

Strategies for Improving the Quality of Internship Education for Teacher Trainees in Local Universities in the Context of Professional Accreditation—Taking S University as an Example

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Abstract: *The quality of internship education for teacher trainees affects the quality of teacher education in local universities. This study develops a self-assessment questionnaire for teacher trainees based on the standard of teacher education professional accreditation, combines the interview method, describes the status quo of the quality of educational internships for teacher trainees in local universities with the sample of S University, discovers the problems in the work of internships education in local universities. Then, we proposed strategies for improving the quality of internship education for teacher trainees, including enhancing the internship quality standards system, establishing regular collaboration with internship bases, strengthening the construction of internship guidance teams, and reinforcing the cultivation of teacher trainees' professional outlook.*

Keywords: *professional accreditation, local universities, teacher trainees, quality of practice education*

1. Origin of the research

Internship education is an important link in the professional development of teacher trainees, and the quality of internship education directly affects the quality of teacher education in local universities. In recent years, the Ministry of Education has issued a series of programmes and plans to strengthen the educational practice of teacher trainees, guiding the internship education reform work of local universities in different dimensions and to different degrees, but the internship education is still a weak link in the process of prospective teachers' training. In 2017, the Ministry of Education issued the "Measures for Implementation of the Accreditation of Teachers' Training in Ordinary Higher Education local universities (Provisional)", which requires local universities to safeguard the quality of the process of the internship education and the result. As a local teacher training college, S University can only obtain the honour of Level 3 accreditation, if it guarantees the quality of internship education for teacher trainees. In this context, the quality of internship of teacher trainees returning from S University should be assessed to find out the bottlenecks constraining the quality of internship, so as to further improve the quality of teacher trainee training in local universities.

2. Conceptual definition

The quality of internship education in the narrow sense refers to the learning quality of teacher trainees' internship education^[1], and the quality of internship education in the broad sense points to the quality of internship education work in local universities. As early as 1990, some scholars proposed that the quality issue is the primary issue in the reform of internship education, and the quality of internship education needs to be measured^[2]. Many recent studies have found that internship education is an important course in the professional growth of prospective teachers, which affects the career identity and professional competence of intern teachers. Internship supervisors, as important others to interns, have a direct impact on interns' teaching knowledge and teaching ability. Selecting a good supervisor is the key to improving the quality of internship education^[3]. Based on this, the quality of internship education in this study includes both the learning quality of teacher trainees' internship education, which mainly has two types of quality: career identity and professional competence, and the quality of practice supervisor's

internship guidance, which directly affects the learning quality of teacher trainees' internship education courses.

3. Research Design

3.1. Subject of the research

As shown in table 1.the teacher trainees returning from the 2021 education internship in S University in Shaanxi Province were selected as the survey object, and the questionnaires were distributed through Tencent APP, and a total of 447 valid questionnaires were recovered, with the validity rate of the questionnaires being 89.4%. Among them, there were 40 male interns and 407 female interns, involving elementary education, psychology, mathematics, sionology, English and other teacher training majors, and the interns surveyed were basically able to represent the situation of teacher trainees in S University.

Table 1: Basic Personal Information for Teacher Trainees

Personal Information	Form	Quantities	Proportions
Gender	Girl	407	91.05%
	Boy	40	8.95%
Major	Education	206	46.0%
	Psychology	30	6.7%
	English	113	25. %
	Mathematics	28	6.2%
	Chinese language	70	15.6%
	Average grade from freshman to junior year	Outstanding (>85)	84
	Good (75-85)	285	63.7%
	Medium (65-75)	72	16.1%
	Pass and below (<65)	6	1.3%
Number of self-study sessions in the third year of university	Seems not	79	17.6 %
	Infrequent	95	21.2 %
	Now and then	149	33.3 %
	Non-recurrent	84	18.7 %
	Everyday	40	8.9 %
Extracurricular reading of professional books	Less than 3 books	141	31.5 %
	3-5 books	191	42.7 %
	6-7 books	62	13.8 %
	8-10 books	18	4.0 %
	More than 10 books	35	7.8 %
Off-campus practice experience	Never	15	3.3 %
	Several times	294	65.7 %
	Many times	138	30.8 %
Home location	Villages	253	56.5 %
	County	114	25.5 %
	Prefecture level city	55	12.3 %
	Provincial capital	25	5.5 %

