

Original Paper

Critical Analysis of 40 Years of Education Reform in Educational Leadership Preparation in China

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Abstract

The success of a principal often depends on the preparation quality. The United States attaches great importance to the cultivation of educational leadership, and has established various professional organizations to study and manage the cultivation of educational leadership, which has promoted the continuous improvement of the cultivation plan of American educational leadership. In the past 40 years of China's reform and opening up, the preparation level of principals in primary and secondary schools has risen from undergraduate to postgraduate. However, at present, it still shows the importance of on-the-job training of principals in primary and secondary schools, while neglecting the research and reform of pre service education activities of educational leaders, which leads to the standardization and professionalism of preparation methods of educational leaders to be improved. Therefore, we can learn from the preparation experience of American, combine with the actual situation of China, attach great importance to the professional training of education leaders, carry out extensive relevant academic research, enhance the direction leading role of education value and social responsibility, systematically design the preparation program of education leaders, and truly build a diversified social support and promotion network, improve the preparation effect of educational leadership in an all-round way.

Keywords

educational leadership, preparation, reform, criticism, China

1. Introduction

Leadership is the key factor to determine the direction and effect of school development. The success or failure of a principal often depends on the quality of preparation (CCSSO, 2012). The United States attaches great importance to the preparation of educational leaders and has established various

professional organizations to manage the preparation of educational leaders (NCPEA, CPEA, CASA, UCEA, NCEEA, CCSSO). For more than half a century, American scholars have also conducted a lot of research on the issue of education leadership cultivation, from the objectives of leadership preparation (Griffiths, 1988; Brooks, & Normore, 2018b), candidate recruitment (Jacobson, 1990; Moller, & M.Schratz, 2008), curriculum content (Hess, & Kelly, 2005; Bridges, 2012), teaching staff (Hackmann, & McCarthy, 2011; McCarthy, 2015), practice (Barnett, Basom etc., 2000; Hallinger & Lu, 2011) and other aspects to analyze, put forward problems and suggestions, and promote the continuous improvement of the education leadership preparation program in the United States. Since the implementation of education reform in 1985, China's education has achieved rapid development, and primary and secondary school principals play an increasingly important role in the process of independent school running. In order to improve the quality of principals and the level of running schools, the state has begun to vigorously carry out the training of principals. In 1989, the State Education Commission issued the Opinions on Strengthening the Training of Primary and Secondary School Principals, which is the first systematic and complete policy document on the training of primary and secondary school principals since the reform and opening up in China, and has determined the basic framework for the development of the training of principals. The summary of educational reforms in policy reforms for the training of Chinese principals are presented as follows (Table 1).

Table 1. Policy Documents and Policy Reform Evolution of Chinese Principal Training

Year	Policy documents	Main policy reforms and regulations
1989	Opinions of the State Education Commission on Strengthening the Training of Primary and Secondary Schools	It puts forward the overall framework of principal training, focusing on post qualification training, and the combination of training and principal's role and assessment
1990	Opinions of the State Education Commission on the Development of Post Training in Primary and Secondary Schools	Specific requirements and implementation of on-the-job training
1991	Qualifications and job requirements for Headmasters of Primary and Secondary Schools in China (Trial)	It is stipulated that all principals should receive on-the-job training and obtain qualification certificate
1992	Opinions on Strengthening the Construction of Headmasters in Primary and Secondary Schools Nationwide (Trial)	Conduct on-the-job training for all primary and secondary school principals, and then rotate training every five years to form a training system for Principals

