

## A Study on Choosing Paths to Conducting Career Aspiration Education on the Part of Tuition-Free Normal University Students

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### Abstract

Establishing a firm and lofty career aspiration on the part of tuition-free university students is the key to the effective implementation of the policy of free normal education, and it is the heart and soul of cultivating tuition-free normal university students. If effective paths to conducting career aspiration education are secured, tuition-free normal university students will receive a lot of assistance to correctly analyze themselves, understand the teaching profession in depth, get to know the society comprehensively, and achieve their career aspirations. Effective paths to conducting career aspiration education are mainly as follows: improving national supporting policies, developing professional courses, organizing activities to train students' capabilities, establishing advanced and typical models, and creating atmosphere of respecting teachers and valuing teaching.

**Key words:** Tuition-free normal university students; Career aspiration education; Paths

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### INTRODUCTION

In order to encourage more outstanding young people to engage in education and become teachers, as well as to achieve the dream of running schools by educators, Chinese government has implemented the free normal education policy since 2007 when tuition-free normal university students became an emerging youth group. They shoulder the expectation from the masses to carry out an education of distinction and have the strategic mission to improve education quality, promote educational equity and achieve the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation. Therefore, whether the tuition-free normal university students have a firm and noble career aspirations will determine the effects of implementing the national strategic plan, affect the reform and innovation of teacher education and the development of normal university students. In this sense, cultivating career aspirations is the heart and soul of training the students who are majoring in education without paying any tuition. Besides, it will be of profound significance to strengthen the career aspiration education, to encourage the students to devote themselves in education for a long time or throughout the whole life, and to encourage them to be outstanding teachers and educators. Path refers to the only way to the destination, which is also compared to a "gateway". Education path is the means to select and implement education content, and is the main nexus connecting the subjects of education, associating the objects of education as well as combing the subjects and objects of education. So the effective selection of education paths will directly

influence the education results. If effective paths to conducting career aspiration education are secured, tuition-free normal university students will receive a lot of assistance to correctly analyze themselves, understand the teaching profession in depth, get to know the society comprehensively, and achieve their career aspirations.

## **1. IMPROVING NATIONAL SUPPORTING POLICIES**

As a part of national policies, education policy is a decision-making process with regard to education gone through by a political system (such as political party, national government, local government, etc.) in a specific period to achieve certain objectives and tasks of education (Huang, 2007). The prosperity and development of education depends on a good education policy. The policy of free teacher education has clearly defined the fundamental purpose of and basic requirements for conducting the career aspiration education on the part of tuition-free normal university students, which thus provides a legal system with binding force to guarantee the implementation. Currently, there are still many drawbacks in the supporting policies of free teacher education. They should be revised and improved in the education practices.

### **1.1 Establishing an Operable Withdraw Mechanism**

The match between personnel and post is an important factor when choosing an occupation, and is also the key to enhancing the professional performance. Free teacher education policy requires the students receiving free education to have the interest and aspiration to be a teacher. However, some students are not willing to be a teacher or consider that they are not suitable for teaching after they are into the school. So we need to establish a “scientific and fair withdraw mechanism so as to let students who are not suitable for teaching can withdraw at an early date” (Zhang, 2012). While adhering to the basic principle of free education policy for normal university students, the State should give students the right to choose whether to pursue a free teaching major after they are enrolled in universities. We should respect the will of students, conduct a strict interview before recruiting, and pay much attention to examine whether the students have a strong aspiration to be a teacher and whether the match between a person and a post is reasonable. In this way, we could filter the pupils who are loath to and are not suitable for majoring in education in the selection of students. If normal students who received free education find themselves not suitable for teaching work after graduation, they should be allowed to withdraw from the teaching profession.

### **1.2 Implementing Strict Punishment**

Giving certain normal university students free education is a state act, so it should be respected and strictly enforced. The State should develop strict punishment methods to punish anyone who betrays the regulations so as to maintain the statutory authority of the policy of free normal education. For example, we can timely terminate the free education for normal university students who are unwilling or unfit to engage in primary and secondary education and allow them to transfer into the non-teaching majors to ensure the quality of training. However, we do not provide teaching jobs for students who fail to meet the requirements of national vocational qualifications for teachers out of personal unjustified reasons. What is more, we will ask students who are persuaded to quit studying or are expelled from universities due to violation of laws and regulations and thus are unable to fulfill the obligations of teaching or unable to properly fulfill the obligations upon graduation to be accountable for their responsibilities and repay the training costs and liquidated damages.

