

A Study on the Improvement Strategies of Pre-service English Teachers' Professional Qualities Development in the Context of Core Literacy

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Abstract: This paper discusses the core professional qualities that pre-service English teachers should possess and its improvement strategies, i.e., optimizing professional knowledge structure, enhancing professional competence and forming positive teacher beliefs, hoping that provide suggestions for the improvement of pre-service English teachers' professional qualities.

Keywords: Teachers' professional qualities; Pre-service English teachers; Teachers' professional development

1. Introduction

In 2021, the Ministry of Education issued the Opinion on Further Reducing the Burden of Homework and Off-campus Training for Students in Compulsory Education. The “double reduction” policy indicates that the state has put forward new requirements for educators. Teachers are the important implementers of the “double reduction” policy and also are one of the key elements to improve the quality of education, their quality will have an influence on the quality and direction of the new curriculum and the double reduction policy. As foreign scholars argued, the education and quality of teachers play a decisive role in the optimization of the educational process (Cochran-Smith & Zeichner, 2005).

Pre-service teachers, as a member of the teaching force, their professional quality, including their professional beliefs, relevant knowledge structures and educational practice abilities, influences the level of professional development of teachers in China in the future. Therefore, analyzing the professional quality of pre-service English teachers not only provides a new perspective for studying English teachers' development, but also facilitates further teacher education and teaching reform. Therefore, this study aims to explore the strategies and paths to improve the professional qualities of pre-service English teachers, hoping to provide suggestions for improving English teacher quality and enhancing teacher literacy.

2. Strategies to Improve Pre-service English Teachers' Professional Qualities

This study adopts the definition of teachers' professional qualities from the Department of Teacher Education of the Ministry of Education (2003) and describes the connotation of teachers' professional qualities in three dimensions: knowledge, competence, and belief. Next, the study will discuss the approaches to improve pre-service English teachers' professional qualities from these aspects.

2.1 Optimize Knowledge Structure

Professional knowledge is the foundation for English teachers to engage in the education profession. Different scholars divide teachers' knowledge structure differently. (Shulman, 1986; Lin, 1996; Zhang, 2016) Teacher knowledge can be generally divided into four categories: educational knowledge, subject knowledge, practical knowledge and pedagogical content knowledge.

Educational knowledge includes knowledge of pedagogy and psychology, which is the conditional knowledge of teachers (Lin, 1996). First of all, normal colleges should enrich the theoretical courses of foreign language education major. Specifically, on the one hand, the proportion of class hours education and psychology courses should be increased; on the other hand, the types of educational theory courses should be expanded. Secondly, normal colleges should pay attention to the integration of educational theory and practice, and appropriately arrange some practical activities in education and psychology to raise pre-service English teachers' awareness of the importance of learning educational theoretical knowledge.

Subject knowledge is the specific subject knowledge possessed by teachers and is the ontology knowledge of the subject (Lin et al, 1996). On the one hand, pre-service English teachers should focus on the depth of the discipline, that is, on the professionalism of the discipline and have a good system of disciplinary knowledge structure. On the other hand, pre-service English teachers should focus on the breadth of the discipline, that is, on the connections between different disciplines. Pre-service English teachers should develop interdisciplinary literacy, explore various kinds of knowledge, and be able to understand other subjects related to English on the basis of solid English subject knowledge.

Pedagogical content knowledge (abbreviated as PCK) is a concept proposed by Shulman in 1987, which refers to the special integration of teachers' personal teaching experience, subject knowledge and pedagogical knowledge. (Shulman, 1987) From the perspective of teacher education curricula, normal colleges should break away from the patchwork of teacher education curricula and develop new integrated curricula that can facilitate the generation of PCK for pre-service English teachers, highlighting the core value of PCK. Secondly, pre-service English teachers themselves should actively participate in teaching practice, especially by completing educational apprenticeships and educational internships seriously, and by developing good habits of continuous reflection to improve their PCK.