3.2. Content of the research

Based on the accreditation concept of "student-centered, output-oriented, and continuous improvement", this study developed the Questionnaire on the Quality Status of Teacher Education Internship for Teacher Education Students. The questionnaire consists of 45 multiple-choice questions, except for key personal information, and is scored on a five-point Likert scale, with higher scores indicating a higher level of agreement. The questionnaire of this study mainly consists of the following five parts: the first part is the personal information of the teacher trainees, including gender, major, average grade from freshman to junior year, off-campus practice experience, and satisfaction with the internship, etc.; the second part is the personal information of the practice supervisors, such as academic qualifications, titles, and years of teaching experience, etc.; the third part is the quality of the teacher trainees' professional competence after their internship education, the fourth part is the professional identification of teacher trainees after their internships quality, and the fifth part is the quality of

internship education guidance of practice supervisors in internship bases. The Cronbach's alpha coefficient of this questionnaire was calculated by SPSS22.0 software, and the coefficients of vocational ability (0.86), vocational identity (0.81), and internship guidance (0.86) were in the range of 0.7-0.9, which means that this questionnaire has a good reliability after the test.

3.3. Data processing

This study used SPSS 22.0 to process and analysis the data from the returned questionnaires and conducted targeted interviews with 16 teacher trainees, with a view to reaching an in-depth understanding of the problems in the process of internship education in a combination of quantitative and qualitative ways.

4. Research Findings

4.1. The current situation of the quality of internship education for teacher trainees in local universities

The mean score of self-assessment of the quality of internship education for teacher trainees in S University was 3.81, which was generally of medium-high level. Among them, the mean value of teacher trainees' agreement with the quality of practice supervisor's guidance is 4.20, the mean value of their agreement with their own vocational competence enhancement is 4.15, while the mean value of their own vocational identity is only 3.06, which is cliff lower than the first two. This shows that the quality of S University internship guidance is higher than the quality of career competence enhancement. The latter one is higher than the quality of career identity. It indicates that the quality of internship education practice tutor guidance and the quality of vocational competence enhancement are at a high level, and the quality of teacher trainees' vocational identity is at a medium level. After the interviews, it was learnt that many of the teacher trainees were more concerned about the quality of the practical guidance they received and the quality of professional competence enhancement, and did not pay much attention to the goal of the dimension of career identity.

4.1.1. Status of the quality of vocational competence promotion

The overall score for the quality of professional competence enhancement is 4.15, which is good overall. AS is shown in Table 2, the average scores of the questions in each sub-dimension are, in descending order: teaching practice ability, comprehensive nurturing ability, and ability of self-development. In the dimension of teaching practice competence, the question mean score of instructional design was 4.1, the question mean score of instructional implementation was 4.17, and the question mean score of pedagogical knowledge was 4.0, indicating that the improvement of instructional implementation competence was higher than that of instructional design, which is higher than that of pedagogical knowledge application.

4.1.2. Status of the quality of career identity

The overall score of career identity is 3.06, which is of medium overall quality. AS is shown in Table 2, the mean scores of the sub-dimension questions, in descending order, were: career confidence (3.74), career perceptions (3.19), career reputation (3.16), and career will (2.86). As shown by the data on career confidence, the teacher trainees had high confidence in becoming teachers in the future, but also generally believed that the work experience accumulated from internship education was insufficient. As shown by the data on career perception, teacher trainees' ratings of the value of the teaching profession were influenced by the reputation of those around them about the teaching profession, and the scores on the reputation of the teaching profession showed intergenerational differences. Compared to the mean scores of career perception, the scores of teacher trainees' perceived professional reputation are significantly lower, conveying the signal that the teaching profession is less attractive to teacher trainees. From the data on professional will, it is clear that S University teacher trainees' awareness of teaching is higher than their readiness to teach, which is higher than their will to teach.

