Research and Strategies on the Prevention of Speculative Teaching Behaviors in the New National Teachers’ Qualification Examination

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Abstract. There are two sections—written examination and interview—in the new National Teachers’ Qualification Examination. However, the speculative education teaching behavior, a general term of utilitarian education and teaching behavior with the fundamental purpose of successfully passing the interview section and finally obtaining the National Teachers’ Qualification Certificate, lies in the interview section, and it is a false presentation of education and teaching ability. This paper lists some typical speculative teaching behaviors in interview section, analyzes the main reasons lying in the time and space limitation, imperfect evaluation mechanism, harmful guidance of training institutions and competition between non-normal students, and gives some preventive strategies including strengthening the cultivation of practical ability of pre-service teachers; setting corresponding thresholds for non-normal candidates; adding assessment and evaluation of examinees’ growth records; guiding normatively training behavior of training institutions; increasing vocational guidance and psychological guidance.

The Raise of the Questions

The Outline of the National Medium and Long Term Education Reform and Development Plan (2010-2020) states: “Improve and strictly implement the teacher access system, and strictly control the entrance of teachers. The State formulates the standards for teachers’ qualifications, and defines the standards for academic qualifications and the requirements for the conduct of teachers. The provincial administrative department of education shall organize the qualification examination and accreditation for primary and secondary school teachers in a unified way.” In 2011, the Ministry of Education first carried out the pilot project of the reform of the qualification examination of primary and secondary school teachers in Zhejiang and Hubei. In 2015, the pilot was expanded to 20 provinces, autonomous regions and municipalities directly under the Central Government, with the total number of applicants over 2.75 million.

As an occupation admission system, the National Teachers’ Qualification Examination includes written examination and interview. The written examination mainly examines the basic knowledge and abilities of education and teaching of the examinees while the interview section mainly assesses the examinees' basic professional qualities (the professional cognition, psychological quality, thinking quality, etc.), practical abilities of education and teaching (abilities of expression, class management, teaching performance, and basic teaching skills, etc.).

Each year, there are a large number of people who take part in the interview test of the National Teachers’ Qualification Examination. Even if the interview is conducted in the first half of the year and the second half of the year respectively, the organization of the interview is quite time-consuming and laborious.

Therefore, considering the principles of simplicity rather than complexity and easy to operate, the interview outline issued by the Ministry of education specifically divides the assessment objectives into eight aspects: professional cognition, psychological quality, appearance, expression ability,
thinking quality, teaching design, teaching implementation, evaluation and reflection. The interviewers evaluate the above performances of the interviewers mainly by observing, questioning and consulting, and comprehensively judge whether they can become a qualified teacher in a structured way.

However, many scholars have questioned the scientificness, comprehensiveness and ideality of the target system of the interview. Some researchers have pointed out that many teachers’ qualification applicants have never participated in education and teaching practice and do not have real related ability at all, while they can successfully pass the teachers’ qualification examination, because they has acquired a set of examination skills with the help of the teachers training institutions, which is actually a kind of “false education and teaching ability”. This paper holds that that the so-called false education and teaching ability can pass the interview examination is essentially a speculative education and teaching behavior. If any precautions are taken, it will become a rapid growth with the increasing number of interviewers year by year.

An Overview of Speculative Teaching Behavior in the Interview Section

The speculative education teaching behavior is a general term of utilitarian education and teaching behavior with the fundamental purpose of successfully passing the interview section and finally obtaining the National Teachers’ Qualification Certificate, and it is a false presentation of education and teaching ability.

If the behavior penetrates into the interview section, but the interviewers do not recognize it, directly using it as the assessment elements of the teachers’ entry standard to score, the authenticity and effectiveness of the interview will be seriously questioned. Therefore, it is very necessary to prevent the speculative teaching behavior, to identify the real education and teaching ability of interviewers, and to select qualified teachers for our country.

