

How to Be an Excellent Vocational Education Teacher

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Abstract. To improve the effect of vocational education (VE), this paper discusses how to be an excellent vocational education teacher (VET) from fifteen aspects: mastering the course content; fully preparing before class; strengthening students' hands-on ability; having an international vision; being dedicated to VE; having a basic knowledge of educational psychology; mastering VE methodology; respecting students; speaking at a moderate speed and volume in class; speaking standard Chinese in class; being calm and confident; paying due attention to your own external image; having a sense of humor; adhering to professional ethics; giving priority to the encouragement-oriented teaching; helping students with learning difficulties; and interacting with students. Hi-tech knowledge intensive enterprises require their highly-educated employees to further improve their skills and technical ability as quickly as possible, which indicates the urgency and necessity of grasping the methods discussed in this paper.

Keywords: teacher, vocational education (VE), on-the-job training.

Introduction

Teachers, as a special professional group, shoulder the important task of cultivating high-quality talents for the future of our country. In the on-going process of promoting quality education, the development of high-quality teaching staff is the fundamental guarantee for the prosperity of China's education. The regularity of VE is a subject that needs persistent research along with the times [1]-[3]. Teachers play a crucial role in VE activities. Attractive course contents provided by VETs are more readily accepted by students, and thus the teaching effect will be much better. It is, therefore, of great practice significance to know how to become a good VET who is popular with his/her students.

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The characteristics of excellent VETs

The process of teaching is a process of constant pursuit, self-development, self-improvement and self-realization of the teacher. To become an excellent VET beloved by his/her students, a vocational educator should possess the following characteristics.

Mastering the Course Content and Fully Preparing Before Class. Lifelong learning: Whether it is an original course or a course that has a textbook, the scope of the professional skills and techniques involved in each course is basically fixed. The teacher himself should have a good command of these skills and techniques and combine book knowledge with practical experience. Only on this basis can his teaching quality reach a very high level.

Reviewing what has been learnt and learning something new: Full preparation before class enables the teacher to be more familiar with and more clearly understand the teaching contents and makes his lecture smoother. For the teacher, reviewing the teaching contents is a process of re-studying, re-improvement and re-sublimation. Where the students are of different educational backgrounds and work experiences, it is necessary to design individualized teaching plans in order to make teaching activities better targeted and teaching effects more obvious.

Individualized teaching plans. Teachers should prepare corresponding teaching plans suited to the length of teaching hours and professional content required by teaching managers. A teaching plan should be a relatively complete and independent system of professional knowledge, but teaching content focuses are different. Teaching content should vary from students with different educational background and work experience. For students graduating from technical schools, secondary schools and colleges, more theoretical content should be properly included into teaching content; for students with university and postgraduate qualifications, more practice and technology innovation should be properly incorporated into teaching content; for new employees, teaching content should emphasize on what they are required to learn; and for students with some work experience, teaching content should focus on core technologies and complex problems. Teachers can appropriately adopt interaction in face-to-face teaching in classrooms, while they can employ the method of answering questions presented by them and properly repeating the answers in remote television teaching.

Strengthening Practice-oriented VE and Enhancing Innovation Ability. Strengthening practice in the teaching process: Skills and techniques are the core of VE, of which hands-on ability is an important aspect. Therefore, VETs should do a good job both on the blackboard and in the laboratory or production site. They should be able to not only explain the skills and techniques with mouth but also make real demonstrations with hands.

Enhancing innovation ability: Innovation is becoming more and more important in the construction of an innovation-driven society. VETs should stimulate students' enthusiasm and inspiration for innovation by telling them the starting point, goal, process and methodology of innovation, so as to lay an innovation foundation for both the students and their enterprises. In the innovation activities by the masses, quality control (QC) and Six Sigma are the most widely applied theories, featuring total involvement. QC is implemented throughout the whole process, while Six Sigma aims to maximize the value. Technology and management innovation are innovation activities designed to solve major technological and managerial problems. For this purpose, a research group consisting of employees from their unit or department should be formed. However, in terms of major research projects in technology and management innovation, a research team whose members are from enterprises, universities and institutes probably needs to be formed and supported by a certain amount of funds. If

teachers have an understanding of, participate in and make achievements in innovation activities of the masses, and technology and management innovation, then they must improve the effects of innovation activities of students in the teaching process. Books on innovation are so many that teachers can acquire related knowledge through the books. Those having practical experience in innovation activities of the masses, and technology and management innovation can be invited to impart related knowledge and specific processes, which facilitates the acquirement of related knowledge in a systematic manner. Teachers can personally take part in innovation activities of the masses, and technology and management innovation, and experience every innovation detail, giving students the best guidance.

A wide international vision: Teachers should be well-informed of the international dynamics and development trends in fields where they teach. They should also know the domestic development situation in these fields: whether China is higher than, lower than, or parallel to the international level. It is on this basis that students can study their courses from an international perspective and be more energetic in learning skills and techniques and carrying out innovation.

