Teachers and Trainers in Adult Education and Lifelong Learning

Professional Development in Asia and Europe

29-30 June 2009 in Bergisch Gladbach/Germany

Cheng Min

The Effective Competences of teachers in Lifelong Learning

Deutsches Institut für Erwachsenenbildung
German Institute for Adult Education

The Effective Competences of teachers in Lifelong Learning

Cheng Min

Contents

1. Introduction

In the process of building a learning society, the cause of China's life-long education faces the dual challenges from the inside and outside of the system. From outside the system, with the social, economic and cultural development, there is the requirements for continuously increasing the public's general knowledge and technological and cultural standards, and developing the creative potential of every individual; from inside the system, there is the demand for reforming the traditional model of adult education that imitates pre-career education, so that it can truly become the profession that is organized and implemented by means of developing human resources and improving the citizens' personality. This change is a new challenge to the ability of life-long education teachers.

In addition to full-time teachers in schools, life-long education teachers also can be experts in a research field, government officials, successful entrepreneurs, social activists, writers, literary and art workers, senior technicians, and so on. As life-long education teachers, they can offer effectively guide to the students within their own expertise. In addition to the prerequisite for the teaching profession, such as language ability, material processing capabilities and the ability to organize the classroom education, these teachers should have the abilities for continuous development and change with the changes of the times, different educational ideas, orientations and requirements. This article believes that life-long education teachers also need to have at least the following capacities.

2. Life-long education teachers must have the ability to develop and integrate curriculum resources

Educational activities can not be separated from curriculum resources, and without curriculum resources, there will be no teaching activities. In the classroom of life-long education, the teaching often develops around a topic. The effective development and rational use of curriculum resources is the core of the life-long education teaching activities.

2.1 Identifying the effectiveness of curriculum resources is the basis of the ability to develop curriculum resources

Lifelong education students are from all corners of the society. Their purpose of study is closer to the social life, and they have more practical demands. Therefore, the life-long education teaching resources can not be limited to textbooks that people are

familiar with, but should also include a large number of software and hardware resources that are non-written but are integral elements and implementation conditions of the of courses. These resources can come from teachers, students, related industries, network, families, society and other aspects inside and outside the school. They are static and dynamic, dominant and recessive. These curriculum resources with different manifestations and existence states have different significance and roles in the curriculum activities and they have specific features for student development and roles. As one of the principal curricular activities, teachers must carefully analyze the significance of a variety of curriculum resources and determine the value of the corresponding curriculum resources with the clear objectives of student career development, academic learning objectives and curricular activity targets

2.2 Curriculum resources integration is the key for the capacity to develop curriculum resource

Curriculum resources integration refers to the teachers' organic link of curriculum resources and student development, and the organic unity of curriculum resources and the implementation of curriculum goal, so that curriculum resources can present vitality and liveliness. Curriculum resources do not have educational value in itself. It is only through integration that it can demonstrate educational value and the value of student development.

Lifelong education focuses on the contact with the learner's experience and the life situations. It not only takes care of the needs of learners, but also emphasizes the development of adult life experience, and focuses on cultivating problem-solving ability. As a result, its teaching content focuses on the correspondence with the subject of all stages of the student development, so that they can effectively play their role in society and adapt to their social life. In the past educational practice, on the one hand, in the curriculum activities, many teachers feel deeply the lack of curriculum resources and the monotony of curriculum activities, and on the other hand, the teachers' unawareness and inability for curriculum resources integration lead to the idleness and waste of a large number of curriculum resources, thus restricting the overall development of students. In view of this, when exploring the potential curriculum resources, teachers should note the following aspects: First, they should explore the possible natural, social, human resources around the students, teachers, classes and schools and expand the scope of curriculum resources. This is the most convenient curriculum resources with the least expensive development and the most prominent effect. Second, they should emphasize the use of and the coordination with other curriculum resources and demonstrate the integrated view of the great curriculum resources. Third, it is necessary to input the lives of teachers and students, particularly their experience, wisdom, understanding, feelings, problems, confusion,

feelings, attitudes and values into the curriculum as important curriculum resources and curriculum content, so that the life, growth and development of teachers and students can be combined organically, and attach great importance to the to participation of teachers and students. Fourth, it is necessary for the teachers to integrate information technology with the curriculum and bring into full play the advantages of information technology, so as to provide a variety of educational environment and beneficial learning tools to, for students' learning and development, and optimize the presentation of the teaching content, the students' learning styles, the teachers' teaching methods and the ways of teacher-student interaction.

