

The Evolution and Trends of Pre-Service Teacher Education Modes in China

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Abstract

With the deepening of globalization, teacher education modes are undergoing profound changes, which are crucial for improving the quality of global education and meeting future challenges. This paper examines the evolution and development trend of China's pre-service teacher education mode through a literature review and historical analysis methods. The article begins with an in-depth exposition of the concept of teacher education mode, including its connotation, the background of its emergence, and the change process. Then, it details the far-reaching changes in China's education system, from the influence of ancient Confucianism to modern exploration and transformation, as well as the reform and opening-up. It is found that China's pre-service teacher education is transforming from closed to open, from a single mode to multiple modes, and from a focus on skills training to a focus on holistic development. This article summarises the key findings of the relevant research by analyzing this transformation process. It concludes with recommendations for improving future teacher education models in China and globally, intending to inform education policy development. The study deepens the understanding of transformative modes of teacher education and provides valuable lessons learned.

Keywords : Pre-Service Teachers, Educational Modes, Evolution, Trends

Introduction

In the era of globalization, the transformation of teacher education modes and strategies is becoming increasingly significant within the field of education. Education, the cornerstone and soul of a nation, profoundly influences its social, cultural, and economic development (Zhang, 2023). Particularly for a major country like China, which is gaining prominence globally, cultivating qualified and competent teachers has emerged as a core issue in education. The quality of teachers is directly linked to the calibre of the next generation,

bearing on the nation's future development and competitiveness in the international arena (Zhu & Luo, 2023). 'For a century-long plan, education is the foundation; for the grand plan of education, teachers are the foundation.' This statement underscores the pivotal role of education in a nation's long-term development, with teachers being the core and critical element of the educational system (Cui, 2020).

Past research has explored the modes and institutions of training in specific colleges of education or teacher training schools. However, traditional modes have been questioned, and new, more open, and pluralistic modes have been explored. Although there is a large body of literature on teacher education modes, there are still some gaps or inconsistencies regarding their transformation and development in globalization. The main contribution of this study is an in-depth analysis of the evolution of the pre-service teacher (PST) education mode in China, with a particular focus on the transformation process from a closed and monolithic instrumentalism to an open and pluralistic holistic teacher education. In addition, the central research question of this paper is: how has China's PST education mode shifted in the era of globalization, and what are the reasons and implications behind this shift? To answer this question, the main objectives of this study include 1) exploring the basic concepts of teacher education modes, 2) understanding the historical background and evolution of PST education modes in China, and 3) analyzing the major current shifts and trends. The context of this paper is contemporary China, while the unit of analysis is the national teacher education system and policies.

Basic Concepts of Teacher Education Mode

Before analyzing the different dimensions of teacher education modes, it is necessary to clarify the underlying "education modes" theory. This section first defines the concept of an educational mode and outlines the historical background of its development. It also focuses on the key elements that make up the mode of teacher education and its historical evolution. This two-pronged approach aims to build a solid theoretical foundation that will serve as a building block for understanding the complexity and dynamism of teacher education modes.

Definition and Development Context of the Mode

The concept of mode was first used in instructional theory by American scholars to summarise a systematic way or method of teaching. With the development of systems theory science, different research fields have formed their understanding of the mode (Liu, 2020). The Modern Chinese Dictionary (2016) defines a mode as the standard form of a particular thing or a traditional pattern that people can follow. "Cihai" (2019) explains the mode as follows: "Generally refers to a pattern that can serve as a template, mould, or variation. In sociology, it is a theoretical schema and explanation scheme for studying natural or social phenomena. It is also a thought system and a way of thinking. A mode pattern can be a template, mould, or variation." In education, the mode has three meanings. First, it refers to the specific style formed by education under certain social conditions; second, it reflects the mode of a country's educational system characteristics; and third, it is a mode of an inevitable educational and teaching process that reflects the procedures and methods of the activity process (Gu, 2021). By comparing the descriptions of different modes, it is possible to find that the internal leading elements of a mode determine its differences from other modes and the development path of that mode. The teacher training mode is generally expressed in English as a teacher preparation or training mode. The teacher training mode refers to a standard construction style and operation mode adopted by teacher education institutions

and departments under the guidance of specific educational thoughts and concepts to achieve training objectives (Zhao et al., 2020). It is about setting different training courses within a specified number of years, with the help of educational media, to achieve a specific teacher training goal. They have formed certain styles or characteristics in their implementation, with obvious systematicity and standardization (Zhang, 2014).

