

An Investigation on EFL Teachers' Needs for Professional Development in Junior Middle Schools in China

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Liu Lei & Shin, Dong-Jin. “An Investigation on EFL Teachers’ Needs for Professional Development in Junior Middle Schools in China.” *Studies in English Language & Literature* 46.1 (2020): 147-176. With the rapid development of globalization, the number of English learners increased as the day passed. Since we are now living in the era of knowledge explosion. In China, learning English is compulsory in middle school, while the period of junior middle school is the golden period of English learning. The teacher is an important part of educational system, and the status of teachers’ professional development concerns the teaching quality. Traditionally, teacher development programmes have concentrated mainly on enhancing teachers’ teaching techniques and skills, largely disregarding their real needs and demands. Therefore, under the background of new national situation and new curriculum standards, as the demand for junior middle school students’ English level and English language education has increased exponentially with the economic growth and globalization (Li Jing, 2010). Based on the teachers’ professional development in China, combined with previous research results, the writer investigates the EFL teachers who took part in national training plan organized by Baoding University in April 2019 and claims their needs of professional development. The survey revealed following results: 1. There are a few problems existing in EFL teachers’ professional development in junior middle schools, such as lack of professional knowledge structure and teaching ability, monotonous in teaching content and weak teaching ability in English; 2. The two major factors restricting teachers’ professional development are the work pressure and no ways for advanced studies. Based on the research results and the actual English teaching situation of Hebei Province, current study tries to put forward the ways of teachers’ professional development from three aspects: training, well-designed training contents and peer coaching. (XingTai University & Jeonju University)

Key Words: Globalization; EFL teachers of junior middle schools; teachers’ professional development; national training program; Survey Study

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I. Introduction

In China, the number of English learners closes to two hundred million while the number of professional EFL teachers has more than 500000(Gu Peiya, 2009). Since we are now living in the era of knowledge explosion. China needs a large number of qualified EFL teachers as China has the most people in English learning in the world. If there is no teachers' development, then there is no development of teachers nor the development of the entire education system (Deng Tao, 2005). Teachers' qualification is the most important factor in the pursuit of this goal, educators and researchers have made many attempts to improve the quality of the teaching vocation with various professional development programmes and activities. In recent years, the field of foreign language in China pays attention to research on teachers' education and development. Traditionally, teachers' professional development programmes have concentrated mainly on enhancing teachers' teaching techniques and skills, largely disregarding their real needs and demands. According to McDiarmid (1995), there are higher expectations for teachers resulting from school reform, but both the public and policymakers still hold the restricted view that teachers are working only when they are in the classroom. Therefore, teachers don't receive much support for the time and resources they need for their professional development. In regard to teachers' professional development is important to teachers themselves as well as the whole curriculum reform, how to effectively realize teachers' professional development has become a hot topic in the current educational fields (teachers, schools, education authorities) (Wang Shuxia, 2011). Foreign language teachers' professional quality is the critical factor to foreign language teaching. But now the foreign language teachers in China are relatively less qualified (Gao Yan, 2012). Therefore, it is an unavoidable to improve EFL teachers' quality and to achieve the good development of English majors.

In the 1990s, the EFL teachers' professional development has gradually become the subject of international research. The first systematic study on the education of

foreign language teachers—Second Language Teacher Education was born in 1990. The 25th International Association of Teachers of English as a Foreign Language (referred as IATEFL) in 1991 described as: “At the beginning of the rise of communicative approach in the 1970s, people were keen to study teaching content (what to teach). In the 1980s, people were keen to study teaching methods (how to teach). Twenty years of research have created a variety of teaching methods and techniques, but teachers are helpless and do not know how to introduce them into classroom practice.” Since then, foreign research on the EFL teachers’ professional development has developed rapidly. In the 1998, TESOL launched a column as the theme of “Research and Practice of EFL Teachers Education”, which indicates that EFL teachers education has become the focus of international research in the English community. From then on, many foreign scholars have begun to work on the EFL teachers’ professional development. Western EFL studies focus more on the internal and external factors contributed to the growth of outstanding foreign language teachers. Researchers do less empirical studies on the EFL teachers of junior middle schools and the theme is scattered, which has not formed a theoretical system. Looking at western research on the EFL teachers’ professional development, the writer can easily find that there is less research on the EFL teachers’ development and the development is slow. It is generally acknowledged that researchers give little attention on common EFL teachers of junior middle schools. Therefore, this study has very important practical significance.

Chinese research in this field is comparatively fewer than that of western studies. After reviewing the related literature of the core journal (from 2009-2019) based on CNKI (China National Knowledge Infrastructure), the author finds that 49 records are retrieved as the theme of “teachers’ needs for professional development”, and there is 1 record with the theme of “EFL teachers’ needs for professional development in junior middle school”. Among all the journal based on CNKI, the author finds that 231 records are retrieved as the theme of “teachers’ needs for professional development”, and there are 4 records with the theme of “EFL teachers’

needs for professional development in junior middle school". In China, the previous research generally centers on some theoretical aspects and the number of empirical studies is relatively small. Fu Daochun (2001) pointed that the current research on the EFL teachers' professional development in China mainly focuses on the connotation, internal structure, development stage and promotion mode of English teachers, but lacks systematic research on the external factors and individual internal factors that affect the growth of teachers. Yang Shufang (2009) pointed that the mechanism for teachers training in underdeveloped area is not perfect, and the intensity of professional training for teachers needs to be greatly strengthened.

