all aspects of knowledge, emotion, intention, and behavior, so as to prepare for their future work as teachers. In-service primary and secondary school teachers should make good use of the diverse rights of autonomous learning, take positive actions, continue to learn, and enhance their sense of self-efficacy and professional identity. Primary and secondary schools should do a good job in the coordination of teacher training from top to bottom. On the one hand, they should collect teachers' training needs and report them to education administration departments, and on the other hand, they should also do a good job in organizing teachers to participate in training. Educational administration departments should improve the teacher training management mechanism, pay attention to teacher training assessment and evaluation, transformation and application, and follow-up guidance. Teacher educators (or teacher trainers) should carry out diversified teacher training according to the development needs of teachers. In particular, educational narrative training should be strengthened, that is, through teacher self-exposure, typical case study, workshops and other forms, teachers' rich educational experiences and reflections should be story-based and academic, to promote the sublimation of practice into theory, and show the training effect of "teacherism & academicism" coexisting. In the future, researchers should cooperate with primary and secondary schools, educational administration departments and teacher trainers to design U-shaped teacher training activities and evidence-based tracking systems to support educational administration departments in conducting evidence-based tracking, recording and guidance of teacher training, so as to provide a reference for the formulation of personalized and growth-oriented teacher training programs and promote the transformation and application of teacher training and follow-up guidance.

This study recommends incorporating key elements such as teachers' past learning experiences, current professional development needs, and future teacher training support services into teacher training programs. In addition, we recommend implementing methods such as role modeling, thematic training, teaching experience, vision interpretation, case study, hierarchical-project-based imitation practice, achievement display, and educational narrative to help teachers achieve professional growth. Educational narrative can promote professional exchanges between teachers and peers and reduce "professional isolation" caused by "classroom isolation".

By putting these findings into practice, it can promote effective cooperation between normal schools and normal students, teacher educators (or teacher trainers), education administration departments, in-service primary and secondary school teachers and primary and secondary schools, and future researchers, strengthen support for teacher training, and ultimately improve the results of teacher training and overall well-being. The assessment and evaluation of teacher training, transformation and application, follow-up guidance, and the establishment of educational narrative workshops will be necessary conditions for improving U-shaped teacher training. Narrative inquiry enriches our understanding of the

complex phenomenon of teachers' success stories and opens the door to new perspectives and potential areas of exploration in the future.

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