

Facilitation of “National Training Project” In-post Internship in Students’ Professional Growth

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Abstract. In-post internship of higher education institutions is an important part of practice teaching, and is a learning form that combines theory with practice, and is also an important way to test theories, and thus plays a critically important role in improving teaching quality and student training quality. This paper discusses about characteristics and facilitation of National Training Project In-post Internship in students’ professional growth with an example of “National Training Project (2013) In-post Replacement Training of Rural Kindergarten Teachers” Project of Sichuan Provincial Continuing Education of Primary and Secondary Teachers Yibin University Training Center, and then proposes suggestions for improving National Training Project In-post Internship.

Brief introduction to “National Training Project (2013) In-post Replacement Training of Rural Kindergarten Teachers” Project

“National Training Project (2013) In-post Replacement Training of Rural Kindergarten Teachers” Project was one of national important training projects undertaken by Sichuan Provincial Continuing Education of Primary and Secondary Teachers Yibin University Training Center in 2013. This project mainly trained some township and rural kindergarten teachers in Yibin, Zigong and Luzhou, including two major parts namely “full-time replacement training” and “post training”. The subject was “full-time replacement training” subproject, which accepted a total of 120 frontline teachers from grassroots kindergartens in Yibin, Zigong and Luzhou. According to training requirements, they shall have three months of full-time learning in Yibin University Training Center. During learning, to ensure normal educational teaching activities of their classes in kindergartens, Yibin University Training Center selected 120 sophomore and junior students majoring in preschool education and assigned them to these kindergartens respectively, and thus replaced trainees in the form of in-post internship, so that these 120 trainees could receive training at leisure. That meant these 120 students majoring in preschool education received a National Training Project In-post Internship.

Characteristics of National Training Project In-post Internship

As an important part of practice teaching, internship or in-post internship is common in lots of vocational colleges and higher education institutions. In-post internship is with students as subjects, employment as orientation, strengthening the combination of theories with practice as breakthrough, improving student training quality as the purpose, makes full use of off-campus educational environment and resources, combines organically school education based on classroom teaching with off-campus work through which practical experience can be gained directly, and thus is an important entry point of reform of higher education talent training mode. However, compared with other forms of internship or in-post internship, National Training Project In-post Internship not only has the abovementioned characteristics but also uniqueness, which is mainly reflected in the following aspects:

High labor intensity of in-post internship

In this national kindergarten teacher special training, especially “full-time replacement training” subproject, most students in the in-post internship replaced teachers one by one, that meant, the Yibin University sent one student intern to take this vacant post every teacher the kindergarten sent to receive training. Due to schooling conditions and environment, many grassroots kindergartens in

Yibin, Zigong and Luzhou were not separated, but stayed together with central primary schools, and some were even in the same campus with primary and junior high school departments. Therefore, it was common for one kindergarten teacher to take charge of all educational teaching activities of a class, which meant that students in in-post internship shall also take charge of one class alone from children entering in the morning to leaving in the afternoon. The phenomenon of integration of health care with education was very common, so that in-post teachers shall complete everything of the class including teaching, games, indoor and outdoor activities, lunches and rest. Therefore, compared with other in-post internship and traditional graduation internship, labor intensity in National Training Project In-post Internship was incomparable by general educational internship or graduation internship, as there was almost not a teacher to help labor from the morning to evening or classes to alternate and shift among different teachers.

Difficult professional guidance for in-post students

Students who participated in this replacement in-post internship were usually sent to township or town-level kindergartens in these three cities. However, due to lack of teachers and teacher level remained to be improved in these kindergartens, there were not enough teachers and it was unable to assign special instructors for in-post interns. In contrast, in traditional graduation internship, normal or not, internship host organizations would generally assign special instructors for interns. Although Sichuan Provincial Continuing Education of Primary and Secondary Teachers Yibin University Training Center assigned on-campus instructors for each in-post student, most of these instructors chose to contact by phone and guide by communication due to reasons such as work and families etc, coupled with a large number of interns and distant journey etc. Network guidance was originally a very good way of guidance, it was also difficult to conduct due to remote geographical location of kindergartens that most in-post interns were in due to limited communication conditions, and face-to-face guidance was even rarer. So, in in-post internship, many interns could only solve difficulties in educational teaching by themselves.

Poor environment and conditions of in-post internship

National Training Project In-post students mostly had posts in township and town-level rural kindergartens with usually remote geographical location and very difficult teaching, working and living conditions. Although food, housing, travel and other minimum standards of living were guaranteed, compared with living conditions on campus, many in-post students felt deeply hardship of work and life, which may produce negative influence on their work enthusiasm to some extent.

Performances of facilitation of National Training Project In-post Internship in students' professional growth

Correct professional attitude

After three months of exercise in in-post internship, lots of interns changed their professional attitude. Before this internship, some students thought that in-post internship meant "cheap labor force", simple work in kindergartens or dirty and tiring work, and they would not have initiative, a sense of responsibility and desire to advance in work. However, after real experience in in-post internship, some interns had a deep understanding of preschool education major, and began to accept early childhood education and love preschool education major.