4.1.3. Current status of practice supervisor's internship guidance

The overall score of internship guidance was 4.20, indicating that teacher trainees rated the quality of internship guidance as high. AS is shown in Table 2 the mean scores of the sub-dimension questions were, in descending order, teaching (4.26), nurturing (4.22), and development (3.93), which was basically the same as the ranking of the quality of vocational competence enhancement. It indicates that the

guidance of practice tutors to teacher trainees favours teaching practice, followed by comprehensive nurturing, and is less concerned with the independent development of teacher trainees, showing a tendency to emphasize teaching over research and nurturing over development.

Table 2: Descriptive statistics of secondary dimensions of quality of teacher education practice for teacher trainees

Level 1 dimensions of quality of internship educations	Secondary dimensions	M	SD	Average score for each question
Vocational ability	Teaching practice skills	41.52	0.66	4.25
	Comprehensive nurturing capacity	4.23	0.79	4.15
	Autonomous development capacity	4.11	0.72	4.11
Career identity	Career perceptions	14.29	0.59	3.19
	Career reputation	15.36	0.44	3.16
	Career confidence	12.47	0.70	3.74
	Career will	22.47	0.73	2.86
Practical guidance	Learning to teach	34.15	0.75	4.26
	Learning to educate	8.44	0.86	4.22
	Academic development	7.86	1.03	3.93

4.2. Analysis of factors affecting the quality of teacher trainees' internship education

4.2.1. Differential analysis of the impact of teacher trainees' personal information on the quality of educational practice

Because of the uneven distribution of data in the personal information part of the teacher trainees, after excluding the information of gender, major, and home location, the difference test of personal information of different teacher trainees was conducted, and the following conclusions were drawn: (1) the number of self-study sessions in the first year of the third junior college year was not significantly correlated with the three dimensions of the quality of internship education; (2) the reading amount of professional books significantly affects the quality of the teacher trainees' career identity; (3) the number of out-of-campus practice sessions has a significant influence on the quality of internship education in the quality of internship supervision significantly; (4) the presence of a teacher among relatives significantly affects the quality of internship supervision and the quality of career identity of teacher trainees; and (5) teacher trainees' satisfaction with internship education as a whole has a highly significant effect on all three dimensions of the quality of internship education for teacher trainees.

Two main questions were then generated to interview 16 teacher trainees: "Why do you think that the reading amount of professional books only affects the quality of career identity" and "Why do you think that the number of off-campus practice experiences only affects the quality of internship supervision". The analyses revealed that teacher trainees who read more books had a more positive career identity, but they thought that theoretical knowledge learning was less helpful for professional competence and internship guidance. Meanwhile, the number of off-campus practice experiences of the teacher trainees was affected by the Covid-19-epidemic, with less exposure to education and teaching practice and longer intervals between each practice, so the effect on the enhancement of personal career identity and vocational competence was average, but there was a significant effect on the quality dimension of internship guidance that requires interpersonal communication, indicating that off-campus practice experiences, though sporadic, helped to enhance the professional socialisation level of the teacher trainees. Teacher trainees with more off-campus practice were more likely to establish positive interactions with their practice supervisors, thus obtaining higher-quality internship guidance.

As shown in table 3, the more professional books read, the higher the score of career identity. However, there are exceptions, such as teacher trainees who read 8-10 professional books have lower career identity ($M=3.05$) than teacher trainees who read 3-5 books ($M=3.07$). Taking the four sub-dimensions of career identity even further, it was found that teacher trainees who read 8-10 books had

the lowest professional confidence dimension ($M=3.0$). Combined with the interviews, it was found that some of the teacher trainees had long been learning professional knowledge and skills under the university field, and it was difficult for them to be psychologically self-competent in terms of the smooth interface between theory and practice for the various changing practical problems in the practice base, thus their career confidence scores were low.

