

Research on Preservice Teachers' Assessment Literacy and its Cultivation Against the background of “Double Reduction” Policy

Shiyang Pan*, Yueyue Wang ^{*corresponding author}

College of Education, Zhejiang Normal University, Jinhua 321004, China.

Abstract: The implementation of the “double reduction” policy requires changes in the assessment literacy of preservice teachers, which is reflected in the following three aspects: the student-oriented assessment concept; the appropriate frequency and difficulty of assessment; the reasonable use of assessment results. The following four approaches can be taken to develop assessment literacy among preservice teachers: strengthening policy support and technical support; updating and optimising teacher education curricula; improving the teaching practice ability of preservice teachers; and guiding the independent development of their assessment awareness.

Keywords: “Double Reduction” Policy; Assessment Literacy; Preservice Teachers

1. Presentation of the issue

China has sought effective ways to reduce the excessive burden of schoolwork on primary and secondary school students. However, since the 1950s, a series of policies promulgated by the education authorities to reduce the burden of schoolwork have had little effect, and the educational anxiety of families has even continued unabated. The difficulties in implementing load reduction policies and parents' educational anxiety are actually related to the lack of education quality. Teachers are the key to improving education quality, so what kind of qualities do preservice teachers need to cope with the changes of the times? Based on this, this study asks the following three questions: What is the meaning of assessment literacy for preservice teachers? What kind of assessment literacy do preservice teachers need to have in the context of “double reduction” policy? How to cultivate the assessment literacy of preservice teachers?

2. What is the “assessment literacy for preservice teachers”?

The current research on assessment literacy of preservice teachers can be divided into the following two categories: One category mainly discusses the assessment literacy of preservice teachers from the perspective of the constituent elements, and considers that the assessment literacy of preservice teachers is mainly composed of assessment awareness, assessment knowledge and skills, and assessment attitude. [□] The other category is based on the document which specifies the educational assessment literacy that preservice teachers should possess. [□] Referring to Li Yi and other scholars' role positioning of preservice teachers in their dual roles as “college students” and “future teachers”, this paper defines assessment literacy for preservice teachers as the ability to have an awareness of assessment, along with a considerable degree of assessment knowledge and a critical attitude towards assessment. Meanwhile they have the ability to choose appropriate methods to evaluate students. [□]

3. Changes in assessment literacy of preservice teachers under the background of “double reduction” policy

3.1 The features of “double reduction” policy

In order to effectively improve the quality of education and teaching, China 2021 promulgated the Opinions on Further Reducing the Academic Burden of Students in Compulsory Education and the Burden of Out-of-School Training. “Double reduction” policy focuses on the issue of students' homework burden and examination pressure, which is highly relevant to the assessment literacy of preservice teachers.

3.1.1 *The problem of students' workload*

First of all, the policy clearly states that “it is strictly forbidden to ask parents to correct homework and students shall not be asked to correct their own homework”^[1]. Homework evaluation is an important way to test and consolidate the learning effect of students, and it is a way for teachers to find out their own teaching deficiencies and regulate the teaching process, so it is necessary for preservice teachers to be clear about the status of their own evaluation subject.

Secondly, the requirement of “assigning an appropriate amount of homework” and “encouraging the assignment of graded, flexible and personalised homework” is to solve the problem of students' homework being large in quantity but low in quality. This approach, which does not take into account the actual capacity of students, goes against the laws of education and is not conducive to the physical and mental health of students^[1]. The “double reduction” policy undoubtedly requires preservice teachers to better grasp the balance between “quality” and “quantity” of homework, improve their own homework design ability, and pay more attention to the all-round development of students.

3.1.2 *Problems of examination stress among students*

The Circular on Strengthening the Administration of Examinations in Compulsory Education Schools, promulgated in 2021, clearly stipulates that the examination chaos in compulsory education schools must be resolved^[1]. In terms of examination methods, this policy involves whether to adopt unified examination and the frequency of examination.

From the examination form, the unified examination in reality often still exists the problem of relatively low fit between test questions and teachers' teaching and students' individual learning and the problem of teachers focusing too much on the results of the examination. In terms of the frequency of examinations, too many examinations have replaced teaching, reversing the relationship between teaching and examinations, and likewise increasing the pressure on teachers and students^[5].

In addition, the policy is concerned with the use of examination results by teachers. Preservice teachers should take into account the negative psychological impact of the disclosure of examination rankings on students, especially the students with learning difficulties. Teachers should advocate the disclosure of examination results in a graded public manner or presented individually to the students themselves, in order to protect the students' confidence in their learning and to overcome score-ism.

