
Demanded Professionalism: Discourse Analysis of State Policy on Teacher Professionalism in Mainland China *

Xiaoli WANG

School of Education, South China Normal University,
Email: wxl.scnu@gmail.com

Abstract:

This article aims to elaborate the policy discourse on teacher professionalism in contemporary Chinese context. Since teachers are regarded as the key factor in educational reform, different stakeholders, such as the government, parents and communities, will have different expectations of teachers. These expectations are expressions of their diverse interpretations of teacher professionalism. Among them, the government has more direct and frequent influences on teachers' work by enacting educational policies. By means of a text analysis of relevant state policies, this article will explore these questions: what's the general picture of teacher professionalism in Mainland China? What changes have taken place in discourse on teachers since the educational reform? How and why such discourse is formed in such a way? Answers to these questions could shed a light on the different understandings of teacher professionalism in mainland China and western countries.

Key Words: Teacher professionalism, Chinese teachers, State policy, Discourse analysis

* Supported by the Youth Scholar Research Program of MOE of China, "Empirical Study on teacher professional ethics in era of educational reform" (11YJC880117), and the Youth Scholar Research Program of Humanity and Social Science in Universities of Guangdong Province (WYM11041).

1. INTRODUCTION

Since teachers have always been regarded as the key factor in the educational reform, they are also expected by various stakeholders such as the government, parents and communities, to fulfill some serious requirements. However, expectations from different stakeholders are not the same, and sometimes even conflicting, but they still intertwine with each other to shape a general picture of what a “professional” teacher is like, or is expected to be. As a result, expectations from various groups will also, to some extent, influence our understanding of teacher professionalism. As the expression of desired quality of teachers, teacher professionalism is not perceived as an absolute, or an ideal, but as “a socially constructed, contextually variable and contested concept” (Troman, 1996, p.473). Within a certain historical-social context, all the relevant groups, aiming to protect their own appeals, will always try to make their voices on desired teachers uttered and heard. That’s why there is often some “new professionalism” emerged. And it is the interchange of these respective appeals, as well as these different voices, that create our ongoing discourses on teacher professionalism and determine its distinctive features.

To better clarify the complexity of teacher professionalism, we can unpack the concept into different levels. The first one is the policy level that represents the expected teacher professionalism of government authority, which often incarnate in ordinances, called *demande* *professionalism*. The second level is that of professionalism recommended by the academic researchers, called *prescribed professionalism*. The third level is the enacted professionalism reified in the teaching practice, that is, professional practice as observed, perceived and interpreted (Evans, 2008). The first two levels constitute the primary perceptions of groups surrounding teacher profession. And as the most influential group, the government has undoubtedly the dominant power to shape the perceptions of teacher professionalism. On the one hand, the governments have the power to enact educational policies, which enables them to actively impose requirements on teachers to regulate their professional practices. On the other, the governments can also control the pre-vocational training of teachers, which enables them to construct a new generation of teachers with different forms of knowledge, different skills and different professional values (Furlong et al., 2000, p.6). Hence, in order to better understand the construction of teacher professionalism in the era of educational reform, much attention has been paid to the first level (Kennedy, 2007).

As a country facing the challenges in the process of globalization, China has undergone a series of education reforms, such as the curriculum reform initiated from 2001. During these reforms, the key role of teachers has been well recognized and better emphasized, by both the Chinese government and the educational scholars and practitioners. Accordingly, we have witnessed a noticeable growth of discourses on teacher professionalism in recently years, and studies in teacher professionalism have attracted more and more attention. A lot of ideas, issues and methods which are prevalent in western discussions of teacher professionalism are soon

introduced and applied into our Chinese context. But still, it is an undeniable truth that Chinese culture indeed played a crucial role in all those educational reforms, and it has also shaped a Chinese understanding of professional teacher which may be different from that of other cultures. In particular, due to the cultural tradition, Chinese teachers are actually facing a different and paradoxical situation in their professional life. On the one hand, both the Chinese society and government always attempt to impose on teachers moral standards that are much higher than almost all the other people, because Chinese culture has a very long tradition which values teacher by their moral achievements. But on the other hand, the social status and earned income of teachers are not equally appropriate and they are indeed only in a quite low level when compared with other professions in Chinese society. Consequently, the ongoing discourse on teacher professionalism in China has manifested itself as a very different and complicated phenomenon with specific features.

