

The Influence of Teaching Practice in Primary and Secondary Schools on Teaching Efficacy of Normal University Students

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Abstract

This study was conducted with 51 normal university students in a third-year class of an English major at a university. A combination of quantitative and qualitative analysis was used, and questionnaires and interviews were adopted as research tools. The questionnaire survey was applied to measure the teaching efficacy of the students before and after the internship as a volunteer teacher. Six normal university students majoring in English from the object of study were selected for interviews and recordings, and two interviews were conducted before and after the internship to dig deeper into imperceptible changes in the subjective emotions of those students before and after their internships. After the questionnaires and interviews were completed at each stage, SPSS 26.0 was used to analyse the stage data and overall data from the questionnaires, and content analysis was carried out on the interview data. The aim of this paper is to explore the impact of educational internships on normal university students' sense of teaching efficacy, identify the influencing factors, propose strategies to enhance the sense of teaching efficacy of normal university students majoring in English, and provide guiding suggestions for the pre-service cultivation of normal university students, the construction of courses for those students, and the improvement of the level of cooperation with internship bases.

Key words: Teaching efficacy; Normal university students majoring in English; Internship as a volunteer teacher

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1. INTRODUCTION

Education is the foundation of a century-long project, while teachers are the foundation of the great cause of education. The Outline of the National Medium and Long-term Education Reform and Development Plan (2010-2020) proposes to strengthen teacher education, enhance the practical aspects of internship, strengthen the cultivation of teacher ethics and training of teaching abilities, and build a high-quality teaching team. As future teachers, the professional development of normal university students is significant and requires not only the learning of theoretical knowledge, but also practical knowledge (Yao and Li, 2012). Practical knowledge includes teachers' educational beliefs, self-cognition (self-assessment, self-efficacy, etc.), and strategic knowledge (Chen, 2003). As the name suggests, practical knowledge needs to be acquired and embodied through "action processes" such as teaching internships. Internship as a volunteer teacher is a professional training and exercise in the pre-service education stage for the professional development of teachers, which enables normal university students to build up their cognitive, practical and reflective skills in teaching (Wu, 2018), deepen their understanding of education (Zhu and Zhang, 2010), and provide an opportunity to examine and evaluate the value of the teaching profession, the theories they have learned, and their existing professional ideals and beliefs (Geng and Sun, 2010) and is an important part of the structure of teacher education programs (Yu, 2016). In the process of internship as a volunteer teacher, normal university students experience a dynamic process of

professional development, which is reflected in the intertwined development of teaching competencies and teaching beliefs (Guo and Wang, 2009). In recent years, the direction of educational reform has begun to shift from an emphasis on explicit educational behaviors to an emphasis on developing teacher beliefs, and the pre-service education stage is an important one for normal university students to develop their beliefs as a teacher (Hu and Qin, 2013).

2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Bandura proposed the theory of self-efficacy in 1977 and argued that human behavior is influenced not only by the outcome of behavior, but also by expectations of the self's ability to behave and the outcome of behavior, formed through the person's perceptions (BaiduEncyclopedia, 2022). He found that even if an individual knows what the outcome of a behavior will be, he or she does not necessarily engage in the behavior or carry out an activity, but first speculates on whether he or she is able to do it. Whether he or she has the ability and confidence to carry out this action? This process of speculating and estimating is actually a manifestation of self-efficacy. Therefore, human behavior is influenced not only by the expectation of results, but also by the expectation of self-efficacy, which is the decisive factor of human behavior. Bandura created the concept of self-efficacy by distinguishing efficacy expectations from outcome expectations. Result expectation, which belongs to the concept of traditional expectation, is people's prediction of what kind of result a certain behavior will lead to. Efficacy expectation is an individual's subjective judgment of his ability to carry out a certain behavior, that is, his speculations about his own behavior ability.

Teaching efficacy is a branch concept of teachers' beliefs. Its theory comes from Bandura's self-efficacy theory, which refers to teachers' subjective judgment on their ability to influence students' learning behavior and academic performance. Teachers' teaching efficacy has a subtle influence on teachers' teaching emotions, teaching control and teaching psychology, thus affecting the degree of teachers' input in the teaching process, the improvement of teaching methods and the personalized adjustment of teaching methods, which is an important variable affecting teaching quality and teacher quality. Studies have shown that teaching efficacy is reconfigurable in the early years (Bandura, 1997). In terms of the research on the status quo of teaching efficacy, the teaching experience of in-service teachers under the traditional teaching mode is directly proportional to the teaching efficacy, and there are differences in school type, region and title. As a whole, the teaching efficacy of primary and secondary school teachers in China is at a medium or lower level, while the application of computer technology makes the influence of

Internet proficiency expand (Horvitz & Beach, 2015; Luo and Meng, 2015; Wang, 2002), for pre-service teachers, micro-teaching and teacher training plan have different degrees of influence on their teaching efficacy (Arsal, 2014). Li Jiran (2013) pointed out that normal university students have higher general teaching efficacy and lower personal teaching efficacy. Gender factors have little effect, school factors affect personal teaching efficacy; There is a relationship between teaching experience and teaching efficacy (Mei and Han, 2020).