Components and Evolution of Teacher Education Mode

The teacher education mode includes theoretical foundations of teacher education, training objectives, teacher education curriculum, teacher training implementation procedures, support systems, and evaluation mechanisms. The teacher education mode has a more significant extension than the teacher training mode. The teacher education mode constitutes the elements of teacher education and their interplay and operational methods, forming an organic unity. Complex relationships and operation modes included among the entities involved in teacher education—those who provide education and training, those who receive education and training, and the managing entities—are constructed to educate and train teachers, encompassing concepts, objectives, and educational intermediaries of teacher education. The teacher education mode is composed collectively by the state, implementing agencies, target groups, and teacher education's concepts, objectives, and educational intermediaries. These three main entities jointly support the core elements of teacher education philosophy, goals, and academic intermediaries. A change in any aspect can impact the entire teacher education mode, leading to a transition from the original teacher education mode to a new paradigm. Different countries implement various teacher education modes. However, scholars categorize many teacher education modes into closed and open types. China is transitioning from a secure teacher education mode to an available mode, shifting from the exclusive training of primary and secondary school teachers by normal universities to a pattern jointly supported by normal universities and comprehensive universities. Some scholars define teacher education modes based on the implementing body, such as the university-based and university-secondary school modes. (Shen, 2007). The United States has successfully transitioned from a closed teacher education mode to an open one, continuously exploring and implementing different teacher education modes, such as the university-centric teacher education mode, professional development schools, urban teacher residency mode, and clinical practice teacher training mode (Zhang, 2010).

Historical Background and Evolution of China's PST Education Mode

This section aims to delve into the historical evolution of China's PST education mode to understand its developmental lineage and key influences better. This section reviews teacher education and Confucian influences in ancient times, examines the transformation and development in modern times, and delves into the changes and trends after the reform and opening up.

Teacher Education and Confucian Influence in Ancient Times

Confucianism profoundly influenced the Ancient Chinese education system. This impact not only permeated the design and practice of the education system but also had a profound and lasting effect on PST education modes. Confucianism regards education as a path to moral cultivation, emphasizing nurturing individual character and virtue. This concept runs through the fundamental principles of the entire ancient education system (Lin, 2022).

In ancient China, the core goal of education was to cultivate gentlemen of noble morals and exceptional talents, a concept highlighted under Confucian thought (Huang, 2015). Confucianism emphasizes the indivisibility of education and moral cultivation, viewing education as a process of moral shaping to foster individuals of high moral character (Shen, 2013). Teachers played a critical role in this system, seen as modes of virtue whose mission included imparting knowledge and nurturing students' morals and qualities. The fundamental principles of this ancient educational concept are reflected in Confucian classical literature such as "The Analects" and "The Great Learning." These texts became necessary teaching materials in old education, focusing on transmitting academic knowledge and, more importantly, on students' moral development and self-cultivation.

Ancient China highly respected the social status of teachers, viewing them as crucial transmitters of Confucian wisdom and traditional values. Therefore, teachers' selection and cultivation process typically underwent rigorous exams and evaluations to ensure they possessed a high moral and intellectual capacity. Although the ancient education mode had some limitations, such as social stratification and the exclusivity of knowledge, Confucian thought laid a solid foundation for China's PST education mode, shaping Chinese education's core values and principles.