In order to examine teacher professionalism in the Chinese Mainland, this study tries to explore these issues: What is the state policy discourse on teacher professionalism in the Chinese Mainland? Why does such a discourse exist? And how is it constructed? In other words, this study will try to figure out what's the demanded professionalism like in context of Mainland China. In doing so, it is appropriate to choose the method of text/discourse analysis. This study will apply this method at two levels: text analysis and discourse analysis. In a nutshell, by a text analysis it is possible to reveal the underlying meanings which are defined and highlighted in the policy texts. Through scrutinizing the words, sentences and grammar, text analysis tends to conduct the semantic interpretation of texts. While the discourse analysis of texts aims to reveal the ideological stance represented in the text, and the literal distortion that the text attempts to constitute. Besides a description of the historical-social context surrounding the policy texts, the discourse analysis should also illustrate the location at the contextual map and the interaction between educational policies and relevant factors (Fairclough, 2003). Above all, with the reference to discourse analysis, this article tries to make the whole picture of teacher professionalism in Mainland China.

2. RELATED LITERATURE

Nowadays the term of *teacher professionalism* has been more and more frequently used in various educational research reports and policy documents, mostly in European and American areas. However, the meaning of this term has never been clearly clarified. Professionalism has long been a controversial term in the history of teaching (Lawn, 1989, p.159); this can be easily verified by its ambiguous uses and its diverse interpretations in the literature. At the very beginning, professionalism is explained as “those strategies and rhetorics employed by members of an occupation in seeking to improve status, salary and conditions” (Hoyle, 1975, p.375). Later, the understanding of this term has gradually been changed to be the qualities of the teaching practice (Evans, 2008). However, the specification of these qualities is always in dissent, and it has then been considered to be socially constructed and dynamic. In different historical-social contexts, the interpretations of professionalism differ from each other. As a

result, especially in area of teacher studies, there is often some ‘new professionalism’ produced and popularized from time to time. Normally the advent of some new professionalism is regarded as a professional development initiative, for the concept of professionalism is actually the expression of desired appeals from different stakeholders. To some degree, professionalism has also been seen as an ideology, a set of beliefs referring to a series of abstract way of thinking, view of values, or hypothesis (Yu, 2000).

The concept of teacher professionalism is constantly changing, and it has been redefined in different ways at different times, in order to serve the interests of different stakeholders. According to Evans (2008), most of the previous studies on teacher professionalism could be located into a three-level framework: demanded professionalism, prescribed professionalism and enacted professionalism. The professionalism that is demanded or requested reflects specific professional service level demands or requests made of an occupational group or individual workforce. The professionalism that is prescribed reflects the envisaged or recommended professional service levels perceived by analysts. And the professionalism that is enacted refers to the professional practice as observed, perceived and interpreted by any observer from either the outside or within the relevant professional group. Yet it is believed that only the third may be considered to reflect reality, and the other two will involve insubstantiality ranging from articulated ideology to wishful thinking. However, the question of which level of professionalism is more substantial remains still to be a controversial issue.

From a sociological point of view, teacher professionalism is interpreted as the efforts of teachers for getting higher occupational status and prestige. Besides, it is not only an endeavor to justify the enterprise of teaching, but also an attempt to distinguish between teaching and other professions. Drawing on the studies on those well established professions like law and medicine, scholars have made great efforts to seek for the unique features which can characterize the practice of teaching. Consequently, from the sociological perspective, teacher professionalism has been analyzed from the perspective of power relation (Niemi, 1999). On the one hand, the term has been increasingly used by policy-makers to achieve some unquestionable compliance to directives, or is used to give some standards to which teachers have to adapt themselves to conform (Darling-Hammond, 1990, p.31). On the other hand, there’s also an alternative tradition of teacher empowerment, which interprets teacher professionalism in such a way that lays greater emphasis on teachers’ own responsibility for controlling teaching practice (Garman, 1995). As a result, teacher professionalism is regarded as a tool used for either controlling or empowering teachers.