3.2 **The new demands of the “double reduction” policy on the assessment literacy of preservice teachers**

From the analysis of the “double reduction” policy, it can be seen that there is a direct relationship between the excessive burden of examinations and the lack of teachers' assessment literacy. In the context of the “double reduction” policy, the assessment literacy of preservice teachers should focus on three aspects.

First, the assessment concept in terms of student-centred theory. Preservice teachers should realise that the essence of the “double reduction” policy is to reduce the unnecessary burden of schoolwork imposed on students, which requires them to completely abandon the “marks-only” approach to assessment, to assess students from multiple perspectives, to look at students from a developmental perspective, and to pay more attention to process-based assessment.

Secondly, the appropriate amount of moderate frequency and difficulty of assessment. Reasonable and effective homework and examination are the key to improving the efficiency of assessment. Students' homework and examination arrangements should be based on the premise of quality assurance, and should be arranged in a reasonable and appropriate amount. Similarly, ignoring the students' original experience and increasing the difficulty of the assessment is not a wise move in evaluation.

Finally, the rational use of evaluation results. In the past, teachers' use of assessment results was relatively superficial, and it became common to disclose results and rankings. However, the results of a single assessment may not truly reflect the development of students, and the publication of assessment results will, to a certain extent, undermine the self-esteem of the group of students who have difficulty in school. It is gradually becoming a trend in educational assessment to abolish examination rankings and to present examination results on a graded basis.

4. How to cultivate the assessment literacy of preservice teachers?

4.1 Policy support and technical support

Policy support: Education administrations first need to indicate the direction of development and the means of implementation of assessment literacy for preservice teachers. China's current Professional Standards for Primary and Secondary School Teachers do not yet provide a comprehensive, clear and measurable definition of teacher assessment literacy, nor has assessment literacy become a necessary condition for new teachers to enter the profession. The lack of a strong institutional guarantee will inevitably result in a lack of influence on the assessment literacy of teachers and preservice teachers.

Technical support: As technology and teaching become more and more deeply integrated, in addition to traditional evaluation tools, preservice teachers can use emerging information technology tools to record and evaluate students to achieve personalised and comprehensive dynamic evaluation of students, such as the use of big data tracking records and the establishment of student e-portfolios.

4.2 Construction of curriculum and practice system

4.2.1 Updating and optimising teacher education courses

Curriculum is the main way to train preservice teachers. On the one hand, the content of evaluation programmes for preservice teachers can be enriched and expanded on the basis of existing resources. The content of the courses can be focused on the characteristics of the disciplines, for example, mathematics and science disciplines pay more attention to immediate logical deduction, so preservice teachers can be guided to use tests and other methods of evaluation. [1] On the other hand, we should also note that it is difficult to rely on only one or two courses to complete the cultivation of assessment literacy of preservice teachers, so it is necessary to strengthen the integration of teacher education programmes. At the same time, teacher training colleges should also rationalise the sequence of courses.

4.2.2 Improving the educational practical abilities of preservice teachers

Assessment literacy of preservice teachers cannot be developed without real problematic situations. Colleges and universities should provide sufficient teaching practice opportunities for preservice teachers, and cooperate with primary and secondary school internship bases to select front-line teachers with excellent evaluation ability in primary and secondary schools as mentors, so that preservice teachers can understand the compatibility of theory and practice through internship. [] Supervisors inside and outside the school should also consciously guide preservice teachers not only to pay attention to students' academic achievements, but also to understand and motivate them, so as to achieve the goal of the "double reduction" policy.

4.3 Autonomous development of evaluative awareness in preservice teachers

It is necessary to cultivate preservice teachers' lifelong learning ability. Preservice teachers themselves should take the initiative to acquire cutting-edge evaluation knowledge. At the same time, it is also necessary to improve preservice teachers' meta-evaluation ability, so that they can correctly understand their own evaluation level. [2] In this regard, we can take the approach of organising the establishment of an evaluation learning and practice community, such as organising thematic seminars. Through the reflection of the preservice teachers themselves and the mutual assistance of the professional community, the preservice teachers will rapidly improve their ability to apply their evaluation knowledge in practical educational situations.

In addition, the preservice teachers themselves should consciously reflect on the evaluation results from multiple perspectives. On the one hand, preservice teachers can start from the design of evaluation content to find out the deficiencies in their own educational evaluation. On the other hand, preservice teachers should also pay attention to students' knowledge mastery and psychosomatic state, so as to make clear the students' adaptation to the teaching content and teaching methods, and constantly adjust the problems in teaching according to the evaluation results.

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