

On Cultivation of the Awareness of Life-long Education for Pre-service Teachers

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Abstract. The cultivation of pre-service teachers is an integral part for teacher life-long education, and the pre-service cultivation should be based on the development of the awareness of life-long education. After analyzing the current literature and examining the researches on life-long education in China and some developed countries, this paper puts forward drafting a Chinese national legislation for life-long education as soon as possible and establishing monitor institutions for life-long education, and then updating teaching ideology and content and adopting various devices for teaching reflection, and simultaneously constructing service-learning system and making use of contests of teaching skills and educational and scientific research in order to increase pre-service teachers' teaching competence and improve their all-around quality.

Keywords: pre-service teachers; life-long education; awareness of life-long education; sustainable development; strategies for cultivation

1. Introduction

Life-long education is the precondition for civic and national sustainable development, and it is a vital measure for establishing Learning Society. For this sense, close attention is paid to life-long education in developed countries, and the effects of life-long education is ensured through legislation. In China, educational circles greatly focus on life-long education and have made deeper research into it. In recent years, there have been plenty of articles on life-long education and continuing education. Through CNKI (China National Knowledge Internet) I have found 17990 relevant articles, over 3000 of which are on teacher life-long education or teacher continuing education. The focus of these articles is mainly on China's current situation and the countermeasures for life-long education, construction of life-long educational system, and international comparison of life-long education, which is helpful to the implementation of Chinese life-long education, especially to teacher life-long education. Moreover, Chinese scholars have already noticed that teacher life-long education should be the integration of "pre-service cultivation, induction training and in-service further education"(Zhang,2004^[1]; Li,2008^[2]). However, the researches about each of the stages of life-long education are not balanced, for I have found no articles whose theme are on pre-service teacher life-long education or pre-service teacher continuing education through CNKI. Since pre-service cultivation, induction training and in-service further education are together a nonindividual body for teacher life-long education, the lack of reearch into any stage, among which there are connection and difference, leads to the loss of unity, completeness and consistency of research for teacher life-long education, and is harmful to implementation of the ideology for teacher life-long education. For this reason, I will probe into the strategies to cultivate awareness of life-long education for pre-service teachers.

2. Theory and Practice of Teacher Life-long Education

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Since “life-long education” was first put forward as an educational ideology in 1960s, the research and practice about life-long education has entered a crucial implementing stage in some countries. However, each country has placed different levels of importance to it because of different national conditions and different viewpoints. In general, life-long education is understood well and researched deeply in developed countries, and the logistic measures for implementing life-long education is sound. But in China, except for Taiwan and Fujian, life-long education is still in the exploration stage, and has not entered the materially practical stage.

2.1. The Research and Practice in Developed Countries

Life-long education means that education will last during the whole life processes of people, from cradle to grave. Teachers, whether they are as human beings or professions, should develop in all their born days. Whether to serve the learners, whether to serve the society, or to serve individual development, teachers should not receive one-off and ending education, but teacher education should be carried out through the whole course of teachers’ development of life (Ma, & Wang, 2006)[3]. Life-long education stands for lifelong learning, but their concepts do not coincide. Life-long education focuses on the serving and providing education, but life-long learning focuses on individual internal changes in the learners. Consequently, life-long education and life-long learning involve different subjects. Life-long education focuses on the fact that the government and the society should take a series of measures to provide their people with all kinds of educational opportunities they need, and to create conditions for the implementation of life-long education; therefore, whether the implementation of life-long education can be realized lies in the government, for the government bears unshirkable responsibility for life-long education. On the other hand, lifelong learning focuses on the people themselves as subject of learning, what’s more, learners, as personal action of subject-of-life, have the absolute responsibility for their lifelong learning (Ren, 2008)[4]. It is thus clear that for the implementation of life-long education, the government must bear the governmental duties, and the government assumes its duties on the premise of law and regulations. In the view of above, developed countries have passed legislation to ensure the effective implementation of life-long education. For example:

In 1971, the French government promulgated the Law of Life-long Career Education. In 1984, it enacted the Law of Occupational Continuing Education Reform. In 1976, the congress of the United States passed the bill of life-long education: Law of Life-long Learning. In 1990, Japan made the Life-long Learning and Promotion Law. And in 1999, South Korea made the Life-long Education Law.