Being a Model for and Respecting Students. Teachers should be kind-hearted persons who treat students warmly and sincerely, who are honest and live up to their own words, who not only strive for self-improvement but also inspire students to do so, who live and work with a positive mentality, who are tolerant of the people and things around, who are optimistic whether in prosperity or in adversity, who face up to all challenges confidently, who set students a good example in every aspect, and who influence students with their own personal charm and academic charm.

The teacher and the students, as equal persons, should respect each other in teaching activities. A teacher's biggest respect for his students is total dedication to the profession of teaching. While interacting with students, the teacher should respect their personality and self-esteem. Only in this way can a teacher get closer to his students and improve teaching effects.

Focusing on Heart-to-heart Communication. Devotion is an attitude toward life. Only when a teacher is totally devoted to teaching will he be able to bring his potential into full play, and will the students really appreciate his work, be more concentrated on learning and enjoy good teaching results. This requires the teacher to consider students' psychology and teach them in accordance with their aptitude. Educational psychology [4] studies the various psychological phenomena and changes in the process of education, and reveals the psychological laws governing students' learning of knowledge and skills and development of intelligence and personality under the influence of education and teaching. As educational psychology helps to improve teaching quality, teachers should be armed with the basic knowledge of educational psychology so that they can reach a higher professional level.

Reference [5] is a monograph on the VE methodology. The book discusses the theory, principle, process, assessment, development trend, methods and the art of VE, as well as the application of modern media in VE. If time and energy permit, VETs are recommended to read this kind of books, which will help improve the method, art and effect of teaching.

Self-improvement of Personal Charm and Quality. Speaking at a moderate speed and volume in class: The teacher shall speak at an appropriate speed and volume to let students clearly hear him and keep up with the pace of teaching. Speaking too fast or too softly will make it difficult for students to clearly hear what the teacher is saying. Speaking too slowly will not only make it difficult to finish the teaching task as scheduled but also give students a bad feeling. Speaking too loudly will also make students uncomfortable and in addition, the teacher is unable to keep this volume of voice throughout the lesson. If audio equipment is

used in the classroom, there should be a proper and relatively-fixed distance between the teacher's mouth and the microphone so that the sound from the audio equipment is relatively stable in volume. If there is a large number of students, teachers should make sure that students sitting in the back row can clearly listen to the teaching content, and that they can keep up with the pace of teaching.

Speaking Putonghua (standard Chinese): The vast majority of students in Mainland China speak standard Chinese because their primary, secondary and tertiary education has been given in Putonghua. Since China has a vast territory and a variety of dialects, it is difficult for all the students to understand a particular dialect. So, teachers must speak standard Chinese in all teaching activities.

Being calm and confident: All teachers, whether senior or young, can satisfactorily accomplish their teaching task as long as they have made full preparations before class. Young teachers can overcome pre-class anxiety and other psychological problems by taking deep breaths, diverting attention or doing outdoor physical exercise.

Paying attention to external image: Being neatly dressed and full of energy is not only a basic requirement for a teacher but also a manifestation of his respect for students. Teachers should properly deal with the relationship between technical work and external image, neither of which should be neglected. For teachers with poor sleep quality, the loss may outweigh the gain if they stay up late doing research before next day's class.

A sense of humor: A moderate sense of humor may help to shorten the teacher-student distance, create a relaxing classroom atmosphere, enliven the students, make them more concentrated, and improve teaching effect.

Giving priority to the encouragement-oriented teaching: encouragement should be used at the appropriate time and situation, drawn from the teaching process and brought into play. Teachers can praise and encourage those students who have a good performance in many aspects, such as a good performance in the classroom, an excellent answer to question, high-quality homework, skilled practice and brilliant creative ideas, which spur the students being praised and provide a demonstration effect to other students.

Helping students with learning difficulties: teachers should give slow students easy-to-receive private guidance in an active, patient, low-profile and continued way, enabling them to achieve the same good academic performance as that of most of their classmates.

Learning Technologies and Skills for Actual Production by Interacting with Students

Practicability, the most essential requirement for employee training or VE, focuses on the combination of teaching content and actual production, and on actual production problems solved by the teaching content. However, as modern technologies are developing rapidly and new technologies and equipment are put into practical use, the normal work requirements for teachers are to track the development of technologies and grasp the actual situation at the worksite. Students from production lines have a command of actual application for equipment and technologies mentioned in the teaching, while a few students with production experience have some skills and have a deeper understanding of work details. Students attending the factory training and professional work meetings have a good command of technological standards and norms for new technologies and equipment unknown for some teachers. After class, teachers should conduct more exchanges with students to have a better understanding of new technologies, new equipment and the worksite situation and to improve their own specialized technical level. By employing interactive teaching method, students mastering new technology or having production experience can be arranged to deliver keynote speeches and hold discussions in class, from which teachers and all students can benefit.

Conclusion

Attractive course contents provided by VETs are more readily accepted by students, and thus the teaching effect will be much better. VETs should have comprehensive quality, high moral standard, high professional skills, strong innovation ability, basic knowledge of educational psychology, and a good command of VE methodology. All these complement each other to constantly improve teaching effectiveness.

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