A Review of the National System for Teacher Training: The Korean Case of National Universities of Education

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Abstract
This article reviews the historical developments and major characteristics of the system, and further discusses its strengths and weaknesses, related issues, and implications for reforming the teacher training system. The analysis shows that the national system is a wonderful mechanism to produce a balance between teacher demand and supply under usual circumstances. However, the system includes has various quality related problems caused by rigid uniformity, lack of creativity, excessive burden of the government, and its efficacy as a balancing mechanism of teacher demand-supply. It is then argued that in the Korea’s case, it is necessary to re-examine the exclusive position of national universities of education.

It is often regarded in many countries as the government’s responsibility to provide an adequate supply of competent teachers. The fulfillment of this responsibility could be made relatively easy if the government establishes a national system of teacher education, so that the government can pre-plan and control the supply of qualified teachers. A national system of teacher education requires that the authorities’ establishment of teacher training institutes, provision of financial supports in order to make the programs operational, and supervision and monitoring of the operations.

The Korean elementary school teacher education program reflects the essence of a typical national system of teacher education. All the Korean elementary school teachers are primarily trained through the national system, which has incorporated into it 12 national universities. This national system, as a prominent feature of Korean teacher education, can
be regarded as one that has the general efficacy or needed capacity to generate moderate positive effects in achieving the policy intent of providing an adequate supply of competent teachers (Lee, Choi, & Huh, 1994).

However, this concept of general efficacy needs to be re-examined from an objective perspective, as there are currently serious disagreements among the pros and cons of the system (J. B. Kim, 1996; Presidents’ Association of National Universities of Education in Korea, 1997). Furthermore, a review of the Korean case of national teacher education system seems more meaningful when considering the fact that other countries which are suffering from discrepancies between teacher supply and demand are also considering the establishment of a national system of teacher education as an measure to solve the problems of teacher quality and balancing teacher supply-demand.

The purpose of this article is to review the national system of teacher education, using the Korean case of national universities of education, to elaborate on the advantages, disadvantages, issues, and future directions of such a system. It also intends to draw implications for reforming teacher education at the institution and system levels. As such, this article first reviews the historical development of Korean national universities of education. Then, an examination of the major characteristics of national universities of education follows. Advantages, disadvantages, issues, and future directions of the national system are then discussed. Finally, implications for reforming teacher education are drawn.

THE HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT OF THE NATIONAL UNIVERSITIES OF EDUCATION

Korea has a history of more than 100 years of providing teacher pre-service training. The first teacher education institution, established in 1895, was a national institute, and it provided training to both elementary and secondary school teachers. Since then, Korea has witnessed enormous growth in teacher education.

The development of Korean elementary school teacher training can be classified into the five stages: the initial development of the national system during the Lee Dynasty and colonial period (1895-1945); the expansion of the normal school system after independence (1945-the 1950s); the establishment
of two-year colleges of education (1960s-1970s); the upgrading of colleges of education to a four-year program (1980s-1995); the further upgrading via the establishment of graduate schools of education and institutional evaluation (1996-present).

The Initial Stage of Development of the National System (1895-1945)

The first Korean teacher training institute was the “Han-sung Normal School,” which was founded in 1895 under the Chosun dynasty. This School had had a two to four year standard curriculum as well as a six-month intensive training course for 20-35 year old males. During the first part of the Japanese colonial period (1905-1945), more national schools were established, although normal schools had not necessarily focused only on elementary school teacher training. Since 1922, national normal schools were expanded: each province established its own national normal school in order to train school teachers. It is noteworthy that the tradition of the Korean national system has continued since the initial stage of development (Lee et al., 1994, pp. 22-26; Presidents’ Association of National Universities of Education in Korea, 1997, pp. 14-19).

The Expansion of the Normal School System after Independence (1945-the 1950s)

There was one men’s normal school for each of the 13 provinces and three women’s normal schools established by the government at the moment of independence in 1945. But, as the demand for teachers increased after independence due to the increased social need for education and to the limited supply of teachers (as a result of the withdrawal of Japanese teachers after liberation), the normal schools established intensive training courses as well as temporary elementary school teacher training institutes as auxiliary short-term programs to train teachers (in one year).

After the Korean government was set up in 1948, normal schools trained elementary school teachers, and colleges of education at comprehensive universities began to train secondary school teachers. At that time, an average of two normal schools per province was established for a total of 18 normal schools. After the Korean War (1950-1953), in order to meet the increasing demand for teachers, short-term training courses were installed at normal schools. Then, Ewha Women University, a four-year comprehensive
private university, established a specialized program of elementary education in 1958.\(^1\) In the main, elementary school teacher training still remained the responsibility of three-year normal school at the high school or upper secondary school level (Cha, 2000; Lee et al., 1994, pp. 22-26; Presidents’ Association of National Universities of Education in Korea, 1997, pp. 14-19).

**Establishment of Two-year Colleges of Education (1960s-1970s)**

Following the proposal for the establishment of two-year colleges of education in 1960, the State Council passed a resolution in favor of a two-year program on top of the secondary school education for training of elementary school teachers. This reinforcement had intended to promote teacher proficiency. In accordance to “The National Education Institute Establishment Law” in 1962, every normal school was reorganized into two-year colleges of education. One college of education was established for each of the ten regions in Korea. Later, an increase in the demand for teachers had resulted in the establishment of six more regional institutions, totaling 16 (Cha, 2000; Lee et al., 1994, pp. 22-26).

But the continuation of insufficient supply of elementary school teachers made the government decided to further expand the capacities of the education colleges. Thus, starting from 1966, temporary teacher training programs were again in place. Temporary elementary school teacher training institutes conferred regular “second level teaching certificates” after an 18-week program for junior college graduates. Increased manpower shortages due to high turnover rates of elementary school teachers, starting in 1969, forced to conferring of “assistant teacher certificates” to high school graduates who completed 18-week temporary training courses. These courses of action resulted in the lowering of the competence level of the teachers, opposite of what had been intended. Fortunately, after 1971, decreases in the turnover rates of elementary school teachers had resulted in having employment waiting lists for graduates of education colleges. The Ministry of Education responded by reducing the capacities of education colleges and, in 1977, by restructuring four regional education colleges of education into standard colleges (Cha, 2000; Lee et al., 1994, pp. 22-26).
Upgrading Colleges of Education to a Four-year Program (1980s-1995)

In the period 0f 1980s-1995, the transformation of elementary school teacher training system from a two-year junior college to a four-year college granting bachelor's degree seems to be noticeable. Since the 1970s, the issue of upgrading elementary school teacher proficiency in relation to changing the program to a four-year one began to receive policy to attention. This was because in many other countries elementary school teachers were in possession of bachelor’s degree. Another reason was that the task performed by elementary school teachers was found to be essentially the same as secondary school teachers. On 30 August 1981, the military government’s “Emergency Education Reform Act” upgraded the programs of colleges of education to four-year programs. The upgraded colleges faced many problems at the initial stage, but later institutional and curricular arrangements were made to pave the way to facilitate the degree-conferring. From 1985, they began to offer evening and summer classes for in-service non-degreed teachers to complete coursework for a baccalaureate (Cha, 2000; Lee et al., 1994, pp. 22-26).

In 1984, the Korea National University of Education was established, aiming at the training of both elementary and secondary school teachers and the pursuit of research in the education field. Totaling 11 national colleges of education in each region, exclusive of the Korea National University of Education, these universities constitute the national system, serving Korea till today.

Another noteworthy aspect is the drastic changes in elementary teacher employment policies since 1990. Korean private universities that have been rapidly expanding since the 1980s attempted to enter teacher training, because of the relatively low marginal cost while it has been rather popular among university entrants due to long lasting teacher shortages (Lee et al., 1994). In view of their strong urge, the government allowed private institutes to train secondary school teachers while insisting on maintaining the national system for elementary school teacher training. At the same time, the government adopted a policy that gave various privileges, such as employment priority and tuition waivers, to graduates of the national universities of education.

Low teacher turnover rates during the 1980s and the government’s failure to control supply were the main cause of private institutions’ contribution to the problem of excess supply of teachers. The situation was extremely
serious in the domain of secondary school teacher employment, in which only 20% of certificate holders could join the teaching profession (Kim, 1999, pp. 27-58; Pak & Kim, 1997). Put simply, the predicament is a result of an open system where private training sector constituted a larger portion (in comparison with the national sector) and a compromise between the government (that wanted to operate a national system) and the private universities (that were interested in teacher training).

Objections from private educational college graduates resulted in a ruling that it was unconstitutional for the government to give employment priority to graduates of national colleges of education. Following this ruling, the government had to give up the inequitable policy. This abandonment had to be extended to elementary school teacher employment policies as well. Consequently, all the previous privileges of national institutes’ graduates and obligatory public service periods were deleted according to presidential order 12846 issued on 23 November 1989. Since 1990, prospective teachers of both elementary and secondary schools compete for jobs through open competition of teacher selection examinations (Cha, 2000; Lee, Choi, & Huh, 1994, pp. 22-26; Presidents’ Association of National Universities of Education in Korea, 1997, pp. 14-19).

