

The Status and Prospects of Community Education Workers in China

Abstract

Professionalization, career development prospects, and social value are the three basic components of the status and prospects of community education workers, which influence their choice to continue their careers or not. In China, these problems are complex and lacking in systematic research, and the current situation does not meet the needs of community education. This study interviewed 24 community workers regarding their salaries, working conditions, and training and career advancement opportunities to evaluate this situation in Ningbo City. The findings highlight challenges in the evaluation processes and work motivations of community education workers, including teams without professional knowledge, lack of training opportunities, unsupportive policies, and low salaries. These findings can be used by governments and community workers to find collaborative ways to

facilitate community education processes, including the provision of adult education for community educators. New legal policies to raise the status of community educators are also suggested.

Keywords Social status • Community education workers • Professionalization •

Professional development

Introduction

In 21st-century China, community education plays an important role in moving toward a learning society and building a lifelong education system as a way for community members to study and gradually enhance their knowledge and prospects. According to Chinese scholar Liu xuelian, community education entails a community-based educational activity and process that realizes the improvement of the quality and quality of life of all members of the community and the development of the community(Liu,2007). In recent years, with the continuous expansion of the scope and content of community education work, the development of professional community educators has become an imperative task for promoting the growth of community education. However, the current situation still does not meet the needs of community education.

On a micro level, community education workers are the professional development arm of a community education team, who are concerned with policy, social cognition, and so on. These roles are of great significance for the raising of the social status of community educators. Their improved social status helps attract more talent to enter the field. The community education workers in this study mainly belonged to three groups: graduate

university students, former primary school teachers (including those who were unsatisfied with their original work and those who had retired), and staff who were recruited temporarily from the labor market. Chinese scholar Cheng Xianping pointed out that Chinese community educators face various career development problems such as social identification, job promotion, salary treatment, work pressure and psychological burden (Cheng, 2015). This study examines the current state of community education in China and analyzes the factors that influence the status and prospects of Chinese community educators.

Literature Review

The Roles and Characteristics of Community Education Workers

Some existing literature has discussed the role of community educators in the professional development of community education, such as mediating for social change and providing youth activities where the issues, interests, and debates of young people become the central point of their learning and exercise of citizenship. Another study explored the roles of team value orientations (collectivism and power distance) and team collegiality, based on data obtained from 207 learning teams (Ning, D. Lee, and W. O. Lee, 2015), which showed the importance of the function of community teachers. In some literature, a blueprint has been

proposed for the professional development of urban teachers that fosters new communities of learning, embraces diversity, and prepares teachers through community and collaborative partnerships. This means that while the main role of the teacher is to improve their teaching (Murrell, 2001), the main role of the community education worker is addressing the values and passion, analytical minds, creative force, and the legacy of the work of community educators (Delgado, 2017) in the context of professionalizing community work. The value of personal experience was a concern of Fitzsimons, who believed that local knowledge and direct involvement through personal experience are not valued to the extent community education workers feel it should be (Fitzsimons, 2010, p. 61). However, this conflicts with the attribution of importance to lived experience by local community workers which has been identified elsewhere (McVeigh, 2002; Henderson and Glen, 2006, p. 282).

One previous study also examined the roles and responsibilities of community educators in Ohio and San Francisco, such as supporting and measuring the quality of expanded learning opportunities and corresponding activities, for example, training sessions or orientations for staff, formal review processes, and formal parent feedback (R. Jacobson, Jamal, L. Jacobson, and Blank, 2013). Schmoker's concept of professional learning

communities promotes collaboration among teachers and paraprofessionals working in groups since borrowing and generating ideas is important to student achievement and success (as cited in Brown, Horn, and King, 2018; Hoaglund, Birkenfeld, and Box, 2014). A community teacher who is intimately invested and integrated into the community internalizes teaching as a community service, believes in and commits to collective responsibility, builds synergistic relationships with parents/families and the community, holds high expectations for students and self, and engages in social activism for community empowerment (Ukpokodu, 2012). When working in professional learning communities, staff need a detailed view of the instructional process and to focus on the practices that can be more effective for student achievement, while attributing importance to addressing problems by working together to achieve what they cannot achieve alone, creating a vision to help all students learn, and monitor and intervene in student learning (Cansoy and Parlar, 2017, pp. 13–27).