It can be seen that there is a lack of research on the EFL teachers' needs for professional development in junior middle school in China, and most of them are based on the research results attached to the needs of teachers' professional development. At the same time, the research on the EFL teachers' needs for professional development in junior middle schools is still in the initial stage. In allusion to the above problems, the writer tries to understand the current situation of EFL teachers' professional development in junior middle schools. Through the analysis of the questionnaire data to find problems, the study investigated the methods to solve the problems, and puts forward some suggestions on the reform to promote the EFL teachers' professional development in junior middle schools in China. On the basis of lifelong education and new curriculum requirements as well as quantitative and qualitative methods such as questionnaires and interviews, this study takes 50 backbone EFL teachers of junior middle schools attending the national training program at Baoding University as subjects. Thus, these participants can be an epitome of junior middle school English teachers across the country. The purposes of this study are: 1. The current situation and existing problems of EFL teachers' professional development in junior middle schools in Hebei Province; 2. The restricting factors of EFL teachers' professional development in junior middle schools; 3. The author tries to propose some effective suggestions to realize the EFL teachers' professional development in junior middle schools. The SPSS 24.0 is

employed to calculate the quantitative data.

The research questions of the paper are as follows: 1. What is the current development situation and existing problems of EFL teachers' professional development in junior middle schools in China? 2. What are the restricting factors of EFL teachers' professional development in junior middle schools? 3. What are the effective methods and suggestions to realize the EFL teachers' professional development in junior middle schools? On the basis of lifelong education and new curriculum requirements as well as quantitative and qualitative methods such as questionnaires and interviews, the above questions can be solved.

II. Literature Review

2.1 Theoretical Foundation

2.1.1 Lifelong Education

Teachers' lifelong education has been a repeated theme in research area of language teaching in recent years and develops along with innovative practice (such as action research, reflective teaching and cooperative teaching) led by teachers. Lifelong education originated as an international education trend in the 1960s, while the core of lifelong education is lifelong learning. In 1965, the French adult educator Paul Lengrand took the lead in proposing the concept of lifelong learning. Paul believed that people should continue to receive education as long as they are alive. Education does not end after graduating from schools, but should be consistent with people's whole life. Jacques Delors (1996) pointed that "Lifelong education is the key element to enter the twenty-first century, and it constantly makes the man learn and expands his knowledge and constantly develops his ability of judgement." Johnson and Keith proposed four characteristics of lifelong learners that should be the pillars of learning society: Learning to do (acquiring and applying skills,

including life skills); Learning to be (promoting creativity and personal fulfillment); Learning to know (an approach to learning that is flexible, critical and capable); Learning to live together (exercising tolerance, understanding and mutual respect). Lifelong learning is not only the basic requirements of teachers' professional ethics, but also an inevitable requirement of the professional development of teachers (Zhang Qingzong, 2011). As teachers engaged in education, they must take lifelong learning as the source of the strength to support their life's development. Teachers should establish the idea of lifelong learning and practice this idea to the end of life. Teachers should also create a lifetime passion for learning since teaching has always been a changing and demanding job. Only by constantly learning and updating their knowledge structure, can teachers improve their teaching ability and other abilities so as to achieve their own professional development (G. Claxton, 2015). Teachers' learning is a long and developmental process, as well as a developmental issue related to the whole teaching career (Liu Huquan, 2014). Lifelong education theory is the guiding principle of China's professional development. The National Education Law of PRC explicitly raised: To establish and improve a lifelong educational system. In 2002, in the report of the 16th National Congress of the Communist Party of China, it was clearly established to build a lifelong development system for talents. From the perspective of teacher professional development, the system incorporates the professional development of teachers, which makes the latitude of teachers' professional development more extensive and more practical (Wang Yongpeng, 2005).

Therefore, only constantly learning new knowledge and updating the concept of the education to keep pace with time, can teachers be lifelong learners to better teach students and achieve themselves. The concept lifelong education and lifelong learning opens a brand new era for teacher education, which plays a leading role in the researchers' professional development. So, teachers' professional development is a lifelong learning process and a dynamic process of solving problems.