Apart from this policy change, the institutes’ names were also changed to “universities” by the presidential order 135859 in 1993: every national college of education renamed itself to “national university of education.” The headmaster was also renamed “president” from “dean” (Cha, 2000).

The Further Upgrading Stage (1996-Present)

Opinions that national universities of education require graduate schools emerged during the late 1980s. The reasons were five: first, it would create more and better educational opportunities for current teachers to further develop; second, it would elevate specialization in elementary school teaching; third, it would increase the teacher’s efficiency of teaching and guidance provided to students; fourth, specialized, higher level training could be provided to school administrators and research personnel; and fifth, it would allow national universities of education to function as research centers.

The government amended “The National School Establishment Law” to allow national universities of education to set up graduate schools. Consequently,
since March 1996, the 12 national universities (except one) have graduate schools; later in 2000, all of them have graduate schools. But these graduate schools of education are special-purpose graduate schools that are different from standard graduate schools or professional graduate schools, and cannot award doctoral degrees (Cha, 2000; Lee et al., 1994, pp. 22-26).

The operation of institutional evaluation in the recent period is another kind of effort to further upgrade teacher education. Based on the proposal of the Presidential Commission on Education Reform in 1996, the Ministry of Education decided to introduce an evaluation system for teacher training institutes. An institutional evaluation system was launched in 1998; in turn, 11 national universities of education were evaluated by the committee formed by the government in 2000, following the evaluation of 40 national and private colleges of education at comprehensive universities in 1998 and the evaluation of 69 graduate schools of education (both national and private) in 1999 (H. S. Kim, 1999).

At present, elementary education for prospective teachers is provided by the national system consisting of 12 national universities of education and one private institute. Among the national universities, 11 that are located in major cities and provinces have together 4,955 in-takes; The Korea National University of Education that trains both elementary and secondary school teachers have 810 in-takes in elementary education program, totaling 5,765 elementary school teacher candidates. Entrants’ quotas for the national institutes increased rapidly during 2000–2002 (see Table 1). This increase has been called for due to the nation-wide shortage of elementary school teachers, observable since 1998 and caused by the lowering of the teacher retirement age 65 to 62 and the activation of an early retirement system.

MAJOR CHARACTERISTICS OF NATIONAL UNIVERSITIES OF EDUCATION

If one reviews the Korean system of national universities of education, some unique characteristics can be underscored. First, the government’s critical role and the exclusiveness of the system can be identified as an obvious characteristic. Korea has a teacher education system that is designed and closely controlled by the government: the Ministry of Education and Human Resources Development and the 16 boards of education in each geographic
region are responsible for balancing the teacher supply and demand. That is, the government plays a critical role in pre-service training, certification, and teacher selection.

Table 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Classification</th>
<th>Institute Name</th>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Entrants Quota</th>
<th>% Increase 1999-2003</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>National</td>
<td>University of Education Korea National University of Education</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>Major cities &amp; Provinces</td>
<td>4,285 4,735 4,735 4,955 4,995</td>
<td>116.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National</td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Choongbook</td>
<td>160 160 160 50 160</td>
<td>100% (’02: 506.3%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sub-total</td>
<td></td>
<td>-</td>
<td></td>
<td>4,445 4,895 4,895 5,765 5,045</td>
<td>108.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Private</td>
<td>Ewha</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Seoul</td>
<td>50 50 50 50 50</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td></td>
<td>-</td>
<td></td>
<td>4,495 4,945 4,945 5,815 5,205</td>
<td>115.8%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


This kind of system was established with the assumption that the government is responsible for balancing the provision and quality of compulsory and secondary education, which are funded with public money. However, the underlying reason may be that the government has a vested interest in education, which is important to political stability and economic growth. The strong government influence is well witnessed in elementary school teacher training since elementary education is compulsory in Korea (Y. H. Kim, 2000; Lee et al., 1994). The government even determines the entrants’ quota of every institute at an annual base (H. S. Kim, 2000, p. 56).

With regard to exclusiveness, it should be noted that basically there is no other way to become an elementary school teacher other than receiving education from the national universities of education (Cha, 2000, pp. 11-15). According to the Article 42 of “Higher Education Law,” only the central or provincial government can establish universities of education that intend to train elementary school teacher candidates. This means that all the universities of education are national of which have exclusive responsibility and authority to train elementary school teachers. The rationale of a national system is that, considering the importance of elementary education, the government carries the responsibility to provide an adequate number and quality of the teaching force (Cha, 2000, pp. 11-15). This is called an “objective-oriented system,” or
“closed system” of teacher training in Korea (Y. H. Kim, 2000, p. 39). In this closed system, the government’s role to control teacher supply and training must be reinforced.

The second characteristic is related to the first one. In such a national system in which the government plays a critical role, uniformity is inevitably a norm well observed in the operations among universities. For instance, uniformity of curriculum (including required courses), student admission policy, and scholarships are easily observed. With regard to curriculum, as dictated by “The Higher Education Law,” colleges and universities must provide general core curriculum, which is then further divided into elective and required courses. All teacher education institutions must follow this set of guidelines, which clearly outlines credit hours spent on each curricular area. Over a four-year period, every student in the national universities of education is required to take a total of 150-151 credit hours. The guidelines set up by the government help establish uniformity among national universities of education (Korean Ministry of Education and Korean Educational Development Institute [MOE & KEDI]), 1996. In fact, the curricula of the 12 national universities of education are all almost identical to the curriculum of the Seoul National University of Education as an example (Table 2).

Table 2
Example of Curriculum: Seoul National University of Education, 2002

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Classification:</th>
<th>Subject Offering</th>
<th>Credits</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>General</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Required</td>
<td>Philosophy 2 and 15 subjects</td>
<td>33 (35)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Electives</td>
<td>General logic 2 and 29 subjects</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Classification:</th>
<th>Subject Offering</th>
<th>Credits</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Specialized</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Required Courses</td>
<td>Foundation of elementary education 2 and 8 subjects</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Optional Courses</td>
<td>Educational technology 2 and 2 subjects</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Specialized subject &amp; Extracurricular activities</td>
<td>Elementary school ethics education 12 and 25 subjects</td>
<td>48 (59)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Art and Physical Education</td>
<td>Practice in elementary school physical education</td>
<td>5 (10) (117-127)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Specialized course</td>
<td>12 courses by specialization, each worth 20 credits</td>
<td>20 (20-30)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teaching practice</td>
<td>Observational practice [1 week] and 4 subjects</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discretionary subject</td>
<td>2 courses</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>150 (168-178)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: The numbers indicate credit hours; the numbers in parenthesis indicate class hours.
Source: Seoul National University of Education (http://www.snue.ac.kr)
Student admission policies of the national universities of education generally follow those of the general universities and colleges in regards to methods and procedures for student selection. However, since 1991, national universities of education have adopted interviews and aptitude tests, which count for 5% to 10% of the applicant’s total evaluation considering the uniqueness and the professionalism of teaching. Each university is requested to develop their own strategy and method for the interview and aptitude test, but uniformity is observable not only in the adoption of the policy itself but as well in their strategies and methods so chosen (H. S. Kim, 2000, p. 60; Lee et al., 1994).

On matters regarding scholarship, uniformity also exists. To attract and retain competent students, the national universities of education provide scholarships of the same name for 40% of their students. In the past, students attending national universities of education were exempted from paying tuition. However, a court decision in 1989 abolished all such privileges. In response, a special scholarship, called the “Sado Scholarship,” was introduced in an effort to attract high quality candidates to national universities of education (H. S. Kim, 2000, p. 60-61).

The third characteristic is the rapid upgrading and expansion. The national universities of education have continuously expanded and upgraded their programs from upper secondary level to four-year university level and then to the graduate school level. As reviewed in the previous section, elementary school teacher training began in 1895 as a normal school’s program at the upper secondary level. In 1962, normal schools were upgraded to two-year junior colleges, and they again upgraded to four-year colleges in 1981. They finally acquired the “university” title in 1993, and have had graduate schools of education added in 1996. Their expansion seems to be a successful example of teacher education institutes.