Prerequisite characteristics for community educators, such as dedication and energy, were noted by Watt (1974), who observed that enthusiasm, energy, dedication, and hard work are the ingredients for success in the development of nationwide community education. Of primary concern to this study were the characteristics and roles of part-time staff, the level of

satisfaction with existing training, and attitudes toward a modular training system (Munn, Castelino, and Hamilton, 1989). Mark Creyton noted that it is perhaps more appropriate to consider all those who contribute to such work as “community members,” rather than to differentiate between the roles of volunteers, staff, and community workers (Creyton, 2004).

Community education workers are the main undertakers and organizers of community education. However, at present, a unified and clear definition of the concept and connotation of community educators has not yet been agreed by scholars in China. Shi Qi and Zhuo Silian stated that community educators mainly include those who specialize in providing community education: management personnel at all levels of community education administration, career management and school management personnel, and full-time teachers engaged in community education and teaching work (Shi and Zhuo, 2005, p. 76). Part-time community education teachers can also be included in this interpretation. Guoliang (2010) held that “community education workers” and “community educators” are different expressions of the same thing; both terms refer to professionals who perform educational and teaching duties. These are personnel specializing in community education and teaching activities, comprising full-time and part-time staff and volunteers. Full-time staff represent

community educators who are formally employed in the relevant community organizations and mainly responsible for the organization, management, and teaching of community education activities; they are the backbone of community education work (Guoliang, 2010, p. 14). Liu described the situation in China as, “community educators are full-time people who specialize in community education, including full-time community education Cadres and full-time community teachers. Community educators have both the basic requirements of educators and the working nature of social workers.” At the same time, she also stated that the lack of necessary professional quality is a common problem amongst the current community education workers in China (Liu, 2007, p. 8).

Community education teachers are generally defined in three ways in policy text: full-time community education personnel, part-time community education staff, and volunteers. For example, in 2004, China’s Ministry of Education issued a number of recommendations for the promotion of community education, suggesting that local education departments should strengthen the composition of community education teams by establishing a full-time staff, with part-time staff and volunteers to support the needs of community education. In summary, the term “community educators” in this study refers to a

team of people who plan and organize community education work in order to better serve community development. Community educators are, as described, the main driving force of community education, therefore, the study of community education is inseparable from the study of community educators.

The Professional Development and Training of Community Educators

A common theme in the extant literature has discussed how community educators can learn through their involvement in professional learning communities to identify variables that either promote or hinder teacher leadership development (Wilson, 2016; Hord, 1997, 2004).

The qualification of adult educators represents a central predictor of the quality of adult education. However, within current policy discourses and adult education research on the professional development of prospective adult educators, little attention has been paid to teacher qualifications when compared to other fields of education and training. Andersson, Kopsen, Larson, and Milana (2013) analyzed the qualification paths, or learning trajectories, of prospective adult educators in Sweden and Denmark, based on narrative interviews with 29 students who were training to become adult educators, and revealed that becoming an

adult educator was sometimes their “Plan B” or second choice. Individual motives and external demands interact in the professionalization process, therefore, both academic studies and hands-on work experience in the adult education community are crucial parts of an adult educator’s training.

Another research theme has focused on training needs and provision. Research commissioned by the Scottish Education Department investigated the views of part-time Scottish community education workers, their employers, and their trainers about training needs and how adequately those needs were being met. In this research, Broadbent and Papadopoulos (2009) discussed the requirements of community workers, especially volunteers, who need training and on-going support, and program coordinators, who should ensure mentors are aware of best practice principles so that young people, volunteers, and communities can optimize program outcomes. The authors also recommended that government and private funding sources demand that quality benchmarks are embedded within programs as a condition of such funding. Meanwhile, Sen focused on the professional development and working conditions of part-time community college teachers in the US, affirming the need to implement teaching centers to train and improve the professional level

of part-time teachers in these colleges (Lin, 2007). Zhang (2009, p. 142–144) also found that US community colleges have flexible teacher recruitment standards, strict teacher recruitment procedures, flexible salary systems, diversified teacher evaluation systems, effective teacher training programs, and effective contract management.

