



On Strategies of Promoting Senior Citizen Education Teachers' Abilities Based on Core Competence

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Abstract

Core competence of senior citizen education teachers can play an important role in defining professional standards of senior citizen education teachers, becoming a professional threshold, measuring the core of teachers' professional development, assessing the current performance management, and being the tool for teachers' self-evaluation. The index system of core competence of senior citizen education teachers covers concept, knowledge and ability. The paper, based on the analysis of connotations and construction of these three indexes, perfects some rules and legal safeguard system to promote senior citizen education teachers' core competence, constructs the training system of cultivating senior citizen education teachers, and puts forward some strategies of encouraging senior citizen education teachers' professional development, so as to provide an enlightenment for measures to develop senior citizen education teachers' professional development.

Subject Areas

Senior Citizen, Teacher, Core Competence, Ability, Strategy

Keywords

Sociology

1. Introduction

In recent years, there has an obvious increase in senior citizen education teachers in China. However, because of unreasonable teacher-group structure and low degree of professionalism, the number of high-quality teachers of senior citizen education is far from satisfying the increasing learning needs of senior citizens.

Strengthening the cultivation of senior citizen education teachers' professionalism is the target of senior citizen teachers' professionalism development in China. There are many problems in cultivating senior citizen education teachers: How to define the teachers' standards of senior citizen education? What kind of teachers can be qualified for being a senior citizen education teacher? What is the aim of professional development of senior citizen education teachers? The teachers' professional standards in developed countries have played an important role in many aspects, including defining professional standards of senior citizen education teachers and being a professional threshold, measuring the core of teachers' professional development, assessing the current performance management, and being the tool for teachers' self-evaluation. The paper aims to construct the core competences of senior citizen education teachers in China, puts forward some strategies to promote the core competences of senior citizen education teachers, so as to provide enlightenment for constructing professional standards of senior citizen education teachers and exploring the ways of developing the teachers' professionalism of senior citizen education in China.

2. The Connotations of Key Competences

According to etymology, com refers to meeting together, and petere means striving in common. Competere means meeting various abilities and powers to adapt to the situation [1]. Therefore, the early meaning of competence is the ability to adapt to the situation. OECD, standing for the highest level of the researches on core competence, defines core competence as the abilities to use knowledge, skills and attitude to adapt to a specific situation. EU defines core competence as the integration of knowledge, skills and attitude to apply to a particular situation [2]. From the above-mentioned definitions of core competence, core competence is a kind of ability which includes knowledge, skills and attitude. Since *Views on Comprehensively Deepening Curriculum Reform and Implementing the Fundamental Task of Morality Education* issued by Ministry of Education demanded that students at all levels should develop key competence, there have been many researches on developing core competence based on the students at all levels. Some scholars hold that the teachers should be equipped with the corresponding core competence based on cultivating the students' core competence. The research on teachers' core competence has increasingly become a hotspot issue in the field of teacher education research since 2014. Up to January, 2018, searching the literature on the key words "teachers' core competence" and "developing teachers' core competence" by consulting CNKI, there are 37 articles and 193 articles respectively. These articles are mainly on core competence of fundamental education teachers, such as *On the Construction of the Core Accomplishment System of Primary and Middle School Teachers' Development in China* written by Yang Zhicheng and *The Connotation and Practical Exploration of Core Makings of Excellent Physical Education Teachers* written by HeJinpeng. However, there are no relevant researches on core com-

petence of senior citizen education teachers in China.

3. The Conception of an Index System of Core Competence of Senior Citizen Education Teachers

Just as the definitions of core competence issued by OECD and EU, core competence of senior citizen education teachers should include knowledge, abilities and attitude. Besides, the current dominant explanation of teachers in China is Professional Standards for Teachers. *The Kindergarten Teachers' Professional Standards (Trial)*, *Elementary School Teachers' Professional Standards (Trial)*, *Secondary School Teachers' Professional Standards (Trial)*, *Special Education Teachers' Professional Standards (Trial)*, *Secondary Vocational School Teachers' Professional Standards (Trial)* have been issued by Ministry of Education. However, senior citizen education teachers' professional standards have not been made up to now. In these standards, there are three dimensions as professional concept and teachers' morality, professional knowledge and competence. Therefore, the paper, based on these three dimensions, constructs an index system of core competence of senior citizen education teachers.

