

# Incorporating the Spirit of Craftsmanship into the Professional Development of Young Teachers in Higher Vocational Colleges: An Exploration of the Development Pathways

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**Abstract:** Young teachers, as a crucial component of the teaching faculty in higher vocational colleges, still face numerous challenges in their professional development. Integrating the spirit of craftsmanship into the professional development planning and practice of young teachers in vocational colleges holds significant importance. Through research methods such as literature review and questionnaire surveys, this study proposes a concerted effort from three levels—top-level design by schools, promotion by teams and master teachers, and individual practice by teachers. The study aims to achieve the professional development of young teachers across four dimensions: value guidance, teaching, practice, and research.

**Keywords:** Spirit of Craftsmanship, Young Teachers, Professional Development

Vocational education is a vital type of higher education in China, responsible for supplying highly qualified technical and skilled personnel for social development. As the primary resource for developing vocational education, teachers are the key force supporting the high-quality development of vocational education in the new era. Teacher professional development refers to the continuous improvement and development process in which teachers, as educational professionals, enhance their professional thinking, knowledge, and abilities. Currently, there is still a significant gap between the construction of the teaching faculty in higher vocational colleges and the high-quality vocational education teacher teams. Young teachers, as an important part of the teaching faculty, face numerous problems in their professional development, such as inadequate support mechanisms, insufficient resource backing, a low level of professionalism in the training process, lack of specificity, unclear professional development pathways, evident psychological burnout, lack of practical skills, and slow improvement in dual-qualification competencies.

## 1. The Necessity of Integrating the Spirit of Craftsmanship into the Professional Development of Teachers in Higher Vocational Colleges

As a spirit of the times, the spirit of craftsmanship is not exclusive to the manufacturing industry but is applicable across various fields. It requires every "craftsman" in the new era to deeply understand and practice it through concrete actions. The essence of the spirit of craftsmanship aligns with that of teacher professional development. Integrating the spirit of craftsmanship into the professional development of young teachers in vocational colleges is the intrinsic logic driving their self-growth and is a timely demand for cultivating highly skilled talents. Teachers in higher vocational colleges shoulder the era's mission of cultivating great craftsmen for the nation. The cultivation of these craftsmen requires not only the shaping of the "spirit of craftsmanship" in students but also the enhancement of this vocational quality among teachers themselves, thereby subtly influencing students in the teaching process.<sup>[1]</sup>

The "spirit of craftsmanship," as a fundamental vocational quality and spiritual concept for teachers in higher vocational colleges, is an essential component of their professional competence. The goal of constructing a "dual-qualified" teaching team in the new era of vocational education is to establish a high-quality team with noble ethics, exquisite skills, a blend of full-time and part-time staff, and dynamic vitality. Teacher professional development is a process where teachers continuously acquire new knowledge, enhance professional skills, and mature in professional ethics, emotional commitment, and social responsibility. As the saying goes, "A teacher's virtue is the best model." The era's connotation of the spirit of craftsmanship aligns closely with the needs of teacher professional development.

Incorporating a professional attitude of dedication, a persistent and focused professional quality, a spirit of excellence, and innovative thinking into the cultivation of "dual-qualified" teachers in higher vocational colleges is in line with the professional development of vocational education teachers.

## **2. Guiding Young Teachers' Professional Development with the Spirit of Craftsmanship as the Core**

Building a high-quality "dual-qualified" teaching team is not only a crucial aspect of vocational education development in the new era but also a fundamental responsibility in achieving the core task of moral education. Higher vocational colleges should focus on the professional development needs of young teachers and, in conjunction with the unique advantages of the school, actively construct a professional development mechanism centered on cultivating the spirit of craftsmanship.<sup>[2]</sup>

### ***2.1 Designing an Induction Training System with Dedication as the Starting Point***

As the new force in the teaching team, young teachers require induction training. However, such training should not be limited to just one or two weeks of orientation, nor should it be confined to the introduction of rules and regulations. Instead, a systematic induction training system should be designed. In terms of training content, to address young teachers' unfamiliarity with college policies and regulations, the training should include relevant content such as the college's history, culture, management, and rules and regulations, helping young teachers quickly adapt to the work environment and requirements, thereby enhancing their professional identity. By conducting courses on professional ethics and inviting moral role models to give talks, young teachers can understand the importance of professional ethics and norms, guiding them to establish correct professional values and viewpoints, improving their vocational quality and moral standards, and strengthening their sense of professional honor. In terms of training formats, beyond lectures and seminars, regular exchanges and discussions should be organized among senior, mid-level, and junior teachers, allowing young teachers to learn from the experiences and lessons of others, thereby better integrating into the team.

