

Postprint: Challenges and Strategies for Enhancing the Professional Competency of Inner Mongolia's Minority Language Editors in the New Media Era

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Abstract

In the new media era, transformations in media communication modalities have placed higher demands on editors as gatekeepers of media communication. Since the 18th National Congress of the Communist Party of China, Inner Mongolia's ethnic minority language publishing industry has achieved considerable development. However, the digital transformation of books, newspapers, and periodicals in ethnic minority scripts has progressed slowly. The primary reasons are that enhancing the professional competencies of ethnic minority language editors in Inner Mongolia faces significant challenges, including the difficulty of obtaining professional qualification certificates, limited opportunities for professional training participation, and inadequate disciplinary setups in higher education institutions. To adapt to the development of editorial and publishing work in the new era, relevant government departments should address these issues by establishing reasonable standards for professional qualification acquisition, innovating talent cultivation approaches, and scientifically adjusting university curriculum systems.

Full Text

Preamble

Title: The Dilemma and Countermeasures of Improving the Literacy of Mongolian Language Editors in Inner Mongolia from the Perspective of New Media

Abstract: In the new media era, changes in communication modalities have placed higher demands on editors as gatekeepers of media transmission. Since the 18th National Congress of the Communist Party of China, Inner Mongolia's Mongolian language publishing industry has achieved considerable development.

However, the digital transformation of books and newspapers in minority languages has progressed slowly. The primary reason is the difficulty in improving the literacy of Mongolian language editors in Inner Mongolia, manifested in challenges such as the difficulty of obtaining professional qualifications, limited opportunities for professional training, and imperfect disciplinary structures in higher education. To adapt to the development of editorial and publishing work in the new era, relevant government departments should address these issues by rationalizing standards for professional qualification acquisition, innovating talent cultivation methods, and scientifically adjusting university curriculum systems.

Keywords: new media; Inner Mongolia; Mongolian language editors; literacy improvement

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In the new media era, information transmission has shifted from single-media to multi-modal dissemination. This transformation has revolutionized how people acquire knowledge, placing higher demands on editors as the gatekeepers of media transmission. As one of China's ethnic minority regions, Inner Mongolia faces challenges including a small population, underdeveloped economy, relative cultural backwardness, and information isolation. The emergence of new publishing formats in the new media era has profoundly impacted traditional media and publishing industries, posing severe challenges to the survival and development of Mongolian language editors. "Mongolian language editors" (民文编辑), short for editors of minority languages, bear the responsibility of communicating the Party's theories, principles, and policies to readers in ethnic regions, publicizing the system of regional ethnic autonomy, and reporting on economic and social development achievements in these areas. They have made positive contributions to promoting economic development and social stability in minority regions.

President Xi Jinping emphasized at the Central Conference on Ethnic Affairs that "language communication is a crucial link between people. Without language communication, there can be no understanding; without understanding, there can be no identity." According to available statistics, China is a country with an exceptionally rich diversity of minority languages, with approximately 80 current languages, 61 of which are designated as major languages. These 61 languages belong to five language families, nine language groups, and 14 language branches, with a total of 40 current scripts used by various ethnic groups.

Since the 18th National Congress, Inner Mongolia's Mongolian language publishing industry has developed significantly, with Mongolian epics, historical classics, and other works being published and gaining worldwide recognition. The Mongolian language, as the lingua franca of ethnic minorities in Inner Mongolia, holds an extremely important position in the region. Throughout this inheritance process, Mongolian language editors have participated in multiple stages of information circulation, and their agency has become increasingly prominent. How these editors can adapt to the new environment, face new challenges, and seize new opportunities in the new media era has become an urgent issue requiring in-depth resolution.

1. The Dilemma of Improving Literacy Among Mongolian Language Editors in Inner Mongolia

1.1 The Difficulty of Professional Qualification Examinations

Currently, all personnel engaged in editorial and publishing work in China must pass the national junior or intermediate publishing professional qualification examination to obtain the status of assistant editor or editor. The current examination system has continuously reformed and improved, and for some candidates, systematic study of editorial and publishing theories and practices through exam preparation can indeed significantly enhance professional skills and competencies in a short time. However, for the vast number of candidates in ethnic minority regions, passing this examination is no easy task.

First is the language barrier. According to available information, current national publishing professional qualification examination materials and test papers are only available in Chinese, with no versions in other minority languages. In minority regions, many Mongolian language publishing professionals, while being experts in their own ethnic language and script with in-depth research, have limited Chinese proficiency due to geographical influences. The Chinese language thus becomes a major obstacle to their learning and examination, meaning they must first overcome the language barrier before they can pass the professional exam.