1994	Opinions of the State Council on the Implementation of China's Education Reform and Development Program	Put forward the implementation of "one million Principals Training Plan" and strive for the implementation of the system of primary and secondary school principals working with certificates in China
1995	Guiding opinions of the State Education Commission on the Training of Primary and Secondary School Principals during the Ninth Five Year Plan	Gradually form three levels of training: headmaster's appointment, improvement and advanced research; the headmaster has received 200 hours of training in five years and obtained the certificate of completion
1999	Decision of the CPC Central Committee and the State Council on Deepening Education Reform and Comprehensively Promoting Quality Education	Training of principals as an important way to implement quality education
1999	Regulations on the Training of Principals in Primary and Secondary Schools	The establishment of the overall framework of principal training; the establishment of the relationship between principal training and education reform
2001	The Tenth Five Year Plan for National Educational Cadres	We will consolidate and improve the system of training and holding certificates for Headmasters in primary and secondary schools. On the basis of the whole staff training, the new and proposed principals who have obtained the "qualification training certificate of the president" and the backbone principals are trained in different levels.
2002	Opinions on Further Strengthening and Improving the Training of Primary and Secondary School Principals	Training should actively cooperate with and promote the reform and development of basic education, recommend training materials for Principals
2004	Action plan for Revitalizing Education	Combine cadre training with lifelong education
2007	"11th Five Year Plan" for Cadre Training of National Education	It emphasizes that the implementation of quality education is the central task, and the

System	level, category and scale of training are all improved
2011 Medium and long term Plan for the Development of National Educational Talents (2010-2020)	Launch the training plan for famous principals of primary and secondary schools, establish a system of half a year's academic leave for famous principals of primary and secondary schools every five years, and carry out advanced training
2013 National Education System Cadre Training Plan (2013-2017)	Focus on the principals of primary and secondary schools in rural areas and carry out full training. Carry out job qualification training, improvement training, senior training for key principals and special training in different levels. Pay attention to the training of other management cadres in primary and secondary schools. Strictly carry out the system of work with certificate. The Ministry of education organizes the national training plan for primary and secondary school principals
2013 Opinions on Further Strengthening the Training of Primary and Secondary School Principals	Enhance the strategic thinking ability, educational innovation ability and the ability to lead the sustainable development of the school, and organize the implementation of the excellent principal navigation project
2014 Notice on Launching the National Training Plan for Primary and Secondary School Principals	The excellent principal navigation project mainly includes: principal advanced study class, excellent principal advanced research class and famous principal leading flight; the goal is to train excellent principal, educator type principal reserve talents and famous educator type principal at home and abroad

It is not hard to see from the above training policy documents that, with the deepening of China's education reform, the training activities of principals have gradually developed from the initial macro

guidance mode into the education leadership quality improvement work with clear objectives, clear levels, full participation, institutionalization and systematization, which has promoted the improvement of the knowledge, ability and leadership of principals in primary and secondary schools, as well as the response to the Chinese population more, the demand of education leading cadres is large, and training can improve the quality of school leading cadres in a large scale. However, training is a kind of supplementary and upgrading work, especially during the 12th Five Year Plan period (2011-2015) in China, there was quite a number of primary and secondary school principals with secondary or junior college degrees (Li, 2016), this kind of training also emphasizes a kind of compensation, so it is relatively slow to systematically improve the level of school leaders only by on-the-job training. The attention now has payed to the pre service education of education managers, that is, how all kinds of colleges and universities, especially normal schools, carry out education leader preparation. The relevant enrollment system, curriculum content, teaching methods and evaluation standards of these colleges and universities directly determine the basic quality level of the “quasi principals” who are going to take the education leadership post, indirectly affect the follow-up training work, and also determine the leadership level and development range of primary and secondary schools.

This study focuses on the work of education leadership and management related majors in various colleges and universities in preparation school leaders since China’s reform and opening up (1978), including the following issues:

- 1) The course and existing problems of education leadership training in China in the past 40 years
- 2) The root cause of influencing the current situation of education leaders preparation in Colleges and Universities
- 3) Suggestions for education leadership preparation improvement

2. Method

Using the method of historical research, the researchers consulted the policies and research documents related to the education leadership preparation in the past 40 years of China’s education reform, including the relevant materials such as various types of college enrollment and education plans, and formed a deep understanding of the research problems through systematic analysis and sorting out.

3. Result

3.1 The Development Course of Education Leadership Training in China in the past 40 Years

After the college entrance examination resumed in 1977, normal universities began to resume the enrollment of undergraduate and junior college students majoring in education management. In 1991, the National Education Management Professional Committee was formally established, which is an academic research institution of education management. Professional educators and researchers in

various regions began to hold regular professional conferences on education management, which promoted the rapid development of disciplines. By 1998, more than 400 colleges and universities across the country had set up education management majors and published more than 100 textbooks and monographs, presenting a scene of “a hundred flowers bloom and a hundred schools of thought contend” (Tian & Sun, 1998).

