

Research on Pre-Service Teachers Multicultural Understanding: A Case Study of Exchange Student in Southwest University

SHI Juan^{[a],[b].*}

^[a]Doctoral Candidate, Faculty of Education, Southwest University, Chongqing, China.

^[b]Teacher, Teacher Education College, China West Normal University, Nanchong, China.

*Corresponding author.

Supported by the Fundamental Research Funds for the Central Universities (SWU1509367); Reciprocal Learning in Teacher Education and School Education Between Canada and China (20140441-1408099).

Received 9 April 2015; accepted 21 June 2015
Published online 26 August 2015

Abstract

Facing the global challenges of teacher education development and reform, the cultivation of teachers needs to international vision and multicultural understanding. This paper selected exchange students of Southwest university they went to university of Windsor as a case study, used interview and questionnaire survey research methods, explored the exchange students the basic understanding and view about multicultural understanding; it is attempted to explain the Chinese students at the university of Windsor during the internship experience culture influence, further find the multicultural understanding on the significance and value of pre-service teachers' professional development.

Key words: Pre-service teachers; Multicultural understanding; Exchange students

Shi, J. (2015). Research on Pre-Service Teachers Multicultural Understanding: A Case Study of Exchange Student in Southwest University *Cross-Cultural Communication*, 11 (8), 25-29. Available from: <http://www.cscanada.net/index.php/ccc/article/view/7393> DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.3968/7393>

INTRODUCTION

Along with the trend of internationalization increasingly, the relationship among the nations of the world closer and

closer, the movement frequency of the international people more strengthened, this is bound to affect on education of every country. Compared with Canada, there are high degree of homogeneity of students within one class in China, in the face of high degree of homogeneity of students, teachers need to have the ability to multicultural understanding, because they will face different living individual in different day. However, vision and ability of multicultural understanding need to be trained, pre-service teachers can't immediately have this ability after graduation, therefore it is particularly important to strengthen the cultivation and training of the multicultural understanding from the phase of pre-service teacher. This paper attempts to spread out exposition as case on exchange students of southwest university to the university of Windsor in 2014 (in short "exchange students") by virtue of reciprocal learning in teacher education and school education between Canada and China.

1. THE CURRENT RESEARCHES OF "MULTICULTURAL UNDERSTANDING"

Due to the cultural differences between different nationalities, races, countries, it forms the situation of the multicultural coexistence, that can be understood as multicultural. With the increasingly frequent exchanges with foreign countries, in our country more and more scholars start to research "multicultural", the research quantity increase gradually, the research content gradually broad which mainly from the multicultural education, cross-cultural study, multicultural teacher education curriculum and teachers in the multicultural, etc.. In terms of multicultural education, some scholars mainly discussed from the rise of multicultural education trend in the United States, multicultural education through nearly half a century has developed from the struggle of minority and disadvantaged groups to the system, institutional

education theory and policy, multicultural education has experienced a complex and tortuous path from the pursuit of cultural differences to differences in equality and mutual recognition (Wan, 2008).

Based on different culture, cross-cultural research is also included in the multivariate culture system. Some scholars put forward the connotation of cross-cultural learning, in order to avoid cross-cultural learning lose its targeted, the core of cross-cultural studies is still learning across the social culture of different countries. In order to effectively carry out cross-cultural learning, it is necessary to set up new learning concept, apply the constructivism learning theory analyzes the intercultural learners would face with the challenge from the knowledge support meaning, action understanding meaning and effective support system for study and action system of communication and communication, and put forward corresponding countermeasures (Zheng, 2013).

With the highlighting of multicultural education under the vision of globalization and American primary and middle school students to the growing diversity of racial, ethnic, cultural and linguistic structure, American primary and secondary school education needs more good at multicultural education teachers. In view of the reality of the isolated multicultural teacher education curriculum settings and the inefficient problem, the United States advocated setting multicultural teacher education curriculum to cultivate cross-cultural ability based on the global perspective, in this way, teachers will have a wide range of multicultural knowledge, attitudes, form continuous cross-cultural teaching ability (Dai, 2012).

