

A STUDY ON THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND CAREER HAPPINESS OF TEACHERS AT HUNAN SPORTS VOCATIONAL COLLEGE, CHINA

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Abstract: This study aimed to investigate teachers' current professional development and career happiness at Hunan Sports Vocational College in China, analyze the differences in different demographic backgrounds, and further explore the relationship between the two. The study used a questionnaire survey method and convenient sampling to test the Hunan Sports Vocational College teachers in China. SPSS was used to analyze the 136 valid data collected statistically. The results showed that the professional development of teachers at Hunan Sports Vocational College in China was high, and the level of teachers' career happiness was high. There were significant differences in teachers' professional development regarding gender, age, and education qualification. There were significant differences in teachers' career happiness regarding age and education qualification. There was a significant positive correlation between teachers' professional development and career happiness at Hunan Sports Vocational College in China.

Keywords: Teacher's Professional Development, Career Happiness, Higher Education

Introduction

The American Education Federation has defined "teacher professional development" and believes that teacher professional development is one of the goals of teacher development. It covered the personal growth of teachers, and the enhancement of knowledge, skills, and awareness related to professional work. This development is achieved through various channels, such as on-the-job training, education qualification research, and academic activities (Grundy & Robinson, 2004). Over time, teacher professional development has gradually attracted global attention. Scholars from other countries have also begun to conduct in-depth research in this field in the United States and other countries, exploring how to promote teachers' professional growth and improve education quality. Since the mid-1990s, teacher professional development has gradually become a hot research topic for scholars in

China. Therefore, all sectors of society and universities quickly realized that the professional development of university teachers was the foundation and core of the sustainable development of higher education in China, and it was also the main driving force to promote the development of universities themselves (Liu, 2019). With the change in enrollment policies of major universities in China and the expansion of high school graduates, the number of college students in Hunan Province will climb to 867600 in 2022. The massive group of students put forward better requirements for teachers. Only more professional teachers could adapt to the changes in the number and quality of students and better meet the needs of the national talent training strategy (Zhong, 2022). In addition, with the advent of informatization and the significant data era, the knowledge involved in higher education had also expanded rapidly, which required university teachers to constantly improve their knowledge reserves and learn cutting-edge professional theories and teaching techniques. (He & He, 2017). Therefore, in the current predicament facing many challenges, how to stimulate teachers' enthusiasm and initiative to the maximum extent, continuously improve teachers' professional quality, promote teachers' professional development, and enhance teachers' career happiness was the core and theme of this study.

Teachers were the teaching subjects of higher education, and their professional level not only directly affected the teaching quality of higher education but also was the key to comprehensively improving their professional skills and promoting the development of high-standard teaching in schools. Therefore, scholars from all walks of life were highly concerned about the research topic of teachers' professional development (Ma & Zhang, 2016; Yin, 2022). Of course, from a social point of view, the public also has high expectations for teachers' professional ability and level, hoping to provide students with high-quality education qualification services, thus promoting students' all-round development. Some scholars in the research community have pointed out with great enthusiasm that teachers were the key variable affecting students' life development (Hammond, 2002). The above theory demonstrated the importance of professional development for university teachers and the necessity of conducting related research.

Soviet educator Sokolovsky pointed out that "the task of schools is not only to teach students the knowledge necessary for labor and social activities that meet the requirements but also to provide everyone with spiritual happiness." (Lu, 2009). The mental state, living state, health state, and emotional life state of university teachers directly and profoundly impact college students' physical and psychological health. Only university teachers who were full of happiness could cultivate college students with a sense of joy. In addition, there was also a research monograph on the happiness of teachers written by Holmes in the UK. The study discussed how to care about the growth of teachers and how to improve their happiness from the perspective of focusing on their physical and mental health and career development (Holmes, 2006).

In traditional cognition, teachers had profound knowledge, high social status, rich income and welfare benefits, and winter and summer vacations that were difficult for ordinary people to enjoy. Hence, people who worked as teachers had higher career happiness. However, from recent surveys and data analysis, the level of professional happiness among university teachers in Hunan Province, China, was generally low. Most teachers faced problems such as job burnout, economic pressure, career development difficulties, and difficulty in title rating. People engaged in teaching work find it challenging to obtain satisfaction, pride, and happiness from their work, and the career happiness of the teacher community urgently needs to be improved (Yang, 2019; Chen, 2020). Teachers' career happiness had not only had a direct and essential impact on teachers' teaching career quality and mental health but also on their career development and prospects. Especially in colleges, teachers' career happiness level was closely related to students' growth and school development (Wang, 2020). University teachers were the concrete implementers of higher education and the promoters of scientific research and social development. Their sense of career happiness influenced their work enthusiasm and initiative. University teachers with a lower sense of career happiness had lower levels of innovative concepts, research ideas, and dedicated teaching spirit, and their work efficiency and quality would be negatively affected, thus affecting the development of higher education (Xu, 2017). Helping college teachers improve their career happiness was what every teacher teaching needed attention to and what every researcher, manager and decision-maker should pay attention to.