The Status of Community Educators

The term “status” can be interpreted as a current professional situation and refers to the comprehensive state formed by individuals in the process of survival owing to the combined effects of their own factors and external factors. It is affected by many factors (Gao, 2018).

The focus of this paper is the status and problems of community education workers, including their salaries and working conditions, professional-quality foundations, professional training systems, external attention, and career development opportunities and planning. Limited literature has been concerned with the status of community educators. Whelan identified a tension between community workers residing in disadvantaged areas that were affected by poverty and exclusion and “outsider” community workers, that is, those from other areas and usually with middle-class origins, who were also enraged by inequality. She challenged the

appropriateness of professionalizing community work, arguing that to do so would exacerbate tension between these disparate groups (Whelan, 1990). Other studies have also discussed the different types of activities required of community education workers, for example, building the skills of workers and other community members. According to Volunteering Australia (2007), there has traditionally been an artificial distinction between working with volunteers and community development, based on the perception of volunteers as being managed and working for the “less fortunate.”

Other research has focused on government endeavors to develop community education. The Department of Planning and Community Development (2004) outlined in its community-building strategy that governments can help build stronger communities by investing in a more linked-up, integrated approach to planning, funding, and the delivery of services at the local level. Strong communities understand and work with their most disadvantaged populations to ensure good quality service provision for all, and governments implement quality benchmarks within programs to ensure standards (Broadbent and Papadopoulos, 2009).

From the literature, we find that community education workers mainly focus on the

process of professionalizing community work and pay little attention to teaching work compared with other school teachers. However, there remains a lack of research on the current specific professional context and the attitudes of governments toward community education are seldom mentioned. However, Peng (2017, p. 56), who did investigate such government attitudes, observed that, in addition to meeting people's educational needs and promoting national economic competitiveness, government intervention in community colleges can improve the lifelong education system, give community colleges a prominent role in this system, promote educational equity, and improve the overall educational level of the population.

Methods

Ningbo is a coastal city in eastern China, where the economy is well-developed. Promotion by government departments, coupled with the increasing demand for education, has resulted in the rapid development of Ningbo's community education, giving it a leading position in China. In this study, 24 community educators from Ningbo were interviewed using semi-structured questions to retrieve a high volume of authentic and specific information. At

present, there are three main groups of community educations in Ningbo: full-time staff in community education, community workers who manage community education, and volunteers. Since volunteers are unpaid, they were not included in this study. Therefore, the interviewees comprised of ten community educators and two part-time workers.

The content of the interviews focused on four aspects: First, whether the living standards of community educators met their expectations and improved their conditions; second, whether the working environment adequately enhanced the professional development of community educators; third, whether the subject background and professional accomplishment of community educators were appropriate for the needs of community education; and fourth, community educators' vision and plans for the overall development of community education. I spoke with the respondents by phone and mentioned that the survey was being undertaken to understand the career development, professional development, work, and lives of the community educators through interviews. The respondents expressed their willingness to participate after understanding the purpose of the study. In order to protect the privacy of the respondents, this article uses pseudonyms for the names of the participants.

After completing the fieldwork, the researchers collected and analyzed the interview data.

Data analysis involved two steps. First, all interviews were transcribed, however, in order to ensure that no interview data was lost or misinterpreted in translation, they were not translated into English. Second, QSR NVivo 10 software was used for the open coding of the data. This coding process uses inductive methods to generalize different open coding into more abstract and more dominant subject words, and then determines the framework of content analysis according to these subject words.

Findings

Lack of Professional Training

Professional knowledge. Most of the interviewed community education workers had no professional knowledge and had never received any professional training before securing the job. When some full-time community educators were asked if they had a prior understanding of adult or community education, the outcome reflected that the professional training of community educators is inefficient. Huang stated, “Before I was a community education worker, I did not know what community education was or what it does,” while Ma added, “I came here with one piece of white paper.” Finally, Xu noted that “The professional

knowledge of some primary school teachers and people who are about to retire from adult schools is not very comprehensive.”