2.3 The use of curriculum resources is the core of the ability to develop curriculum resources

The use of curriculum resources refers to the teachers' integration and use of the effective curriculum resources formed in the identification and combination of curriculum resources around the student development goals and the goal of curricular activities, so that they can enter the process of curriculum activities, cause the students physical and psychological changes and achieve the full realization of the educational goal. This is the great concentration and performance of the teachers' teaching art.

In the use of curriculum resources, teachers should establish a structured, full-featured, and versatile curriculum resources system, so that a large number of curriculum resources can form sequential and related groups of curriculum resources with curriculum goals as the axis. At the same time, it is important to achieve the combination of the curriculum resources development with the changes in teaching methods, the organic integration of curriculum resource development with the student development, and the combination of the curriculum resources with the development of the teachers' professional development. Through the combination of the curriculum resources development with the changes in teaching methods, the teaching process can become the process in which teachers and students cooperate to build the course curriculum, and in which teachers and students jointly develop, enrich and integrate curriculum resources. Through the organic integration of curriculum resource development with the student development, the student development can benefit from a large number of rich and open curriculum resources, the students' life experience, feelings, interests, hobbies, knowledge, ability, etc. can form the organic components of curriculum resources, and the students can creatively use all resources available for their own learning, practice and exploring activities. Through the combination of the curriculum resources with the development of the teachers' professional development, the curriculum resource development can promote the teachers' professional abilities and form their good curriculum development quality, so that they can become the guides and developers for the students' use of curriculum resources.

3. Life-long education teachers must have the ability to teach students learn how to study

Life-long education emphasizes the interaction between teachers and students and the co-development of teaching and learning. It is not indoctrination education or the accumulation of education, but is education dialogue and education exchange. Teachers are responsible for providing a good environment and adequate resources, and sharing their experiences with the learners to construct knowledge. Life-long education not only has the feature of "student center", but also is a "teacher-student interaction" process. Teachers have less and less responsibilities for imparting knowledge, but more and more responsibilities for providing thinking incentives, and they have gradually become the advisors and participants for discussing questions. They help to find the argument rather than coming up with ready-made truth, and they must spend more time and energy more effective and creative activities. They influence, motivate, understand and encourage students to learn and to think.

As early as the seventies of the last century, UNESCO has proposed the concept of "learn to survive", reminding us that to live well, we must learn to study and study lifelong. Life-long education has to make everyone "master the tools to understand the world" or "acquire the means of understanding", make "everyone learn to understand the world around him, and at least to enable him to live a dignified life, to develop his professional capabilities and exchanges".

According to this interpretation, teaching students to learn how to study should have the meaning of the following three aspects: First, students should learn and master two types of knowledge, that is, declarative knowledge and procedural knowledge, rather than merely declarative knowledge. In accordance with the interpretation of information processing theory, declarative knowledge mainly deals with stating what, why and how things are, and it is the knowledge about things and the relationship between things. Procedural knowledge is the knowledge on what to do, and is the specific algorithm used for the specific scenario and a series of act steps. These two types of knowledge are necessary for the survival and the lives of human beings. The lack of either one would lead to a serious shortage of human development. To master these two types of knowledge is the basis of student learning. Second, students should understand the source of knowledge and its application direction. This is the basic requirement for "mastering the tools to understand the world" or "acquiring the means of understanding". Only when students understand the source of knowledge and its application direction can they make flexible application of the knowledge acquired, enable their own knowledge to become meaningful, and eventually understand knowledge and self-construct knowledge. Third, students should learn and master the recognition strategies. The recognition strategy is the knowledge

about how to learn and think, and the general method and skills about how to use declarative knowledge and procedural knowledge for learning, memorizing and problem-solving. It is the technique and methods about how to use a variety of cognitive processes and different combination forms to carry out learning activities. Fourth, students should take the initiative to learn. Learning how to study is a subject study, which makes students free from the restraint of objective targets and activities on students, so that students can obtain learning initiatives in their own personalized learning, show interest in learning and acquire the self-esteem of learning and development.

3.1 It is necessary to be good at stimulating and maintaining student interest in learning

The key for students to learn how to study is the interest in learning, with which, students will be concerned about the study and continue to study. It is the responsibility of teachers to use effective methods to stimulate and maintain student interest in learning. Teachers should start from the students' existing basis, and fully explore the value of curriculum to the student development, according to the actual lives of students and their actual abilities, so that students can understand the meaning of learning and stimulate their interest in learning from their self-activity, self-development, and the needs of life and the practical application of knowledge. With students having interest in learning, teachers should allow students to experience the joy of learning so that their interest in learning can be maintained and continued.

