

Exploring Courses in Educational Practice in Normal College Setting—Take the Nanjing Xiaozhuang University Primary Education Major (Directed Students) as a Point

XIA Yangyan

Nanjing Xiaozhuang University, Nanjing, China

In order to meet society's requirements for high-quality teachers, the pre-service teacher education curriculum has shifted to a practical orientation, focusing on cultivating reflective and research-oriented teachers. Through the field investigation of the training program of primary education professional practice courses of Nanjing Xiaozhuang University, and the practical courses of teacher education of primary education majors, the practical curriculum should promote the mastery of the required professional knowledge, skills, and affection of normal students, and promote the transformation of education and teaching skills. Based on the research and systematization of the teacher education curriculum itself, this paper comprehensively analyzes the current situation and problems of the teacher education practice course of primary education in Nanjing Xiaozhuang University and puts forward suggestions for the improvement of the professional practice curriculum of teacher education based on the training needs of existing primary education majors at home and abroad.

Keywords: primary education major, practical knowledge of teachers, courses in educational practice

Analysis Framework

Connotations and Constitutive Elements of Teachers' Practice Knowledge

Elbaz (1983) first used the term “knowledge” to refer to the teacher's understanding of teaching practice that has been regarded as vague and imprecise, at the empirical level, giving the teacher the role of producer and user of the knowledge of the practice. It opens up a new and unique perspective for the professional research of teachers, puts forward the concept of “teachers' practical knowledge”, and believes that teachers' practical knowledge is a function of teachers' response to teaching situations, and puts forward “the teacher integrates practical theoretical knowledge and convictions, knowledge is defined by the teacher”. Therefore, this study defines teachers' practical knowledge as the understanding of education and teaching formed by teachers through reflection and refinement of their education and teaching experience. Teachers form experiences by self-interpreting their education and teaching experiences, rise to the level of reflection, form value orientations

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XIA Yangyan, Ph.D., Lecturer, School of Teacher Education, Nanjing Xiaozhuang University, Nanjing, China.

with general guiding roles, and guide their routine education and teaching behaviors (Chen, 2009). The constituent elements of educational practical knowledge mainly include professional beliefs, individual experience, and action decisions (Qu & Li, 2018). Therefore, the purpose of the teacher pre-service education practice course is to help teacher training students acquire the professional knowledge, skills, and affection needed to become effective classroom teachers; actively promote the transformation of teacher education skills; strengthen teacher education research to promote the organization and systematization of curriculum development (Wang, 2019).

The Objectives and Curriculum of the Practical Curriculum for Primary School Pre-service Teacher Education

The *Teacher Education Curriculum Standards (Trial)* clearly states that one of the basic concepts of the pre-service teacher education curriculum is “practice orientation”: teachers are reflective practitioners of professional development in the process of studying one’s own experience and improving educational and pedagogical behavior. Teacher education courses should strengthen practical awareness, pay attention to practical problems, and reflect the new requirements for teachers in educational reform and development. Teacher education curriculum should guide future teachers to participate in and research basic education reform, actively construct educational knowledge, and develop practical ability; guide future teachers to discover and solve practical problems, innovate education and teaching models, and form personal teaching styles and practical wisdom. Therefore, the specific curriculum objectives of the primary school pre-service teacher education curriculum include three aspects: educational belief and responsibility, educational knowledge and ability, and educational practice and experience, clearly take “educational practice and experience” as one of the three major curriculum objectives, and specifically design the sub-goals of teachers’ “observation”, “participation”, and “research” of practice; in terms of curriculum, “educational internship” and “educational internship” are included in the curriculum (Ministry of Education of the People’s Republic of China, 2011).

Research Methods

Analysis of Literature Materials

This study collects the training programs of primary education teachers from the School of Teacher Education of Nanjing Xiaozhuang University. First, a comprehensive understanding of the general idea and overview of the college training programme is carried out. After that, a training program for oriented teacher training students was randomly selected from the school’s teacher training program to analyze the setting and implementation of the practical course.

Field Observation and Interviews

As a teacher at the School of Teacher Education of Nanjing Xiaozhuang University, the researcher participated in all the educational practice courses of primary education major, including education internship, teacher learning, top post internship, and employment internship as a teacher of college education internship. At the same time, as a teacher of college education theory and teacher education theory courses, he participates in the overall implementation of educational practice courses and the evaluation of teacher education practice courses and cooperates with the leaders of primary and secondary education practice courses, instructors, and the teacher trainees conducted corresponding interviews and exchanges.

