

On the Trends of Construction of Teacher Education Quality Assurance System in China in an Open Context

LIU, Yi-chun

(Northeast Normal University)

1. Preamble

If an isolated and closed teacher education system is one most adaptive to a planned economy, then in the context of a market economy a teacher education system should be accordingly flexible and open. Based on this notion, the Chinese government has been promoting a reform on the teacher education system from closed to open since the turn of the century. An open and flexible teacher education system entails a quality assurance system as a supplement. Especially under the background of massification of higher education, the construction of a quality assurance system appears more important and urging. In this case, the Outline of the National Medium-and Long-Term Program for Education Reform and Development (2010-2020) (ONXD) demands that ‘an open and flexible teacher education system, with normal universities as its mainstay, and comprehensive universities as its participants, should be constructed to strengthen teacher education’ and ‘that the teacher education reform be deepened, preparation models be innovated, practice teaching and internship be increased, and the education of professional ethics and teaching competences be strengthened to upgrade the quality of teacher education’. So it is evident, that in the process of promoting an open and flexible teacher education system, the establishment of a wholesome quality assurance system will be the tenor of development and reform of teacher education in China years from now on.

To this end, this paper will outline the reforms and explorations the Chinese government has made in recent years, in terms of assuring the quality of teacher education, to make clear the tendency of the reform and exploration. Due to the space constrains, only the explorations since 2007 will be discussed in this paper. To provide a clear view of the holistic trend of teacher education quality assurance exploration, and also the nuts and bolts of it, this paper attempts to give a general review of the policies at a national level firstly, then to examine the case of Northeast Normal University (NENU).

2. National Policies

2.1 Implementing the Free-Education-for-Teacher-Education-Students Policy in Order

to Attract Excellent Students to Teacher Education Program

The source of candidates of teacher education program is one of the decisive factors in the quality of teacher education. It is necessary to enroll candidates of potentials and aspiring for teaching.

Long since the establishment of P. R. China in 1949, teacher education students had been enjoying a preferential policy by the government. It is not until the implement of cost-sharing policy in higher education, the free education for teacher education students policy came to an end. In the fifth meeting of the 10th National People's Congress held in March of 2007, Premier Wen Jiabao declared, in his report, that free-education-for-teacher-education-students policy would be implemented in the six normal universities affiliated with the Ministry of Education (MoE). The purpose of the policy is to further create a social climate of respecting teachers and education in order to elevate education, the vocation, to a status of the most respected, to prepare a large number of outstanding teachers, and to advocate education by professional educators and encourage excellent youth to devote themselves into the cause of education. The free-education-for-teacher-education-students policy began to be implemented in Beijing Normal University, East China Normal University, Northeast Normal University, Central China Normal University, Shanxi Normal University and Southwestern University in the autumn semester of 2007, with the purpose of accumulating experiences, setting up institutions, and establishing a foundation for prepare a large number of school teachers and professional educators through the pilot experiments in six national normal universities.

It is safe to say that implementing the free-education-for-teacher-education-students policy is one of the strategic moves toward attracting excellent students to teacher education program, and encouraging talents to choose teaching as their life-long career. Since 2007, the six national normal universities have recruited candidates of the free teacher education programs tantamount to 55000. The recruited students all promise well, they have passed the admission examination with an average grade 40-odd higher than the par grade for entering key universities. All of the 10597 graduates of the free teacher education programs in 2011 get employed at primary and secondary schools, among them 90% teach at central or western part of China, 39% at rural schools. Moreover the piloting effect of the free-education-for-teacher-education-students policy implemented in six national normal universities has emerged. According to statistics, currently, 18 provinces have implemented the free-education-for-teacher-education-students policy in respective provincial normal universities in the form of governmental sponsorship, tuition refunding, or

governmental covering of students' loan.

