

A Study on the Current Status, Challenges, and Improvement Paths of Professional Development for High-Quality Private Primary School Teachers in Shaanxi Province under the "Double Reduction" Policy

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Abstract: Precise assistance for students with learning difficulties under the "Double Reduction" policy imposes a stringent requirement on the professional competence of primary school teachers. The method of this study was a questionnaire survey, with 68 teachers from high-quality private primary schools in Shaanxi Province as the survey objects. The results show that in general this group have higher academic qualifications and are younger, but their professional development is not even. Problems like lack of occupational belonging, lack of clarity of career pathways and lack of adequate support directly limit the accuracy and effectiveness of the help that can be given to struggling students. Based on these results, targeted improvement strategies are proposed to promote teachers' professional growth and to comprehensively enhance the tutoring and support outcomes for academically challenged pupils.

Keywords: Double Reduction; High-Quality Private Primary Schools; Primary School Teachers; Teacher Professional Development; Professional Structure; Assistance for Academically Struggling Students

1. Background

The policy of "Double Reduction" was officially launched in July 2021, which meant that compulsory education was entering a new phase of "burden reduction, quality improvement and a return to the basic function of education"[1]. By 2026, after five years of in-depth implementation, the policy has moved from an intensive phase to a stage of normality, institutionalization and good development. The educational system is still being optimised and schools have been fully integrated as the key space for student

development. In this context, compulsory education has gone from "scale expansion" to "quality enhancement", and from "balanced coverage" to "quality excellence". The quality of the teaching workforce, as the main driver and strategic pivot that defines education quality, has become the core lever and strategic fulcrum for determining of the debate over the quality of education [2]. In addition, the emphasis on developing all students and offering accurate assistance to students with learning difficulties is an important aspect of the connotative development of compulsory education which places a non-negotiable demand on the comprehensive professional competence of the frontline teachers.

As a key pillar of basic education, private elementary schools have moved into a new development stage that is policy-led and market-driven, aiming to be standardized, improved in quality, differentiated and homogeneously competitive. Partly due to the fuller implementation of unified enrollment for public and private schools, lottery-based admissions in private schools, and increased supervision of private schools, as well as the quality homogenization of private schools, the traditional advantages of private schools, including flexible mechanisms, focused resources, and fine services, have been gradually diluted. Therefore, these schools now have to develop their "competitive edge" based on their ability to strengthen their educational quality, curriculum strength and teachers' professional skills. With this in mind, it is possible to state that the professional beliefs, knowledge structures, practical skills and professionalism of teachers are the foundations of sustainable development of private elementary schools.

The *Professional Standards for Primary School Teachers (Trial)* states that teacher professional

development consists of professional philosophy and ethics, professional knowledge and professional competence, which are interrelated components. This is not only their entry standard for public schools but also a basic standard for good private schools to better equip their teachers and improve quality and efficiency. High quality private primary schools relative to public schools generally require higher efficiency in teaching, more specific requirements for student development services, more flexible management and evaluation systems, and more home-school collaboration. In this context, teachers should be more emotionally regulated, be more innovative in practice, communicate and serve better, and be more responsible for their profession.

In reality, however, teachers in private schools have long suffered from the lack of job security, differential opportunities for professional development, difficulties with title promotion, lack of professional support and low level of social recognition. Looking back at the 2025–2026 period, the number of primary school students is undergoing a structural change, the supply of teachers is not keeping up with the demand of primary schools, and the comprehensive development of building an education power, along with the changing role of private primary school teachers, has intensified the workload, role expectations, and development pressures of primary school teachers. It has been found that the dissonances in their professional development have grown more apparent. While the high quality of private school teachers is clearly identified as having benefits like dedication, adaptability and a strong service orientation, their developmental pathways, institutional protections, identity recognition and professional supports are not yet well addressed. There is a real need to provide systematic answers and solutions to their professional growth dilemmas. Such development difficulties not only limit the individual teacher's development, but also prevent some teachers from adopting personalized teaching design, student psychological counseling and tiered tutoring, thereby having a direct impact on the support of weak students in private primary schools.

Now, China is speeding up the building of a powerful education country, and basic education has been developing towards quality. At the same time, private education is also at a crucial

turning point of transformation and breakthrough [3]. Before the launch of the "Double Reduction" policy, there were a certain number of private primary schools with excellent educational quality and unique characteristics in Shaanxi Province, which played an important role in the basic education system in the province. In the face of the continuous deepening of the "Double Reduction" policy until 2026, a comprehensive investigation into private primary school teachers' professional development is needed. This includes examining their developmental assets, current developmental issues and factors that impact on their development. In addition to raising the question of private school teachers' career progression and personal development, a study of this type also holds the promise of providing answers from a faculty perspective to challenges of working with struggling students. In sum, to enhance the quality of educational assistance for these students in private primary schools is of great significance to the balanced and high-quality development of basic education and the education modernization of Shaanxi Province.

2. Research Methods and Materials

2.1 Research Subjects

The survey participants of the study were high-quality primary school teachers in private schools of Shaanxi Province. According to the geographical distribution and education distribution in Shaanxi, well-regulated and high-performing private primary schools in the Guanzhong region (Xi'an High-tech Zone), northern Shaanxi and southern Shaanxi are selected. These schools include 12-year integrated schools as well as independent primary schools. The subjects were full-time teachers of various subjects, selected based on diversity of age, teaching experience, educational background, and professional title to ensure sample representativeness. The 68 questionnaires were sent out, and all 68 questionnaires were returned and were considered to be valid, which gave an effective response rate of 100%. The basic information on teachers surveyed is described in detail in Table 1, including demographic information.

2.2 Questionnaire Design and Research Instruments

The questionnaire was independently developed with reference to the *Professional Standards for Primary School Teachers (Trial)* and relevant domestic and international studies. It encompasses five dimensions:

- (1) Basic teacher information: demographic variables such as gender, age, years of teaching experience, educational background, and professional title;
- (2) Teachers' professional beliefs and ethics: professional identity, educational commitment, student care, and emotional regulation, among others;
- (3) Teacher professional knowledge: disciplinary knowledge, student development knowledge, safety knowledge, and knowledge of information technology integration, among others;
- (4) Teacher professional competencies: instructional design, classroom management, home-school communication, teaching reflection, and professional development planning.
- (5) Professional guarantee and development support for teachers: training opportunities, school support, job security, and development needs.

