

A Study on Building a “Three Wholes” Long-Term Mechanism for Tuition-Free Normal University Students’ Education on Career Aspiration

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Abstract

The establishment and achievement of tuition-free normal university students’ lofty and unswerving teaching aspirations is closely associated with the implementation of the state tuition-free policy for normal university students. It has a direct impact on the improvement of the quality of China’s future education, and is the core of cultivating tuition-free normal students. In this sense, the education in terms of their career aspirations plays a vital role. The paper is of the belief that building a long-term “three wholes” mechanism which includes whole process, whole participation and whole direction is an inherent requirement of enhancing the effectiveness of the career aspiration education on the part of tuition-free normal university students.

Key words: Tuition-free normal university students; Career aspiration education; Long-term mechanism

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INTRODUCTION

The fundamental purpose of resuming the implementation of tuition-free policy for normal university students is to train a large number of outstanding teachers, promote educators to run schools, encourage more excellent young people to be lifelong teachers, meet the people’s ardent desire for a high-quality education, improve the overall national education quality, promote equity in education and achieve the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation. Thus, the establishment and achievement of tuition-free normal university students’ lofty and unswerving teaching aspirations is closely associated with the implementation of the state tuition-free policy for students majoring in education, has a direct impact on the improvement of the quality of China’s future education, and is the core of the cultivation of tuition-free normal university students. Nevertheless, the establishment and achievement of their lofty career aspirations have to undergo a complex process influenced by a certain environment and education in which such factors as career cognition, career emotion, occupational volition, professional behavior are in a dialectical movement and balanced development. In this process, career aspiration education plays a vital role. Therefore, it is an inherent requirement for us to build a long-term “three wholes” mechanism to guarantee the whole process of education, the whole participation of the educated, and the whole direction of the education space, so that a three-dimensional and complete education pattern will be formed to enhance the effectiveness of the career aspiration education on the part of normal university students who receive tuition-free education.

1. WHOLE PROCESS: THE TIME MECHANISM

The establishment and achievement of tuition-free normal university students’ teaching aspirations should go

through a process which is from perceptual understanding to rational knowledge, from abstractness to concreteness, from instability to stability. The writer believes that this kind of education should be throughout the learning and growing process of tuition-free normal university students; in specific, it should not only be conducted in the process of “learning to be a teacher”, but should also extend backward to their learning process in the secondary schools and extend forward to the whole process of their professional development as a teacher.

1.1 Enhancing Career Cognition Education in the Process of Learning in Secondary Schools

The students in secondary schools who have just entered into the preadolescence enjoy an expanding scope of knowledge and an improving level of awareness. Besides, their self-consciousness begins to wake up. So they are the most energetic, dynamic, imaginative group who start to design their future based on their academic achievement and social value standard, and they try to develop a longing and fantasy for their future career. During this period, if we conduct career aspiration education, the secondary school students will develop a preliminary understanding towards the teaching profession. Meanwhile, the noble charisma, profound knowledge and superb teaching art of those outstanding secondary school teachers will exert great influence on these students' immature mind, thus strengthening and consolidating their knowledge about the teaching profession. Under the guidance of such knowledge about the teaching work, some of the students will tend to admire and aspire to become a teacher. Studies have shown that students' life experience gained before entering the normal universities are of great significance to their educational ideas, teaching and professional development. In general, it is more difficult to change their previous cognition on the teaching work. In the absence of special attention and special support environment, the educational concepts developed before entering the normal universities will serve as a “filter” for students' learning in the campus, making it difficult for normal students to totally accept or accept the new and more reasonable educational concepts with reservations. This will limit their learning scope of the teacher specialization theory and confine the range of their professional activities to the training of teachers' professional skills and techniques (Ye & Bai, 2001).