2.2 Constructing the System of Teacher Education Standards in Order to Provide a Basis for Teacher education Quality Control

Standards are the basis for quality administration and control. It will be easier to monitor the quality of teacher education with a luminous standard. With the opening process of teacher education, to set up the system of teacher education standards to assure the quality of teacher education has become an important task for the reform of teacher education in China. In this case, MoE set out to work on the formation of teacher education standards in 2004, and consequently issued the Teacher Education Curriculum Standard (Tentative)(TECS) in October 2011, and Professional Standard for Kindergarten Teachers(Tentative), Professional Standard for Primary School Teachers(Tentative) and Professional Standard for Secondary School Teachers(Tentative) in February 2012.

The TECS reflects the state's basic requirements for teacher education institutions on their teacher education curriculum offering and provides a ground for teacher education program designing, teaching materials and curriculum resources development, teaching and evaluation, and the accreditation of teacher qualification. The TECS consists of five parts, which are prelude, basic ideas, curriculum objectives, layout of the curriculum, and suggestions on the implementation of the Standard. The TECS, focusing on the main theme of guiding and promoting teachers' professional development, emphasizes three fundamental ideas which are 'educating students foremost', 'practice-oriented' and 'lifelong learning'. MoE promulgated 'The Suggestions on Vigorously Promoting Teacher Education Curriculum Reform' with the TECS. The issue of TCES has provided guide and basis for Chinese teacher education curriculum reform, which will definitely add momentum to the reform.

Three above-mentioned teacher professional standards are defined as the basic professional requirements for qualified kindergarten, primary and secondary school teachers, the basic educational norms for school teachers, the fundamental principles for guiding teacher professional development, and important basis for teacher preparation, teacher certification, in-service teacher training and teacher evaluation. The framework of the teacher professional standards includes three parts which are 'basic ideas', 'basic content', and 'suggestions on implementation'. The basic ideas penetrating the three professional standards are 'teacher's morality first', 'student-centered', 'competence-focused' and 'lifelong learning'. The 'basic contents' part is composed of 'dimensions', 'domains', and 'basic requirements'. In the 'suggestions on

implementation' part, requests are made respectively for educational administrations, teacher education institutions, kindergartens and primary and secondary schools, and teachers. It can be said that the teacher professional standards have laid direct foundation for the realization of the goal of deepening teacher education reform, innovating preparation models, increasing teaching practice and internship, and strengthening the education of professional ethics and teaching competences in order to upgrade the quality of teacher education', which put forward by the ONXD.

Standards as 'criterion measuring things' and 'model and norms' in nature make them have two functions of evaluating and guiding. Likewise, the significance of the teacher professional standards and TECS to the quality assurance of teacher education lies in two aspects. On one hand, they are the basic regulations and requirements to check whether or not the activity of teacher education is up to standard, therefore they are the basis for teacher education activities. On the other, they are the guide for the development and reform of teacher education.

2.3 Improving the Teacher Certification System in Order to Regulate the Quality of Teacher Education

The teacher certification system, as an occupation access system, is an integral part as well as an institutional guarantee for teacher education in an open teacher education system. So countries with an open teacher education system are usually very strict with the implementation of teacher certification system. China has enforced the teacher certification system since 1996, but there are still a lot of problems remaining unsolved. For example, extremely low requirements on the applicants' diplomas, unregulated testing system, vulnerable accreditation mechanism, and a once-for-all teacher certificate, which not only seriously influence quality of the teaching force, but also undermine the quality of teacher education.

Due to the above problems, in order to regulate the quality of teacher preparation, improving the teacher certification system and making more strict requirements on the access to the teaching profession has become an important content of the teacher education reform in China in recent years. The 55th entry of the GNXD proposed clearly a "national standard, provincial examinations and county recruitment" system for access and management of teacher certificates, that is, the central government (MoE) is in charge of setting the teacher certification standards; the provincial educational departments are in charge of administering teacher certification examinations and accreditation in respective provinces; the county educational bureaus are in charge of the recruitment, employment and training of teachers in respective counties. Moreover,

the GNXD also commands more strict selection of teachers and setting up of a periodical renewing system of teacher certificates. In accordance with the spirit of the GNXD, MoE promulgated in 2011 ‘The Guiding Suggestions on Carrying-out the Pilot Reform on the Teacher Certification Examination Among Kindergartens and Primary and Secondary Schools’, ‘Trial Measures for Periodical Renewing of Teacher Certificates among Primary and Secondary Schools’, ‘Teacher Certification Examination Standards’, and paper examination outlines for 32 subjects and 3 interview outline for 3 subjects.