But this rapid expansion has created some problems. Among them, the lack of compromise or openness among faculty members and students of national universities of education deserves attention here. When the shortage of elementary school teachers occurred in 2000 and 2001, the government proposed a measure to solve the problem, allowing secondary school teaching certificate holders to enter elementary schools as subject-based teachers in such fields as music, art, and physical education. Faculty members and students of national universities of education uniformly and strongly opposed to the proposal (Chosun Daily Newspaper, 15 October 2001). Their position even
opposes the proposal that secondary teaching certificate holders may be admitted into the junior year of national universities of education. Notwithstanding, the government implements the proposal in 2002. The government could not activate its policy proposal for temporary teacher training programs due to strong opposition from the national universities of education. In any case, it seems to be obvious that at present the national universities of education work as a strong interest group in Korean teacher education (Chosun Daily Newspaper, 15 October 2001).\(^6\)

And fourth, not all generally expected features of universities can be found in the national universities of education, because they are objective-oriented universities. The difference between national universities of education and other comprehensive universities is that the institutional scale of the national universities of education is very small, as compared with other comprehensive universities. Each of 11 national universities of education per each region is organized with one undergraduate school and one graduate school (http://www.snue.ac.kr). Not only the numbers of schools but also the student and professor population and these university’s facilities are too small to deserve a university title. For example, Incheon National University of Education has the largest student population – only 2,716 students (http://www.incheon-e.ac.kr), and Jeju National University of Education has the smallest student population - 603 (http://www.jejue.ac.kr). The Korea National University of Education that trains both elementary and secondary school teachers has slightly larger size, but they do not have various fields of study except education. All national universities of education show features of an objective-oriented university (http://www.knue.ac.kr).

REFLECTIONS ON THE NATIONAL SYSTEM

In this section, strengths and weakness, issues, future directions of the national system as represented by the national universities of education are to be discussed. In addition, implications for reforming teacher education system are to be drawn.

Strengths and Weakness of the National System

The Korean national system of elementary teacher training has revealed some weaknesses as well as strengths. Its strengths can be summarized as the
following. First, it is possible for the government to control the teacher supply to some degree, as intended. As mentioned earlier, the government has pre-calculated the number of necessary teachers and decided entrants’ quota of each of national universities of education at an annual base. Forecasting teacher demand for the next year and the years after is usually possible by the examination of usual teacher retirement rate and additional factors, such as class size policy, as long as the teacher labor market is under a predictable situation, although the calculation may not be accurate. In fact, Korea has achieved the balance between teacher supply and demand at the elementary school level, owing to the national system. It should be noted that Korea, at the same time, has experienced an excessive over-supply at the secondary school level that adopts an open system consisting of both national and private tertiary institutes (H. S. Kim, 2000; Jin, 1997). Therefore, the balancing of teacher supply and demand can be argued as the prominent advantage that the national system has.

Second, the national system has advantages in quality control of the teaching force. As observed earlier, the government directs not only total credit hours but also subject names of the national universities of education (Hwang et al., 1995; J. B. Kim, 1996; Lee et al., 1994). The Ministry of Education and Human Resources Development often send official documents to regulate the curriculum and other university operations. One of the reasons for this practice is that the government has founded and funded the national universities of education. Of course, there are criticisms on these practices. When the government prescribes and tightly supervises the curriculum and others features, it may positively influence the quality of teacher education because the control implies the standardization of curriculum and other educational conditions. One benefit of the national system is that the graduates from the 12 different institutes are pretty much the same in terms of their basic skills and proficiencies.

Third, the national system has advantage in attracting high quality candidates into the teaching profession, because employment after graduation of national universities is guaranteed to a reasonable degree. In particular, when the economic condition is bad or uncertain, the merit of the national system of teacher training becomes obvious. In fact, when Korea experienced economic crisis under the International Monetary Fund’s supervision in 1997, elementary teaching became one of the most attractive alternative to college students because of the relative ease of getting employed. Further, the recent teacher
shortage in the elementary schools since 2000 has reinforced the national system’s edge. In turn, the average competition rate of the examination for admittance to the junior year of national universities of education was 13.5:1 (http://www.gosi-times.com). It is astonishing when considering the fact that the qualification requirements of the applicants were completion of program at a four-year comprehensive university and the holding of secondary teaching certificates. In this particular case though, it is questionable whether their quality is high enough comparable to ordinary students of national universities of education, because many housewives who had never taught also applied for the examination (http://www.gosi-times.com).

In any case, nowadays, it is common sense that entrants to national universities of education are academically more capable as compared with former entrance groups before the economic crisis and comparable with other major groups excepting medicine or law.7

On the other hand, weaknesses of the national system of teacher training are also inevitable. First, there has been a criticism about the graduates from the national universities of education that they are not well grounded in liberal arts and humanities, and that they generally have a narrow perspective or limited mind. This is because they are trained just as the military officers under a rigid curriculum. In fact, students of the national universities of education actually take almost identical courses with little electives. Even though some courses are classified as electives, they are similar to requirements in terms of their operation. The classrooms in these universities look like high school classrooms as they divide every 40 students by class (Lee, 1998, pp. 146-149). Consequently, they are not familiar with co-existence or compromise among different people or different styles of thinking. This characteristic of the program is troublesome, because the society in the 21st century requires members who are more openness, flexibilities, and humanistic approaches.

Second, the critical role of the government in the operation and emphasis on uniformity, including curriculum among national universities of education, may lead to the lack of creativity and operational flexibility, and thus resulting in inferior quality of the program (H. S. Kim, 2000, p. 61; 2001; Y. H. Kim, 2000, pp. 39-40). Uniformity created by the government would seriously limit creative thinking and voluntary efforts among faculty members and students. Further, uniform curriculum itself shows some limitations. The subject titles and actual contents of the curriculum are often selective and very narrow,
because they follow the expertise of the faculty members. This is even more serious in advanced courses. This is a problem because elementary school teachers are expected to have integrated knowledge rather than narrow and partitioned knowledge. Additionally, lack of practical training in diverse teaching methods is another problem in the curriculum arena (Lee, 1998, 1999).

Third, maintaining the national system is troublesome in terms of economies of scale. The government intends to maintain in such a way the national system that each region can produce sufficient numbers of teachers according to demand. Thus, there are 12 national universities, one each in every major city or province. As a result, the sizes of national universities of education have become relatively small as compared with other comprehensive universities. There seems to be a strong relationship between small scale and poor educational conditions in terms of facilities and the quality of teaching staff (Kim & Lee, 1999; Lee, 1999, p. 85). These conditions may hinder quality control in teacher training.

In addition, the government needs to accept great financial burden in order to operate the national system. The financial burden of the government for operation of this national system is great. As the government provides all financial support, the cost burden is inevitably very high. The government pays more than 80 million dollars for national universities of education every year (MOE & KEDI, 2001, p. 933). Therefore, it has been doubtful if the current system is cost-effective. Fundamentally, the key question is whether operation only by public money is necessary or inevitable for teacher training.

Related Issues

There are many issues about the national system and national universities of education. The first issue relates to the faith of teacher supply-demand balance of the national system. The issue is whether the national system really has the advantage in acquiring the balance of teacher demand and supply. Ironically, the national system could sometimes hinder balance because of its closed features. In Korea, when the emergency situation of great teacher shortages occurred in 2000 and 2001, it was witnessed that the national system did not work adequately to meet the new teacher demand.

Let us examine this aspect in detail. The long-persistent situation of balance at
the elementary level and over-supply at the secondary level was changed suddenly after the implementation of a policy of lowering teachers' retirement ages from 65 to 62 and activating an early retirement system in 1998. Many aged teachers who were disappointed with the teacher policies had chosen to retire early (G. J. Kim, 1999; Pak, 2000). The simultaneous retirement of teachers of ages between 62 and 65 and the early retirement rush resulted in the teacher shortage. The situation was more serious at the elementary schools (Park, 2001). In 1999, 8,789 out of 137,577 elementary school teachers (6.4%) and in 2000, 10,244 out of 140,000 (7.3%) left the teaching profession (http://www.nso.go.kr). These figures are quite different with turnover rates of previous years or the year 2001 and after (see Table 3).

Table 3

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Rate</td>
<td>1.9</td>
<td>1.9</td>
<td>1.2</td>
<td>6.4</td>
<td>7.3</td>
<td>1.9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Korean National Statistics Organization (http://www.nso.go.kr)

The second issue relates to the debates on the objective-oriented system versus an open system for teacher training. The disagreements are becoming wider (Y. H. Kim, 2000). The national universities of education insist that teacher professionalism in elementary teaching and high commitment can be cultivated only through the objective-oriented system, because students are trained for the purpose from the very beginning of admission. In contrast, training institutes for secondary school teaching never agree with that argument. They contend that the open training system through comprehensive universities has more advantages in training creativity, openness, and flexibility that are essential for teachers in the changing society of the 21st century (Han, 1997; Song, 2000). The gap and disagreements between the two positions have become larger and deeper. Consequently, it leads to serious conflicts between them.