During this period, with the Decision of the CPC Central Committee on the Reform of the Education System in 1985 and the Outline of China’s Education Reform and Development in 1993, China’s education reform gradually deepened, and the education management specialty gradually upgraded. In the Catalogue of Disciplines and Specialties for Awarding Doctor’s and Master’s Degrees and Preparation Graduate Students, issued by the academic degree Office of the State Council in 1997 and implemented in 1998, educational economics and educational management are combined into educational economy and management, which are set as the secondary disciplines under the first level of public management, and can be awarded with management degree or education degree. Before 1998, the professional researchers of educational economics and management were mainly in the education colleges of various normal universities. Now they are in the education colleges and public management colleges of various universities, especially in the comprehensive universities. The preparation level of school managers has risen to the graduate level. The undergraduate education of normal universities keeps the education major and opens the education major School management courses. Some normal universities develop the subject of public management and set up the school of public management based on the major of educational economy and management. Among all the secondary subjects under the first level discipline of public management, there are the most researchers and the most published papers in the discipline of educational economy and management (Cao, 2008).

At the same time, on April 13, 1996, the fourteenth meeting of the academic degree committee of the State Council deliberated and approved the Report on Setting Up and Pilot Running of Master’s Degree in Education, which was born from the application of master’s degree in China. With the development of master’s degree education in the direction of education management, formal enrollment began in 1997, which has become an important part of graduate education, and cultivated a large number of high-level management talents with on-the-job learning and half off-line learning as the main mode for basic education.

In 2008, in order to meet the urgent needs of the development of national education for high-level applied talents, on the basis of years of practice and full demonstration in Peking University, Beijing Normal University and other universities, the academic degree committee of the State Council passed the Program of Setting Up the Professional Degree of Doctor of Education. In 2009, according to the Notice on Carrying Out the Pilot Work of Education Doctoral Degree Education issued by the office of the academic degree committee of the State Council, 15 universities including Peking University,

Tsinghua University and Beijing Normal University were listed as the first batch of Pilot Universities to carry out the education doctoral degree education, and in 2010, they began to recruit graduate students of education doctoral degree. As of June 2015, 15 colleges and universities have recruited 959 students, 90 of whom have passed the defense of dissertation and obtained the professional degree of doctor of education. In September 2015, the National Steering Committee for Graduate Education in Education (hereinafter referred to as the "Education Steering Committee") organized experts to conduct special evaluation on the pilot colleges and universities. On the basis of self-assessment, the expert group agreed that 15 pilot colleges and universities passed the special assessment by reviewing the application materials and on-site defense of colleges and universities (Zhang, Wen, & Zhai, 2016) on the basis of pilot projects in the early stage, the enrollment scale of education professional doctors was expanded in 2018, and 12 enrollment colleges and universities including Tianjin Normal University, Hubei Normal University, Zhejiang Normal University and Xinjiang Normal University were added. Among them, there are 26 schools that enroll the major of "education leadership and management", accounting for 72.4% of the total enrollment (South China Normal University research group, 2019), which shows that the social demand is very wide.

3.2 Existing Problems of Education Leadership Training in China in the past 40 Years

At the postgraduate level, 127 colleges and universities currently offer education economy and management majors, with small total amount and obvious regional distribution differences, most of which are in North China; 21.26% are normal universities, and "985"/"211" colleges and universities account for 48.03%, and the main studying directions include education management research, education economics, education policies and regulations, education and human resource development, etc. (Li & Song, 2016). In terms of enrollment, it has the advantages of interdisciplinary and interdisciplinary students, but there are many problems. The quality of students is not high and a large number of students come from college graduates, lack of practical experience in education. However, due to the tight pace of school work, it is difficult for teaching backbone and management backbone to have the opportunity to study (Chu, 2007). The goal of education and training emphasizes practicality, but the curriculum is not matched, and the curriculum structure is unbalanced (Chu, 2007; Zhao, 2008). The evaluation mechanism is not scientific, which affects the comprehensive ability of preparation talents (Huang & Sun, 2009); the problem consciousness and practical quality of teachers can not fully meet the students' requirements, and professional teachers and scientific research teams are lacking (Chu, 2007; Yang, 2002). The quality of graduation thesis is not high and it is not closely connected with practice (Zhang, 2004). The cultivation of master level professional degree personnel is insufficient (Li & Song, 2016); the social recognition is not high and the employment is difficult (Guo & Ren, 2011).

