DOI 10.3868/s110-002-013-0040-6

“教师教育”的诞生：教师培养权变迁的社会学研究. [*The birth of “teacher education”: Power and struggles in naming “teacher education”*]. Yang, Yue. Guilin: Guangxi Normal University Press, 2011. 298 pp., 38.50¥, ISBN: 9787549502943.

People transform the world by naming it. However, it should not be the privilege of some to name the world on behalf of others¹. The act of naming involves struggles over power and interests. *The Birth of “Teacher Education”* provides a vivid reiteration of this ancient piece of wisdom by telling an engrossing story of struggles behind and surrounding the term “teacher education” in China.

The Birth of “Teacher Education” starts with a simple observation that is rarely acknowledged by researchers and educators working with the English language. That is that the English term “teacher education” corresponds to two distinct terms in Chinese, normal education and teacher education. For over one hundred years, the term “normal education” had been the formal name for teacher preparation programs and practices in China, only to fade out and be replaced by “teacher education” in the recent two decades. The book has convincingly argued that this change goes far deeper than the mere switch of terms on the surface. Rather, it signals a profound paradigm shift in conceptualizing and organizing teachers’ professional training. Central to this process of transformation is the question: Who should have the power to educate teachers?

The book has seven chapters. The *Introduction* reviews the three stages over time in the gradual decline of normal education and the rise of teacher education since the late 1970s. Chapter 1 analyzes in detail the changing discourses on teacher preparation and professionalization from the 1980s to the current time. The century-long institution of normal education was increasingly perceived as a “closed system” that concerned itself only with the training of pre-service teachers and that allowed the power for training professional teachers to be monopolized in normal universities and colleges. By contrast, teacher education, as a so-called international norm, was championed for its “openness” to expand the scope of teacher preparation programs to cover pre-and-in service education

¹ See Freire, P. (1970). *Pedagogy of the oppressed* (M. B. Ramos, Trans.). New York, NY: The Seabury Press.

and to allow non-normal or comprehensive universities to train and certify teachers. This chapter chronicles the evolution of the discourse changes among academics and the changes in policymakers' attitudes from disapproval to enthusiastic promotion. A rather brief content analysis is offered in an attempt to illustrate the cultural hegemonic influence of the Anglo-American world in guiding the conceptualization of this reform.

The teacher education reform has also involved a significant reshuffling in both comprehensive research universities and traditional normal universities with regard to program setting, curriculum content, and the power of teacher certification. Chapters 2 and 3 discuss the transmutation of roles played by comprehensive research universities and normal universities in teacher preparation and certification. In the name of "openness," the traditional normal universities have endeavored to expand their program offerings to non-teacher education disciplines in order to, firstly, adapt to the demand in the higher education market, and secondly, compete with the comprehensive research universities for resources and reputation. Similarly, the non-normal universities, according to the book, have also incorporated teacher education into their existing program offerings and set up higher education institutes to conduct educational research, albeit with a focus on higher education. Indeed, the "opening up" of teacher education in terms of this institutional re-organization betrays an ambivalence around the conceptualization of teacher professionalism. Teacher professionalism consists of expertise both in subject matter disciplines and in content pedagogy. The institutional changes in both comprehensive universities and normal universities are grounded in a split that has emphasized the duality of teacher professionalism.

The new emphasis on the duality of teacher professionalism has caused strong repercussions within normal universities. Chapters 4 and 5 reveal the conflicts and problems resulting from this teacher education reform in micro settings within normal universities. Before the reform, the subject areas and corresponding content pedagogy were offered by each disciplinary school or department. For instance, courses on mathematics and the pedagogy of mathematics were both taught by teachers from the mathematics department under the school of sciences. Now, as a result of the reform, the pedagogical courses are separated from the subject matter courses and the pedagogy teachers have to be transferred from their original schools and departments to the School of Education, or in some universities, to the newly established School of Teacher Education. Before, teacher preparation was the primary task of all schools and departments in a normal university. Now, with the inclusion

of non-teacher education programs and the concentration of pedagogical courses and staff in one particular school, teacher preparation has become the mission of the School of Education (or School of Teacher Education) only. The rest of the disciplinary departments increasingly position themselves as non-teacher education institutions and evaluate staff by research output just as their counterparts in non-normal universities. These transformations in the departmental functions within normal universities have triggered severe conflicts between schools and between the subject matter and the pedagogy teachers over course arrangements, resource distribution, performance evaluation, and personnel management. In the midst of these top-down changes, teachers in normal universities are experiencing anxiety, frustration, confusion and loss of their identities.

The concluding chapter criticizes the ways in which administrative power has overridden academic autonomy and denied university teachers the right to democratic participation. It also chastises the intruding role of the government in controlling and interfering with the operations of higher education institutions. To my regret, these concluding critiques reflect a kind of general set of clichés about China's higher education system and ignore the rich nuances and multi-facet interpretations offered by the history of the reform, also the organizational evidence presented in prior chapters. The deeper issues of the conceptualization of teacher professionalism and the cultural hegemony of western discourses have completely disappeared in the final remarks. "Teacher education" is treated as a stable concept rather than a contested one in the discussion and analysis of the micro-level dynamics. The power struggle behind this episode of re-naming is simplified as a contradiction between administrative and academic power, a dichotomy that the evidence available in this very book might well reject.

Despite the inadequacy in theorization, this is still a highly informative work. The author should be congratulated for her in-depth understandings and knowledge about the policies, discourses, and the institutional ecology of teacher education/normal education in China. The book is highly recommended for scholars, students, university administrators and policymakers working in the fields of teacher education, higher education, educational policy, and comparative educational research.

Dan Wang
The University of Hong Kong
E-mail: danwang@hku.hk