The purpose of the pilot reform on the teacher certification examination, is to establish national teacher certification examination standards, to reform examination content to strengthen professional ethics, psychological literacy, teaching competencies and professional development potentials; to reform examination forms, to strengthen examination management, improve evaluation of the examinations, to guide teacher education reform, to make more strict requirements on the access to the teaching profession, and finally combined with the public recruitment system for new entrants of the teaching profession to build a “national standard, provincial examinations and county recruitment” system for access and management of teacher certificates. The purpose of the pilot reform on the periodical renewing system of teacher certificates is to establish a periodical renewing system of teacher certificates.

In accordance with the requirements of the pilot reform on teacher certification, any applicant for teacher certificates, including teacher education students recruited since the academic year of 2011, has to attend and pass the teacher certification examination. In compliance with the arrangement of the central government for the pilot reform, in the year of 2011, Zhejiang province and Hubei province are decided to implement the pilot reform on teacher certification examination, and the two provinces have chosen a prefecture-level city respectively within their domains as the pilot area for periodical renewing system of teacher certificates. In 2011, in the provinces of Zhejiang and Hubei, there were 28909 applicants attending the paper tests, the proportion passing the exam amounted to 37.7%. 9432 applicants attended the interview with a passing rate of 82.9%. Taken together, the passing rate of Zhejiang province was 30.9%, and it was 23.9% in Hubei province.

2.4 Improving the Undergraduate Education Evaluation System to Monitoring the Quality of Teacher Preparation

Since the 1980s, China has conducted undergraduate education evaluations for several times. Among them, the undergraduate education evaluations implemented in the years from 2003 to 2008 are most impressive. These evaluations are believed to have played

important roles in raising the status of the undergraduate education within institutions and improving the teaching conditions and environment of the institutions and teaching management. After this round of evaluations, MoE began to organize some task forces to summarize the experiences and lessons of the past evaluations and explore how to design and implement a new round evaluation. According to the GNXD's spirit of improving the teaching quality assurance system and undergraduate education evaluations, MoE promulgated in 2011 'Suggestions on Undergraduate Education Evaluations of General Higher Education Institutions' (hereafter '12 Suggestions' for short), which clearly put forward a top-level design of future undergraduate evaluation system based on self-evaluation of institutions, with institution evaluation, program accreditation and evaluation, international evaluations and routine monitoring over the basic data of undergraduate education as the main contents.

From now on, the undergraduate evaluations are triaged into 2 categories, one is the so-called qualified evaluations (conformity evaluation) of the newly built and unevaluated higher education institutions, and the other is the audit evaluations of those institutions that have already passed the previous evaluation. At the beginning of 2012, MoE promulgated 'The Implementation Measures for Qualified Evaluation on the Undergraduate Education of General Higher Education Institutions' and 'The Index System for Qualified Evaluation on the Undergraduate Education of General Higher Education Institutions', which marked the commencing of the undergraduate education evaluation of newly established universities.

It needn't to say that the undergraduate education evaluations were not specifically designed for teacher education assessment, but teacher education institutions as important part of higher education institutions cannot be the exception. According to 'The State Council's Suggestions on Intensifying the Construction of the Teaching Force' (SCXF) promulgated in the August of 2012, the state will develop teacher education program accreditation standard and implement program accreditation and assessment in order to regulate teacher education program establishment and set up the evaluation system of teacher preparation quality. MoE has already commissioned NENU researchers to formulate the teacher education program accreditation standard and procedures.