Obviously, developed countries have emphasized life-long education greatly. First, they have established and perfected the system of life-long education. Second, they have set up administrative agencies to make and coordinate concrete policies and measures for life-long education. Third, they have mobilized all the social forces to raise funds and jointly promote the development of life-long education. Fourth and last, they have tried their best to make the modern educational technology play an important role in life-long education (Lu, & Gui,2010)[5].

When it was put forward first, life-long education was based on civic all-around development and sustainable development. As we all know, teachers, as social members, deserve life-long learners. Moreover, it is necessary that teachers should learn actively and continuously in life because of particularity of their teaching profession, that is, their knowledge and ideas need to be updated, and modern teaching means and teaching methods need to be applied properly. For this purpose, some countries have made a series of policies and systems to ensure the effective implementation of life-long education. For instance, Japan has perfected the academic trainee scheme since 1970s, which involves studies and training for novice teachers and in-service teachers, also including new headmasters and vice headmasters (Yang, 2002)[6]

2.2. Research and Practice in Taiwan Area

Taiwan Area attaches great importance to civic life-long education. Since Article 1 of Taiwan’s Social Education Law revised in 1980 clearly points out that the aim of social education is to implement the whole civic education and life-long education, Taiwan has made over 10 laws, regulations and policies on life-long education, of which more influential ones are the report of Educational Vision to 21st Century in 1995; the

white paper of Towards Learning Society: Promoting Life-long Education and Establishing Learning Society published in 1998; and Life-long Learning Law promulgated in 2002. The last one has greatly contributed to Taiwan's life-long education, which has four main features: first, clearly promoting the concept of life-long learning legislation; second, making the precise rules for legal status of life-long education institutions in order to work according to laws; third, making expressly agreed terms of enriching the content of life-long learning; fourth, raising funds for life-long education through various channels of funding sources (Li, 2009)[7].

Obviously, the life-long education in Taiwan Area has entered the stage of maturity. The laws, regulations and policies on life-long education are more perfect and sound to ensure the effective implementation of life-long education. The implementation of the life-long education and life-long learning reveals responsibilities of all the departments of administration. It stresses the continuity of policies and their improvement and clearly shows the educational idea of "one is never too old to learn". All papers must be in Microsoft Word format and MAY NOT EXCEED 5 PAGES IN LENGTH, including figures, tables and references. The file of each paper cannot be larger than 4,000Kb. Filenames should be as follows: (please specify), etc.

2.3. Research and Practice in Chinese Mainland

Besides Fujian Province, some provinces and cities in Chinese mainland are ready to develop legislation. However, the national legislation for life-long education has not been developed, which leads to no legal protection for the development of life-long education, and makes local legislation for life-long education lack the legal basis and guideline. In addition, there are quite a few policies and documents about life-long education, but very few laws and legal regulations. Besides, the existing laws and legal regulations are not sound. Take Fujian Provincial Promoting Regulations for Life-long Education for example. It does not give a clear explanation of the relevant definition and does not illustrate the relationships between life-long education and civic education, and adult education, etc (Li, 2000)[8]. It is clear that the implementation of life-long education is not consistent with the development of the national economy, whether it serves as the whole civic life-long education or as teacher life-long education. Lack of national level of educational laws and regulations makes it difficult that the teachers enter planned, organized and orderly life-long learning sequences, or in-service training for teachers is only their individual behaviors, which are not protected by laws, supported or awarded by related departments (Yang, 2002)[6]. In some parts of China, some leaders of the relevant departments and headmasters of some schools have such low policy level that they regard in-service teachers' further studies as teachers' own "fame and gain". Thus, teacher education can not be supported, and even it is blocked, which has frustrated the teachers. In addition, some headmasters, who are still deeply influenced by examination-oriented educational ideology, take up summer and winter vacations for lessons, while the vacations are usually the time for teachers to study. Thus, many teachers have lost opportunities for further studies. What's worse, some local educational administrative departments have not arranged or organized activities of continuous education for teachers for years, only to get money from inspection certificates on continuous education. This phenomenon has seriously influenced sustainable development of China's primary and secondary school teachers; therefore, great attention must be paid to it.

