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The Construction and Practice of Practical Teaching System for Physical Education Majors in Local Normal Universities under the Background of University Transformation

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Abstract: Under the dual drivers of connotative development in higher education and the construction of the "New Teacher Education" initiative, the transformation and development of local normal universities are urgent, with the core being the reform and innovation of talent cultivation models. As an important component of teacher education majors, the quality of talent cultivation in physical education majors is directly related to the construction level of the physical education teaching force in basic education. Currently, the practical teaching system for physical education majors in local normal universities generally suffers from issues such as fragmented arrangement of components, disconnection between content and needs, a single evaluation mechanism, and superficial collaborative education, which severely restricts the effective enhancement of teacher candidates' practical teaching abilities. Guided by problem-oriented analysis, this study systematically examines current practical dilemmas and, based on exploratory practices, constructs an "One Center, Two Main Lines, Three Entities, Four Stages" comprehensive practical teaching system with integrated on- and off-campus linkage. This system adheres to a focus on cultivating teacher candidates' practical teaching abilities, connects professional teaching and social practice as two main lines, integrates the forces of universities, local governments, and practical training bases, and advances progressively through the stages of "Educational Observation-Educational Probation-Educational Internship-Educational Research." Practice has shown that this system contributes to achieving full-process coverage, multi-entity collaboration, and competency-oriented evaluation in practical teaching. It significantly enhances the adaptability of talent cultivation for physical education majors and improves teacher candidates' professional competence, providing a replicable paradigm for practical teaching reforms in similar institutions.

Keywords: University Transformation, Local Normal Universities, Physical Education, Practical Teaching System, Collaborative Education, Teacher Candidates' Competencies.

1. Introduction

As socialism with Chinese characteristics enters a new era, the principal contradiction in Chinese society has shifted, leading to an increasing public demand for high-quality education and higher requirements for the quality of the teaching workforce [1]. Teachers are the primary resource for educational development, and teacher education is the source of the teaching force. In 2018, the "Opinions on Comprehensively Deepening the Reform of Teacher Team Construction in the New Era" and the "Teacher Education Revitalization Action Plan (2018–2022)" were issued successively, marking a new stage of comprehensive revitalization and deepening reform in China's teacher education [2]. These documents explicitly call for innovating teacher education models, strengthening the practical components for teacher candidates, and striving to cultivate a professional and innovative teaching force that meets the expectations of the Party and the people. In response, Guangdong Province launched the "New Teacher Education" implementation plan, aiming to build a high-level, distinctive teacher education model with Guangdong characteristics [3]. Among its key measures is "deepening the reform of talent cultivation models and strengthening the cultivation of teacher candidates' practical abilities."

Against this macro policy background, the transformation of local normal universities has become an inevitable choice. The core of this transformation involves shifting from traditional academic orientation and knowledge-based education to application-oriented and competency-based education, and from closed on-campus cultivation to open collaborative education, in order to better serve regional basic education development. Due to its distinct practicality, applicability, and teacher education nature, the effectiveness of reforms in physical education majors is particularly notable. However, influenced by factors such as historical evolution, resource constraints, and conceptual limitations, the practical teaching systems for physical education majors in many local normal universities remain relatively weak, becoming a bottleneck restricting the improvement of talent cultivation quality [4]. How to construct a scientific, systematic, effective, and transformation-compliant practical teaching system has become an urgent task for the connotative construction of physical education majors in local normal universities.

This study is based on local normal universities in Guangdong Province, using the physical education major as a specific case. Through empirical research and theoretical analysis, it delves into the prominent problems existing in the current practical teaching system and attempts to construct a new practical teaching system that is competency-focused, comprehensive, and multi-collaborative. The aim is to provide theoretical reference and practical pathways for promoting the reform of physical education majors in local normal universities and enhancing the quality of teacher candidate cultivation.