Table 3: Significance test of the effect of different professional books read by teacher trainees on the dimension of career identity

Quality of internship education	Professional book reading	N	M	SD	P (significance)
Career identity	Less than 3 books	141	3.02	0.42	<0.05*
	3-5 books	191	3.07	0.43	
	6-7 books	62	3.10	0.37	
	8-10 books	18	3.05	0.39	
	More than 10 books	35	3.12	0.36	

4.2.2. Analysis of differences in the impact of personal information of practice supervisors on the quality of educational placements

Among the personal information of practice supervisors, only the teaching age has a strong and significant effect on the enhancement of professional competence. Combining the trend of teaching age and teacher trainees' vocational competence, the overall presentation shows that the longer the teaching age of practice supervisors is, the more positive the impact on the dimension of teacher trainees' vocational competence is. As shown in Table 4, it was found that practice supervisors with more than 20 years and less than 5 years of teaching experience had a better impact on the enhancement of teacher trainees' professional competence. Whereas, practice supervisors with 5-10 years of teaching experience had less impact on professional competence ($M=4.12$) than practice supervisors with less than 5 years of teaching experience ($M=4.17$). In conjunction with the interviews, it was found that the teacher trainees perceived that practice supervisors with less than 5 years of teaching experience were aspirational and passionate, and were more willing to supervise the trainees more carefully and conscientiously in the area of professional competence enhancement. On the other hand, practice supervisors with 5-10 years of teaching experience were in the winning period of teacher development, and the college entrusted them with heavy responsibilities, such as serving as classroom teachers, thus the time and energy for internship guidance was insufficient, and some practice supervisors suffered from burnout and were unwilling to pay too much attention and guidance to the interns.

Table 4: Significance test for the effect of instructors of different years of teaching experience on the quality dimension of vocational competence

Quality of internship education	Teachers' experience	N	M	SD	P (significance)
vocational ability	Less than 5 years	53	4.17	0.69	<0.01**
	5-10 years	142	4.12	0.72	
	11-20 years	150	4.14	0.65	
	More than 20 years	102	4.21	0.56	

In addition, satisfaction with different guidance from the practice supervisor significantly affects all three dimensions of educational practice quality. As shown in table 5, Overall, the higher the satisfaction with the practice supervisor's internship guidance, the higher the mean scores of the dimensions of internship education quality. However, in the dimension of career identity, even though the value of satisfaction with teacher supervision was 5 (the highest), the mean score of teacher trainees' career identity was only 3.11 (medium). Combined with the interviews, it was found that the awareness and ability of practice supervisors to lead the teacher trainees' career identity was average. Among them, there was little difference in the effect of teacher guidance satisfaction 1 (low) and 2 (lower) on the dimension of career identity.

Table 5: Significance test of the effect of teacher trainees' satisfaction with different supervision on the dimensions of the quality of internship education

Quality of internship education	Satisfaction with Teacher Guidance	N	M	SD	F-value	P (significance)
Career identity	1	5	2.8	0.71	6.85	<0.01**
	2	7	2.86	0.49		
	3	26	2.92	0.4		
	4	124	3	0.41		
	5	185	3.11	0.39		
Vocational ability	1	5	3.3	0.67	7.23	<0.01**
	2	7	3.13	0.69		
	3	26	3.74	0.80		
	4	124	3.82	0.71		
	5	185	4.38	0.62		
Practical guidance	1	5	2.52	1.64	6.89	<0.01**
	2	7	2.57	1.02		
	3	26	3.16	0.70		
	4	124	3.79	0.61		
	5	185	4.55	0.52		

5. Discussion and recommendations

The core of the "Continuous Improvement" standard in professional accreditation is to enhance the effectiveness and security of the quality assurance system in accordance with the quality objectives, quality control, quality analysis, corrective and preventive measures, and so on. Through the analysis of the questionnaires and interviews, it can be found that there are four problems in the education internship of the 2021 teacher trainees in S University, such as unclear quality standards of education internship, ineffective collaboration between the college and the local community, lack of guidance from the practice supervisors, and lack of career identity of the teacher trainees. As a result, the strategies to improve the quality of internship education for teacher trainees in local universities include the following four aspects.