However, the ancient education mode also had limitations, including social inequality. In ancient China, educational opportunities were often skewed towards social elites, nobility, and the scholarly class, leading to educational inequalities among social classes. Ordinary people struggled to gain access to higher education, which, to some extent, limited the universality and equality of education. Another limiting factor was the exclusivity of knowledge. The education system in ancient China focused primarily on classical culture and Confucian classics, neglecting other areas of expertise. Although Confucian thought emphasized moral cultivation and character training, education in other areas, such as science, technology, and arts, was relatively lacking, limiting individuals' comprehensive development and innovative capabilities to some extent.

Despite these limitations, Confucian thought laid a solid foundation for the basis of China's PST education mode, shaping the core values and principles of Chinese education. This tradition still has a lasting impact on China's education system, particularly regarding teachers' moral cultivation and social status. The experiences and lessons of ancient education also provide valuable insights into the evolution of China's pre-service education mode.

Modern Transformation and Development

China's PST education mode underwent significant transformation and development in the modern era. Internal and external factors influenced this period of change, profoundly affecting China's education system.

China experienced dramatic political, social, and economic upheavals throughout its modern history. The Qing Dynasty's decline and the Xinhai Revolution's outbreak ended China's feudal society, followed by a wave of the New Culture Movement and intellectual liberation. These shifts stimulated a rethinking of the educational system, emphasizing the importance of knowledge, innovation, and modernity. These trends influenced PST education, beginning to develop in a more open and diverse direction (Zhu, 2019). International educational thoughts and modes also significantly impacted China's pre-service education. China sent students abroad, exposing them to different educational systems and philosophies. Upon their return, these students introduced foreign academic concepts into China, promoting the

internationalization and modernization of China's PST mode. The modern transformation and development also led to the reform of normal schools and colleges of education. China began to focus on cultivating and improving educational personnel, enhancing the quality and diversity of teacher education. Disciplines such as scholarly research and educational psychology gained more attention, rising to provide more theoretical support for pre-service education.

Despite many positive changes brought about by modern transformation and development, challenges also accompanied it. The unequal distribution of educational resources and the urban-rural education gap remained, with education fairness still an urgent problem (Chen, 2022). In addition, the diversity and openness of the pre-service education mode brought about challenges in management and quality control, necessitating ongoing improvement and refinement.

Changes and Trends since the Reform and Opening up

Since the reform and opening up, China's PST education mode has undergone remarkable changes and development, and the reforms during this period have profoundly impacted China's education system. Implementing the reform and opening-up policy opened a new chapter in China's education reform, creating favourable conditions for the changes in the pre-service education mode. Table 1 describes the changes and trends in teacher education in China since the reform and opening up.

Table 1.

Changes and Trends in Teacher Education since the Reform and Opening up

No	Changes and Trends	Description
1	International Educational Cooperation	Increased international collaboration projects and study abroad opportunities, providing a broader global perspective and expertise.
2	Diversified Education System	The emergence of various educational institutions, such as private schools, training institutions, and online education platforms, enriches the educational ecosystem.
3	Educational Policy Reform	The government has implemented a series of policy measures to encourage and support educational innovation and improvement, aiming to enhance the quality and efficiency of education.
4	Unequal Distribution of Educational Resources	The gap in educational resources between urban and rural areas persists, and further efforts are required to address this issue.
5	Intense Competition in the Educational Market	Some educational institutions pursue the maximization of profits, which may compromise the quality of education, necessitating regulation and oversight.

The reform policies and opening up have catalyzed the modernization and internationalization of Chinese education. China absorbed advanced international educational concepts and experiences during this period, incorporating diversified

educational modes and technologies. International cooperation projects and study-abroad opportunities have significantly increased, broadening the global perspective of PSTs in China and endowing them with professional knowledge (Dai, 2017). The educational system has become more diversified and open. While traditional normal universities continue to play a crucial role, other educational institutions, such as private schools, training organizations, and online education platforms, have emerged, offering students more choices and opportunities and enriching pre-service education modes. The reform and opening up have also prompted adjustments and improvements in educational policies to promote the development of pre-service education. The government has introduced a series of policy measures to encourage and support educational innovation, covering areas including teacher training, distribution of educational resources, and evaluation of academic quality. These policies aim to improve the quality and efficiency of PST education.

