

# Construction of Master Teacher Studios: A Successful Device for Promoting Teacher Professional Development

Peiyu Gu

Nanjing Normal University of Special Education, Nanjing 210038, Jiangsu, China

*“A professional is a man who can do his job when he doesn't feel like it; an amateur is one who can't when he does feel like it.”*

*-James Agate*

IN CHINA, in-service teachers at the basic education level can pursue professional development through various channels. The two most common modalities of further education in this group are: (i) participating in teacher training programs, such as the National Teacher Training Initiative sponsored by educational authorities, or attending thematic lectures organized by the schools (Zhu, 2010); (ii) fulfilling personalized study plans, enhancing their professional competence by reading academic literature on education and taking online courses, among other autonomous approaches. While well-organized collective training programs may enable teachers to efficaciously update their knowledge, including mastery of new pedagogical theories, and can facilitate professional growth of novice teachers, group training of these programs seldom incorporates practical activities and is unable to meet individualized needs. On the other side, autonomous professional development may appear a more personalized and flexible approach; however, its outcomes are contingent on the teacher's personal competence and experience, rendering it less ideal to novice teachers, who may encounter difficulties accessing high-quality in-service education resources. To bridge the gaps between the two said modalities, Chinese education authorities and researchers have endeavored to innovate the channels for teacher professional development. In this context, the master teacher studio (MTS) emerged as one of the most prominent innovations. This paradigm combines policy and resource support from the government and the autonomy of teacher participation, capable of providing a diverse variety of in-service training activities. The past decade has seen a smooth development of MTSs as facilitators of professional growth of Chinese basic education teachers.

---

© 2025 Insights Publisher. All rights reserved.



Creative Commons Non Commercial CC BY-NC: This article is distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial 4.0 License

(<http://www.creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/>) which permits non-commercial use, reproduction and distribution of the work without further permission provided the original work is attributed by the Insights Publisher.

The MTS can be regarded as a collaborative approach to teacher professional development, integrating one-on-one mentorship and teamwork. It is led by one or several renowned, high-achieving teachers, often referred to as “master teachers,” who have received significant accolades and achieved notable accomplishments in education (Zhu & Yan, 2019); it also encourages collaboration and resource sharing in teacher members. The primary purpose of developing MTSs is to support teacher professional growth and enhance the quality of education and teaching in the region.

The construction of an MTS involves multiple stakeholders. Provincial and municipal educational authorities are responsible for providing funding for its running, schools or other educational institutions for supplying facilities like office spaces (Ren & Li, 2011), and the master teachers for recruiting its members. Once established, the MTS has the right to autonomous management, free from any interference from government organizations or sponsoring educational institutions.

The master teacher has the duty to offer ordinary teacher members professional guidance and training using their extensive experience and valuable expertise. They also regularly organize collaborative activities like teaching research and project-based studies to increase exchanges among MTS members. Within the studio, the master teacher is often referred to as its “anchor.” Nevertheless, the genuine relationship between the master teacher and the studio’s other members is that of a mentor and mentees. Aside from the former as the leader, the latter often comprise senior and novice teachers. Senior teachers are those excellent educators in their respective schools with considerable teaching experience and research capabilities, acting as the assistants to the master teacher while also providing guidance to novice teachers. Novice teachers are in the early stages of their careers, with considerable professional prospects. By participating in MTS activities, they learn advanced teaching concepts and methods to increase their professional competence. The MTS is largely a learning community, where all members share teaching resources, experiences, research findings, and insights.

The core function of the MTS is threefold: providing in-service training and education for teachers; solving practical teaching issues through educational research activities, including developing new teaching materials and pedagogical methods; and scaling its research outcomes via demonstration lessons, seminars, and other moves to elevate educational quality in the region. While MTSs have created more opportunities of professional development for basic education teachers, there are challenges in their running over the years, such as the master teachers’ becoming increasingly distanced from the teaching practice (Han & Yu, 2014) and the timing conflicts between the teachers’ roles as front-line instructors and MTS members. To address issues like these, researchers have experimented with new forms of the MTS, aiming to optimize its operation and outcomes.

