

An Ethic of Care Perspective: Reflecting on the Professional Development of Middle School Teachers

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Abstract:

Teachers are a group of essential talents in society, and middle school teachers are even more responsible for nurturing the growth of middle school students. In modern society, a high-level middle school teaching force plays a crucial role in the development and progress of society. However, due to various problems in teacher education and professional development, there is a big gap between the needs of the professional development of middle school teachers and the actual situation. Thus, caring for teachers and caring for teachers has become a priority and a facilitating force for teacher development. From the perspective of caring ethics, we discuss the importance of middle school teachers' professional development, analyze the role and significance of caring ethics in teachers' professional development, and put forward some strategies to promote the professional development of middle school teachers, which is crucial to cultivate more professional, caring and responsible middle school teachers. In the future, it is hoped that teachers will feel caring in education and educate and teach in a caring way.

Keywords:

Middle School Teachers, Professional Development, Ethics of Caring, Caring

1. Introduction

The ultimate goal of education is to cultivate well-rounded people, and teachers are the key to realizing this goal. In the current context of education reform, the professional development of middle school teachers is significant. Accompanied by the renewal of educational concepts and the transformation of educational models, middle school teachers need to continuously improve their educational and teaching levels to meet the needs of education in the new era, which also involves teachers' professional development, teaching ability improvement, and individual growth. However, professional development is often limited to the cultivation of subject knowledge and teaching skills, and there needs to be more reflection and guidance on teachers' ethics of care. This paper discusses the importance of the professional development of middle school teachers from the perspective of the ethic of care. It

proposes strategies to promote the professional development of middle school teachers, expecting to provide some references for the professional growth of middle school teachers.

2. Caring and Caring Ethics

2.1. Caring

Caring means concern and taking care of others, which is a good virtue for people to get along with each other. Caring is a good quality for every teacher. American educator Nell Noddings understood caring as a state of “total commitment,” a certain sense of responsibility in the spirit, constantly worried and concerned about something or someone, willing to be responsible for something or someone to protect her, concerned about its development [1]. Instead of saying that caring is a good virtue, we should say that caring is an expression of love, a kind of love. We need to learn to care, to move towards caring, to learn to love, to feel love.

2.2. Caring ethics

Caring ethics emphasizes attention and care for individuals, advocates caring and care between individuals, respects the value and dignity of individuals, and focuses on establishing good interpersonal relationships [2]. Caring ethics differs from traditional moral ethics in that it pays more attention to individuals' emotional needs and experiences and emphasizes interaction and emotional exchange with others. Caring ethics is characterized by delicacy, warmth, and humanization. It also emphasizes the concern and respect for human dignity and rights as the starting point, and the caring ethics perspective includes establishing, maintaining, and developing caring relationships. Moreover, caring ethics takes human care as the core of behavior. It takes caring for the needs and development of individual teachers as the starting point to explore the sources and meanings of the professional needs of middle school teachers, which helps to comprehensively understand the inner needs and psychological state of middle school teachers. Thus, it provides emotional support and conscious care for teachers' work and lives.

3. Analysis of the Current Situation of the Professional Development of Middle School Teachers

3.1. The reality of middle school teachers' professional development

With the development of society, there are some problems in the professional development of middle school teachers, mainly including lack of guidance and cultivation of caring ethics, insufficient attention to professional development, insufficient opportunities for relevant training, and irrational education and teaching evaluation system.

First, middle school teachers need more guidance and cultivation of caring ethics in professional development. Caring ethics is essential to teachers' professional ethics, which involves caring, respecting, and helping students. However, some middle school teachers attach importance to students' academic performance but neglect students' differences in growth and development and lack the awareness and ability to provide comprehensive care for students. Therefore, schools and education departments need to strengthen the guidance and cultivation of caring ethics for

middle school teachers so that they can pay better attention to student's physical and mental health and overall development.