In existing research, scholars have already made relevant discussions on improving the career happiness of teachers. Xiao (2009) pointed out in his works that there was an apparent correlation between teachers' professional level and development and teachers' career happiness. He believed that the more precise a teacher's professional development prospect and the timelier the promotion of professional level, the higher recognition of the profession and the higher his career happiness level. Although there have been many research results on teachers' career happiness and professional development, from the perspective of promoting practice, these research results were difficult to build a theoretical system and provide adequate references for practice. It was an essential academic background for this study.

To sum up, this study selected some teachers of Hunan Sports Vocational College of China as the research object, using questionnaires to understand the relationship between teachers' professional development and career happiness, explored the current practical problems among teachers, analyzed the reasons and put forward targeted countermeasures, to make research progress and achievements in theory and practice, improved the living conditions of college teachers, promoted their professional development, enhanced career happiness, solved the education qualification problems concerned by the public, and promoted the sustainable development of colleges and higher education.

Research Objectives

(1) To understand the current professional development and career happiness of teachers at Hunan Sports Vocational College.

(2) To analyze the differences in professional development and career happiness of teachers in Hunan Sports Vocational College under different demographic backgrounds such as gender, age, education qualification and marital status.

(3) To explore the relationship between professional development and career happiness of teachers at Hunan Sports Vocational College.

Literature Review

Research on Teacher's Professional Development

Some researchers put forward that teachers' professional development should take individual development as the core and foundation, which could be considered a process with teachers' self-awareness and autonomy. For example, Kelchtermans (1993) held that teachers' professional development was not only a process of teachers' self-improvement, self-learning and self-growth but also the result of individuals' continuous acquisition of experience in the external environment.

There were also many conceptual studies on teacher's professional development in China. Some researchers believed that a teacher's professional development was a dynamic process. Yu & Lian (2007), Xu (2013), Guo (2021) and other scholars agreed that teachers' professional development was a process in which individuals grew from "novice" teachers to mature teachers and finally into expert teachers.

Xu (2017) was based in Shanghai, starting with teachers' work attitude, compiling a scale to measure the correlation between professional satisfaction, organizational commitment, job engagement and teachers' professional development in private schools.

Wang (2018) believed that there were many elements of college teachers' professional development. Still, they could be roughly divided into professional ability, scientific research ability, professional ethics and ability to participate in social activities. Based on this, a self-assessment form for college teachers' professional development has been compiled, and dimensions such as ideology and morality, knowledge and learning, teaching ability, scientific research ability and social serviceability have been set up to measure the professional development level of college teachers.

There were many research results on the influencing factors, connotations, and approaches to the professional development of university teachers.

As for the factors influencing teachers' professional development, the researchers generally agreed that the factors affecting teachers' professional development were mainly divided into internal factors and external factors. Among them were the internal factors, primarily from teachers themselves,

while the external factors especially included family, school, and society. The research results of Grundy & Robinson (2004) directly confirmed this viewpoint. Although they proposed the theory of driving force, their essence still believed that the factors influencing teachers' professional development were divided into internal and external aspects.

Chinese researcher Xu (2017) made a detailed analysis and exposition of the influencing factors of teachers' professional development. The internal factors mainly came from teachers, including their self-efficacy, subjective initiative and self-development expectations. External factors especially included organizational atmosphere, external support, national education policy, etc. The above achievements once again confirmed the research conclusion of Wang (2023). He concluded that the factors affecting teachers' professional development were mainly divided into internal subjective factors, namely teachers themselves, and external objective factors, namely various working and living environments. It was not difficult to see that although a consensus has been formed on a large scale, scholars had different discussions on specific influencing factors.

