

The Tracing Investigation on Training Quality of Government-sponsored Primary English Education Graduates under the Perspective of Outcome-Based Education (OBE) ——Taking the Graduates of 2011 of Heyuan Polytechnic as an Example

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Abstract. In order to gain a deeper understanding of their career development since graduation, this study conducted interviews with the government-sponsored graduates of 2011, which mainly centred around their fundamental motivations for teaching in rural areas, their self-growth and professional development trajectories, future career development directions and planning, teaching effect and influential social contributions, etc. The results show that talents training objectives for primary English education major is highly achieved; government-sponsored graduates are firmly dedicated to teaching in rural areas; they have a strong drive for professional development, and the talents training mode of government-sponsored graduates has obtained good results; Accordingly, suggestions were proposed to optimize the talents training of primary English education based on outcome-based education.

Keywords: Outcome-based education; government-sponsored graduates of primary English education; the tracing investigation on training quality.

1. Research Background

Teachers are the key to enhancing the quality of rural education. In order to strengthen the teaching force in rural primary schools, address the severe issue of structural imbalance in discipline structure and teachers, and boost the balanced development of compulsory education in rural areas, the government has proposed a new educational model for targeted training of normal students, covering educational levels from kindergarten, primary school, and junior high school to high school. In 2018, the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China and the State Council jointly promulgated "Opinions on Comprehensively Deepening the Reform of the Construction of Teachers in the New Era" (2018), which underscored "comprehensively improving the quality of primary and secondary school teachers" and "strengthening the cultivation of teachers in short and weak disciplines". The document stressed the importance of implementing a rejuvenation action plan for teacher education, envisaging the creation of a normal education system with Chinese characteristics primarily driven by normal universities as the main body and high-level non-normal institutions as an active participant. This initiative seeks to foster a collaborative "Trinity" model between local governments, higher education institutions, and primary and secondary schools^[1]. In 2020, multiple authoritative bodies including the Ministry of Education of the People's Republic of China jointly released "Opinions on Strengthening the Construction of Rural Teachers in the New Era" (2020) in which the significance of reinforcing the development of rural teacher teams in the new era was clearly pointed out. It particularly emphasized that all regions should vigorously boost the establishment of a cooperative ecosystem for rural teacher training. This would involve close collaboration among colleges and universities, specifically those designated for normal education students, along with local governments, primary and secondary schools, and teacher development institutions. Then, the government, the universities and students sign three party agreements so as to take targeted enrollment, targeted training, targeted employment for the targeted cultivation of localized rural teachers^[2]. The

envisioned framework aims to create an integrated platform that combines training, research, and service functions to enhance the high efficacy of rural teacher team building in the new era. In 2022, “Notice on Further Improving the Training of Normal Students for the ‘Excellent Teachers Plan’”(2022) put forth a proposal to refine and bolster the “Four-in-One” cooperative education mechanism, which encompasses harmonious interaction among colleges and universities, local government entities, primary and secondary schools, and teacher development institutions. This notice advocates for an enhanced alignment between the provision of training and its demand, facilitating the seamless integration of pre-service and in-service teacher education resources. It also calls for the establishment of robust education practice bases, culminating in the creation of a synergistic and collaborative network that unifies teacher training, professional development, research, and service-oriented initiatives^[3]. Hence, it can be seen that the targeted training program for rural primary school teachers is a teacher training system innovation specifically for rural basic education^[4]. By appealing to outstanding students, the program aims to nurture a cohort of educators with strong teaching beliefs who are willing to take root in rural education and take the initiative to shoulder the important responsibility of transmitting local culture, nurturing rural talents, engaging in rural affairs, and countering conservative rural mindsets^[5].