2.5 Encouraging Higher Education Institutions to establish Centers for Faculty Development in Order to Improve the Teaching Competencies of Faculties in Higher Education Institutions

Teachers are the key to raising the quality of education. A high-quality teaching force of

teacher education is the requisite for the cultivation of high-quality school teachers. Due to the great expansion of higher education started at 1998 causing great shortage of teachers, a large number of new teachers have been recruited into many higher education institutions. In the year of 2011, the total number of teachers of higher education institutions amounted to 1343100. Most of them began their teaching career in higher education institutions without any prior training in education and instruction because most of them were not graduated from teacher education institutions or programs. Though normally there is induction training for the new entrants of higher education institution, most of the inductions prove to be mere formality with low effectiveness. Furthermore, they are usually not provided opportunities to participate in the activities to improve their teaching competencies when they feel not equipped with enough teaching competencies. In response to this situation, MoE has begun to pay attention to the faculty development of higher education institutions, especially faculties' instructional development in recent years.

For the implementation of 'Ministries of Education and Finance's Suggestions on Implementing Undergraduate Education Quality and Reform in Higher Education Institutions during the 12th 5 years plan', MoE decided to initiate the construction of National Demonstration Centers for Faculty Development(NDCFD) during the 12th 5 Years Plan in the year of 2012. During the implementation of 12th 5 Years Plan, MoE will give special support to the construction of 30 NDCFD in high education institutions affiliated with the Ministries of the central government. The purpose of constructing NDCFD is to encourage higher education institutions to establish faculty development center with respective features, in order to enhance the academic level and teaching competencies of teachers, especially young and middle-aged teachers and those who teach foundational courses in higher education institutions, and meanwhile to improve the mechanism for faculty development, to promote the institutionalization of faculty training, teaching consultation, teaching reform and quality assessment.

Currently, universally admitted qualities include general knowledge, subject matter knowledge and pedagogical knowledge. Teachers with such kind of knowledge cannot be prepared only by faculties of one specialty in higher education institutions. In a broad sense, teacher educators are numerous. In a higher education institutions engaged in teacher education, nearly every teacher has the potential to dabble into the domain of teacher education. In this sense, for higher education institutions engaged in teacher education, faculty development amounts to teacher educators' development.

3. Reforms at Institutional Level: the case of Northeast Normal University

In a closed teacher education system, teacher education can easily get guaranteed because it is a whole-institution work in separate teacher education institutions. While in an open teacher education system, new systems and measures for teacher education quality assurance are needed because teacher education is only partial work of the institutions. In recent years, aiming at preparing outstanding teachers, Northeast Normal University (NENU) has been pushing forward the reforms and innovations in teacher education and the establishment of an internal teacher education quality assurance system.

3.1 Comprehensive Revision of Undergraduate Educational Program and Promotion of the Reform of Preparation Model

The educational program as implementation program for realizing the educational objectives, is the fundamental basis for organizing educational activities and guaranteeing the quality of education and teaching. On the basis of revision of the educational programs in 2004, NENU has made a complete revision of the undergraduate educational programs from 2008 to 2011. The revised version is the result of consultation between the university department of academic affairs and schools as well as evaluations inside and outside the school. ①What was prioritized in the two revisions can be summarized as the following two aspects:

3.1.1 Highlighting Autonomy and Consolidating Foundations

The revisions were made in accordance with the concept of “respect-oriented education” and the basic principle of guiding and promoting students to conduct self-directed learning. Through the revisions, a curriculum structure with the characteristics of being modularized, diversified, netted with directions was established; an academic credits management mode with course selection as the core was implemented; an auxiliary service and support system for teaching was established and optimized. These measures have provided more room and autonomy for students to select their majors, courses, teachers and learning process in a self-directed manner. In addition, NENU has also conducted exploration and experimentation in teaching models and methods aiming at enhancing students self-directed learning abilities, which mainly include the explorations and practices in model or method of lecture–discussion teaching, cooperative learning, the open-ended and interactive teaching with the aid of internet, inquiring teaching, project-based teaching, tutorial system for undergraduates, etc.