The third one is about recruitment policies of the so-called “elementary school teachers with secondary certificates” and “admission into junior year at national universities of education recommended by superintendents.” These are currently hot issues in Korean teacher training. The issue about whether secondary teaching certificate holders can teach at elementary schools in effect raises more questions about the meaning of professionalism exclusive in elementary teaching. The outline of the policy on “elementary school teachers with secondary certificate” is that the government in 1999 employed 3,866 secondary teaching certificate holders who graduated from general
comprehensive universities as subject teachers specializing in art, music, physical education, computers, and elementary English, after passing examinations and completing a pre-service training of 1,200 hours (Chosun Daily Newspaper, 15 October 2001).

This policy might be considered an extension of the previous policy on subject teacher recruitment. In the 1990s, some elementary school teachers specialized in these areas were recruited or appointed as “subject teachers” to improve teaching in those subject areas in elementary schools. However, in the case of 1999, there was a possibility that those subject teachers might be transferred to the posts as regular teachers because of the serious teacher shortage. National universities of education strongly opposed this policy arguing that professionalism in elementary education would be compromised. Students and faculty members of national universities of education demonstrated and boycotted classes; thus, it became a social problem in which the process was reported in mass communications. The opposition and resistance against the new policy were strong enough to make the government to abort the policy after its implementation in 1999 (Chosun Daily Newspaper, 15 October 2001).

The situation became worsen when the government proposed in 2001 another recruitment policy - “admission into junior year at national universities of education recommended by superintendents.” According to the presidential education reform policy of “class size reduction to 35 by the year 2003,” (Chosun Daily Newspaper, 30 July 2001) more elementary school teachers are needed, but there is no resource pool of elementary teachers. In this additional emergency situation, the government first proposed the establishment of temporary teacher training institutes. In light of the strong opposition from national universities of education, the government proposed an alternative policy that screens and employs 4,000 secondary teaching certificate holders after completing in national universities of education one year pre-service training of 70 credit hours. Again, demonstrations and class-boycotts made the arrangement a social problem.

At last, a compromised proposal has been announced and is in the process of implementation in 2002. According to the plan, the boards of education in the six rural regions where teacher shortages are more serious are to select a total of 2,500 secondary teaching certificate holders and admit them into the junior year of national universities of education by recommendation of superintendents (http://www.gosi-times.com; http://www.moe.go.kr). After
graduation of a two-year study period, they are supposed to be employed at elementary schools within the region. Again, different criticism is emerging about this policy: the educational conditions of national universities of education may worsen because of the sudden increases of students even though the classes are scheduled during school vacation time.

**Future Directions**

The national system and the universities of education are likely to develop in the following directions in the future. First, reinforcement of the current objective-oriented or closed national system is anticipated in the near future. As witnessed in the cases of teacher recruitment policies, such as “elementary school teachers with secondary certificate” in 1999 and “admission into junior year at national universities of education recommended by superintendents” in 2001, there is no tendency of the objective-oriented or closed system to make attempt to coexist with different kinds of system or to have itself transformed into an open system. The national universities of education may contend their professionalism exclusive in elementary education more strongly and emphasize the advantages of their system. This means that the other universities, except the Ewha Women University, cannot get themselves involved in elementary teacher training. In turn, the current parallel systems of elementary and secondary education are to be continued in the foreseeable future in spite of long debates in society.

Second, the national universities of education are expected to continue their continuous expansion and upgrading. Considering their energetic and continuous efforts, offering doctoral degrees in elementary education could come true someday in this decade. In addition, relatively poor educational conditions of the national universities of education are supposed to be upgraded by a recent funding plan. On 10 May 2002, the government announced a massive extra funding plan of more than 230 million dollars for national universities of education in the next five years (2002-2007) (Korean Ministry of Education and Human Resources Development, 2002).

Third, the task recruiting male students to the universities would remain a constant problem. The rapid growth of the female teacher population appears to be negatively affecting the recruitment and retention of high quality male teachers. This tendency has resulted in the lowering of the socio-economic status of the teaching profession. Therefore, attracting high quality male
candidates into teaching seems to be a policy priority at this point. Scholarships and a waiver system for military service could be considered for this purpose. In the near future, however, teacher training policy will also have to focus on attracting bright female candidates, who may also choose other more prosperous careers that were previously closed to women (H. S. Kim, 2000).

Fourth, once the current emergency situation of teacher shortage is dealt with by 2004 (http://home.ewha.ac.kr; http://pax.hoseo.ac.kr), the usual size of the entrants to the universities will appear again and continue in the future: although demand for elementary school teachers will decrease due to the decrease of student population at the elementary school level, the policy direction to reduce class size of elementary schools will create the need for more teachers.

And fifth, restructuring the national system will once again become an issue in teacher education because of the economies of scale. Most national universities of education, except two or three universities, have very poor educational conditions mainly due to their small sizes. Many secondary level training institutes suffer from extreme over-supply of teaching certificate holders (H. S. Kim, 2000; Kwak, 1999). Therefore, the possibility of consolidation among teacher pre-service training institutes was intensively researched on, as the Presidential Commission on Education Reform had proposed in 1996 (Pak & Kim, 1997). Restructuring could be possible among national institutes in the region or between national and private institutes at different school levels. Restructuring will be an important issue, and its policy alternatives are already under policy discussion.

**Implications For Reforming Teacher Education System**

One might be interested in the national system when considering reforms of teacher education because of its advantage in balancing teacher supply and demand. Implications from the Korean experiences are three-fold. First, it does not seem to be a good idea to attempt to transform the pre-existing different systems to a national system. As discussed earlier, the national system in which the government takes all the responsibilities of establishing institutes, financing the program, and controlling the program obviously has efficacy in a sense. It can control teacher supply in order to meet teacher demand in terms of quantity and quality, and can pursue pre-planned programs as the government intends.
But the uniformity and poor quality of the program may produce a teaching corps whose creativity and open spirit are relatively poor (Han, 1997). When considering both positive and negative effects, a closed or exclusive national system like the Korean case does not appear desirable. An alternative is that the national universities play a certain role with private universities under the condition of no excessive over-supply. This means a shared responsibility between the national and private universities in the proportion of “half-half”; “70%-30%”; or “60%-40%” (depending on the situation).

Second, if one is to redesign the teacher training system, the total capacity of teacher training institutes seems to be desirable when it is between 150% and 200%. The case of national universities of education in Korea tells that 110%-120% supply of expected teacher demand is not enough and brings numerous problems when various factors such as classroom reduction policies affect. Then, excessive over-supply like 500% as observed at the secondary level in Korea reveals more serious problems (H. S. Kim, 2000; Kwak, 1999). Therefore, the capacity of training institutes should be bigger than the current number, while a little increase seems desirable.

And third, success of teacher reform with the national system is much more difficult. Under the national system, most efforts to improve teacher education in Korea have been initiated by the government. This situation implicates that voluntary bottom-up reform in teacher training is hard to take place within the national system (H. S. Kim, 2001). As a result, the quality of teacher education becomes doubtful, and most reforms could not succeed in the real sense although the national universities of education have produced an adequate number of teachers and have expanded their programs. Balancing voluntary participation and planned push from initiators and balancing top-down and bottom-up reforms are important tasks to be well performed.

CONCLUSION

Reviewed in this article is the national system of teacher training, which is composed of 12 national universities of education. The foci of review include historical development, major characteristics, strengths and weaknesses, issues, and with future directions, and implications for reforming teacher education.

Throughout the article, the author has tried to figure out whether the Korean...
national system has really had more advantages when it is in comparison to an open system in which national and private institutes constituting numerous tracks coexist. The answer to this question is that the national system where only national universities play an exclusive role, as observed in Korea, seems not to be the best choice because of its disadvantages, including a lack of creativity, uniformity, and excessive burden on the government.

Therefore, the conclusion of this article is that it is necessary to re-examine the exclusive position of national universities of education even if the objective-orientation of the system is pursued. In other words, the national system of elementary teacher training needs to be modified so that private institutes are allowed to join in the training to some degree. The desired system could be characterized as “a modified national system” or “an open system based on the national institutes.”

Consequently, countries that intend to restructure their teacher training system in order to meet demand for teachers may adopt the national system idea, but it should not be an exclusive system. Even though the establishment of more national institutes is desirable, sharing responsibility between national and private institutes is more important and more desirable.

NOTES

1Ewha Women University is the only exception of the national system for elementary school teacher training.

2Training for secondary school teachers is offered by national and private universities and can follow four different avenues in Korea: colleges of education (both national and private), teacher certification programs, departments of education, and graduate schools of education. All of them are programs that belong to comprehensive universities. In the beginning, during the 1960s and 1970s, private institutes contributed to the decreasing of great teacher shortage. Later, more private institutes wanted to establish the training departments and programs, but the government failed to control them. On the other hand, teacher demand became stable since the 1980s. Therefore, excessive over-supply took place during the 1980s and it continues today.