3.1. The Concept and Morality of Senior Citizen Education Teachers

In all the teachers' professional standards, professional concept and teachers' morality include teachers' professional understanding, teachers' attitude towards students, teachers' attitude and behavior towards teaching and teachers' culture and behavior. In the field of teachers' culture and behavior, love, responsibility, patience and carefulness are the basic requirements needed by the teachers at all levels [3]. However, what are the specific requirements in teachers' professional understanding, teachers' attitude towards students, teachers' attitudes towards teaching in the field of senior citizen education teachers.

1) Professional Understanding

In the current professional standards for teachers, the basic requirements of professional understanding cover implementing CPC guidelines and policies on education, abiding by the laws and regulations in education, being equipped with professional ideals, professional dedication, excellent professional morality and team spirit. Therefore, the basic requirements of senior citizen education teachers' professional understanding correspond with those of other teachers' professional understanding (See **Table 1**).

2) Teachers' Attitudes towards Students

In all the standards, the basic requirements of teachers' attitudes towards students include taking care of students' physical and mental health, protecting the rights and interests of students, respecting students' individual differences, and creating conditions to promote students' development. For juveniles, we should pay attention to various factors in the process of their development. But for senior citizen students, they have developed from maturity to aging, therefore, the

Table 1. The basic requirements of professional understanding of senior citizen education teachers.

Dimension	Field	Basic requirements
Professional concept and teachers' morality	Professional understanding	1) implementing CPC guidelines and polices on education and abiding by the laws and regulations in education. 2) understanding the importance of senior citizen education, loving senior citizen education undertaking, and being equipped with professional ideals, professional dedication. 3) approving of the professionalism and uniqueness of senior citizen education teachers, and attaching importance to self profession development. 4) being equipped with excellent professional morality, and serving as role models. 5) being equipped with team spirit and actively carrying out cooperation and communication.

main purpose of educating senior citizen students is to promote active aging, follow the principles of relaxation, volunteer, happiness and culture, so as to help the senior citizen students lead a happier life (See **Table 2**).

3) Teachers' Attitudes towards Teaching

The essence of senior citizen education is a kind of recreation education and potential education. In senior citizen education, educators exert a purposeful, planned and organized influence on senior citizen, so as to make their health and mentality to change a lot [4]. The need for lifelong development is an inner impulse to promote the development of senior citizen education. To senior citizens at different ages, there are many differences in physiological characteristics, personality characteristics, and cognitive level. Therefore, the teachers' attitudes towards teaching should vary according to the age characteristics of senior citizens. At present, senior citizen education is divided into preparatory education for the old-to-be, role change and potential development education for the young old, redevelopment education for the middle old, self-protection and self-transcendence education for the oldest old according to the age characteristics of senior citizens. **Table 3** is the basic requirements of teachers' attitude towards teaching in all ages of senior citizens education.

4) Individual Culture and Behavior

As to the basic requirements of individual culture and behavior, all the standards are almost the same [5]. Therefore, in senior citizen education, we adapt the one used by other standards (see **Table 4**).

3.2. The Knowledge Needed by Senior Citizen Education Teachers

The problem about what kind of knowledge senior citizen education teachers need has attracted many scholars' attention. Shulman holds that knowledge needed by teachers include content knowledge, curriculum knowledge, general pedagogical knowledge, pedagogical content knowledge, knowledge of learners and their characteristics, knowledge of educational context and knowledge of

Table 2. The basic requirements of senior citizen education teachers' attitude towards students.

Dimension	Field	Basic requirements
Professional concept and teachers' morality	Professional understanding	<p>6) taking care of senior citizen, paying attention to senior citizens' health care education, and promoting senior citizens' health.</p> <p>7) cultivating senior citizens' sentiment, improving the personality of senior citizens, enriching senior citizens' lives and making the aged lead a happy life.</p> <p>8) increasing and updating senior citizens' knowledge, regulating the intelligence of senior citizens.</p> <p>9) actively creating conditions to make senior citizen to have the right to take part in social development and enjoy the achievements of development course.</p>

Table 3. The basic requirements of teachers' attitude towards teaching in senior citizen education.