In China, the enrollment time of doctoral degree students is still relatively short, and they are still in the stage of accumulating experience. The survey of the first batch of students in the pilot universities shows that the comprehensive evaluation of students in preparation objectives, tutor level, teaching resources and conditions is relatively high, with an average satisfaction of 78.38%, but the satisfaction in the aspects of on-the-job learning costs (48.51%), provisions for scholarships and bursaries (29.6%) and practice research base (60.2%) is relatively low. (Research Group of South China Normal University, 2019) However, there are still some problems, such as immature enrollment plan, outstanding contradiction between work and study, unclear dissertation standard and low graduation rate (Zhang et al., 2016). Among them, the biggest bottleneck of the doctor of education is the prominent contradiction between work and learning, the teaching emphasis on academic practice, and the small scale of enrollment. The problems in urgent need of reform are: clear preparation objectives and characteristics, scholarships, fewer opportunities for visiting schools, revision of policies, establishment of exchange platform for colleges and universities, etc. The problems and perplexities faced by the newly added colleges and universities have certain commonness with the first batch of colleges and universities, so it is necessary to continuously explore the development mode suitable for the school-based characteristics. (Research Group of South China Normal University, 2019)

4. Discussion

4.1 The Root Cause of Influencing Education Leaders Preparation in Colleges and Universities

Throughout the preparation process of education leadership in the past 40 years, the professional cultivation level of principals in primary and secondary schools in China has risen from undergraduate level to graduate level, and the quality of education has been greatly improved. However, we need to think deeply about the standardization and specialization of preparation plan.

First of all, there is no clear distinction between academic and professional degree education in China. Especially at the level of master's degree, no matter the academic graduate students of education economy and management or the master's degree students of education management, they can apply for the academic doctoral education of education leadership and management after graduation, and they can also work in primary and secondary schools through recruitment. It is only required to have 3 years (Master's degree) and 5 years (doctor's degree) working experience when recruiting professional master's degree or doctor's degree. This shows that the educational objectives of academic or professional degree postgraduates are actually mixed. This causes a series of problems in the process of learning and teaching.

The interdisciplinary nature of enrollment affects the quality of preparation. The master of education management requires a certain amount of working experience, that is, the experience of "education and related fields", but the screening is not strict when applying online, and some people who are not

engaged in education are also involved in it, resulting in the failure of cross professional students in the learning process. And the learning time of master degree of education management is two years, of which half a year to one year is internship in school. The time of theoretical study is not enough, which affects the cultivation of professional quality.

There is no significant difference between academic graduate students and professional degree students. The teaching process is mainly theoretical learning, and the content of theoretical learning is basically the same. Only the professional degree students increase the case teaching course, and the practice time is extended. In contrast, professional degree doctoral students usually come from primary and secondary schools, with certain education and management experience, and internship problems can also be solved in the process of work; while a considerable part of professional degree master's learning effect depends on the level of guidance teachers.

Secondly, there is no close relationship between the cultivation of educational leadership and the professional standards of principals. The Professional Standards for Principals of Compulsory Education Schools and the Professional Standards for Principals of General High Schools issued by the Ministry of Education emphasize five aspects in terms of philosophy: morality first, education-oriented, leading development, ability first and lifelong learning; specific professional responsibilities include: planning school development, creating education culture, leading curriculum teaching, leading teachers' growth and optimizing internal management, Senior high school principals have also increased the responsibility of "adjusting the external environment"; the professional knowledge and methods that principals should master include: education policy, law and school management theory and technology, their own cultural knowledge and theory and method of school culture construction, curriculum policy and basic theoretical knowledge and method of teaching and learning, theory and method of teachers' professional development, and construction method of the Learning Organization, national policies and their responsibilities and requirements for principals, basic theories and methods of school management, theories and methods of school public relations and method of home-school cooperation. It can be seen that the quality requirements of national policies for primary and secondary school principals are very comprehensive, and they pay attention to the leadership ability of principals formed on the basis of knowledge and skills. However, the education curriculum in colleges and universities usually accounts for more than half of the education courses, while the management courses are few, the elective courses are single, the practical courses are lack of continuity and excessive concentration, and the teaching materials are not standardized, which can not reflect the professional needs (Zhao, 2008). In 2018, the Ministry of Education issued a document to entrust the Education Steering Committee to compile the Graduate Core Curriculum Guide, which is used to guide the colleges and universities to compile the core curriculum for postgraduates in education.