3In the case of elementary school teacher training, the over-supply was not serious, but a little over-supply had happened because of low teacher turnover rate and the government’s failure of immediate response to the change. It should be considered that it is hard to forecast the exact number of teacher demand and there always is a time difference between demand and supply because of four-year teacher training.
Depending on the so-called closed (elementary) or open (secondary) system of teacher training, the possibility to pass the teacher selection examination is very high at the elementary teaching level (around 80-95%), but very low at the secondary teaching level (around 20%).

Changing the title to “national university of education” seems to be a result of the institutes’ strong desire and the government’s consideration after abolishing their privileges to graduates of the national institutes in 1990. Previously, using the name of “university” was a privilege granted to the comprehensive universities that consist of different kinds of several colleges. The new order adopted a looser standard. In Korea, the public conception was that universities were superior to colleges that exist as an independent institute.

A total of 2,500 secondary teaching certificate holders are admitted into national universities in order to solve teacher shortage this year. Due to the universities’ lack of capacities, they are supposed to have classes during school vacation period.

However, the general trend for last decade is that the quality of teacher candidates has fallen significantly, since many bright young people are being lured into other occupations and new industries. This trend is true for secondary school teacher training, but it is a little different in the case of national universities of education.

In the case of secondary school teachers, meeting new demands does not seem hard because of the huge pool of teaching force.

As being observed in many developing and industrialized countries, approximately 62.7% of the elementary school teachers and some 72.8% of the students at teachers college in Korea are female in 1999 according to the Statistical Yearbook of Education (MOE & KEDI, 1999). Furthermore, these percentages are consistently growing. This trend indicates that teaching is a preferred category of employment for female college students, but not for male college students.

REFERENCES


Towards Professionalization of Teachers in China: One hundred-year Effort of Beijing Normal University

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Abstract
This paper traces the development of teacher education of China. It takes Beijing Normal University as a case for illustration, as Beijing Normal University is the oldest and the leading teacher education institution in China. Described in this paper are the origins of modern teacher education in China, the movement of upgrading teachers colleges into universities, and the rapid development of teacher education after 1949. The author argues that there are financial crisis, quality crisis, and identity crisis to deal with in the process of further developing teacher education in China. Finally, the author introduces the current efforts to make teaching a genuine profession in China.

As Beijing Normal University is approaching the 100th anniversary of its founding, it is constructive to reflect on how the University has developed over the course of the past century. The history of Beijing Normal University represents in a way the history of China’s modern teacher education. The whole society of China now is transforming very fast. While the educational system is moving towards the center of the society, it has become very vulnerable and easy to get blamed, just as its counterparts in other countries. Teacher education has been challenged and has to change very frequently, but different aspects of the society do not always agree with each other about the directions of the changes. The teacher education institutions in China should never ever forget that the greatest contribution they could provide to the development of China’s school system is to promote professionalization of teachers. A historical perspective can enlighten the future development course of professionalization of teachers in China, which is presented in this paper.
THE ESTABLISHMENT OF TEACHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS

The establishment of Beijing Normal University in 1902 marked the beginning of teacher education in China.¹ The emperor, His Majesty Guangxu of the Qing Dynasty, issued the “1902 School Law” on 15 August 1902. The law stipulated that a Shifanguan (division of teacher education) should be set up and attached to Jingshidaaxuetang (the Imperial University, which Peking University, the nation’s best university, grew out from). Then, the Division of Teacher Education was established in the Imperial University in December 1902. The Division was the first teacher training institution at the higher education level in China. Beijing Normal University grew out from it.

The Division enrolled 79 students in its first class in 1902. Later on, there were some additional students enrolled to the first class. The official learning period stipulated by the Law was three years. But the 1902 class stayed at the Division for five years. They were all required to take 14 courses, including ethics, Chinese classics, education, calligraphy, writing, mathematics, domestic and world history, domestic and world geography, science, physics, chemistry, a foreign language, painting, and physical education. The first 108 students graduated with Diploma in Teaching in 1907. The Division adopted a new name of Youjishfanke (Advanced Normal Department) in 1903.

The establishment of the Division of Teacher Education was indeed the first serious step taken towards achieving professionalization of teachers. Before that, there had been no formal training for teaching and, in general opinion, there was no need for teachers to receive professional training in order to join the teaching vocation, for anybody with some knowledge in certain fields were qualified to teach.

There were two rationales behind the establishment of the Division. Firstly, witnessed was a growing number of new schools (Xinxuetang). The so-called new schools were those schools that followed foreign models. In 1895, there were only 20 new schools in China. The Qing government ordered on 14 September 1901 the transformation of all traditional schools into new schools. After that, the new schools mushroomed in China. In 1903, there were 769 of them and 8,277 of them in 1905. With this growing number of new schools, there was certainly a great need of teachers suitable to teach in the new schools. And secondly, if the schools were operated in foreign models, there should be
teacher education institutions that adopted foreign models in order to supply teachers to satisfy the special needs of those schools (Li & Wang, 2000, pp. 267-302).

The emperor issued the "1904 School Law" on 13 January 1904. The Law prescribed the restructuring of teacher education institutions in China. The Law stipulated that the Advanced Normal Department be separated from the Imperial University and renamed Jingshi Youjishifanxuetang (Beijing^2 Advanced Normal School). The Law further stipulated all the provinces build an advanced normal school in their capital cities – the Law required the establishment of Chunjishifanxuetang (normal school) in all counties; as a realistic arrangement, all provinces were ordered to first build a normal school in their capital cities. According to the Law, the advanced normal school was to prepare secondary school and normal school teachers, and the normal school was to prepare primary school teachers.

Beijing Advanced Normal School became independent from the Imperial University in 1908. It admitted secondary school and normal school graduates. The enrollment of 1908 was 80. For the freshman year the students were all required to take a core curriculum consisted of ethics, Chinese classics, Chinese literature, Japanese, English, eloquence, mathematics, and physical education. The students went to class 36 hours per week. For the rest of the three years, the students took specialized studies in one of the four groups, namely, Chinese literature and foreign languages; geography and history; mathematics, physics and chemistry; botany, mineralogy, and physiology. For a major, the students had to take class 36 hours a week. There was an additional year for students who were willing to stay for additional study. But in fact the School was not able to offer the additional year of study then. All the costs of study were borne by the government, and the students were obligated to teach for at least six years after graduation.

Along with Beijing Advanced Normal School located in the national capital, other advanced normal schools were built in different province capitals, namely, Zhili Advanced Normal School, Liangguang Advanced Normal School, Henan Advanced Normal School, Fujian Advanced Normal School, Hunan Advanced Normal School, and Shandong Advanced Normal School.

In 1907, the Qing government issued an order to build a female normal school in each county. According to the order, the female normal school was to
prepare teachers for female primary schools and kindergartens. It also aimed to
prepare better housewives. It was to admit primary school graduates at age 15
or above. All the students were waived of tuition. The study period was three
years. It offered moral character cultivation, education, Chinese, history,
geography, mathematics, science, drawing, home economics, sewing,
handicraft, music, and physical education. The male staff had to be moral and
at the age of over 50, and their office had to be outside of the campus. In 1908,
Jingshi Nuzishifanxuetang (Beijing Women's Advanced Normal School) was
founded to set an example.

This was a second serious step towards achieving professionalization of
teachers - a complete structure of teacher education institutions was
established, consisting of a group of advanced normal schools and a good
number of normal schools. As a group, the teacher education institutions had
stronger impact on various levels of education in China. The teachers with
specialized knowledge acquired in their teacher education so received
produced stronger voice in society (Li & Wang, 2000, pp. 343-345).

Immediately after the imperial government was overturned and the new
republic was established in 1911, the president issued a new school law and the
Ministry of Education promulgated the Decree of Teacher Education following
the law in 1912. The teacher education institutions were categorized into
normal schools and teachers colleges. The former was to prepare primary
school teachers and the latter was to prepare secondary school teachers. The
former was supported financially by provincial governments and the latter by
the national government. They all had to have “lab” schools. The tuition was
waived for all the students in teacher training institutions.

According to the decree, Beijing Advanced Normal School became the
National Beijing Teachers College in May 1912. The College offered one year
pre-college program, three year undergraduate program, and one or two year
graduate program. The pre-college program enrolled graduates of normal
schools and secondary schools and, when the students finished one year of
study, they were admitted to the undergraduate program. In the pre-college
period, the students were required to take ethics, Chinese, English,
mathematics, drawing, music, and physical education. At the undergraduate
level, the students were streamed into different divisions. In 1913, there were
Division of English, Division of Physics and Chemistry, Division of History
and Geography, and Division of Integrated Science. In 1915, the Division of
Chinese and Division of Mathematics and Physics were formed. Short specialized programs in education, Chinese, handicraft, and drawing were offered in the same year. A music program and a vocational education program were added in 1916. A short specialized program in physical education was offered in 1917.