However, the post-reform and opening-up mode of pre-vocational education also faces challenges. Uneven distribution of educational resources and the urban-rural education gap still exist, and the training and development of pre-vocational teachers still face many challenges. Competition in the education market is fierce, and some educational institutions may be overly concerned with maximizing profits, possibly at the expense of the quality of education.

Major Changes and Trends

China's PST education has evolved from a closed, uniform system to a more open and diverse one. It has led to an expansion from a narrow focus on instrumental teaching skills to a holistic approach that encompasses the full development of educators. Reforms have paved the way for international collaboration and a mix of traditional and innovative training institutions, enriching the educational landscape and promoting a multifaceted growth of teacher competencies.

The Evolution from a Closed to an Open System in Teacher Education

A closed training system within higher normal universities characterized the traditional mode of teacher education. With continuous transformation and development, there has been a consensus on constructing an open, comprehensive, diversified, and integrated teacher education method. Mu (2005) noted that teacher education must become open and professionalized to meet the demands of ongoing social and economic development, particularly in fundamental education reform, which requires improving teacher quality. Han (2011) conducted a comparative analysis of the current teacher education reform modes and their problems, making preliminary discussions on the reform of teacher education modes in local colleges and the construction of teacher education institutions. Lin (2008) argued that teacher education reform in China needs to draw lessons from developed countries to achieve a dual improvement in academia and professionalism. Li (2012) pointed out that the transformation from a closed to an open system in teacher education is a global trend. Since the end of the last century, China's teacher education has also gradually embarked on the path of transformation, facing numerous issues such as the dilution of status, shrinkage of the profession, loss of secondary vocational education resources, and the separation of pre-service and in-service training. It has been suggested that China should implement a teacher education mode that combines both targeted and non-targeted training. Fan (2019) took Zhengzhou Normal University as an example to explore the "132" mode in the transformational development of teacher education, analyzing the operational effectiveness

of the mode, which can provide references for deepening teacher education reform and promoting the transformational growth of local normal universities. Hu (2009) pointed out that China has formed an open teacher education system. However, the substantive content of this open system is significantly less substantial when compared with the mature open teacher education systems of developed countries. It has become more urgent for China's open teacher education mode to improve the level of teacher education following the completion of the system construction, following the developmental laws of teacher education itself.

The traditional mode of PST education has changed, and an open mode of teacher education has become an inevitable trend. Local normal schools must adapt to the times in the transformation wave, maintain the characteristics of teacher education without becoming stagnant, and establish an open system of teacher education.

Evolving from Singularity to Diversity in Teacher Training Approaches

As we navigate the evolving landscape of China's PST education, it becomes evident that a singular approach to teacher training no longer suffices in meeting the dynamic demands of the 21st-century classroom. This evolution is characterized by a shift from a homogenous training system to a mosaic of diverse and specialized methods that cater to various educational contexts and learning needs. The rich tapestry of approaches reflects the multifaceted nature of teaching competencies required today and echoes the call for more adaptive, innovative, and personalized professional development for educators. In this light, we observe a conscious movement towards embracing plurality in training strategies—a transformation that promises to prepare teachers for the complexities of contemporary education. Table 2 discusses how various scholars and practitioners have contributed to and conceptualized this shift towards diversity in teacher training modes.

Table 2

Scholarly Perspectives on the Evolution of Teacher Education Reform

Author	Year	Key Points	Implications for Teacher Education Reform
Mu	2005	Advocates for openness and professionalization of teacher education to meet the needs of social and economic development.	Suggests that improving teacher quality is necessary to respond to fundamental education reform.
Han	2011	Comparative analysis of current reforms and issues, discussing local colleges and teacher education institution construction.	Points out the need for reform in teacher education modes at local levels.
Lin	2008	Suggests learning from developed countries to achieve academic and professional improvements in teacher education.	Highlights the importance of international benchmarks for enhancing teacher education.
Li	2012	Observes a global trend toward openness in teacher education and discusses the challenges China faces in this transformation.	Calls for a mixed teacher education mode combining targeted and non-targeted training.
Fan	2019	Examines the "132" mode at Zhengzhou Normal University and analyses its effectiveness.	Provides insights into deepening teacher education reform and promoting transformation in local normal universities.
Hu	2009	Notes that while China has formed an open system, its substantive content is lacking compared to developed countries.	Emphasizes the urgency for China to elevate the substance of its open teacher education to international standards.