These answers reflected that most of the full-time community education workers had experienced similar problems, such as their jobs were not matched with their specialties and overall professional literacy was weak. These were issues for both full-time employees and social workers who managed community education. Ms. Zhang, a community worker, expressed his views on the current situation of community education work in China:

The reality of community education today is too complex and unprofessional. The recruited social workers, as you can see, are also not professional. Whether you major in community education [at university] or not, staff should be assigned according to the needs of the job. There is no specialization in community education. In fact, what needs to be specialized is not the social workers, but the professionals in community education. (Ms. Zhang)

When asked about the specialty of his social work, Mr. Xu said, “It is not limited to your field.” Further, in response to the question, “When workers started to manage community education, did they have previous knowledge about the subject?” he answered, “No, I don’t

think they have any professional knowledge of it at all.”

At present, the complexity and lack of professionalism in community education work in China represent internal reasons for the low professional quality of workers in the field. Zhao, a community teacher, expressed her views on the current situation of community education:

Now, the real situation is that it is too complicated and there is no specialization in community education. In the recruitment of social workers, they never consider whether these workers have appropriate professional knowledge or not, even though we really need someone with professional knowledge to do this kind of job. (Zhao)

There are different requirements for community education managers and front-line social workers in terms of their understanding of the content of community education work. Pan, a community education administrator, said, “Community education work should be carried out by all communities. Many specialized community staff often serve as a connecting link. However, they rarely complete a project or carry out an activity by themselves.” According to Mrs. Pan, the real executors of community education are specialized community staff, while other community education workers believe that full-time community education employees should carry out this educational work.

Improving professional skills. Two types of training are available for community education workers in China. One is self-directed training through the Zhejiang Teachers Training Platform, which is chosen based on personal preferences and academic needs. However, most of the training courses accepted by full-time teachers are related to the subjects they previously taught in schools, and the training content focusing on community education is very little. As Mr. Zhang explained, “This training is layered; people from different professions have their own courses. However, this kind of training is only organized once a year and lasts about three days.” Pan also said, “Generally speaking, there are theoretical courses lasting two days and practical courses lasting one day, mainly for the projects which will be accessed by the municipal and provincial departments.” This kind of training is organized by community colleges for community workers who are responsible for community education and is professional and targeted.

However, the frequency of such training activities is low, so most workers have limited chances to attend. This is similar to the professional training problem reflected by a teacher, Huang, who noted, “At present, the professional skill levels of the staff are not high and the

training opportunities are few, which makes it hard for their professional ability to significantly improve.”

The Disconnect Between Chinese Community Education Policies and Practice

Community education is undervalued by the Chinese government. Influenced by international debate in the early 1970s, the modern concept of lifelong education and policies began to develop in China, and the government has now published many policies about community education to achieve the goal of a learning society. The “Regulations on Promoting Lifelong Education in Ningbo” was the fifth published local regulation on the Chinese mainland, which was marketed widely and highly praised by the authorities. However, during the interview, we discovered some outcomes that opposed the intent of the regulation to promote continuing education.

When asked whether the implementation of the regulations regarding the promotion of lifelong education in Ningbo had helped the professional assessment of community education workers, Feng, a dean, replied:

The regulation is useless because executors never enforce it... Chinese people just think the laws should be abided by... Since it was published in 2015, there have been concrete measures on the promotion of lifelong education. In terms of jobs, this regulation should enact professional law, just like educational law, and formulate specific implementation rules to promote these jobs. However, during these years, there has been nothing except for the file. So, it is useless. (Dean Feng)

Mr. Xu, a local community education specialist, also expressed the same view, saying, “Ningbo’s current regulations on promoting lifelong education are not very effective.”

When the interviewees were asked about their biggest concerns regarding life status and work prospects in Zhicheng, which are covered by article 22 of the regulations—which focuses on the professional ranks and titles of lifelong educators—by the government in Ningbo in 2015, Zhang opined: “According to the nature of lifelong education institutions, relevant government departments should supervise the technical qualification assessment of full-time educators specializing in lifelong education during the relevant series of title assessments.”