The Result Analysis

The Current Situation of Practical Courses

Credits and weeks of practical courses. According to the *Teacher Education Curriculum Standards (Trial)*, the total class hours of professional education internship and education internship in primary education shall not be less than 18 weeks. The primary education major courses of Nanjing Xiaozhuang University include general education courses, humanities social and science literacy courses, and professional courses; among them, the professional courses include four parts: teacher education courses, subject professional courses, professional practice teaching courses, research and development courses. Teacher education practice courses mainly refer to professional practice teaching courses, research and development courses. The specific schedule and number of weeks of educational practice courses are as follows.

Table 1

Educational Practice Curriculum Arrangement of Primary Education Major of Nanjing Xiaozhuang University

Course	Semester schedule	Specific contents	Number of weeks	Credits
Professional practice teaching courses	Second semester	Educational internship (I)	A week	0.5
	Third semester	Educational internship (II)	A week	0.5
	Fourth semester	Learn from the teacher (I)	Fortnight	1
	Fifth semester	Learn from the teacher (II)	Fortnight	1
	Sixth semester	Top post internship	Around	1.5
	Seventh semester	Graduation internship	Six weeks	1.5
	Eighth semester	Employment internships	19 weeks	1.5
Research and extension courses	Semester 7 and 8	Graduation thesis	About 26 weeks	6
	Semester 2 to semester 7	Professional lectures	Six lectures	1.5

Practical course content arrangement. Based on traditional educational internships and educational internships, the content of practical courses is also increasingly rich. Micro-grid teaching, teacher training skills, educational observation, and experience have also been included in the scope of practical courses. In addition, education and study have gradually gained attention. In order to allow teacher training students to better strengthen the connection between theoretical courses and practical courses, students should strengthen the transformation between knowledge and skills, enhance their professional beliefs and reflective ability, and refine the separation of educational internships and internships, throughout the entire university training process, reflecting the whole process of teacher education practical ability training concept. Nanjing Xiaozhuang University starts the education internship in the second semester, and continuously arranges corresponding teacher training from the second to the eighth semester, including education internship, learning with teachers, post internship, graduation internship, employment internship, teacher training skills competition, micro-grid teaching, etc., in the sixth and seventh semesters, the educational practice course is combined with the student's graduation thesis, and the cultivation of students' educational research ability is enhanced through the research on the topic selection of the graduation thesis carried out by the students in the internship school.

The Implementation of Practical Courses

Guiding the instructor during the implementation. In general, the School of Teacher Education at Nanjing Xiaozhuang University uniformly organizes the educational practice courses for elementary school

students, and the college assigns one teacher to lead the team, typically in a group of about ten, and the primary teacher assigned by the School of Teacher Education leads students to the co-operative primary school and carries out centralized placements, and the specific arrangement of internship content in elementary schools must be negotiated and organized by colleges and primary schools according to the instructional plan of each educational practice course, and elementary schools will assign placement instructors from corresponding disciplines to normal teachers in each discipline based on internship plans and college and university internship requirements. In the primary school practice process of primary school practice, normal students follow the subject practice guidance teachers of primary schools to carry out specific educational practice activities such as listening to lectures and observing. College guidance teachers go to primary schools every week to connect with primary school practice instructors, communicate on each student's educational practice, and communicate with each normal student on the educational practice process, to timely discover the problems encountered in the process of teacher education practice, and give an answer.

The specific content of teacher training student internship. Take the Educational Internship (1) of the Primary Education major as an example. Educational Internship (1) is the first practical teaching activity for students majoring in primary education. The topics of educational clerkship mainly include four parts: school architecture and culture inspection, school daily management system inspection, school classroom teaching inspection, and class management observation. First, in terms of primary school environment construction and campus layout, students should understand the design and layout of primary school campus buildings, the environmental design of primary school classrooms, and understand their design characteristics and educational functions, and understand the relationship between them and the school's philosophy. Second, regarding the management system and daily operation of primary school, students should understand the management system and organizational structure of primary school, be familiar with the general process of the day-to-day operation of teaching and management in primary education as well as the day-to-day work and rest arrangements of teachers and students. Thirdly, students should observe the classroom teaching in primary schools and observe the classroom teaching of the instructors; Structural analysis of the process of classroom teaching between teachers and students shall be conducted; students should observe children's learning characteristics in the classroom. Fourth, as for class management, students should understand the basic situation of primary school classes, the content, and production methods of primary school class rules or life conventions, and the basic ways and methods of routine management of primary school classes.