1.2 Emphasizing a Systematic Education on Career Aspiration in the Process of “Learning to Be a Teacher”

University education is the key to firming tuition-free normal university students' teaching career aspirations, and is also of great importance to the systematic education on their teaching career aspirations. We should carry out various educational activities for them in accordance with the characteristics of their teaching career aspirations at different stages of development, and try to “grasp the both

ends and lay a solid foundation between”, that is, not to lower the standard of the education guidance for freshmen as well as the graduates, and put particular emphasis on improving the students who are in the middle stage of studying in universities.

First of all, we should grasp the enrollment education, improving tuition-free normal university students' professional knowledge. If the students do not develop a correct understanding of the teaching work in the secondary schools or the reason for their application for tuition-free education is economic problem or the choice is not made out of their own will, then conducting enrollment education will be a good opportunity and breakthrough for their education on the teaching career aspirations, and it will firmly exert a profound impact on students' professional development in terms of the teaching work. At this stage, we should focus on students' changes on their mind and psychology, pay attention to the clashes between their ideas, guide them to clarify the teachers' professional goals, understand the teachers' professional development and employment prospects, and develop an identity and sense of responsibility for the teaching work. Up until now, some universities who are training teachers without tuition have actively explored effective mechanisms for conducting enrollment education on students' teaching career aspiration. For example, Northeast Normal University organized an enrollment education with the “Five Guidance” as the theme (i.e., policy guidance, model guidance, learning-life guidance, vocational guidance and teachers' soul guidance), helping the students majoring in education without tuition understand the policy, get to know the role of teachers, appreciate teachers' soul, and ultimately establish the teaching career aspirations, that is, to be willing, delighted and aspired to teach.

Second, we should grasp the daily education, making students' life-long teaching beliefs steady and firm. In fact, making the life-long teaching beliefs of students majoring in education without tuition steady and firm is fundamental for conducting the teaching career aspiration education, so it should be through the whole process of daily education. Besides, teaching beliefs are the organic unity of teachers' profound professional cognition and the ardent professional emotion, reflecting the career expectations and professional values of teachers, explaining their career choice, goals, ideas, and professional development, and constituting a cornerstone for teachers to take any measures. In this sense, it is “the direction, principle, motivation and perpetual power of teachers, and this kind of career belief is the core driving force for teachers to be dedicated to the teaching work” (Qi, 2009). Undoubtedly, universities who are training teachers without tuition have recognized the importance of making students' life-long teaching beliefs steady and firm in daily education, so they have explored a series of successful methods to meet the end.

For example, Beijing Normal University “has penetrated the education of students’ teaching beliefs coupled with the development of their teaching professional quality throughout the entire process of cultivation. During the four-year college education, Beijing Normal University have taken advantage of the first teaching course and a variety of educational activities in the second course to create a cultural atmosphere of loving education and of the glory of being a teacher. It also guided students majoring in education without tuition to establish lofty career aspirations and firm career beliefs, forming noble professional ethics, develop good qualities such as being adjustable to the teaching work and being willing to teach, establish the lofty ideals of life-long teaching, and cultivate students’ sense of glory, responsibility and mission of being teachers” (Huang & Wu, 2011).

Third, we should pay high attention to the education before students leaving universities, enhancing students’ career adaptability. For the tuition-free normal university students who are going to work as a teacher, they have to face a role transition from student to teacher. They have both great expectation and fear towards their future. Therefore, it is a golden opportunity for us to conduct the career aspiration education before their leaving universities. We should put the focus of education on encouraging them to “be dedicated to the teaching career and start from now”, further enhance their career adaptability, and advocate them to be extraordinary in the ordinary teaching position.

1.3 Following up Career Aspiration Education in the Process of Professional Development

When first entering into the teaching work, the tuition-free normal university students will encounter many new situations and new problems, and sometimes an inconsistency between the job reality and their imagination will even emerge, so they will in a bad mood. At that time, we should continuously follow up the career aspiration education, guiding them to adjust their mentality to needs of the post. In the process of their professional development, we should highlight the guidance for them to follow the standards in the teaching circle, form good moral habits, improve their professional and ethical standards as a teacher, and establish a sense of dedication. Besides, the students should also be guided to develop a sense of dignity and honor, clear dedication to work, and a sense of accomplishment towards the teaching profession, so that the students will work hard, strive to improve their professional standards, and make extraordinary achievements in the ordinary teaching position.

