The Reflection of Teacher Education and Self-education

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Abstract. This paper takes Schulman’s teacher knowledge type as analysis structure, analyzing the conflict about teaching knowledge quality of pre-service teachers who are in teaching assistance. It also explores the reason above and put forward some opinions about educational course and practice course in pre-service teacher teaching.

Introduction

“Reality Shock” is a new concept proposed by western scholar Veeman, which influenced practice teachers a lot. When the teachers finish their first teaching task, “the real class full of harshness and rudeness breakdown their teaching dream forming during the teachers’ training”. The description of this phenomenon reveals the objective existence of cognitive conflict in pre-service teachers’ practice. In 1987, Shulman, American famous teacher-education expert, integrated teachers’ practical knowledge into structural knowledge system. This system is based on the scientific theory of knowledge and is given teacher knowledge structural model including seven types. They are subject knowledge; general knowledge; curriculum knowledge; pedagogical content knowledge, shorted as PCK; knowledge of students and their characteristics; knowledge of education environment, including team and class performance, management of learning area, funds allocation, community and culture characteristics; the purpose, aim, value of education and the knowledge based on philosophy and history. This research opens up a new approach for studies of teachers’ knowledge. In the process of organizing and guiding the preservice teachers in teaching practice, we will take Schulman’s teacher knowledge type as the analysis structure, analyzing and studying the cognitive conflicts of practice teacher during their teaching process, put forward some suggestions about practice-teacher education.

Cognitive Conflict of Practice-teachers

Practice teaching, a new practical teaching mode of teaching practice in normal universities in China, always arranges at the last year of normal school students for one semester. When managing and guiding practice-teacher, we find their confusions in real fundamental education. In order to make them get out of these confusions and improve the quality of practice-teacher, we interview and search some practice-teachers, analyze some representative remarks and feelings. Combining our daily observation, we sum up their cognitive conflicts as follows.

Conflict of Environmental Knowledge

Interview 1:
Student A: I used to think that teachers are very sacred but during my practice teaching I contacted with some teachers and found that their living conditions are different from what I have imagined. I used to think that the teachers would work at their office conscientiously but the fact is that some of them are chatting and some female teachers are talking about buying clothes.

Student B: Some courses in our school are too idealistic and describe the dedication of teachers too divine, which made us cry and feel the profession of teachers full of yearning. However the practice
teaching is totally different from what we have learned at college. Some teachers have occupation burnout period and some of them don’t teach students seriously.

Student C: We have seen many cold violence at school,… and thought how does teacher treat students like this. It is very strange because the teachers in our college respect students very much.

From above, we can see that the conflict of environment knowledge for students mainly including the recognition for teachers’ teaching, the process of working. In practice teachers’ knowledge system, they consider the teacher as a divine career and what the teachers should do every day is working seriously in their office. However, during practice teaching, they may find that teachers’ life and working condition in their offices are different form what they have imagined so pre-teachers are very strange. Students’ understanding for this profession is abstract and partial. From life learning period to career period, the gap will be existed and dissemination for teachers’ dedication during pre-teacher’s education at college will mislead them to think that dedication for students as the whole portrayal of teacher’s real life. For pre-teachers, the first thing they will face is the conflict of environmental knowledge.

Conflict between General Teaching Method and Students’ Characteristics

Interview two:

Student A: Our instructor at college told us that it is useful for you to be strict so the students would fear you, which is totally different from what I have learned. From my point of view, teacher, whose responsibility is to teach students knowledge and morality, what the teachers have to do is to tell students what is right and what is wrong. However, in the real class, the teachers would not do this; they would scold, reproach and hit the students when they are needed.

Student B: …Teacher came into the classroom with a falling face otherwise students wouldn’t be scared. However, when we came into the classroom, students did what they did and didn’t care about us. But when their own teacher came in they sat down suddenly. I don’t think I can use a soft way to treat them, if not, this class can’t going on. When I had third class, students were scared. It is the last way I can use but during the class all of them lowered their heads.

Student C: I think the difference between theory and the reality is that theories we have learned at college were almost useless, such as a teacher should be warm, especially be patient. In the real class, only treating them with patience is useful to only some of them. Some of them are incorrigible, if you treat them too warmly they may think you are vulnerable. That’s why all the head teachers are very strict. The first requirement for them is to keep them and teach them well. There are always some naughty students in my class.

Pre-teachers has cultivated a strong humanistic feeling when they were in college. They studied psychological characteristics of children and adolescents systematically as well as teaching principles, teaching and learning method strategy, respecting children, being patient and being warm to them. All these theories left a deepest faith for pre-teachers. However, when they came to the teaching school, their instructors told them they could scold and hit students when they were needed. As a result, they worked out three points, which are treating students softly can’t keep them, being patient is useful to some students, education theories they have learned enthusiastically at college are totally useless.

Conflict between General Teaching Knowledge and Teaching Content

Interview three:

Student A: Sometimes you may think your teaching steps are good enough to teach students well. However, when you stand on airs you try your best to teach them well, because of students’ cooperation and your tension you cannot achieve the goal you supposed to be. I left about ten minutes in my class so I let students recite the text. In the next two classes, I wasn’t as nervous as before so I could achieve my teaching goal basically.