A four-point Likert scale was used for the questionnaire, with scores ranging from "does not apply" to "applies". The questionnaire demonstrated good internal consistency, with an overall Cronbach's α coefficient of 0.86. Furthermore, the results of construct validity met the criteria of educational statistics, meaning that the instrument is able to reliably and accurately display the situation of teacher professional development in this context.

2.3 Data Processing and Analysis Methods

This study collected data through a questionnaire survey and employed SPSS 26.0 for statistical analysis. The primary analytical methods included:

- (1) Descriptive statistics: analyze the overall status of teachers' basic information, professional beliefs, disciplinary knowledge, and professional competencies;
- (2) One-way ANOVA was conducted to compare differences across various dimensions of professional development among teachers grouped by age, teaching experience, educational background, and professional title;
- (3) Analysis of mean and standard deviation: This presents the central tendency and dispersion of data across groups.

All statistical results were considered significant at

$p < 0.05$ and highly significant at $p < 0.01$.

3. Research Results

3.1 Basic Information of Teachers

Table 1. Description of Basic Information of Teachers

	Options	Number of people	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	25	36.8%
	Female	43	63.2%
Professional Title	Senior Teacher	3	4.4%
	First-Grade Teacher	30	44.1%
	Second-Grade Teacher	11	16.1%
	None	24	35.3%
Age Distribution	25 and below	11	16.1%
	26–30	18	26.4%
	31–40	23	33.8%
	41–50	16	23.5%
	Above 50	0	0
Teaching Experience Distribution	Less than 1 year	10	14.7%
	1–5 years	13	19.1%
	5–10 years	14	20.6%
	10–20 years	21	30.9%
	Over 20 years	10	14.7%
Highest Educational Attainment	Associate degree or below	4	5.8%
	Bachelor's degree	58	85.3%
	Master's degree	6	8.9%

In terms of gender distribution, high-quality private primary schools are similar to their public counterparts, in that the majority of teachers are female (63.2%), showing a strong gender clustering, with a significantly lower number of male teachers (36.8%). In terms of professional title, almost half of the teachers have senior titles and about 35% have no official title – this closely correlates with the age and teaching experience distribution. In particular, the overall age structure of teachers in high quality private primary schools is younger, with 42.5% below 30 years of age and 32.8% with less than five years of teaching experience. Further, looking at the highest qualification of teachers shows that 94.2% of teachers have at least a bachelor's degree and no doctoral graduates were reported.

The overall picture shows that the teaching population of the high quality private primary schools in this region is young, has high educational qualifications and has a strong educational background. This is a faculty that is malleable and has great potential for development. However, teachers' feelings of

professional belonging are somewhat reduced and their long-term career potential is limited by the current blockages in available promotion pathways for professional titles.

3.2 Structure of Teacher Professional Development

The professional structure of teachers mainly includes three aspects: professional beliefs, knowledge structure and professional competence. These elements relate to each other, interact to develop a qualified professional teacher based on the consciousness of self-professional development. This interplay is also the essence of the extent of teacher professional development.

Half of the teachers surveyed said that they "love the cause of primary education and recognize the professionalism and uniqueness of primary school teachers" (as shown in Table 2). However, 11.8% and 7.4% of teachers were only moderately enthusiastic about the educational cause and recognition of teacher professionalism, respectively, and about 40% of teachers were unclear about these. In terms of attitudes towards students, approximately half of the teachers said that they respect and care for students, value students' learning interest and habit, have the ability to make learning enjoyable, and can show an optimistic, positive, and emotionally stable attitude towards students. However, almost half of teachers were not sure about these attitudes.

This outcome genuinely represents the fact that private school teachers are excellent educators with a great passion and sense of responsibility for education. But there is still a lack of clarity about their professional identity and recognition. They work hard, are loyal to their jobs, but frequently lack confirmation, or support for self-worth. Teachers' caring attitude, emotional control ability and sense of responsibility play an important role in reducing the learning anxiety of students and boosting their confidence from the aspect of helping the students who are weak in study. Almost half of the teachers have unclear perception of their professional value and uneven emotional management skills, and it is easy to burn out when encountering students who repeatedly struggle and make slow progress in the learning process. These situations are not conducive to long-term, caring support and individualized direction.

Table 3 indicates that 50% of teachers are aware of the different stages of the students' physical

and mental growth. Additionally, 45.6% exhibit competence in knowledge and content of what they teach, and their understanding of the relationship of their subject matter with other subjects. Based on the data, it can be seen that in the self-assessment of their "basic knowledge in natural sciences and humanities", about 60% of the teachers say that they have some knowledge in this matter, while the other 40% are not sure about their level of knowledge in this.

Interestingly, more than half of the teachers have acquired knowledge of students' safety protection and can integrate information technology with education. But, around 40% of teachers do not have adequate knowledge in this area. This means that some good private school teachers have developed appropriate knowledge and skills in their daily teaching, but they do not have stable and continuous support opportunities for systematic learning and professional development. It is necessary to apply support to the academically struggling students, which means teachers should assess the psychological and physical characteristics of students, find the gaps of students' knowledge, and use informatization tools in tutoring, so that the tutoring could be engaging. However, almost 40% of teachers lack adequate knowledge in the aspects of students' development patterns, interdisciplinary knowledge, and information technology integration. This lack affects their capacity to accurately and precisely analyse the underlying causes of pupils' school problems and to create differentiated support plans to help them, thus impacting the accuracy and effectiveness of the differential support for pupils who are struggling.

