

The Cultivation of English Normal Students' Teaching Ability: Problems and Countermeasures

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ABSTRACT. *Normal universities are confronted with the challenge of how to train English normal students' teaching ability under the new situation. The purpose of this paper is to sum up the problems with the cultivation of English normal students and to put forward several suggestions to enhance their English teaching ability.*

KEYWORDS: *English normal students, English teaching ability, Problems, Suggestions*

1. Introduction

Teachers are not only the imparters of knowledge and culture, but also shapers of students' soul. Our government highly values the construction of teachers, and insists to build up a contingent of teachers who are highly competent, professional and innovative, especially teachers of primary and middle schools. Therefore, as the cradle of teachers, Normal universities are shouldering this important mission. However, at present, there is a certain gap between English normal students' actual ability and the requirements for talents cultivation.

2. Present Situations of English Normal Students' Development

Based on years' observation and reflection, there are many problems limit English normal students' development, which can be summarized in the following aspects:

2.1 Lack of Systematic Learning of English Teaching Theories

The current curriculum system for English education has little difference with that for English majors, professional knowledge of English language is still the major concern. On the other hand, courses concerning the English teaching emphasize theory learning over practice. A combination of theory learning and related practice is the basic approach to strength the comprehension of knowledge.

However, when English normal students are taking these theory courses, they do not have any teaching experiences, therefore, it is difficult for them to digest, not to say internalize those theories into their own teaching skills.

2.2 Lack of Sufficient Teaching Practice

Generally, on-campus trial teaching and off-campus internship are two major means of teaching practice for English normal students. The on-campus trial teaching is carried out among a group of several students, with one teacher as the supervisor to guide their lesson plan and classroom teaching skills. Although this provides practical help for English normal students, it is different from the real English class, the complexity and variability cannot manifest, which limits the development of their teaching skills. As for the off-campus internship, most of the English normal students are busy with the postgraduates' entrance examination or job hunting at that period of time, hence, they cannot fully devote themselves. Moreover, many internship schools, facing the pressure of enrollment rate, would deprive English normal students' chances of classroom teaching, considering that those internship students' teaching ability may affect those junior or senior school students' study. In fact, English normal students are assigned with many trivial tasks such homework correction, thus, they cannot receive enough teaching practice and guidance during the internship period.

2.3 Lack of Professional Teachers' Effective Guidance

Excellent teaching staff is an important guarantee to promote English normal students' teaching ability. However, teachers are postgraduates from various majors in English, but not English education. Therefore, they cannot provide a demonstrative effect. In addition, they do not have the work experience in basic education stage, and know little about the actual situation, which leads to a mismatch between the on-campus teaching practice and the practical teaching in primary and middle schools.

2.4 Lack of Professional Identity

The reason for choosing English education as their major is not interest in the first place, but parents' wish or pressure, and in fact, the career attractiveness and income of teachers are low. To be an English teacher is not on the top of their lists, but a safety choice. Because they think the specialization requirement for English teaching is not high, so anyone can be an English teacher so long as his or her English is good enough. Consequently, in four years of learning, their motivation for seeking teachers' professional development is not strong, and they are not enthusiastic about the educational theory learning and the English teaching practice.

3. Suggestions to Improve English Normal Students' Teaching Ability

After four years of learning, English normal students still need a long time to adapt themselves to the teaching in primary or middle schools. Therefore, it is an urgent need to improve their teaching ability before graduation. Several suggestions are given as follows:

3.1 Reconstructing the Curriculum System

To English normal students, courses on practical teaching skills are supposed to be set up to highlight the feature of English education, for example, how to lead in a new content, how to raise questions and give feedbacks, how to end a class, how to design and write the blackboard...Online learning can be used to help them learn more practical knowledge and skills within limited time.

3.2 Strengthening Cooperation with Local Schools

In order to cultivate qualified English teachers, colleges and universities should strengthen their cooperation in various forms. Excellent front-line teacher can be invited to give lectures or demonstrations, introducing the actual situation of English teaching in primary and middle schools; besides, teachers can have in-depth communication, discussing the teaching content and the practice plan, to update teaching methods; Moreover, double tutorial system can be carried out to make up for the shortage of qualified teachers, supervisors on and off campus cooperate to cultivate English normal students.

3.3 Improving Education Internship

Internship is the most indispensable part, which links the theory learning with practice. To carry out the internship more efficiently, it would be better to arrange it in the third academic year, and select high-quality schools as the long-term off-campus internship bases and excellent teachers to supervise English normal students, giving more effective help. During the internship, English normal students should keep the habit of writing diary, reflecting on their teaching, and communicate with supervisors from both sides, constantly review experience, so as to improve the education internship.

3.4 Developing Skills Competitions

Another important way to practice teaching skills is competition. Various kinds of teaching competition can be held, such as the PPT design contest, blackboard design contest, lesson plan contests, etc. which provide the platform for students to practice, learn from each other, and stimulate their competitive spirit.

4. Conclusion

Four years of learning in English education is the basic stage in English teachers' professional development. Normal universities should constantly update educational mechanism, integrate various resources, and make every endeavor to cultivate high-quality teachers, who shoulder the responsibility of teaching those flowers of our motherland.

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