Second, some schools and education departments need to pay more attention to the professional development of middle school teachers. They pay more attention to teachers' teaching performance and evaluation while neglecting their professional growth and development. This affects not only the motivation and dedication of middle school teachers but also the overall quality of the teaching force. Therefore, schools and education departments need to pay more attention to and support middle school teachers, provide more development opportunities and resources, and encourage them to continuously participate in various training and research activities to improve their professional abilities and standards.

Third, insufficient training opportunities are also an essential issue in the professional development of middle school teachers. Some schools and education departments have invested limited resources in training to meet the needs of middle school teachers. In addition, some teachers also need more awareness and motivation to take the initiative to participate in training. Due to their busy schedules and accumulated illnesses over the years, some teachers can only recuperate during their vacation time, thus dampening their motivation to participate in summer workshops. Therefore, schools and education departments need to strengthen the organization and management of training for middle school teachers, provide more diversified forms of training, set up diversified content, stimulate teachers' interest in professional learning, and enhance their willingness and ability to participate in training.

Fourth, the unreasonable evaluation system also affects the professional development of middle school teachers. Some schools and education departments overemphasize students' examination results and teaching effectiveness, neglect teachers' education and teaching methods and processes, and the evaluation system needs to be comprehensible. This will lead to some middle school teachers focusing too much on utilitarian teaching behavior and neglecting teachers' professional development and quality improvement. Therefore, schools and education departments need to establish a scientific and reasonable evaluation system that pays more attention to the professional development of teachers and the substance of education and teaching, gives teachers fuller affirmation and support, and encourages them to continue to innovate and make progress.

The emergence of these problems needs to be solved, then the joint efforts of schools and education departments to strengthen the attention and support for middle school teachers, to provide them with more training opportunities and resources, to establish a scientific and reasonable evaluation system, and to promote the overall improvement of the professional development of middle school teachers.

3.2. Findings on the current status of professional development of middle school teachers

By interviewing middle school teachers and organizing relevant information, we discovered the problems of existing teachers' professional development and understood teachers' needs and expectations for caring ethics. The findings show that most middle school teachers expect to receive more care and support, want relevant training and guidance, and also want to feel the influence of caring ethics in the educational environment. They go to work with enthusiasm, dedication, and commitment to educate and train their students. However, in their work, in addition to

completing their classroom tasks, they need to be evaluated, compete in classes, deal with parents' questions, and take care of every student. They return home very late, and their lives are all handed over to their work. The author once talked to a junior high school English teacher, and she often said, "Do not stand on the moral high ground and demand teachers. Teachers are human beings who make mistakes, and she is someone else's child, daughter, and wife. She has her profession, but she also has her own life, so can we care for teachers and not put too much pressure on us?" The author was surprised and sympathetic to hear what she said. The author also wondered if today's society is too demanding of teachers, asking them how to do things but never paying attention to themselves, their needs, and their emotions. We often talk about caring for students and taking care of them, but we always ignore the needs and feelings of teachers. Teachers are also living beings with their feelings and emotions. As mentioned by Nell Noddings, caring for others and being cared for by others are the most basic needs of a person. Both the school and society should take care of the spiritual needs of the teachers and should use caring ethics to do the teachers' spiritual homework. Then, the school, with a firm reliance on teachers, should enrich their experiences and spiritual life as observers, carers, and leaders [3].

4. The Importance of Caring Ethics for the Professional Development of Middle School Teachers

4.1. The role of caring ethics in the professional development of middle school teachers

Caring ethics are an indispensable part of education work, and they play an important role in promoting the professional development of middle school teachers.

Firstly, caring ethics can enhance middle school teachers' teaching motivation and professional satisfaction and stimulate their enthusiasm and commitment to education. Caring can help middle school teachers establish correct professional values and moral values. Teachers are the soul engineers of society; their duty is to cultivate and educate students, and their feeling of caring can make them clear about their duties and missions so that they can be more determined and focused on fulfilling their educational mission and resisting all kinds of negative influences from the outside world. Caring exists in the teacher-student relationship and serves as a bridge between teachers and students. Being recognized, treated with courtesy, cared for, and loved prompts teachers to feel a sense of well-being and accomplishment and to be better engaged in their work.

