

A Case Study of English Teacher Development in Hebei Normal University of Science and Technology

UNE ÉTUDE DE CAS DU DÉVELOPPEMENT DE PROFESSEUR D'ANGLAIS À L'UNIVERSITÉ POLYTECHNIQUE DE NORMALE DE HEBEI

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Abstract: English teacher training is a very important part of teacher development in a university. This article reports a case study of English teacher development in Hebei Normal University of Science and Technology. A training program was given to improve the professional level of the young English Teachers. The result shows the school-based training improved teachers' professional competence and received a good training effect. Several effective training patterns are proposed to enhance the English teacher development in universities.

Key words: Teacher Development; English Teacher; Training Pattern; Teacher Education

Résumé: La formation de professeur d'Anglais est une part très importante de développement des professeurs au sein d'une université. Cet article rapporte une étude de cas du développement de professeur d'Anglais à l'Université Polytechnique de normale a Hebei. Un programme de formation a été donné pour améliorer le niveau professionnel des jeunes professeurs d'Anglais. Le résultat montre la compétence professionnelle des professeurs améliorés par la formation scolaire et reçoit un bon effet d'exerçant. On propose plusieurs modèles efficaces de formation pour augmenter le développement de professeur d'Anglais aux universités.

Mots clés: Développement de professeur; Professeur d'Anglais; Modèle de formation; Formation de pédagogie

1. INTRODUCTION

The 21 century is the era of knowledge. The new era requires more and more about the professional development of English teachers. There are a lot of young English teachers in service now because of the expansion of student enrollment in recent years, which has brought both energy and challenges to universities. Therefore, the training and development of the young in-service teachers has become the primary task of the universities in China now.

2. THE CURRENT SITUATION OF ENGLISH TEACHER TRAINING

2.1 English teachers' age, education, and professional status

Take Hebei Normal University of Science and Technology as an example. The total number of the English teachers is 50, and most of them are young. The number of teachers whose age is under 30 is 15, which accounts for 30%; teachers whose age ranges from 30 to 40 are 17, accounting for 34%; 8 teachers are over 40, accounting for 16%. The number of teachers who has got a master's degree is 8, and those who are still working for a master's degree are 12, accounting for 40% of the total; 60% of teachers has only a bachelor's degree. Among all the teachers, 7 are associated professors or professors, accounting for 14%; 12 teachers are assistant professors; 31 teachers are lecturers, accounting for 62%. The structure of

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the professional status of English teachers in this university is relatively reasonable, which help to facilitate English teaching in full scale.

This teaching team is relatively young. On the one hand, the teachers have comprehensive modern knowledge, strong language skills, quick thinking capacity and energy. On the other hand, they are not experienced, weak in the teaching practice and pedagogical research, and inflexible in choosing teaching method, which could not meet the teachers' requirement of higher education.

2.2 The current situation of English teacher training

The university started to enroll English major students in 2002. Since then, 30 English teachers have participated in various educational training programs. Among them, two have the opportunity to go abroad. One of them went to the United Kingdom to work for a Master Degree. 15 took part in the training program for PETS. 18 participated in the English Teaching Theory and Practice Seminar organized by the Foreign Language Teaching and Research Press. 12 participated in "English Teaching Seminar" organized by the Higher Education Press. A questionnaire was given to all the teachers who had attended different training programs. The changes of the teachers before and after training are showed as follows.

Table 1: Teachers' Changes before and after Training

Reading & listening	Not improved	Improved slightly	Improved significantly
Percentage	3	70	27
Using English in class	Not improved	Improved slightly	Improved significantly
Percentage	6	61	33
Background knowledge	Low	No difference	Improved significantly
Percentage	0	87	13
Application of new teaching methods	Seldom	Normal	Often
Percentage	0	57	43
The teaching methods learned	No help	Help slightly	Help significantly
Percentage	0	17	83

The data in the table shows that the teachers' ability improved obviously after the relevant training of professional knowledge and education. However, because of the limited funds of the university, it is impossible to give all the teachers opportunities to attend training programs to develop themselves. Only a small group of teachers can get the chance to receive further education. In order to help more English teachers, especially young teachers to get a professional training, it is necessary to use the resources in the university to develop a school-based training program, in which the experienced teachers can help young teachers to develop professionally. Therefore, a school-based training program was conducted in Hebei Normal University of Science and Technology. A research group is formed, including both professional researchers and young inexperienced teachers, to improve the development of the teachers in the whole group.