To sum up, theoretical and empirical static studies on teaching efficacy have been carried out both at home and abroad. However, the dynamic research on the change of teaching efficacy of normal university students before and after internship by combining qualitative and quantitative methods needs to be further studied. Quantitative data can be used to objectively analyze the general changes, while qualitative data can be used to facilitate the deep mining of the subtle changes in subjective emotions. The two can complement each other and reflect the dynamic changes of teaching efficacy more comprehensively.

3. SIGNIFICANCE OF THE RESEARCH

3.1 Innovations

This study was conducted with 51 normal university students in a third-year class of an English major at a university to explore the basic characteristics of their teaching efficacy before and after the internship, and make a comparative analysis of the characteristics before and after the internship, then explore the change rules and reasons; This paper studies the influence of internship on teaching efficacy of normal university students majoring in English, including the influence on their professional identity, view of the internship, implementation of teaching activities, solution of teaching problems, etc. This study also analyzes the influencing factors to teaching efficacy in the process of teaching practice. For example, the influence of individual experience, interpersonal relationship and emotional state on teaching efficacy; This study provides guidance and effective strategies for the school and other similar institutions in improving the education of normal students, such as ideological and political knowledge teaching, practical knowledge teaching, basic education teaching guidance, normal students' curriculum and cooperation with the internship base, etc.

3.2 Objectives

This study will take the third-year normal university students majoring in English as the research subject to study the influence of internship as a volunteer teacher on their teaching efficacy; explore the influencing factors, so as to improve the teaching efficacy of normal university students in the process of internship. The research of this

topic also provides guiding suggestions and strategies for the pre-service training (including professional knowledge imparting, practical skills imparting, ideological and political content imparting, etc.), curriculum construction of normal university students, and improvement of the cooperation level with the practice base, etc. It is beneficial to perfect the internship teaching system of normal education and strengthen the effective connection between normal education and primary and secondary school teaching. This study is helpful to explore the new breakthrough point of teacher education research and reform, and give full play to the traditional advantages of teachers' practice and support teaching, cultivate talents for the grassroots, and strive to create high-quality primary and secondary school teachers with high teaching efficacy, profound educational feelings, solid professional foundation, innovative teaching, comprehensive education methods, and lifelong learning and development ability required by the basic education; This research is conducive to deepen the reform of teacher training mode, spread advanced educational ideas, output high-quality educational resources, promote educational system innovation, enhance the ability to serve local basic education, improve the quality of local basic education, and highlight the characteristics of teacher's education in the school.

4. METHODOLOGY

4.1 Research Content

This study was conducted with 51 normal university students in a third-year class of an English major at a university. These students has completed some teacher education courses before the internship, such as Teaching Design of English Class, English Teaching Skills, Interpretation of English Teaching, and Education Research Method, etc., thus, they have a certain teaching knowledge and skills. In the first half of 2021, they were allocated to various primary and secondary schools in the local counties for a semester's internship; they undertook English teaching or part-time teacher in charge of the class. This study will measure and analyze the teaching efficacy of these normal university students, aiming at solving the following three questions: (1) what are the basic characteristics of teaching efficacy of normal university students majoring in English before their internship as a volunteer teacher? (2) After a semester's internship, did his/her teaching efficacy change? and what kinds of changes have taken place? (3) What are the factors that influence the change of teaching efficacy?

4.2 Research Process

A combination of quantitative and qualitative analysis was used to measure and analyze the teaching efficacy of the research subject, and questionnaires and interviews were adopted as research tools.

Questionnaire survey method. It is mainly used to measure the teaching efficacy status of the research subjects before and after the internship. After the completion of the questionnaire survey at each stage, SPSS26.0 is used to conduct periodical data analysis and overall data analysis of the questionnaire.

Interview method. Six students are selected from the research subjects for interview and recording, and two interviews before and after the internship are conducted respectively. The interviews are used to deeply explore the subtle changes in the subjective emotions of the normal university students before and after the internship.

5. FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS

5.1 Questionnaires

The mean value and standard deviation of the two subscales were obtained by adding the scores of the general teaching efficacy scale and the personal teaching efficacy scale of normal university students and dividing by the number of each item. The total scores of the two subscales were added and divided by the total number of items to obtain the mean and standard deviation of the total scale of teacher's teaching efficacy. In order to further analyze the current situation of teaching efficacy of normal university students, taking "3.8" as the theoretical median, the normal university students whose average score of various indicators of teaching efficacy is greater than or equal to 4.6 are classified as high scores, and those whose average score is greater than or equal to 3.8 and less than 4.6 are classified as average. Normal university students with an average score of less than 3.8 are classified as low score.

Table 1
Analysis of teaching efficacy before internship

Dimension	Mean	Std. deviation
General teaching efficacy	4.39	0.73
Personal teaching efficacy	4.07	0.54
Overall teaching efficacy	4.21	0.52

As shown in Table 1, before the internship, the mean value of general teaching efficacy of normal university students was 4.39, the mean value of personal teaching efficacy was 4.07, and the mean value of overall teaching efficacy was 4.21. This indicates that the sample of normal university students' teaching efficacy was above the average level before the internship. The reason is that for English normal university students, their education makes them believe that education plays an important role in students' growth, so the general teaching efficacy is relatively high. However, before the internship, they did not have too much teaching experience, lack of experience, and could not apply the theories they learned into practice. They lacked confidence in teaching students

well, thus, resulting in low personal teaching efficacy compared with general teaching efficacy.

Table 2
Analysis of teaching efficacy after internship

Dimension	Mean	Std. deviation
General teaching efficacy	4.39	0.65
Personal teaching efficacy	4.04	0.44
Overall teaching efficacy	4.20	0.43

As can be seen from Table 2, all the mean values of the general teaching efficacy, personal teaching efficacy and overall teaching efficacy of normal university students after internship are above the average level. Similar to the pre-internship, the personal teaching efficacy of normal university students after the internship is still at the lowest value of the three dimensions; And compared with the pre-internship, personal teaching efficacy decreased. The reason is that teaching efficacy is a long-term dynamic development process, which needs to go through different stages of psychological process, and the change of teaching efficacy is still in a complicated transitional period.

Table 3
Comparison of teaching efficacy before and after internship

Dimension	Mean difference	P
General teaching efficacy (pre-internship - post-internship)	0.000	1.000
Personal teaching efficacy (pre-internship - post-internship)	0.031	0.784
Overall teaching efficacy (pre-internship - post-internship)	0.014	0.863

Table 3 shows that before and after the internship, the mean values of general teaching efficacy are equal, and there is little difference between personal teaching efficacy and overall teaching efficacy. Before and after the internship, there was no significant difference in the scores of teaching efficacy in the three dimensions (all P values were greater than 0.05), which indicated that there was no significant difference in the teaching efficacy of normal university students in the two periods. This indicates that the teaching efficacy of normal university students at this stage is in the process of dynamic and complex change, and the change of teaching efficacy cannot be directly reflected in the quantitative data, so the conclusion can be more accurate only with the necessary qualitative research.

5.2 Interviews

Teaching efficacy includes cognition and emotion. The questionnaire mainly measures the cognitive aspects of teaching efficacy and objectively analyzes the general changes of teaching efficacy of normal university students. The following will use the interview method to deeply explore the subtle changes in the subjective emotions of normal university students. The interviews were divided into pre-internship and post-internship. The interview

questions before the internship are: Question 1, what are the reasons for being a teacher and what is your attitude towards this profession? Question 2, what do you think of teachers' teaching and students' learning? Question 3, What are the factors that influence student achievement, and which do you think is the most important? After the internship: Question 4, What is the overall evaluation of the education internship? Question 5, What efforts have you made in response to the difficulties encountered during the internship? Do you think your efforts effective? Question 6, Is there any change in teachers' professional identity after the internship? Questions 2 and 3 were used to understand the general teaching efficacy of normal college students before the internship; Question 5 aims to understand the teaching problem solving effectiveness of personal teaching efficacy after the internship. Questions Q1 and Q6 aim to understand the attitude of normal university students towards the teaching profession and their enthusiasm for the profession, thus understand their sense of teaching efficacy. Question 4 is used to understand normal university students' views on the internship and analyze the teaching efficacy in the process of internship.