As the tableau of scholarly insights in Table 2 illustrates, the transformation of China's PST education system is unmistakable and multifaceted. There's a unanimous pivot away from a one-size-fits-all approach towards a more open, diverse, and dynamic teacher education framework. These scholars underscore a burgeoning necessity to revolutionize PST education to keep pace with global trends and the escalating complexities of the educational environment. Key themes from these academic explorations include the urgency for openness and inclusivity, the assimilation of international best practices, and the harmonization of theoretical and practical competencies. The advocated reforms are not merely surface-level adjustments but call for a fundamental rethinking of the paradigms on which teacher education in China has traditionally operated. The implications of these scholarly contributions point towards an educational renaissance where teacher training is a kaleidoscope of innovative practices reflective of an interconnected world. This reinvention is pivotal in sculpting a generation of teachers who transmit knowledge and are cultivators of wisdom, equipped to navigate and shape the educational landscapes of tomorrow.

Transitioning from Instrumentalism to Holistic Teacher Education in Training Objectives

The normative education in China once focused primarily on cultivating teachers as "instrumental" beings, emphasizing the transmission of knowledge and skills, with the core objective of ensuring that teachers could fulfil their roles in the classroom, imparting subject knowledge and skills (Huo, 2018). However, under the transformation of the global era and the evolution of social demands, teacher education is constantly adjusting its goals from instrumentalism towards a more holistic teacher education approach.

This shift reflects higher expectations of education, which is not limited to transmitting knowledge and skills but also emphasizes holistic education. The training goals of holistic teachers include a broader range, focusing on transferring subject knowledge and paying attention to teachers' ethics, emotional qualities, values, social responsibilities, and other dimensions (Cen, 2022; Qu, 2020). The philosophy of holistic education requires teachers to be not merely conveyors of knowledge but also mentors who guide students, possessing a broader educational background and diverse capabilities.

With the continuous reform and development of China's education system, the new standards for teacher professional certification also reflect this shift. The standards no longer view teacher education simply as the cultivation of knowledge and skills but stress that teachers should possess a correct worldview, outlook on life, values, and a sense of social responsibility. Moreover, the standards highlight the training objectives of autonomous learning, international perspective, reflective research, and collaborative communication to meet the diverse needs of today's educational field.

This transformation contributes to cultivating holistic teachers with comprehensive qualities and a sense of social responsibility, who teach knowledge within the classroom and guide students' overall development outside the school with more robust social engagement and leadership. Holistic education helps cultivate teachers who are lifelong learners with adaptability to better cope with today's diversified and globalized educational environment. This transformation is expected to bring more innovation and progress to the academic field in China.

Discussion

The primary aim of this study was to delve into the evolution and trends of China's PST education mode. We sought to understand how these changes better position China's educational system to meet the evolving demands of education in the era of globalization, thus enhancing the quality of teaching and cultivating teachers equipped to meet modern academic requirements. The significance of this research lies in its close examination of the global transformations and trends in the field of education and how China's PST education mode is responding to these trends. Our findings indicate that China's pre-service education mode has shifted from closed to open, from uniformity to diversity, and its training objectives from instrumentalism to holistic teacher education. These shifts are crucial for improving the quality of teaching and meeting diverse educational needs. Hence, the primary contribution of this study is to provide deep insights into this evolution, emphasizing the importance of international cooperation, resource support, policy innovation, and regulation to ensure the sustainable development and improvement of the educational system.