About teachers' professional development in multiculturalism, some scholar based on Canadian multicultural situation, carried out teachers need to have a multicultural view to teach, and the forms of expression of multicultural education of teachers from all over the world are different. When the Canadian teachers carry out multicultural education, they face with the students from different ethnic groups and countries, as far as possible to ensure education fair; on the other hand, with the trend of internationalization, combined with the actual current situation of development of education itself, Chinese teachers conduct the "localization" of multicultural education, make its begin to grow and develop in China, and "settle down" in the national minority (J. Wang & M. G. Wang, 2006).

2. HOW TO KNOW "MULTICULTURAL UNDERSTANDING" OF EXCHANGE STUDENTS BEFORE AND AFTER THE CROSS-CULTURAL LEARNING

Multicultural understanding is an important content of multicultural education, is a matter of success or failure of multicultural education. Based on existing research, It is

used narrative research method to investigate exchange students knowledge of multicultural understanding, to reach the "localization" interpretation of the multicultural understanding.

2.1 Before Cross-Cultural Learning: What Is a Multicultural Understanding

It is hard to put the theoretical knowledge into practice no teaching experience and no experience in teaching practice, exchange students have more alternative experience of teachers' education teaching' understanding, namely, they learn about teachers' shallow understanding from their high school teachers or other ways. 20 exchange students participating in Reciprocal Learning in Teacher Education and School Education between Canada and China Project in 2014 at Southwest University received the questionnaire survey, the results show that more than 85% of the exchange students thought multicultural education in China is not obvious; 60% of the exchange students thought the necessity of multicultural education is not big; but in the face of international trend, nearly 100% of the exchange students thought that teachers should possess multi-cultural vision for teaching. Nearly 70% of the exchange students can't put forward the constructive suggestions and measures on how to carry out multicultural education. In an interview, when exchange students were asked that how teachers treat students in the class can better reflect the multicultural education, they said:

Student A: According to the pedagogy and the psychology theory knowledge, we are clearly known that teachers should treat every student equally, not to let every student "left behind".

Student B: I think current education, students in every class is the same situation, teachers need to be equal, fair to treat every student, and as for multicultural education is not obvious.

Student C: Multicultural education should be conducted in a variety of cultures, and our culture is a coherence lot, it is not a lot necessary to implement multicultural education.

2.2 After Cross-Cultural Learning: What Is a Multicultural Understanding

Three-month of exchange learning at the university of Windsor is not long time in exchange students' learning life at the university, but their influence is very profound. Canada as the main immigration country, in the process of its historical development gradually become a model of multicultural country, it is bound to have a more flexible multicultural education policy, multicultural education is internalized for every teacher's education idea, and externalized through a variety of education activities. Exchange students are generally believed that cross-cultural learning at the university of Windsor has profoundly influenced on their development, and changed

their previous many views and understanding. When they were asked how teachers treat students in the class can better reflect the multicultural education again, they said:

Student A: Teacher is a lifelong pursuit career. teachers in the face of different individuals, teachers need to use multiple view of each student, such as how to treat students of exceptional intelligence, how to help student get rid of the learning difficulties, how to take care of most of the students learning in general and so on. These are all need to learn, no matter how teachers need to have the concept of different-oriented, only in this way can students be got sufficient development.

Student B: Before I thought multicultural education exists only in countries such as Canada, the United States. During exchange learning in Canada, I saw and heard in the school that made me realize multicultural connotation is actually a very wide, there is multi-culture between different countries and ethnic, even from the same ethnic in the same class, this kind of culture may be more micro, so teacher need to pay attention to each student's different life background and the family environment, because these are very important factors in the multi-culture of class.

