

Research on the Application of e-Portfolio Assessment on Educational Internship

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ABSTRACT. This study applies the electronic portfolio (e-portfolio) to the educational internship of normal university English majors. The 120 participants were from senior English majors of the School of Foreign Studies, at Huzhou University, Zhejiang, China. They attended the 6-credit 12-week compulsory teaching practice in different junior middle schools in Huzhou. The study adopts a questionnaire consisted of three parts: 14 Likert Scale questions, a multiple-choice question, and an open answer question. The 14 Likert Scale questions with five degrees points from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree) are designed to evaluate students' degree of satisfaction about the teaching practice, which was divided into the following four dimensions: teaching ability, other abilities, instructor guidance, the effect of portfolio evaluation and the general effect of the practice. Through the analysis of the data from the questionnaire, it can be seen that the educational internship using e-portfolio assessment has achieved a good result in many aspects such as teaching ability, cooperative ability, autonomous learning consciousness, lesson planning and so on and students are satisfied with the experience of internship using e-portfolio as the assessment method. However, the study also reveals that students are still not confident with their research ability and the guidance from their university instructors is not as satisfied as that from the internship schools' instructors.

KEYWORDS: Electronic portfolio, E-portfolio, Educational internship, Internship, Teaching practice

1. Introduction

Practice teaching or practical education refers to the sum of a series of teaching activities in the field of specialized education in colleges and universities, which students are mainly engaged in practical operation under the guidance of teachers, including internship, curriculum practice, profession training, social practice, graduation thesis (design), etc. The aim is to consolidate and deepen the theoretical and professional knowledge related to the professional training objectives.

In recent years, the national education departments at all levels have attached great importance to practice teaching and issued a series of documents to refine, implement, and improve its implementation. Back in January 2012, the Ministry of Education required universities to increase the proportion of practice teaching to ensure that the practice credits for majors in humanities and social sciences account for at least 15% of their total credits. In 2018, the department further proposed to build a "practice-oriented teacher education curriculum system". In July 2019, it put forward the detailed requirements of "systematic design of practice teaching system, formulation of practice curriculum, improvement of internship quality standard, scientific arrangement of internship content" and "strengthening internship process guidance and ensuring internship quality".

Although China's local normal colleges and universities have been committed to the reform of practice teaching, formed a complete practice teaching system, there are still deficiencies.

First, the objective of the educational internship is not clear enough, and the overall design needs to be strengthened. The overall design of the teaching goal is to draw a blueprint. The training target is realized under the interaction of the theoretical teaching system and the practical teaching system. Currently, although there is a relatively complete system of internship teaching, the teaching target is not clear enough, built on which, the guiding effect of the internship outline is compromised, hence the failure to form a cohesive and clearly organized hierarchy to serve the teaching target.

Second, the assessment method needs to be improved. Assessment is the most important link in the teaching system. Assessment is a process to evaluate the efficacy of teaching and learning. It plays an important role in diagnosis, motivation, and adjustment in teaching, including formative assessment and summative assessment. Formative assessment is used for the assessment of the learning process, and summative assessment is used for the assessment of the phased learning effect. But currently, educational internship usually adopts summative assessment based on the

appraisal from the internship school and student internship report, which is subjective and lack of consistency. Besides, for the daily performance during the internship, observation records, etc. are not included in the assessment, which can neither make a persuasive assessment of some key factors such as teachers' professional ethics, cooperative consciousness, and professional development potential nor make use of students' feedback to promote their growth in the process of the internship.

2. Portfolio Assessment and e-Portfolio Assessment

Portfolio assessment, a formative evaluation method, emerged in the 1990s with the “educational evaluation reform movement” in the west. It aims to collect and display students' learning achievements in a purposeful and planned way, and judge students' learning and development status according to certain standards.

2.1 Features of Portfolio Assessment

Portfolio evaluation has three main characteristics. Firstly, it can integrate both quantitative and qualitative methods to achieve comprehensive conclusions. Based on the practice teaching objectives and curriculum, the corresponding data are collected, including works, papers, diaries, videos, recordings and photos, interviews and reflective writing, which can reflect the actual learning situation correctly. Secondly, since portfolio evaluation focuses on formative assessment of various aspects, it can reflect the progress and growth of students as well as enable teachers to find students' learning needs and difficulties in time, and give specific feedback through a variety of ways to help students understand the way to progress as well as their level [1] Thirdly, portfolio assessment focuses on self-evaluation and self-reflection. Portfolio assessment encourages students to actively participate in the selection of works, portfolio creation process and evaluation criteria. Through continuous reflection, self-evaluation and peer evaluation, students can continuously adjust their expected goals of learning, so as to reveal their merits, inspire their self-confidence, and strengthen their intrinsic learning motivation.

2.2 The Main Types of Portfolio Assessment

According to the usage scope of portfolio evaluation, the portfolio evaluation can be divided into non-structural portfolio, structural portfolio and semi-structural portfolio by means of portfolio content construction and ways of presentation.