Research on Teacher's Career Happiness

Based on the concept of happiness, Lyubomirsky et al. (2005) proposed that career happiness referred to the subjective happiness experienced by individuals in their work, which was the personal emotions and cognitive evaluation of their work experience. Most Chinese scholars believed that career happiness reflected an individual's experience of positive and joyful emotions in the working environment (Ma, 2010; Yang, 2019).

Hornet et al. (2001) proposed that the primary evaluation dimensions of a teacher's career happiness include emotional, behavioral, cognitive, physical, and mental states. Based on this, in subsequent research, they constructed a career happiness model with five dimensions: physical and psychological state, emotion, cognition, social, and professional dimensions.

In addition, Zu (2022) developed a localized and personalized scale based on integrating relevant foreign scales and combined with the connotations of college teachers and happiness, set a high reliability and validity scale for college teachers' career happiness, which included seven dimensions: work emotion, salary, working environment, occupation itself, work effectiveness, interpersonal relationship and physical and mental health, with a total of 58 questions. This study acknowledged the reliability and validity of the scale as a measurement tool.

In terms of the influencing factors of demographic backgrounds, Huang & Miao (2012) clearly pointed out in their study that there was a significant positive correlation between factors such as gender, teaching experience, and age and teachers' level of career happiness. Besides demographic backgrounds, they also believed that improving social identity, respecting and facing up to the reasonable material needs of college teachers, and creating an excellent interpersonal environment could improve teachers' career happiness.

Later, Han (2018) found in the research that marriage was also an essential factor affecting teachers' career happiness, and the level of career happiness of unmarried teachers was significantly higher. The influence of age on teachers' career happiness was dynamic.

Research on the Relationship between Teacher's Professional Development and Career Happiness

In pedagogy and related research fields, teachers' professional development, career happiness, and relationships were mainly studied at the theoretical and speculative level, with few empirical studies and weak practical references.

Zhao (2014) believed that a teacher's professional development was also an internal driving force for individual teacher development. Knowledge accumulation, improvement of moral cultivation, and emotional control contribute to positive emotions and promote teacher's professional development.

Zhu (2019) pointed out that only by constantly pursuing professional development could teachers who work in private vocational and technical schools get out of their work difficulties, gain job satisfaction and a sense of accomplishment, relieve the pressure and burnout brought by work, gain an understanding of accomplishment, enhance their professional identity and satisfaction, and indeed fall in love with the profession of teachers, thus improving their career happiness. She also pointed out a significant positive correlation between the professional development of teachers in private vocational and technical schools and career happiness.

Generally speaking, teachers' career happiness was produced and felt during their professional development. Teachers' professional development and career happiness were related, and they promoted and functioned with each other.

Methodology

This study took Hunan Sports Vocational College in China as the research site and the Hunan Sports Vocational College teachers as the overall research object. According to the official website of Hunan Sports Vocational College, in July 2022, there were 376 faculty members, including 210 full-time teachers. The research objects were full-time teachers, not logistics and administrative teachers. According to Krejcie & Morgan (1970), when the total number of subjects was 210, the sample size 136 was reasonable. In the formal testing stage, a total of 151 questionnaires were collected. After removing invalid questionnaires with errors or omissions, 136 valid questionnaires remained, and the effective return rate reached 90.07%.

This study selected the self-rating scale of college teachers' professional development compiled by Wang (2018). Based on the research theory of past scholars, combined with the current characteristics of college teachers' professional development, the questionnaire evaluated the current teachers' professional development from five aspects. Specifically, it included five dimensions:

ideological and morality, knowledge and learning, teaching ability, research ability, and social service ability, with 22 questions.

This study selected the college teachers' career happiness scale revised by Zu (2022). Based on past scholars' research theories and college teachers' professional characteristics, the questionnaire described the current teachers' career happiness from seven aspects. It was divided into seven dimensions: work emotion, salary and treatment, working environment, profession itself, work effectiveness, interpersonal relationship, and physical and mental health, with a total of 58 questions.