To lay a solid foundation for students’ self-directed learning, and provide more space for students’ self-directed learning, the revisions of the educational programs were

performed in line with the ideas of ‘broad caliber, profound foundation, proficient major knowledge and competitive abilities’. According to the basic idea of the revised program, general education and professional education is combined in a way of refining major courses and meanwhile consolidating the foundational courses so that professional education can be provided after a solid foundation has already be laid for students’ future and lifelong learning development. The marginal space made available by refining the major courses is used for the consolidation of students’ foundation. In this way, the proportion of general knowledge courses goes up to as much as one third to overall curricular design, in terms of academic credits. Consolidation of foundation is also reflected in setting the so-called platform courses crossing related specialty or disciplines.

3.1.2 Reinforcing Practice and Highlighting Reflection

In order to strengthen the cultivation of teacher education students’ practical competencies in teaching, NENU has established a practice-conscious curriculum system characterized by ‘school observation, simulated teaching, on-site internship, reflection on practice’.

Normally, school observations are arranged purposefully in the key primary and secondary schools in Changchun City to make students visually accessible to the management and teaching of prestigious schools and reputable teachers. To improve the effectiveness of school observations, pre and after-observation instructions have been strengthened accordingly.

Simulated teaching is done mainly in NENU’s micro-teaching classrooms. To ensure the effectiveness of the simulated teaching, all-along instruction for teacher education students is highlighted so that they can develop basic abilities in instructional design, practice and reflection before leaving for field internship in primary and secondary schools.

The on-site internships, adopting the model of ‘internship schools concentrated at county town, mixed formation of student teacher group, tour supervision form supervisors and multi-evaluation of internship ’, are mainly organized in 100 plus primary and secondary schools in 23 county towns of NENU Teacher Education Innovation Experimental Zone, which is located in the three provinces of northeast China. The purpose of arranging the on-site internship in schools at county towns instead of city schools and rural schools lies in, is to offer student teachers enough chances to practice teaching (each student teacher can give at least 25 classes) on the one hand, and to ensure them get more and better mentoring from experienced

supervisors and cooperating teachers on the other hand. In order for internship to be more effective, NENU send experienced supervisors (who will stay with student teachers all along during the internship) to schools to provide mentoring cooperatively with experienced cooperating teachers.

Practice is just a necessary condition for forming practical competencies for prospective teachers; practice with reflection is the fundamental guarantee for the forming practical competencies. In view of this, NENU strived to make students' reflection go throughout the process of internship in order to make an organic combination of practice with reflection. The supervisors and cooperative teachers often organized students to reflect collectively on their teaching experiences and ask them to write reflection journals after their teaching. The guided reflection of this kind has brought the gradual formation of student teachers' active reflective consciousness and abilities, and great enhancement of their practical abilities.

3.1.3 Establishing the Teacher Education Innovation Experimental Zone (TEIEZ) to Explore a New Mechanism for Teacher Preparation based on University- Local Governments-Schools(U-G-S) Partnership

As early as in 1988, NENU started to establish the so-called Reform Experiment and Service Zone for Basic Education in Baishan city of Jilin province to explore the teacher education model based on the partnership between the university and local governments, and between the university and schools, which is known as the 'A Road of Changbaishan Mountain'. After entering the new century, NENU initiatively put forward and implemented the "U-G-S" teacher education model. The "U-G-S" model refers to the three-party collaboration of normal universities, local governments and schools conducted pre-service and in-service teacher education in line with the principle of striving for the same goal, shouldering responsibilities together, sharing common interests and optimizing resources in such aspects as pre-service training, orientation training and in-service training. In December of 2007, NENU signed partnership agreements with the Educational Departments of three provinces (Liaoning Province, Jilin Province and Heilongjiang Province) in Northeast China on joint establishing of TEIEZ in 23 counties and cities. According to the agreements, more than 100 schools have been selected as experimental bases. The purposes of establishing TEIEZ include three aspects: Firstly, to ensure the quality of teacher preparation by virtue of high-quality implementation of internship programs; secondly, to promote more integration of educational research with the practices of basic education; and thirdly through cooperating closely with the TEIEZ to improve the university's service for basic

education and promote the development of basic education in the TEIEZ. To put it simply, The focal purpose of setting up TEIZ and implementing UGS model is to explore the route for future development of normal universities, aiming at making the three main functions of normal universities, i.e. education (teacher preparation), research(educational research) and service (in-service teacher training) organically combined and mutually improved.