2.1.2 New Curriculum Requirements

English Curriculum Standards of Compulsory Education proclaimed by the Ministry of Education of People's Republic of China points out the overall goal of the English course in the stage of compulsory education. The overall goal is through learning English to enable students to form a preliminary comprehensive language application ability, promote mental development and enhance the humanistic quality. English Curriculum Standards of Compulsory Education mainly puts forward new requirements for English teaching in primary and middle schools, and "if there is no qualified and sufficient number of teachers, the best reform plan can only die in practice" (Lu Junxuan, 1990). So the EFL teachers of junior middle schools are English language experts as well as teaching experts in English subject. English Curriculum Standards of Compulsory Education specifies that the key to effectively carry out English curriculum is English teachers' professional level (Chinese Ministry of Education, 2011). With the far-ranging implementation of the new curriculum reform and the reform of English teaching, it puts forward the higher requirement for the EFL teachers of junior middle schools' professional knowledge and professional quality. Teachers should get a deeper understanding and recognition on curriculum ideas and curriculum goals. Teachers should optimize the teaching methods, improve the teaching method and the teaching efficiency, and try hard to improve their professional quality in practice to adapt the requirements of English curriculum reform. Therefore, EFL teachers' professional development is both important and necessary in improving teaching activities. In order to make students get more progress, teachers must obtain consistent and high-quality professional development. The new curriculum reform promoted the teachers' professional development and made the research become explicit. The new curriculum reform put forward new requirements for teachers, which objectively promoted self-development of teachers.

2.1.3 Maslow's Self-actualization Theory

The subject need is a theoretical support to the teachers' professional development. Teacher is the subject whose needs are multidimensional. Survival need is the most fundamental and low level, but only to meet the survival need can't promote teachers' professional development. Only the pursuit of truth, goodness and beauty which is manifested by cognition, morality and emotion is the goal of the teachers' professional development. In addition, teachers' potential need is the need to realize their own transcendence, which is the source of the power of teachers' professional development. Humanistic psychologist Maslow put forward the hierarchy of needs theory in 1943, in which the self-actualization theory is the highest level theory. Maslow's self-actualization is to achieve personal aspirations and one's personal potential to be the greatest degree of play.

Maslow believes that people's growth comes from the individual's self-actualization, which is the driving force of personality formation, maturity and development. The self-actualization need refers to the people's desire for self-realization and development, which means a tendency to realize self-potential. It is because people have the need of self-actualization, which makes people's potential achieve and enhance. According to the above views, it can be said that self-actualization is the motive power of teachers' professional development. The professional development of teachers not only can make themselves qualified for their job, and what's more important is the realization of personal value, career progress, the respect of others, professional identity and satisfaction.

2.2 Research on Teachers' Professional Development at Home and Aboard

2.2.1 Research on Teachers' Professional Development at Home

Compared with foreign countries, the research on foreign language teachers' professional development in China starts late. It explicitly laid out the issue of teachers' professional development only in the 1990s. Bai Yimin (2001) believed

that EFL teachers took self-development as the driving force. In the teacher education mechanism, through continuous learning and reflection, EFL teachers continue to develop and improve their professional intelligence and belief systems. The EFL teachers' professional development emphasizes the subjectivity of teachers, emphasizing that under the premise of lifelong education teachers actively develop themselves. The core is the consciousness of teachers' self-development. Liu Xiuxiang and Han Jie (2004) considered that teachers' professional development is a process of lifelong learning and problem solving. It is a process of teachers' idea, professional ethics, professional emotion and social responsibility, including the teachers' understanding and grasp of their subject, cognition, aesthetics and so on. It is a process that their educational practice ability continues to mature, the educational experience continues to improve and educational skills continue to innovate. Jia Aiwu (2005) presented two dimensions of foreign language teachers' professional development. The first dimension is psychological growth process of foreign language teachers in the professional teaching career. The second dimension is the in-service teachers gain the above development through external education or training. Liu Jie (2005) thought that teachers' professional development is teachers through lifelong training and rely on professional organizations to acquire the professional knowledge and skills in the whole professional life. It is a professional development process of good educators, in which they show their professional ethics and gradually improve their teaching quality. Zhu Xudong and Zhou Jun (2007) assumed that teachers' professional development can be understood as: "It is the process of teachers broaden the professional connotation through constantly learning, reflecting and exploring as well as improve the level of expertise to reach the professional maturity. When Wen Qiaoping (2007) interpreted the teachers' professional development, he defines it as the process of teacher professional growth or the continuous updating, evolution and enrichment of the teachers' internal professional structure. The conclusion of Zhou Zhizhong (2009) is based on the study of EFL teachers' professional development in junior middle schools under the

background of new curriculum. He acknowledged that the majority of EFL teachers of junior middle schools have realized the necessity and urgency of professional development and have a clear understanding of their own development.

It is obvious that the concept of teachers' professional development is expanded in China. It focuses on the purpose of teachers' professional development, that is to display teachers' independence consciousness and encourage teachers to take part in the systems' formulation and social changes.

2.2.2 Research on Teachers' Professional Development Abroad

According to the course of the teachers' professional development, foreign academia began to study it long ago. Hoyle, the first man who puts forward the concept of "teacher professionalism". Hoyle believes that professionalism is a process that successfully satisfies a certain professional standard after a period of development. The first research about teachers' professional development originated in American scholar Frans Fuller, it has produced a great deal of stage theories of teachers' professional development ever since he put forward education should concern the stages. In the mid of 1970s, the United States put forward the slogan of teacher professionalism to advance the quality of public education and drive teachers to become a real career. American teachers' professional development requests teachers the corresponding practical teaching ability, and advocates that teachers take an active part in the design of teaching aim and teaching content, to expand the autonomy of teachers and to promote the rationalization of classroom teaching. The innovation of teacher education in United States is successful. It takes teachers' professional development as orientation and carries out in all aspects.