However, the regulation was not put into effect. Mr. Xu, a community education professional, noted, “At Ningbo community college, there is no professional technical qualification index

to evaluate community education professionals. Although the “Regulations on Promoting Lifelong Education in Ningbo” mentioned the technical qualification of workers, it has not been implemented.” To solve this problem, Mr. Xu suggested:

With the development of community education, both maintaining the stability of ranks and promoting their professionalism need to be perfected via a system of professional and technical titles. A relatively independent and open channel for promotion should also be set up. This will improve the professional development of community education and give workers more powerful protection. (Mr. Xu)

There are many aspects of community education work, but the problem of insufficient personnel is particularly highlighted in practical work in the community. The source of this problem is that government departments paid little attention to this work, as Yao, a teacher, observed:

Leaders always focus on so-called key projects, such as demolition, social governance, and other work, which are acknowledged as people’s livelihoods. Community education is not a key project because leaders can’t see the effects. Almost all assessments focus on the economic facets—there are 50 scores given for this—while

there are only one or two scored for community. So where is the motivation for them to do this job? (Yao)

“Community work is on the wrong track. It is not included in the government’s work schedule, so how financial investment, personnel investment, and title evaluation be put in the right place?” added Xu.

Further to the neglect of the government, this issue also existed in the opinions of community education workers. Most community education workers in this study believed their jobs were not very important. As community workers are responsible for community education, they tend to be “multi-taskers.” Ms. Jing said, “Unlike specialized community education workers, many community workers are responsible for six jobs, including health, civil administration, community education, and so on, which puts big pressure on them.”

The professional status of community education was low among community workers. One community worker, Ms. Zhao, discussed the exhausting nature of the work:

There are many jobs related to community education, and you will be responsible for more than one...if a resident connects with you, you need to deal with it...basically, there is no leisure time at all. Besides, I have more than eight supervisors, and each of

them assigned me different tasks that were not related to community education. (Ms. Zhao)

Meanwhile, Ms. Zhou described the understaffing of her organization:

My job entails lots of responsibilities, including party organizing, culture, the women's federation, the communist youth league, community education, marketing, planning activities, making purchases...For example, when you should be focusing on writing work, instead you need to do a series of related jobs by yourself, such as buying resources for activities, taking pictures, connecting with journalists, writing manuscripts...we need more staff. (Ms. Zhou)

Neglect of their work leads to some mobility problems amongst community education employees. Due to lower salaries and limited recognition by society, the phenomenon of rapid mobility appeared amongst these workers frequently. Many of them had worked in the field for just a few years before taking the civil servant examination (so they could be officially employed by the government) or applying for a position in a public institution.

Lack of an Independent Career Development System

The engagement system for professional and technical teaching positions in China was implemented in 1986, but until now, a separate system to promote the professional roles of full-time community education teachers in China has still not been implemented. At present, the professional positions of full-time community education workers in Ningbo are mainly assessed by the former school units, not community schools. Further, the competition for promotion is intense. Mr. Yao, who had been working for more than 20 years, said:

Nowadays, there are few channels for professional evaluation. If you want a higher professional title, you can try entering educational management, but this means you must give up your teaching qualification and transfer to roles related to educational management... Those employed from the general population have no rights to get higher professional titles.(Mr. Yao)

This study found some different opinions on career development planning for community education workers. For younger workers, defining a career development plan and achieving a higher professional level was definitely important. However, work intensity was not found to be directly proportional to salary and lack of support caused negative effects on professional

development and future planning. Pay was not proportional to gain, which caused the slow professional progress of workers, especially to the staff employed from the general population who did not hold official positions:

I work a lot and work overtime frequently, but there are no overtime payments. The staff of government or company-affiliated institutions have salaries of 67,000 yuan per year, or if there is no affiliated relationship, about 40,000 yuan or 50,000 yuan per year. This is now called the annual salary system, which is much lower than before.