As the innovative model of teacher education matures, its training mode and effectiveness have grabbed much attention and aroused a heated policy discussions. Outcome based education, with its concept of continuous improvement, has a profound impact on talent cultivation and the improvement of training quality. It is outcomes-oriented, focusing on “what students learn” and “what they can do”, and evaluating students’ learning outcomes, abilities, and qualities upon graduation, as well as whether these abilities and qualities can meet the needs of society through evaluation and feedback, accordingly, identifying problems to perfect teaching and education ^[6]. This provides an important value judgment criterion for tracing the training effectiveness of the targeted students and the training objectives of colleges and universities. The evaluation of the quality talent cultivation holds a pivotal position in the entire process of nurturing talents. It is not only an evaluation of the various abilities of the students cultivated, but also the teaching level of teachers, and it is also the basis for continuous improvement of talent cultivation programs and teaching processes^[7]. Therefore, continuous attention to tracing the effectiveness of talent cultivation has become an effective way to ensure dynamic matching between talent output and social actual needs.

2. Research questions

Based on an in-depth interview, this study designed an open-ended interview outline to reveal the career development profile of this group of targeted training normal students since their graduation, aiming to answer the questions below: 1) What is the root cause of your choice for and persistence in teaching in rural areas? If you have the opportunity to teach in a school located in the county, will you intend to go there? 2) How do you cultivate your abilities in terms of teaching, research and communication with parents? 3) Do you keep the habit of writing from after-class reflections, participating in the publication of teaching papers and daily teaching reflection essays, so as to deepen your understanding and practice of teaching? 4) For the future career planning, do you aspire to become an expert in research or teaching, be an administrator or an ordinary front-line teacher? Please share your considerations. 5) What kind of exemplary role have you and your peers played in the local primary school English education field?

3. Research method

3.1 Research participants

With a total of 12 graduates of 2011 English Education major (Five-Year Program) interviewed, seven are from class 1 and five from class 2, comprising three boys and nine girls. In terms of

graduates selection, we try to represent the diversity of the graduates' backgrounds by selecting graduates from all 17 townships in Boluo County, spanning from the eastern, central to western regions.

Table 1. Profiles of the graduates interviewed

Gender	male	3
	female	9
Origins	the eastern part	4
	the central part	4
	the western part	4
Primary school type	township centre school	5
	school in the country	7
Professional title	junior level	12
Education degree	bachelor's degree	12
	(self-taught education)	

3.2 Data collection

After comprehensive data collection, the author gave a meticulous arrangement, classification, and summary of the interview materials to guarantee its pertinence so as to adhere to the subject requirements and study objectives.

4. Interview results

4.1 What is the root cause of your choice for and persistence in teaching in rural areas? If you have the opportunity to teach in a school located in the county, will you intend to go there?

The frequently-used term “serve the hometown” in the interview results was particularly noticeable. Their strong emotional bond with the place where they were born and reared is the primary reason behind their desire to remain in rural education. Driven by the goal and belief of giving back and aiding in the revitalization of education in their hometown, they are eager to dedicate themselves to the educational cause of their hometown upon returning from their studies.

“Rural areas need development, and it is our duty as locals to contribute our strengths to our hometown. Staying in our hometown to participate in construction, teach and mentor others, we dare not profess to turn stones into suns or flowers into towering trees. However, by doing our best and always keeping our responsibilities and accountability in mind, I believe that one day flowers can bloom beautifully and trees can grow luxuriantly.” (Personal interview with student ZYL)

“The primary reason for choosing to teach in rural areas is that I was born and raised here, making me more familiar with the rural environment. I have no trouble adjusting here, and at present, rural areas’ educational resources are not much worse than those in the county, which is why I have remained dedicated to teaching in the countryside.” (Personal interview with student HWK)

When asked about getting chance of teaching in the county, will you intend to accept it? Out of the twelve students, four are firmly committed to the rural education cause; one plans to broaden her horizons before returning to the countryside again, aiming to better nurture the children at home; seven are willing to teach in the county if given the opportunity, as it offers more platforms and resources from which they can reap the benefits for personal and professional growth.

If I have the opportunity to teach in a school in the county, I would like to. I want to see more of the world while I am still young. I want to see the differences between teaching concepts and teaching methods. I hope to meet more and better teachers and learn from them as well. Since graduation, I have been staying in the same school for a long time, which makes me feel like a frog in a well. If I can teach and study in the county for one or two years before returning to a rural school, will it be better for both the rural students and myself? (Personal interview with student HWH)

4.2 How do you cultivate your abilities in terms of teaching, research and communication with parents?

It can be seen from the interview results that their self-improvement path is “active learning from outstanding teachers”, “participating in professional competitions and training”. This shows that personal pursuit and professional ability improvement constitute the internal driving force for their personal growth and professional development. Teachers' professional development initiative is a personal choice for actively making changes in their professional development, reflecting their personal proactive rather than passive or forced action state^[8].