Teachers' professional development, starting in the 1990s, has become a heated topic in the field of educational research. Teachers' development has become an appreciable trend of international teacher education reform, which reflects the important rule of contemporary education. Holey proposed that the nature of teachers' professional development is a process that teachers master knowledge and

skills for professional practice in each teaching professional stages. Perry emphasizes that the teachers' professional development means individual teachers' growth in professional life, which including the enhancement of the confidence, the improvement of the skills, the constantly widen and broaden the subject knowledge.

Fullan and Hargreaves (1992) pointed out that the teachers' professional development can be understood from three aspects: the development of knowledge and skills, self-understanding ability and ecological alter. Hargreaves (1995) considered that the teachers' professional development not only should included knowledge, skills and other technical dimensions, but also should take moral, political and emotional dimensions into account. Larsen Freeman (2000) noted that the connotation of the teachers' professional development should consist of two dimensions: the first dimension is the psychological development of teachers in the professional teaching career; the second dimension is teachers get the above development due to external training. Evans (2002) showed clearly that the most basic development of teachers' development is attitude's and function's development. The former is teachers' change process in attitude, while the latter is the process of improving teachers' professional performance. Gabriel (2003) defined the teachers' professional development as teachers' continuous learning process, in which they learn spontaneously to adjust teaching methods in adapt to the students' learning needs. Professional development is not a one-time activity, but a process of self-revealing, self-reflection and continuous evolution.

In conclusion, teachers' professional development is a process of enrich themselves continuously and update knowledge. This professional development is lifelong learning process. In this process, teachers keep learning subject knowledge, teaching skills and professional ethics. In one sense, if there is no teachers' development, no teachers' professional development, the teachers are unable to complete their historical mission. Therefore, teachers' professional development is not only the trend of historical development, but also the necessity of educational reform and development.

Based on the domestic and international theory research, the writer thinks that the teachers' professional development is the process of improving their knowledge, professional ability and professional consciousness. Teachers not only need to build new knowledge through continuous self-learning and achieve the professional maturity, but also maximize their self-worth. The connotation of teachers' professional development is never the same, but its connotation is constantly expanding and extending (Li Ting, 2012).

III. Research Design

3.1 Research Subjects

In order to ensure the extensive of the samples, the writer sends out the questionnaires to EFL teachers of junior middle schools of Hebei Province who took part in national training program in April 2019, which is undertook by Baoding University. 57 questionnaires were returned with rate of 88%, among which 50 are valid. In order to provide more information about the sample of teachers, based on the results of questionnaire, the writer chooses 5 teachers as qualitative research objects. These teachers come from different cities, which account for 10% of the valid samples.

3.2 Research Questions

In this paper, the writer makes an investigation into the current situation of EFL teachers' professional development in junior middle schools. Based on Hebei Province's actual situation and literature, this paper tries to solve the following problems:

a. What is the current development situation and existing problems of EFL teachers'

professional development in junior middle schools in Hebei Province?

b. What are the restricting factors of EFL teachers' professional development in junior middle schools?

c. What are the effective methods and suggestions to realize the EFL teachers' professional development in junior middle schools?

3.3 Research Method

Both qualitative and quantitative methods are used in this research. By quantitative research in this paper, the writer can quickly measure sample reactivity to the related issues and find the causal relationship between the variables to improve the research validity.

3.3.1 Documentation Analysis Method

Through consulting literature about teachers' professional development, the writer collects the existing research results of EFL teachers' professional development in junior middle schools. Documentation analysis method can be used to understand achievements and shortcomings of the studies at home and abroad up to now, and it lays the groundwork for the former theory.

3.3.2 Questionnaire Survey Method

Questionnaire survey is the main investigation method of this research. Fifty questionnaires were distributed. Professor Zhang, who have a high prestige in the field of English teaching, helped to distribute and collect the questionnaire. The questionnaire includes five dimensions: (1) teachers' basic information (item 1-11), including age, gender, teaching years, educational background and so on; (2) teachers' understanding of their vocation (item 12-14); (3) the present situation of teachers' professional development (item 15-28), including knowledge structure, teaching ability, teachers' knowledge about information technology; (4) the factors

that restrict teachers' professional development (item 29-31); (5) teachers' needs for professional development (item 32-38), including influencing factors of teachers' professional development and ways of advancing teachers' professional development (see Appendix I for details).

3.3.3. Interview Method

According to the interview outline, the author coherently interviewed 5 teachers based on questionnaire data with semi-structural telephone interview. The individual interviews lasted 20 minutes, were tape recorded. The interview questions as follows:

(1) To what extent does the National Training Plan impact on the EFL teachers' knowledge?

What are your attitudes towards the Plan?

(2) Do you really need to take extra courses for your English improvement?

(3) Are you satisfied with the current situation of junior middle schools English teaching in Hebei Province?

(4) For you, what do you think an English teacher needs most? Knowledge or ability?

(5) What kind of training method do you think is the most feasible and meaningful?

(6) What kind of help are you most eager to get in your professional development?

