



RESEARCH ARTICLE

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## THE NEW ROLE OF ENGLISH TEACHERS IN CLASSROOMS - TEACHERS AS RESEARCHERS

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### ABSTRACT

The reform of education in China is not only a series of changes in the content of the curriculum, but also a renewal of the concept of education, a reform of the of talent training mode and even involves the change of teachers' role. Different from its traditional definition, this paper aims to discuss how to become a teacher as a researcher. That is to say, we are about to inquire into the impact of teachers as researchers on how to transform from "technique-oriented" teachers to "research-oriented" teachers, and what influence the teachers as researchers will have on future English teaching in classrooms.

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## Introduction

**Background of the study:** Since the beginning of 21<sup>st</sup> century, China has entered an unprecedented period of transformation of life style. Almost everything has undergone dramatic changes, including political, economic, social and cultural changes. Meanwhile, the development and reform of education has become a fundamental and strategic task concerning the existence and prospect of the country and the nation. In order to meet the requirements of the modern society, teachers are expected to carry the burden of cultivating innovative talents. As a result, the change of teachers' role has become a necessity. Under this new educational circumstance, the English teachers are demanded to become researchers of English teaching, especially the English teaching in classrooms. Nowadays, teacher and student should be a lifelong learner and researcher rather than learning for examination and grade. For adapting to this new world, they need to be a researcher to research their own major or even what they want and like.

**Purpose and significance of the study:** The researchers of English teaching refers to those people with good theoretical self-cultivation, extensive teaching experience and some capacity for researching. Besides, they always put the advanced educational philosophy and theory into practice, and

are always ready to question the problems in English teaching with a high level of research consciousness. And above all, they are well aware of the importance of continuous reflection and innovative spirit. Does it suggest that teachers should give up their jobs and only focus on scientific research? Of course not. Here are some practical principles that the researching teachers should follow: (1) The best practice principle of teaching, which means that no matter what kind of experiment or research the teacher is carrying out, the teaching process must conform to the principles derived from those excellent teachers' years of teaching experience.(2) The principle of estimating research achievements. That is, the purpose of any teaching experiment is to make it easier for students to acquire and more relaxing for teachers to teach as well. (Zou Weicheng, 2008:228).

## Discussion on transformation of teachers

**The distinction between "technique-oriented" teachers and "research-oriented" teachers:** English teaching, as one of the most important subjects in our current school education system, has drawn more and more attention. One can not only communicate with others once they have learned a foreign language, but can also master a skill through language learning and cultural exchanges. However, in most English classes, the traditional English teaching method--the teacher-centered interpretation still plays a leading role. The teacher barks out

what sounds like commands, while the students remain totally passive throughout. Being afraid of making mistakes, they hardly have chances to involve into classroom activities. As for teachers, they tend to finish the course in a hurry instead of explaining things in detail patiently. Moreover, the traditional teaching aids like blackboards and chalks are still used in many cases. In this mode, it may be easy for students to grasp the knowledge from textbooks, such as grammar, vocabulary, translation and so on. But once they are faced with communication, you can imagine the difficulty and frustration they may have. If students spend most time learning English just to get high scores in exams, their listening, reading, speaking and writing can never be improved. Thus there is an urgent need for transformation of teachers' role.

### How does the transformation occur

**The current educational situations:** Under the current educational situations, a teacher should be equipped with high overall qualities more than one who simply teaches knowledge from textbooks. How exactly can an ordinary teacher develop into a researching teacher?

**The elements involved:** According to the requirements of modern education, it involves the following elements: (1) Build the confidence and faith in English teaching; (2) Get into self-improvement endeavors; (3). Expand educational abilities (such as the ability of applying English in communication, the ability of coordinating personal relationships and so on); (4). Have a strong work ethic and a correct emotional attitude; (5). Be in good mental health; (6). Be eager to study diligently to create something new.

**The definition of researchers:** Why do we call the modern teachers "researchers"? Generally speaking, "research" refers to study a particular field carefully and try to discover new facts about it. While a "teacher" is a person whose job is teaching, especially in a school. And how is a "researcher" connected with a "teacher"? First of all, an English teacher studies something closely related to his or her students and the object of the research is students and curriculum. Both the personalities of each student and the characteristics of each class should be carefully analyzed so as to get the best effect of teaching. Second of all, the teacher carries out the experiments which have positive effects on students without distracting them from learning and life. For this reason, the teaching experiments can only be conducted at break or after school.

### Methods of becoming researchers

The main purpose of English teachers' scientific research lies in the connection between theories and practice. The classroom is where the practical problems of teaching are solved by the means of summarizing, refining and promoting teaching experience. The specific methods are as follows: (1). Teachers should communicate with students more often to keep track of and investigate their study and life; (2). The Internet should be made readily accessible to teachers because it enables teachers to know about the latest news and knowledge at home and abroad. As a result, the English teachers can pay close attention to the recent development of English as well as the newest vocabulary. (3). The teachers are supposed to participate in academic exchanges as much as possible in order to improve their abilities in practical use. (4). English songs, movies or other relevant materials can be

applied into class in diverse forms, which brings vitality to the class and broadens the students' horizon. In conclusion, it is believed that the students trained in this way will become not only excellent in theoretical knowledge but also in practical ability in the future.

### The Influence of Teachers as Researchers

**The Benefits brought to students:** Nowadays, since quality education is emphasized, the teachers play a decisive role in English classroom teaching. The teacher is the organizer of class, the guardian of students' mind and a light that shows where you should go. Because of this, the teachers must update their knowledge structure and try to improve their ability to accept new things. Only in this way can an ordinary teacher develops into a teacher as a researcher and can meet the demands of modern education. And only with this ability can the teacher communicate better with students and get along with students in harmony. Likewise, students tend to take control of the class and create a sympathetic atmosphere when they are working with such a "multifunctional" teacher.

**The Development of English teachers:** At present, the English education is in the rising period in our country, which provides plenty of opportunities for English teachers. The development must depend on the reform, and only reform can lead to innovation and further development. On the one hand, a dynamic, adaptable and ideal image of teachers should be established. On the other hand, the education department should set up the corresponding system of teachers. By learning from and drawing upon advanced education concepts and methods of other countries, the English teachers' education in our country is developing and growing step by step, the mode of the English teachers' education is going through the process from closeness to openness, and the form of Teachers' Preparation Institutions is running from single to multiple. In general, the development of our English teachers' education is moving towards the level of internationalization, diversification, cooperation, high quality and innovation. There is no doubt that with the efforts of all the English teachers, we will reach a new height in the English education.

**The New Environment:** Meanwhile, teachers are themselves learners and it is necessary to continue to pursue professional and personal growth in teaching. Teachers must be proficient in their career to enable the students to make some academic achievements. Then they should facilitate learning by encouraging and motivating students and providing a comfortable learning environment. Language teachers should also pay attention to foster the right attitude of students towards different cultures.

### Conclusion

Reflection teaching is the key to becoming teachers as researchers. When it comes to the needs of teachers' professional development, reflection teaching plays the leading role. Posner, an American scholar, has noted: "the experience without reflection is a narrow experience, and it can only be superficial knowledge." That is to say, if a teacher is only satisfied with his experience and does not think deeply about his experience, the development of his teaching level will be greatly restricted or even slipped. In reflection teaching, teachers need to think over the process of their own teaching behavior, measures, decision-making methods, and the results

of a comprehensive survey and analysis, summarize and reviews and gradually form their own teaching theories to improve their professional skills, the teaching effects, and the value of teachers as researchers.

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