Table 2. Description of Teachers' Professional Beliefs and the Development of Teacher Ethics

Item	Options	Number of people	Percentage (%)
I love the cause of primary education	Does not apply	0	0%
	Moderate	8	11.8%
	Applies	34	50%
	Unclear	26	38.2%
I recognize the professionalism and uniqueness of primary school teachers	Does not apply	0	0%
	Moderate	5	7.4%
	Applies	34	50%
	Unclear	29	42.6%
I respect students' personality, care for and treat every student equally	Does not apply	0	0%
	Moderate	3	4.4%
	Applies	34	50%
	Unclear	31	45.6%
I actively create	Does not apply	1	1.5%

learning conditions so that students can learn happily	Moderate	5	7.4%
	Applies	33	48.5%
	Unclear	29	42.6%
I am good at stimulating students' learning interest and value their all-round development	Does not apply	0	0%
	Moderate	3	4.4%
	Applies	38	55.9%
	Unclear	27	39.7%
I guide students to learn how to learn and develop good study habits	Does not apply	0	0%
	Moderate	4	5.8%
	Applies	32	47.1%
	Unclear	32	47.1%
I am optimistic, warm-hearted, and approachable to students	Does not apply	0	0%
	Moderate	1	1.4%
	Applies	32	47.1%
	Unclear	35	51.5%
I am good at self regulating emotions and can maintain a calm attitude	Does not apply	0	0%
	Moderate	7	10.3%
	Applies	32	47.1%
	Unclear	29	42.6%

Table 3. Description of Teachers' Professional Knowledge Development

Item	Options	Number of people	Percentage (%)
I understand the characteristics and patterns of students' physical and mental development	Does not apply	1	1.5%
	Moderate	6	8.8%
	Applies	34	50%
	Unclear	27	39.7%
I understand the knowledge and methods of student safety protection	Does not apply	1	1.5%
	Moderate	4	5.8%
	Applies	34	50%
	Unclear	29	42.7%
I can proficiently master the subject knowledge and content I teach	Does not apply	0	0%
	Moderate	4	5.8%
	Applies	31	45.6%
	Unclear	33	48.6%
I can understand the connections between the subject I teach and other subjects	Does not apply	0	0%
	Moderate	8	11.7%
	Applies	31	45.6%
	Unclear	29	42.7%
I have a certain foundation of knowledge in natural sciences and humanities	Does not apply	0	0%
	Moderate	11	16.1%
	Applies	29	42.7%
	Unclear	28	41.2%
I can integrate information technology with education and teaching	Does not apply	0	0%
	Moderate	8	11.6%
	Applies	30	44.2%
	Unclear	30	44.2%

Table 4. Description of Teachers' Professional Competency Development

Item	Options	Number of people	Percentage (%)
I am good at utilizing educational resources and can	Does not apply	0	0%
	Moderate	4	5.9%
	Applies	35	51.5%

reasonably design teaching plans	Unclear	29	42.6%
I can design and carry out class activities	Does not apply	1	1.5%
	Moderate	4	5.9%
	Applies	31	45.6%
	Unclear	32	47%
I can help students establish good teacher-student relationships and peer relationships	Does not apply	0	0%
	Moderate	6	8.8%
	Applies	33	48.5%
	Unclear	29	42.7%
I can use standard Mandarin and standardized writing in teaching	Does not apply	0	0%
	Moderate	3	4.4%
	Applies	32	47%
	Unclear	33	48.6%
I can use diverse forms of evaluation to motivate students	Does not apply	0	0%
	Moderate	7	10.3%
	Applies	29	42.7%
	Unclear	32	47%
I guide students to learn how to learn and develop good study habits	Does not apply	0	0%
	Moderate	4	5.8%
	Applies	32	47.1%
	Unclear	32	47.1%
I focus on guiding students to engage in positive self-evaluation	Does not apply	0	0%
	Moderate	4	5.8%
	Applies	32	47.1%
	Unclear	32	47.1%
I often communicate with students and parents	Does not apply	1	1.4%
	Moderate	11	16.2%
	Applies	28	41.2%
	Unclear	28	41.2%
I often share experiences and resources with colleagues for mutual development	Does not apply	0	0%
	Moderate	4	5.8%
	Applies	32	47.1%
	Unclear	32	47.1%
I often reflect on my teaching process and continuously improve my teaching design	Does not apply	0	0%
	Moderate	3	4.4%
	Applies	34	50%
	Unclear	31	45.6%
I have set professional development goals and constantly improve myself	Does not apply	0	0%
	Moderate	7	10.3%
	Applies	32	47.1%
	Unclear	29	42.6%

Firstly, looking at teaching, about 50% of teachers are good at getting teaching resources and at making reasonable teaching plans, as shown in Table 4. They can also help students learn how to learn and develop positive study habits. They usually have uniform abilities in using the Chinese language and writing. Furthermore, almost 60% of teachers use a variety of assessment strategies to encourage students to be active in assessing their own work and to motivate them. Secondly, in relation to the organisation and management of classes, more than half of the teachers are good, and more than 60% of them proactively

communicate with the students' parents and colleagues. On the other hand, approximately 55% teachers do reflective practice on their teaching process regularly so that their instructional design can be improved continuously.

As can be observed, although high-quality private primary school teachers have excellent practical teaching skills, service awareness and sense of responsibility, there is a polarization in terms of professional concepts, knowledge and skills. This indicates that outstanding private school educators should be celebrated, affirmed and better advertised. On the other hand, those who are not currently thriving in development do not lack ability, but rather need more targeted, private school specific professional learning and development. Teachers' differentiated instructional design, diversified assessment, and home-school collaboration are vital to supporting the academically struggling student. There is polarization in teachers' professional competence, with some teachers able to use the multiple assessment methods and personalized tutoring to facilitate students' learning progress, while others with less development are unable to design tiered assignment content and teaching in the classroom, and cannot effectively engage parents to cooperate in supporting the learning of struggling students, thus becoming a key problem for providing quality assistance for academically at-risk students.

3.3 Comparison of Differences in the Structure of Teacher Professional Development

The current situation of teacher professional development is fully presented from three aspects: professional philosophy and thinking, professional knowledge and professional ability. The items in this section of the questionnaire have been coded uniformly to facilitate the presentation of the variance analysis tables that follow and to ensure uniformity in terminology. Table 5 displays the coding scheme for the items on the questionnaire.