2. WHOLE PARTICIPATION: THE BODY MECHANISM

The establishment and achievement of tuition-free normal university students’ career aspirations is a complicated and

systematic project, in which all the members of society assume a certain educational responsibility. Tuition-free normal university students spend most of their time in schools, so the management cadres, teachers, counselors (class teachers), support workers in schools shoulder the great responsibility of conducting career aspiration education to these students. These people have their own part to play, and there is a clear division of labor, so that an overall pattern of imparting knowledge and educating people can be established. Apart from this, the teachers universities which implement the tuition-free policy should integrate the education resources, establish a sound internal mechanism, and penetrate the career aspiration education into such work as education management, knowledge transference, and logistics services, so that a whole-participation education mechanism that goes down from leaders to ordinary working staff can be formed.

2.1 Leaders of All Levels Should Live up to Their Organizational and Managing Responsibility

Leaders of university and faculties should be highly responsible for the country and people, correctly understand the strategic intent of the implementation of tuition-free policy for students majoring in education, and innovate the relevant educational concepts and training models. Besides, they should give first priority to the teaching career aspiration education when cultivating students, care about and support the career aspiration education, make good overall planning, and provide guarantees in terms of institution, manpower, and funds to the establishment and achievement of students’ career aspirations. Furthermore, leaders of all the university departments as well as the managerial cadres assume the responsibility to organize and coordinate students’ career aspiration education. They should develop a democratic working style, improve their work efficiency, center around the people, change their management concepts, and build an equal and democratic relations with students, so that students could appreciate their personality charisma in the contacts and exchanges with them, thus truly achieving education through management.

2.2 Teachers Should Be Good Models

The power of examples is endless. Since teachers have frequent contacts with students, they are in a natural advantage of giving students career aspiration education. Their every move and every word could cause tuition-free normal university students to emulate, thus exerting a subtle influence to the development of students’ career aspirations. Therefore, teachers should have a high sense of responsibility and dedication, teach students by precept and example, and set a good example to students with their good character, living style, thoughts and personality. In addition, teachers should guide students to love education, cultivate students’ vocational emotion, and firm their teaching beliefs. Last but not least, they should

respect, care about, and help students, hold a dialogue between heart and soul, and strengthen the educational effectiveness.

2.3 Counselors and Class Teachers Should Shoulder the Main Responsibility

Counselors are the backbone of conducting career aspiration education to tuition-free normal university students, and are the life guiders of the students. As for the class teachers, they guide these students in such aspects as thinking, learning and living. Counselors and class teachers should innovate the ideological and political education according to the particularity of tuition-free normal university students; they should be targeted to carry out career aspiration education, and enhance students' social responsibility; moreover, they should be strict with the students and urge students to strengthen the training on teachers' basic quality so that the students could be ready for the accomplishment of their career aspirations. Furthermore, counselors and class teachers should receive the special training on teachers' career aspirations, have the qualification and capability to carry out career aspiration education to the students majoring in education, and influence students with their good morality and dedication to the teaching work, thus becoming the supervisor of students' professional development.

2.4 Support Workers Should Earnestly Perform Their Duty of Educating People Through Services

Support workers in colleges and universities shoulder the great responsibility of conducting career aspiration education to tuition-free normal university students. Deng Xiaoping once pointed out, "the task of logistics is to serve research, education, researchers and educators. It should create conditions for researchers and educators, so that they can dedicate themselves to the scientific research and education work." Good logistics offered by support workers could influence and educate the students majoring in education without tuition, so that students could invest more time and energy to their professional development as a teacher. To meet the end, the support workers should clarify their duty of "educating through services", effectively address a variety of life issues, guarantee the smooth progress of students' daily life and study, and do practical things for the tuition-free normal university students.

