

Guidelines on Being Qualified Teachers for Normal School Students

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Abstract

The ultimate goal of pedagogical education is to enhance comprehensive quality of normal school students and cultivate qualified elementary and secondary school teachers. How to be a qualified teacher has been a complex issue for both normal school students themselves and educators in the process of achieving the aim. This paper argues that there are, during the process of training construction, some basic strategies that normal students should acquire to reach the goal: (a) improving professional skills; (b) stimulating learning motivation; (c) establishing positive teacher-student relationships; (d) pursuing self-fulfillment; and (e) building professional appearance.

Key words: Normal school students; Pedagogical education; Qualified teachers

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INTRODUCTION

That now we are in an era of information along with the rapid development of Internet and multimedia technology is undeniable. It has been entailing us involving in varieties of challenges and intense competitions under the background of global society. Education, as a means of advancement, plays a momentous role in building a prosperous, strong and powerful country. Therefore, it

is of great significance for normal school students to be a qualified teacher in order to cultivate talented persons and promote our national educational undertaking. The *Decisions of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China on the Reform of Education System* (1985) suggested that “all the pedagogical education, from preschool teacher training to higher teacher education, must be vigorously developed and strengthened. Normal colleges and universities should adhere to the school-running ideology for serving primary and secondary education.” That is to say, making arduous efforts to be a qualified normal school student and serve for basic education is the school-running guiding ideology and right direction of normal universities. Meanwhile, normal students, as the cradle of future teachers, should take actions.

However, the truth is the social identity of teacher profession is not as high as expected. Teacher, as a holy and consecrate job which dedicate to students’ integrated performance and educational achievements, is one of the most influential occupations in the world, “yet the profession is continuously mocked and put down instead of being revered and respected. A large majority of people have misconceptions about teachers and do not truly understand what it takes to be an effective teacher.” (Meador, 2016) As a teaching expert, Derrick Meador also remarked that there are numbers of people who do not have much of an eye for noticing “the daily challenges that teachers across the country must overcome to maximize the education their students receive” (Ibid.). Therefore, being a qualified, professional, effective teacher and being acknowledged by the society are not going to be easy. In order to receive high recognition from the students, their parents, schools and others, normal students should prepare to overcome all kinds of obstacles by dint of an indomitable spirit, master the teaching techniques and strategies, strengthen teachers’ role awareness and improve themselves in all aspects.

This paper is about the suggestions of preparing to be qualified teachers for normal students, to a certain extent, providing effective information for students' pre-service training and school educational programmes in normal schools or universities. Firstly, professional skill, as one of the most essential fundamental factors, is the key to determine teaching quality. Scientific professional skills not only include knowledge that we have learned from textbooks or academic achievements but also include physical health, mental health and moral cultivation. Secondly, student's motivation is termed as the self-desire to observe and gain knowledge driven by their own interest. As for a teacher, how to inspire learning motivation as well as critical thinking skills successfully has become an enormous challenge for a long time. The exploration in ways to stimulate students' learning motivation is introduced in this paper. Thirdly, it is about multifaceted relationships between students and teachers. It is undeniable that developing solid positive relationships with students is paramount in facilitating teaching, and in fostering academic success as well. This article also has engaged to explain how important it is to build such relationships as well as how to deal with it. Then, in the terms of self-fulfillment, teachers' education or self-fulfillment, invested with significance which teachers should pursue and fulfill, is a lifelong successive progress. In other words, teachers' fulfillment has no ending. Finally, elaborated details in building up an appropriate external image of professional teachers are included.

