

Professional Development Pathways for High School Chinese Language Teachers from the Perspective of Core Competencies

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Abstract: Under the curriculum reform guided by core competencies, the professional development of high school Chinese language teachers must transcend traditional teaching frameworks and construct a three-dimensional competency system encompassing "cultural depth—linguistic breadth—emotional height." This system is grounded in cultural heritage, deepening the construction and application of language and script; centered on textual interpretation, enhancing aesthetic appreciation and creative abilities; and bound by emotional resonance, fulfilling the educational goal of fostering virtue through education. Drawing on teaching practices, this paper explores specific pathways and implementation strategies for teacher professional development from three dimensions: cultural depth, linguistic essence, and emotional resonance.

Keywords: core competencies; high school; Chinese language teachers; professional development

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As educational reform enters a deep-water zone, core competencies have become a pivotal guiding principle for teaching, placing higher demands on teachers' professional capabilities. Core competencies refer to the systematic reconstruction of modern education aimed at enabling students to achieve self-realization and meet the needs of contemporary development. They encompass the core knowledge and abilities that individuals should possess, as well as core values ^[1]. Chinese, as a humanities discipline and the mother tongue, requires teachers to "shift perspectives, emphasize humanistic education, and focus on students' holistic development" ^[2]. As a vital carrier of cultural heritage and intellectual exchange, Chinese language teaching demands not only solid linguistic skills but also the demonstration of cultural depth, linguistic breadth, and emotional height. However, some high school Chinese teachers still exhibit deficiencies in professional development, falling short of the requirements for cultivating core competencies. Against this backdrop, an in-depth exploration of professional development pathways for high school Chinese language teachers from the perspective of core competencies holds significant practical importance for improving teaching quality and achieving the mission of fostering virtue through education.

1. Cultural Depth: Cultivating Cultural Understanding Through Linguistic Roots

Cultural depth involves understanding and grasping language within the long river of culture. By exploring a single wave up and down, one can find its source and main current.. As Yeh Chia-ying noted, fixed images that have precipitated over time within a culture become "cultural codes" of that national culture. Those nurtured by such a culture can easily grasp the cultural connotations of these codes ^[3]. These "codes" carry not only surface meanings but also profound cultural implications.

Specific principles include:

1.1 Character Recognition Principles

Chen Yinke stated, "To interpret a single character is to compose a cultural history" ^[4], and "to study books, one needs to first know characters" ^[5]. Here, character recognition goes beyond mere literacy; it entails understanding meanings—both literal and extended—and the developmental patterns from literal to extended meanings.

To know characters, one needs to recognize their forms: In *The Biography of Su Wu*, the phrase "the emperor shot a wild goose in Shanglin Forest and found a silk letter tied to its foot" describes the "wild goose ruse" to welcome Su Wu back to Han. However, many versions inaccurately write "Su Wu and others were in a certain marsh," which seems illogical. Consulting *The Great Chinese Dictionary*, the clerical script for "wild" (荒) closely resembles "certain" (某). Contextual inference suggests "certain marsh" is a corruption of "wild marsh," referring

specifically to Lake Baikal.

1.2 Canonical Principle

Pre-Qin works are the source of Chinese culture, particularly the classics, which form its core. Seemingly ordinary terms carry profound connotations in the hands of culturally literate writers, necessitating a return to canonical texts to uncover their original meanings.

In Su Shi's *Ode to the Red Cliff*, in the lines of "It makes the hidden dragons in the deep gorges dance, and moves the widowed woman on the lonely boat to tears", the phrase widowed woman(嫠妇), which literally means a widow, holds far deeper significance.

The Great Chinese Dictionary explains, “嫠不恤纬 (lí bù xù wěi) "A widow does not worry about having too little weft yarn, but fears that the nation's downfall will bring disaster to herself" metaphorically expressing concern for the country over personal loss. Thus, "widow" has become a "cultural code" in Chinese culture, bearing special meanings. Based on this, Cheng Xiang argues that Su Shi uses this allusion to convey two layers of meaning: first, his exile to Huangzhou renders him as pitiable as a widow (or "abandoned woman"); second, despite his plight, he remains concerned for the monarch and the nation.

With this cultural background, "dancing dragons" and "weeping widows" no longer merely denote aquatic creatures and widows but symbolize Su Shi himself. The guest's plaintive flute music stirs Su Shi's emotions, reflecting both the pain of exile and the integrity of "worrying for the monarch while distant from court."

1.3 Era-specific Principle

Interpreting works requires considering the cultural, value, interpersonal, and aesthetic contexts of the author's era, not judging by modern standards. This aligns with the concept of Mencius' "understanding the author by studying his times". Rich engagement with historical materials is both a gateway to Chinese teaching and an expression of reverence for culture.