The graduate program in education first enrolled 32 students from the College’s undergraduate programs and from other colleges and universities. The graduate students took 24 courses in philosophy, psychology, education, biology, and sociology. Gradually, the other divisions provided graduate programs. In April 1922, 16 graduate students completed their study and were granted Bachelor of Education degree. This could be considered as a milestone achievement in the Chinese history of education, for it was the first time for Chinese colleges and universities to admit graduate students by examination and to grant degrees. Along with Beijing Teachers College, the national government founded four national teachers colleges in different district of teacher education and National Beijing Female Teachers College. With all these progress, the National Beijing Teachers College took a leading role in the enhancement of professionalization of teachers.

THE MOVEMENT OF UPGRADING TEACHERS COLLEGE INTO UNIVERSITY

China’s school structure had followed the Japanese model up to 1920; it was then more influenced by the American model in the 1920s. American scholars, such as John Dewey, Paul Monroe, G. R. Tuiss, and W. A. Mecall, all came to China to promote American concepts of education and school system in the early 1920s. The state president signed and issued “The Resolution on School System Reform” on 1 November 1922, which adopted American “6-3-3” school system (6 years for primary school; 3 years for lower secondary school; and 3 years for upper secondary school) (Li & Wang, 2000, pp. 54-55). The new system meant that the new college entrants were going to have six years of secondary education instead of four years before they entered college. This progress laid a foundation to promote the teachers college into the university.

But a question remained: whether the teachers college should be upgraded to an independent normal university or it should be integrated into the comprehensive university. Some scholars and decision-makers were for the
independent normal university, but others against the idea. They thought that if the teacher training institution kept independent, it could hardly produce qualified teachers with high level content knowledge in their teaching subjects, as secondary school graduates with high academic achievement would not be willing to apply to become members of the independent teacher training institution, and the existing independent teachers colleges were poorly equipped in facilities and teaching staff. The crux behind this debate was whether the teachers should be professionalized.

In view of the debate, the new school law issued in 1922 could be considered a compromise: as the National Beijing Teachers College “was established earlier and had graduate divisions,” it “should be first to be upgraded to a normal university” (Gu et al., 1990, Vol. 2, p. 115). Beijing Teachers College formally became Beijing Normal University in 1923. Beijing Female Teachers College was upgraded to Beijing Female Normal University in 1924 and emerged to Beijing Normal University in 1931. The other five national teachers colleges located in different teacher education districts were either transformed into comprehensive universities or incorporated into comprehensive universities.

This movement should have strengthened teacher education in China, but in fact it hurt it very much. Firstly, as the formal teacher education was just organized at that time, it needed some time to take root in the higher education system, to gain support from other sectors of the society, and to establish standards of the teaching profession. Secondly, when teacher education became an academic discipline in a comprehensive university, it tended to be looked down to, as it was not as mature as other disciplines. And thirdly, without a group of independent teacher education institutions to mass-produce qualified teachers, the need of trained teachers could hardly be satisfied. According to a survey, there were 651,633 primary and secondary school teachers in 27 provinces, but only 27.7% among them had received certain teacher professional training (Liu, 2001, p. 32).

At this critical moment, Beijing Normal University upheld the banner of independent teachers colleges and universities, and continued its efforts in professionalization of teachers. While Beijing Normal University remained its independent position, it did everything towards a real university. It prolonged its pre-college program to two years and its undergraduate program to four years. The students were undertaking study. It adopted
academic departments at the bottom level. It had departments of education, Chinese, English, history and geography, mathematics, physics, chemistry, and biology. The Department of History and the Department of Geography grew out of the Department of History and Geography in 1928. And a short program in physical education was upgraded to the Department of Physical Education in 1930. Its charter was revised in 1933. In the new charter, the mission of the University was to “mainly prepare secondary school and normal school teachers, meanwhile to train educational administrators and to do research in education and other related fields” (http://www.bnu.edu.cn/). This was the first time for a teacher education institution to have educational research as its mission. Educational research would lay foundations for professional knowledge of teachers. This clearly is an important step towards professionalization of teachers.

Following Beijing Normal University’s example, more independent teachers colleges and universities were established. In 1949, there were 12 independent teachers colleges and universities, with an enrollment of 12,039 students (Department of Planning, Ministry of Education, 1984, pp. 50-55). In short, China had formed a mixed model of teacher education institutions before 1949, which was consisted of teachers colleges and universities, departments or colleges of education within comprehensive universities, and normal schools.

THE RAPID DEVELOPMENT OF TEACHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS AFTER 1949

The new republic was established in 1949. After 1949 China had dramatic changes in all aspects of the society. The Soviet Union provided models for almost all the directed changes. The higher education system was totally restructured, copying Russian model in 1952 and 1953. First of all, all private higher education institutions were taken over by the government. Second, all short-cycle colleges were rebuilt into specialized two or three year colleges. And third, all colleges and universities were turned into either single-subject ones, such as agriculture, industry, medicine or foreign language ones, or universities of social sciences and science (Li & Wang, 2000, pp. 95-98).

For teacher education, there was one additional reason to have restructuring. As the government launched a major drive to popularize primary and secondary education, the country was in need of a good number of teachers.
The first national congress of teacher education was held in 1951. The congress set five guiding principles for restructuring teacher education system: (1) teachers colleges and universities independent from comprehensive universities should be consolidated and their academic departments strengthened; (2) colleges of education of comprehensive universities should be turned into independent teachers colleges and departments of social sciences and science be added afterwards; (3) departments of education of comprehensive universities should be integrated into independent teachers colleges and universities; (4) a few colleges of arts of comprehensive universities should be turned into independent teachers colleges; (5) there should be at least one full-scale teachers college or university developed in each administrative region (covering several provinces), and all provinces and metropolises should have short-cycle teachers colleges or regular teachers colleges.

After restructuring, China gained again an independent teacher education system consisted of (1) normal schools, which admitted lower secondary school graduates, provided three or four year study programs, and prepared primary school teachers; (2) short-cycle teachers colleges, which admitted upper secondary school graduates, provided two or three year study programs, and prepared lower secondary school teachers; (3) teachers colleges and universities, which admitted upper secondary school graduates, provided four to five year study programs, and prepared upper secondary school teachers; and (4) teacher in-service training institutions. This system lasted almost half a century in China. With this system, teacher education had developed very fast (except in the period of the Cultural Revolution) (see Table 1).

**Table 1**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>No. of Teachers Colleges and Universities</th>
<th>No. of Normal Schools</th>
<th>Teachers College and University Enrollment</th>
<th>Normal School Enrollment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1949</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>610</td>
<td>12,039</td>
<td>61,370</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1952</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>916</td>
<td>31,551</td>
<td>93,007</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1959</td>
<td>175</td>
<td>1,365</td>
<td>192,285</td>
<td>374,882</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1965</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>394</td>
<td>94,268</td>
<td>151,789</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1976</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>982</td>
<td>109,731</td>
<td>304,356</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1980</td>
<td>172</td>
<td>1,017</td>
<td>338,197</td>
<td>482,108</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1989</td>
<td>256</td>
<td>1,044</td>
<td>492,057</td>
<td>684,627</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1999</td>
<td>227</td>
<td>815</td>
<td>845,354</td>
<td>922,956</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Sources: Department of Planning, the Ministry of Education (1984, 1999)
After 1949, the government gave a special attention to Beijing Normal University in order to make it a model for other teacher training institutions. In the movement of higher education restructuring in the early 1950s, Catholic University, Beijing Short-cycle College of Physical Education, the College of Science of University of China, the Department of Education of Yenching University, the Research Division of Education, and the Short Program of Education of the Renmin University of China were all incorporated into Beijing Normal University.

After restructuring, the enrollment increased and reached to 2,300 students. A totally new campus was built. In 1955 it started to offer teacher in-service training programs. Following the Russian model, the undergraduate programs were prolonged to five years. Russian specialists were invited to the campus. The pedagogical theories of Kairov (a well-known Russian educator) were taught in the education courses. His ideas about education, such as stressing the relations between the communist moral education and intellectual development, stressing systematic mastering of basic knowledge and fundamental skills, stressing teachers’ central role in learning, and stressing order in the classroom were taught in the teacher training programs. His ideas may sound very traditional from today’s perspective, but at that time they at least made pedagogy an important part in the curriculum of teacher education. Therefore, the theories contributed towards the professionalization of teachers.

In 1960, some new fields, such as atomic energy, radio, radiochemistry and biophysics, were introduced to the University and the Department of Astronomy was formed. Later on, nuclear physics and cell biology were introduced too. This progress marked the beginning of the serious effort of making the University a center of research. This progress certainly had a potential to make teachers more professionalized, but it opened a new round of debates on whether a teacher training institution should move towards a full comprehensive university and on whether a secondary school teacher need frontier knowledge in his or her teaching subjects and related fields.