### **1.3 Building a Special Subsidy and Reward System for Rural Primary and Secondary School Teachers**

While emphasizing the teaching obligations on the part of tuition-free normal university students, the State should take full account of the legitimate interests and reasonable demands of the students under the circumstances of the socialist market economy, so as to fundamentally solve the problem that students are reluctant to teach in rural areas due to the relatively low income. Besides, the state should strive to increase investment in rural education, curb the imbalance of education development, effectively increase the salary of rural teachers, and encourage normal university students who receive free education to teach in rural primary and secondary schools. When it comes to the specific measures, we should formulate preferential policies for teachers in rural areas when carrying out professional evaluation and conducting faculty training; we should also establish a national special subsidy fund for primary and secondary school teachers in rural areas and give rural teachers special subsidies of at least 2,000 Yuan per person per month; apart from these, we should establish an annual system of commendation and reward for rural schools teachers and properly increase the special funds to anyone who receives the rewards.

### **1.4 Building a Civil Servant System for Education With Chinese Characteristics**

In today's world, Germany, France and other developed capitalist countries have implemented an education civil servant system in line with their national circumstances while carrying out a strict teachers' qualification system and an access system simultaneously, which deserves our learning. In this sense, under the premise of formulating a unified national standards for primary and secondary school teachers, we should timely implement a strict

teachers' qualification system and an access system, deprive the privileges enjoyed by the undergraduates in Higher Teachers Colleges to gain certificates of primary and secondary school teachers in schools, cancel the rights enjoyed by the provincial executive departments for education to organize teacher qualification examination, and hold a national teacher certification examination. In addition, we can also set up a civil service system for primary and secondary school teachers, bringing these teachers into the management scope of "Civil Servant Law", so that primary and secondary school teachers could enjoy the salary and welfare given to civil servants.

## **2. DEVELOPING PROFESSIONAL COURSES FOR TEACHERS**

There is either a broad or a narrow meaning for the professional development courses for teachers. In a broad meaning, the professional development courses for teachers include all the courses opened to tuition-free normal university students in accordance with the teacher education theories; while in a narrow meaning, the courses refer to the ones aimed at conducting an education of professional aspirations for teachers. Through the study of teachers' professional development courses, tuition-free normal university students will be able to understand the nature and characteristics of the teaching work, master the basic knowledge and basic vocational skills needed to advance professional development, and cultivate their professional awareness, emotions and so on.

### **2.1 Establishing a Scientific Curriculum System for Teachers' Professional Development**

As the future primary and secondary school teachers, tuition-free normal university students are in the initial stages of teachers' professional development when they have to receive a systematic pre-vocational education. Establishing a scientific curriculum system for teachers' professional development is the basic demand for cultivating outstanding primary and secondary school teachers. To achieve the end, first, the system should reflect the objectives and requirements of primary and secondary school teachers' professional development. According to the "Basic Education Curriculum Reform (Trial)", teachers universities as well as other higher colleges and training institutions who undertake the task to foster qualified teachers in elementary education should adjust their training objectives, professional setting, course structure, and teaching methods based on the objectives and content in the curriculum reform of basic education. Second, we must adhere to the basic principles of establishing a curriculum system for teachers' professional development. Proceeding from the combination of society-oriented values and people-oriented values and according to the national interests, the need of social development and the requirement of

professionalizing and specializing teacher, we should enable the future teachers to have career aspirations, professional ethics, professional emotions and social responsibility. All the practices we made should not only comply with the basic requirements of basic education reform, but also make innovation boldly, thus keeping up with the pace of the trend of the times and education; besides, we should not only focus on combing theory with practice, associating general education with professional education, and uniting required courses with elective ones, but also take into account the fact that curriculum should cover extensive knowledge, teacher training should be specialized and professional practices should be groundbreaking. Third, we should rationally plan the structure of courses for teachers' professional development. Teachers' professional development curriculum should take liberal arts, education disciplines, social sciences, professional disciplines, artistic disciplines as its basic elements, and construct a curriculum system which put stress on education disciplines and structures liberal arts and social sciences. Furthermore, we should further rationally plan the structure of courses, effectively integrate course content, design feasible implementing methods of courses, establish a scientific evaluation mode, achieve the integration of natural science and social science education, and combine scientific education and liberal arts education, so that every course is open to and tolerant of each other, and normal university students receiving free education could be enabled to build diverse knowledge structure, including the subject knowledge in a usual sense, literature, history, philosophy, psychology, anthropology and sociology, etc., on the basis of which a diversified capability structure could be established to make those students become the mentor of their own school life, and become the course creator, discipline designer and culture interpreter.