At present, the following speculative teaching behaviors in the interview are as follows:

Answering the Specified Questions with the Template

Many examinees summarize the answers to the questions in the interview section into some answer templates, and carry out targeted intensive training when preparing for the exam. The template responses can generally ensure a good answer, and achieve certain results in practice, but only provides a framework. The application of the template makes the answers boring and lack of soul and also gives the examiners a sense of sameness. For example, in the interview, the examiners ask, “What do you think is the original intention and mission of being a teacher?” The examinee replied, “Serve all the students wholeheartedly.” This answer seems very dignified, but not specific and profound. It is also difficult to evaluate whether his answer is wrong or not. Obviously, the examinee’s understanding of teachers’ profession is very superficial. In fact, many examinees have learned to use templates to answer a large number of questions.

The “Conversation” between Teachers and Students is Too Smooth during the Audition

There is usually a “simulated teaching” in the interview. However, there are no students at all in the teaching section, where the candidates are both teachers and students. During the teaching presentation, the candidates often ask their “students” some questions, but the “students” “answer” all the questions very smoothly, and the candidates just know to say “good, very good”. So there is no any classroom accident at all. In this way, the examinees organize “teaching” with the purpose of being concise and efficient to ensure that their teaching presentation can be successfully completed. But in fact, the classroom is always changing; communicating smoothly is not enough to produce more teaching wits, or to determine the candidates’ future teaching potential.

The Basic Teaching Skills are Deliberately Avoided

The audition in the interview is different from the traditional teaching audition, because the examiners need to know more than the teaching content from the audition. And the purpose of the audition is not
the content itself, but the comprehensive assessment of the basic teaching skills of the examinees and
the implementation ability of the classroom teaching program.

While in the real interview situation, the examinees often stand before the empty blackboard to give
their lessons, so they don’t show their real level of teaching basic skills such as blackboard writing
and drawing pictures, which may cover up their shortcomings. When using the teaching aids, the
students just raise their hands symbolically and tell the students “look, this is a XX (the teaching
aids)...” Many students stand in the same place reading their teaching plan and there is nothing except
the title on the blackboard with poor handwriting. The teaching effect is very poor. Undoubtedly, the
shortcomings of their teachers’ basic professional skills are poor. Although some examinees are full
of emotion and have a beautiful language, they don’t show the basic teaching skills to the examiners.
In this way, how do the examiners know whether they have strong teaching abilities?

Other Speculative Teaching Behaviors

In order to achieve better results in the interview, many examinees have tried their best, but many
behaviors and languages they used actually have nothing to do with the teaching ability. For example,
some examinees even try to sweet-talk the examiners in the scene, saying “Thank you for working so
hard”, “if I pass the exam, I will try my best to be an excellent teacher”, and so on, which makes the
interview vulgar. So it is no longer a clear and refreshing relationship between examinees and
examiners, and the examiners feel at a loss.

The Reasons for the Speculative Teaching Behavior in the Interview

Time and Space Limitation
The interview of the national examination is objectively limited by time and space, and lacks of the
real situations of education and teaching. The interview time for the examinees is only 20 minutes,
and there are no students and teaching conditions. It is a virtual scene. There was an interviewee who
said in an interview “the interview time was too short. When I was giving the lesson, the teaching
skills I prepared before were not displayed, and I was asked to stop...” On one hand, because of the
short interview time, the candidates organize their interview content in order to reduce their mistakes
and highlight the efficiency of teaching; on the other hand, they are not rich in the cognitive theory and
lack of practice. The candidates have speculative psychology and behavior because of time and space
limitation.

Imperfect Evaluation Mechanism
As for the evaluation mechanism of the national examination, there is no objective personal growth
“portfolio” assessment. The “Portfolio” evaluation comes from foreign countries. With the promotion
of basic education reform and the development of teachers’ specialization, portfolio evaluation is also
widely used in students’ evaluation and teachers’ personal development evaluation. However, at
present, the portfolio evaluation index has not been introduced into the national examination
interview, and there is a lack of necessary data on the candidates’ professional background, growth
experience, personal characteristics, educational feelings, etc. In this context, candidates have
speculative psychology and behavior.