Recently, scholars in the studies of teacher professionalism start to highlight two contrasting models, one from the managerial perspective and the other democratic perspective (Sachs, 2001). While the former perspective stresses effectiveness, efficiency and compliance with policy, the latter prefers the values like social justice, fairness and equality. Some believe that the managerial professionalism is currently the dominant discourse and it is “mandated by the state” (Sachs, 2003, p.151). And managerial professionalism has its roots in the corporate world

of business, where efficiency, targets and accountability are deemed central to effectiveness and become compliant operatives (Smyth *et al.* 2000, p.1). Whereas the democratic professionalism “seeks to demystify professional work and build alliances between teachers and excluded constituencies on whose behalf decisions have traditionally been made either by profession or by the state” (Sachs, 2001, p.152). Hence the key factor of democratic professionalism is collaboration. Nowadays these two different views are dominating our current debates on teacher professionalism, and their influence by no means of equal to the practice field.

To sum up, teacher professionalism has been a fruitful field with valuable achievements in theory and practice. However, it is worth mentioning that in all these studies reviewed, the used terms and methods, as well as the practical fields studied are all from the majority of English-speaking, capitalist countries. It is a matter of fact that rare researches have been carried out in the context of Chinese Mainland, thus it still remains to be explored on whether those models are appropriate to explain the Chinese educational reality.

3. METHODOLOGY AND CONTEXT

The analysis of educational policy is essentially a kind of interpretation in a certain context. Stephen J. Ball has distinguished two approaches in policy studies in education that “in current writing on policy issue I actually inhabit two very different conceptualizations of policy...I will call these policy as text and policy as discourse...The point I am moving to is that policy is not one or the other, but both: they are ‘implicit in each other’” (Ball, 1994, p.15). Using this framework, this study tries to analyze educational policies from both the level of *policy as text* and the level of *policy as discourse*. And this study will take discourse analysis as the main methodology, since it has been well recognized by researchers as a useful method to reveal the ways in which people produce meaning out of policy within some specific contexts.

Policy can be regarded as both text and discourse. A text is any discourse (i.e. speech act) fixed in writing (Ricoeur, 1991, p. 106). To understand a text properly, it is required, of course, to do the *linguistic analysis* on words, clauses and structures of the text. But when aiming for revealing its hidden meaning, the *textuality analysis* will also be called for, which is focused on genre, frame, rhetoric and narrative of the given texts. Fairclough (1995, p.5) has further stressed the significance of textuality analysis in such a way that “...no analysis of text content and meaning can be satisfactory which fails to attend to what one might call the content of texture (or the content of its form)”. Here the term *textuality* refers to “the texture of the texts, their form and organization” (Fairclough, 1995, p. 4). It is by introducing this concept of textuality that our analysis of a text can go beyond studying only its linguistic forms (written or spoken). For example, the first and foremost textuality in a particular text is what has not been said, or what is absent in the text. And by analyzing what is missing in the given text, one can reveal the underlying ideological stance represented by that text.

The meanings of the terms, discourses, are many; and they vary according to the traditions from which they are derived (Poynton & Lee, 2000). Therefore, both the linguistic analysis and the

textuality analysis should be located in a historical-social context. As a matter of fact, language as a cultural tool does mediate the relationships of power and privilege in our social interactions, institutions, and bodies of knowledge. Furthermore, the social and political meaning of an educational policy should also be investigated, because as a discourse, educational policy will profoundly influence people's lives. Accordingly, researchers have recently attempted to bring social theory and discourse analysis together in their studies of educational policy. They are trying to describe, interpret, and explain the ways in which the discourse is constructed and represented by the social world. It is in this way that we find their studies have shared the common values with the studies of critical discourse analysis, the enterprise which questions the relationships between the power relations evidenced in social structures and that of local everyday practices. More specifically, critical discourse analysis focuses on the discursive strategies that legitimize controls, or the discursive strategies that naturalize the ways in which the world is represented, and the ways in which the social identities are set up, and the relationships among these identities are constructed (Fairclough, 1995). This study also chooses to draw on Fairclough's analytic framework which is critical in nature, and is constituted by three levels of analysis: the level of the text, the level of the discursive practice, and the level of the socio-cultural practice. Within his framework, each discursive event will have three dimensions: firstly, it is a spoken or written text, secondly, it is an instance of discourse practice involving the production and interpretation of texts, and thirdly, it is a part of social practice. At the same time, the analysis of the text will involve the study of language structures produced in a discursive event. The analysis of the discursive practice will involve examining the production, consumption, and reproduction of the texts. And the analysis of socio-cultural practice will include an exploration of what is happening in a particular socio-cultural framework (Rebecca *et al.*, 2005).