In line with our study's objectives, our findings include trends in China's PST education mode transitioning from a closed to an open system and the evolution of training methods from uniform to diverse. Concurrently, we observed significant changes in teacher training objectives during this evolution, shifting from the original instrumental goals to the current holistic teacher education goals. These trends reflect the progress of the Chinese education system in adapting to the needs of the globalized era. Meanwhile, our findings are consistent with existing literature and other researchers' results, further strengthening the credibility of our discoveries. While our findings align with the literature and other studies, challenges and issues exist, such as the uneven distribution of educational resources and competition in the education market. These issues may stem from differences in policy implementation or other factors and require further research and policy improvements. Therefore, the managerial implications of this study underscore the importance of collaboration between the government, educational institutions, and all societal sectors to ensure the sustainable development and improvement of China's PST education system. Policymakers should focus on resource allocation, policy innovation, and regulation to ensure the quality and equity of education. However, the study also has limitations, including insufficient exploration of some complex issues and restrictions on data availability. Future research could further explore the specific implementation and effectiveness of China's PST education mode and a deeper

examination of globalization's impact on education. Moreover, cross-national comparative studies could be conducted to understand the differences and similarities between educational systems in different countries.

Conclusions and Recommendations

This study delves into the evolution and trends of China's PST education mode, aiming to understand how it adapts to the demands of education in the era of globalization, improves the quality of education, and produces teachers who meet the requirements of modern education. By summarizing the study's findings and making recommendations and outlooks on the future mode of PST education, we can see more clearly the current state of China's education system and the direction of its future development.

Findings of the Study

The findings of this research indicate significant transformations in China's PST education mode, shifting from a closed system to one that is increasingly open and evolving from a uniform method of training to a diversified one. These trends are vital for adapting to the continually changing educational needs of the global era. Through an open educational system, China can better meet the diverse needs of students, enhance the quality of education, and cultivate teachers who meet the requirements of modern education.

Critical factors in this evolution include international cooperation, resource support, policy innovation, and regulation. International collaboration has introduced global educational concepts and best practices into the Chinese education system, providing teachers with broader professional development opportunities. Additionally, enhanced resource support has helped improve the distribution of educational facilities and resources, thus increasing the accessibility and equity of education. Policy innovation has also driven continuous improvements in academic modes to meet rapidly changing social demands. Strengthened regulation helps ensure the quality and effectiveness of the education system.

Despite significant progress, China's education system still faces challenges. One such challenge is the uneven distribution of educational resources, particularly between urban and rural areas, requiring additional policies and measures for resolution. Moreover, with intense competition in the education market, some institutions may compromise on educational quality in the pursuit of profit, necessitating increased regulation and assessment to ensure the quality and fairness of education. These challenges call for the collective efforts of the government, educational institutions, and researchers to continuously improve China's PST education mode to meet the evolving educational needs of the globalized era.

Suggestions and Perspectives on Future Modes of PST Education

In the future, China's PST education mode can adopt the following recommendations to further adapt to the globalization era's needs and improve education quality.

Expand cooperation in the field of education with other countries and international organizations to promote the sharing of knowledge and experience. Establishing more international education exchange programs and supporting teachers' study and exchange trips abroad will help introduce international education concepts and best practices and enhance teachers' professionalism. Active participation in international education research cooperation to keep abreast of global education trends will help maintain the international competitiveness of Chinese PST education. Investment in education resources should continue to be increased and ensure a more balanced distribution of resources to all regions,

predominantly rural and remote areas. It will help to reduce the gap between urban and rural education and improve equity and access to education. At the same time, emphasis has been placed on improving basic education facilities and upgrading teacher training to ensure every student has access to high-quality education. Innovation in education policy is actively promoted to meet changing education needs. Encourage schools to adopt a more flexible education mode that fosters innovative and holistic qualities in students. Policy innovations can also encourage more applications of education technology to improve teaching efficiency and implement personalized learning. Through continuous policy improvement, China can continue to improve the quality and effectiveness of PST education and adapt it to the needs of modern education.

These recommendations will help China's PST education mode to better adapt to the needs of the globalization era in the future, to improve the quality of education, and to train more competitive teachers, thus making a more outstanding contribution to China's education.

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