Vocational Oriented Teaching Reform for Liberal Arts Major—Taking Chinese Language and Literature Major as an Example

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Abstract. Since 2014, education reform emphasized on applied skill development has evolved rapidly in China. However, less progress has been made for liberal arts majors such as Chinese Language and Literature that mainly focus on the courses of literature, history and philosophy. It is a more serious problem for such majors in third class colleges in China. Through long-term teaching experience, we put forward the teaching reform ideas of Chinese Language and Literature major according to the actual situation of students. Firstly, we must teach students in accordance with their aptitude; secondly, we should provide differential teaching schemes according to student’s occupation orientation; then further reform the teaching materials and improve teachers’ development program. By taking the measurements above, students from liberal arts major can also been trained into pragmatic professionals who can serve the local economic development.

Introduction

The author has taught in three universities for 15 years, and students are increasingly relying on mobile phones. In the era of the Internet, classical literature works can be found in all major reading platforms. Then how to achieve career-oriented training as applied specialists for students on Chinese Language and Literature Major, which relies on reading and emphasizes on tradition, has become an urgent question. First of all, we must know what kind of situation our students are in. According to my questionnaire survey before each semester in the past five years, a conclusion could be draw that:

Students' Spare Time is Mainly Spent on Entertainments

When answering "How do you spend most of your spare time?", 7.8% of the respondents answered "sleeping" (which accounts for a large proportion in the lower grades). Up to 45% of the students spent their spare time on computer games and TV dramas. The choice of "social activities" and "sports" accounted for 9.3% and 7.8% respectively. Compared with the choice of "studying professional courses and reading", the proportion of the first several choices accounted for 69.9%. This shows that college students still do not make full use of their spare time. Therefore, the education authority should take the guiding role, especially for the freshmen, and guide students to make plan for their college life which will serve as solid foundation for their future development. Universities can also offer courses or lectures on career planning in order to improve the utilization of students' spare time.

About 23% of the students spend their spare time on reading, while 39% of them choose reading materials for entertainment, such as gossip magazines, romance novels, martial arts novels and online novels. 34% of students choose to read literary books. 9% of the students are not interested in humanistic knowledge, such as literature, history, philosophy and so on.

Pragmatism Dominates Students' Learning

In terms of future life planning, many students have revealed that they want to be rich and powerful. 55% of them are no longer the idealists living in the ivory tower. Society and schools are
strengthening students' adaptability to reality. The survey above showed that students’ expectation on life has stepped down. Yet they become too pragmatic and value too much on material honor and success. More than 70% of students are keen on qualification certificate examination for primary and secondary school teachers. They study hard for preparation of examinations, read the examination guidance books, but are unwilling to spend time on courses like *College Chinese, Modern and Contemporary Chinese Literature* and *Ancient Chinese Literature*, to read the works in these courses and finish their homework. More than half of these junior college students will pass the entrance examination and enter the undergraduate phase. 67% of undergraduates can get their teachers’ qualification certificate for primary and secondary schools. The high ratios demonstrate their learning ability and their poor performance on their courses could be the result of lack of motivation.

Now the question is what kind of education should we give to those students? In my opinion, we should in the first place serve their career-oriented purpose which determines their direction of efforts and learning motivation. So what can we do for their employment? For students from third class colleges, their actual academic level reduces the possibility for most of them to take postgraduate entrance exams and continue pursuing master or doctoral degree. We must tailor the future career path for them. Finally, the education reform for liberal arts majors cannot be implemented through school-enterprise cooperation as science and engineering majors did due to professional restrictions. We can only take into full consideration of their own advantages and absorb the advantages of the training program for science and engineering majors to explore the reform ideas for liberal arts majors.

**Vocational-oriented and Differential Teaching**

According to incomplete statistics in the past three years, 3% of the students majoring in Chinese at third class college level will be successful in postgraduate entrance examination, 40% will become primary and secondary school teachers, 10% will be engaged in office work, and the rest in other occupations. The only way to make a reasonable division of these students is through their academic performance and personal interests. The weights of these two parts are equal and need to be considered comprehensively. For example, in the first two years the emphasis should be put on basic curriculum education, the third year on professional orientation education, then, the fourth year on the job related practice.

Through the first two years of college study, we can determine which students are more capable in learning, and have the aspiration to take part in the postgraduate entrance examination. Then we can put them into the class emphasize on teaching of general courses, preparing for entrance examinations and enhancing their research ability.

For the students who plan to take some career right after graduation, we can tailor the appropriate career-related courses for them, reduce or compress the ordinary courses. Take the course *Ancient Chinese Literature* for example; students who intend to take the teacher's qualification certificate can learn how to teach *Ancient Chinese Literature* to children aged 7-14. For them, skill training is the main task which includes reading classics, identifying and writing complex ancient Chinese characters and explaining traditional cultural knowledge. Therefore, competitions can be held in all respects to expand professional courses, and to improve students' learning motivation. Excellent students could be selected for internships and be recommended to employers. For students who will be engaged in clerical work, we can increase their calligraphy skills, computer skills and provide office automation courses for them. For some students who are confused about their future, we can help them start their own businesses considering their family background and personal expertise, or open a green channel for them to change their majors. Our work is to help every student to grow up and find their own direction in life.
Teaching Materials Reform for Differential Teaching

Most of the textbooks used now come from the elite universities which are not suitable for third class college students. If we can boldly carry out the curriculum reform, then the textbooks, teaching methods and assessment programs must be changed. We need to trust teachers, affirm their efforts, help teachers to discuss new textbooks and use new textbooks in order to accumulate the latest teaching materials.

Teaching methods should also be changed from teacher-centered to student-centered, from lecturers' teaching to students' self-teaching on class stage, and commented by lecturers.

Assessment procedures should be flexible to reflect different types of students. Closed or open-book examination is not enough to test the actual level of students. On the contrary, classroom performance and classroom work may be the best metric to measure students' capability. The form of homework can be drama performance, lecture notes, continuation stories of classical works, and even the establishment and maintenance of literary websites.

Strengthen the Practice and Training Courses with Career Orientation

Practice and training courses are the most important support to help students quickly get on the job and obtain relevant certificates. Therefore, the assessment of practice and training courses should be flexible, and the proportion of assessment should be increased. Outstanding students may be recommend to internship at any time, and update our assessment criteria at the same time. Unlike the requirements of factory training base for engineering students, liberal arts students need much less for practice training, a platform in class or school management will be enough.

Vocational-oriented Teacher’s Training Programs

Vocational education teachers are different from academic education teachers. In the daily teaching, they have to put the situation of the students in their mind and devise new methods to resolve complicated and changeable tasks. It is unfair to use publication to judge the effort and ability of a vocational education teacher. For better management and evaluation of these teachers, the students' employment rate and the students' certificate acquisition rate should be taken as an important evaluation condition. Simple quantitative management cannot measure the efforts of teachers dedicated in reform and innovation. The teacher’s rewards should be determined by combined consideration on teaching plan, actual implementation process and final level of students.

Students majoring in liberal arts, especially those in junior or third class college level, are not at the same level with their peers in first class universities. Replication the education model from top universities will lead to difficulties. It is better to boldly innovate teaching process, give priority to students, give priority to employment preparation, give priority to pragmatism, break the conventions and train students as applied specialists for the better service of the local community.

References