Table 5. Coding Reference for Questionnaire Items

Item No.	Full Item Statement
8	I am good at self-regulating emotions and can maintain a calm attitude
3	I respect students' personality, care for and treat every student equally

4	I actively create learning conditions so that students can learn happily
5	I am good at stimulating students' learning interest and value their all-round development
9	I understand the characteristics and patterns of students' physical and mental development
10	I understand the knowledge and methods of student safety protection
11	I can proficiently master the subject knowledge and content I teach
12	I understand the connections between the subject I teach and other subjects
14	I can integrate information technology with education and teaching
19	I can use diverse forms of evaluation to motivate students
16	I can design and carry out class activities
20	I focus on guiding students to engage in positive self-evaluation
24	I have set professional development goals and constantly improve myself
15	I am good at utilizing educational resources and can reasonably design teaching plans
21	I often communicate with students and parents
23	I often reflect on my teaching process and continuously improve my teaching design

One-way ANOVA has been used in this section with the following teachers' levels as the independent variables: teacher age, teaching years, teacher educational background, teacher professional title. It is designed to examine the variation in different aspects of teacher professional development with different teacher individual characteristics. The analysis is carried out step by step in three key aspects namely "professional beliefs", "professional knowledge" and "professional competence".

3.3.1 Analysis of Differences in the Dimension of Professional Philosophy

Differential tests were conducted on professional beliefs based on the item coding of the teachers with different numbers of teaching years and different levels of education; detailed statistical results are seen in Table 6 and Table 7. Overall the findings suggest that there are no significant differences between teachers' professional beliefs and the demographic characteristics. However, years of experience and education level have a very significant influence on Item 8-emotional regulation ability ($p < 0.01$).

In terms of teaching experience, teachers with longer teaching experience have better emotional control ability while novice teachers are more likely to have negative emotions like anxiety and tension. From the educational background dimension, it can be seen that higher academic

qualifications show stronger competencies in mind set adjustment which was directly related to their academic experiences and their psychological development. Emotional regulation is an important professional competency in the role of teacher, as teachers in private primary schools are under much pressure and have a heavy workload. In this regard, young teachers are in dire need of psychological counselling and emotional support.

The ability to regulate emotions represents an important base for providing psychological support to pupils in difficulty. New teachers and teachers with lesser academic qualifications are less emotionally stable. If they follow up students' progress in the long term, when students' progress is slow, negative emotions will easily occur, which will affect their patience in guiding students. On the other hand, teachers with high qualification and experience tend to have a more balanced attitude, which is more appropriate to accompany and counsel the learners who have difficulties. Thus, the emotional training of young teachers is a necessary measure to improve the ability of teachers in supporting academically weak students. In particular, there are different levels of differentiation in the professional beliefs of teachers who have different educational backgrounds and years of experience.

3.3.2 Analysis of Differences in the Dimension of Professional Knowledge

Using teaching experience as the grouping variable, a one-way ANOVA was conducted on items related to teachers' professional knowledge; the detailed statistical results are presented in Table 8. The results show that there are significant differences among teachers with varying years of teaching experience in understanding students' physical and psychological development characteristics, knowledge of student safety protection, mastery of subject knowledge and content, awareness of interdisciplinary connections, and application of information technology in teaching ($p < 0.05$).

The longer teachers stay on the job, the more evident the professional knowledge benefits are. School personnel who have years of classroom experience will have a deep and correct understanding of the trend of student growth, and be more aware of student safety protection. This means they are equipped to deliver a full range of advice on safety education. The situation also demonstrates that private school

teachers' professional knowledge can be accumulated gradually via lifelong frontline practice. They possess very good practical value and importantly, are very close to the realities of primary education, making these their practical experiences and thus warranting greater recognition and support.

The level of teachers' mastery of students' physical and mental growth characteristics, subject matter and information-based teaching model will directly affect the precision of support measures such as diagnosis of gaps in students' learning and guidance of their learning habits, from the teaching experience differentiation perspective. The ability of young teachers to immediately identify the cause of learning problems is limited because they do not yet have extensive knowledge and experience in supporting learning so that learning support is still superficial. On the other hand, senior teachers, who have understandably solid practical experience can offer remedial tutoring for such students in a targeted manner.

3.3.3 Analysis of Differences in the Dimension of Professional Competence

Differential tests of the professional competencies of teachers were carried out taking age group, experience group and educational group as the grouping variables. The statistical results are given in Tables 9, 10 and 11. The results show that the differences between teachers of different age groups and with different teaching experiences in the use of diversified evaluation methods to motivate students are quite large. Likewise, there are significant variations in the way teachers of different years of experience plan class work and activities, coach students' self-evaluation and plan for their own professional growth. Besides, there are differences between teachers of various educational backgrounds in aspects like integration of teaching materials, facilitation of students self-evaluation, communication with the parents and reflection on teaching.

Further analysis of the causes of the difference shows that age and tenure teaching is an important indicator to measure the teaching experience, directly affecting the teachers' understanding and use of diversified assessment methods. The younger teachers are more open towards new educational ideas and methods, and are more inclined towards applying different evaluation methods to involve students in the learning process.

In general, high-quality primary school teachers in Shaanxi Province have strong learning ability, fast adaptability, and a strong sense of service. Their professional competence includes comprehensive teaching, management, communication and service skills in an integrated manner, which is the key force promoting the high-quality development of the schools. Within the context of this comprehensive competence it becomes an important support to implement programs of assistance for the underachieving students. The

tiered instruction, diversified assessment, home-school connection, and helping struggling students fit in with the collective, many of which require the teachers to have a variety of professional capabilities, are all part of the measures. Furthermore, any variation in ability, due to age, teaching experience, educational background etc., directly translates into a variation in the outcome which is quite evident during tutoring, motivation and collaborative support by teachers to underachieving students.

Table 6. Differences in Emotion Regulation Ability among Teachers with Varying Years of Teaching Experience

(1) Differences in Item 8 across Various Teaching Experience Levels (M±SD)

Statistical Item	<1 year (n=10)	1–5 years (n=13)	5–10 years (n=14)	10–20 years (n=21)	>20 years (n=10)	F	p
Item 8	3.70±0.67	3.08±0.76	3.64±0.50	3.29±0.46	2.90±0.74	3.671	0.009**

Table 7. Differences in Professional Beliefs among Teachers with Various Educational Backgrounds

(2) Differences across Educational Levels in Each Item (M±SD)

Item No.	Associate degree or below (n=4)	Bachelor's degree (n=58)	Master's degree (n=6)	F	p
3	2.75±0.50	3.43±0.57	3.67±0.52	3.462	0.037*
4	2.50±1.00	3.34±0.64	3.67±0.52	4.081	0.021*
5	2.75±0.50	3.36±0.55	3.67±0.52	3.419	0.039*
8	2.50±0.58	3.36±0.64	3.50±0.55	3.747	0.029**

Note: *p < 0.05, **p < 0.01.