Poor Guidance of Training Institutions
Influenced by training institutions, students become utilitarian. The training courses of educational
training institutions teach candidates to use an answer template and routine to solve the major
problems in the interview, so that students can pass the interview quickly. In fact, this is a kind of
opportunistic behavior, which delays the development of students. If the training institutions have a
high pass rate, more people will apply for their training and the institutions will get more profits.
Business factors flow into serious interviews, forming a vicious circle. The examinees are misled, and
have a speculative psychology.
Competition among Non-normal Students

A large number of non-normal candidates participate in the National Teachers’ Qualification Examination, who have no professional skill training, don’t systematically study pedagogy and psychology, and do not really understand the knowledge of education and teaching. They have deficiencies in temperament, basic skills, teaching connotation, textbook understanding, etc., so they do not form a real foundation of education and teaching ability. Therefore, these non-normal students also have speculative psychology and behavior in the interview.

Prevention Strategies

Strengthening the Cultivation of Practical Ability of the Pre-service Teachers

We should advocate the practice oriented education model and strengthen the understanding of the importance of practical ability from the value orientation. We should also reform the curriculum structure, increase the proportion of practical teaching, and stress the combination of theory and practice. On the basis of practice, students are trained to find and solve problems, so as to improve their own quality and promote their own development. Schools should actively adapt to the changes brought about by the reform and carry out the reform of teaching mode. In order to improve the students’ practical teaching ability, we can use micro-teaching to guide the normal students to evaluate and reflect on their teaching process, to correct their shortcomings in repeated training, and to form a “practice—evaluation and reflection—practice” loop. We need to carry out professional skills training and vocational skills training in groups, so that every student has the opportunity to practice. In addition, we can “promote teaching by competitions”, that is, regularly hold simulation classroom teaching competition, teaching plan and multimedia courseware making competition and teaching aids making competition, etc., to arouse the enthusiasm of students, and to cultivate the hands-on and brain using ability of normal students.

Setting Corresponding Thresholds for Non-normal Candidates

In the current occupation admission system, the state gives all examinees equal opportunities to recruit excellent teachers, which reflects the fairness and justice. However, the qualities such as educational feelings, teachers’ quality and so on, need time to shape, while non-normal students do not have.

For the non-normal students, the threshold of the current “written examination + interview” examination system is too low, and it is even easy to breed new unfair phenomenon, so another special standards should be set. For example, if he passes the written examination, only after one or two years of training in the industry can an interview apply for the interview examination. Or the probation assessments can be included in the certification and assessments for non-normal students—after the candidates pass the written examination and the interview, they still need to pass the probation assessments—and only after all the indicators are qualified can the teachers’ qualification certificate be officially issued.

Increasing Assessment and Evaluation of Candidates’ Growth in Teaching

A personal growth record should be set up bag for each person who is determined to achieve the teacher’s qualification, dynamically recording their teaching process and reflection. In the process of educational practice, the examinees can systematically collect relevant information, such as practice teaching plans, teaching evaluations, class activity plans, self-reflections and so on. On the one hand, the examinees can see their own growth track from these materials, review their gains and losses in the work, reflect on their teaching methods and effects, experience the happiness of their growth, and enhance their self-reliance and self-confidence in the future work. On the other hand, the personal growth records can provide a detailed personal data for the interviewers, so that the examiners can evaluate the examinees objectively and fairly from different perspectives.
Carrying out Policy to Standardize and Guide the Trainings of Training Institutions and to Avoid the Training Ideas of Exam Oriented Education

The responsibility supervision mechanism should be strengthened. The education administrative department should strengthen the qualification of management and examination of training institutions, make them develop healthily and orderly by formulating and improving relevant policies and systems, and regularly check and evaluate training institutions. In fact, if the supervision is appropriate and the management is standardized, the training institutions can even participate in the talents cultivation, who can strive to develop the examinees’ cognitive ability of their position, their education feelings, and their abilities of handling education events and monitoring teaching practice.

Increasing Vocational Guidance and Psychological Guidance

Before the interview, necessary vocational guidance and psychological guidance should be set up to get the examinees to know that if they are determined to be a teacher, they should try their best to improve the corresponding qualities of teachers, practice their basic teaching skills and improve the ability of education and teaching. In particular, we need get the examinees to know that if they choose the job, they should not pay much attention to the promotion of the salary but the development of their education feelings. If they only consider the job a good salary and speculate in the interview, even if they become a teacher, they will not have a sense of happiness, because the job is a career, not an occupation.

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