Teacher life-long education is a continuum, including "pre-service cultivation, induction training and in-service further education". However, only in Japan, can induction training be paid attention to, while in-service further education is stressed in any other countries and regions. Although some scholars have noticed the importance of pre-service cultivation, they have not provided systematic and feasible measures to implement it. We hold the belief that pre-service teachers have not joined the profession and are not real teachers, who lack thinking of teaching practical issues. In this case, therefore, developing the awareness of life-long education seems to be more important to them.

3. Countermeasures for Developing Awareness of Life-long Education for Pre-service Teachers

Teachers' professional development requires that all the teachers must carry out life-long education and life-long learning. For this reason, life-long learning becomes a new idea of *Standardization of Primary and*

Secondary School Teachers' Occupational Ethics revised in 2008 in China. Recently, however, China's teacher life-long education is carried out separately, that is, pre-service teacher cultivation is implemented by normal universities and colleges, and in-service teacher training is taken charge of by training colleges for teachers or schools of education. Obviously, this separate model lacks continuity of life-long education. Therefore, in order to ensure the development of awareness of life-long education for pre-service teachers, we give the following strategies:

3.1. Drafting Laws on Life-long Education

Wu et al (2008) pointed out "that strengthening special legislation for life-long education and nationalizing the sound development of life-long education is becoming the prospective and directive tendency in the process in which some countries and districts promote life-long education in recent years"^[9]. Thus, China should develop legislation for life-long education as soon as possible, which should include pre-service teacher education, and ensure pre-service teacher life-long education can be implemented according to laws. It should be included in the law that primary and secondary schools should be obligated to accept pre-service teachers for probation, practice and study. Nowadays in China, it is very common that pre-service teachers are not accepted to carry out practical teaching in elementary and secondary schools. The reason is that they are afraid that the teaching practice of pre-service teachers might lead to bad teaching effects. Although pre-service teachers are accepted by some schools, they usually do some aiding teaching work, such as coaching learners, going over exercises, cleaning test tubes etc. Therefore, legislation for life-long education is necessary, which can protect normal teaching practice of pre-service teachers.

3.2. Establishing Monitor Institutions for Life-long Education

Educational administrative departments and universities should establish special life-long education institutions, which take charge of practical measures for implementing life-long education, and monitor the implementation of life-long education. Nowadays, educational practice of pre-service teachers has not been given due recognition, for example, some universities have not made unitive and comprehensive arrangement for educational practice, so that educational practice has been lost control of. For instance, some pre-service teachers do not work hard at educational courses in class, and even not experience teaching practice at all. Therefore, different levels of monitor institutions for life-long education should be set up to ensure the effective implementation of life-long education.

3.3. Updating Teaching Ideology and Content

Recently, some of the courses on educational practice for pre-service teachers in colleges and universities have lagged behind the teaching reform in primary and secondary schools in China. Additionally, the teaching ideology divorces from national curriculum, and the teaching material is out of date. Thus, the thought of quality-oriented education should be introduced in the pre-service teacher education. Besides, the teaching content for pre-service teachers should include primary and secondary curricula, textbook analysis, teaching skill training and microteaching, so that cultivation of pre-service teachers can be geared to the teaching reality in primary and secondary schools.