Just when teacher education institutions moved forward with their full force, the Cultural Revolution was launched in 1966, generating drastic and substantial negative impact upon China. Teacher education was one of the worst disastrous areas and Beijing Normal University was a center of turmoil.
THE CURRENT DEVELOPMENT AND REFORMS

When the Cultural Revolution ended in 1976, teacher education institutions entered into a new era for development. As table 1 shows, the number of teachers colleges and universities jumped from 58 in 1976 to 172 in 1980, and the enrollment from 109,731 to 338,197 during the same four year period.

After the Cultural Revolution, Beijing Normal University had a rapid development. The enrollment has grown from 5,000 in mid-1960s to 20,000 in 2001 (including 10,000 correspondent and night university students). It enrolled its first batch of master degree students in 1979. Now there are 1,800 master degree students and 600 doctoral degree students. It set a goal of “promoting Beijing Normal University to the nation’s top and world influential teachers university” in 1985. There is certainly an inner dilemma in the goal. The university tried to be a top university and a teacher university at the same time. It tried to remain as a teacher university in order to gain special support from the government; meanwhile it had a strong desire to become a full comprehensive university like Peking University.

Crises in Teacher Education

Education is now a hot topic and a central issue in China. The social or individual development depends on education. Education is a necessity for people to survive, to live with dignity, and to live with quality. Education is a lifelong learning process and is a way of living. Whether education can really perform the functions relies on quantity and quality of teacher supply. Therefore, people have a very high expectation on teacher education, but the status quo of teacher education is far from satisfying people’s expectation. It now faces serious crises.

Financial Crisis

The size of higher education has been greatly enlarged in recent years in China, but the government’s ability to support higher education is very limited. If higher education in general is in critical financial situation, teacher education is surely the poorest among all the sectors of higher education system. Teacher education institutions are the last on the list of priority support for facility renovation or modernization. Yet, new teachers are expected to teach with information technologies. The institutions have to put almost all of their energy and time in fund-raising and...
the professors in teacher education sometimes can hardly concentrate on their teaching or scholarship as they have to earn additional income outside their institutions. With poorer living and learning conditions, teacher education can hardly attract able students (Dang, Yang, Wang, & Fan, 2001, pp. 16-20).

**Quality Crisis**
Teacher education institutions can hardly catch up with rapid changes of the outside world. Now most of the Chinese school children in towns and cities come from one-child families, and therefore their parents have terribly high expectations on their children’s schooling. The rural families take schooling as an important way to change their children’s social status and therefore they push their children too. The information and communication technology revolution has brought new ways of learning. The Western culture has greatly invaded China. The market-oriented values have gradually gained dominant influences on almost all aspects of the Chinese society.

With all these changes outside the college walls, teacher education institutions are still preparing teachers more or less the same way as 20 years ago. The curriculum has not changed much for 50 years, and the course contents are mostly outdated. Students still cannot take a full responsibility for their learning. This institutional inertia, maybe, comes from their traditionally conservative attitude towards changes, but certainly the lack of financial support is also an important reason.

**Identity Crisis**
As the quality of teacher education is challenged, a century old question has been asked again: do teachers really need a special professional training? Members of the profession and many policy-makers believe that teachers should be well grounded in the subject content they are going to teach and have a firm grasp of how to teach it effectively. But a good number of people, including some policy-makers and even a few members of the profession, have a strong different point of view. They think that teachers need only subject-matter knowledge in order to teach well. They argue for complete deregulation of entry to teach. They would like to see whosoever holds a “relevant” certificate could be allowed to enter the classroom. They claim that “how to teach” can be learned by experience. Now the teacher education institutions have to prove that the training they provide is a must for the entry to the profession.
Even if the question is answered positively, there is still a question for many people to ask: whether it is necessary to maintain independent teacher education institutions separated from comprehensive universities. Independent teacher education institutions have to prove that they can provide subject-matter knowledge at least as well as comprehensive universities and professional knowledge and skills (such as knowledge of child and adolescent development, instructional strategies, assessment and evaluation strategies, classroom management, and so on) better than any other institutions.

**Current Reforms of Teacher Education**

China has developed rapidly in past 20 years. China is now making all its efforts to catch up with the fast development of the new economy and science and technology. But the education system could not provide enough well-trained workers and the school leavers lack sound character, creativity, initiative, or entrepreneurship. The school system is blamed to have organized examination-oriented education. The all-rounded education is promoted throughout the nation and has become the guiding principle for the whole education system since 1999 (*People's Daily*, 17 June 1999). The principle challenges the traditional teacher education.

China's educational system has made great progress. The nine-year compulsory education has been basically universalized in 2000. The gross participation rate of post-secondary education has been raised to 11%. With the success of family planning, the primary school age cohort is shrinking. The market of teachers will be a market of buyers. The conditions for teacher education reforms are gradually getting ready.

**Raising Qualification Standards**

The current teacher education system indicates in a way that teaching is not really regarded as a full profession like medicine, law, or engineering as it does not need a full college training. Besides, there is actually no requirement of professional training for entry into the teaching profession. According to the Law of Teacher, any person who had education at certain academic levels with or without professional training can be employed as teachers. There is no doubt that the qualifications for entry into the teaching profession have been low. The government set the qualifications low to allow enough supply for China's huge school system. The low qualifications for entry no longer serve China's needs in the information age. Now, some major cities are taking the lead in the
reform. Normal schools are being closed, as there is a surplus of primary school teachers. The entry qualification for primary school teaching is raised to two or three year college education. Some short-cycle teacher colleges in turn are either elevated to full teacher colleges or incorporated into normal universities or comprehensive universities.

"The most significant event for teacher education is the establishment of Master of Education professional degree" (Gu et al., 2001, p. 4). This is indeed a milestone for the professionalization of teachers in China. Education at the graduate level had never had anything to do with the school teaching profession before the degree program was established in 1997. The program was set to train backbone teachers. Eventually, the degree will be one of the conditions for promotion to the position of senior teacher.

The degree differs from the traditional academic Master degree in several aspects. First, the professional degree program is for experienced teachers to pursue further study on part-time basis. Second, the professional degree program stresses more on course study while the academic degree stresses on learning through research. The professional degree program includes 12 courses (about 36 credit points) of which around half are education related ones, such as educational foundations, educational psychology, educational technology, subject-matter teaching methods (e.g. mathematics teaching methods), reform and research in subject-matter teaching, and history of subject-matter teaching. Third, case study and supervised and diagnostic teaching are emphasized in the professional program. And fourth, the thesis to be submitted by the teachers is to be problem-solving-based.

Beijing Normal University is taking a leading role in providing the Master of Education professional degree program. It formed a special office to oversee the Master of Education professional degree programs throughout China with the authorization of the Ministry of Education. Its Department of Education grants a dozen such degrees each year cooperating with other departments.

*Transforming the Closed Teacher Education System into an Open One*

The huge teacher education system, solely consisted of independent teacher education institutions, has prepared almost all the qualified teachers. This independent teacher education system in fact has monopolized teacher supply. Now comprehensive universities have started to prepare teachers. As there is
no accreditation system of teacher education, any established higher education institution could offer a teacher education program if it chooses to do so. Peking University, the nation’s best university, took the lead and has already established a school of education, and Tsinghua University, the second best, is said to follow the step. A government document encourages all higher education institutions to prepare teachers. The document in fact announced that a new era for teacher training has come. The government is going to hold teacher license tests open for the public. The monopoly of teacher education by independent teacher education institutions is going to be broken and a free market of teacher supply is going to be built.

There are three reasons for this development. First, China’s economical system has been transformed from a planned one into a market one. Second, the social status of teachers has been improved in recent years. Now, teachers’ pay ranks about in the middle of all jobs. Therefore, the teaching profession is attracting graduates from comprehensive universities. And third, more and more people blame teachers colleges and normal universities for not producing teachers with new educational concepts and up-to-date subject knowledge.

From the viewpoint of teachers colleges and normal universities, there is the need to accept the open market system, as competition cannot be avoided. Yet, teachers colleges and normal universities do feel strongly that they are forced to join an unfair competition: on the one hand, the government does not provide enough fund to improve the quality of their programs; on the other hand, comprehensive universities with better government funding and higher abilities to create new income sources are encouraged to prepare teachers. As teachers colleges and normal universities have to compete with comprehensive universities, they are trying to enlarge their living space by offering non-teacher training programs, such as management or engineering. In a way, teachers colleges and normal universities are becoming comprehensive ones.

Meeting the challenges from comprehensive universities, Beijing Normal University is now determined to move towards the status of a full comprehensive university. In 2001, it set a new aim of “promoting Beijing Normal University into a nation’s top, world well-known, and comprehensive research university” (http://www.bnu.edu.cn/). Among 45 undergraduate majors it offers now, only 20 are for teacher training. It has greatly expanded its graduate programs. Now, about one-third of its full-time students are graduate students. If we take the number of programs that are authorized to grant doctor
degrees by the National Degree Council as a criterion to evaluate Chinese universities, Beijing Normal University ranks among top 10. Now it has 28 research institutes and 46 research centers.