Teachers should have a personal understanding of teaching and get oneself familiarized with the entire textbook; we should pay attention to the preparation of lessons, standardize the teaching process, and then improve it in practice; we should also attend more lectures; I will actively participate in various competitions as well, thus, forcing myself to make progress. In the competitions, I can practice and improve my teaching abilities, meanwhile, I am able to recognize the strengths exhibited by numerous outstanding peers, draw closer to exceptional teachers, and learn valuable insights from renowned educators.(Personal interview with student WJR)

Among the various relationships from the perspective of education, the quality of teacher-student relationship directly affects the quality of student learning. In rural educational environments, faced with a group of “left-behind children” mainly cared for by their grandparents, “left-behind elderly”, it is particularly crucial to establish a healthy and harmonious teacher-student relationship and maintain timely and smooth communication with parents. In this regard, the students interviewed hold the strong belief that, firstly, they should adjust their mentality and explore diversified communication channels tailored to the evolving circumstances; secondly, they should learn from experienced teachers and absorb their educational wisdom and practical experience to continuously enhance their own educational practice abilities; thirdly, as a head teacher, the professional ability of the head teacher is mainly reflected in handling well the school, family and social relationship to form a joint force of education, creating class characteristics, applying education according to students' personality characteristics, and organizing class education activities^[9].

4.3 Do you keep the habit of writing from after-class reflection, participating in the publication of teaching papers and daily teaching reflection essays, so as to deepen your understanding and practice of teaching?

As the results showed that out of the twelve students interviewed, ten demonstrated strong reflective practices, being keen to share their teaching experiences and insights, diligently crafting teaching essays, eagerly engaging with diverse research projects, actively producing numerous research papers, and consequently achieving fruitful results in academic performance while two students exhibited reflective tendencies but struggled to articulate their reflections in a refined manner. According to American psychologist G.J.Posner, a teacher's growth is equal to their experience plus reflection. He notes that unexamined experiences lead to limited insights, resulting merely in superficial knowledge. Teachers' development will definitely get constrained if they do not reflect on their experiences in depth^[10]. Professor Ye Lan further lays particular emphasis on the significance of reflective practices by suggesting that lifelong teaching based solely on composing teaching plan cannot foster excellence, whereas three years of conscientious teaching reflections could potentially shape an ordinary teacher to an excellent one.

*Teaching reflections is crucial for enhancing teaching practices and facilitating rapid progress among young teachers. Teaching papers are the theoretical condensation of teaching practices. Throughout my seven-year tenure in the primary school teaching, I have achieved the title of **Outstanding Teacher** at the town, county and municipal levels three times. I have authored eight papers in total about essays, teaching strategies, and moral education. Additionally, I have successfully led and completed two educational projects. I have taken part in twenty-three competitions in different categories, securing first, second, and third place awards at the county*

and municipal levels. Furthermore, I have guided eleven teachers to top honors in county-wide events and thirty students—many of whom placed first—to success in subject competitions. In addition, I have judged several English competitions in Boluo County for six times and have contributed to the creation of unit tests and final exams at the county level. (Personal interview with student WJR)

I have been engaged in the primary school teaching for seven years. I insisted on the submission of one paper or educational essay per semester, the scope of writing including teaching practices, moral education, case studies, educational essays, etc. Over the past few years, my submissions have claimed the top prizes in the county for many times. (Personal interview with student CJW)

4.4 For the future career planning, do you want to become an expert in research or teaching , be an administrator or an ordinary front-line teacher? Please share your considerations.