Secondly, caring ethics can promote a good relationship between middle school teachers and students and establish a teacher-student relationship of mutual trust, respect, and assistance. A good teacher-student relationship reflects the stability of the relationship between teachers and students and the results of communication between teachers and students. Mutual respect and trust between teachers and students create an atmosphere full of warmth and humanity, which is conducive to teachers' teaching and students' learning. A teacher who is cared for will treat his/her students with his/her love, will care for them and understand them, will be able to observe and discover their needs well, and will communicate with them in time.

Finally, caring ethics is essential for middle school teachers' personal growth and moral literacy development, which can enhance their emotional intelligence and moral consciousness. Caring ethics focuses on people, caring and loving people, and middle

school teachers feeling cared for will generate professional motivation and promote the personal growth and development of middle school teachers. Caring ethics requires teachers to care about their growth and development and their students. Teachers face a variety of problems and challenges in their practice. Through caring guidance, teachers can continue to reflect on their educational practices and improve their educational level and philosophy, thus growing and developing.

4.2. Mechanisms of caring ethics in the professional development of middle school teachers

Caring ethics can provide teachers with a supportive and caring experience that helps middle school teachers better cope with challenges and dilemmas and promotes their professional development. Specifically, caring ethics works through the following mechanisms:

First, it provides teachers with emotional support. Emotional care is one of the essential concepts in caring ethics. We should pay attention to the emotional needs of teachers and care about their emotional expression and development. Schools can provide emotional support and stimulate the positive development of teachers' emotions. Create a harmonious and relaxed atmosphere so teachers can feel care and love. Education is a cognitive and emotional symbiosis of the practice process; paying attention to the "love" in education embodies the essence of education [4]. Improve the attention to teachers' emotions, from understanding to care, and care for teachers' emotions.

Second, establish a good teacher-student relationship. Teachers and students have a mutual relationship; teachers teach students knowledge and the reasons to do things. Teachers and students have a kind of interdependence, equal dialogue relationship, and they need to use this to clarify the emotions; that is to say, teachers use their behavior to let students feel cared for, and students in their behavior to experience being cared for, being encouraged. Teachers teach to encourage people to become successful and guide students to grow and become successful. Teachers and students care for each other through each other, creating a harmonious atmosphere and a harmonious classroom atmosphere to establish an excellent teacher-student relationship. The fusion of teachers' and students' minds enables teachers to gain professional happiness and students to gain motivation to learn. This is where caring ethics play a role in establishing an excellent teacher-student relationship.

Third, cultivate teachers' emotional intelligence. Teachers are the subject of their own emotions, and they should have self-emotional awareness and be consciously aware of their inner emotions, emotional capacity, and emotional value [4]. From the caring ethics perspective, caring helps teachers to establish self-confidence and emotional self-confidence. A teacher surrounded by love and willing to treat all her students with kindness is slowly developing a teacher's emotional intelligence. Teachers use a certain amount of rational cognition to recognize themselves and regulate the relationship between themselves and their students. They can express their emotions subtly and deal with their students well. Emotional intelligence helps teachers deal with the relationship with students and build a better teacher-student relationship.

Fourth, it promotes teachers' personal growth and moral consciousness. Each person is a unique individual in life and needs to be paid attention to and cared for. Teachers who feel cared for will convey their emotions to their students, which is also

a growth for teachers. In the process of becoming a person, teachers constantly realize personal growth, and there is an excellent improvement in teaching and learning. The practice of the caring ethic cultivates teachers' good moral character. Teacher development under the perspective of caring ethics should also continuously cultivate teachers' awareness and behavior of inclusiveness and create an educational environment that respects and cares for every student. Teachers are promoted to transmit care to others, forming a mutual relationship, an emotional exchange, and a love communication.