*Integrating Pre- and In-service Teacher Education*

Teachers colleges and universities are mainly engaged in pre-service teacher education, as there is a separated system of in-service teacher education institutions. Therefore, the in- and pre-service teacher education are artificially separated. The teachers colleges and universities with better facility and faculty provide education to pre-service teachers, and the in-service teacher education institutions with worse facility and faculty provide continuous education for in-service teachers. This is certainly an absurd phenomenon that needs to be changed.

Now some in-service teacher education colleges have already been incorporated into teachers colleges or universities. Some teachers colleges and universities have started their own in-service teacher training programs. This reform provides possibilities to design pre- and in-service teacher education programs on a basis of lifelong education concept and more effectively use teacher education resources.

Beijing Normal University established a teacher in-service training college in 2001. It works together with the College of Continuous Education and the College of Educational Administration to provide in-service training for about 10,000 teachers and educational administrators each year.

*Reforming Curriculum of Teacher Education*

Politicians, parents, and the general public challenge the quality of teacher education in China, and therefore the reform of the curriculum of teacher education is a very hot topic in teacher education institutions. In general, everybody agrees that the complex knowledge structure for teachers comprises subject-matter knowledge, conditional knowledge (knowledge about pupils' development, knowledge about learning and teaching, knowledge about assessment and evaluation, etc.), practical knowledge, and cultural knowledge. But there is lack of common understanding what should be the proportion of those kinds of knowledge or where the emphasis should be put. There are some people believing that the subject-matter knowledge is the most important knowledge that teacher should master. Teachers colleges and universities are losing ground in the competition with comprehensive universities just because
the former is not as good as the latter in specialization in academic disciplines. But there are a lot of teacher educators saying, with certainty, that teachers only need to know subject-matter knowledge at a limited level and what they should really know well is the conditional knowledge. Although the debate is still going on, this author considers the following principles being important to carry out in reforming curriculum of teacher education.

First, the content of subject-matter courses should be renewed to keep up with the rapid advances of science and technology revolution. Second, the courses of conditional knowledge should be dramatically transformed. Now there are only three courses in education for prospective teachers to take, namely, educational foundations, psychology, and subject-matter teaching methods. These courses are too general to help students meet challenges in the real school classroom situation. The courses should be transformed to help the prospective teachers know well the psychological and physiological characteristics of children in this fast changing society and how to teach the subject-matter, classroom management, assessment and evaluation, and even action research methods. Third, the cultural knowledge should be widened to cover foreign languages and culture, computer literacy, environment awareness, professional ethics, etc. For the students specialized in science, courses in humanities and social sciences should have a place in the curriculum; likewise, for the students specialized in humanities or social sciences, courses in science should have a place. In summary, general education should be an important part in the curriculum. And fourth, the practical knowledge should be strengthened. At present, the prospective teachers have to spend only four to six weeks for internship, and they usually have to teach only four to six class periods. This is clearly not enough.

A Reconstruction Project of Beijing Normal University
All teacher education institutions are debating on or experimenting with new curriculum throughout China. Beijing Normal University has developed a reconstruction project consisted of following three education modes: the mode of “4+0,” mode of “4+2,” and mode of “4+3” as depicted in Figure 1. (http://www.bnu.edu.cn/).
Figure 1: The Three Education Modes of the Reconstruction Project

Regarding the “4+0” mode, after three years of study, students can select courses of education and internship to lead to a B.A or B.S in teacher education, or select additional courses in their major fields to lead to the academic B.A or B.S.

Regarding the “4+2” mode, four years of study, students, including those enrolled in programs leading to teaching profession or non-teaching professions, can apply for admission into Master of Education Professional Degree program of two year study. They can be admitted after being screened within the University without taking the national tests.

Regarding the “4+3” mode, after four years of study in their fields, students can take the national tests to get into academic Master degree programs of three-year study. Those who fail the tests can still walk in the labor market with B.A or B.S equivalent to the same degree awarded in comprehensive universities.

Among three modes, the “4+0” is the basis of the project, while the “4+2” is an
innovation. Three modes put together a flexible system in which students have the rights of selection, and have better preparation for their future career.

Along with this project, a curriculum reform will be carried out. The undergraduate programs will emphasize general education and foundations of major fields. The majors will be widened to cover inter-disciplinary or multi-disciplinary studies. Students will be encouraged to take a minor. The professional training for teaching will be strengthened (http://www.bnu.edu.cn/).

Now Beijing Normal University is experimenting with the new project. It is hoped that three goals will be reached by carrying out the project. First, the identity crisis will be over. As the undergraduate period focuses on general education and academic preparation, Beijing Normal University will be able to compete with comprehensive universities. As teacher education is moved to graduate level, Beijing Normal University will make teaching more professionalized. Second, as the project gives students more choices, better students should be attracted to the University. And third, as the project needs special supports from the administration and instructors, other reforms in management, resource allocation, and academic program restructuring will be initiated. It is hoped that the reform carried out in Beijing Normal University will have a positive influence on other teacher education institutions throughout the country.

LESSONS CAN BE LEARNT FROM HISTORY

Beijing Normal University is one of the top universities in China. But it now faces serious challenges. It cannot enjoy the financial support guaranteed in the era of the planning economy, and it now has to compete with other higher education institutions, especially with those top comprehensive universities. The monopoly of teacher education by teachers colleges and universities is going to be broken. The complaints have been that the graduates of Beijing Normal University so produced cannot compete with graduates from top comprehensive universities in subject-matter fields, and Beijing Normal University even cannot claim that its graduates are better prepared in the teaching arts and craft than the graduates from other teachers colleges.

Beijing Normal University now has to take decisive steps in reform in order to compete with top comprehensive universities, to keep the leading position
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among teacher education institutions, and to continue its efforts towards the enhancement of professionalization of teachers. China is now under dramatic changes. Teacher education has to be reformed to keep up with those changes. From the historical development of China’s teacher education introduced in this article, we can draw some key lessons for further professionalization of teachers in China.

Firstly, the government’s proper support is absolutely important for the development of teacher education, as teacher education has been a public business and will be kept that way in the foreseeable future. China’s teacher education owed the government support in its establishment and development in its 100-year history. Now, to affirm this point is very significant. While China is moving from a planned economy to a market economy, the commercialism is dominating almost all aspects of the society. The teacher education institutions are forced to earn income in order to survive as the government’s support is far from enough to keep their vitality. But the teacher education institutions are not in favorable conditions in generating income, as compared with other higher education institutions, for their fields are mostly in humanities and sciences (due to historical reasons). Nowadays, nobody in China can deny that even teacher education institutions must diversify their funding sources, but the government’s support must be the main source, and the government must increase its support when the government collects more revenue so that the teacher education institutions can concentrate on teacher education and development.

Secondly, teacher education institutions must raise their standards and improve their quality of education to promote professionalization of teachers. Teachers are still not regarded as full professionals by many policy-makers or the general public in China. Teacher education institutions must continue its long expedition in making teaching fully professional. The first move is to gradually transform the three-layer teacher education system into a two-layer one. This means gradually closing down or upgrading normal schools at upper secondary school level. The second move is to produce teachers with Master of Education Professional Degree. The third move is to make professional courses in teacher education institutions more relevant to the real school classroom situations and to improve quality of general education and subject matter instruction in teacher education.

And thirdly, an open teacher education system needs to be established to
promote professionalization of teachers in China. To build an open system is to break the monopoly of teacher education by teachers colleges and universities and to include other higher education institutions to provide teacher education. An organic substance can grow better in a competitive environment. With the competition between teachers colleges and universities and other higher education institutions, the quality of teacher education can be improved, and teachers produced in such a system can be regarded as more professional than in a closed system. The continuing teacher education should be considered a vital part of teacher education in the open teacher education system, as teachers have to learn continuously during their career if they are professionals. When the pre- and in-service teacher education are provided by the same institutions, teachers with more professional attitude, skills, and knowledge can be produced.

A historical analysis can provide us enlightenment in preparing for future challenges, and therefore policy-makers and teacher educators in China must study carefully the history of teacher education when striving to prepare teachers and our younger generation for the challenges in the new century.

NOTES

1. Nanyanggongxue (Nanyang Public School), established in 1897, was in fact the first school to provide teacher education in China. As it was closed in 1903, Beijing Normal University is recognized as the oldest teacher education institution in China.

2. According to the old phonetic spelling, Beijing was spelt “Peking.” For the convenience of readers, the author uses Beijing all the time except Peking University as it has insisted in keeping that name.

REFERENCES


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