1. IMPROVING PROFESSIONAL SKILLS

As I have observed, professional skills as one of the most elementary and necessary factors, attach great importance to normal students. Not everyone can be a teacher to deliver knowledge to students. One of the most obvious differences between teachers and other ordinary people is that teachers take good command of professional skills. The professional skills which we have mentioned above not just emphasize what normal students have learned from abundant textbooks. Support for this view comes from a study by Fuquan Huang. Huang (2004) reported that "the system of contents and experiences reconstructed with links not only to society, science, and technology, but also to students' lives." To this point, current teaching need to lay particular emphasis on the basic requirements for students' knowledge and skills, on the processes and methods of students' learning, and on life emotions, characters, attitudes, and values. In addition, teachers should combine their experiences, keeping a good healthy physique and fine psychological quality. Only in this way can they set a good example for students to establish positive values and look at things in a proper

way, also, to form a sound constitution from exercises into the bargain.

Since we have known professional skills are of critical significance to pedagogical education, and then, as normal students, making every effort to improve professional skills is quite crucial. The Ministry of Education (2001) formulated and published "*Guidelines for the Curriculum Reform of Basic Education*" in which one of the main tasks of the curriculum reform was related to a reform of educational content, experiences, and teaching methods as well as a strengthening of teachers' education. In other words, China's central and local governments, as well as schools, are giving great attention to the direction of the current curriculum reform and creativity. Thus, by combining theory and practice, normal students or teachers are under obligation to work on the perfection of reforming and creating more efficient and effective educational approaches and instructional strategies. Being exposed to a variety of instructional strategies that align with their unique individualized learning style, students will enjoy studying and are likely to stay engaged longer with higher learning efficiency.

Then, normal students must have a lifelong study opinion which is, according to Wikipedia, "the ongoing, voluntary and self-motivated pursuit of knowledge for either personal or professional reasons" (*Lifelong Learning*, 2000). And since the late 20th century, technology has been increasingly developed, and provided adequate and effective in-service training, then students have better chances of learning more and performing more efficiently. (Mustafa, 1997) That is to say, teaching is a dynamic profession and teachers are in the position to update their knowledge frequently along with new knowledge about teaching and learning emerges. Therefore, normal students or teachers are required to have the crisis awareness and keep abreast of relevant developments of the specialty and employ it to continually refine their conceptual for conveying updated knowledge to students and explore pedagogical skills for further education.

Moreover, normal students should keep physical and mental health, especially mental health. I would like to tell you a true, heartbreaking news which happened in my hometown. Several days ago, a teacher in Rizhao, a seaside city of Shandong province, was reported to kill one student in her class. Police investigation showed that the teacher has serious mental disease. If the teacher had found her disease and been given earlier treatment, the accident would have been completely avoided. However, without any precautions, when unexpected disasters knocked, it's all late. This accident should act as a warning to teachers and normal students to realize the magnitude of maintaining psychological health. Listening to relaxing music, taking exercises, chatting with friends or family, and going on a trip are some good ways to free from pressure, and relieve physically and mentally.

2. STIMULATING LEARNING MOTIVATION

2.1 What Is Motivation?

Motivation is related to individuals' behavior and represents the reasons for people's actions, desires, and needs, in other words, "it gives behavior strength, purpose, and sustainability" (Reeve, 2013). Students' motivation is considered as the self-desire to observe and gain knowledge, which is driven by their own interest. As teachers, in the midst of interaction with students, it is universal for them in moments of intense fatigue to come up with any ideas or use any strategies to alter this kind of status quo that students are always giving passive cooperation in educational activities because of their low learning motivation. To help motivate students and find out what they are passionate about and arouse the interests of learning which is connected with their school works has been a tremendous challenge for both educators and parents for a long time. This section will give a particular introduction related on motivation and methods on how to deal with it.

2.2 Why Are Students Lack of Initiative?

The reason why students are lack of initiative is that the traditional examination-oriented education has long been deeply embedded in Chinese culture and Chinese students "have been trained in passive teacher-centered educational environments" (Gilardi & Reid, 2011). "Rote memorization or recitation were the standard teaching methods, past and future examination questions the specific focus" (Pepper, 1997). The examination system, focusing on "memorization and examination score rather than developing well-rounded individuals" (Dello-Iacovo, 2009) contributed to students' passive performance in learning.