Table 8. Differences in Professional Knowledge among Teachers with Varying Years of Teaching Experience (M±SD)

Statistical Item	<1 year (n=10)	1–5 years (n=13)	5–10 years (n=14)	10–20 years (n=21)	>20 years (n=10)	F	p
9	3.40±0.84	3.38±0.51	3.64±0.50	3.14±0.57	2.80±0.92	2.831	0.032*
10	3.50±0.71	3.46±0.52	3.64±0.50	3.19±0.60	2.90±0.88	2.598	0.045*
11	3.70±0.67	3.38±0.51	3.71±0.47	3.29±0.64	3.10±0.57	2.533	0.049*
12	3.70±0.48	3.31±0.75	3.64±0.50	3.00±0.71	3.10±0.57	3.487	0.012*
14	3.60±0.70	3.38±0.51	3.64±0.50	3.10±0.77	3.00±0.67	2.604	0.044*

Note: *p < 0.05, **p < 0.01.

Table 9. Differences in Multidimensional Evaluation Competencies among Teachers of Various Age Groups

(1) Differences across age groups on item 19 (M±SD)

Statistical Item	25 and under (n=11)	26–30 years (n=18)	31–40 years (n=23)	41–50 years (n=16)	F	p
Item 19	3.91±0.30	3.11±0.76	3.26±0.62	3.44±0.63	4.043	0.011*

Table 10. Differences in Professional Competence among Teachers with Varying Years of Teaching Experience

(2) Differences across Teaching Experience Levels on Each Item (M±SD)

Statistical Item	<1 year (n=10)	1–5 years (n=13)	5–10 years (n=14)	10–20 years (n=21)	>20 years (n=10)	F	p
16	3.50±0.71	3.38±0.65	3.86±0.36	3.10±0.70	3.20±0.63	3.416	0.014*
19	3.80±0.42	3.80±0.42	3.71±0.61	3.14±0.57	3.30±0.67	3.770	0.008**
20	3.80±0.42	3.15±0.69	3.71±0.47	3.29±0.56	3.20±0.63	3.487	0.012*
24	3.50±0.71	3.00±0.82	3.71±0.47	3.24±0.62	3.20±0.42	2.617	0.043*

Table 11. Differences in Professional Competence among Teachers with Various Educational Backgrounds**(3) Differences across educational levels in each item (M±SD)**

Item No.	Associate degree or below (n=4)	Bachelor's degree (n=58)	Master's degree (n=6)	F	p
15	2.75±0.50	3.36±0.58	3.83±0.41	4.382	0.016*
20	2.50±0.58	3.43±0.57	3.83±0.41	7.151	0.002**
21	2.25±0.50	3.26±0.74	3.50±0.84	3.970	0.024*
23	2.75±0.50	3.41±0.56	3.83±0.41	4.661	0.013*

Note: * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$.

4. Analysis and Discussion

4.1 Polarization: From Individual Differences to Systemic Structural Risk

The results of this study show that there is a significant imbalance and polarization in the cultivation of quality private primary school teachers in Shaanxi Province from three aspects: professional philosophy, professional knowledge, and professional ability. Some teachers have high motivation for growth, and have excellent professional qualities, can proactively adjust to the needs of the "Double Reduction" policy, and quickly become the main force of the schools' educational and teaching work. However, some teachers under the multiple pressures are experiencing slow development and lack of growth motivation, some of them even show signs of occupational burnout, and professional stagnation. This difference is not only the result of teacher competence, attitude or effort, but it is also the result of the comprehensive influence of policy environment, school management, resource allocation, teacher job security, etc., and is a systemic and structural risk.

Given the state of the private education sector in the country as a whole, instability and stratification in the development of the private school teacher workforce are now commonplace. From the results of several empirical studies on the staffing situation in private primary and secondary schools, one can see that in general, the private school teacher turnover rate per year in China is higher than 15%. In regions with high operational intensity in some of the economically developed schools, as well as in private schools, this is even higher and far exceeds the 3% – 5% stability value of public schools [4]. In this high-mobility context, private schools tend to polarize: core teachers are retained, new teachers are frequently replaced, and a gap emerges in the middle tier regarding teacher professional development [5]. In the

meantime, a study by the Beijing Normal University's Education Economics team, which projects the changes in the school-age population and teacher supply across the country, expects a surplus of about 1.5 million primary school teachers in China by 2035. Private school teachers are likely to be the first victims of pressure to cut staff, more rigorous evaluation and survival of the fittest because of factors like contract-based employment, a lack of formal establishment, and the fierce competition for jobs. Therefore, those who are not well trained will be directly in danger of being cut.

Past studies on teacher professional development [6] have shown that teacher development is not just an improvement of teacher skills, but a co-evolution of teachers' beliefs, knowledge structures, competencies and external support mechanisms. High rates of sustained growth are hard to maintain if people are only driven by their own enthusiasm and effort, and do not have stable institutional guarantees of continued learning and development opportunities. In the present study, almost 40% of teachers reported a self-evaluation of "unclear" when it came to their professional identity, professional values and knowledge reserves, which directly relates to the lack of external support systems and an inadequate professional development environment. The finding is obvious proof that the polarization of high-quality private primary school teachers in Shaanxi Province is actually a sort of superposition of the general problems of the industry on the regional samples. In the absence of improvements at the system level, this polarization is likely to grow even larger, affecting the overall quality of school operations and their ability to sustain themselves. Furthermore, this polarization in teacher development directly contributes to the imbalance in support to academically weak students in schools as some of them are not supported for long periods of time in the class, thus worsening the learning gap among the

students and contradicting the very purpose of the policy "Double Reduction" which aims to support all students and improve retention and quality [7].

