

Research on the Changes of Teaching Beliefs of Rural Elementary and Junior High School English Teachers in China

-- A Case Study of Four Teachers in Zhejiang Province

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I Introduction

On the basis of ELTE knowledge theory and with the theme of "The Influence of the Change of Teaching Belief on professional Development", this study attempts to conduct research in several rural primary and junior high schools in Zhejiang Province, China, and to understand the establishment of English teachers' teaching beliefs, the influencing factors of the formation of teaching beliefs and the influences on professional development, as well as to explore effective paths and methods for belief formation and professional development of English teachers in their career.

1.1 Research Background

China's English Curriculum Standards for Compulsory Education (2022 Edition) suggests that teachers should set clear teaching objectives, practice the concept of English learning activities, and guide integrated language knowledge learning. However, the cognitive beliefs of English teachers support the design and implementation of English teaching activities. In order to implement this series of new ideas, a comprehensive and systematic understanding of the formation of English teachers' teaching beliefs is particularly important. Therefore, with the deepening of the research on primary and secondary school English teaching and teacher professional development, the teaching belief of English teachers has become one of the key research topics in the field of English teaching research. Learning;the treasure within (1996) mentioned that Education reform needs teachers' active assistance and will to act.

Combs (1998) believed that educational system reform was faced with material, administrative, philosophical and psychological obstacles. Indeed, human behavior depends on cognition in the brain. In order to effectively change teachers' behavior, education reform should not only pay attention to external conditions such as information technology and methods, but also pay more attention to how to change the inherent but inappropriate belief system in teachers' brain. No matter how promising a reform strategy is advocated, if such a strategy is inconsistent with or even contrary to teachers' personal belief system, it cannot influence behavior in the expected direction and will be ignored or even counterproductive over time.

The transformation of teacher belief is influenced by many factors, which cannot be achieved overnight, including teachers themselves, external links, practice process and behavior results (Clarke&Hollingsworth, 2002).

The value and significance of the research on teacher belief is worthy of affirmation, but the actual effect of the research on teacher belief can not give the same reasonable proof. Joram and Gabriele (1998) argue that normal university students are hampered in their thinking by beliefs formed from previous learning experiences before they enter the workplace. Teacher belief mainly comes from real teaching classroom, professional learning and pedagogical knowledge learning. Only by transforming teachers' implicit theory into rational, comprehensive and effective teaching beliefs can teachers' teaching practice be improved. Although normal university students have learned a large number of courses and new theories of teaching, when they are faced with complicated practical situations and special students in rural areas, these declarative knowledge is difficult to be transformed into operational procedures in a short time, and this untested theory is likely to be replaced by experience in practice (Cheng Xiaotang, Sun Xiaohui, 2010).

To sum up, there have been previous studies on whether teachers' belief can change, the relationship between teachers' belief change and professional development, and the influence of teachers' original teaching belief on the establishment of new belief. However, there is still a lack of research on the teaching belief change, influencing factors and professional growth of English teachers in rural

primary and secondary schools. Therefore, this study makes a longitudinal and systematic research on the formation of teaching beliefs and professional development of English teachers in rural primary and secondary schools in China.

1.1.1 The Importance of Belief in Teaching

Teacher belief should first respect students' subjectivity status, that is, respect students' individuality, creativity and development of students' potential. The second is to understand the nature of education, namely "what is education", "why do education" and "how to do education well"; Thirdly, adhere to the comprehensive outlook on development, pay attention to the balanced development of all aspects of students, believe in the possibility of each student's development. The essence of teacher belief is the experience view, construction view and student view emphasized by the curriculum.

In certain social and cultural contexts, teachers can find that people express their beliefs and ideas consciously or unconsciously. When it comes to many education and teaching issues, they express their opinions, but these opinions or opinions are often implicit and rarely clearly recognized. Teaching belief has a guiding effect on teaching practice. As the psychological background of teachers engaged in educational work, it deeply affects their cognition and judgment, and further affects their actual classroom behavior. Therefore, it becomes an important factor affecting teachers' professional development.