Dimension	Field	Classification	Basic requirements
Professional concept and teachers' morality	Teachers' attitude towards teaching	preparatory education for the old-to-be (55 - 60)	<p>11) guiding the old-to-be to view and treat the retirement issue.</p> <p>12) making a good preparation for everything before retirement, so as to hug the retirement with a positive attitude.</p>
		role change and potential development education for the young old (60 - 70)	13) guiding senior citizens at transition period to reposition social role and self-expectation, reselecting and designing their retirement life, adjusting their mentality to adapt to the changed social living environment.
		redevelopment education for the middle old (70 - 80)	14) guiding senior citizen at this age to adjust the ways of productive aging according to their health, interests and expertise, doing according to their own abilities in order to achieve a healthy and sustainable development.
		self-protection and self-transcendence education for the oldest old (above 80)	<p>15) leading a valuable life according to the psychological characteristics and their physical conditions of senior citizens, so as to perfect themselves and prolong their lives.</p> <p>16) guiding senior citizens to transcend themselves, and holding healthy philosophical view and value.</p> <p>17) guiding senior citizen to re-explore and re-perceive the meaning of life, and integrating their valuable items, so as to positively face the end of their lives.</p>

educational ends, purposes and values. Some scholars abroad such as Dewey, LStenhouse and Schn hold that teachers' knowledge lies in teachers' previous experience, teachers' present mind and body and teachers' future action and plan (namely practical knowledge) [6] Different scholars, based on different

Table 4. The basic requirements of “individual culture and behavior” of senior citizen education.

Dimension	Field	Basic requirements
Professional concept and teachers' morality	individual culture and behavior	18) having love, responsibility, patience and carefulness; 19) being optimistic, enthusiastic and compassionate; 20) being good at self-adjusting mood and maintain peaceful mind; 21) working hard and keeping making a progress in study; 22) wearing neatly and properly, using language norm and behaving politely.

perspectives, classify teachers' knowledge. Chinese scholars, based on Professional Standard for Teachers, classify teachers' knowledge into student development knowledge, content knowledge, pedagogy knowledge and general knowledge. Senior citizen education is a kind of lifelong education with purpose and organization according to the needs of senior citizens and social development. Therefore, knowledge of learners in senior citizen education means knowledge which can satisfy the learning needs of senior citizen. McClusky, the father of senior citizen education in America, holds that learning needs of senior citizen should include coping needs, expressive needs, contributive needs, influence needs and transcendence needs [7]. Coping needs means minimal literacy and self-sufficiency levels, therefore, we need to promote senior citizens' physiological knowledge, psychological knowledge, self-cognition knowledge and safety knowledge (travel safety, food safety, medical emergency). Expressive needs, contributive needs, influence needs refer to activities carried out for its own sake, altruistic desire to serve others, and influence others. Transcendence needs refer to the knowledge and ways in which senior citizen reflect on themselves to summarize the value and meaning of their lives. Senior citizens need some content knowledge such as calligraphy, dancing, music, tea art, instrument and chess to feel a great deal of pleasure. Besides, various activities organized by senior citizens themselves are also called curriculum. Senior citizen education in schools, in society, and long-distance senior citizen education serve senior citizen with courses. Therefore, the author combines content knowledge with curriculum knowledge in the paper. Imparting curriculum knowledge to senior citizen requires curriculum pedagogy knowledge, including principles and ways of senior citizen education, practice ways of curriculum, teaching methods, strategies of organizing a class and knowledge of senior citizens' learning characteristics. Senior citizen education also needs general knowledge, such as national conditions, history, geography, culture and civic knowledge. Besides, general knowledge also includes natural science knowledge, humanistic and social science knowledge, corresponding artistic appreciation and expression knowledge, and information technology knowledge (Table 5).

3.3. The Abilities Needed by Senior Citizen Education Teachers

Teachers, main parts of conducting teaching, must have the ability of teaching and research in order to conduct teaching effectively, including the ability of

Table 5. Knowledge needed by senior citizen teachers.

Dimension	Field	Basic requirements
Professional knowledge	Learners' knowledge	23) knowing the laws, regulations and polices about living conditions, development and protection of senior citizens;
		24) knowing psychological characteristics and laws of senior citizens, and mastering the strategies of protecting and encouraging senior citizens' mental and physical healthy development;
	Curriculum knowledge	25) knowing safety knowledge;
		26) knowing ways in which senior citizens serve others, influence others and contribute to society;
Curriculum pedagogy knowledge	27) acquiring knowledge of reflecting on their own lives.	
	28) understanding and mastering some curriculum knowledge about coping needs and expressive needs;	
General knowledge	Curriculum pedagogy knowledge	29) knowing contributive needs-typed, influence needs-typed, self-transcendence-typed curriculum knowledge.
		30) knowing principles and methods of senior citizen education psychology;
	General knowledge	31) mastering teaching methods and strategies of four types of courses;
		32) mastering ways of evaluating four types of courses.
		33) having the knowledge of corresponding natural science and humanistic and social science;
		34) knowing backgrounds of education in China;
		35) having the knowledge of corresponding artistic appreciation and expression;
		36) having the knowledge of information technology.