In *Zhu Zhiwu Persuades the Duke of Qin to Withdraw*, Zhu Zhiwu convinces Duke Mu of Qin by citing four points: unfavorable terrain, Zheng's survival benefiting Qin, the Duke of Jin's untrustworthiness, and Jin's greed. The Duke of Qin, pleased, not only withdraws but also forms an alliance with Zheng—a remarkable diplomatic feat. “A single person's persuasion outweighs a precious bronze tripod; a three - inch tongue is mightier than a million - strong army.” It seems that diplomatic rhetoric is the decisive factor in international relations, and Zhu Zhiwu's image shines brightly, overshadowing hegemony like Duke Mu of Qin and Duke Wen of Jin, making them seem mediocre—easily swayed by a few words, as if alliances could collapse at will. But is this truly the case? Examining interpersonal dynamics of the era and closely reading reveals the dukes' cunning. The text states, "The Duke left Qi Zi, Pang Sun, and Yang Sun to garrison Zheng before withdrawing." This move served dual purposes: resisting Jin (whose rise threatened Qin) and laying groundwork for future annexation of Zheng. The subsequent events confirm this: Qi Zi later informed Qin of controlling Zheng's northern gate, enabling a sneak attack. Though Duke Mu's eventual campaign failed due to unforeseen circumstances, his strategic foresight—conditional withdrawal to await opportunity (given the aging dukes of Jin and Zheng)—remains undeniable.

2.Linguistic Breadth: Refining Interpretive Skills Through Textual Nuances

When Chinese was established as an independent subject, Ye Shengtao famously asserted, "Chinese belongs to language," a view echoed by Lü Shuxiang and Zhang Zhigong [6]. Without "language construction and application"—the soil in which all "competencies" take root—the flowers of literature and culture cannot bloom[7].

Thus, the core of Chinese teaching lies in the construction and application of language. To broaden linguistic breadth, teachers must refine interpretive skills through textual nuances, encompassing not only word and sentence comprehension but also "paragraph sense" and "text sense." In textual analysis, teachers should delve into "writing techniques," exploring why authors choose specific words, sentences, and structures, and tracing their logical and

emotional trajectories. As Ye Shengtao noted, thorough reading instruction clarifies words, sentences, the entire text, and the author's logic and emotions, thereby expanding linguistic breadth in teaching and enhancing professional interpretive skills.

Let's look at a teaching case of *Qinyuanchun · Changsha*. In the theme - elevating session, there are the following two activities: (1) Not only did Mao Zedong believe that young people are the backbone of national development, but Liang Qichao also held this view before him. Read Liang Qichao's *The Young China* and see what kind of responsibilities young people should shoulder.

While lively and ideologically lofty, are these uniquely "Chinese" activities? Likely not—history, politics, or even science teachers could design them. The issue is not their quality but their lack of linguistic essence.

A linguistically rich redesign might include:

Identifying "leading words" that structure content in the poem.

Analyzing the connotations of key verbs in the first stanza.

Debating whether "melancholy" (悵) in "melancholy vastness" truly means sorrow.

Evaluating if deleting one of two scenes depicting "youthful classmates" weakens the poem.

Kant believed that the sublime has two characteristics: one is the greatness in number, with a large quantity and volume; the second is the great power, with the object having a magnificent momentum, but the subject can defeat the object. Combine the content of the article to analyze the specific connotations of the aesthetic meaning of "the sublime" contained in the article.

Linguistic breadth in teaching hinges on text-based student comprehension, achieved through relentless questioning. The common angles of "asking questions" are as follows::

Lexical Understanding: Interpreting words in context, distinguishing literal, deep, and implied meanings.

Structural Analysis: Clarifying hierarchical relationships and textual organization.

Content Comprehension: Summarizing key elements by genre.

Technique Exploration: Examining expression methods and their arrangements.

Intertextual Connections: Linking auxiliary materials (e.g., other texts, theories, real-life examples) to textbook for critical appraisal.

Broadening linguistic breadth entails understanding language and its implications.

2.1 Understanding Language

Literal Meaning: Precise translation and interpretation, avoiding generalizations. Gardner noted, "The core of linguistic intelligence is a sensitivity to the meaning of words." [8]. Descartes advised, "We ought to give the whole of our attention to the most insignificant and most easily mastered facts, and remain a long time in contemplation of them until we are accustomed to behold the truth clearly and distinctly." [9].

Second, understanding language means understanding linguistic forms. The "negative - affirmative" reciprocal linguistic form in Liu Zhenyun's *A Word Is Worth Ten Thousand Words*, the six "one"s at the beginning of Shen Congwen's *Border Town*, from the four - character *Book of Songs* to Sao-style poetry, to five - character and seven - character poetry, from ancient-style poetry to new-style poetry, and linguistic forms such as concise language vs. elaborate language, and the lineation in poetry, all deserve careful appreciation.

2.2 Understanding Implications

Plato's "Allegory of the Cave" analogizes language as shadows (perceptible world) and implications as statues (essential world). Moving from form to content signifies a deeper understanding of language. Thus, understanding a sentence means mastering a language, and mastering a language means mastering a skill [10].