1.1.2 Problems in English Teaching in Rural China

Zhejiang Province is a big economic province in China, but the economy and education in rural areas are quite different from those in urban areas. The authors will investigate teachers in four rural primary and secondary schools. With the deepening of a new round of curriculum reform, English teachers in rural primary and secondary schools have finally realized the seriousness of the problem and consciously paid attention to the subjectivity of students in their teaching activities. In this teaching mode, the result is "high consumption, low income", and the phenomenon of the old model, old method and old routine of teaching classroom cannot be changed in a short

time. In addition, due to the unbalanced development of urban and rural education, there is a shortage of English teachers in rural primary and secondary schools. Some English teachers are part-time, temporary or transferred from other disciplines. Due to the lack of systematic knowledge and teaching skills of English professionals, they just deal with the job, and it is difficult to meet the teaching requirements.

Although there has been a breakthrough in the continuing education of English teachers in rural primary and secondary schools, there are still some problems in the teaching and learning of English classrooms. Therefore, in terms of how to improve the professional level of English teachers in rural primary and secondary schools, the change of teaching beliefs is closely related to various problems in the in-service education of teachers, and the influencing factors in the process and their impact on professional development are worthy of further discussion.

1.2 The rationale and main conceptual themes

1.2.1 Teaching Belief

Researchers hold their own views on the connotation and definition of teacher belief. Pajares (1992) broadened the denotation meaning of teaching belief. He argued that teacher belief also included teachers' cognition, emotion and evaluation of learning process, students' role, teachers themselves, curriculum and teaching, etc. Zhao Changmu (2004) had his own unique views. He believed that teachers' beliefs were the assumptions, thoughts and views about nature, human beings, society, education and science that teachers confirmed and believed by themselves. Based on the interpretation of teaching belief by Pajares and Zhao Changmu, this paper summarizes the concept of teacher belief, that is, teacher belief is a unique view and knowledge system of teacher's role, teacher's teaching process, student's learning process, teaching mode and method, teaching effect, etc. It is the potential core of teachers' thought, the profound reflection result and the primary power of promoting teaching activities.

1.2.2 Teacher's professional Development

Teachers' beliefs are mostly formed by teachers' self-shaping. Theoretical

knowledge acquired in training or education plays a very limited role in the formation of their beliefs in work, but as students, they are more deeply influenced by their own teachers (Lortie, 1975). Classroom discourse research is a professional development process that displays teachers' knowledge, ideas and experience (Marton&Tsui,2004). In the development of teachers' career, teachers should actively participate in discussions in teaching and research activities, and understand, reflect on and apply teaching situations based on their own actual conditions (Johnson,2006).

Based on the above points of view, this study summarizes the new concept. Teacher professional development refers to a process in which teachers develop professional knowledge, skills and concepts. English teachers in primary and secondary schools should have an in-depth understanding of the content of curriculum reform, understand the connotation of the new English curriculum, master the gist and implementation strategies of the new curriculum, and integrate the teaching concept of the new curriculum into the practical teaching work of teachers. In this way, English teachers can pay more attention to practical problems in education, pay more attention to the actual teaching process, and explore scientific theories and solutions.

II Research Design

2.1 Research Questions

Based on constructivism and sociocultural theory, this study adopts in-depth investigation, classroom observation, teaching log and other research methods to investigate and study four teachers in Zhejiang Province. The research questions are as follows:

- (1) For these primary and secondary school English teachers, what are their beliefs?
- (2) What factors influence the change of their teacher beliefs?
- (3) How do teachers' beliefs affect their professional development?

2.2 Research Object

In order to make the results of this study truly reflect the situation of teachers'

beliefs, this study selected 4 rural primary and secondary school English teachers in Zhejiang Province for research. The school backgrounds and teachers' beliefs of the research objects are different and hierarchical, which can satisfy the research sampling. In terms of school composition, the author will choose rural middle schools and primary schools from different regions of Zhejiang Province. With the continuous progress of rural construction and English curriculum reform, English teaching in rural areas has been significantly improved in terms of cultural environment and teaching conditions. However, the problems of uncoordinated development between urban and rural areas and large gap in education level have not been fundamentally solved, so it is not possible to act too hastily in a short time. The author will collect the information of the four interviewed teachers, including gender, school, title, teaching age, educational background, school situation, student situation, etc.