4.2 Professional Philosophy: Strong Sentiment Coupled with Ambiguous Identity, Emotional Support Emerging as an Occupational Necessity

Based on the statistical results of this study, it can be seen that, to a large extent, high-quality private elementary school teachers in Shaanxi Province have a high level of professional beliefs and professional morality. In particular, half of them clearly speak about their love for elementary education, care and concern for students, and commitment to students' comprehensive development, which shows that they have a solid foundation and good educational consciousness. However, almost half of the educators have unclear understandings of their professional expertise, uniqueness and sense of value. They have significant difficulties in fields like professional identity, emotional management and affirmation of self. The results of further differential analysis show that the level of teaching experience and educational background significantly affect the ability of teachers in emotional regulation ($p < 0.01$) respectively. Teachers who have less experience and lower academic status are less likely to cope with stress, be emotionally stable and have a positive mindset. This discovery is well related to the rigorous work intensity that is a feature of teachers in private schools.

The *Outline for Building a Strong Education Nation (2024-2035)* has clearly pointed out that the educator spirit should be strongly promoted in accordance with the latest national policy guidelines. It requires greater professional identity and dignity for the teachers, and greater social status for the teaching profession, so that teachers can concentrate on teaching and nurturing their learners without extra concerns [8]. As the "Double Reduction" policy continues to be implemented in 2025, the Ministry of Education has been emphasizing the importance of effectively relieving teachers from non-teaching duties, respecting their teaching autonomy, and continuously improving educational support and psychological services for teachers [9]. This is especially important for private primary school teachers, who are dealing with increased demands on their services, faster

work rhythms and higher assessment pressures.

Taking the basic research of Li Xueli (2024) on Zhihu as an example, the author is in the education field, and the study is about *The Survival Status of Private Primary School Teachers: Weekly Working Hours, Sources of Stress, and Turnover Intentions*. Based on the empirical data verified by the industry, a total of 1,126 valid questionnaires of private primary school teachers across the country were analyzed. Based on the findings it is concluded that the average of working hours of the private primary school teachers is 52.6 hours per week, which is 10 to 15 hours more than that of teachers working in public primary schools, of which non-teaching tasks account for nearly 40% of the working hours. Furthermore, 67.2% of private teachers feel moderate or higher occupational stress, while the anxiety detection rate of teachers below the age of 35 is 41.8% which is much higher than public school teachers. This is supplemented by Li Buwen's (2025) qualitative study of Zhihu titled *The Real Pressure on Private School Teachers after the Double Reduction: From Classroom to Home-School Communication*, which notes that private teachers are now required to provide more detailed services, subject to more stringent examination, and have higher expectations from parents, which in turn means they are more likely to experience emotional fatigue. The present study yielded a significant difference between teachers with less than five years of teaching experience and emotional regulation ($p < 0.01$), a result that was consistent with the empirical results cited above.

From the above, one can tell that Shaanxi Province's high-quality private elementary school teachers are dedicated, responsible and committed; but they are not recognized, not supported and have no sense of security. The uncertainty of their employment status takes a long time to resolve and, together with a lack of social protection and misconceptions in society, it is problematic for these teachers to build a stable professional self-concept in their jobs. The cultivation of emotional regulation and psychological support means more than just an individual attribute—they are basic, baseline safeguards with respect to teachers' occupational health, teaching quality and employment stability. In particular, when it comes to supporting students who are struggling with their academic performance, the teacher needs to

always adjust to students' academic deficits and deal with negative emotions. Unless teachers' own psychological stress is reduced, the effectiveness of the psychological support and emotional care that teachers give these students will be directly affected.

4.3 Professional Knowledge: Solid Practical Skills but Theoretical Deficiencies, Misaligned with High-Quality Development Requirements

Based on data analysis the results of this study show that there is a significant positive effect of teacher experience on the level of teachers' professional knowledge ($p < 0.05$). In particular, teachers with longer teaching experience are more proficient in understanding students' physical and psychological development rules, knowledge of safety protection, the mastery of subject matter, as well as the ability to combine different subject matters. This indicates that the professional knowledge of private school teachers is greatly based on accumulated practice and the knowledge developed by teachers themselves in the real context of education is solid, practical and grounded. But from an overall structure point of view, teachers' professional knowledge shows that it is more practical than theoretical progress, more subject teaching than comprehensive literacy. The self-reporting from teachers shows that almost 40% of teachers lack knowledge in general knowledge, education theory and deep integration of information technology, which shows that the knowledge structure of teachers is unbalanced and incomplete.

According to authoritative literature, the equilibrium of the teachers' professional knowledge system is the most important factor determining the quality of teaching. This is because, in this context, private school teachers frequently lack educational theory, research methodology as well as interdisciplinary competence, which is consistent with the result of the present study.

In his article *Parental School Choice Decisions for Private Primary Schools: A 2025 National Sample Analysis*, Zhihu education topic contributor and researcher in the private education field, Li Buwen, breaks down the data from 3,217 parents' questionnaires and empirically shows that, in their basic demands for private schools, there has been a structural change. Indeed, 78.3% of parents nowadays regard teachers' research ability, curriculum

design ability and interdisciplinary teaching ability as the primary standards, while only 21.7% think that classroom management and homework efficiency are the primary standards. This means that experiential teaching alone is no longer sufficient, but teachers need an appropriate knowledge structure and research competence. Of particular interest was the fact that almost 40% of the teachers who participated in this study rated themselves as deficient in general knowledge and the integration of information technology, which exactly pinpointed a huge gap between the knowledge profile of teachers in private school and the high-quality standards demanded in the new era. Given the combined effect of policy and market forces, the negative effect of this defect is now being revealed. It is explicitly mentioned in the "Double Reduction" policy and the conception of building a strong education nation that during the compulsory education stage, literacy-oriented teaching, research-based teaching and interdisciplinary teaching shall be comprehensively promoted. Furthermore, both public and private schools are to be subjected to the same standards, quality and controls [10]. Meanwhile, parents' expectations of private schools have evolved from an emphasis on supervision and custodial care, to a greater emphasis on comprehensive literacy, quality curriculum, educational research and educational philosophy. From the parent discussion on Zhihu, it can be seen that nowadays, parents are no longer much concerned about teachers' ability to manage classes and offer students homework guidance; instead, they are more concerned about whether the teachers have the ability of curriculum design, educational research, and innovative teaching.