Cooperation between universities and primary and secondary schools. The school-running mode of cooperation between colleges and universities and primary and secondary schools to train normal teachers aims to improve the teaching knowledge of normal students, improve their professional development level, and promote the realization of the goal of integrating teaching, learning, and research in the process of teacher training. Primary and secondary schools are not only places for teachers in colleges and universities to effectively carry out education and teaching practices, but also platforms for college teachers to participate in the reform and practice of basic education, and also cooperate between colleges and universities to carry out scientific research on basic education, an important position to promote the teaching reform of primary and secondary education and the professional development of teachers. Taking the employment internship of primary education students as an example, the education internship school for targeted teacher training students in Jiangsu Province is uniformly arranged by the education bureaus of each district and city, and assigned to the primary school where

the student comes from for internship. The education administrative department, colleges, and universities, and primary schools shall jointly formulate educational internship programs and plans, clarify the tasks and responsibilities of universities and primary schools in the process of student employment internship, and put forward the duration of educational internship of 19 weeks, education internship quality assurance requirements, educational internship purpose and tasks, educational internship content and requirements, education internship management, and education internship performance evaluation regulations.

The Construction of the Practical Curriculum System

Based on the research of teacher education practice knowledge, the formation of a systematic practical curriculum system is a sign of the maturity of teacher education curriculum construction. Only under the condition of developing and implementing systematic practical courses can colleges and universities comprehensively guarantee the implementation quality of practical courses, ultimately improve the knowledge and skills of normal teachers, strengthen their willingness to teach, and complete the transformation from students to teachers. After reform and research, the School of Teacher Education of Nanjing Xiaozhuang University has formed an experiential layer, an experimental layer, and a practice layer based on the professional education practice curriculum system of primary education of Nanjing Normal University, a hierarchical and multi-stage teacher education practice curriculum system at four levels of research level. The experiential layer of the educational practice course of the School of Teacher Education of Nanjing Xiaozhuang University mainly includes educational internship (1) and education internship (2), which mainly allows students to pass the visit and inspection in the education internship, communicate with practical guidance teachers, listen to lectures, etc., experience primary education and the professional role of primary school teachers; the experimental layer mainly includes learning from teachers (1) and learning from teachers (2), mainly allowing students to observe and discuss teaching through field observation and discussion in the process of learning from teachers' teaching skills training in the form of lectures by famous teachers, micro-teaching, lesson preparation, etc., which provides situation-based learning opportunities for normal students; the practice layer mainly refers to top post internship, graduation internship, and employment internship, which mainly allows normal teachers to carry out subject teaching, class management, and educational surveys and other tasks; the research level mainly refers to graduation internship and employment internship, and teachers choose the research topic of graduation thesis according to their own educational practice and research interests, and write a thesis proposal, in the internship school, carry out research on the topic of graduation thesis selection and complete the writing of graduation thesis.

Existing Problems

There Is Not Enough Link Between Theoretical and Practical Courses

From the perspective of the curriculum arrangement and specific curriculum implementation of the existing training program, the connection between the practical course and the theoretical course of the School of Teacher Education of Nanjing Xiaozhuang University is not close enough, and there is the problem of separating the internal connection between practical knowledge and theoretical knowledge. College teachers do not consider the students' practical course arrangement and the connection between theoretical courses and practical courses when taking education or teacher education courses, and the college teaching arrangements do not have such requirements for college teachers. In the exchange with the normal students, when asked "what are the help of educational theory courses for internship and the main difficulties encountered in practice?", most of the students

believed that “it is difficult to apply the educational theory learned in the university classroom to educational practice”. In practice, it is more dependent on their exploration, in fact, in the classroom, the requirements of primary school instructors are quite different from the requirements of theory, “the content learned in the practical course of primary education is relatively scattered and random”. In general, normal students feel that the educational theory courses studied in colleges and universities are not directly related to educational practice, and there is a lack of an overall system framework guidance in curriculum planning; knowledge is mostly acquired from a large number of detailed materials that are not related to each other, and the order of learning materials is mostly random.

The Evaluation of Educational Internship Was Unqualified, and the Reflective Ability of Normal Teachers Was Not Substantially Improved

Cultivating teachers with teaching reflection ability is an important goal of teacher training in the new era. Taking educational internship as an example, one of the requirements of educational clerkship is for students to “seriously consider and discuss the layout of campus buildings, the characteristics of functional areas and their functions”; However, all the educational internship assignments that students are required to submit at the end of the internship do not correspond to the educational internship requirements, but are replaced with an “inspection report on the primary school campus environment and architectural layout”, which requires students to describe the basic situation of the school based on facts. The primary education major of Nanjing Xiaozhuang University mainly monitors the whole process of teacher training students’ participation in practice through the “Education Internship Manual”, “Teacher Learning Manual”, “Top Post Internship Manual”, etc. According to the educational practice results and performance in the practice process displayed in the manual, the comprehensive evaluation is carried out by the methods of group level, primary school tutor evaluation, and college tutor evaluation. However, after the end of the educational internship, there was no internship group report or internship group exchange meeting, and students’ reflection on educational practice was basically out of personal consciousness and lacked effective guidance; teacher training students are not provided with professional advice and frameworks for why, what, and how to reflect so that the requirements for reflection on educational practice are only formalities and documents.