3.3 Research Timetable

The study will last for one and a half years from January 2024 to September 2025, and will be divided into four stages: preparation, research, data collection and analysis, and summary and reflection.

(1) Preparation stage (January to February 2024)

Consult relevant literature on this topic, collect and sort out information, study relevant theories and write research.

Plans and programs.

(2) Research phase (March to April 2024)

To investigate the teaching beliefs and professional development of English teachers in rural primary and secondary schools, and to understand the current situation of English teaching and student learning in primary and secondary schools in Zhejiang Province.

(3) Data Collection and Analysis (May 2024 to June 2025)

Four rural English teachers with different teaching ages and professional titles will be interviewed in depth for 3-4 times before, middle and later stages. Eight open classes will be selected for comprehensive analysis based on on-site classroom

observation, and relevant parts of teachers' teaching logs will be selected for description and analysis, so as to understand what English teachers' teaching beliefs are at different stages and what influencing factors are as well as the impact on their professional development.

(4) Summary Stage (July 2025 to September 2025)

According to the actual situation, the collected data will be selected and organized, and the conclusions will be drawn through data analysis and mutual argument. Finally, according to the research results, the formation process of teachers' teaching beliefs will be evaluated and reflected, and effective paths and methods suitable for rural primary and secondary school English teachers' teaching beliefs formation and professional development will be proposed.

3.4 Research Methods

Scientific and reasonable research methods are conducive to achieving research objectives. Combined with the objective, content and object of this study, the author mainly adopts in-depth interview, classroom observation and teaching journal in the research process.

3.4.1 In-depth Interview

Interview is an open, direct and personal interview or conversation aimed at discovering the background, attitude, belief and emotion of a certain issue. We can record the interviewees expressing their opinions on things in their own words (Stringer,1996). This study will conduct in-depth interviews with 4 interviewees, all of whom are anonymous to protect their privacy. The outline of the interview is divided into three dimensions (teaching practice, theoretical guidance and scientific research methods) according to the survey results of rural primary and secondary school teachers' teaching beliefs. See Appendix 1 for the outline design of in-depth interview. Due to the different experiences and conditions of interviewees, structured and semi-structured interview methods are comprehensively used in the in-depth interview outline design. In order to prevent the interviewees from interfering with each other and expressing their true thoughts in the presence of others, the interviews

will be conducted in 3 to 4 times, with an interval of about 3-4 months, from May 2024 to June 2024. All of them are personal interviews, face-to-face interviews in offices, coffee shops or online video interviews when inconvenient. In addition, considering the ethical issues, the choice of scene will be decided by the teacher being interviewed.

3.4.2 Classroom Observation Method

In this study, the classroom observation method is used to focus on the teaching behavior of English teachers, whether teaching beliefs and teaching behaviors violate each other, what are the influencing factors, and the influence of the change of teaching beliefs on teachers' professional development. The observed phenomena are verified with the reflection of teachers, so as to grasp the current situation of teachers' beliefs more accurately. See Appendix 2 Classroom observation evaluation table. For example, teachers use conventional teaching methods in the classroom to reflect their inherent teaching beliefs. The observation period will be from May 2024 to June 2024. By eliminating invalid data, eight English classes that could best reflect teachers' teaching beliefs will be selected and analyzed through the evaluation table.