(Mr. Yao)

The same problem affected workers with official jobs in the community, who also complained that low salaries and minimal support decimated their passion for their work:

We need car subsidies to do our jobs. We are not like other teachers who only teach in schools. Our jobs require us to go to out to other communities and streets using our own cars; however, there are no official schemes to help us with this. Therefore, we have less motivation to do certain jobs. (Mr. Yao)

This situation differed for those who had already achieved a higher professional level:

To be honest, I will retire after eight years. That's why I do not have a career development plan. Besides that, there is no opportunity for me to be promoted. I would have already been a senior teacher with the highest professional title if I were in that system. So, what kind of career development plan can I make?... But I will still try my best to do the job. (Ma)

Ma, a dean, was transferred to a new position as the head of a community college one year ago, so she still felt positive about her job. However, her comments demonstrated one of the problems that exist in career development planning for community education workers, which is that their promotion channels are limited when compared with the general education system, causing negative effects on the efficient construction of community educator teams and the willingness of community educators to remain in the career.

Discussion and Conclusion

Cultivating Professional Community Educator Talent through Adult Education

At present, the diverse content of community education work in China and the lack of

professionalism represent the internal reasons for the low professional quality requirements of employees in the field. Most full-time community education workers in China are transferred from the general education system through assignment and secondment. Although both school education and community education fall under the overall remit of education, there are great differences in the professional knowledge and skills required by each. Teachers transferred from the general education system to community education face great differences in teaching content and objectives, and the professional qualities acquired in general education can no longer meet the needs of community education. Additionally, there are no professional restrictions and requirements on social workers recruited to deliver community education, which inevitably leads to the problem that the professional background of this group of employees is not compatible with the key requirements of community education or social work.

The professional development of community educators depends on the overall progress of and their access to adult education, while the overall progress of adult education not only depends on the development of the field of practice but also professional adult education talent. While promoting the practice of adult education, developed countries should not

ignore the exploration of related academic fields and the cultivation of professional talent.

Lindeman, the adult educator known as the “spiritual father of adult education,” first introduced “adult education” to the United States in 1926 with *Andragogik: The Method of Teaching Adult* (Chen, 2010, p. 68–73). Later, Knowles, the master of Western adult education, proposed a theoretical model of adult education based on the traditional pedagogy model, which provided theoretical guidance for the cultivation of adult education professionals.

In 1964, the United States Commission for Professors of Adult Education (CPAE) published *Adult Education: Outlines of an Emerging Field of University Study*. In this book, the concept of adult education, adult education curricula, the relationship between adult education and other disciplines, adult education practice and research, and other basic issues were systematically discussed. This book, as well as the *Handbook of Adult Education*, written by Smith, Aker, and Kidd in 1970, have become classic texts in the field of adult education, providing rich academic insights for the development of adult education research (Chenf, 2010, p. 68–73). It can thus be seen that developed countries have made outstanding contributions to this research discipline and the professional development of adult education

through mature research on adult education theories.

In contrast, the development of adult education in China has been slow and theoretical research on the subject began relatively late. Community education in the country is also still in its initial stages of development. As such, there is a lack of professional talent in the area and a need to draw knowledge from developed countries on adult education management theory, training institutions, and the construction of professional experience. At present, there is no community education major offered in the undergraduate degrees of our China's universities, although the adult education training plans for graduate students in some schools do include a community education research direction. However, community education professional talent is still very sparse. Colleges, universities, and community colleges should jointly manage schools and implement internships in community colleges to allow students to apply their theoretical knowledge of community education in practice (Lin, 2017, p.40) It is also necessary to establish and improve the entry qualification standards for community educators, initiating prerequisite standards for them to enter the workforce so as to standardize and professionalize community education teams.

Improving the Training System for Community Educators

Community education training content is not professional in China and more importance is placed on theory than practice. At present, training for community educators mainly includes lectures, field visits, online learning, and other aspects, among which the theoretical teaching content accounts for the majority, meaning the training format is relatively singular. Furthermore, government officials' lack of knowledge on community education is another reason for this lack of professionalism, as well as the culture of government; the low level of organizational commitment to community engagement within many government agencies; the pressures and constraints on public servants, including gaps in their knowledge of engagement processes; the limited training opportunities available for public servants to develop their knowledge and skills in community engagement; and the lack of monitoring and evaluation (Tobias, 2009, p. 20).