What should the school and the education administration do?

(7) What are your professional goals in the next few years? Why?

3.4 Research Purpose

On the basis of lifelong learning theory and new curriculum reform, this paper researches on the influence factors of needs for teachers' professional development and understands more details about the current development situation of EFL teachers' professional development in junior middle schools. The purpose of this study aims at finding the problems and influence factors in the EFL teacher'

professional development in junior middle schools and proposing measures and policies (from three levels: teachers, school administrative department of education) to stimulate the EFL teachers' professional development in junior middle schools.

IV. Results

4.1. The Current Situation and Existing Problems of EFL Teachers' Professional Development in Junior Middle Schools

4.1.1 EFL Teachers' Professional Satisfaction and Vocation-selecting Reasons in Junior Middle Schools

Item 12	Options	Frequency	Percentage
Vocation satisfaction	dissatisfaction	3	6%
	average satisfaction	22	44%
	more satisfaction	18	36%
	very satisfaction	7	14%

Table 1. Frequency Test about teachers' professional satisfaction

Item 13	Options	Frequency	Percentage
Professional-selecting Reasons (multiple choices available)	parents' advice	16	32%
	your own ideal	12	24%
	match your major	17	34%
	jobs' stability	24	48%
	a good salary	0	0%
	good for caring family	5	10%
	helpless to be a teacher	6	12%

Table 2. Frequency Test about teachers' vocation-selecting reasons

It can be seen from the above table 1, 14% of the investigated teachers are very satisfied with their vocation, and even teachers express satisfaction accounted 94%. Among all the investigated teachers, there are 3 teachers dissatisfied with their vocation, accounting for only 6%. This shows that EFL teachers of junior middle schools of Hebei Province are highly satisfied with their teachers' vocation, and they have a high recognition degree of their professional status. This result is mainly caused by the following factors: (1) In recent years, the poison of EFL teachers in China has been raised; (2) Teaching is a vocation. Teachers only have professional qualification can get social recognition. Based on the result of table 2, most teachers speak frankly in the interview that they choose to be teachers because their parents' suggestions about teachers' stability. Most of EFL teachers across the countries start to teach English upon graduation from their undergraduate course at teachers' college. It follows that their knowledge of language and teaching experience are somewhat limited (P. Janchive & Seung-Man Kang, 2018). Although the number of passive choices might be small, more or less affect the motivation of teachers' professional development, which will have a negative reflect on teachers' professional development.

4.1.2 EFL Teachers of Junior Middle Schools on Teachers' Professional Development

Item 14	Options	Frequency	Percentage
Ideas of teachers' professional development	Designing own development plan	12	24%
	Only thinking but not in action	28	56%
	No ideas and follow the arrangements	10	20%

Table 3. Frequency Test about teachers' thinking on teachers' professional development

As can be seen most teachers are not satisfied with their own professional development, but they don't know what to do, simply obeying the educational management department. So, in China, EFL teachers have a weak sense of professional development, and this is largely due to the condition of professional is

not loose. Through interview we find the majority of EFL teachers of junior middle schools undertake two classes' teaching task, there is no time to advanced study. Thus, they are lack of clear understanding of their professional development. However, 5 teachers in the interview more or less shown the desires and needs to further improve their professional development. This shows that EFL teachers of junior middle schools have a sense of crisis and realize the importance of improving their professional development.

4.1.3 The Existing Problems of EFL Teachers' Professional Development

a. Lack of Professional Knowledge Structure

Item 21	Options	Frequency	Percentage
Your most urgent professional knowledge (multiple choices available)	English grammars	6	12%
	enrich your vocabulary	26	52%
	cross-cultural knowledge	20	40%
	SLA acquisition theory	7	14%
	teaching method knowledge	27	54%
	new curriculum reform knowledge	29	58%

Table 4. Frequency test about teachers' most urgent professional knowledge

Teachers' professional knowledge includes subject knowledge and practical pedagogical knowledge, which is generally accepted by educational field and foreign language teaching field. Teachers' deep and extensive professional knowledge is an important factor that affects the degree of students' learning. That is to say, English teachers should at least have the quality of listening, speaking, reading, writing and translation. The ability of English teachers directly affects the quality of English teaching. For EFL teachers of junior middle schools, professional knowledge includes English phonetics, grammars, vocabulary, cross-cultural knowledge, SLA acquisition knowledge, teaching method knowledge and English pedagogy theory.

The first thing EFL teachers of junior middle schools should do is to master the above professional knowledge. For teachers who engaged in junior middle school English teaching, to master the system of English professional knowledge is the insurance of the future English teaching. Therefore, the systematic English professional knowledge is a requirement for EFL teachers' professional development in junior middle schools, and also a requirement for the smooth reform of the new curriculum.