Student C: I should revise my before understanding, our country is a multi-ethnic country, students in the Han nationality community is the same situation, but after the exchange learning, I have communicated with my national minority students, learn the class in minorities areas especially the minorities and Han nationality mixed residence regions is similar with the class in Canada, just they are immigrants. So in this case, the teacher not only need to understand the national culture, they also need to understand other ethnic culture, internalize this culture and integrate this culture with their own culture, in this way they can practice multicultural education better.

3. THE INFLUENCE ON EXCHANGE STUDENTS PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT AFTER CROSS-CULTURE LEARNING

Exchange students got larger changes after a short cross-culture learning, they have more specific, clear education idea, the improving teaching ability which they can combine the skills they learned in Canada consciously in the process of internship, and have more clear and long-term planning of their own professional development.

3.1 The Influence on Exchange Students' Educational Ideas After Cross-Culture Learning

Educational idea is the sum of the views and ideas about education, is a pointer to guide teachers' teaching behavior. Students of Southwest University before participating in the exchange project, they also hold a

certain educational idea, but the idea is too broad and theoretical, and are limited to verbally, in their opinion, the educational idea is not conducive to implementation. But after three months cross-culture learning of exchange project, they would concretize their educational ideas which were too broad and theoretical by means of obtaining operation behaviors indirectly in the lectures and internship, and they could say how to do to carry out their educational ideas effectively. When exchange students were asked which impact on their educational ideas after Cross-culture learning of Windsor exchange, they said:

Student A: I always think that teachers should be equal to treat every student, love their students and their education career. But I never thought about these problems, such as facing with students of a class how can I do to treat them equally, whether can I achieve real equality. After exchanging learning from Windsor, cross-culture learning gave me great influence, also gave me more inspired. Teachers' love to their students embodies in dribs and drabs: They respect their students' customs, culture and language from different races, which are a reflection of equal treatment of their students, is also the embodiment of loving students. Now I am in the internship, I will consciously focus on every student' need in class management and teaching, although I know that it is a huge challenge to meet every student' need for teachers' work, I will try to do it, and in the future work I will insist to do so.

Student B: I think that democracy and equality are important factors of education, teachers need to treat every student equally and democratically, students' creativity and independence need to be protected, only in this way is a humanistic education. Teachers between Canada and China have some complementary aspects, Chinese teachers emphasize dignity very much, to some extent they may neglect cultivating students' creative. Nevertheless in cultivating students' creative we should learn and draw lessons from Canadian teachers' doings.

Student C: linked with multicultural understanding, I think I know how to respect every student's difference more after exchange learning, the difference is a result of different family culture which is a kind of embodiment of cultural diversity. Through the internship, I experience more profoundly the importance of respecting for differences, which put forward a great challenge to teachers' professional qualitat. I need to chasten for continuous self-improving.

3.2 The Influence on Exchange Students' Teaching Skills After Cross-Cultural Learning

Teachers' teaching skills is that in performance they successfully and creatively accomplish their teaching tasks effectively achieve their teaching purpose and obtain effective teaching methods; and is that internal

performance in order to ensure to complete their teaching mission of knowledge, skills, psychological characteristics and the function of personality system, Teachers' teaching skills are unity of teachers' personality, creativity and teaching requirements. Teachers' teaching skills include teaching design, teaching, homework and after-school tutoring, teaching evaluation, teaching research and so on. Teachers' teaching skills are important embodiment of teachers' professional quality. Normal students obtain their teaching skills indirectly and internalize their own personality characteristics and psychological quality, eventually form the unique teaching style. The exchange students through comparing and observing classroom teaching of Canada and China, which had great influence on their teaching skills.

Student A: Cross-culture learning affect on our professional development greatly, but applying the effect to specific teaching, we need to have a kind of consciousness, namely when we meet confusion in education we can consciously think about problem and reference Canadian teachers' practice or not? When we emphasis on course returning to life, how can we choose chemistry material in daily life to arouse students' learning enthusiasm. Recently I always think about these problems. In my internship, I could teach knowledge from living examples that close to student' life, and students like this way of teaching very much.