2.3 How to Stimulate Students' Learning Motivation?

Since motivation has been widely acknowledged by both

educators and researchers as one of the key factors that influence the effect of students' learning, it is of great importance for normal students, the future teachers, to obtain the motivating strategies.

Firstly, set up appropriate goals for different level students. It seems that there exists diversity among the students' learning capacity. Take the differences into consideration, then teachers can help students to make up a short term goal for them to achieve. If the students have a certain goal, they will be ready to try it and take mindful action to complete it. Later, if they really make it a reality, then teachers can do students a favor with another more challenging aim and take the students to the next level.

Secondly, create a relaxing in-class atmosphere and eliminate students' tension. Therefore, teachers should dedicate to satisfy the learning needs in a way of increasing students' interest in learning and giving proper arrangements of teaching activities on in-class teaching, such as carrying out discussion, debating, situational teaching modes, and role play. Then teachers should encourage students to get involved in and enhance their learning interest and enthusiasm.

Thirdly, combine the in-class teaching with extra-curricular activities (see Figure 1). In the process of teaching, textbooks should be the main carriers of teaching and learning content, and wide-ranging curriculum resources in and outside school should be advocated and developed. Teachers should try to organize extra-curricular activities such as academic competitions, social investigations, practice innovations, campus cultural activities, and so on. Besides, attending extra-curricular activities can not only strengthen the communication between teachers and students, promote pair-work and team work, but also create an environment which assures to develop students' personality, stimulate and enhance the student s' learning interest.

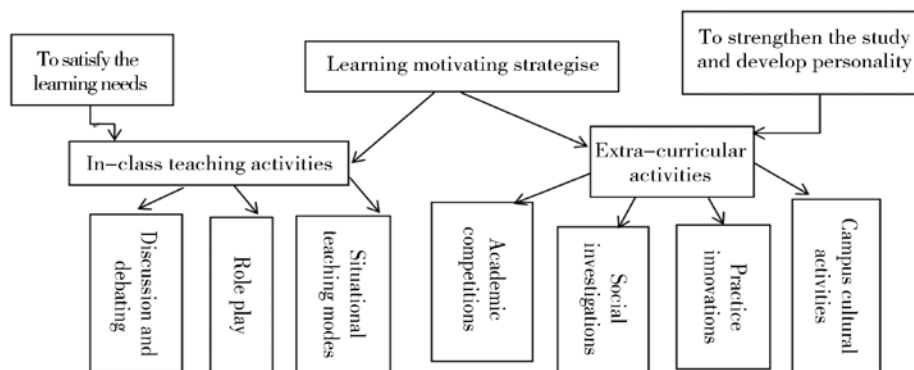


Figure 1
The Combination of In-Class Teaching With Extra-Curricular Activities

Then, employ transmedia techniques to establish an active mode of teaching and instruction. As a matter of fact, due to the traditional examination-oriented education system, classroom teaching which emphasizes the

teachers' teaching and the students' acceptance of that teaching represents the dominant pattern in elementary and high schools in China. However, transmedia technology utilizes multiple platforms to simulate daily life,

making it a potent constructivist pedagogical tool for education uses (Jenkins, 2010). It can provide students with large quantities of learning materials and the wide range of experiences at any time. Normal students or teachers should take advantage of transmedia technique as a pedagogical tool, wherein students interact with platforms, such as QQ groups, WeChat, WeiBo as well as YouTube type sites, which permit students to share viewpoints and experiences and acquire learning resources (Gilardi & Reid, 2011). In this way, students' lacking of questioning, thinking, imagination, creativity and learning motivation can be effectively changed and cultivated.

Finally, give appropriate rewards and punishments to students and express the teacher's expectations. If students have made progress in learning, teachers had better say something incentive or give rewards to his or her improvement. Because teachers' praise and recognition will assist students to foster a sense of achievement and gain more confidence. However, if students have made mistakes, teachers can convey their critics and express their expectations and help them to correct and make progress.