Second is the reading and writing barrier. Taking book and periodical typesetting as an example, Mongolian script still predominantly uses vertical writing (top-to-bottom, left-to-right). Due to the vertical orientation and special characteristics of Mongolian characters, editing and typesetting present significant challenges, making it difficult to utilize advanced international printing and typesetting technologies. The existing answer sheet format is also unsuitable for Mongolian writing. Consequently, Mongolian language editors face considerable challenges in adapting to textbook compilation, test design, and typesetting standards.

According to investigations, at Inner Mongolia People's Publishing House, it is common to find editors who have taken the national publishing professional

qualification examination for three or more consecutive years without obtaining certification. This situation has directly led to a substantial loss of Mongolian language editing talent.

1.2 Limited Opportunities for Professional Training

With the continuous emergence of new publishing formats and increasingly diverse information channels, Mongolian language editors face mounting challenges. In the all-media era, editors can no longer remain at the traditional level of simply polishing manuscripts; they must become composite, cross-disciplinary talents with multiple skills. The literacy of Mongolian language editors should be enhanced through scientific and rational training programs.

Ma Jian noted in “Difficulties and Breakthroughs in Interdisciplinary Talent Cultivation in Cultural Industries” that despite the rapidly growing demand for interdisciplinary talent in cultural enterprises and institutions, structural imbalances in the supply and demand of cultural industry talent have become increasingly prominent. Under these circumstances, the talent structure imbalance in Mongolian language publishing departments has become more severe, with the existing structure unable to meet the development and expansion needs of these departments. Li Qing observed in “On Approaches to Improving the Professional Literacy of Minority Language Editors” that the difficulty in improving Mongolian language editors’ literacy primarily stems from economic constraints and language barriers.

For Inner Mongolia, current continuing education and training for Mongolian language editors consist mainly of online learning and face-to-face instruction. Regarding online learning, the state requires professional and technical personnel to complete no less than 72 hours of continuing education annually. However, this nationally uniform education has limitations, as it overlooks potential language barriers among certain personnel in specific regions, causing some online learning to become superficial and formalistic. Regarding face-to-face training, there is also the issue that editors at different professional ranks desire different training content, but due to the small number of editorial and publishing personnel, implementing tiered training is difficult. Face-to-face training, while applicable to specific disciplinary fields, presents several problems: First, such training programs typically operate under purely commercial models with high costs. According to available data, each training session costs approximately 10,000 yuan per person including travel expenses, making it difficult to ensure equitable access to training. Second, all training is conducted in Chinese, creating a language barrier that excludes numerous Mongolian language editors. Since the curriculum design overlooks the particularities of Mongolian language publishing, even editors proficient in both Mongolian and Chinese achieve unsatisfactory results, further dampening their enthusiasm for training and slowing the updating of their knowledge structures.

1.3 Imperfect University Curriculum Design

To adapt to the demands of the new era and new situation, editing and publishing must evolve. Since 1998, editing and publishing studies have been formally included in the Ministry of Education's "Undergraduate Major Catalogue of Regular Institutions of Higher Education." According to surveys, editing and publishing programs in various universities primarily follow Ministry of Education unified curricula, with some institutions establishing relevant extended disciplines in response to contemporary developments. While the overall disciplinary structure in some domestic universities is feasible, certain issues persist, including an excessive proportion of traditional theory courses, insufficient practical skills training, and a lack of digital media courses. For Mongolian language publishing, universities serve as platforms for cultivating high-quality composite talent, making them the most convenient and effective bases for training editorial and publishing professionals.

Inner Mongolia has 14 universities qualified for first-tier enrollment, among which only three have established editing and publishing-related majors: the editing and publishing program at Inner Mongolia University, the media program at Inner Mongolia Normal University, and the journalism program at Inner Mongolia Minzu University. Compared to other provinces and regions nationwide, this proportion is significantly low. Although the overall disciplinary structure is viable, some programs suffer from an excessive emphasis on traditional theory, insufficient practical skills training, and a lack of digital media courses.

2. Countermeasures and Recommendations for Improving Literacy Among Mongolian Language Editors in Inner Mongolia

Improving the literacy of Mongolian language editors in Inner Mongolia requires relevant government departments to conduct in-depth organizational research and collaborate with national authorities to explore solutions. The following approaches may help address these challenges.