At last, the documents we have chosen for policy analysis in this study are selective. We decide to include firstly *Teacher Law* as the main object for analysis, because it is the principal state document on teachers in Chinese Mainland. Besides, we also choose *The Eleventh Five-year National Plan of Educational Development* for our analysis, because it will indicate us a broader picture of educational development in recent Chinese Mainland, which is undoubtedly informative for a better understanding of the teacher's role. And then we select *The Teachers Certification Regulations* and *The Regulations of Teachers Continued Education* for analysis, for they could tell us respectively the benchmark requirements of being a teacher in China and the expected or desired qualities for improvement. At last, we also choose to analyze *Chairman Hu Jintao's Speech* at the symposium with the representatives of excellent teachers, which we believe will definitely have significant influence on the discourse of teacher professionalism in China. All of them could be regarded as educational policy documents at the state level, and we get access to all these documents from the official website of the Minister of Education. As the highest authority of national education affairs, the Minister of Education plays a decisive role not only in the administrative management but also in forming the dominant discourse on teacher professionalism. Needless to say that it's impossible for this study to cover all of the

relevant texts, but we believe that these documents are adequate for a coherent and comprehensive analysis, and are suffice to illustrate the dominant view of teachers in Chinese Mainland.

4. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

This study draws on documentary evidence pertinent to the development of teacher policy in Mainland China over last two decades. As a whole, the documents we selected are coherently interrelated, providing us enough materials to probe into the ways in which the dominant discourse on teacher professionalism is constructed. *Teacher Law* is enacted in 1993, and ever since its enactment, it has been treated as the primary and the most important law for teachers in China. It is the *Teacher Law* that formally claims for the first time that teacher in China is one kind of profession, and that teachers are all professionals performing their duties of teaching and educating. Moreover, *Teacher Law* has also for the first time officially established the teacher certification regulations, which require every teacher to be certificated before getting a teaching position. Therefore, to better implement the certification regulations, *The Teachers Certification Regulations* was issued in 1995, and then the Entry Qualification System of teachers has been gradually set up in Mainland China. It is in *The Teachers Certification Regulations* that the basic requirements of a professional teacher have been clarified into concrete and specific standards. And then, these requirements and standards are further enforced in the *Regulations of Teacher Continued Education* in 1999, as the principal contents for teachers' professional training and continued education. The ultimate objective for the teachers' professional training and continued education is not only making an eligible teacher, but also aiming for a competent and excellent teacher. However, it is in *Chairman Hu Jintao's Speech*, addressed in 2007 at the symposium with the representatives of excellent teachers, that we have the best formulations of an ideal teacher expected by Chinese government and society.

4.1 Policy as a Text: Semiotic Analysis

Starting with a semiotic analysis, we firstly find that there is no unanimity on declaring teachers as professionals in all these documents we analyzed. In fact, within most of the documents, teachers are recognized only as an occupation, and sometimes they have even been regarded as a *troop*, a term with subtle positive feelings we usually use for describing soldiers and workers. It is only for one time that teachers are clearly claimed to be professionals, that is in the *Teacher Law*. However, deeper analysis soon indicates that the word "professional" in that context makes no substantive meaning; it is more like a rhetorical choice to make a wording difference. According to the Chinese language uses, *professional* means actually a *specialist* who has expertise in some particular area. Sometimes it has the similar meaning with the word "*major*". That's why a Chinese teacher would normally reply the question of "*whether you are a professional*" by an answer like "*Yes, I am a Chemistry teacher*" (Chen, 2006). As a matter of fact, the idea of profession, to some degree, is quite alien to Chinese teachers. It is more

natural in Chinese society to understand teaching as only an occupation, and accordingly, to regard the group of teachers to be in need of supervision as well.