Results

Demographic Analysis of the Respondents

This study investigated the full-time teachers of Hunan Sports Vocational College in China. After a formal investigation, 136 valid questionnaires were collected. Among the gender variables, there were 75 males, accounting for 55.1% of the total sample size, and 61 females, accounting for 44.9% of the total sample size. The number of male teachers participating in the survey was slightly higher than that of female teachers, consistent with the gender ratio of teachers at Hunan Sports Vocational College. Among the age variables, 47 people aged under 30 years old, accounting for 34.6% of the total sample, 38 people aged 31-40 years old, accounting for 27.9% of the total sample, 29 people aged 41-50 years old, accounting for 21.3% of the total sample, and 22 people aged 51 years old and above, accounting for 16.2% of the total sample. Among the education qualification demographic backgrounds, there were 36 bachelor's degrees, accounting for 26.5% of the total sample number, 36 master's degrees, accounting for 26.5% of the total sample number, and 29 doctoral's degrees, accounting for 21.3% of the total sample number. The number of teachers participating in the survey had a master's degree or above, which indicated that the overall education qualification of college teachers was gradually improving. Among the marital status variables, 84 were married, accounting for 61.8% of the total sample, and 52 were unmarried, accounting for 38.2%. The number of married teachers participating in the survey was more than that of unmarried teachers.

Descriptive Statistical Analysis

(1) Current professional development of teachers at Hunan Sports Vocational College in China

According to the statistical results in Table 1, overall teachers' professional development was 4.13, which met a high standard. The ideological and morality means in each dimension were the highest (M=4.49), followed by knowledge and learning (M=4.38), teaching ability (M=4.23), and research ability (M=3.83). The dimension with the lowest was social service ability (M=3.83). Overall, the professional development level of teachers at Hunan Sports Vocational College in China was good.

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics of Teacher's Professional Development

Dimension	Mean	SD
Ideology and morality	4.49	0.48
Knowledge and learning	4.38	0.51
Teaching ability	4.23	0.49
Research ability	3.83	0.75
Social service ability	3.73	0.77
Overall Teacher's professional development	4.13	0.47

(2) The Current career happiness of Teachers at Hunan Sports Vocational College in China

According to the statistical results in Table 2, the overall teachers' career happiness was 3.68, which met the high standard. The professions themselves were the highest among all dimensions (M=4.44), followed by interpersonal relationship (M=4.04), working environment (M=3.76), work emotion (M=3.73), salary and treatment (M=3.44), and work effectiveness (M=3.24). The dimension with the lowest mean was physical and mental health (M=3.13). Overall, the level of career happiness among teachers at Hunan Sports Vocational College in China was relatively high.

Table 2: Descriptive Statistics of Teacher's Career Happiness

Dimension	Mean	SD
Work emotion	3.73	0.59
Salary and treatment	3.44	0.98
Working environment	3.76	0.69
Profession itself	4.44	0.61
Work effectiveness	3.24	0.87
Interpersonal relationship	4.02	0.48
Physical and mental health	3.13	1.09
Overall happiness in the teaching profession	3.68	0.55

Analysis of Differences in Different Demographic Backgrounds

Through the questionnaire, the t-test is used to understand the different genders and marital statuses. ANOVA is used to understand the differences in the ages and education qualifications of teachers' professional development and career happiness.

There were significant differences in teachers' professional development in Hunan Sports Vocational College of China in terms of gender, age and education qualification.

There were significant differences in the career happiness of teachers at Hunan Sports Vocational College in China in terms of age and education qualification.

Correlation Analysis

Through Pearson correlation analysis of questionnaires, this study explored the correlation between professional development and career happiness of teachers at Hunan Sports Vocational College of China.

According to the statistical results in Table 3, the correlation coefficient between teachers' professional development and career happiness was 0.769, and $p < 0.01$ reaches the significance standard. That was, there was a significant positive correlation between the two variables.

Table 3: Correlation Analysis between Teacher's Professional Development and Career Happiness

	Correlation	Teacher's professional development
Teacher's career happiness	Correlation Coefficient	0.769**
	<i>P value</i>	0.000

Discussion

Current Situation of Professional Development and Career Happiness of Teachers at Hunan Sports Vocational College in China

The overall level of teachers' professional development was good, which showed that the teachers of Hunan Sports Vocational College in China had reached a high level of professional quality and comprehensive ability. The ideology and morality, knowledge and teaching ability in each dimension were high, which showed that teachers not only had high academic levels and teaching ability but also had good personal ideological quality and professional ethics to recuperate.

The overall level of teachers' career happiness was higher than the middle standard, which showed that teachers at Hunan Sports Vocational College of China could experience positive experiences such as satisfaction, pride and a sense of accomplishment in their teaching profession. The scores of the profession itself and interpersonal relationships in all dimensions were high, which might be related to the professional nature and characteristics of college teachers. College teachers were a group with a high cultural heritage and professional quality in the public consciousness, so college teachers were one of the occupations that could be generally respected and recognized by society.