With the global development of adult education, many countries and regions have realized the importance of strengthening the training of adult education providers, to gradually create a lifelong education process that is closer to the general education service. In March 1985, the first committee of the Fourth International Conference on Adult Education,

held in Paris, stated in its report:

Many representatives emphasized the importance of training adult educators as the key to improving the quality and functioning of adult education, a major concern of many countries. Many speakers noted the importance of pre-service training and continuing education, [and the] upgrading and updating of knowledge for adult educators. (Zhang, 1990, p. 377)

According to this report, adult educators should establish their own training system and carry out targeted training, since they have some similarities and some obvious differences from general educators. He An'E took community language teachers as the object of his research and proposed the establishment of corresponding situational factors to improve the professional quality of community teachers and promote their professional development (He.An E, 2009, pp.153–163). Murrell investigated urban community teachers, designed corresponding models for community teachers' professional quality, and proposed relevant measures for the sustainable development of community teachers (Murrell, 2001, p. 135–138). The training of adult educators with professional characteristics, high standards, and strict requirements has long been carried out throughout the world.

Thus, Chinese professional training for community educators should be combined with international experience. Firstly, the format of training should be flexible and diverse. Theoretical courses should be combined with lectures in large classes, discussions in small classes, and practical experience. Practical courses should be augmented with more placement and exchange activities, which should be combined with theoretical knowledge. Secondly, training content should be more targeted. The professional background and working ability of community educators vary, and the “one-size-fits-all” training approach is inefficient; training should reflect differences and diversity. During training, the opinions of trainees should be respected and students should be taught according to their aptitude, prior knowledge, and ability to aid the more effective growth of community educators. Finally, pre-service training should be strengthened. In light of the current situation where the knowledge background of most community educators in China is not highly matched with the specialty of community education, it is necessary to strengthen orientation training for these workers to compensate for their professional knowledge gap.

Establishing and Improving Policy Systems and Regulations

A sound system of laws and regulations is not only the key to the professional development of community education workers but also an important guarantee for community education to obtain social recognition and long-term future development. Western developed countries have long supported the training of adult education providers with policies and regulations. France was the first country globally to implement adult continuing education legislation; in 1919, the French government promulgated the Loi Astier law and began to recognize adult primary education (Zhang, 2007). Since the 1950s, France has promulgated more than 10 further adult education laws based on its national reality, which make specific provisions for the professional training of adult education providers. In Britain, legislation has been passed to ensure that adult education administrators enjoy the same social status, benefits, opportunities for further study, and other welfare benefits as general school staff. In 1968, the Leisure Time Education Act, a Danish adult education act was passed, which stipulated that the main supervisor of an adult education provision must study related management courses. Further, in 1966, the United States implemented the Adult Education Act, which made comprehensive provisions for the institution, content, and funding of adult education training, providing legal guarantees for the continuing education of adult education administrators in

the country (Liu, 2007). Meanwhile, in Japan, the social education law was designed to give clear and detailed conditions for the training and qualification opportunities for adult education management personnel. These developed countries have made corresponding provisions for adult education managers in law so that their professional qualifications and social status can be clearly defined. Since these measures have greatly promoted the professional development of global adult education providers, this strategy is especially worthy of attention in China.

Thus, to realize the long-term and orderly development of community education, it is necessary to have the guarantee of a legal system and ensure its practical implementation. Specific measures are as follows. First, the state should introduce relevant legal regulations to provide general guidance for community education work. Local governments should also formulate policies and regulations with high relevance and operability, and conduct regular inspections and supervision on the implementation of such policies. Second, according to the contribution of individual workers, the relevant departments should offer different welfare benefits, bonuses, and corresponding standards and improve community education workers' salaries to satisfy their needs. Third, the establishment of a separate professional evaluation

system for community education should be expedited, as well as smooth channels to promotion, and it should be ensured that workers can clearly define their career development plans. The existing professional hierarchy for teachers should be refined, and a series of special and independent professional titles for community educators should be applied to ensure the professional assessment is appropriate for teachers in community education.

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