Secondly, we find that there is no use of the word *professionalism* across all the documents we analyzed. Instead, they prefer to talk directly about *the qualities of teacher*. In *The Teachers Certification Regulations*, the government has formulated the basic requirements for a qualified teacher, which includes an identity of Chinese citizen, a health proof, academic diplomas, and the thought appraisal offered by relevant authorities. Besides, to be a teacher you will also need to pass the *National Mandarin Proficiency Test*, as well as the examinations with regard to basic knowledge of educational theory and educational psychology. After becoming a teacher, you will still be required to take part regularly in series of training courses in order to update your knowledge and teaching strategies, especially when there is an educational reform ongoing. Normally, each educational reform will be accompanied with some training requirements on teachers, because it is believed that in order to guarantee the success of the reform, teachers are supposed to be in need of improving some relevant knowledge or skills. And more importantly, it is not the teachers themselves, but the policy-makers, who will take charge of designing those training courses or workshops for teachers.

Thirdly, it's worth noting that we find in all these analyzed documents a unique way of talking about the teacher professional development. They all refer it as a process of "augmenting the teaching staff". This peculiar phrase first illustrates a special understanding of teacher professional development with regard to the quantitative traits. What is crucial is that the government can increase teachers' quality for them, thereby possibly denying teachers ownership of their own professionalism. Consequently, the autonomy, which is the constitution of professionalism became a missing point. Put together, the policy statements probably suggest that teachers are not professional, at least not in a sense discussed in western academic researches.

4.2 Policy as a Discourse: Discourse Analysis

State policies could be regarded not only as texts, but also discourses. By an analysis of textuality amongst documents, and an analysis of the contextuality between the policy and the socio-cultural context surrounding it, some more meanings underlying these policies could also be uncovered. We can easily find that all these documents analyzed in this study are fundamentally consistent and coherent with each other, and to some extent there is indeed a dialogical connection among them.

Firstly, these documents share the same framework to define the professional teacher in a dichotomous way. At the beginning, the *Teacher Law* has established an authoritative definition of qualified professional teachers. That is, in order to be qualified as a teacher, one should have not only "good moral characters", but also "good skills in teaching". As a result, this particular articulation has been endorsed by all the other later policy texts, thus has dominated all the discussions of a professional teacher in China.

Secondly, these documents together constructed and justified an ongoing discourse of teacher professionalism. For instance, the *Teacher Law* first set up the basic stipulations of professional teacher, and *The Teachers Certification Regulations* and *The Regulations of Teacher Continued Education* then aimed to facilitate its realization by clarifying those demanded qualities and incorporating them into institutional practices.

Thirdly, all these documents are clearly contextualized in a broader social-cultural context of globalization. In fact, this globalization context has preconditioned all the discourses on education in recent China, and it has forced a fundamental shift of their central theme from the social justice to international economic competition (Zeng, 2007). Accordingly, many are apt to understand and discuss all the educational issues in terms of economic concerns. As a result, we find all these documents analyzed have stressed teachers' decisive role in implementing educational reforms, and they all simply grounded it on the considerations that the capabilities of teachers will finally determine the improvement of human capital in our country. And the importance of such an improvement is further justified as indispensable, for our nation's achieving the desired power in competitions within current global arena. In other words, it is indicated that the value of teacher's work is understandable only in the context of global international competitions. All the requirements on professional teachers could ultimately be reduced to concerns of strengthening national power, and all the discourses on teacher professionalism are located within such a broader social-cultural context.

Besides the above three general points, there are still two more particular issues which deserve mentioning in our discourse analysis on these documents. For the first, we find that the issue of teachers' status and income, especially that of rural teachers, has been taken to be of great importance in a peculiar way in discourse on teacher professionalism. In all these documents, the promotion of status and income for teachers is promised. And they all tend to take it as the proper means to attract promising youth, and to keep the excellent ones staying in teaching profession. However, we also find that this particular promotion has always been strongly emphasized before some new requirements are going to be imposed on teachers. It appears as though the policy-maker is driving teachers' professional development with some special prices. Therefore, for teachers the process of professionalism also seems to become a political token that can be exchanged for income and status. This indicates, to some extent, that the current development of teacher professionalization in Chinese Mainland is only at a primary stage. Features like autonomy of teachers and culture of teacher collaboration is far from a part of the picture.