2.5 Tuition-Free Normal University Students Should Educate Themselves

According to Marxism, external factors are the conditions for things' development, while internal factors are the basis for the development of things. In this sense, the actual effects of career aspiration education depend on students' self-reflection and retrospection. Self-education includes self-awareness, self-evaluation, self-monitoring and conscious execution. Tuition-free normal university students should consciously learn the tuition-free policy

for students majoring in education, specify their rights and obligations, get to know the strategic significance of the policy, and enhance their responsibility of era and sense of historic mission; besides, they should actively learn the expertise and develop the abilities required by being a qualified teacher, and have a good career planning; moreover, they should widely participate in the social practices including teaching probation and internships, improve their understanding of the teaching work in practices, reinforce teachers' professional skills, cultivate vocational emotions, and firm their teaching beliefs; last but not least, they should actively learn from the outstanding teachers, attach importance to retrospection, and be courageous to correct the mistakes in their understanding and behaviors, so as to make them close to perfection in terms of the professional development as a teacher.

3. WHOLE DIRECTION: THE SPACE MECHANISM

The realization process of tuition-free normal university students' career aspiration education is a process in which the students interact with the places where they are at including society, school, and family. In this sense, in order to effectively carry out the career aspiration education to these students, we must build a educational space mechanism in which family education is the foundation, school education is the main front, and social education gives support. In this way, a "sister trinity" (family, society, and school) will be established.

3.1 The Society Should Improving the Policy and Foster an Environment of Esteeming Teachers and Education

The tuition-free policy for students majoring in education has provided an institutional guarantee to tuition-free normal university students, which has legally binding force and coercive power. However, there are still many defects in the policy, thus it needs revision and improvement through educational practices. First, we can establish a workable exit mechanism. For example, students could be given the right to choose whether to pursue the tuition-free education major; we can allow any students who are not suitable for teaching to quit their teaching work. Second, we can implement strict punishment measures. For example, any students who are persuaded to quit studying by or are expelled from schools for personal violations of laws thus unable to fulfill the national education obligations, or the students who cannot properly fulfill the obligations after graduation should be held accountable, and pay the training costs coupled with the liquidated damages. Third, we can establish a special subsidy and reward system for rural primary and secondary school teachers. For example, we could formulate preferential policies for teachers in rural areas

when carrying out professional evaluation and conducting faculty training; besides, we could also build a national special subsidy fund for primary and secondary school teachers in rural areas and give rural teachers special subsidies per month; apart from these, we could establish an annual system of commendation and reward for rural schools teachers and properly increase the special funds to anyone who receives the rewards. Fourth, we can build a civil servant system for primary and secondary school teachers, bringing these teachers into the management scope of “Civil Servant Law”, so that primary and secondary school teachers could enjoy the salary and welfare given to civil servants.

Only by living in a rich social atmosphere of esteeming teachers and education can tuition-free normal university students cherish the teaching positions and have the willingness to dedicate themselves to long-term teaching and life-long teaching. Wen Jiaobao once pointed out, “The goal of the tuition-free policy for students majoring in education is to send the strong signal of respecting teachers and education to the whole society, attract the best and most talented students to be teachers, and encourage more outstanding people to be life-long educators; besides, it also means to further foster a rich atmosphere of esteeming teachers and education in the whole society, so that the teaching work could become the most respected and the most enviable profession” (Wen, 2011). In this sense, we should respect teachers and education, get to know the teaching work, and let teachers live with more dignity and more professional pride. As for the governments, they should improve and protect the occupational status, social status and political status of teachers, safeguard the legitimate rights and interests of teachers, and attract talented people to dedicate themselves to education. At the same time, the mass media should promote the main theme of the society, create a public opinion of respecting teachers and education, spread the deeds of outstanding teachers, and enhance the professional efficacy of tuition-free normal university students.