Analysis of Differences in Professional Development and Career Happiness among Teachers of Hunan Sports Vocational College in China with Different Demographic Backgrounds

Through the analysis of gender differences, it could be seen that there were significant gender differences in teachers' professional development in Hunan Sports Vocational College of China. The overall level of male teachers' professional development was higher than that of female teachers, and this difference mainly came from the dimensions of teaching ability and scientific research ability. Although there was no significant gender difference in overall career happiness among teachers, male teachers had significantly higher career happiness in terms of working environment and interpersonal relationships than female teachers. The reason might be related to the different social divisions of labor and the career development needs of male and female teachers. Influenced by traditional social concepts, females were usually expected to be higher by society and families, so male teachers often had a more robust demand for professional development, and the improvement of teaching ability and

scientific research ability was the best way to reflect their professional value.

Through the analysis of age difference, it could be seen that there was a significant age difference between teachers' professional development and career happiness in Hunan Sports Vocational College of China, and teachers aged 51 years old and above had higher professional development levels and career happiness. The reasons might be that, on the one hand, professional development was a dynamic development process of teachers' professional growth, and it was a process in which teachers constantly improve their professional ability and comprehensive quality under the impetus of the lifelong learning concept. With the improvement of teachers' age, their teaching experience was gradually enriched, their professional abilities were improved after practice, and the overall level of professional development was naturally improved.

Through the analysis of education qualification differences, it could be seen that there were significant education qualification differences between teachers' professional development and career happiness at Hunan Sports Vocational College of China, and teachers with doctoral's degrees had higher professional development levels and career happiness. Similarly, Zhong (2018) and Mouza et al. also reached similar conclusions (2022). The reasons might be as follows: First of all, teachers who had obtained doctor's degrees had rich learning experiences, their learning of academic knowledge and training of professional skills were more systematic, and they had accumulated more scientific research experiences and methods, which were very beneficial to the promotion of their professional development.

Correlation Analysis between Professional Development and Career Happiness of Teachers at Hunan Sports Vocational College in China

Through correlation analysis, we could see that there was a significant positive correlation between teachers' professional development and career happiness. That was, the better teachers' professional development, the higher their career happiness would be. This result was consistent with the conclusion of Zhu's (2019) study. It could be seen that teachers' professional development and career happiness were closely related, and they interacted and promoted each other. Firstly, the high level of professional development among teachers indicated a positive trend in both personal and professional growth. As a result, teachers were more likely to experience a sense of achievement and satisfaction in their daily work, such as teaching and research.

Moreover, teachers' professional development was a continuous and dynamic process, which could also enable teachers to obtain better and broader career development space in the future, thus promoting the promotion of career happiness. Secondly, career happiness comes from many aspects related to work, including personal cognition, the development and growth of ability, the establishment of good interpersonal relationships, organizational support and the realization of self-worth. Therefore, when teachers experience greater happiness in their careers, they usually get spiritual satisfaction and

motivation, which provides an inexhaustible internal driving force for teachers' professional development.

Finally, Erozkhan et al. (2016), it was pointed out that the accumulation of self-efficacy in the profession of teachers has a positive promoting effect on their career happiness. Then, professional development was a dynamic process throughout teachers' careers. Its development trend was good, not only conducive to the promotion of teachers' self-efficacy but also conducive to the acquisition of their career happiness.

Conclusions

Conclusion 1: The professional development of teachers at Hunan Sports Vocational College in China was good, and the level of teachers' career happiness was high.

Conclusion 2: Under different demographic backgrounds, there were significant differences in the professional development and career happiness of teachers at Hunan Sports Vocational College of China.

There were significant differences in teachers' professional development in Hunan Sports Vocational College of China in terms of gender, age and education qualification. Male teachers had a higher level of professional development than female teachers. Teachers aged 51 years old and above had the highest level of professional development, while teachers aged 41-50 years old had significantly higher levels of professional development than those aged 31-40 years old. Teachers with a doctoral degree had the highest level of professional development.

There were significant differences in the career happiness of teachers at Hunan Sports Vocational College in China in terms of age and education qualification, and the professional development level of male teachers was higher than that of female teachers. The career happiness of teachers aged 51 years old and above was significantly higher than that of teachers aged 40 and below. The career happiness of teachers with doctoral degrees was significantly higher than that of teachers with master's degrees.

Conclusion 3: There was a significant positive correlation between the professional development of teachers at Hunan Sports Vocational College in China and their career happiness. The better the professional development of teachers, the higher of career happiness.

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