On the one hand, the teachers' professional knowledge is a crucial support for the new curriculum reform, the teachers' educational concept, knowledge structure and professional quality have a significant influence on the curriculum's implementation. We can even think that the success or failure of new curriculum reform depends in part on the teachers. On the other hand, in order to meet the needs of new curriculum reform, teachers must update the knowledge structure to promote the implementation of new curriculum reform. Therefore, the implementation of new curriculum reform provides the opportunity for teachers' professional development. However, from the current teaching practice, the shortage of teachers' professional knowledge has become the bottlenecks of teachers' professional development. As we can see from the table 4, the most urgent needs of EFL teachers of junior middle schools are new curriculum reform knowledge, teaching methodology, large vocabulary and cross-cultural knowledge. This shows that the professional knowledge structure of EFL teachers of junior middle schools is relatively weak, and the content of teachers' professional knowledge is needed to expand and enrich.

b. Lack of Teaching Ability

Teaching ability is a kind of psychological characteristic that teachers achieve the teaching goals and smoothly engage in teaching activities. It mainly includes cognitive ability, teaching control ability and teaching monitor ability. In the interview, the writer finds that the teaching ability of EFL teachers of junior middle schools varies, mainly reflected in language applied ability, teaching content and the

knowledge of information technology.

Item 15	Options	Frequency	Percentage
Frequency of teaching in English	always	0	0%
	often	15	30%
	sometimes	32	64%
	seldom	3	6%

Table 5. Frequency test about teachers' teaching in English

For English teaching in China, teachers' English level and proficiency is the important factor that related to the English teaching ability. The teaching principles of middle schools in China require that EFL teachers should try to use English to organize English classroom teaching and explain in English, and to cultivate students' ability of English thinking and ability of expression in English. Therefore, junior middle school English teaching today requires teachers must have a perfect foundation of language skills, or they are unable to improve the quality of English teaching and it is possible to cultivate high-quality students for China.

The table 5 shows that there are no teachers all teach in English, accounting for 0% of the total number of surveyed teachers; the teachers who often use English in teaching are only 15 people, accounting 30%. This shows that teachers' practical teaching ability in English is relatively weak, so in the interview, most of the teachers show an urgent desire to improve their English proficiency.

Item 22	Options	Frequency	Percentage
What do you focus on when explaining the text?	words and grammar	9	18%
	background knowledge and cultural connotation	3	6%
	text meaning and structure	38	76%

Table 6. Frequency of focuses when teaching the text

The result of table 6 shows that in classroom teaching, 94% of the teachers pay more attention on the words and grammar and text meaning, and only 6% of teachers lay emphasis on the background knowledge and cultural connotation. This shows that in the practical teaching, teachers pay more attention to imbue the students with language points so that ignore to cultivate the students' own humanistic quality and cross-cultural communication competence (J. Srivener, 2002). Cross-cultural knowledge is the foundation to foster cross-cultural awareness. It refers to the sensitivity of foreign cultures and national cultures and the use English culture to adjust their own language. The lack of cross-cultural awareness in junior middle schools leads to the deviation of junior middle school students' understanding about target language culture. English teachers of junior middle schools play a dual role in teaching. Besides the English knowledge, the teachers also need to develop students' cross-cultural communication ability. The junior middle school is the key period of building life and world outlook, so the purpose of compiling the teaching materials is to help students understand the word and increase the cultural understanding of the language countries. Only integrate language teaching and cultural teaching can promote the teachers' own professional development.

Item 24	Options	Frequency	Percentage
How many times do you use IT in the teaching in a term?	never once	5	10%
	about 5 times	10	20%
	more than 10 times	22	44%
	more than 20 times	13	26%

Table 7. Frequency test about IT utilization in a term

According to the results of above survey, most of the teachers (90%) apply multimedia teaching 5-20 times in one semester, and even 5 of the investigated teachers never use multimedia technology in classroom teaching in the whole semester. There are 7 surveyed teachers come from rural areas, where local teaching

conditions are backward and multimedia teaching equipment is only a kind of supplementary teaching means that teachers use in open class. Although modern information technology and Internet provide a large amount of English teaching resources, but in the interview, most teachers say that they make little use of the Internet to find teaching materials. So the vast amount of teaching knowledge provided by the Internet plays no role in the practical teaching (Li Jiankun, 2013).

With the development of modern high technology, modern teaching methods have been widely used in the classroom, which require teachers can make as well as demonstrate with PPT. In the interview, many teachers mention that present courseware with multimedia in the classroom teaching can arouse students' interest in learning, and active classroom teaching can arouse students' interest in learning, and active classroom atmosphere makes the teaching more vivid. Courseware can help teachers and students to break through the teaching important and difficult points, thus more easily achieve the teaching goals (Huang Zheng, 2012). There is no doubt that the advantages of multimedia teaching are obvious. Therefore, EFL teachers of junior middle schools should learn from the advanced multimedia technology, constantly enrich the teaching forms and improve the efficiency of classroom.