3. SUBJECT AND RESEARCH METHOD

All the participants in the project are from the Foreign Language Department, Hebei Normal University of Science and Technology. The research group consists of 3 professional teachers as instructors, 5 middle-aged teachers as guides, 15 young teachers as training participants. The experiment lasted for one year. After the experiment, the data is collected through a questionnaire and an interview.

4. PROCEDURE

The research is about a school-based training program, a study organization set up at the Foreign Language Department. The research was done cooperatively by the teachers and researchers. At the beginning stage of the research, the professional researchers offered some help in dividing the participants into different groups of projects, drawing up plans, studying the systematic research methods, etc. Gradually they develop into a research group of mutual-support, mutual-learning and mutual-improvement.

The research was carried out under the training pattern of a combination of team coaching and individual coaching. During the first semester, the participants finished the theory learning period. They attended 8 different lectures and seminars about the basic theories of foreign language teaching. At the same time, the participants were asked to do some self-study assignments, which help to improve their theory level of foreign language teaching.

From the second semester, the participants are organized to do action research. The action research was focused on classroom instructions and classroom activities. First of all, the supervisors observed the young teacher's behaviors in classrooms, and wrote down their instructions and students' reactions in classrooms. During the break, the supervisors

gave advices at some obvious problems. After the class, the supervisors and the young teacher had a further discussion of the class, and come up with an improved solution to the problems, so as to help the young teacher to make some improvement in the teaching next day. Because the supervisees taught two or three classes of the same level, thus the repetitive action research can be done smoothly.

At the same time, the supervisees also took part in supervisors' research projects to learn research methods during this period. The supervisees were also encouraged and instructed to do research independently.

To make sure the research group function properly, measures were also taken to monitor the research by writing observation checklists, interview feedbacks, teaching dairies, study dairies, action research materials and research reports.

5. RESULT

5.1 The participation rate is high because the participants' enthusiasm is inspired

The training program is practical and effective because the teachers can receive the training on the spot, which inspired the enthusiasm of the participants in the research. The questionnaire shows that 100% of the participants like the training program.

5.2 The research explores a new school-based training mode for young English teachers

Self-study pattern. The self-study pattern helps the participants to develop themselves based on their needs and specialties, which also enlarges their time and space of the training. During the training, the teachers are asked to do their own plans, or study under the guidance of the supervisor. The young teachers are also asked to read books of theory, write their ideas and experiences about teaching, communicate with other teachers and apply the theory into the teaching. Every young teacher is required to read one to two books of pedagogy every semester, and write down notes and their ideas. The time of self-study for the young teachers is no less than 200 hours in a year, with the monitoring and evaluation of the department.

Project research. By participating in doing a project, the participants have opportunities to study and research with other teachers to develop their professional level. For instance, the Foreign Language Department is doing two projects of the province and two projects of the university. By participating in projects in the training program, all the teachers are encouraged to do scientific research in their teaching.

Reflective teaching. This pattern accelerates the young teachers' development and improves professional level of the entire group by thinking about the teaching reflectively after class, revising teaching plans according to the feedbacks and writing reflective dairies.

Lectures. By inviting famous experts, professors and teachers from home and abroad to give lectures, the young teachers have opportunities to learn more teaching theories and broaden their horizons efficiently.

Group discussion. The teachers join in different groups and discuss the problems appeared in their teaching freely to find out solutions to the problems.

5.3 The professional competence of the young teachers is improved greatly

The data from the surveys (questionnaires and interviews) conducted in September, 2007 and September, 2008 shows that the professional competence of the young teachers is improved greatly.

a. The consciousness of the importance of teacher training and life-long learning is strengthened.

Question: "What role does school-based training program play in improving teachers' competence?" The result was showed as follows.