After five plus years of exploration, noticeable achievements have been made in all aspects. In that of teacher education, the local governments and schools in the TEIEZ have identified teacher preparation as their obligations and responsibilities, and thus given great supports to the university's internship programs. The local governments in the TEIEZ have earmarked a lot of funds to improve the accommodation and catering conditions, and the schools in the TEIEZ have made hospitable reception plans, selecting their best teachers to mentor student teachers all along in process of their internship in such aspects as teaching practice, class management and activity organizing. In the meantime, the experienced supervisors from NENU work with cooperating teachers to mentor student teachers. In the aspect of educational research, an increasing number of university teachers have gone further to the frontline of basic education, getting to know the realities of basic education and searching into basic education through cooperating with school teachers in the TEIEZ, which has made their educational research more empirical, research methodology more scientifically rigid, and correspondingly the atmosphere and level of educational research have been remarkably upgraded. In the aspect of providing service for basic education, NENU has organized various trainings for the teachers from the TEIEZ. Meanwhile, NENU has also carried out trainings for the teacher trainers (principals and teaching and research staff of local teacher training schools) so that they can get the benefits of trainings expanded on a larger scale to more primary and secondary school teachers. The in-service trainings of this kind have exerted a positive influence on the development of basic education in the TEIEZ.

The TEIEZ founded by NENU have been highly praised, and received wide attention. In a comment made by LIU Yandong, Politburo Member of the CPC Central Committee and State Councilor, NENU's initiative of setting up the TEIEZ was highly praised, which was considered a model worth being emulated by other teacher education institutions on the strength of its innovative success in both solving the problems with in-service teacher training and exploring internship bases for teacher education student. A leader from the Teacher Education Department of MoE has said that the valuable experiences of NENU's TEIEZ could be boiled down into four: Firstly,

the concept of collaboration; secondly, inventive mode; thirdly, win-win cooperation; and fourthly commitment never wanes. NENU's "U-G-S" model has set a paradigm for teacher education institutions, department of educations in different provinces, local governments, and primary and secondary schools to carry out reforms and explorations in teacher education. In 'The State Council's Suggestions on Intensifying the Construction of the Teaching Force' issued in 2012, it has been clearly pointed out that for the improvement of the quality of teacher preparation, the model of teacher preparation should be innovated and a new mechanism for teacher education based on the partnership between universities, local governments and schools (kindergartens, vocational schools) should be established.

3.1.4 Adhering to the Idea of People Foremost to Strengthen the Construction of the Teaching Force for Teacher Education

To strengthen the construction of the teaching force for teacher education and to promote the professional development of teacher educators are the essential condition and the fundamental guarantee for improvement of teacher preparation quality. The measures that have been adopted hereby by NENU are as follows:

Firstly, the development measures for teacher educators in a broad sense, namely, all the university teachers. The faculty development has long been taken by NENU as the foundation for the development of the university. Teachers' collaborative development and common growth are prioritized by NENU. And great importance has been attached to the improvement of the faculties' education and teaching competencies. According to different characteristics shown in different stages of teachers' development, NENE has put forward different requirements for different type of teachers, and adopted different measures. The middle aged and senior teachers are required not only to undertake the cultivation of graduate students, develop their own academic teams and improve the academic level of their teams, but also to teach foundational courses for undergraduate students, construct teaching teams, and assume the responsibility of undergraduate course development. The young teachers are required to put unremitting efforts into the improvement of their academic levels and teaching competencies. Usually, due to the fact that young teachers are lack of student development awareness and curriculum awareness, NENU has on the one hand arranged experienced teachers to share their experience with the younger ones, help and guide them to grow, and on the other hand compiled the Teaching Manual for Teachers of NENU to instruct them in how to teach in the university.