Student B: When we stand on the airs is, we always ignore something which is easy for us but students don’t understand. On the contrast, something we think they may not understand but they do. So we can’t hold this accurately.
Student C: I think we are not qualified for a teacher, who has a deep understand about the subject. For example, I spent about five minutes teaching a point but for them the time may be one or two classes. They can expand one question into several ones but for me I would put several questions as only one.

Student D: I was surprised by their teachers’ classes and never thought it is difficult for me to teach these students. During the class, I tried my best to use simple words so they could understand. If I used difficult words they may not understand, I must change my teaching method.

Many people regard Schulman’s teaching content knowledge as teacher’s practical knowledge. For pre-teachers, PCK is less than a conflict than a deficiency. They think they couldn’t grasp students’ level and something easy for him is difficult for students. “Something we think they may not understand but they do”, “I never thought it is difficult for me to teach these students.” “I’m not qualified for a teacher now.” “I never thought it is difficult for me to teach these students.”

Conflict between Teaching Goal and Education Value

Interview four:
Student A: In our micro-teaching class we accepted many new education theories, such as you need do some quality-oriented education according students’ characteristics. But when I was in practice school, I found that though their curriculum design was good enough their process of knowledge teaching is just examination-oriented. They did a lot about these teaching parts but still has a conflict between them.

Student B: Don’t regard courses at college as fantasy, as a teacher, your task is to let students learn something about the present situation of Chinese education and which level you are in. Don’t tell them what the future of Chinese education. Those are not what we care about, we just care about now. When we had class no one told us what kind of schools and students we would face.

From pre-teachers’ view, now our school education should embody the modern new educational idea. “Their curriculum design was good enough their process of knowledge teaching is just examination-oriented.” There are two opposite forms in the educational concept of practice students: examination-oriented education and quality-oriented education. They used the forms in the theories to describe the reality and found that the original concept structure and practice is not consistent. Facing so much work, pre-teachers don’t care about the future Chinese education but only the present thing.

Combining with teaching practice of pre-service teachers’ feeling, we can figure out obviously that there exist conflicts between knowledge they have learned and real teaching experience in several parts, such as environmental knowledge, general knowledge or teaching target knowledge. These conflicts must affect the adoptability of pre-teachers for primary education reality as well as development of their teaching ability.

Advice for Pre-teachers’ Education

Basing on the analysis of cognitive conflict for pre-teacher, we try to explore the main reasons leading to cognitive conflict of preservice teachers in pre-service teacher education and put forward some advice for them.

Deficiencies and Limitations of Pre-service Teacher Education Curriculum

Realistic teacher education curriculums in Normal Universities followed the style of college courses blindly. They focus on the system’s integrity and theories’ richness but lack discussion of the problems existing in real education. Meanwhile, those teachers lack of educational practice studies about primary and middle schools. On the one hand, their teaching theories and views even teaching cases are all from the books, which would be away from the reality after layers of abstraction. On the other hand, with the development of our society, both educational culture at school, students’ development and other aspects change a lot. The contrast of these two aspects gives pre-teachers such a kind of feeling like “The real school is like this.” “The students are like this.”
The Border between Theory and Practice

Teachers need to use intuitive judgment to analyze the realistic structure of the research object and grasp the non-essential attributes and the overall characteristics in the elements of the scene. Their thinking process doesn’t depend on a consistent theory but on the process selected in the scene and the scene based on it. Then teachers should extract elements from various principles, traditions, cognition and experience in order to combine and judge them instantly. It is a fuzzy process to judge what kind of elements they would select and the reason they to do so. It is not only affected by teachers’ cognitive experience, but also includes teachers’ beliefs, emotions, needs, life experience, personality, motivation and other complex factors. Therefore, during the process of using knowledge, if pre-teacher misunderstands the theory and believes that theory can be a guide in various scenes absolutely and comprehensively, which is difficult for pre-teachers to form an appropriate verification conclusion. Teaching Education in China generally based on theoretical learning, until the last year they have the opportunity to practice but internship time is short. Such a system is under an assumption that the first step of teachers cultivation is to provide relevant teaching theories and knowledge skills and then apply them to primary and middle school education and teaching practice. This approach has been denied in emphasizing the study of teachers’ acquisition of practical knowledge.

Therefore, we conclude that there is something we can not do in teaching work of educational courses in Normal Colleges but something we should do must be implemented. The guidance of theory to practice is often in the form of reflection non-systematically. The value of theory has its own advantages but there is an important step in the process of learning theory, which is guiding and suggesting students that what is the role of theory and what form it plays in practice, the problem consciousness of education curriculum should be pay more attention to how to lead the system more strict and perfect. Moreover, teaching contents for teachers are theoretic knowledge and knowing how to explain the knowledge points is important practical knowledge. Pedagogical content knowledge is the key to the difference between pre-service teachers and skilled teachers. During the education for pre-teacher, in order to adjust and control their teaching activities, teachers should focus on guiding students to reflect the formation of knowledge or the process of acquiring and performing of knowledge and concepts during their own teaching. “Even a good education course can not accurately represent the true teaching (Odell,1987).” It is the basic way to avoid the cognitive conflict for pre-teacher in teaching practice, Normal Colleges should strengthen the practice-curriculum teaching of pre-teacher, provide enough opportunities for them to learn the reality of primary and secondary education, the condition of middle school students and more practice training.

References