Teachers' practical knowledge is a concept proposed by Elbaz in the 1980s. Elbaz (1983) believes that teachers' practical knowledge is the knowledge that teachers integrate their professional theoretical knowledge with their personal values and beliefs, and is oriented to the actual situation. Normal colleges need to optimize the teaching mode of theoretical courses, change the teaching mode of simply imparting theories, and adopt case teaching method to promote the acquisition and development of pre-service English teachers' practical knowledge. Pre-service English teachers should strengthen their teaching practice, which is the fundamental way to develop their practical knowledge. Pre-service English teachers can acquire and construct practical knowledge through educational apprenticeships and educational internships, which are important practical learning activities for pre-service teachers.

2.2 Enhance Professional Competence

Based on Huang Youchu's (2019) classification of teachers' professional competence structure, this study will discuss how to improve English teachers' professional competence from three aspects: classroom teaching competence, teaching reflection competence and educational research competence.

Classroom teaching competence refers to teachers' ability to organize teaching activities and implement effective teaching under the guidance of educational theories, which is an important factor to measure the comprehensive quality of pre-service teachers. (Huang, 2019) First of all, normal colleges should strengthen the perfection of educational practical curriculum system, which is the guarantee of improving pre-service teachers' teaching competence. Secondly, normal colleges should strengthen the education internship and play the role of education internship in improving the teaching practice competence of pre-service English teachers.

Teaching reflection refers to the activities that teachers themselves, as the subject of reflection, analyze, evaluate and think on a series of teaching-related issues such as teaching design, teaching effect and teaching behavior in order to promote teachers' professional development. (Huang, 2019. There are two common methods of reflection as follows. First, writing a reflective journal, which is the experience accumulated by preservice teachers in their educational practice and shows the way pre-service teachers deal with educational problems. Secondly, pre-service English teachers can conduct action research for teaching reflection training. Pre-service English teachers can use classroom observation, build learner profiles, and interviews to analyze the shortcomings of their own teaching.

Educational research competence refers to the ability of teachers to use educational theory to analyze and research teaching as a way to gain a deeper understanding of teaching, which is an innovative ability that derived from teaching practice but goes beyond it. (Huang, 2019) First of all, it is necessary to cultivate pre-service English teachers' research awareness or problem awareness. Pre-service English teachers should be conscious of finding problems. Secondly, pre-service English teachers should attach importance to the mastery of educational research methods. In the process of collecting information, pre-service English teachers should keep rational and objective so that they can find strategies for their next actions with the support of theoretical knowledge.

2.3 Form Positive Teachers' Beliefs

Teachers' beliefs are teachers' perceptions, feelings and evaluations of education-related factors such as educational work, teachers' roles, students, curriculum and teaching in the process of education. (Pajares, 1992)

Firstly, normal colleges should build a good educational philosophy and cultural atmosphere. Pre-service English teachers spend

most of their teacher education in schools, so the educational philosophy and cultural atmosphere of normal colleges will have a direct impact on the formation of pre-service English teachers' teacher beliefs. Normal colleges should strengthen the construction of school material and spiritual cultures, cultivate a positive and innovative cultural atmosphere, and provide pre-service English teachers with abundant opportunities for teacher learning.

Secondly, teacher educators should play the role of models of their own teacher beliefs and stimulate the motivation of pre-service English teachers. Teacher educators are the designers and implementers of pre-service professional courses for English teachers, so teacher educators will show their teaching style and teacher beliefs through classroom teaching, which are intuitively expressed through the choice and trade-offs of teachers' behaviors, classroom design, operations and organization.

Thirdly, pre-service English teachers should promote the development of teacher belief in individual reflection. The formation and development of teachers' beliefs need not only the promotion of external factors, but also the adjustment and integration of internal factors. As an internal positive thinking activity, reflection can promote pre-service English teachers to conduct self-supervision, self-regulation and self-motivation, and constantly update and optimize their own teacher beliefs.

3. Conclusion

In conclusion, the development and enhancement of pre-service English teachers requires both the promotion and support of external factors and the driving force of individual internal factors. Only when external factors and internal factors are organically combined can we better promote the improvement of pre-service English teachers' professional quality to be better.

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