Secondly, the development measures for teacher educators in a narrow sense, especially

the development measures for teachers specialized in subject education. Teacher educators specialized in subject education are specially needed in teacher education. With importance attached to Teacher educators specialized in subject education, NENU is striving to build up a teaching force specialized in subject education with sufficient members and a favorable structure, and the members are expected to be familiar with basic education. To ensure the success in the construction of such a teaching force, NENU has adopted a standard quota system for staffing and personnel, and given the teacher educators of subject education special policy and financial supports. The university encourages teacher educators to enter the TEIEZ to supervisor student teachers and to carry educational researches together with school teachers in the TEIEZ meanwhile, in order for the research questions to come from basic education and research outcomes serve basic education. Some teachers have long maintained their temporary posts and carried out school-based teacher training to help improve the primary and secondary school teachers' abilities in teaching and researching on their teaching.

3.1.5 Carrying out Undergraduate Program Assessment to Promote the Construction of Teacher Education Program

The basic mission of higher education institutions is to cultivate talents. The cultivation of talents needs to be organized and implemented through different specialty or programs offered by higher education institutions. Therefore, to conduct a thorough, systematic and in-depth assessment on the competitiveness of the educational programs offered by higher education institutions so as to strengthen the construction of the specialties is of great significance to the improvement of teaching quality and performance in higher education institutions. In addition, the assessment of the program offered by higher education institutions is an important direction in enhancing undergraduate education after the undergraduate education evaluation from 2003 to 2008, which has been put forward by MoE.

After being rated 'excellent' in the undergraduate education evaluation in 2005, NENU started taking the assessment of specialties or programs as an important part in the construction of an internal quality assurance system of undergraduate education. Based on drawing on experiences from extensive resources and in-depth discussion, NENU made the Assessment programs on Undergraduate Programs (hereinafter referred to as APUP). According to the APUP, 56 undergraduate programs including teacher education programs have been assessed one after another. The assessment on each program was conducted by three experts from other universities and two from NENU.

The experts assessed all NENU's programs strictly and seriously in the forms of listening to self-evaluation report of each undergraduate program under assessment, observing class activities, holding a forum with teachers and students, administer testing of students' skills, checking examination papers and graduation thesis, and conducting fieldwork inspections. In addition to making positive comments on the achievements made in the development and construction of the assessed programs, the experts offered their constructive ideas and suggestions to help solve the existing problems they had pointed out very clearly after their assessment on the programs.

Not only has the assessment offered a clear picture about the basic situations of and the problems and deficiencies existing in the teacher education programs, it has also made clear the orientations of all teacher education programs. All that has been achieved in this regard has laid a solid foundation for the future development of teacher education.

4. Conclusion

In a sense, the goal of establishing an open, flexible teacher education system in which teacher education institutions are the main body and comprehensive universities are involved put forward in the ONXD has been fulfilled. The problem, however, is that a trend showing the following two characteristics has appeared in the opening process of teacher education: on the one hand teacher education has been gradually marginalized within some traditional teacher education institutions in the process of becoming comprehensive, and on the other hand traditionally high-level comprehensive universities have failed in participating in teacher education in the opening process. The result of this kind has triggered great concerns of the society about the quality of teacher education. Therefore, the establishment of a quality assurance system of teacher education is an important part of the construction of an open and flexible teacher education system.

The opening process of teacher education in China is still relatively short, and the construction of a quality assurance system of teacher education is still far from optimization. Due to the fact that the construction of a quality assurance system of teacher education is a long, sophisticated project, unswerving efforts are then needed from all parties, which requires a joint effort of all parties related with teacher education to make active explorations proceeding from the current situation of Chinese teacher education, and in addition, to learn from others' experiences and lessons in the process of constructing a quality assurance system of teacher education in an opening context.