organizing teaching and controlling class, language expression, scientific research, choosing teaching resources and management. Senior citizen education teachers must also have the basic teaching ability as the teachers, but the teaching aim, teaching model and teaching subjects of senior citizen education have its own characteristics. The key difference between senior citizen education and other academic education is that it does not systemically impart content knowledge to students, but organize, develop and integrate curriculum for senior citizen to choose from based on needs of senior citizen in the aspects of health care, leisure, potential and social adaptability. Therefore, senior citizen education teachers should know to integrate high-quality resources, develop the courses suitable for senior citizen, and promote and implement these courses based on internet. In a word, core competence of senior citizen education teachers is the ability of developing, integrating, promoting and implementing courses. Secondly, the ability of communication and cooperation is of great importance. SCANS of America emphasizes interpersonal skills in adult education teachers' abilities, including abilities to work with administrators, school inspectors, colleagues and students [8]. Senior citizen education teachers must know learning needs of senior citizen. Master learners' learning background and cognition status, and make senior citizen learn happily. Besides, it is of great significance for

senior citizen education teachers to effectively cooperate with administrators and colleagues, including collecting, allocating and sharing information, putting forwards some strategies in organizing and implementing teaching, and strengthening cooperation to improve teaching quality. Thirdly, senior citizen education teachers should have the ability of fully respecting senior citizens' psychological needs and their personalized learning needs, providing learning support service, including learning plan management and preparation of learning materials, offering and creating appropriate learning environment. In a word, senior citizen education teachers should be equipped with professional concept, professional ethics and service ability. Fourthly, senior citizen education teachers should have reflection and development ability. Teaching reflection, an effective way of improving teaching, is an essential ability of improving teachers' professional development. Stenhouse holds that teachers are researchers, and Schwab also puts emphasis on teachers' practical ability. Senior citizen education teachers should actively collect and analyze the relevant information, constantly reflect on themselves, make an exploration and research in the problems happening in teaching, work out professional development plan, actively take part in professional training, and constantly improve their professional quality (Table 6).

4. The Value of Core Competence in Senior Citizen Education Teachers' Professional Development

The construction of an index system of core competence has become the main part of teachers' standards. As to promoting teachers' abilities based on teachers' standards, the developed countries are the models. In America, novice teachers in adult education should be trained, which can be used as the standards of evaluating teachers' skills and abilities. Teachers' qualification and teachers' professional development projects go hand in hand. However, in our country, senior citizen education is in the developing stage, and we have no qualification system and professional standards of senior citizen education teachers. Therefore, core competence plays an important role in senior citizen education teachers' professional development.

1) Providing reference for selecting senior citizen education teachers

At present, we have adopted many ways to expand the ways of hiring senior citizen education teachers, including part-time teachers of each level of higher schools and retired teachers. Some senior citizens are also encouraged to be re-hired as tutors, consultants or lecturers by some schools. The graduates and talents are encouraged to work in senior citizen education organizations. When hiring, managing and cultivating senior citizen education teachers, we always face three important problems: 1) What kind of people can be acted as senior citizen education teachers; 2) What are the standards for choosing senior citizen education teachers? 3) How to evaluate teachers' performance? 4) What is the goal of teachers' professional development [9]?

Table 6. The abilities needed by senior education teachers.

Dimension	Field	Basic requirements
Professional abilities	Teaching and research ability	37) having the ability of organizing teaching and controlling class;
		38) having the ability of language expression; 39) having the ability of scientific research; 40) having the ability of choosing teaching resources and management.
	Curriculum development, integration and implementation ability	41) having the ability of developing personalized courses according to the needs of senior citizen;
		42) having the ability of integrating high-quality teaching resources according to the needs of senior citizen; 43) having the ability of marketing and implementing courses based on internet.
	Communication and cooperation	43) having the ability of making senior citizens to learn in the joyful atmosphere,
		44) having the ability of communicating with colleagues, sharing experience and resources and promoting mutual development. 45) having the ability of collecting, managing, allocating and sharing information, and cooperating with colleagues.
Service ability	46) having the ability of fully respecting senior citizens' psychological needs, and their personalized learning needs, 47) having the ability of providing learning support service, including learning plan management and preparation of learning materials, 48) having the ability of providing and creating appropriate learning environment.	
Reflection and development	49) actively collecting and analyzing the relevant information, constantly reflecting on themselves, and making an improvement in teaching, 50) making an exploration and research in the problems happening in teaching, 51) working out professional development plan, actively taking part in professional training, and constantly improving their professional quality.	