2. Reality Check: Dilemmas in the Practical Teaching System for Physical Education Majors in Local Normal Universities

Through interviews with multiple local normal universities, literature review, and in-depth case studies of the physical education major, we have identified the following five deep-seated dilemmas in the current practical teaching system:

2.1. Disintegrated System Structure, Failing to Achieve Comprehensive and Integrated Design

An ideal practical teaching system should be a continuum throughout the entire teacher candidate cultivation process. However, the reality is that practical teaching components in many institutions are distributed in "isolated points," lacking organic connections and logical progression. A common model is: first- and second-year students primarily focus on on-campus theoretical and sports skills courses, with occasional scattered visits; third-year students may have short-term probation arrangements; and fourth-year students concentrate on graduation internships and thesis writing. This "theoretical idling in early years, practical cramming in later years" model leads to a severe disconnect between theoretical learning and practical experience. Students in the first three years lack continuous, in-depth exposure to educational settings, making it difficult to test and deepen theories in practice. By the time of the concentrated internship, they often face the awkward situation of "difficulty in applying knowledge reserves and unfamiliarity with teaching skills," significantly diminishing the effectiveness of practice.

2.2. Lagging Content Supply, Disconnected from Basic Education Reform and Development

The content of practical teaching is slow to update and fails to closely align with the requirements of the new era's physical education and health curriculum reforms in primary and secondary schools. On one hand, university course structures and teaching content remain relatively rigid, inadequately integrating the latest policy documents such as the "Compulsory Education Physical Education and Health Curriculum Standards (2022 Edition)." Practical content in emerging areas such as health education, interdisciplinary thematic learning, cultivation of sports ethics, and sports participation for students with special needs is missing or weak. On the other hand, practical task designs are often limited to traditional physical education teaching simulations, with insufficient attention paid to cultivating comprehensive practical abilities such as organizing large recess physical activities, guiding extracurricular sports clubs, building campus sports culture, conducting student fitness testing and interventions, and planning and operating sports events. This disconnection makes it difficult for graduates to quickly adapt to the complexity and diversity of physical education work in primary and secondary schools [5].

2.3. Rigid Evaluation Mechanisms, Failing to Effectively Play a Guiding and Motivational Role

Current practical teaching evaluations commonly suffer from the drawback of "emphasizing three aspects while neglecting three others": first, emphasizing summative evaluation over formative evaluation. Evaluations often deliver a "final verdict" after the internship, primarily based on the completeness of internship manuals and feedback from internship units [6]. There is a lack of continuous tracking and recording of students' growth trajectories, effort levels, and depth of reflection throughout the practical process. Second, emphasizing quantitative evaluation over qualitative evaluation. Excessive attention is paid to quantifiable "hard indicators" such as teaching hours, number of lesson plans, and observation sessions, while insufficient evaluation is given to the "soft skills" reflecting professional competence, such as the thoughtfulness of instructional design, flexibility in teaching implementation, effectiveness of teacher-student interaction, and criticality of teaching reflection. Third, emphasizing on-campus evaluation over multi-source evaluation. The evaluation subjects are predominantly university instructors, with low or even absent weighting given to evaluations from internship site mentors, peer students, and service recipients (primary and secondary school students). This results in a single perspective in evaluation, making it difficult to comprehensively and objectively reflect students' actual practical proficiency.

2.4. Superficial Collaboration Mechanisms, with University-Government-School (Enterprise) Cooperation Remaining Superficial

Although most institutions have established off-campus practical training bases, "collaborative education" often remains at the level of signing agreements and unveiling plaques, without establishing deep-seated cooperation mechanisms. The problems are reflected in: First, insufficient motivation for cooperation. Primary and secondary schools, burdened with their own heavy teaching tasks, perceive accepting interns as an "additional burden" and lack intrinsic motivation for active participation. Universities, often constrained by funding and management limitations, struggle to provide substantial resource feedback or intellectual support to the bases. Second, inadequate communication channels. There is a lack of stable, efficient daily communication platforms between universities and bases, leading to potential misunderstandings in practical objectives, content, and guidance standards, making it difficult to form educational synergy. Third, inadequate implementation of the "dual mentorship system." The responsibilities of university mentors and base mentors are unclear, and connections are loose. The mechanisms for joint guidance and collaborative assessment are unsound, easily resulting in situations of "neither side taking responsibility" or inconsistent guidance directions [7].