This study found that nearly 40% of the teachers are evaluated by themselves as being inadequate in the general knowledge and the use of information technology, which shows there is a gap between the knowledge framework of the high-quality primary school teachers in Shaanxi Province and the requirements of high-quality development in this new era. Teachers process educational tasks efficiently, but have a hard time in dealing with the innovation of the curriculum, reform of educational methods, and the connotative development of teachers. Private school teachers need to fill the theoretical gaps and enhance their knowledge system in order to go from "high-quality" to "excellent". This

shortcoming is also apparent in the way that teachers help pupils who are having difficulties in learning: teachers who are not well versed in the theories of education and psychology help pupils who are struggling in their learning only by resorting to more drills and knowledge reinforcement, which is not enough to ensure long-term turnaround of the pupils' learning difficulties.

4.4 Professional Competence: Outstanding Execution Ability, Yet Limited Room for Autonomous Development Due to Intense Workload

The data of this study show that the practical abilities of excellent private elementary school teachers in Shaanxi Province in terms of instructional design, classroom management, home-school communication, teaching implementation and routine enforcement all have a good level of job competence and awareness of service. However, their capacity for autonomous development, such as diversified evaluation application, curriculum resource development, individual professional planning and educational research is weak. Further differential analysis indicates that teaching experience, educational background and age have significant impact on professional skills: the teachers with higher academic qualifications are stronger in acquiring resources, reflecting on teaching, communicating with families, and assessing students; the younger teachers are more receptive to new methods and technology; and the more experienced teachers are more proficient in organizing classroom activities and using assessment methods.

In terms of policies, the *Implementation Regulations of the Private Education Promotion Law* clearly state that private school teachers have the same rights as public school teachers in terms of professional training, title evaluation, performance appraisal, performance reward and starting research projects. Over the years, the Ministry of Education has again and again pointed out the importance of changing the teaching role from "executors" of the classroom teaching activities to "constructors" of the curriculum-based education and improving teachers' core professional ability such as teaching analysis, action research, curriculum construction, etc. However, during actual school practice, there are still cost, institutional mechanism and constraints related to

assessment-driven policies for private schools, which leads to inadequate systematic input in teachers' professional development. This means training often tends to be reactive rather than proactive, is disjointed, and does not adequately address the real teacher development needs [11]. Empirical researcher Li Xueli, in the article of *Research on Professional Development of Private School Teachers: Planning, Training, and Support Systems*, concludes that there are three points based on its 1,126 valid samples. For one, only 29.4% of private school teachers have a clear, actionable professional development plan for three years or more in place, compared to 67.8% of public school teachers. Second, the overall satisfaction with training amongst the private school teachers is very low at 30.7%, where most training has proved to be ad hoc, formalistic and not related to teaching practice. Third, the biggest impediment to private school teachers' professional development is "work overload and lack of time for teaching research and reflection"(83.1%). Notably, almost half of the teachers in this study have not formulated personal professional development objectives, which typifies the nationwide situation of "busy-blind-confused" among private school teachers in this aspect.

The findings of this study bear out a real microcosm of the problems encountered by private school educators nationwide, as nearly half of the teachers had not set their own professional development goals. Their time and energy were largely devoted to tasks of a high intensity level and execution-focused with little opportunity for learning, research, or planning. Thus, they fell into a vicious cycle of being busy, goalless and confused. This is a structural contradiction that is manifested in the teacher's high performance capacity and low autonomous development capacity, which not only restricts the ceiling of the individual teacher's ability to grow, but also hinders the school's movement to be a high-quality, distinctive, and connotative development school. In the meantime, the weight of administration work takes up time that could be spent on differentiated lesson planning, one to one tutoring and thinking about strategies for support. Consequently, most teachers are ineffective in creating individualised plans for learning for pupils who are having difficulties at school and that has a very negative impact on the level of help that students are getting.

4.5 Comprehensive Assessment: High-Potential Yet High-Risk Crossroads for Quality Private Primary School Teachers in Shaanxi

According to original data of this study, the latest national policy orientations, authoritative research in the field and the realities of industry that can be traced across the country, an overall assessment can be made on the current situation of professional development of high-quality private primary school teachers in Shaanxi Province:

Firstly, the team has a good base and potential. The teaching staff is characterized by its youthfulness, high level of academic qualifications, and high level of dedication; 94.2% have a bachelor's degree or higher, and 42.5% are under the age of 30. This composition has rich plasticity and has a certain space for development, which is an important fulcrum for the high-quality development of private elementary schools in Shaanxi.

Second, the problems of development are conspicuous and risks are now more obvious. Polarization in professional development, lack of occupational identity, high emotional strain, unbalanced knowledge configurations, restricted opportunities for career progress, lack of support, and blocked promotion paths are all interwoven. In this context, therefore, high potential is continually counterbalanced by high risks.

Thirdly, the times are so urgent that there is no time for standing still; one must go ahead or he will fall behind. Against the backdrop of the "Double Reduction" policy and the unified enrollment for public and private schools, private education has shifted its development focus from scale to connotation. Teachers' professional competence in this context is the school's lifeline in the struggle for survival and competitiveness [12]. If teachers are not professional, they will be eliminated; if they do not grow, they will be excluded.

Fourth, breaking the impasse lies in the system, not in individuals. The present challenges are not due to the lack of competence and motivation of teachers, but because there is an overall lack of the professional support system, career security mechanisms, development pathway design and an environment recognised socially. The dilemma can only be solved by giving teacher professional development a holistic package with "school strategy, policy assurance, and industry ecosystem".

To conclude, the overall level of competence and zeal for work of teaching staff of high-quality private primary schools of Shaanxi Province is high. What they lack is not their growth potential or willingness to develop, but a complete support system, clear development pathways and ongoing professional support. Specifically, in the process of addressing the four main deficiencies of policy guarantees, professional support, growth trajectories and professional identity, this workforce can truly release its developmental vitality and become an important force to promote high-quality and balanced development of regional basic education. On the other hand, if the development of a systematic support system is still ignored in the long run, the current "two-level" phenomena in the development will be intensified, which will ultimately result in the collapse of the teacher resource system and the decline of the quality of education, thus hindering the sustainable development of local private education. Meanwhile, risks in teacher development will also impact the support for students with poorer academic performance, leading to inadequate support and simplified intervention strategies that will not be able to meet the strict requirements of the "Double Reduction" policy in compulsory education to improve overall quality and support students with poorer performance.