Non-structural portfolio, that is, there is no exact structural design of the portfolio contents. Teachers only provide students with the corresponding portfolio theme, instead of a fixed task list. This kind of portfolio provides students with sufficient space to, and enables them to identify and plan the items or contents in the portfolio with their own knowledge and ability. At the same time, it also provides students with the opportunity to collect materials on their own, which can give full play to their own potential.

The structural portfolio mainly establishes the subject status of students in the process of learning and teaching. Before the students made the portfolio, the teacher restricts the conditions for the portfolio, including the portfolio theme, the key items to be displayed, the evaluation objectives and criteria, the evaluation sheet for each key item, and the portfolio production requirements. After the teacher designs the above contents, students can fully exert their subjective initiative and present their own learning results, achievements and improvements in the portfolio according to the content in the evaluation sheet and their own understanding of the evaluation criteria.

The semi-structured portfolio is one of the main types of portfolio, which is somewhere between a structured and a non-structured portfolio. For this kind of portfolio, teachers only provide the theme and key items of the portfolio, leaving more room for students to create. According to the key content provided by the teacher, students can plan the key learning items and presentation mode in the portfolio by themselves, which allows them to effectively use their imagination and creativity to design the contents and structure of the portfolio.

2.3 The e-Portfolio Assessment

In recent years, the rapid development of electronic technology has led to the development of electronic portfolio (e-portfolio). An electronic portfolio is an archive developer's use of electronic technology to collect and organize content and material in a variety of formats (audio, video, pictures, text, etc.) [2]. Compared with the traditional paper portfolio, e-portfolio has the characteristics of saving storage space, easy backup, easy carriage, easy storage, and long storage time. Employing e-portfolio as assessment tools is a meaningful process that provides students with the opportunity to show their creativity and focus on the quality and the competence of the material presented [3]. Furthermore, e-portfolio

can exhibit various dimensions of students' learning improvement and development to teachers unavailable from standardized test scores [4].

The e-portfolio assessment method emphasizes the process, so as to seamlessly integrate with the practice teaching requirements of the Ministry of Education and agree with the Object Based Education (OBE) concept of modern education. This study adopts the portfolio assessment method to reform the practice teaching or internship assessment system of to improve its teaching quality.

3. Educational Internship Assessment Reform Based on e-Portfolio

3.1 Participants and Instrument

The participants were 120 senior English majors of the School of Foreign Studies, in Huzhou University, Zhejiang, China to attend the 6-credit 12-week compulsory teaching practice in different junior middle schools in Huzhou. At the end of the educational internship, the students were required to submit a questionnaire consisted of 14 Likert Scale questions and a multiple choice question. The 14 Likert Scale questions with five degrees points from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree) are designed to evaluate students' satisfaction with the process and result of the educational internship, which is divided into the following four dimensions: teaching ability, other abilities, instructor guidance, the effect of portfolio assessment and general effect of the internship .

3.2 Procedure

Firstly, the university and internship school tutors jointly determined the appraisal contents according to the course cultivating objectives, the internship school course features and the characteristics of the students, which covers attendance record, lesson plan or teaching design (including self-written and collected excellent lesson plans), audio or video of the class (including one's own class and other teachers' class), the reflection of the teaching method (including self reflection, the reflection others' teaching and reflection of some related topics such as teacher development, textbook design etc.) , other materials or products (such as the highlight of the class).

Secondly, in order to make the students fully understand the purpose, significance and the concrete implementation plan of the e-portfolio method, pep rally with the theme of "my portfolio my call" was held before the internship. One of the university instructors exhibited the sample e-portfolio and introduced in details the characteristics of the portfolio assessment and the contents in their portfolio, so as to make them clear about their tasks and arouse their curiosity and interest.

During the internship, university instructors should evaluate the e-portfolio materials of students regularly, and give students the in-time feedback including oral reports or e-portfolio. Through this inspection, instructors can show the well-made portfolio to the class so as to urge them to optimize their own portfolio materials, hence the realization of the process evaluation. At the end of the internship, the practice school instructors will grade the students according to their internship performance, and the university instructors will evaluate the students according to their portfolio.

The portfolio assessment mainly includes self evaluation, peer evaluation and teacher evaluation, which is relatively fair and objective and can truly reflect the actual performance of students during the internship. In addition, after the evaluation process is completed, the teacher organizes the students to display their portfolio. In the process of mutual help, students can report their internship obtainments to teachers and other students, demonstrating their professional quality.