4.2 The Restricting Factors of EFL Teachers' Professional Development in Junior Middle Schools

Item 30	Options	Frequency	Percentage
Factors that affect your professional development (multiple choices available)	your own ability	38	76%
	family circumstance	7	14%
	your career aspirations	5	10%
	professional challenge	35	70%
	interest in teaching	6	12%
	no ways for advanced studied	42	84%

Table 8. Frequency test about restricting factors of teachers' professional development

According to the table 9 shows that the two biggest factors restrict the EFL teachers' professional development in junior middle schools are no ways for advanced studied and working pressure. As we all know, English in the junior middle school is a compulsory course. During the interview, the writer finds that almost every EFL teachers of junior middle schools undertake more than 12 classes every week, which does not include the morning and evening self-study class. Only the class loads can reflect the teachers' heavy teaching burden. In the item 9, the writer finds there are 70% teachers whose class capacity exceeds 55 students. So, the large class is quite common and popular, which bring many problems when they are teaching. What's more, the overloaded repetitive work obliterates the teachers' teaching passion and the heavy teaching tasks make many teachers feel strong needs of advanced studies. Therefore, teachers don't receive much support for the time and resources they need for their professional development. So the advanced studies look more urgent for teachers. Advanced study can enable teachers to acquire new knowledge and teaching concepts, optimize and improve the teachers' knowledge structure and carry out teaching innovation. It directly affects the overall quality of EFL teachers in junior middle schools. This related to the quality of English education in junior middle schools. However, 84% of the investigated teachers have no way for advanced studies. All of these factors will seriously restrict the teachers' professional development.

4.3 Suggestions to Realize EFL Teachers' Professional Development in Junior Middle Schools

The ways of EFL teachers' professional development in junior middle schools is a long and evolutionary process, which is influenced mutually by lots of factors, such as society, school and individual. Each factor has its important significance in the different stages of development. Based on the background of new curriculum reform, on the one hand, the school formulates rules and policies to guide the

direction of teachers' professional development; on the other hand, it also should emphasize the self-directed development of teachers. Based on the actual situation of Hebei province and related problems in the investigation, the writer tries to put forward the following suggestions of professional development.

In order to improve teachers' professional level, we must strengthen teachers resource training and encourage teachers to participate in various training. In the interview, teachers feel generally that they are in need of training. But the teachers' personal experience and actual work needs are not taken into account in lots of in-service training, so training often become mere formalities (Huang Lan, 2015). Therefore, the innovation of English teachers training model is the important key to improve the teachers' professional ability. Through the result of item 34 and item 35, the writer can see clearly that there are no investigated teachers dissatisfied or less satisfied with the national training plan, even 30% teachers very satisfied with the national training plan.

In China, starting from 2010, the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Finance launched the national training program for primary and secondary teachers, referred as national training plan. The national training plan aims to improve the teaching level of primary and secondary teachers and to train a group of famous teachers and academic leaders. The national training plan plays a leading role in basic education, especially in rural education. The EFL teachers in junior middle schools should seize the good opportunity to make full use of the national training plan and actively participate in the training according to their own needs.

For the universities that undertake national training plan, they should conduct extensive and in-depth investigations in advance. The universities should listen to the voices of the first-line teachers who take part in national training plan and collect the training needs of teachers. Firstly, the school should seek teachers' advice in a wide range and fully understand the teachers' needs when arranging the training content; Secondly, the training contents selected by schools should be multiple-layered, and its system is gradient. The training methods are flexible and

various, focused on interaction, which aims at supplementing the knowledge and skills needed in EFL teachers' professional development in junior middle schools. This well-designed training contents not only meet the needs of the education authorities and universities, but also meet the professional development needs of English in junior middle schools. Lv Shuxiang once mentioned that as a teacher, you should master three types of knowledge: the first one, specialized knowledge is the foundation of teachers; the second one, specialized background knowledge is the prerequisite for deepening as teachers; the third one, necessary knowledge of times is the guaranteed as teachers. Among these three, the specialized knowledge is the premise of teaching quality and the most needs for students. In the item 37, 90% of the investigated teachers said that the most hope is to train the cutting-edge knowledge of English subject. Therefore, in the process of national training, on the one hand, experts in English subjects are hired to enhance the specialized level of teachers. Experts provide cutting-edge knowledge of English subject and develop a vision of trained teachers. On the other hand, taking the difficulties and confusions in the actual teaching as the fulcrum, carefully design the training contents to solve the problems at the operational level. For example, in face of students, how to strengthen the ability to control the classroom and how to cite advanced teaching methods. Therefore, for the school, it should strengthen the study of teachers' training needs, and it also should carefully select and arrange the training content from the regularity of teachers' professional development.

Based on the result 38 and the interview, almost 90% teachers consider the peer coaching is the most feasible way for teachers' professional development. Over the past few decades, there has been a marked shift in our understanding of teacher education in the field of ESL/EFL learning and teaching. In the earlier period, "teacher training" was a dominant concept, but since the beginning of 1990s "teacher development" has gained a new currency. Teachers' professional development can't just rely on the teachers' research behind a closed door, but they need to get inspired in the communication between colleagues, which will increase

motivation and new ideas for their professional development (B. Showers & B. Joyce, 1995). Every teacher has their own advantages. The difference between teachers can be replenished by peer coaching. As we all know that the collective strength is great. It is conducive for teachers to learn from each other, and better exploit and use curriculum resources and optimize the teaching. Peer coaching is not carried out in order to evaluate the teaching of peer teacher, but to encourage self-reflection and self-awareness about his/her own teaching (Gholam-Reza et al, 2018). In the interview, teachers say that peer coaching and peer observation can offer an opportunity to understand teaching styles between teachers. During collecting the questionnaire, the writer makes an overlapping analysis to item 2 and item 28. The results showed in the followed table 9:

Item 2		Item 28 What type of multimedia do you use?				Total
		Blackboard	Projector	PPT	Flash Animation	
Age	under 30	0	0	1	5	6
	31-40	1	4	16	4	25
	41-50	0	15	3	0	18
	over 51	1	0	0	0	1
Total number		2	19	20	9	50

Table 9. Overlapping analysis of item 2 and item 28

Six young teachers under 30 years, they often use PPT courseware (1) and flash animation (5). Among the 25 teachers aged 31-40, there are 16 teachers often use PPT courseware; Among 18 teachers aged 41-50, there are 15 teachers often use projector in the classroom teaching; While the only one teacher aged over 51, s/he only use blackboard and chalks. Thus, we can see that there is a negative relation between age and application of multimedia. The younger the teachers are, the better they master the multimedia technology. In the interview, the writer learns that because the young teachers' teaching seniority is short, they do not have too much teaching experience. Therefore, the school can divide teachers by age in the future's

teaching management, so that the novice teachers and old teachers can learn from each other. The novice teachers have advantages in multimedia teaching. The old teachers can learn multimedia technology through attending to the novice teachers' class; Old teachers have been teaching long time and have rich experience in teaching. The novice teachers can grow rapidly in teaching through attending to the old teachers' class. Teachers, old and new, get a new understanding of teaching through peer coaching and peer observation (Zhu Xudong, 2010). They can get the support from the peers who better ability, so that they can finish teaching task well.

V. Conclusion

EFL teachers' professional development in junior middle schools with new round of elementary education curriculum reform is becoming increasingly important and urgent (J.G. Gebhard, 1998). Only through continuous learning to promote their professional development can teachers face the challenges brought by the new curriculum reform (Zheng Yan, 2013).

On the basis of the related research both in home and abroad, according to lifelong learning theory and new curriculum requirements, this research combines qualitative and quantitative approaches to survey 50 junior middle school English teachers' professional development of Hebei province who took part in national training plan. This paper analysis the present situation and existing problems of teachers' professional development, the factors restrict the teachers' professional development, and put forward some suggestions to promote the teachers' professional development. The findings are summarized as follows: First of all, most teachers are not satisfied with their own professional development. Because of the subjective and objective factors, teachers' professional development has no clear or sense of direction, most teachers lack enthusiasm and initiative in professional development. Secondly, there are a few problems existing in EFL teachers'

professional development in junior middle schools, such as lack of professional knowledge structure and teaching ability, monotonous in teaching contents, and lack of IT knowledge. In the view of the above questions, the writer tries to put forward the ways of teachers' professional development from the angle of school and teachers. How to make use of the new curriculum reform to implement the good development opportunity, combining with the practical situation of China to promote English teachers' professional development, all these are questions worth thinking about. Thirdly, the two major factors restricting teachers' professional development are the work pressure and no ways for advanced studies. The great work pressure and teaching burden, which led to teachers have no time to carry out professional development. These heavy tasks make the teachers feel strong need for advanced studies, but the research found that most teachers lack of ways for advanced studies. Lastly, the school can divide teachers by age in the future's teaching management. The novice teachers have advantages in multimedia teaching; the old teachers have rich experience in teaching. So, the novice teachers and old teachers can learn from each other and get new understanding of teaching.

However, the current research contains some limitations. the study chooses EFL teachers of junior middle schools who participated in the national training plan undertook by Baoding University as samples, through investigation and interview to understand teachers' needs for professional development, and quantitative and qualitative analysis the survey data. There still exist a lot of unsatisfactory points in this paper, which are the following

- a. Due to the limited time and ability, the writer has some limitation in the design of questionnaire and interview outline. Before sending the questionnaire, the writer didn't pre-test it. A further analysis to some data has not been done.
- b. The writer takes EFL teachers of junior middle schools of Hebei province who participated in the national training plan as research objects, whose coverage is not wide.
- c. What the writer has done about teachers' professional development still stays at

the initial stage, which needs to be further improved in the future study.

Taken together, learning English is becoming more important in China. The role of teacher is the key factor in the English education. In recent years, the field of foreign language in China pays attention to research on teachers' education and development. So, EFL teachers' professional development in junior middle schools is important and urgent. This paper combines qualitative and quantitative approaches to investigate 50 EFL teachers in junior middle schools. In a word, with the deepening in educational reformation of China, the EFL teachers' professional development in junior middle schools is becoming increasingly important and urgent. Teacher education is the cornerstone of national strategic development and the most decisive factor of the sustainable development of a country. Teachers' professional development is the important process of teachers continuously exceeding themselves and self-realization. The significance and value of teachers' professional development is that it necessary to promote the development of students, and it is important to construct an education system of foreign language which is adapted to the condition of China. It is expected that this research can provide a practical and effective method for the future EFL teachers' professional development in junior middle schools, and then accelerate the course of teachers' professional development to realize the continuous self-transcendence.

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