### **2.2 Opening Courses for Teachers' Career Aspiration Education**

In the pattern of traditional teachers education, career aspiration education only emphasized the dedication that normal university students should have to be a teacher and had no characteristics of the society, history, and reality. Therefore, it failed to enhance the awareness of being a teacher on the part of students. Nevertheless, Russia, Japan and other European countries attach great importance to normal university students' career education; some countries even raise the teachers' career education to be the will of nation, specifically set teachers' career aspiration education as a compulsory course, develop a unified national teaching syllabus, compile unified teaching materials, and systematically elaborate the typical advantages of the teaching work, job selection methods, social trends. Besides, they have listed teachers' career aspiration education as a compulsory subject in the national teacher qualification examination.

So China can learn from the successful experience of the European and American countries, opening the teachers' career aspiration education course for normal university receiving free education, and also put it as the basic content of the National Teacher Certification Examination. The teachers' career aspiration courses should include the guidance for teachers' professional value, policy guidance, professional psychological guidance, guidance for teachers' capabilities to conduct professional development, and their employment skills guidance. We should respect the career preference and choice of tuition-free normal university students and flexibly use various teaching methods based on their physical and mental characteristics. What is more, we should not only make them have a profound understanding of the social status and the value of teaching profession, thus establishing lofty career ideals, but also guide them to master right ways to achieving their aspirations.

### **3. ORGANIZING ACTIVITIES TO TRAIN STUDENTS' CAPABILITIES**

Capabilities are the individualized psychological characteristics of people which could exert much influence on their activities such as acquiring and applying knowledge and skills, improving operational efficiency, and accelerating their study, work, and creation. Education and teaching is not only a science, but an art. So mastering the art of teaching is the highest expression of teachers' capabilities. However, the capability to master the arts of teaching is not easy; instead, it requires tuition-free normal university students to participate in systematic, regular, and high-intensity training activities and to develop their skills in many aspects. By organizing training activities can we enhance the students' career awareness and beliefs of being a teacher, and can we enable them to have the capacity in line with the national standards for teacher qualifications, thus fully adapting themselves to teaching work in primary and secondary schools as well as rapidly becoming outstanding teachers and educators.

#### **3.1 Holding Theme Activities**

By holding distinctive, diverse activities of a variety of themes, the comprehensive capabilities of tuition-free normal university students can be enhanced, so can be their professional skills of being a teacher. For example, Southwest University implemented a training project called "twelve 'one's'" for normal students receiving free education and formed a tuition-free normal university student association—The Union of Future Educators, which is the only one of this kind existing in China; besides, it organized educational activities with "Glorious Teachers" as the theme; in addition to these, Southwest University also organized "Teaching skills Competition of Tuition-free Normal University Students", speech

contests, talent performances, and other classic reading contest. There are also good examples in Shaanxi Normal University who launched the "Contest of Tuition-free Normal University Students' Educational and Teaching Capability", in the hope of "using contests to promote learning and development, as well as enabling students to improve themselves in the contests." The results showed that these purposeful and targeted theme training activities could effectively develop and improve students' basic teaching skills and guide them to achieve their career aspirations. These successful experience is worthy of conscientiously summarizing and promoting.

#### **3.2 Organizing Study Tours and Social Investigation**

It is highly recommended to frequently organize tuition-free normal university students to take study tours in typical primary and secondary schools in rural and urban areas, so that the students can build a direct understand of the teaching profession, correctly understand the development of education in China, and enhance their perceptions of the teaching work. Moreover, conducting surveys, personal interviews and other methods could enable more students to understand the status quo of grass-rooted education, recognize their responsibility and missions, thus sublimate their career emotions and beliefs. For example, Northeast Normal University launched a theme activity named "The Basic Education in My Eyes", organizing thousands of tuition-free normal students to teach in schools scattered all around China and to conduct field research on the status quo of China's basic education as well as on education equality. Beijing Normal University organized various forms of teaching activities, such as the holiday social practice named "Three Hearts and Three 'Small's'", guiding students to identify career aspirations through social practices.

#### **3.3 Carrying out Youth Volunteer Activities**

It is suggested to guide tuition-free normal university students to form a youth volunteer service team and make use of their spare time to go deep into the primary and secondary schools nearby, conducting such youth volunteer activities as caring about left-over children, helping students' learning, and developing these students' interest and hobbies. In this way, the tuition-free normal university students will be enabled to have a good understanding of the development of these primary and secondary school students and teachers, cultivate their own educational teaching capability, enhance vocational emotions, and make their teaching career aspirations determined. For example, "The Union of Future Educators" established by Southwest University organized tuition-free normal university students to spend their weekends in caring for the left-over children, helping primary and secondary school students learn, and develop these students' hobbies and interest, so that the



professional capability of normal students receiving free education have been enhanced, so have been their career aspirations.