### ***2.2 Establishing a Long-Term Training Mechanism with Persistent Focus as the Main Line***

After the induction training, young teachers may have a basic understanding of various aspects of the college but may still be unprepared for their roles. Currently, vocational colleges exhibit a degree of randomness in young teacher training; some only provide induction training, and even if professional training is offered, it is often short, with limited content and unequal opportunities. To promote the professional development of young teachers, colleges should integrate high-quality resources both within and outside the school to establish a long-term training mechanism for the professional growth of young teachers, thereby fostering their development. The training content should be aligned with the growth needs of young teachers and set according to the current and long-term needs of the school, focusing primarily on policy concepts and values, professional knowledge, and technical skills. Policy concepts and values include interpretations of vocational education policies, innovative ideas in vocational education, and professional ethics based on the spirit of craftsmanship. Professional knowledge training should cover cutting-edge knowledge in the subjects taught by the teachers, as well as pedagogy and educational psychology. Skills training should encompass practical abilities, teaching skills, research capabilities, and competition skills. Given the diverse composition of vocational teachers, the training content should vary according to the different types of teachers. For example, teachers recruited from enterprises and vocational teachers who graduated from universities each have their strengths and weaknesses: enterprise-recruited teachers possess strong practical skills but lack educational and teaching experience, while university-graduated vocational teachers are more focused on theoretical research but have less enterprise practice experience. Schools should develop multi-dimensional training content that includes the vocational qualities of the spirit of craftsmanship, educational and teaching philosophies, teaching methods, information technology, classroom management, and professional skills, based on the professional categories and career development needs of vocational teachers. The training process should be divided into low, middle, and high levels based on the growth stages of young teachers to avoid training discontinuities. In selecting trainers, initial training can primarily involve in-house experts, while middle and high-level training can involve external scholars, experts, and industry craftsmen. By establishing and implementing a long-term training mechanism, young teachers can receive systematic training within 3-5 years of employment, allowing them to focus on educational and teaching work.<sup>[3]</sup>

### ***2.3 Establishing a Professional Development Support Mechanism with Comprehensive Development as the Goal***

Higher vocational colleges should establish an organization specifically responsible for building the teaching staff, coordinating resources, and ensuring the construction of the teaching team, including the professional development of young teachers. On one hand, the organization should improve conventional systems such as funding, salary, promotion, the establishment of master teacher studios, the implementation of the Blue-Project, and professional development records, in accordance with higher-level policies and the college's development needs. On the other hand, the organization should address the specific issues facing the professional development of young teachers in higher vocational colleges by introducing relevant policies to effectively address and solve new situations and problems.

### **3. Promoting the Professional Development of Young Teachers in Higher Vocational Colleges through the Guidance of Master Teachers and Team Mentorship**

Under the top-level design of the college, the professional development of young teachers in higher vocational institutions should be supported by two key drivers: the guidance of master teachers and the mentorship provided by teams. Leading the construction of a high-level teaching staff through team building, enhancing the cohesion and combat effectiveness of the teaching team with structured teams, and using team strength to address the key and difficult issues in educational and teaching reform has become the mainstream in the new era of vocational education reform and development. In the process of young teachers' professional development, the role of the team should be emphasized, implementing various measures of the "Blue-Project" and carrying out personalized, precise planning based on the actual needs of teacher development. The exemplary effect of teaching masters and master teacher studios should be fully utilized, integrating the professional development of young teachers into the cultivation of innovative teaching teams, establishing a mechanism for team member learning integration, building the core values of the team, and leading team development with an excellent team culture. This approach promotes the integration of members in terms of team goals and professional concepts, facilitates the free flow of knowledge within the team, and aids in the role transformation of young teachers in higher vocational colleges.<sup>[4]</sup>

