

A New Exploration in Reformations of Teacher Training Modes

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Abstract: This article addresses the reform and renewal of teaching training modes, discussing ways to build up a project of teacher training universities as academic support, and to use rural primary and secondary schools as training bases to improve the holistic quality of educational service by rural teachers of fundamental education.

Key words: fundamental education; rural; teacher training mode; renewal project

Rural education, particularly rural fundamental education, claims an essential place in China's educational reformation and development. However, it remains a weakness in the process of socialist modernization. The reformation and development of rural fundamental education should play an important role in developing rural areas and building up a healthy society around the country, and in solving the issues concerning agriculture, countryside and farmers. Therefore, as a supporting system of fundamental education, teacher training in combination with rural primary and secondary education and its direction to serve rural education is a new approach and another access to teacher training reformation and innovation.

1. Leading Rural Education is the Task for the Teacher Training Normal Universities

1.1 Education, particularly rural education, to a great extent determines China's domestic progress and its status in the international context

Educational development, particularly rural educational development, occupies a key place in China's further progress. All educational professionals must be well aware of the critical situation of the country, for we are already facing fierce competition and big challenges in almost each important field from various powers around the globe. Obviously, most developed countries use educational investment and improvement to promote other fields and compete with other countries. At home, there are serious problems of overpopulation, human resource shortage, scientific backwardness, etc. These weaknesses are usually rooted in underdevelopment or slow process of education investment and improvement. The best way out of such a critical situation might be pressing forward with educational innovations and advancement in order to transform the population burden into human resource advantage. That is to say, educational investment and reform and its outcome of human resource innovation should be of the first importance in China's national development.

It is clear that fundamental education is the basis of the national education system, which aims to bring about human resource advancement. The fact that the majority of China's population is from the countryside is a reminder that the nation's concern of education should be about underdeveloped rural education since education in urban areas is developing fast. If rural education could keep up with urban education and reach a higher level, human resource exploration could be better conducted and lead to faster social development and China's

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international competence. The country may then hope to keep up with other international big powers or even outgo them in the near future. Otherwise, it might still lag as a developing country of limited intellectuals, perhaps vulnerable internationally. In this case, teacher training universities should take up the responsibility to foster a large number of intellectuals for educating the majority of China's population or preparing for work at hand.

1.2 Normal universities have the potential to guide rural fundamental education

Serving and prompting rural educational, particularly rural fundamental educational reform and innovation, is not only the obligation of normal universities or teacher training institutions, but is also to their advantage. Firstly, they have professional and well-experienced academicians and trainers to help send qualified teachers to the rural areas; secondly, educational researchers from these universities or institutions can provide updated educational information and guide trainees to constantly developing educational theories and methods; thirdly, some educational experts can provide high-level support for specific rural educational programs directly; in addition, normal universities hold advanced facilities and many educational literature resources in store which obviously provide information and theoretical guidance.

Above all, the normal universities bear the responsibility and capability to lead and promote rural fundamental education. The key point is how they make full exploration of the potential to fulfill the task.

2. Conducting a Renewal Project is the Main Approach to Guiding Rural Fundamental Education

Teachers are the key to developing rural fundamental education. At present, rural teaching teams are not stable (teachers are likely to leave their positions due to lower pay and poor working conditions) and not very qualified in many aspects. This, to a great extent, hinders the innovation and development of rural fundamental education. However, local people may not be able to solve these problems by themselves in the short term. Teacher training reform may be focused on encouraging educational researchers and practitioners through innovating rural fundamental educational construction and teacher training mode, which should result in significant progress. Thus, an innovation project of rural primary and secondary educational professionals could be smoothly carried out through academic support from normal universities and rural primary and secondary schools, aiming at enabling teachers and improving China's normal universities' training quality.

During this process, the most important thing is to establish various innovation project bases among the rural primary and secondary schools (mainly town schools). Then senior normal university students can be chosen to go to the schools to take up the teaching tasks of some local teachers who would have the chance to obtain systematic training by academic institutions. This helps the student practice teaching and gains time for the rural teachers to study and obtain professional training. Consequently, there should be great progress in rural educational conception and educational technology, teaching contents and evaluation, etc.

3. A Renewal Project of Innovating Teacher Training Mode

A cycling mode of teacher training could throw light on the reform and innovation of rural fundamental education. In recognizing different strengths among universities and different levels of rural education in different places, five teacher training modes of innovation are presented:

3.1 The "3+0.5+0.5" mode

Through a reflexible-credit mode, normal university students are expected to finish educational courses and

teaching skill courses within three years and then go to the innovation project bases to teach rural pupils as field work for about six months. Afterwards, these university students may return to campuses, study for their graduation paper and work for job opportunities in the remaining six months.