For the second, it is found that the teacher professionalism constructed by the state policies is highly-moral and not materialism. The quality of teacher is something that can be promoted by the government, in doing so teachers' own responsibility for their own professionalism is limited. Ever since *Teacher Law* has settled the framework of teachers' quality, other documents adopted the dichotomy to elaborate such understandings. The stated views of the essential qualities by the policies can be summarized as a list of traits, which includes two

dimensions: one is moral dimension and the other one is professional dimension. Like many western countries, teachers in China are also required to be knowledgeable. What's different is that Mainland Chinese teachers should take lots of moral obligations. Above all the requirements, the morality of teachers is the principle concern. Only if a teacher shows his/her loyalty to the country and his/her good personal characters, he or she would get the entry qualification and the opportunity for advancement. As to the content of teachers' morality, first of all is the indifference to fame and wealth; secondly is the spirit of utter devotion; thirdly is the belief of core values that socialism upheld (cf. *Chairman Hu Jintao's Speech* at the symposium with the representatives of excellent teachers). The rest of moral requirements is about self-regulation including caring for all students, being role-model, and improving their psychological condition. It looks as if any requests that cannot be categorized into knowledge-skill dimension would be put into the moral dimension. However, across all the documents we have analyzed there is no specific articulation of the appropriate ways by which we can fairly assess a teacher's morality. Besides, the main purpose for teachers to take part in the continued education programs is also reduced to satisfying the need of educational reforms, and it is suggested by doing so teachers make contributions to their country.

To sum up, the state policies in Chinese Mainland intends to conceive a list of teacher's quality in the discourses on teacher professionalism, this has seemingly reflected an influence of the trait model popular in the western practice (Webb, *et al.* 2004). However, compared to the classical trait theory which includes components like specialized knowledge base, a strong service ethic and self-regulation in the form of professional association (Helsby & McCulloch, 1996, p.56), the list of traits conceived by Chinese discourses is not the same as its western counterpart. It is more complicated to include elements like ideological loyalty, moral obligations, knowledge base and technical requirements. But the autonomy part is obviously absent, without which the whole list may just turn out to be an external regulations. Therefore, as a newly recognized perspective to the understanding of teachers and their works, professionalism still appears to be a brand new idea in the Chinese Mainland, and much remains yet to be done for its localization in Chinese cultural context.

5. CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS

In the era of globalization, all the countries in the world share some common beliefs and measures in their own educational reforms. Nevertheless, due to their distinct historical traditions and social-economical contexts, their state policies, as well as their educational documents, differ with each other in meanings and values they conveyed (Ball, 1999). China has a longstanding historical and cultural tradition, but it is now just in a process of extensive and profound social transformation. This particular social-cultural context provides us the basic starting points to comprehend our current educational practices. What does a professional teacher mean in Chinese culture, and what kind of qualities of teachers are valued and expected by Chinese society? By a careful analysis of the state policy discourse on teacher professionalism, we may get some clues of the answers.

5.1 The Decisive Role of Teachers in Educational Reforms

The fact that teachers have played a decisive role in educational reform has been well recognized and strongly emphasized by all the state policies. All the policy documents we analyzed are focusing on teachers' work and their desired qualities. They admit the significance of teachers' work and they all try to better improve them. However, the value of teachers, and the improvement of their work, is justified in all the state policies on the grounds that education is the vital means for our country to survive the challenges in globalization. Taking them together, the government constructs a particular teacher professionalism in which the image of teachers is conceived to be the personnel with the obligation to devote themselves to the building of a prosperous and competitive country. Moreover, teachers are also required to conform to the competences stated in various policy documents, which in fact has limited teachers' capacity, thereby also reduced the possibility of developing their own understanding of professionalism (Sachs, 2003). Consequently, to the central government, the concern for economical benefit outweighs that for the teachers and children, which indicates the dominant discourse of teacher professionalism in China is still subject to the bigger globalization and neo-liberalism discourse in educational world stressing the accountability and effectiveness.