#### ***3.1 Guidance from Master Teachers***

Master teacher studios are repositories of teaching ideas, centers for gathering teaching resources, and venues for collaborative problem-solving. They serve as experimental fields for teaching reform. Different experts' interpretations of the value of master teacher studios consistently point to their role as crucial platforms for enhancing teachers' professional competence, improving education quality, and promoting educational reform. Master teacher studios represent a new model of teacher training in the new era. Compared to traditional teacher training, master teacher studios are characterized by their leaders' frontline involvement, direct experience in teaching and education, practical teaching guidance, exemplary role modeling, and the dual influence of personality and academic achievement. These factors make them more likely to gain the trust and support of frontline teachers than university scholars and experts. A master teacher studio is a learning, research, and development community. Both the leader and members of the studio come from the frontline, and they are united in mutual selection and cooperation. In the real-world context of school education, they collaboratively study and practice, focusing on shared educational goals. Through diverse forms of research, led by master teachers, supported by experts, team cooperation, shared resources, complementary strengths, and collaborative wisdom, the studio ultimately achieves a win-win situation for both the studio leader and its members in terms of their dual development.

#### ***3.2 Team Mentorship***

While professional development is primarily an individual endeavor for teachers, it can only be fully realized within a community, and this is especially true for young teachers. The professional departments and teaching and research offices in higher vocational colleges can be viewed as communities that contribute to teachers' professional development. However, these communities often lack a high degree of institutionalization, have relatively loose structures, and mainly perform basic teaching management functions rather than professional development roles. In contrast, vocational education teaching innovation teams are more institutionalized, with more focused goals and clearer directions, providing new opportunities and platforms for the professional development of young teachers. The "National

Vocational College Teacher Teaching Innovation Team Construction Plan" outlines the goals and requirements for building a group of high-level teaching innovation teams and emphasizes the need to "build a group of high-level vocational college teacher teaching innovation teams to lead and demonstrate the construction of a high-quality 'dual-qualified' teaching team." As a designed system, teaching innovation teams reinforce their inherent connection with the personal professional development of "dual-qualified" teachers, making it more likely to achieve the goal of "supporting less experienced teachers through the experience of more seasoned ones" and becoming a true community supporting the professional development of young teachers.<sup>[5]</sup>

From the perspective of young teachers' professional development, teaching innovation teams can be defined as collaborative teacher organizations focused on reform and innovation in key areas such as vocational education program construction, talent cultivation models, and teaching models, with the fundamental goal of promoting the professional development of vocational teachers. Young teachers can use teaching innovation teams as new platforms and carriers, embedding their personal professional development goals into team-building tasks, and continuously deepening the interactive relationships between self and others, individuals and teams, thereby enhancing their professional competence and confidence through teaching innovation practices.

#### **4. Three Stages and Four Dimensions of Professional Development for Young Teachers in Higher Vocational Colleges**

##### ***4.1 Three Stages of Professional Development for Young Teachers***

After joining the profession, young teachers typically go through three stages in their career development: the integration and adaptation period, the growth and stabilization period, and the maturity and development period. Through their efforts during each career development cycle, young teachers can progress from being competent teachers to becoming key teachers and even teaching masters. At different stages of their career development, the focus of young teachers' professional development should vary accordingly.<sup>[6]</sup>

The integration and adaptation period typically covers the first 1-2 years after a teacher starts working. During this phase, young teachers often lack teaching experience, feel anxious about their teaching duties, and have little understanding of the school's rules and development direction. During this stage, young teachers should focus on familiarizing themselves with the school environment, getting to know school staff, mastering basic educational theories and teaching skills, and understanding student characteristics, with the goal of quickly becoming a qualified teacher. The professional development during this period should primarily focus on adjusting their role and becoming familiar with the school and its students.

The growth and stabilization period usually occurs during the 3rd to 5th years of employment. During this phase, young teachers develop deeper reflections on their professional growth, diversify their teaching skills, and are able to design scientifically sound teaching methods that cater to student characteristics, resulting in improved teaching outcomes that are recognized by both the school and students. During this period, teachers may successfully publish high-quality academic papers, apply for research projects, and collaborate with other teachers to achieve outstanding teaching results. Those who develop rapidly may gradually become key figures in their profession or even lead teaching teams. The focus of professional development during this period should be on learning and input, while also attempting to produce and share academic outputs.<sup>[7]</sup>

The maturity and development period generally occurs between the 6th and 10th years of employment. After accumulating experience and honing their skills, teachers' professional development becomes more mature. Outstanding teachers who stand out will embody the spirit of craftsmanship in all aspects of their educational work. During this stage, young teachers significantly improve their teaching and research capabilities, beginning to make a mark in provincial-level competitions and research project applications. These three stages are interconnected and each has its own focus, providing young teachers with a clear professional development plan.