2.1 Rationalizing Standards for Obtaining Professional Qualification Certificates

The current editing and publishing professional qualification examination is a national unified test that objectively does not reflect policy preferences for minority regions. For Mongolian language editors in minority areas, the language barrier must be urgently addressed. First, different examination papers could be designed for different provinces and regions, similar to the national college entrance examination (gaokao). Examination materials could be published in corresponding minority languages through state funding, with test questions and answers provided in the appropriate language. Although the examination currently allows answers in Mongolian, no corresponding adjustments have been

made to test language or answer sheet design. Second, passing scores could be appropriately lowered. For example, in the current professional title English test, the national passing score is 60, but provinces may set their own qualifying scores according to specific circumstances, with score validity ranging from one year to lifetime. Third, professional qualification certificates could be issued through a recognition-based system. For practitioners who have worked in Mongolian language editing and publishing for a certain number of years, maintained qualified annual performance evaluations, and controlled error rates within specified limits, certificates could be issued after assessment and review. This would enable Mongolian language editors to master basic editing and proofreading theories in a short time and enhance their abilities in topic planning and editorial processing.

2.2 Innovating Talent Cultivation Methods

In the new media environment, the cultivation of Mongolian language editors should innovate in terms of training location, content, and instructional language.

Regarding training location, professional editing and publishing training could be regularly held in minority regions. Due to their remote locations and inconvenient transportation, minority regions have less developed cultural environments compared to more developed provinces. Conducting training in these regions would allow Mongolian language editors from local publishing houses to participate in batches, enhancing the professional cultural atmosphere while saving training costs and increasing participation. This approach would also help motivate editors in their work.

Regarding training content, programs should be reasonably designed according to Mongolian language editors' knowledge structures, as well as differences in language, typesetting, and proofreading. Training should be truly substantive rather than formalistic. Instead of the traditional "lecture-only" model, a combined approach of "lecture—seminar—practice" could be implemented. "Seminar-style" teaching through reading groups and discussion sessions could strengthen editors' theoretical foundations. "Case-based" teaching could analyze typical workplace cases to solve series of practical problems. Diverse training formats would ensure participants genuinely learn and apply their knowledge.

Regarding instructional language, using ethnic languages for teaching in minority regions or providing simultaneous translation through technical equipment should be explored. This would enable Mongolian language editors to understand and learn effectively, truly achieving educational gains.

2.3 Scientifically Adjusting University Curriculum Systems

Currently, based on the status of editing and publishing programs in Inner Mongolia's universities, after years of development, each institution has established mature professional training plans suitable for its region. However, with the

rapid development of information technology and the shortage of relevant technical talent, disciplinary development has lagged far behind the times. Curriculum design should prioritize theory while emphasizing skills. The particularities of editing and publishing disciplines require universities to appropriately innovate in curriculum structure and standards from both theoretical and practical perspectives.

In terms of theory courses, reference could be made to professional programs at Beijing Institute of Graphic Communication and Wuhan University to break down existing disciplinary barriers, follow the trend of media convergence, and establish “timely” professional concepts. In terms of skills courses, establishing all-media laboratories or “workshop” mechanisms could be attempted, implementing “school-enterprise” collaboration to promote industry development. All-media laboratories could provide students with preliminary understanding of editorial and publishing workflows in media environments. For Mongolian language editing and publishing in Inner Mongolia, Mongolian typesetting and proofreading present particular difficulties. Although Mongolian script is written left-to-right, character length variations often cause garbled text and formatting errors during typesetting. The “workshop” mechanism could effectively solve such problems.

“Workshop,” also known as thematic study workshop, originally referred to a research-based approach focused on specific topics and has evolved into a practical teaching model. This learning model is student-practice-centered, emphasizing autonomous learning. The “workshop” teaching approach should become an important method in editing and publishing education. Only with clear learning objectives and tasks can students truly improve their practical skills and overcome practical challenges. Based on the workshop model, establishing an interactive “school-enterprise” cooperation mechanism could link university skills courses with strategic partnerships in publishing units. To ensure substantive cooperation, agreements must be signed, responsibilities clearly defined, and assessment requirements quantified.

Conclusion

In the new media era, editorial objects are becoming increasingly complex, while demands on editors’ agency in minority regions are also rising. Mongolian language publishing is an arduous and long-term undertaking. As editors in ethnic minority regions, particularly Mongolian language editors, we bear important missions including disseminating ideas in minority areas, inheriting excellent traditional Chinese culture, and prospering philosophy and social sciences. Mongolian language editors must continuously cultivate and enhance their literacy to fulfill the great responsibilities entrusted to us by the times. Only then can Mongolian language publishing go further and develop better. Mongolian language editors in minority regions are directly responsible for interpreting and publicizing the Party and state’ s policies and theories, making their literacy improvement crucial for ethnic harmony and stability. Facing the entirely new

media environment, talent cultivation methods for editing and publishing must innovate. Only through continuous learning and literacy improvement can Mongolian language editors avoid political and knowledge errors in manuscripts, ensure scientific rigor, and achieve timely updating and optimization of their knowledge structures.

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Note: Figure translations are in progress. See original paper for figures.

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