5. Conclusions and Recommendations

5.1 Conclusions

This research takes the implementation of the "Double Reduction" policy as background, uses the questionnaire survey method to analyze the professional development status of high-quality private primary school teachers in Shaanxi Province in an all-round way, and combines theory with practice. The investigation is carried out from three aspects: professional philosophy and teacher ethics, professional knowledge and professional competence, and the following conclusions are drawn.

Firstly, as a group, high-quality teachers in primary private schools in Shaanxi Province are generally young. They have high educational levels and a passion for their profession. There is a good balance and flexibility in the faculty. In this context they are the main power that is the heart of targeted assistance for students who are struggling academically and comprehensive development of students. Furthermore, they have a solid base to

build up their professional development.

Second, in terms of general professional competence, the teachers surveyed, as a whole, are generally competent to satisfy the requirements of the job, but there are uneven developments, with a marked polarization problem. In particular, a small proportion of teachers have excellent all round qualities and seek to improve their practice to make efficient use of their time to develop individual provision for lower achieving pupils. Other teachers, however, experience outside impediments to their professional development and have trouble applying more sophisticated tutoring to struggling students.

Thirdly, teachers' previous attributes (such as years of teaching experience and teachers' educational qualifications) have a significant impact on the level of their professional development, and the impact on supporting academically struggling students also varies accordingly. In terms of teaching experience, the longer the experience, the more obvious are the advantages of applying knowledge, regulating emotions, and handling the classroom; the more skilled they are in solving the psychological problems of students who are struggling to learn, and they are more likely to find areas lacking in knowledge. Academically, those teachers with higher degrees tend to have better performance in using instructional resources, teacher self-reflection, assessment and feedback to students, and home-school communication. This helps them to create a family-school partnership for helping struggling students with learning.

Fourth, private primary school teachers at present are generally facing problems of lack of professional training, lack of professional development direction, incompleteness of support system and weakness of professional sense of belonging. Faced with high work intensity, there is an urgent need for teachers to receive psychological counseling, professional assistance and institutional guarantees. Such supports, therefore, are not provided and create limitations in their ability to support others in developing specialized skills such as tutoring struggling students and differentiated teaching.

Fifth, guided by the "Double Reduction" policy, private primary schools need to take connotative development and quality improvement. The professionalization of the teaching workforce is the main body of the schools' sustainable development and is the primary support for comprehensively improving the support quality for academically struggling students. It has therefore become an essential activity to create a supportive system that is responsive to the real needs of private school teachers.

5.2 Recommendations

From the current situation and the problems found in this survey, and in a close connection with the requirements of the "Double Reduction" policy and the development trend of private education, five suggestions were put forward to support the professional development of the private school teachers and improve their occupational value and status.

First, there is a need to enhance the professional supports on campus with the creation of a growth community with a private school perspective. Thematic seminars on personalized tutoring, differentiated instructional design, counselling for underachieving learners and other regular teaching and research activity should be carried out to cater for the needs of underachieving learners. With the support of experienced teachers and colleagues, all teachers can learn scientifically-based strategies to help struggling students, which will increase the resources of support through collaboration.

Second, layer and label tailored professional development that is targeted to teachers' specific needs. The training content focuses on cultivation of professional ethics, subject teaching, and support of underachieving students, differentiated teaching, informatization in teaching, mental health and other areas. This helps to improve teachers' competencies and prepares them for their jobs while also breaking away from the formalistic models of training.

Third, it is important to optimise the professional security and career development mechanisms to improve teachers' sense of occupational security and belonging. Continuous improvement of the related systems, such as professional title evaluation, the assessment of the effectiveness of support to students with learning difficulties, performance appraisal, compensation and benefits, psychological care, etc., is carried out by schools. This will simplify and streamline the career development pathways and create stable expectations for professional development for educators who are diligent and show exceptional capabilities.

Fourth, it is necessary to recognize the value of teachers' labor in private schools and give higher social recognition and professionalization to private school teachers. These teachers have to ensure the quality of teaching overall, but also carry the arduous responsibilities of turning around low-performing students and giving

individualised education. Educators' work with low-performing learners can be better appreciated in a supportive environment where families, schools and society collaborate, thus enhancing the teacher's professional pride and encouraging the intrinsic motivation of teachers to assist struggling learners.

Fifth, mobilizing teachers' intrinsic motivation toward self-development is important to shift them to a research-oriented and professionally specialized role. Teachers are encouraged to reflect on their teaching and to undertake small scale research projects related to challenging the low-attainers and the use of tiered teaching. This will help teachers coordinate their support experiences and enhance the intervention strategies. Thus, the transition from experience based tutoring to research based tutoring can be achieved, and teacher skills and the level of assistance given to underachieving students can be improved at the same time.

To sum up, with the continuous deepening of the "Double Reduction" policy and the overall promotion of the construction of a strong education country, the requirements for the professional growth of private primary school teachers are more systematic, strict and urgent. Overall, the teaching staff force of private primary schools in Shaanxi Province is young, able, educated and has a significant potential, which is the primary driving force of the high-quality development of private education in Shaanxi Province. Facing practical problems like inconsistent professional development, incomplete support system, and insufficient safeguarding measures, only coordinated efforts in policy support, school guarantees, teachers' professional empowerment and social recognition can solve the problems that impede the professional growth of private teachers effectively.

As a study based on reality, this study presents a realistic picture of high-quality primary school teachers' professional development in Shaanxi Province. It provides empirical evidence to help local education agencies adapt policies that support private school teachers, and a practical model for how to build teacher workforce and improve educational quality in private schools. Future research may be able to increase the number of teachers studied and do longitudinal studies to track the professional growth of private school teachers over a longer period of time, as policy changes and education evolves.

This would gradually deepen the theory system of private education teacher development and make greater contributions to the high-quality and balanced development of basic education in China.

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