#### **4. ESTABLISHING ADVANCED AND TYPICAL MODELS**

Typical model is a certain person or thing that could provide a profound demonstration effect on people's thoughts, ideas, quality, behavior, etc. Advanced models can make an enlightening, educational, encouraging and guiding influence on society and other people. "A fine example could show a new way of thinking and a new mode of behavior that the observer does not possess. Through observation, observers could also form the same way of thinking and behaving (Bandura, & Lin, 2001, p. 65)." Therefore, we can establish demonstration models, make the abstract career aspirations specific and personalized, so that the tuition-free normal university students could receive a profound education from these advanced and typical models which are vivid, infectious and full of credibility.

##### **4.1 Selecting and Demonstrating Advanced Persons**

Selecting and demonstrating advanced persons is the foundation of establishing advanced and typical models. The more similar that the growth conditions, growth paths, personality traits, gender and age of the advanced persons are to the imitators, the greater the demonstrating effect of establishing models will be. So the selection and establishment of advanced and typical models by schools should be based on the actual situation of normal students who are receiving free education. The great educators at all times and in all countries, the present outstanding teachers in China, advanced teachers in schools, and excellent tuition-free normal university students should all be included in the scope of advanced persons. At the same time, we should focus on the model establishment of outstanding alumni, advanced teachers in schools and excellent tuition-free normal university students, for they have the same learning and growth environment as tuition-free normal university students and their emotional connection is close. Besides, since their excellent deeds are generated in the real life of teachers students, the models are fresh, perceivable and acceptable.

##### **4.2 Fostering Rich Atmosphere for Learning Advanced Models**

Fostering rich atmosphere for learning advanced models is the key to establishing advanced and typical models. We should fully exploit the publicity materials, open a special edition and column in school newspaper, internet, radio and other media, and three-dimensionally and all-directionally report the excellent deeds of great educators, outstanding teachers, and excellent tuition-free normal

university students, so as to provide rich spiritual food and vocational guidance to all the normal students receiving free education. Moreover, we should fully carry out a variety of educational activities to learn from the advanced and typical models. When conducting enrollment education, schools should take advantage of the advanced deeds of famous educators at all times and in all countries and of outstanding teachers in China, so that a distinctive image of teachers could be built, thus guiding students to take these people as good examples, understand the social responsibilities of teachers, appreciate the noble soul of teachers, and establish the career aspirations of loving and enjoying teaching. Furthermore, schools should take full advantage of such major festivals and educational activities as Teachers' Day, opening ceremony, and graduation ceremony of schools to carry out lectures, seminars, and exchange meetings to learn from advanced teachers' deeds, so that tuition-free normal university students could be improved and their teacher career aspirations could be strengthened.

##### **4.3 Intensifying the Demonstrating Impact Made by Teachers**

In order to establish advanced and typical models, we should pay more attention to intensify the demonstrating impact made by teachers. Teachers have the natural advantage to conduct career education for normal students who are receiving free education, for they have close ties with the students. Every movement and every word produced by the teachers are more likely to attract the imitation from the students, thus subtle influence will be placed on tuition-free normal university students' career aspirations. As a result, teachers should have a high sense of responsibility and dedication, teach students by personal example and verbal instruction, set a good example to students with their good moral character, lifestyle, thinking and personality, thus guiding students to love education, cultivate vocational emotions, and make their faith of being teachers more resolute. In addition, teachers should respect, care about, and provide assistance to students, having a close and sincere dialogue with tuition-free normal university students, so as to strengthen the educational effectiveness.

#### **5. CREATING ATMOSPHERE OF RESPECTING TEACHERS AND VALUING TEACHING**

Atmosphere refers to the special ambience or sentiment enveloping a particular occasion, especially the environment and mood that could give people intensive feelings. As for creating the atmosphere of respecting teachers and valuing teaching, it emphasizes showing respect for teachers, attaching importance to education, and establishing and developing a good habit of respecting

teachers and valuing education. By creating a strong atmosphere of this kind, the teaching work will be enabled to become the most respectable and admiring occupation, and the social atmosphere that everyone cares about, supports, values and respects education and knowledge will be fostered. Therefore, a majority of normal students without paying tuitions will be attracted to choose the teaching profession, and their feelings of glory and pride out of long-term teaching or life-long teaching will also be enhanced.