3.4.3 Teaching Journal Method

The journal mainly records the meaningful events, thoughts and feelings of teachers in the teaching process, which is a personal record of teachers (McKernan,1991). Teachers should be teaching journal is also called the research as a partner in the research process (Altrichter, Posch, Somekh, 1993). The author of this paper believes that teaching log method is a research method for teachers to record their views or opinions on classroom implementation after teaching. The process of recording the formation and change of teachers' teaching thinking, beliefs, views and attitudes is also a process of improving their teaching behavior and promoting professional development. The author pays attention to the following contents: the incidents that violate the teaching belief in the teaching process, the problems that occur in the practice of teaching belief and the solutions to the problems, and the relationship between teaching belief and teacher professional development. From May

2024 to June 2024, the author will collect the Chinese teaching journals of 4 teachers, and it is expected that there will be 12.

3.5 Research Implementation

The author will conduct longitudinal in-depth interviews on 4 rural English teachers of different teaching ages and professional titles in Zhejiang Province for 4 times before, during and after, select 8 open classes based on comprehensive analysis of on-site classroom observation, select relevant parts of teachers' teaching journals for description and analysis, and form triangular mutual verification through three research methods. To understand the formation of English teachers' teaching beliefs in different stages, the influencing factors in the process of change, and the influence of the change of teaching beliefs on their professional development.

IV References

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V Appendix

Appendix 1

Outline design of in-depth interview

Date:	Place:	Duration:
Hello, welcome to the interview "Research on the Change of Teaching Beliefs of Rural Primary and Junior High School English Teachers". This interview does not involve too much privacy and promises to keep the privacy of the interviewees confidential. You are free to express your views. Thanks!		
Information of interviewee:		
Name:	Teaching Age:	Professional Title:
Personal education background (primary school, junior high school, junior high school, undergraduate period and school) :		
School of employment:		
The grade you teach is (), and your school has () an English teacher.		
Please give a brief description of your current school, student profile and background, teaching and research team, school atmosphere and leadership management ideas.		
Dimension I: Theoretical basis		
1. As a rural English teacher, what role do you think you play in an English classroom? What does he/she do?		
2. Compared with your understanding of teachers before working, has your understanding of the profession of English teacher changed after working? In what ways?		
3. What career conflicts did you encounter at the beginning of your employment and how did you resolve them?		
4. As a foreign language, English is more challenging for Chinese learners, and the interaction between teaching and learning is worse than that of Chinese. When your classroom unexpectedly becomes "one word", how do you arouse students' enthusiasm and improve their interest in English learning?		

5. Some people say that teacher cooperation and teacher autonomy are contradictory for rural foreign language teachers. When your teaching concept conflicts with other foreign language teachers, what are the main aspects of your conflict and how do you negotiate with them? Will you change your teaching beliefs easily because of the opinions of others or because of the reality?

Dimension 2: Theoretical guidance

6. How did you establish your belief in English teaching at the beginning? When teaching practice and theory conflict, your original teaching faith is not shaken?

7. Is there any contradiction between your teaching beliefs and teaching behaviors in your English class? If yes, do you have positive attribution (student situation or teacher)?

8. Under the trend of reform and change of The Times, the teachers should make progress together with the students. What puzzles do you have in the teacher's learning and training, and how do you verify and update your cognition in teaching practice?

Dimension three: scientific research methods

9. Have you participated in any English teacher workshops, on-the-job English training or other activities? The problem of rural teachers is that they lack the ability to reflect and their research methods are not standardized and scientific. What growth have you gained in these activities? Does it make you more cognizant of your teaching identity and more firm in your teaching faith?

10. Due to the lack of research resources and research ability, some rural teachers mainly focus on their own teaching class, lack interest and motivation in academic research, and only choose topics that can produce results quickly or are easy to publish, but do not have substantial help to solve the teaching problems. How do you think about this situation?

After answering the above questions, briefly describe the key events that changed your belief in English teaching. So far, what kind of teaching beliefs do you think rural English teachers should establish?

Thank you for your cooperation!

Appendix 2

Classroom Observation Evaluation Form

teacher:	school:	class:	lesson type:
time:		observer:	
task:			
Do teaching methods and strategies reflect the beliefs of English teachers?	Factors influencing the change of English teachers' beliefs	The change of teaching beliefs and Professional Development of English teachers	Teacher self-summary
Overall evaluation and recommendations			