Thirdly, the management organization of education leadership cultivation is mainly the administrative department, and the relevant reform activities are mainly subject to the administrative instructions, which is easy to lead to the lack of academic, and does not match the needs of improving the quality of primary and secondary school leaders. At present, a large number of primary and secondary school principals working in the front line are with secondary technical school and college degree. They are faced with intergenerational replacement, that is, graduates with master's degree will go to leadership positions and become a new generation of expert headmasters. At present, the China's reform is focused on the setting of doctoral degree, and the master's education is not very concerned. Therefore, if only the Ministry of Education, the Higher Education Department of the regional education department, the Discipline Degree Office and other relevant administrative departments manage affairs, or temporarily set up a expert group to evaluate, it is difficult to provide direct and in-depth professional guidance for complex discipline and professional issues. But to establish a fixed and professional organization of discipline experts, it is necessary for science and research institutions to carefully review and consider the education and preparation programs, evaluate the quality of cultivation, put forward opinions, and continuously follow up and guide them. The "National Education Professional Degree Education Steering Committee" established in 2009, it is a professional organization established in accordance with the professional degree categories approved by the academic degree committee of the State Council to assist the competent departments in carrying out the education research, consultation, guidance, evaluation, exchange and cooperation of the corresponding professional degree postgraduates. The education index committee is composed of experts and principals recommended by relevant competent departments, industries, enterprises, institutions and degree awarding units. The revised "Working Procedures of Professional Degree Graduate Education Steering Committee" in 2019 points out in detail that the committee will study major issues such as development planning, curriculum setting, reform and development of professional degree graduate education. This is a very good trend, but it is only the beginning. Each region should establish a corresponding Graduate Education Steering Committee to guide the training of education leaders in this region.

Finally, the lack of relevant research makes the direction and steps of reform lack of scientific and sufficient basis. There are 88 articles on the theme of "education leadership training" during 1985-2019 in CNKI without any conditions (Figure 1). They are mainly covering: leadership, student leadership, postgraduate education, comparison at home and abroad, among which the research on postgraduate education and international comparison focuses on the curriculum and training transformation of "Ed.D" at home and abroad Aspect. It can be seen that, at present, there are few researches on education leaders preparation in China, lacking of historical combing and content reflection on education leadership cultivation. Although the focus of the reform of the degree system of international

education leadership cultivation has been captured due to practical needs, the overall research content in this field is lack of comprehensiveness and systematicness. And the relevant empirical research is lack, which makes the school leaders preparation work and its development in China lack of extensive academic support. It's easy to get lost and hit a wall in the chaos. As a necessary cycle, research, reform and effect improvement can help us to identify the direction and clear the goal.

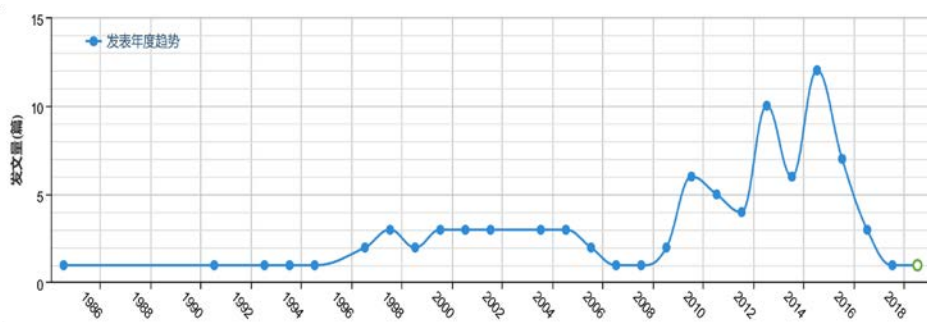


Figure 1. Distribution of Papers on the Theme of “Education and Leadership Training” on CNKI

4.2 Implications and Suggestions for Education Leadership Preparation Improvement

Comparatively speaking, the problems of education leaders preparation in China and the United States are all related to education objectives, enrollment, teaching and practice. However, as China's education leaders preparation is in the transition from a standardized period to a specialized one, it is very important for the state to regulate and guide this work as a whole. Therefore, we can learn from the development experience of the United States, and combined with the actual situation of China.