3. ESTABLISHING POSITIVE TEACHER-STUDENT RELATIONSHIPS

Teacher-student relationship is a kind of relationship between teachers and students in the process of education, including characters, influence and attitude between teachers and students. It is a kind of special social and interpersonal relationship. Good teacher-student relationship is that they get along well with each other, have proper emotional communication and respect each other. In a harmonious atmosphere, teachers are willing to share more knowledge and at the same time students are capable of learning knowledge efficiently with great enthusiasm. Besides, healthy teacher-student relationship can provide a firm and potent guarantee for the students' physical and psychological development. Thus, a democratic, equal, co-operative, and respectful relationship between teachers and students, as well as among students, should be developed. Normal students will be teachers someday. So as a normal student, it is necessary to build up good teacher-student relationship and an open learning atmosphere to incarnate human solicitude.

Teacher-student relationship includes educational relationship, psychological relationship and ethical relationship. Educational relationship is the most basic one. During the process of teaching, teachers are facilitators, organizers, advisers and researchers, while students are participants, learners, and their own masters in their studying and learning. Significantly, in classroom, teachers should make atmosphere lively and exciting instead of just teaching, and should avoid having no

interaction with students. To seek a form of integration between information technology and the curriculum is an excellent example of handling this problem. In order to liven up lessons and let the students become the real class protagonist, Robert Cettl, a foreign teacher used to teach in my college, UJN (university of Jinan, Shandong), have integrated transmedia techniques with his English listening lessons which gradually brought about active changes in the presentation of teaching content, students' learning and the interaction among students and himself. Besides, teachers should focus on trying their best to impart both professional knowledge and principles in real life to their students.

Psychological relationship means emotional communication between teachers and students. Classroom teaching can provide teachers with varieties of opportunities to enhance the feeling of amity with students. To keep teaching and learning fascinating, teachers can try incorporating humor into their daily lessons, such as sharing an appropriate joke related to the content to be taught, telling an interesting or current news that they experienced or heard, and laughing at themselves when they make a foolish mistake, but not making fun of the students when they commit a blunder, anyway. It is really a good way to connect with students heart to heart. In addition, teachers must put themselves in the student's shoes and see it from their perspective; in this relationship, teachers should be good listeners and considerate instructors. For instance, when students stand up and answer the question the teacher raised, the teacher should not exhibit negative emotions and criticize students even though they give an inappropriate reply, instead of commending students' exemplary courage and encouraging students to put in seriously consideration. In other words, in the process of teaching, teachers should be empathetic enough to pay more attention to what they should do to attend students' feelings and what they should not do to hurt students' confidence and enthusiasm. Moreover, to develop a friendly psychological relationship, teachers can also give a hand to students to deal with some difficulties and problems which students meet in both study and life.

According to Wikipedia,

an ethical relationship, in most theories of ethics that employ the term, is a basic and trustworthy relationship that one has to another human being, that cannot necessarily be characterized in terms of abstraction other than trust and common protection of each others' body.

Ethical relationship between teachers and students not only refers to the relationship formed in the process of teaching and learning, but also reflects the proper status of each other, the effect of "teaching benefits teachers as well as students", the attitude of mutual treatment, and so on. In modern society, human races are created equal; a harmonious, civilized and healthy interpersonal

relationship is based on mutual respect, trust and understanding, so there is no exception between teachers and students. Whether the teacher-student relationship is harmonious or not will directly affect the working enthusiasm of teachers and also has great impact on the overall development of students. Therefore, to establish a new ethical teacher-student relationship which fully embodies the respect, democracy and development is key to training creative talents and meeting social requirements.

4. PURSUING SELF-FULFILLMENT

In 1966, UNESCO and ILO published a document which gave some advice about teacher's status, and pointed that teaching should be considered as a major, which requires teachers to acquire and maintain their professional knowledge and specialized skills by strict and consistent exploring. Thus, they can serve the nation. This inspired and motivated worldwide teachers to work harder and improve their professional skills. Holmes Group's reports (1986) emphasized that teachers' education is not a simple, time-limited training activity, but a lifelong and successive process. This requires teachers to fulfill themselves and pursue their value.