##### ***4.2 Four Dimensions of Professional Development for Young Teachers***

Teacher professional development refers to the continuous improvement and development process in a teacher's professional thinking, knowledge, and skills. Specifically, it includes four main dimensions: value guidance ability, teaching ability, practical ability, and research ability.

**Enhancing Value Guidance Ability:** President Xi Jinping has emphasized the need to highly value youth work, educate and guide young people to form correct worldviews, outlooks on life, and values, and strengthen their confidence in the path, theory, system, and culture of socialism with Chinese characteristics, ensuring that the younger generation becomes the builders and successors of socialism. President Xi's speech presents significant requirements for the professional development of young teachers: they must strengthen their ability to guide values and help college students form correct value concepts. As young teachers are closer in age to students, students tend to turn to them for advice when facing life dilemmas. The feedback to such questions can be both explicit and implicit. When addressing students' doubts, young teachers should fully demonstrate their exemplary role, reflecting their positive spirit to students and guiding them to align their personal aspirations with social development.

**Enhancing Teaching Ability:** Teaching ability includes the capacity for lesson design, implementation, and reflection. The enhancement of young teachers' teaching ability is a systematic project that starts with classroom teaching. This involves preparing the teaching materials, understanding students' needs, and choosing appropriate teaching methods based on a deep understanding of the course standards and materials. Young teachers should integrate the latest industry developments and technologies into their teaching content and motivate students by choosing appropriate teaching methods that align with the learning objectives, content, and the analysis of students' conditions. Additionally, young teachers should improve their ability to manage their specialties by actively participating in professional research and the development of talent cultivation plans, understanding the demands of enterprises for professional talent, and the knowledge, skills, and qualities required from students to better serve their teaching roles.<sup>[8]</sup>

**Enhancing Practical Ability:** Young teachers need to possess both solid theoretical knowledge and refined practical skills. Currently, many young teachers transition directly from graduation to teaching, and the lack of professional practical skills becomes a bottleneck in their professional development. Higher vocational colleges must recognize the deficiency in young teachers' practical skills and intensify training efforts to enhance these abilities. The high-quality development of vocational education requires young teachers to possess both theoretical and practical teaching abilities. Young teachers should proactively keep pace with industry development trends and talent demands by actively engaging in field practice in enterprises and production services. The duration, form, content, and standards of this practice should comply with relevant regulations on enterprise practice for vocational school teachers. Young teachers should understand the relationship between the subjects they teach and industry, be aware of industry developments, demand trends, and changes in professional roles, and timely incorporate new technologies, processes, and standards into their teaching.

**Enhancing Research Ability:** Young teachers should realize that teaching ability grows through research; without solid scientific research, teaching lacks substance. The research process itself is a means of enhancing professionalism, which significantly contributes to young teachers' teaching efforts. Identifying problems is the starting point of educational research and the internal motivation for conducting educational research activities. With this motivation, educational research actions will naturally follow. In frontline educational activities, young teachers should focus on discovering problems within classroom teaching and educational dilemmas and actively engage in research. Young teachers can strengthen their learning of educational theories and methods, conduct research on course design, teaching models, methods, strategies, and tools, and apply for educational research projects based on teaching reform, writing papers to summarize and refine the outcomes of their teaching reforms.

## **Conclusion**

In the context of the increasing importance of vocational education in the new era, the professional development of the teaching staff in higher vocational colleges holds great significance. The professional development of young teachers, who make up a substantial portion of the teaching workforce, plays a crucial role in the future prospects of higher vocational colleges. The professional development of young teachers must align with the essential attributes of vocational education while also adhering to the fundamental principles of personal growth. Promoting the professional development of young teachers requires a concerted effort from both the institutions and the teachers themselves, providing robust faculty support to accelerate the modernization of vocational education and cultivate a large number of highly skilled technical talents.

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