The advantages of this training mode may be its easy operation and minor effect on the ongoing normal university education and management and the national education system. In addition, young and energetic qualified university teaching candidates may reduce the pressure of a teacher resource shortage and benefit from practicing for comprehensive capability for future teaching performance as well.

One disadvantage might be an inconsistency in the rural primary and secondary education due to frequent changes of teachers within only six months

3.2 The “3+1+1” mode

The second mode is projected to require normal university students to finish courses of majors other than educational courses and teaching skill sessions within three years, and practice teaching for twelve months in schools of the innovation bases. After that, they should take another year to teach and write a dissertation in education, etc. Trainees by this mode could become double-qualified potentials holding bachelor’s degrees of education and another discipline. A small number of excellent students might be awarded Master of Education for their convincing defense of an educational dissertation.

Advantages of this training mode are likely to be: one more year of theoretical study after field work should stimulate reflective thinking of teaching and result in a series of theory-practice-theory progress. Longer replacement of local teachers relatively stabilizes the teaching teams and maintains a continuity of education to the pupils. Moreover, the temporarily replaced teachers are given more time to study and receive training for better qualities and qualifications.

The disadvantage might be that it could affect the present educational system and require support from new educational policies, which may take some time to come into form.

3.3 The “3+1+2” mode

Here, university students are to accomplish their major courses and teaching skill courses in three years. The difference is that only some students will be chosen to practice teaching in the innovation bases for twelve months and obtain a bachelor’s degree if qualified in study and at work. Additionally a few of them are recommended to study further for a master’s degree in Education. For one thing longer teaching practice of one year makes university students more cognizant of the features of fundamental education and the profession of teaching. Secondly, it does not interrupt the teaching plan in the short term and keeps the continuity of education for the pupils. Additionally, it meets the needs of the students who plan to study further for MA in Education and gains time for some rural teachers to return to campuses for better understanding of teaching.

However one difficulty might arise. This training mode might not be able to cover the majority of normal university students who want to join the program until a series of facilities and policies are obtained for realization to this training mode.

3.4 The “4+1+1” mode

Different from the above three modes, the fourth training mode needs normal university students to study for four years on the campus and gain a bachelor’s degree in Education. Then they have one year to practice teaching in schools of innovation bases and one more year to study the master’s educational courses after fieldwork.

These students can concentrate on each stage and progress continuously. They would start from a higher stage and may become more popular among pupils and schools.

However, it is hard to popularize the training mode around the country because of financial and operational inconvenience. Therefore it may just be carried out among some normal universities with students who are very interested in education and show a high potential in the profession.

3.5 The “4+1+1+1” mode

The target trainees of the fifth mode are future teachers of the rural schools around the country. Students are required to study for four years and finish all the courses. Then they go to innovation bases and teach for twelve months and return to their university campus to study for one year full-time. They must then return to where they previously practiced, to work and study for another year in order to accomplish a master’s dissertation, which qualifies for a master’s degree and teacher’s qualification at the same time. Finally, the educational Masters with a teacher’s qualification should work for another year in the rural primary or secondary schools to serve a contract they would have signed earlier.

This article has discussed five different teacher-training modes. They respectively have their own advantages and disadvantages. However, they are common in the following aspects: first, every mode places stress in a combination of general education and major education to promote a wider horizon for educational research and future teacher training. Secondly, they relate normal university students’ theoretical background with school practice, and rural teachers’ working experience with campus study and professional training, which consequently encourages a better understanding of teaching to rural pupils.

In addition, normal universities may develop distance learning, particularly e-learning, and rural teacher training sessions, backbone teacher training and full-time university campus training, etc. Thus the temporarily replaced rural teachers could obtain training for degrees or simply for a better understanding of education.

The presentation of the five teacher training modes is intended to guarantee the practice of the renewal project of rural primary and secondary schools and illuminate the significance of such a project. In terms of rural development, the renewal project should benefit the solution of the issues concerning agriculture, countryside and farmers and the combination of education and technology, even a comprehensive and coordinate progress of rural society and economy.

As for rural fundamental education, the renewal project could help avoid a teacher resource shortage and produce improvement in rural educational quality.

To conclude, normal universities are obliged to enhance their academic level and enable better teaching candidates for future generations.

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