5.2 Moral-Oriented Teacher Professionalism

In contemporary teacher studies, teacher professionalism has been commonly unpacked into three respects: the knowledge and skill base, the professional ethics which usually embodied in a code of profession, and the professional autonomy (Hoyle, 1995). As indicated by these state policies, in Chinese context teaching has also been stressed as a skill-based activity. However, there is no mentioning of the need, or the desirability, for teachers to extend and revitalize their knowledge, attitudes or values. To some extent, teaching is becoming simply a technical delivery of other people's purpose (Goodson, 2003, p.7). More importantly, the moral dimension becomes prominent in teacher professionalism in Chinese Mainland. All these policies have strengthened the view that the most significant quality for Chinese teachers is their high-standard morality and self-devotion. And these moral obligations incurred on teachers by the government include not only the regulations for professional relationships, but also the guidelines for personal views of value. In particular, teachers are required to uphold only those values that accord with the mainstream ideology of the country.

Actually, this moral-oriented teacher professionalism is just an offspring of the Chinese cultural tradition. Seen from a historical perspective, Chinese teacher has long been recognized as the representative and the propagator of Dao. They take responsibilities of propagating the doctrine of Dao in society, of imparting the knowledge to people, and of resolving the doubts from students. And their foremost task is to hand on the core values of the society and to foster them in young generations. This particular way to understand the social function of teacher is undoubtedly quite different from that in the western culture. As a result, educational practices have always been intertwined with social-political concerns in Chinese history.

5.3 The Missing Professional Autonomy

Based on the findings, it can be indicated that Chinese teachers are not truly regarded as professionals; they are more like personnel serving to the state's needs. In all these policy documents, there's no mentioning of the professional association or a teachers union at all. In other words, the issue of professional autonomy is completely missing in the dominant discourse on teacher professionalism in China. Consequently, teachers become only workers to be conducted and supervised by the government administration. Indeed, both the entry qualification and the evaluation of teachers in China are all controlled by the central government instead of some professional committees. As a result, for most Chinese teachers the professional autonomy turns out to be an alien, sometimes even irrelevant issue to their thinking. Thus gradually they become quite accustomed to this kind of confined professionalism (Lai, 2007), and they are unaware of their losing autonomy when fulfilling the requirements from authorities. To some degree, teachers are just becoming professional technicians, without their own judgments and aspirations, and it is in this way that the professionalism turns to be just a specific way of control. In fact, the neglect of teachers' autonomy is partly due to our specific way of defining the teachers' work in the Chinese cultural tradition. There has never been any conception of profession emerged throughout the history of thoughts in China. For a very long time, teaching has just been regarded as an ordinary occupation. In the *Occupation Regulations* published in 1989, teaching is classified as a particular kind of "technician", similar to nurse and statistician. Although later in the *Teacher Law* teaching has been classified rightly as a profession, and words like 'professional', 'professionalization' are also used frequently, their exact meanings have never been clarified or elaborated. Therefore, it turns out to be only an adoption of new terms from the western discourse. In order to apply them into Chinese educational practices in a proper way, terms like "professionalism" are still in need of localizing into the historical-cultural contexts in China.

The concept of professionalism can be used to empower or exploit teachers. And it derives from ideological concerns about the state and society. The state policy discourse has placed teacher professionalism under the overall framework of national development. As part of this bigger discourse, Chinese interpretation of teacher professionalism stressed the conformity to the authority, the dedication to the work and a moral-oriented self regulation. Those concepts borrowed from western discourses, such as performantivity and managerialism, have influenced our thinking in a significant way. However, due to its different culture and tradition, Chinese society has also inherited a distinct view of teacher. In one word, in Chinese culture both the understanding of teacher professionalism and our related conception system are quite different. Policy-makers' conception of teacher professionalism in Mainland China differ remarkably from various countries. Because of the unique historical –cultural context, the dominant discourse of teacher professionalism emphasizes the teachers' moral quality which shapes both the perception and practice. To some degree, the phrase of "professional teacher is more than a brand new word to us. And the changing nature of teachers' work has implications

for the perception of teachers' role as professional. In the future research, some efforts may exert on the teacher's understanding of professionalism to explore the distinctions between the demanded professionalism and prescribed professionalism.