In different stages of teaching, teachers' points of view vary towards works and lessons. When new teachers first step into their careers, they tend to focus more on their own work, wondering whether they can manage their class properly. Will they be acknowledged by senior teachers and leaders? And what should they do to deal with emergencies in classroom? Then, the moment they overcome this kind of worries and adapt to their works, they begin to concentrate on improving their teaching techniques and methods, and inspiring students to high spirits and helping them get higher grades. After achieved these goals, they may pay more attention to separate individuals, to show their concerns to particular students, help them adapt to the whole class, thus achieve all-rounded development. Teachers should have the ability to control and inspire a class. The ability is not only influenced by their own work experience, but also by others' experience. Teachers observe and analyze the other excellent teachers' performance in class partly because of this. It is of great importance that teachers be open to take in effective methods from others and make efforts to try out new activities and techniques. Besides that, Huang (2004) also observed that Chinese teachers have lacked a concept of educational or learning experiences; teaching content mainly from textbook is regarded only as a special kind of culture that is external to individuals and can be transmitted from the outside, by way of education. So, in an attempt to explore techniques, improve the quality of lessons, and perfect the instructional strategies, teachers should dedicate to discuss with other teachers

from different disciplines who would plan together and share experience from their own collective experiences, try to observe the excellent teachers' classes, analyze their performance, evaluate their strengths and weaknesses, compared with them to learn from their experiences and make a feedback. However, due to the diversity of situation and unique features of individuals, not every instructional strategy will be the perfect fit for a certain educational condition, so teachers are in the position to become adept at evaluating which strategy will be the best fit.

In order to fulfill themselves, it is not enough for teachers to improve their skills, they should evaluate and reflect their own work by asking themselves whether their classes are successful. Did their students enjoy them or learn anything from them? At this point, issues on what is the most momentous way for teachers to improve their teaching may emerge. A good way of promoting is to get feedback from students. Ask some questions based on the development of lessons and their feelings about the lessons frequently, then think about their views on studying and teaching, reflect the teaching ways and try to get some inspirations to establish a more effective and impressing lesson. Through reflection, teachers can find problems, then analyze, discuss, research, explore and finally solve them. In a word, teachers need to promote and create their unique, proper and effective ways of teaching through an overall, comprehensive, and profound self-criticism or self-introspection.

Teachers who have a certification, master enough professional knowledge, behave properly, are friendly and closely connected with students and their parents, colleagues and leaders. Well-managed lessons do not really mean qualified teachers.

A great teacher is a continuous learner. They continuously read and apply the newest research in their classroom. They are never satisfied whether they have taught for one year or twenty. They seek out professional development opportunities, research ideas online and subscribe to multiple teaching related newsletters.

said by the educator, Derrick Meador. "It's never too late to learn", an ancient saying, has encouraged people to consecrate to life-long learning for thousand years. Needless to say, teachers' fulfillment has no ending.

5. BUILDING PROFESSIONAL APPEARANCE

In general, the image of the teacher includes external image and the internal image. This section, building appropriate teachers' appearance, mainly discusses the external image in detail. As a teacher, appearance is as important as knowledge due to the specialty of their certain teaching work. The external image of teachers gives most of the people the first impression which