The Educational Practice Curriculum Has Unclear Goals and a Single Form, and the Research and Construction of the Practical Curriculum System Need to Be Strengthened

For the implementation of educational practice courses, the college’s educational practice curriculum plan is formulated to meet the indicators or requirements of external assessment or to draw on the educational practice curriculum plans of other normal colleges, without sufficient empirical or theoretical evidence. Although the educational practice courses are segmented and distributed throughout the entire study period from the second semester to the eighth semester, there is no sequence of connections between the objectives and contents of the educational practice courses at each stage and the objectives and contents of the educational practice courses in the next stage; at the same time, teachers generally feedback that the evaluation of educational internship results is not scientific, and they are very skeptical about the evaluation methods of colleges and universities to evaluate outstanding educational interns, believing that there is no scientific evaluation mechanism for educational internship performance. It is not scientific to mainly use teachers leading teams in colleges and universities to read internship manuals or mutual evaluation among group members to determine excellent interns.

Discussion and Suggestions

Clarifying the Purpose of Educational Practice Courses and Paying Attention to Improving the Quality of Educational Practice Courses

According to the interpretation of the Ministry of Education's *Teacher Education Curriculum Standards* (for trial implementation): the three target areas of educational belief and responsibility, educational knowledge and ability, and educational practice and experience support each other, jointly outline the core scope of pre-service teacher education, and fully demonstrate the key professional characteristics of pre-service teacher education. Consequently, the design of practical courses for teacher education cannot be limited to the development of knowledge, skills, or curriculum alone. Instead, we should fully study the overall program design and implementation guarantee research of the curriculum around the practical curriculum, and raise the construction of the teacher education curriculum system to a higher level as a whole. In order to improve the quality of practical courses in teacher education, it is first necessary to develop high-quality teacher education training programs. The pre-service teacher education curriculum of normal students is planned as a whole, which attaches importance to both educational theoretical knowledge and the cultivation of practical knowledge and ability of teacher education, and pays attention to the cultivation of belief and responsibility of teacher education in the teaching and internship process of colleges and universities. Secondly, it is necessary to attach importance to the training and selection of high-quality instructors, and expert teachers will serve as the instructors of teacher education internships to help teachers solve the confusion encountered in the internship process promptly. At the same time, it is necessary to increase the supervision, assessment, and evaluation of internship instructors. Finally, we should pay attention to the construction of high-quality partnerships between universities and primary schools, provide teachers with high-quality and stable educational practice bases, and strengthen the development of educational cooperation and research between universities and primary and secondary schools and promote the development and management of educational practice courses.

Determine Scientific and Reasonable Evaluation Mechanisms to Enhance the Cultivation of Teacher Students' Ability to Reflect on Education

There should be an objective, scientific, and perfect monitoring system and assessment mechanism for implementing educational practice courses, with an overall assessment angle and high operability, and tangible outcome materials should also reflect practice effectiveness. Firstly, the function of educational internship evaluation should be more diversified, not only the summary of internship activities but also focusing on performance appraisal, screening, and selection distinguishing between different grades. Secondly, the evaluation of educational internships should pay attention to the process evaluation, not only based on the materials presented in the educational internship manual, but also on improving the assessment of the student internship process. Thirdly, the content of educational internship evaluation should be diversified, not limited to teaching work, class teacher work, and educational investigation. The evaluation of students' teaching knowledge and skills, as well as students' innovative thinking, teacher ethics, professional ethics, etc., should be improved, so that the evaluation of educational internships can play a better guiding function and role. Fourthly, to improve the reflection mechanism of educational internship evaluation, the educational internship work should not end after the evaluation of achievements and grades, and the evaluation of educational internship should not only be "evaluated" higher and "promoted" to promote students' learning and improvement through evaluation.

Strengthen the Cultivation of Teacher Ethics and the Mastery and Transformation of Practical Skills in Education

Normal students, especially oriented normal students, should return to the rural primary school where the students come from to teach after graduation, and only those who have firm educational ideals, love education and rural education, and care for students can do a good job and become a qualified rural teacher. Therefore, the cultivation and assessment of teacher ethics of normal students should be strengthened in educational practice courses. At the same time, because the education internship and teacher learning of oriented teacher training students are generally arranged in the primary school of the city where the university is located, the top post internship, graduation internship, etc. employment internships are arranged by the Education Bureau of the student's place of origin in a high-quality primary school where the student is located, although it provides a real learning situation for normal students, which helps normal students to build professional knowledge and develop professional practice ability in real professional situations, however, all the educational internships of normal students are carried out in urban high-quality schools, and there is a lack of understanding of rural students and schools, and whether the practical educational skills acquired in urban schools can be transformed and transferred to rural primary and rural primary school students needs to be strengthened.

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