2.5. Weakened Resource Support, with Supporting Conditions Mismatched to Transformation Needs

The in-depth development of practical teaching requires sufficient resource support. Local normal universities, especially those in non-central cities, often face challenges in this regard: First, scarcity of high-quality practical training base resources. Establishing stable, in-depth cooperative relationships with primary and secondary schools is difficult, and the quantity and quality of bases struggle to meet the demand for high-quality practice for all students. Second,

relatively limited funding. Practical teaching involves high costs such as transportation, insurance, materials, and stipends for external mentors, often stretching regular university teaching budgets thin and limiting the breadth and depth of practical activities. Third, lagging construction of digital and intelligent practical teaching platforms. There is insufficient application of modern educational technologies such as virtual simulation experiments, online practice communities, and AI-based teaching analysis in practical teaching, making it difficult to break through time and space constraints and provide students with rich, repeatable simulated practical scenarios [8].

3. System Reconstruction: Construction of the "One Center, Two Main Lines, Three Entities, Four Stages" Model

To address the aforementioned dilemmas, we propose a systematic, integrated reform plan for the practical teaching system, with its core framework summarized as "One Center, Two Main Lines, Three Entities, Four Stages."

3.1. Core Philosophy: Focusing on Cultivating Teacher Candidates' Practical Teaching Abilities ("One Center")

The design and operation of all elements of the system must closely revolve around cultivating the core objective of "practical teaching abilities of teacher candidates in physical education majors." Here, "practical teaching abilities" is a broad, structured concept. Referring to professional teacher standards, it can be decomposed into three levels: foundational abilities (language expression, movement demonstration, classroom management), professional abilities (ability in physical education instructional design, implementation and evaluation, sports skills teaching, health education), and developmental abilities (ability in teaching reflection and research, innovative planning of sports activities, teamwork and communication). The construction of the system aims to promote the progressive generation and integration of these three levels of abilities through systematic practical arrangements [9].

3.2. Pathway Design: Connecting the Dual Main Lines of Professional Teaching and Social Practice ("Two Main Lines")

Professional Teaching Practice Main Line: This is the fundamental path for cultivating teacher candidates' core professional abilities. Focusing on the actual tasks of physical education teacher positions in primary and secondary schools, it integrates practice into all components directly related to education and teaching, such as subject pedagogy courses, microteaching, educational probation, educational internship, and graduation theses, emphasizing the professionalism, standardization, and contextual nature of practice.

Social Practice Training Main Line: This is an important pathway for expanding teacher candidates' comprehensive qualities and enhancing their sense of social responsibility. By organizing and participating in activities such as community sports guidance, youth sports summer camps, national fitness volunteer services, organization and service for large-scale sports events, and sports public awareness campaigns, students exercise general abilities like organization and coordination, interpersonal communication, and emergency response in a broader social classroom, deepen their understanding of the social functions of sports, and achieve the organic integration of professional education and social education [10].

3.3. Mechanism Innovation: Building a University-Government-Practice Base Collaborative Education Community ("Three Entities")

Moving away from the situation of universities "going it alone," the responsibilities and rights of universities, local education administrative departments, and practical training bases (primarily high-quality primary and secondary schools, extendable to kindergartens and sports enterprises) in practical education are clarified, forming a symbiotic and co-prosperous community [11].

Universities: Assume the main responsibility for system design, theoretical teaching, on-campus training, process management, and quality monitoring, actively aligning with the needs of the other two parties.

Local Education Administrative Departments: Play a bridging role in policy guidance, resource coordination, and quality supervision. They can incorporate the construction of teacher candidate practical training bases into regional teacher team development plans, introduce incentive policies, and coordinate implementation.

Practical Training Bases: Serve as the main battlefield for refining teacher candidates' abilities and testing outcomes, providing real positions, excellent mentors, and practical projects, and deeply participating in the revision of cultivation plans, curriculum development, and practical evaluation.

Mechanisms such as regular joint meeting systems, co-construction of courses and projects, personnel exchanges and visits, and resource sharing platforms are established to achieve deep collaboration among the three parties in objectives, processes, resources, and evaluation.