Key to understanding implications is grasping imagery. Chinese literary tradition values implicit expression and the art of leaving the unsaid. It requires extracting meaning from imagery. Goethe observed, "Content is visible to all;

meaning only to the discerning; form remains a secret to most." Wang Bi's "Images convey meaning" and "Nothing expresses meaning better than images" ^[11] underscore imagery's role.

Imagery typically divides into objects, characters, and scenery, though these often blend in scenes. In the analysis of an image's implied meaning, scholars commonly classify it into two distinct dimensions: comparative symbolism and atmospheric rendering.

3. Emotional Height: Elevating Educational Ideals Through Humanistic Illumination

Core competencies like "aesthetic appreciation and creation" and "emotional attitudes and values" require teachers to transcend moral preaching, entering characters' inner worlds with "empathetic understanding" to cultivate students' critical thinking and humanistic spirit.

3.1 Immersion and Stepping outside

For poets, when confronting the universe and life, they must immerse themselves within and also step outside. Immersing within allows them to depict it; stepping outside allows them to observe it ^[12]. "Immersion" follows textual logic; "stepping outside" applies life and reading experiences to fill gaps and probe into the character's psychological state.

Why does Xianglin's wife react so drastically to Fourth Aunt's "Just leave it, Xianglin's wife"? To answer this question well—and further, to truly feel abhorrence toward feudal ethics and sympathy for Xianglin's Wife—one needs to both immerse within and step outside the text.

Fourth Aunt, though minimally described, delivers these seven words like a judge's verdict: despite Xianglin's repentance (donating a threshold), her "sin" remains unforgivable. This "sentence" strikes Xianglin like lightning, leaving her hands as if scorched by "branding punishment"—hence her drastic transformation. Here, the true murderer of Xianglin is revealed: China's inherent moral judgments, which morally lynch others under the guise of "moral justice". Khalil Gibran wrote, "Your thoughts speak of 'beauty, ugliness, chastity, prostitution, cleverness, stupidity'... mine say every woman is every man's mother, sister, daughter" ^[13]. Civilized societies protect rights and freedoms. Analyzing such complexities fosters understanding over moral condemnation.

3.2 Critical Over Dogmatic

Broad reading and rich experiences foster tolerance, philosophical reflection, and warmth, whereas narrow exposure breeds absolutism and emotional numbness. Dietrich Bonhoeffer observed, "*And so it would seem that stupidity is perhaps less a psychological than a sociological problem. It is a particular form of the impact of historical circumstances on human beings, a psychological concomitant of certain external conditions. The fact that the stupid person is often stubborn must not blind us to the fact that he is not independent. In conversation with him, one virtually feels that one is dealing not at all with him as a person, but with slogans, catchwords, and the like that have taken possession of him.*" ^[14].

For instance, some view the Pipa woman in *Song of the Pipa* as "oppressed yet unenlightened," because she fails to recognize that the past life of catering to others' pleasures, living in a glamorous and dissipated world, and indulging in a life of drunkenness and dreaminess was a painful experience of being destroyed. On the contrary, she even takes a show-off attitude. She only laments the fleeting of her beauty and the passing of prosperity, without awakening from her own misfortunes.

3.3 Holistic Over Fragmented

In the excerpted *Thunderstorm*, Zhou Puyuan seems central. He appears nostalgic yet cruel toward Shiping, tyrannical toward Fanyi, and desperate to maintain family order. Students often simplistically conclude "evil begets evil," relishing the family's collapse.

Yet, the full play focuses not on Zhou but Fanyi and Zhou Chong.

Fanyi, to reclaim love, thwarts Sifeng and Zhou Ping's relationship by leveraging four figures: Shiping, Lu

Dahai, Zhou Chong, and Zhou Puyuan. Each attempt backfires catastrophically, culminating in Sifeng and Zhou Chong's electrocution, Zhou Ping's suicide, and Fanyi's madness.

Wang Guowei believed that there are three types of tragedies in life: The first type of tragedy is constructed by extremely evil people using all their capabilities. The second type of tragedy arises from blind fate.

The third type of tragedy is inevitable due to the positions and relationships of the characters. It does not necessarily involve venomous nature or unexpected misfortunes; rather, ordinary people are forced into such situations by ordinary circumstances. They clearly know the harm, yet they impose it on each other and suffer from it mutually, each contributing to it but none taking responsibility. Zhou's tragedy is the second type: one of fate, cruel in nature. Cao Yu wrote, "What Thunderstorm reveals is neither cause and effect nor retribution. It is rather the cruelty I perceive in the world."^[15] Fanyi's is type 3: relational inevitability. "Humans, smugly assuming control, are often playthings of emotions, reason, chance, or environment".

To truly achieve emotional cultivation and purification in Chinese language teaching, the emotional engagement of both teachers and students is indispensable. Students should feel troubled by their own conclusions and dissatisfied with their own choices. As Kohlberg put it: place them in dilemmas, make their souls tremble, so that every choice becomes a struggle, a risk, and a participation of the spiritual life. Only then can Chinese language emotional education have warmth and vitality, and such emotional resonance will carry the essence of humanity..

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