3.2 Schools Should Build the Campus Culture of Respecting Teachers and Education, Open Career Aspiration Education Courses, and Expand Educational Practices

We should construct the campus culture with the theme of respecting teachers and education. Colleges and universities should permeate such factors as “respecting teachers and education”, “willingness to teach”, “advocating teachers’ ethics” “setting good examples to others” into all the aspects of campus culture construction, infiltrate and influence the career aspirations of normal university students who are receiving free education, and enhance their professional emotion. First, we can enrich school activities and improve the attractiveness of the campus culture. For instance, we could carry out

such activities as informal discussion with schoolfellows, keynote speeches, essay competitions, photography exhibitions, film screenings, discussion and exchange. Second, we could optimize the activity content, and enhance the appeal of the campus culture. To meet the end, we could organized such activities as “to be an honorable teacher”, “After growing up, I will become a teacher like you”, and the planning of training the overall quality of students. Third, we can permeate “respecting teachers and education” into the building of schools’ material culture. For example, we can name campus roads with rich educational words or educators’ names, establish well-known educators’ statues in the campus, and hang educators’ portraits, photographs, and biographies in teaching buildings.

Meanwhile, it is necessary to open career aspiration education courses for students majoring in education without tuition, and make it as the basic requirement of gaining the Teachers’ Qualification Certificate. The content of teaching career aspiration education should include the guidance of the professional values, policy guidance, psychological guidance, guidance of students’ professional development as a teacher, and employment skills guidance. We should respect the vocational tendency and choices of students, make flexible use of various teaching methods based on the students’ physical and mental characteristics. Besides, we should not only make them develop a profound understanding of the social status and value of the teaching profession, establish lofty teaching aspirations, but also teach them to master the scientific methods to achieving their teaching aspirations. In addition, we should exploit the educational materials in other disciplines and penetrate them into the various courses of career aspiration education.

Last but not least, we should enrich students’ educational practices and strengthen their confidence and capability of teaching. Social practice is an important part of tuition-free normal university students’ career aspiration education, which plays an irreplaceable role in such aspects as promoting their understanding of the society and education, sharpening their abilities, encouraging them to serving society, exercising their willpower, and cultivating their character. Colleges and universities should not put focus only on students’ internship but should enrich the educational practices. First, they can frequently organize students to take study tours in typical primary and secondary schools in rural and urban areas, so that the students can build a direct understand of the teaching profession, and enhance their perceptions of the teaching work. Second, they can take such measures as conducting surveys and personal interviews to enable more students to understand the status quo of grass-rooted education, recognize their responsibility and missions, thus sublimate their career emotions and beliefs. For example, Northeast Normal University launched a theme activity named “The Basic Education in My Eyes”,

organizing thousands of tuition-free normal students to teach in schools scattered all around China and to conduct field research on the status quo of China's basic education as well as on education equality. Third, they can guide tuition-free normal university students to form a youth volunteer service team and make use of their spare time to go deep into the primary and secondary schools nearby to conduct youth volunteer activities. In this way, they can have a better understanding of the development of the local students and teachers, cultivate their teaching capability, enhance their teaching career emotion, and their beliefs of being a teacher. For example, "The Union of Future Educators" established by Southwest University organized tuition-free normal university students to spend their weekends in caring for the left-over children, helping primary and secondary school students learn, and develop these students' hobbies and interest, so that the professional capability of normal students receiving free education have been enhanced, so have been their career aspirations.

3.3 Family Should Develop Good Occupational Values, and Properly Guide the Students to Devote Themselves to Education

Family is the first school of a person after his/her birth, and is also the cradle of his/her personal growth. So family education is charged with the responsibility of imparting

cultural knowledge, develop morality, guide conduct and behavior, and help him or her make a living on his/her own. There is no doubt that the ideological quality, values, occupational experience and codes of conduct of family members will exert a profound and significant impact on the establishment and development of tuition-free normal university students' morality and career aspirations. In this sense, parents should form good professional values, guide and encourage their children to combine the personal ideals with the needs of the state and society by virtue of the affinity and authority of blood relationships, so that the students will be determined to engage in teaching work, firm their teaching beliefs, and finally achieve their values in the ordinary teaching position.

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