Enhance professional skills

From the perspective of professional growth and development, National Training Project In-post Internship is mainly a process that interns put theories and early childhood educational teaching skills that they have learned in school in practice. Each intern shall often take charge of one class in National Training Project In-post Internship especially that with relatively hard conditions. Many interns improve their preschool education professional skills greatly after three months of daily practice and application, and enrich and expand their professional skills in repeated practice and exercise.

Deepen professional development potential

Hard work, long term and independence of National Training Project In-post Internship exercise students' professional skills and wisdom to a great extent. Actually, during National Training Project In-post Internship, interns communicate constantly with themselves, students and colleagues around. In particular, they are fully exercised by working, living and learning alone in a new environment. As a result, they gain both professional and more life experience, enhance their employment competitiveness, deepen their development potential, and thus lay a solid foundation for their future preschool education work. "National Training Project In-post Internship" not only enables many students to have careful calculation and strict budgeting and arrange their lives more rationally, but also provides opportunities to improve students' overall ability. In hard environment, students experience life in person and master certain basic life skills, which are valuable wealth of their lifetime; "National Training Project In-post Internship" is also a social practice activity in the true sense, in which students truly enter and understand the society and get exercised.

Aspects of National Training Project In-post Internship to the further improved

Although most students in National Training Project In-post Internship make considerable progress in professional development by being in relatively hard environment, it does not mean that all students grow faster in harder conditions, as environmental conditions have both advantages and disadvantages. So, National Training Project In-post Internship needs improvement and adjustment from both macro and micro aspects.

Students' internship duration needs further improvement and adjustment

This National Training Project In-post Internship lasted for 3 months, and 90 days were enough in terms of duration. However, these 3 months included the National Day, and students asked for leave occasionally because of school work, making the entire internship not centralized or continuous enough. Some interns got to know children and got used to be teachers in classes, and would be interrupted due to long vacation or school affairs. After the long vacation, they had to establish intimate relationships with children and adapt to teaching work again. In this regard, therefore, if the time of in-post internship was continuous without interruption, students could better adapt to roles of teachers, and thus ensure smooth conduction of work.

Inadequate instructors for in-post internship

It was very difficult to assign instructors for in-post students due to a large number of interns and limited teacher resources. Firstly, in terms of teacher-student ratio, one teacher shall at least instruct 15 students. Besides, these kindergartens were in townships and towns which were far away from each other with inconvenient transportation. The only convenient way for teachers to guide so many students in the meantime for a long term was to contact by phone, email or network. Secondly, from the perspective of teachers' majors, most instructors did not major in preschool education. Although they could help when students were helpless and needed comfort, their guidance was not targeted enough compared with teachers majored in preschool education when solving difficulties in actual educational teaching of kindergartens. Such ineffective guidance was not conducive to professional growth of in-post students. So, colleges shall combine full-time teachers with social practice and assign professional instructors according to majors and the number of students. Instructors shall know about needs of kindergartens and students in practice, and provide necessary data, information and guidance for students according to actual conditions, coordinate students to combine internship tasks with requirements of kindergartens, and solve various problems in in-post internship. Of course, instructors shall focus their management on coordination and guidance instead of control or rigid management, pay attention to communication with students and kindergarten instructors, and thus complete jointly students' in-post internship objectives. In this way, "dual" qualities of on-campus instructors could be enhanced, management of in-post interns can be completed, and thus dual effects were achieved.

Great difference among in-post students

Firstly, there were differences among posts of these students. In this National Training Project In-post Internship, most students had one post, which was basically for backbone kindergarten

teachers. In contrast to students with one post, some students had internship that was unrelated to preschool education. Secondly, students had very different in-post abilities. Students, who were positive and progressive in schools and had a strong learning ability, could be competent in backbone posts through adaption for a certain period of time, while some chose to escape in front of harsh environment and posts beyond their abilities.

According to investigation, difference among in-post students had the following reasons, firstly, some kindergartens and parents did not trust interns' working ability, and did not dare to let them take charge of classes independently, and thus only allowed them to join a regular class, during which students doubted about their abilities and thus affected their enthusiasm. Secondly, some township and town kindergartens lacked teachers, and thus principals took in-post students as "substitution" and assigned them where there was not a teacher. Students felt that they were not respected, as they shifted from this class to another every day, being mentally and physically fatigued. Thirdly, some township and town kindergartens had a seriously imbalanced teacher-student ratio, which was common to be 60:1.

Although National Training Project In-post Internship has many disadvantages, it does more good than harm. Through effective in-post internship, students could be exercised and improved in terms of teachers' ethics, intelligence and skills. Therefore, generally speaking, in-post internship especially National Training Project In-post Internship has obvious facilitation in students' professional growth. In-post internship could be more complete and perfect integrally only by handling arrangement of teacher guidance, in-post time arrangement and other detailed issues in future in-post internship.

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