3.3 Results and Discussions

The questionnaire was completed and collected anonymously. Eighty eight students completed the questionnaire. Twenty six or 29.5% of students think that after the internship, their teaching ability has been improved, i.e., they choose four or five for the questionnaire (mean response=3.45±0.75). The item of lesson plan design ability recorded the highest mean response (4.37±0.38) and all but two students agreed that they have a big improvement in their lesson plan design ability. However, only fourteen or 15.9% of the students felt the promotion in research ability (mean response=2.09±0.40). Eighty or 91% percent of students (mean response=4.12±0.27) feel the obvious improvement in cooperation ability and the numbers of autonomous learning ability and reflective ability are quite close that are 76 or 86.4% (mean response=3.88±0.58) and 74 or 84.1% (mean response=3.75±0.85) respectively. All the 88 students consider the guidance of the practice school instructors to be effective and 77 or 87.5% of the students are satisfied with the direction of the university instructors. As to students' attitude toward the portfolio evaluation method, 68 one or 77.3% of the students agreed with the objectivity and comprehensiveness of the way of assessment (mean

response= 3.95 ± 0.83) and sixty two or 81.8% of the students were satisfied with the efficacy of the teaching methods with the score of 4 or 5 (mean response= 4.11 ± 0.56), while only 66 or 75% of students are reluctant to share their portfolio with other students (mean response= 3.34 ± 0.88). In general most of the students are satisfied with the form and effect of the practice with the numbers of 88 (mean response= 4.54 ± 0.68) and 82 (mean response= 4.18 ± 0.74) respectively, but about one third or 28 students are still not confident for the teaching profession (mean response= 3.85 ± 0.63).

Through the data analysis of the questionnaire, it can be seen that the internship by means of e-portfolio assessment has achieved a good result in many aspects such as teaching ability, cooperative ability, autonomous learning ability, instruction design ability and so on.

Firstly, students' teaching ability has been greatly improved, especially in lesson planning ability. The lesson planning integrates the educational principles and teaching materials to deal with "what to achieve and how achieve it" (Wang 2006). A teacher first needs to know the learning objectives that determine what to learn, that is, the specific teaching content, based on which, methods and strategies to learn, or "how to learn" will be specified. It can be seen that instructional design or lesson planning is the premise of the implementation of classroom teaching, which is a comprehensive reflection of the curriculum standards, teaching content, teaching objectives, the main points, difficult points, teaching methods, teaching tools, teaching process, and so on. It is the embodiment of the theory into teaching activities acceptable to students. The normal university students have studied theories of lesson planning in school, but that is lack of operability; therefore, one important goal of the internship is to put theory into practice and make up students' lack of practical teaching experience in classroom design.

Secondly, students sense a big progress in their reflective ability. Teaching reflection is an effective means for normal university students to improve their professional quality and ability and achieve professional development. The traditional summative assessment merely requires students to submit their reflection during the practice at the end of the practice without the direction or instruction during the practice. Admittedly, students can improve their teaching methods and learning efficiency through their independent and to a certain degree unintentional reflection, but due to the lack of plan and guidance, the acquisition of students during the process is discounted. In contrast, as a significant function of portfolio assessment, the systematic and organized reflection will be done by students before, during and after the practice under the guidance of university tutors, which requires them not only to pay attention to their teaching practice, but also reflect on themselves. Therefore, the process of reflection is an important means to improve the depth and breadth of students' thinking while achieving continuous development in teaching practice.

Students also claimed the improvement in other abilities such as cooperative ability. In the real educational scene, the students need to create their own portfolio without the step-by-step guidance from teachers and text books, which requires their independent thinking as well as cooperation with front-line teachers and other students to discuss issues such as teaching, class management and students' ideological and moral education. During this process, their autonomous learning ability, cooperative ability and other abilities are developed.

The data analysis also reveals some problems after the internship. Students are not confident with their research ability and they are not satisfied with the university instructor compared with the front-line instructors. Actually, teaching and research are closely linked. To be adapted to the modern teaching, normal students must have the scientific thinking and innovation consciousness to apply the scientific theories and methods to the teaching practice, or through careful study and analysis, generalize the theory from their teaching practice to solve the actual problems during teaching. However, due to a severe shortage of teachers, though some normal university teachers have doctor's degree, they do not have professional training and could not apply the theory to the practice themselves, which makes them in a disadvantageous position in tutoring practical teaching courses for normal students. Therefore, university teachers should first take the initiative to learn the teaching theories and methods so as to improve the effectiveness of education.

4. Conclusion

The portfolio assessment is the reform and innovation of the current practice teaching evaluation model. The traditional summative evaluation has no obvious effect on the motivation of normal university students, which leads to the deterioration of students' self-confidence and learning and teaching motivation. Through the positive guidance of the e-portfolio assessment method, this study enables teachers and students to pay attention to and reflect on the performance in the learning process, so as to stimulate students' sense of achievement and autonomous learning ability, and thus promote the development of learning ability, teaching skills, reflective ability, cooperative consciousness, and other abilities. This study proves the feasibility and efficacy of e-portfolio assessment in practice teaching; hence it will encourage more scholars and front-line teachers to conduct relevant research to extend the limitations of this study.

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