3.4. Adopting Various Devices for Teaching Reflection

In order to increase the abilities of pre-service teachers' teaching practice and classroom management, normal universities and colleges should strengthen their reflective awareness and ability. Reflective means can be various, mainly including modern record and playback system, peer observation, journal writing and group discussion etc. Especially, modern record and playback system should be employed, for it has many good features, such as visuality, authenticity, pertinence, reproducibility, localizability and convenience. Therefore, it is possible and convenient for pre-service teachers to reflect their teaching procedures, postures, blackboard design, classroom management and discourse features systematically and roundly.

3.5. Constructing Service-learning System

Service-learning is an educational methodology which combines community service with explicit academic learning objectives, preparation for community work, and deliberate reflection. Students participating in service-learning provide direct and indirect community service as part of their academic

coursework, learn about and reflect upon the community context in which service is provided, and develop an understanding of the connection between service and their academic work. These learning experiences are designed through a collaboration of the community and the institution or academic unit/program, relying upon partnerships meant to be of mutual benefit. Improvement and sustainability of the experiences and the partnerships are enhanced through formal assessment activities that involve community, faculty, student and institutional perspectives (Gelmon, et al, 2001)^[10]. Therefore, strengthening connections with the primary and secondary schools and establishing long-term partnership can solve the problem that pre-service training is short of actual connections with teaching in primary and secondary schools. Universities and colleges need to contact primary and secondary schools, research educational and practical questions in primary and secondary schools, educate pre-service teachers purposefully, and stimulate their professional development needs so that they can lay foundation for entering positions (Jin, 2004)^[11].

3.6. Making Use of Contest of Teaching Skills to Increase Teaching Ability

The annual contest of teaching skills for pre-service teachers is one of the important means to check the educational and teaching results of normal universities and colleges, and it is also an effective measure to encourage pre-service teachers to take an active part in teaching practice and increase their teaching skills. In order to deal with the annual provincial contest of teaching skills for pre-service teachers, all the local universities and colleges have to make an active preparation. They tend to train and guide the pre-service teachers who desire to attend the contest, and hold some relevant and ready contests to select competitors. In this way, more pre-service teachers are trained and their confidence is built up. In our university, for example, in the last three provincial contests of teaching skills for pre-service teachers, seventeen of those who had been trained have had the qualifications for attending the contests and have gained good results. The rest, who had not gotten the qualification for attending the contests, did so well in the following job interviews and entrance examinations for graduate schools that some got teaching posts in elementary and secondary schools, and others succeeded in entering graduate schools.

3.7. Making Use of Research of Educational Science to Increase Pre-service All-around Quality

The Chinese National New Curriculum regards teachers' ability of research of educational science as one of important qualities the modern teachers should have. Modern educational and teaching theories suggest that a teacher should not be a "teacher man", but a "research-type" or "scholar-type" teacher. Only by participating in educational research, can teachers increase their professional quality and teaching competence. However, school teachers in China are very poor at educational research, and in most cases, their teaching depends only on textbooks. That is, they are unable to adapt, exchange and replace the current textbooks as needed. Therefore, it is vital for them to carry out educational and scientific research. This can not only increase their scientific ability, but also help them develop the awareness of educational and scientific research to lay foundation for their life-learning and sustainable development.

4. Conclusion

Teacher life-long education is a continuum of pre-service cultivation, induction training and in-service further education; therefore, it can not lack the participation of pre-service teachers. Because of the features of pre-service teachers, their participation in life-long education mainly reveals the development of their awareness of life-long education. Pre-service teacher life-long education is an important part of teacher life-long education, and even the whole civic life-long education. Thus, it is significant to adopt various effective measures and approaches to increase the awareness of pre-service teachers, which helps them study perpetually and develop sustainably. However, there are very few articles and successful examples on pre-service teacher life-long education; therefore, it is necessary for more experts and scholars to pay close attention to it, so that the research can advance.

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