REFERENCES

- [1] Ball, S. J., Shilling, Chris, 1994, *Education policy studies*, Oxford : Blackwell, 1994.
- [2] Ball, S. J.1999, *Educational reform and the struggle for the soul of the teacher*, Hong Kong: Hong Kong Institute of Educational Research, Chinese University of Hong Kong.
- [3] Chen Shuangye, Lo Naigui ,2006, Forms of Organized Knowledge in Universities: Four Analytical Perspectives of Academic Programs in Chinese Universities, *Peking University Education Review*, 4(4), 18-28.
- [4] Darling-Hammond, L., 1990, Teacher Professionalism: Why and how. In A. E. Liberman (Ed.), *School as Collaborative Culture: Creating the Future Now*. Philadelphia: Falmer Press.
- [5] Evans, L., 2008, Professionalism, professionalism and the development of education professionals. *British Journal of Educational Studies*, 56(1), 20-38.
- [6] Fairclough, Norman, 1995, *Critical discourse analysis: The critical study of language*. London: Longman.
- [7] Fairclough, N., 2003, *Analysing discourse: textual analysis for social research*. London; New York Routledge.
- [8] Furlong,J., Barton, L., Mlies, S. and Whitty, G.,2000,*Teacher Education in Transition*, Buckingham: Open University Press.
- [9] Garman, N.B., 1995, The schizophrenic rhetoric of school reform and the effects on teacher development, in J.Smyth (Eds), *Critical discourse on teacher development*,London,Cassell.
- [10] Helsby, G., and McCullonch,C., 1996, Teacher professionalism and curriculum control, in:I.Goodson&A.Hargreaves (Eds), *Teachers ' professional lives*,London,Falmer Press.
- [11] Hoyle, E., 1975, Professionalism, professionalism and control in teaching. In V.Houghton, et al. (Eds.) *Management in Education: the Management of Organisations and Individuals* London, Ward Lock Educational in association with Open University Press.
- [12] Hoyle, E., & John, P. D. (Eds.), 1995, *Professional knowledge and professional practice*, London: Cassell.
- [13] Kennedy, A., 2007, Continuing professional development (CPD) policy and the discourse of teacher professionalism. *Research Papers in Education*, 22(1), 95-111.
- [14] Lawn, M., 1989, Being caught in schoolwork: the possibilities of research in teachers' work, in W.Carr (Eds), *Quality in teaching: arguments for a reflective profession*, Lewes,Falmer Press.

- [15] Lai ManHong and Nai Kwai, LO, 2007, Teacher Professionalism in educational reform: the experiences of Hong Kong and Shanghai. *Compare*, 37(1), 53-68.
- [16] Niemi, H., 1996, Do teachers have a future? Conditions of teachers' growth, in P. Tuohotie & P. Grimmett(Eds.), *Professional growth and development: direction, delivery and dilemmas*, Tampere, Career Development Finland.
- [17] Poynton, C., & Lee, A., 2000, Culture and text: An introduction. In A. Lee, & C. Poynton (Eds.), *Culture and text: Discourse and methodology in social research and cultural studies*. St. Leonards, NSW: Allen & Unwin.
- [18] Rebecca R., et al, 2005, Critical Discourse Analysis in Education: A Review of the Literature *Review of Educational Research*, 75(3), 365–416.
- [19] Ricoeur, Paul, 1991, From text to action: Essays in hermeneutics, II. *Evanston: Northwestern University Press*.
- [20] Sachs, J., 2003, *The activist teaching profession*. Buckingham [U.K.] ; Philadelphia, PA : Open University Press.
- [21] Troman, G., 1996, The rise of the new professionals? The restructuring of primary teachers' work and professionalism, *British Journal of Sociology of Education*, 17 (4), 473–487.
- [22] Webb, R., Vulliamy, G., Hamalainen, S., Sarja, A., Kimonen, E., & Nevalainen, R. A., 2004, Comparative analysis of primary teacher professionalism in England and Finland. *Comparative Education*, 40(1):83-107.
- [23] Wing Kwong TSANG, 2007, Policy study in education: discursive-critical perspective, *Peking University Education Review*, 5(4), 2-30.
- [24] Yu Huibing, 2000, *Policy Discourses of Teacher Union in Hongkong*, Ph.D. dissertation, CUHK.