### **5.1 Strengthening Campus Culture Building With the Theme of Respecting Teachers and Valuing Teaching.**

Campus culture is an important carrier of creating the atmosphere of respecting teachers and valuing teaching by schools. Schools should permeate such factors as “respecting teachers and valuing teaching”, “willingness to teach”, “advocating teachers’ ethics” “setting good examples to others” into all the aspects of campus culture construction to infiltrate and influence the career aspirations of normal students who are receiving free education. First, schools should permeate “respecting teachers and valuing teaching” into the building of schools’ material culture. For example, we can turn the famous aphorisms about education into school motto and university spirit, and engrave them on walls of the main campus area; we can also name campus roads with rich educational words or educators’ names; establishing well-known educators’ statues in the campus is also recommended, so is hanging educators’ portraits, photographs, and biographies in teaching buildings. Second, schools are suggested to carry out campus cultural activities with the theme of respecting teachers and valuing teaching. They can make full use of Teacher’s Day, Thanksgiving Festival, and other festivals to well organize thanksgiving activities featured by showing gratitude to teachers. Besides, the activity of rewarding excellent teachers is also recommended, digging in depth the typical achievements made by the school teachers who have dedicated themselves to students’ healthy growth, establishing good models of teaching, and inspiring normal students’ sense of pride to teaching work. What is more, we can organize the students to conduct theme essay contests featured by “praising teachers”, make DVDs of teachers’ styles, and other activities to enhance the emotion between teachers and students, so that normal students will recognize the dedication from teachers and consciously regard outstanding teachers as their role models. Apart from these, schools can also carry out keynote speeches with praising and respecting teachers as the theme, conduct recitation and other competitions of normal students’ basic skills, and foster a campus custom of respecting and valuing teaching teachers, thus affecting, edifying and enlightening tuition-free normal university students to establish lofty teaching aspirations.

### **5.2 Creating a Social Environment for Respecting Teachers and Valuing Teaching**

Only by living in a society which is full of the ambience of respecting teachers and valuing teaching do the tuition-free normal university students produce feelings of job satisfaction and career achievement. Such positive inner experience will inevitably prompt them to cherish the teaching position, and have much willingness to teach for a long time or throughout their whole life. In order to reach the end, we should create a social environment for respecting teachers and valuing teaching, and foster favorable atmosphere for the formation and development of their teaching career aspirations. To be more specific, first, the majority of the ordinary people should respect teachers and value teaching. It is necessary for them to establish education-oriented thinking, attach much importance to education, develop a general understanding of the importance and special nature of the teaching profession, understand the pressures and difficulties faced by the teaching work, so as to promote entire community to understand and respect teaching profession, as well as let teachers live with more dignity, more happiness, more professional pride. Second, governments should strengthen organization and leadership. They should take effective measures to enhance and guarantee the occupational, social and political status of teaching profession, safeguard the legitimate rights and interests of teachers, and develop practical policy and measures to attract talented people dedicated to education. Besides, governments can also encourage the majority of young people to go to the grassroots and to the places where the country needs them most to make contributions to the cause of national education. Moreover, they should further develop and implement policies to improve the treatment of teachers, and gradually increase the level of teachers’ salaries, narrow the income gap between urban and rural education, and design preferential policies for teachers in rural and remote mountainous such as implementing performance pay to remove their worries. Third, we should give full play to the advantages and characteristics of the Internet, micro blogging, text messaging and other new media to create public opinions about respecting teachers and valuing teaching. Furthermore, we can use new media to elaborately create special web pages which have rich content and new forms, and use texts, photos, video and others to comprehensive show excellent teachers’ styles, so as to enhance teachers’ sense of belonging to teaching work as well as their sense of pride and mission. Apart from these, we can give play to the multidimensional characteristics of new media which could integrate words, pictures, feature films, interviews, and other forms together. In this way, we can “vigorously promote excellent teachers’ deeds, so that the whole of society will understand the importance and special nature of the work of teachers, and teaching will

become the most respected profession in the community, thus respecting teachers and valuing teaching will become the order of the day.” Last but not least, we can make use of micro blogging, fetion and other mobile network platforms to release the national policy on education and teachers as well as excellent teachers’ typical stories in a lively, concise and clear manner anytime and anywhere, so that more people will be attracted to pay attention to these good deeds, leaving messages, making comments, and airing their feelings. As a result, the social practice of respecting teachers and valuing teaching will penetrate people’s daily work and life.

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