Student B: Now I am in internship, I remembered the situation of the first lecture, I was a little nervous and what is more, I was calm. Although I didn't teach students real ago, my learning experience and cross-culture learning exchange experience made me clearly know that teaching is not only a science, but also an art. Teachers need to interact with students constantly in the process of lecture, the interaction is not only the verbal, but also eye contacting and communication with students. In the knowledge teaching, Chinese teachers pay more attention to systematicness and coherence of knowledge, Canadian teachers pay more attention to interestingness and creativity of knowledge. In internship I will consciously combined the practices of Chinese teachers and Canadian teachers.

Student C: I focus on taking care of students differences in teaching students during internship. When students meet difficulties, I would communicate with them. When students were absent-minded in class, I would listen to their reasons after class, and help them form good study habits. In conclusion, I believe that teaching is a process of mutual association between teachers and students. If teacher does not pay attention to students' individual differences coming from different family background, teaching is bound to lose energy. After exchange learning I support this viewpoint more firmly.

3.3 The Influence on Exchange Students' Career Planning After Cross-Cultural Learning

Teacher professional development is a continuous process. Teachers have different tasks and development goals in the different professional development stages, the previous professional development stage effects and restricts the latter professional development stages directly. As a result, normal students' career planning is necessary. After cross-cultural exchange learning in the University of Windsor, exchange students could make more clear career plans for their professional development through rational thinking.

Student A: My ideal is to be a teacher, loves my students and loves education career. After cross-cultural exchange learning, I think about my future development. I think that teacher career need to continually give affection, which need have sincere emotion to students and education. Also needs pursuit the true persistently. Only in this way can teachers teach students well. Therefore, I hope that I can constantly consolidate knowledge, improve my teaching skills. After my graduation I can go through "groping" stage of the novice teachers quickly, in order to prepare for my later professional development.

Student B: Through cross-cultural exchange learning my horizons was broadened which is good for your future professional development undoubtedly. After my graduation, I will adopt the useful cross-cultural exchange learning experience in Canada continually to my educational practice. I need to enrich and improve myself through a variety of ways in the subsequent professional development to have more advanced teaching idea. I strive to be a good teacher who is popular with the students.

Student C: I wanted to be a teacher who is popular with students after graduation before my cross-cultural exchange learning. After cross-cultural exchange learning, I believe that the teacher is my lifelong pursuit career through observing the education at home and abroad. After my graduation I aspire to be a teacher who loves students and respect every student' difference, meanwhile, I should constantly enrich myself to improve my teaching ability and research ability. This is my direction and motivation of efforts.

CONCLUSION

On account of coming from different cultural background, students in China have strong individual differences. Teachers need to have a multicultural view to treat their students democratically and equally. With increasing international communication, teachers couldn't be completely closed to teach, teachers need to bring fresh teaching elements to students, teachers need to have

multicultural view from this viewpoint. Cross-cultural exchange learning for three months had played a positive role in promoting pre-service teachers' professional development by interview survey. Pre-service teachers need to study and improve themselves after their graduation to maintain the positive role of cross-cultural exchange learning. Exchange students need to consciously use the cross-cultural exchange learning experience to guide their educational practice, to consciously promote practical knowledge transformation, in order to improve their theoretical knowledge and practical ability.

REFERENCES

- Dai, W. F. (2012). On the cross-cultural model of multicultural teacher education curriculum in the U.S.A. *Comparative Education Review*, (5), 72-75.
- Wan, M. G. (2008). Multicultural education: From "disparity" to "recognition". *EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH*, (11), 88-92.
- Wang, J., & Wang, M. G. (2006). *Comparison research on multicultural education*. Minorities Press.
- Zheng, T. N. (2013). Intercultural learning: A preliminary exploration. *Comparative Education Review*, (9), 25-28.