*Academic Tribe-Based Master Teacher Studios in China: New Characteristics and New Mechanics* in this issue explore an innovative form of the MTS, focusing on its distinctive characteristics and workings (Jiang, 2025). Despite it being solely a theoretical discussion without providing empirical evidence, the article offers valuable insights for the MTS’s further development. It is hoped that it will inspire more research in this area.

## References

- Han, S. & Yu, W. (2014). Master teacher studios in China: A review and reflections. *Journal of Northeast Normal University (Philosophy and Social Sciences Edition)*, 2014(5), 196-200. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.16164/j.cnki.22-1062/c.2014.05.096>

- Jiang, B. (2025). Academic tribe-based master teacher studios in China: New characteristics and new mechanics. *Science Insights Education Frontiers*, 29(2): 4803-4815.  
<https://doi.org/10.15354/sief.25.re577>
- Ren, G. & Li, W. (2011). The working mechanics of master teacher studios. *Contemporary Educational Science*, 2011(14), 30-32. Available at: [https://kns.cnki.net/kcms2/article/abstract?v=NeMQ-uUh4kEH2VLMvoiiEgqmytu20xLCkxtBusx8jG2aCk\\_4DxmkoJv7uFOCDATXEX9LkGf-IqO6D-TPBjykvCuvOtBafvx7-r9YFarxhIEHhEvkTwgUTfHs7g41sz4MUtUKXz55vR0yWoGGFvrX21MlhsgTHUXhXxjZ7KvOI=&uniplatform=NZKPT&language=CHS](https://kns.cnki.net/kcms2/article/abstract?v=NeMQ-uUh4kEH2VLMvoiiEgqmytu20xLCkxtBusx8jG2aCk_4DxmkoJv7uFOCDATXEX9LkGf-IqO6D-TPBjykvCuvOtBafvx7-r9YFarxhIEHhEvkTwgUTfHs7g41sz4MUtUKXz55vR0yWoGGFvrX21MlhsgTHUXhXxjZ7KvOI=&uniplatform=NZKPT&language=CHS)
- Zhu, N. & Yan, Y. (2019). The role of the master teacher in the master teacher studio: Retracing, expansion, and transcendence. *Education Science*, 35(2), 22-27. Available at: [https://kns.cnki.net/kcms2/article/abstract?v=qEs6\\_XgQVxx\\_qUalt4zRE69oGclr05rQJZ9yldU9YbpGXSKENLG9J02KAp6BXna-igiosest8Wf3ozR8727\\_WsGa1OAP00WWRg1sOEx3ljb4-NXhYC0cczJC00EuvTrtIRT9m\\_43mq30jkrBXPd7mD1-7JC AvdLun33-KNiM56\\_GvicuLWhV5EyGstzQ=&uniplatform=NZKPT&language=CHS](https://kns.cnki.net/kcms2/article/abstract?v=qEs6_XgQVxx_qUalt4zRE69oGclr05rQJZ9yldU9YbpGXSKENLG9J02KAp6BXna-igiosest8Wf3ozR8727_WsGa1OAP00WWRg1sOEx3ljb4-NXhYC0cczJC00EuvTrtIRT9m_43mq30jkrBXPd7mD1-7JC AvdLun33-KNiM56_GvicuLWhV5EyGstzQ=&uniplatform=NZKPT&language=CHS)
- Zhu, X. (2010). The significance of the National Teacher Training Initiative. *Teacher Education Research*, 22(6), 3-8+25. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.13445/j.cnki.te.r.2010.06.003>

**Correspondence to:**

Peiyu Gu  
Nanjing Normal University of Special Education  
Nanjing 210038  
Jiangsu  
China  
E-mail: [354953165@qq.com](mailto:354953165@qq.com)

**Conflict of Interests:** None

**Doi:** 10.15354/sief.25.co493