Table 2: The Importance of the School-based Training

	very important		important		medium		not important	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
before	5	33.3	6	40	2	13.3	2	13.3
after	10	66.7	4	26.6	1	7.7	0	0

b. The professional competence of the young teachers is improved.

Table 3: The Professional Competence of the Young Teachers before and after Experiment

	excellent		good		medium		bad	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
before	1	7.7	5	33.3	6	40	3	20
after	5	33.3	6	40	3	20	1	7.7

Table 3 shows that the percentage of medium and bad in professional competence is decreased after the training, while the percentage of excellent is increased, which indicates that the abilities of the teachers have been strengthened after the training. The classroom observations and the interviews of students also show that the young teachers have made great progress in class management and teaching skills. Therefore, the school-based training pattern has shortened the period of young teachers' self-development and the improvement is obvious.

c. The teachers show great interests in research, and their research level is developed.

Table 4: The Result of the Young Teachers' Research Level before and after Experiment

	Always	Sometimes with published essay	Sometimes without published essay	Never
before	0 0	1 7.7	1 7.7	13 86.7
after	5 33.3	4 30.8	5 33.3	1 7.7

After the training, the young teachers are more willing in doing scientific research, and their research abilities and levels are improved.

6. CONCLUSION AND DISCUSSION

Hebei Normal University of Science and Technology is a provincial university in Hebei province, China. There are 50 English teachers in Foreign Language Department in the university. Among them, 15 are under 30, accounting for 30% of the total. The teachers are in charge of the teaching of 12 classes of the English majors and all the non-English majors. Because of the lack of money, the teachers got very few chances to take part in the teacher training program off the job. However, by developing the school-based training program, we promoted the professional development of the young teachers in the university. The project is very effective in improving the quality of the entire teaching group in the university.

The experiment is a success in solving some problems appeared in teacher training, such as the lack of funds and practicality. The results are as follows:

1) The management and teaching mode of the training program is scientific and practical.

The management of the training program was based on the modern education concept, following the rules of teacher development and the principles of the teacher education. The training program is self-study centered and school-based, aiming at improving the professional level of all the teachers.

2) The training program has made best use of the local teaching resources.

The local teachers and researchers in the university are the major resources of the teacher training program in this experiment. In this way, the teachers can not only give full play to their professional knowledge and skill, they can also improve mutually in communicating with others and doing the research.

3) The training is very appropriate and effective.

The school-based training program meets the needs of young teachers and the situation of the university. The training patterns of the program are various. It made it easier to inspire the enthusiasm, initiative and creativity of the young teachers, which also makes the training more appropriate and effective.

In conclusion, the result shows that the experiment has achieved what had been expected. Further education of the young teachers is an important part of the teacher education in universities. The school-based training program is convenient to manage, cheap in expense, timesaving and effective. It has relatively little contradiction between work, study and training content. The participants were trained based on their needs. Therefore, the training program is very popular among the young teachers.

7. PROBLEMS AND IMPLICATIONS

This is a case study of English teacher development in Hebei Normal University of Science and Technology. Although the experiment achieved a lot, there are still some problems to be solved. The author hopes that the case study can bring some implications for further study of teacher development in the future.

1) The main factors that influence the school-based training program are the qualities of the academic leaders, supervisors, the teaching group and the conditions of the university. So it is necessary to change the ideas of the academic leaders and supervisors, strengthen their responsibilities and improve their professional level, so that the supervisors can actually become the leaders of the school-based teacher training.

2) The college teachers are under great pressure because they have to teach for long hours as many as 16 per week averagely. At the same time, most of the supervisors are leaders or backbone teachers. They have a lot of things to do besides the training program. So it is hard for them to spend a lot of time and energy on the training program.

3) Because the Foreign Languages Department is newly founded, the referent books for foreign language teaching and research is insufficient. Although we have bought some professional books, it is far from enough for the English teacher development of the university.

4) The knowledge and research ability of the supervisors is also a limitation to the training program. It is necessary to invite experts to give lectures regularly. Meanwhile, teachers should be organized to communicate with others from different colleges and universities as much as possible.

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