mainly refers to the teachers' complexion, dress, etiquette, and the manners of speech and deportment. Many administrators believe that the professional appearance of a teacher will have a positive effect on students' behavior. Teachers' appearance, such as every word and every action, every act and every move, voice and expression, attire and makeup, permeates the shadow of education. It represents a teacher how to influence and drive educatee with a certain demeanor. Xiao (2000) has observed in *Design on Teachers' Image in the 21th Century* that teachers, in the 21th century, should take all the following standards as consideration in dressing and personal adornment: plain and not rustic, beautiful and not colorful, fashionable and not unconventional, marvelous and not extravagant, dignified and generous, full of distinctive personality, rich connotation, and cultured disposition. In fact, the appearance of a teacher, consisting of voice and countenance, attire and makeup, can be a kind of knowledge as well as an art, after all, it is a culture. Therefore, having a professional teacher's appearance plays a crucial background role in the process of educational teaching. For students, if a teacher look like a kid, the students will treat the teacher as a kid. If look like an adult, they will treat accordingly. First impression is hard to erase, so it is certainly worth making a good one.

First of all, teachers should be able to dress comfortably and decently and not worry too much about whether their appearance will have an effect on the student's behavior or be judged by them. According to a survey, most of the teachers believe that casual dress is accepted more by themselves, administrators and parents, allowing them to feel more comfortable. As a normal student, after graduating from the normal school or college, they are young and maybe show lack of maturity, so they should take steps to make their appearance more mature, which is suitable for men and women. Male teachers can choose a neatly ironed business shirt which should be tucked into trousers. While female teachers could wear a dress or a pair of dress slacks with a suitable blouse. Katya Gordeeva has pointed out in his article *How to Have a Professional Teacher's Appearance*: For female teachers, significantly, "if you opt for the dress, it should fall no higher than the top of your knee; clothes should not be skin tight, and your midriff, thighs and cleavage must never be exposed. " Meanwhile, it is noteworthy that teachers, whether female or male, should avoid wearing sleeveless dresses, although teachers could be dressed comfortably. Because sleeveless dresses are too casual for the classroom, instead, a loose-fitting shirt or well-tailored jacket is best for teachers to choose.

Secondly, teachers should choose appropriate shoes. For example, women teachers should avoid wearing trendy too-high heels and instead, opt for sensible flats that can last all day (Lewis, 2016). What's more, it is also

worth mentioning that teachers should leave the jewelry at home, because the jewelry should be dressed at normal occasion, such as party.

Finally, although make-up enables people to look much fresher and younger, make-up is not necessarily teacher's optimum selection. Tolstoy (1869) once said: "It is not beauty that endears, it is love that makes us see beauty." This saying enlightens us that the most beautiful face lies in the beauty of mind in terms of the nature of beauty. As a teacher, internal beauty is more vital than external beauty. Besides, a teacher, as a guide, has an essential influence on students' behavior, if a teacher makes up, some female students may follow their teacher, and they will spend more time in make-up but less time on studying, which may entail a bad effect on their academic performance.

In a word, teacher's appearance is an important part of education. Beth Lewis, the elementary education expert, has reviewed "our young students, their parents, our administrators, and the greater community all need to trust us to be mature, professional, capable, and competent. Like it or not, our outer appearance is their first indicator of these inner characteristics." (Lewis, 2016) It is evident that looks play a prominent role in student-teacher interactions everywhere, whether the institutions are larger public universities or small private colleges. To adjust to the job better, normal students should pay more attention to their appearance and build up a professional teacher's appearance.

CONCLUSION

All in all, for normal school students, being a qualified teacher then achieving the ultimate goal of pedagogical education, is a sophisticated, meticulous and comprehensive engineering. At the same time, the way ahead must be strewn with difficulties. For instance, building a trusting, harmonious and positive teacher-student relationship can be both challenging and time consuming, or some teachers may be lack of effective instructional strategies to maximize their effectiveness, etc. Though the project tough and rough, it does convey a hint of persistence that real education demands. Hopefully some basic strategies which have been provided in this paper can give normal students or teachers some clearly direction in handling this kind of problems. For normal school students, under the guidance of national policy, who are to be qualified teachers, to be engaged in the teaching profession and dedicated to talents training throughout their lives, all of these demonstrate great and glorious responsibilities that they should bear. For China, to survive in the fiercer international competition environment, it is essential to raise normal schools educational quality and reverse the backward situation.

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