Table 4
Microscopic reflection of teaching efficacy

Student	Answers	Dimension
Student 2	Teaching is an interactive process.	General teaching efficacy
Student 3	Teachers should adjust his teaching according to the students' progress.	
Student 6	Teachers should treat each student equally.	
Student 2	School atmosphere directly affects students, and school factors are the most important.	
Student 3	Education has great influence on the students.	
Student 6	Teachers are the external factors.	
Student 2	Teaching is the most effective method for the students' progress.	Problem solving efficacy (Personal teaching efficacy)
Student 3	School education is as important as home education.	
Student 6	The most important factor is oneself.	
Student 1	There will be some adjustments in teaching methods and skills.	View of the internship (overall teaching efficacy)
Student 3	Ask teachers and classmates for some first aid.	
Student 6	Be more patient with the students.	
Student 3	Everyone will feel a sense of freshness and nervousness.	
Student 4	Internship is a great challenge, also a good exercise.	View of the Career (overall teaching efficacy)
Student 6	I loved my internship.	
Student 2	After I got in touch with education, I thought it was good to be a teacher.	
Student 3	There is a particularly noble sense of achievement in seeing students make progress under my leadership.	View of the Career (overall teaching efficacy)
Student 5	I think it is great to be a teacher.	

Table 4 shows part of the answers from the students during the interview. As can be seen from the table,

normal university students agree with the interaction between teachers and students, and they think that school education is important for students' development, and also affirm the importance of education, school and teachers. They are full of confidence in future teaching, this indicates that the general teaching efficacy of normal university students is at a high level before the internship; It can be seen from the students' answers to the problems that all the normal university students have a positive attitude towards the problems encountered during the internship. The positive emotions and efforts indicate that the emergence and solution of English teaching problems in the internship contribute to the improvement of the personal teaching efficacy of normal university students; All the six students agreed that the education practice is a very precious experience. Through personal participation and experience, they know the efficient way to make effective action to reflect continuously during the internship, they also know how to improve the ability of teaching, and how to create a good interpersonal relationship, thus promoting the improvement of the teaching efficacy; Professional identity has a positive impact on teaching efficacy (Tang, 2014). It can be seen from the table that after educational practice, normal university students have a strong career enthusiasm, which reflects their positive professional identity and promotes the improvement of their teaching efficacy.

5.3 The Influencing Factors to Teaching Efficacy

During the internship, the teaching efficacy of normal university students is mainly affected by individual experience, interpersonal relationship and emotional state. Teachers feel a sense of achievement when they help students with their English. The main problems in English teaching are the lack of interest in learning and the fear of students. The advantage of English teaching is that English is a universal language, which is conducive to normal university students majoring English to optimize their teaching strategies with their love for English and professionalism, stimulate students' interest in learning and help them overcome the fear. All these have effectively accumulated successful experience for normal university students majoring English and have a positive impact on teaching efficacy; The interpersonal communication factors in school also have a great influence on the teaching efficacy of normal university students. The internship is also an important assessment process, so normal university students will try to build good interpersonal relationship (including the relationship between teachers and students and the relationship between instructors and them) in order to gain positive evaluation. The friendly communication between the interns and the students during the internship stimulates the sense of teaching efficacy. The attitude of the internship instructors is influenced by the positive atmosphere created by the normal university students and

the internship, and they will actively play the role of the guidance teachers as role models. Therefore, during the internship, normal university students have a relatively harmonious interpersonal relationship; Most normal university students treat the practice with a positive and active attitude, and the continuous cultivation of this positive emotion and attitude is conducive to the individual's enthusiasm for the occupation, and the improvement of the teaching efficiency.

CONCLUSION

This study explores the influence of internship as a volunteer teacher in primary and secondary schools on teaching efficacy of normal university students, discusses the general characteristics of teaching efficacy of normal university students, and makes a comparative analysis of teaching efficacy before and after the internship, and also finds out the reasons for the change. Firstly, the general teaching efficacy, personal teaching efficacy and overall teaching efficacy of normal university students were above the average level before and after the internship, and personal teaching efficacy was the lowest among the three. Secondly, internship enhanced the teaching efficacy of normal university students, daily teaching activities and problem solving improved their personal teaching efficacy, while positive practice view and strong professional identity reflected the improvement of their overall teaching efficacy. Thirdly, the main reasons for the change of teaching efficacy are personal experience, interpersonal relationship and emotional state. Fourthly, the author also gives some suggestions on normal university students' education; they are, increasing the proportion of practical knowledge, improving the level of cooperation with the internship base to create a good internship atmosphere, guiding normal university students to conduct fun teaching to improve the students' enthusiasm in English learning in primary and secondary schools.

Of course, there are some limitations in this study. Only normal university students majoring English are selected as a sample to carry out the study. The sample coverage will be expanded in the future to make the research results more convincing.

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