5.1. Local universities urgently need to establish a comprehensive quality standard system for internships

Top-level design is a prerequisite for internship education work to improve the quality of educating people. Local universities need to constantly benchmark against teacher training professional accreditation standards, improve the supervision, management, evaluation and accountability system of the internship education process, implement process assurance and management assurance^[4], and form a new pattern of optimising the resources for internship education, and strengthening the supervision of the process and management assurance. In principle, it takes into account both formative and summative evaluation, introduction of specific standards and requirements, then organising and implementing them on a regular basis. For example, the process data of "teachers' evaluation of learning", "interns' evaluation of teaching" and "students' evaluation of teaching" are regularly collected through classroom observation and questionnaires. In the digital era, information technology can be used to enhance the effectiveness of supervision, management and evaluation of internship education. For example, the combination of on-site field guidance and network remote guidance can instantly obtain feedback from interns and solve various problems in the process of internship in a timely manner^[5], so as to enhance the sense of acquisition of internship education for teacher trainees.

5.2. Local universities should establish a regular collaborative relationship with internship sites

Local universities must strengthen the internship collaboration with internship bases, unify ideas with internship bases by holding symposiums and other forms, supervise and manage the whole process of internship education work, and make clear the tasks of the dual tutors at each stage. At the same time, it is also necessary to urge college instructors to maintain good communication and collaboration with practice supervisors, which can take a combination of online and offline ways to communicate and provide feedback on the problems existing in the process of internship. Between colleges and internship bases, in addition to the delivery of interns, there can also be more cooperation in curriculum teaching, scientific research, etc., to enhance collaboration and friendship, enhance the collaborative nurturing sentiment, take the internship education seriously, and do a good job of system and resource protection.

5.3. Both local universities and internship centers should strengthen the selection and management of internship supervisors

Both local universities and internship bases need to pay attention to and strengthen the selection and management of internship supervisors. First of all, both universities and internship bases should pay attention to the formation of a high-calibre and responsible team of internship supervisors. Before the internship, universities should clarify the responsibilities and obligations of internship supervisors and interns through system construction and publicity training. It is recommended that the bases give priority to excellent teachers with less than 5 years or more than 20 years of teaching experience, who are passionate about education and are willing to and have the time and energy to supervise the interns. Secondly, both sides should also consider optimising the management and establishing a two-way mutual selection mechanism between supervisors and interns, so as to avoid teachers blindly selecting students and students blindly following them, and to avoid dissatisfaction with internship supervisors, which will affect the internship education experience of the teacher trainees and thus the quality of the final internship education. Finally, both universities and base S Universities should establish a sound monitoring and incentive mechanism to urge the dual supervisors to perform their respective duties and be responsible.

5.4. Local universities should strengthen the guidance on the career outlook for normal college students

Local universities need to strengthen the guidance on the career outlook for normal college students., which needs to be carried out throughout the whole process of talent training. Firstly, in the teaching of professional courses, local universities should pay attention to the effectiveness of the public course "Code of Ethics for Teachers and Educational Policies and Regulations". At the same time, the teaching of other professional courses should also adhere to the ideology and politics of the curriculum, discover the diversified and changeable ideas of Z generation students, and endeavour to carry out the mission of college teachers to cultivate morality and nurture people in the classroom teaching. Secondly, before the internship, local universities should pay attention to the management of apprenticeship and research work, to enhance the teacher trainees' understanding of the front-line teaching practice, to avoid the teacher students experiencing an internship education, due to the gap between theoretical learning and practice to reduce the professional will, resulting in the loss of excellent teacher training personnel. Finally, local universities should strengthen home-college co-operation and unify the concept of nurturing with students' parents, such as encouraging students to read professional books and dare to carry out off-campus educational practices related to their majors. In addition, they should give parents regular feedback on the students' internship life, so as to form an atmosphere of home-college co-operation, and jointly lead the professional outlook of teacher trainees, and cultivate "Teachers with Four Good Abilities" for primary and secondary schools.

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