3.4. Process Optimization: Implementing the Progressive Four-Stage Model of "Observation · Probation · Internship · Re search" ("Four Stages")

Following the cognitive and practical law of "perception-experience-practice-reflection," practical teaching is organically embedded into the four-year curriculum:

Educational Observation Stage: The goal is to form preliminary professional cognition and emotional identity. Forms include watching recordings of master teachers' lessons, on-site observation of physical education classes and recess activities in primary and secondary schools, attending special reports by outstanding physical education teachers/teaching researchers, visiting school history museums and sports halls of fame, etc. The task is to complete observation records, write reflections, focusing on "what constitutes a good physical education class" and "what is the role of a physical education teacher."

Educational Probation Stage: The goal is to gain initial practical experience through auxiliary participation. The form involves groups regularly entering base schools and, under the guidance of base teachers, attempting to undertake assistant teacher roles, such as assisting with equipment preparation, leading warm-up activities, tutoring individual students, organizing small games, and conducting 5–10-

minute segment teaching trials. The task is to complete a probation manual, write experiential reports, and begin simple student analysis and lesson plan design.

Educational Internship Stage: The goal is to conduct comprehensive teaching and work practice in real positions. This is the core component, recommended to adopt a "segmented and concentrated" model (e.g., short-term concentrated probation in the second semester of the third year + concentrated internship in the first semester of the fourth year). Students need to independently or cooperatively undertake physical education class teaching and extracurricular sports activity guidance for a class, possibly also including assistance with homeroom teacher duties, organization of fitness tests, etc. The task is to complete the required teaching hours, a full set of internship materials, and solve encountered practical problems under the guidance of "dual mentors."

Educational Research Stage (Throughout all stages, deepening after internship): The goal is to promote the internalization and sublimation of practical knowledge and initially form awareness of teaching research. Forms include writing reflective journals, conducting teaching case studies, undertaking small-scale research projects based on internships, recording and analyzing one's own teaching videos, holding internship outcome presentation and defense sessions, etc. The task is to complete a high-quality teaching reflection report or a small-scale action research report, achieving the leap from "experience" to "expertise" to "wisdom."

4. Conclusion and Outlook

In the contemporary context where higher education transformation intersects with "New Teacher Education" construction, the reform of physical education majors in local normal universities must place the innovation of the practical teaching system at its core. The "One Center, Two Main Lines, Three Entities, Four Stages" practical teaching system constructed in this study represents a systematic reconstruction of the traditional practical teaching model. It aims to fundamentally reverse the tendencies of marginalization, fragmentation, and formalism in practical teaching, striving to build a modern practical education system that is goal-focused (centered on competency), pathway-clear (dual lines advancing), mechanism-sound (three-party collaboration), and process-scientific (four-stage progression).

Looking ahead, the deepening and development of this system require continuous exploration in the following dimensions: first, strengthening institutional safeguards, promoting the inclusion of "collaborative education" effectiveness into the performance evaluation systems of local governments, universities, and primary/secondary schools to form stable policy and resource supply chains. Second, deepening evaluation scientific research, developing more reliable and valid assessment tools and standards for teacher candidates' practical abilities, and promoting more scientific and professional evaluation. Third, embracing the changes of the intelligent era, actively exploring the deep integration of technologies such as artificial intelligence and extended reality with practical teaching to build a smart practical education ecosystem that combines virtual and real, and human-machine collaboration. Fourth, expanding international comparative perspectives, learning from the advanced experience of "clinical practice" in teacher education in developed countries, creatively adapting it to local contexts, and continuously improving the modernization level of physical education teacher cultivation in China.

In summary, constructing a practical teaching system for physical education majors in local normal universities that meets the requirements of the times, aligns with professional characteristics, and satisfies social needs is a systematic project fundamental to teacher education. Only by adhering to a problem-oriented approach, daring to reform and innovate, strengthening collaborative linkages, and focusing on continuous improvement can we effectively cultivate high-quality, professional, and innovative physical education teachers who shoulder the educational mission of the new era, laying a solid talent foundation for accelerating the construction of an educationally strong nation and a sports powerhouse.

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