5. Based on Caring Ethics, the Path of Professional Development for Middle School Teachers

5.1. Establishing a professional development mechanism oriented to caring ethics

Establishing a perfect mechanism for teachers' professional development, guiding teachers to pay attention to caring ethics, integrating caring ethics into teachers' education and training and evaluation system, and promoting teachers' professional development towards a more humane direction. The development that teachers need is the development as a living individual, the development that needs to be cared for. Schools should establish incentive mechanisms oriented to caring ethics and create humanized teacher evaluation methods. Caring ethics should be constantly implemented in teacher education and training, and some relevant lectures should be set up to stimulate teachers' sense of caring and make them feel cared for.

5.2. Developing caring ethics in middle school teachers

Caring is an emotion expressed in the heart of a human being, and it is the communication of relationships between people. Nell Noddings suggests that building caring relationships and moving toward equal dialog with each other is the meaning of caring. For Noddings, Dialogue is the mutual pursuit of understanding, empathy and appreciation. Teachers' caring literacy is directly related to whether education can be carried out effectively and whether education can be a warm and humane activity [5]. Through an encounter between people, one or both parties have specific needs [2]. Among the professional development of middle school teachers, we need to emphasize the development of caring ethics literacy so that teachers can feel caring. We can provide training on the theme of caring ethics for middle school teachers to help them understand the importance of caring ethics and learn to care for and be cared for. We can also help teachers master the basic principles and methods of caring ethics and implement caring ethics in their practical work. To enhance teachers' sense of well-being and develop their caring ethics.

5.3. Strengthening the professional identity and motivation of middle school teachers

Schools should encourage teachers to participate in professional development activities, highlighting motivational evaluation. Focus on listening, recognizing, respecting, and caring for teachers. Provide teachers with opportunities for personal growth and promotion to stimulate their professional motivation. We also develop evaluation and promotion mechanisms oriented to caring ethics to motivate teachers to focus on the overall development of students. We want teachers to feel cared for and learn to care simultaneously to enhance middle school teachers' sense of professional identity and cheerful willingness to develop professionally.

5.4. Creating a favorable educational environment and climate

Improve the management mechanism of schools and the education system, create an environment and atmosphere oriented to caring ethics, encourage emotional exchanges and mutual assistance, and enhance teachers' job satisfaction and happiness. A teacher's happiness comes from his or her profession and the students he or she teaches. Encourage care and support between teachers and teachers, interact with colleagues, and build a team of teachers who are full of warmth. Then, it should also strengthen the cooperation and consistency between the school, the family, and society to create an educational environment and atmosphere rich in care and love so that middle school teachers can discover love, feel love, and learn to love.

6. Conclusions

Caring ethics plays a significant role in the professional development of middle school teachers. Promoting the development of teachers under the perspective of caring ethics requires the joint efforts of the education sector, the government, and the community to provide teachers with support and training opportunities and improve the caring ethics in teacher development to improve the quality of teaching and student growth. In the context of the current education reform, the cultivation and guidance of caring ethics for middle school teachers should be strengthened, a caring ethics-oriented professional development mechanism should be established, the professional identity and motivation of middle school teachers should be improved, and a favorable educational environment and atmosphere should be created for teachers. Teachers are givers of caring behaviors and should be cared for accordingly. We should recognize and treat teachers with courtesy and preferential treatment, pay more attention and care to their daily life and professional growth, give them more encouragement and support, and continuously enhance their well-being. In the future, we want teachers to feel caring, learn to care, and move towards caring, to feel caring in teaching, to feel love in caring, and to lay the foundation for the future happiness of their students in the name of caring. In a society that lacks care, learning to care will give our teachers and education warmth.

Conflicts of Interest

The author declares that there is no conflict of interest regarding the publication of this article.

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