As it can be seen that two students determined to become professionally outstanding teachers; two students aspired to work in school administration; seven students clearly expressed their satisfaction with being ordinary front-line teachers in the future; one student maintained an open career direction, believing that they could excel in any of the three roles: as a teacher, administrative staff, or front-line teacher. In their perspective, their roles, regardless of their nature, are all aimed at nurturing students. As one student repeated during the interview, "Regardless of our positions, we must fulfill our duties, shoulder our responsibilities, and strive for excellence. Teaching always comes first, administrative work comes second."

Furthermore, their career development choices are evidently influenced by two factors: first, the local economic development situation. Students who yearn for becoming teaching and research masters all come from the eastern region of Boluo County. Compared to the central and western regions of Boluo County, it is economically lagged behind, but it boasts of a profound tradition of valuing culture and education, highlighting the significance of education and talent nurturing.

Second, gender factors. The three students who intend to pursue school administration are all male students, indicating that male teachers tend to prefer administrative and leadership positions in their career development and planning.

I oriented to be a school administrator, aspiring to become the principal as soon as possible. I have observed that , after reaching 40 years of age, many male teachers often encounter career shifts, either upward or downward. Maybe taking on greater responsibilities can motivate me to keep learning and making progress. Concurrently, I strive to achieve the status of a senior teacher, as managing a school necessitates a profound understanding of education, along with a longer-term and more profound perspective to conceive and implement measures that benefit the school, teachers, and students. (Personal interview with student ZYL)

Looking ahead to my professional journey, I favor pursuing a career in school administration. This path allows me to actively contribute to the management and development of my school, thus fostering the growth of my hometown. Additionally, it enables me to continue working in front-line education while combining my administrative and teaching responsibilities. (Personal interview with student CJW)

4.5 What kind of exemplary role have you and your peers played in the local primary school English education field?

Three key points rose into prominence in the the interview results : "being a pillar in local education and teaching", "becoming a distinctive teaching administrator", and "possessing a strong sense of responsibility and self-learning awareness". As one of the students interviewed mentioned, "At the beginning, my peers and I scattered across Boluo county like dandelions, but now many of us have emerged as key figures in local English teaching. Some outstanding and hard-working peers have even grown into English teaching and research personnel within the township. Thus it can be seen that these graduates have gradually evolved into the cornerstone of local primary school English education through their solid professional knowledge and excellent professional abilities. A

few have ascended to leadership roles and teaching administration positions within the English field. Within their familiar social circles, those graduates support each other, fostering a conducive environment for mutual assistance and collective advancement.”

My peers and me are a group of teachers who dare to innovate and are willing to dedicate ourselves to local education cause. Most of us are already local backbone teachers, and some of us have become administrators or famous teachers, playing a good leading role in local primary school English education. we are also practitioners and pioneers in revitalizing rural English education. (Personal interview with student HWK)

I take great pride in being a government-sponsored graduate of primary English education from Heyuan Polytechnic. I am particularly inspired by the success of my classmates, with some now serving as principals, English teaching and research experts, and administrative leaders. Their achievements motivate me to learn from them, strive to emulate their success, and continuously enhance my professional skills.

(Personal interview with student ZYL)

Now my peers have become the mainstay of various schools. It is common to spot familiar faces from our class on the screen. If we encounter any teaching challenges or lack of learning materials, we can readily seek advice from or exchange ideas with classmates across different towns. Essentially, the entire Boluo County Primary School English community is engaged in a collective sharing of experiences. We often see our classmates participate in various competitions. Basically, this group of commissioned students are consistently recognized and commended by school authorities for their professional contributions. (Personal interview with student TYT)

5. Research conclusions and implications

5.1 Research conclusions

This study conducted interviews with the government-sponsored graduates of 2011 for a better understanding of their current work status, thus, we can have a clear and comprehensive picture of their fundamental motivation for teaching in rural areas, their self-growth and professional development trajectories, future career development directions and planning, teaching effectiveness and influential social contributions for local education. Thereupon, conclusions can be drawn into several aspects:

Firstly, it can be seen that a high degree of cultivation goals of the primary school English education major has been attained. The positioning of the cultivation goals, characterized by scientific rigor, objectivity, and clarity, directly affects the achievement of the cultivation goals and the quality of cultivation. The cultivation goals should be developed around three core dimensions: the type, specification, and level of the intended talent cultivation. This involves constructing a matrix relationship among graduation competencies, literacy requisites, and curriculum teaching expectations^[11]. Through our interview findings, it is apparent that graduates of targeted training have emerged as influential leaders within their local education sectors, serving as pivotal intellectual pillars in invigorating the educational landscape of their hometowns. Their developmental path strikingly mirrors the professional talent cultivation goals, embodying the essential qualities required for front-line primary school English educators. These include being deeply rooted in rural education, upholding strong professional ethics and literacy standards, mastering robust foundational knowledge and teaching techniques, and effectively merging these with local realities. They also demonstrate innovation in instructional methods, thereby offering indispensable intellectual backing and practical role models for enhancing the quality of rural education and propelling the advancement of regional educational development.

Secondly, government-sponsored graduates exhibit an unwavering commitment to teaching in rural regions. As gleaned from the interviews, it can be found that those targeted training students harbor a deep love for their hometown and are committed to contributing to the rural

education endeavor. They take practical actions to assume the role of builders of rural education in the new era, effectively emerging as the driving force behind rural education—individuals who are eager to teach, derive joy from teaching, and excel at teaching. Moreover, coupled with the solid implementation of rural revitalization work, the overall humanistic environment in rural areas has undergone tremendous changes, with beautiful environment and comfortable life, which further reinforce their resolve to pursue careers in rural areas.

Thirdly, government-sponsored graduates exhibit exceptional motivation towards their personal professional growth. The interviews reveal that the relentless pursuit and enhancement of professional competencies lie at the heart of their individual career advancement. These graduates diligently cultivate and refine their teaching prowess, research capabilities, and parental engagement skills by consistently engaging in learning, drawing on excellent experiences, participating actively in competitive events, and receiving systematic training. Their dedication to ongoing improvement demonstrates a profound passion and commitment to educational excellence.

Fourthly, the training effectiveness of government-sponsored primary English teacher has proven notably effective. Seven years since their graduation, this cohort of selectively trained students have grown into outstanding rural educators who embody both ethical integrity and robust professional skills. They are tirelessly striving to bridge the urban-rural educational disparity within the county, reshaping the local educational landscape, gradually transforming into a team of teachers with adequate numbers, excellent professional quality, strong adaptability to agricultural contexts, and a profound connection with rural communities^[12].

5.2 Research implications

Based on the findings derived from this study, the suggestions for the optimization of talents training of primary school English education major are as follows:

Firstly, it is strongly advocated to strengthen vocational identity education during the enrollment phase, aiming to heighten students' awareness and appreciation of their prospective teaching careers. Teacher professional identity significantly influences students' dedication and passion for the profession, motivating them to keep their efforts in academic pursuit, so that they can quickly adapt themselves to and be competent for the role of rural English teachers after graduation.

Secondly, it is indeed imperative to refine the existing curriculum by thoughtfully incorporating rural education-focused courses. This will enhance the students' understanding of the status quo of rural education, rural history and culture so as to better equip students with the necessary knowledge and skills pertinent to the unique challenges faced in rural educational settings.

Finally, it is highly advisable to maintain a steadfast commitment to the principles of outcome-oriented education, ensuring that all facets of the educational process—from curriculum design to teaching methodologies and assessment strategies—are geared toward fostering measurable learning achievements of student and cultivating core competencies, highlighting the characteristics of “teacher education”. The teacher education characteristics are the upgrading of the “normal” nature. It is emphasized that on the basis of a more generous academic quality and a more solid professional quality of teachers, students should not only master the content they teach, that is “what to teach”, but also develop a profound understanding of pedagogical strategies, that is “how to teach”, self-directed learning awareness, that is “how to learn”, and the purpose behind learning, that is “why to learn”^[13]. Simultaneously, it is critical to enhance the effectiveness of graduates tracking studies by actively adopting the perspectives and constructive recommendations and perspectives from employers. It is conducive to the establishment of a dynamic and responsive system for evaluation, feedback, and ongoing improvement, ultimately aimed at consistently elevating the the quality of primary school English education professionals.

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