2) Tools for evaluating teachers

Each level of senior citizen education administrative sections must regularly evaluate teaching performance and quality of faculty. In the present system, as to standards of evaluating teachers' teaching performance, there is no reference at all for us, therefore, we always use tools for evaluating adult education teachers or basic education teachers. Constructing an index system of core competence can be used as an important reference for evaluating senior citizen education teachers, which is a tool for teachers' self-evaluation and mutual evaluation. By means of evaluating teachers' knowledge, ability, and teaching performance, teachers can reflect on themselves, and have more chances to appraise the excellent, promote their professional titles and increase salary.

3) Helping teachers choose the way of professional development

The establishment of core competence of senior citizen education teachers guides the direction of teachers' professional development. Teachers should

know where they must improve, and where they must give priority to develop, which are the foundation and key issues of future professional development. To administrative section, we can provide senior citizen education teachers with a periodic study plan, refresher courses, training bases based on index systems of core competence. Therefore, this is a platform built between administrator and teachers, so as to help teachers choose the way of their professional development.

5. Strategies of Developing Core Competence of Senior Citizen Education Teachers

Because core competence of senior citizen education teachers plays an importance role in teachers' professional development and promotion of teachers' performance by means of selection, training and encouragement, how to promote core competence of senior citizen education teachers has attracted our administrative department's attention. Promoting core competence of the teachers is a long-term continuous process. There are many elements which are influencing the development of senior citizen education teachers. The author puts forward strategies of developing core competence of senior citizen education teachers from the perspectives of integration of training and training system, top-level design, personal development awareness and subjective initiative.

1) Perfecting rules and regulations and legal safeguards of promoting core competence of senior citizen education

In developed countries, legislation of senior citizen education progresses together with development of senior citizen education. In other words, the meaning, ways and strategies of senior citizen education teachers' professional development are prescribed by the government. At the level of central government, Lifelong Education Act makes a principled stipulation on the direction of senior citizen education teachers' professional development. In the local lifelong education regulations, there are the rules and regulations on enforcement regulations of senior citizen education teachers' professional development. It is necessary to construct a management system of senior citizen education teachers based on the leadership of the Party Committee, on the co-ordination of other relevant sections. The evaluation system of senior citizen education teachers is built based on teachers' educational concept, teachers' moral competence, teachers' knowledge competence and teachers' ability competence. The senior citizen education teachers are rewarded in the aspects of salary, professional development, appraisal of professional titles and performance assessment, so as to constantly promote teachers' core competence to develop themselves.

2) Building an integrative training system for senior citizen education teachers

The government should provide policy and fund for higher schools which host senior citizen education, so as to encourage each level of higher schools, especially state-owned Normal Universities, to offer senior citizen education. The universities can offer many courses, including pedagogy for senior citizen, psychology for senior citizen, artistic appreciation, life-and-death education, and religion, make rules and regulations for senior citizen education teachers' training,

expressly state training contents, training method, funding support mode and reward and punishment measures. It is necessary to build the specialized institutions for teachers' training. Besides, with some higher schools as Open University, a planned and hierarchical training for senior citizen education teachers can be provided, so that we can cultivate excellent teachers with high academics and good specialization.

3) Encouraging and guiding senior citizen education teachers' professional development

Senior citizen education teachers should be good at discovering problems, constantly update their teaching concept, perfect their knowledge structure, and promote their comprehensive ability. Besides, teachers should insist on problem solving, actively conduct action research, build teacher practice community, give full play to teachers' advantage and expertise, and share their knowledge, skills, experience and resources, so as to cooperatively carry out professional development in a team group. The school should guide senior citizen education teachers to take part in research, training and teaching competition by means of project management and operation. Besides, we should also explore sustainable development of core competence of teachers and elaborate management mode. Each stage of senior citizen education teachers' professional development should be attached great importance, including strict implementation of professional development plan, timely collection of information, strengthening process monitoring and paying attention to checking after training, so as to promote teachers' core competence by means of ways of professional development.

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