First, we need to carry out extensive research on the cultivation of educational leaders. Academic research has been accompanied by the reform of American educational leaders preparation program. The theoretical research from the first half of the 20th century to a large number of empirical research in the period of dialectical development provide an important basis for the scientific process of education leaders preparation programs.

Second, attach great importance to the professional cultivation of educational leaders. Although the United States continues to explore a multi-channel and multi-mode education leadership cultivation model, but the university and college are the main body of education leadership preparation, and the education reform of graduate students majoring in education leadership is the core of the discussion. Almost all kinds of new training models keep close contact with universities in terms of teachers, courses, research cooperation, etc., and having a graduate degree is still the embodiment of the quality of leaders that people trust. The Education College of Normal University in China is the cradle of the growth of school managers. The Education Department of Normal University has professional teachers, profound research skills and rich training experience, which can provide a systematic, comprehensive and coherent education program. Moreover, compared with the later training, if the pre service

preparation of education leaders ensures the quality of education, it greatly reduces the post training. The difficulty and cost of the training period improve the overall efficiency of the training of education leaders.

The third is to lead the development direction with education value and social responsibility. Educational value and social responsibility have always been embodied in the mission of American educational leadership. The goal of American education leaders preparation is to take the development of students as its mission. In the framework of the ISLLC license, the ability of school leaders to “promote the learning and development of all students” is also the basic standard. The purpose of public schools is to promote democracy, equality and common interests. The enrollment brochures of some universities clearly state that the mission of education leaders cultivation is to “recognize the interrelationship of education issues in the state, country, region and global scope...” to contribute to public welfare and a more just world. When entering a university, it is necessary to examine the “changes brought about by the applicants in primary or secondary education” and their “potential as initiators and implementers of educational reform” (UMass of Boston, 2019). China is a post developing country with rapid development. Education is not only an important social system for social innovation and talent cultivation, but also the best way to spread excellent culture and promote social democracy and development. Therefore, the work of preparation education leaders should not be limited to improving their own professional ability and quality, but should be guided by social responsibility and scientific education concept, to enhance their sense and level of leadership, in order to create excellent education effect and social influence.

The fourth is to systematically design education leaders preparation programs. In the process of early education leaders preparation in the United States, the elements of education leaders preparation system are not enough and the cooperation is not matched. The following three aspects should be considered in the systematic design of education leaders preparation program. First of all, according to the changes of the national, social and school environment, as well as the needs of learners to determine the education objectives. Secondly, education objectives, personnel selection standards and methods, education institutions and personnel, curriculum content, teaching methods, specific training plans and evaluation standards are all indispensable elements in the education leaders preparation system. If any aspect is ignored, it will affect other links and overall training quality due to local problems. Finally, ensure the internal consistency of all elements of the education leaders preparation system, and reduce the conflict and internal friction in the specific preparation process.

Fifth, build a diversified social support and promotion network. After the Second World War, various administrative management and research institutions, including some social organizations, established in the United States explored the education leaders preparation plan from different perspectives, explored the direction and measures of reform, formed an atmosphere of common concern and

collective supervision of the social welfare fed back by the education leadership, and greatly promoted the rapid optimization of the education leaders preparation program. At present, educational institutions and administrative departments of education have always been the main body of China's education leadership training. The State supports all sectors of society to participate in the preparation of education leadership, but it has not yet established such a diversified system network, and lacks in-depth academic participation and guidance from academic organizations, experts and research institutions, reflecting the characteristics of administrative management. It is not only beneficial to share the cost and responsibility, but also to gather the wisdom and strength of the whole society, form a support and supervision mechanism, and improve the quality and social benefits of education leaders preparation.

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