3.2 Teachers are required to make good use of things that students are more familiar with to interpret profound principles

The *Scholars* written in China two thousand years ago gives a detailed description of the issue of how teachers should teach students to learn to study. In its view, the key of teachers teaching students learn to study is "good metaphor (yu)". "Teaching is metaphor". The meaning of yu is "analogy and interpretation". Therefore, when teachers teach students how to learn, they should be "able to give an example from the current situation", realizing the circumstantial transformation of Knowledge, and transform the external logic knowledge into the circumstantial knowledge the students can associate with. As a result, students can "to know the second from the first", "know the whole from the part", and "know the future when informed of the past". Teachers should emphasize the students' self-construction of knowledge and experience, in accordance with their existing experience, students, so that students can learn in actual circumstances and make application in actual circumstances. The

requirement of students learning in actual circumstances and self-construction for the teachers is that teachers should deal with the course content with simple reasons and concise language. Teachers have to consider both the curriculum content and the learning scenarios facing the students. They have to consider both the teaching itself and the method for reflecting and presenting the students' recognition in the teaching. In this way, teachers will be able to "give one example" to "represent the category", and the students can give their "feed-back" and "achieve association".

3.3 It is necessary to teach students to choose appropriate learning strategies in accordance with the course study

Learning strategies refer to the series of procedures, methods and rules that students use in their learning process for the purpose of completing their learning task. In teaching students to choose suitable learning strategies, the measures teachers should take are: First, to provide different levels of strategies suitable for learning a variety of courses, in accordance with the students' existing basis and the characteristics of their social roles. Among these strategies, there are not only general principle strategies, but also very specific operational strategies for practice. Second, attention should be paid to the generation of learning strategies, requiring students conduct psychological self-processing of the learning strategies used, so that the existing learning strategies can transform into the students' own learning styles. Third, it is necessary to improve students' personal efficacy in using learning strategies, so that they can feel the effectiveness of the learning strategies and enhance their awareness of the use of learning strategies. Fourth, it is necessary to combine interpretation, examples, practice and feedback and teach students to use the specific methods for learning strategies.

3.4 Enhancing students' capacity for independent participation

Life-long education emphasizes the students' participation, and in such teaching processes as curriculum design, needs assessment, goal setting, programming, activities and learning assessment, it requires the participation of learners and their cooperation with teachers in establishing the important content of teaching programs as far as possible.

Through this participation, learners not only can acquire learning motivation and interest, but also to realize that learning is their own responsibility, form the attitude of lifelong learning and enhance their capacity for "self-orientation". To this end, teachers should first allow students to know their learning characteristics and learning styles, understanding the characteristics of their own intellectual activity, and choose the cognitive strategies to enhance the efficiency of their learning. Second, it is

important to teach students how to set up their own learning goals, so that they can concentrate their effort on achieving these goals, and at the same time, guide their own learning activities with the goals. Third, it is necessary to teach the students to put their learning process under the control of their own awareness. The learning process is a dynamic process. Teachers should allow students to conduct regular self-examination of their own learning behavior through self-observation and reflective thinking, summarizing achievements, finding out the gaps, analyzing the causes, and constantly improving and enhancing the level of their own learning.

4. Lifelong education teachers are required to have the ability to organize students for cooperative learning

In the modern society, the cooperation between people is often the key to success and is the basis of a happy life. As a result, an essential ability of lifelong education teachers is to improve the ability of students for cooperative learning through life-long education. It will be a new challenge to the curriculum organizational capacity of teachers and instructional design capacity. The basic processes of cooperative learning are summarized by Chinese scholars as follows: cooperative design → goal presentation → collective teaching → group cooperative activities → test → feedback and remediation.

4.1 The design capacity for cooperative learning

The design of cooperative learning is different from the teaching preparation teachers were used to. It is the teacher's "directing" of the whole teaching activities, including group division principles, activity rules, monitoring guidance, summary and in-depth study. A well-structured program of activities is the prerequisite for the effectiveness of cooperative learning.

In the cooperative learning program, teachers should grasp three keys: First, it is necessary to grasp the standard of group division and the scale of groups. Under normal circumstances, the group division should be heterogeneous between groups and homogeneous inside a group, so that different groups remain at a same level. It is the best that the sex, academic ability, learning progress and other qualities vary from each other within a group, in order to provide equal learning opportunities for each member. Group size should be appropriate for 5-7 people. Second, it is necessary to develop the rules of activities that all students can understand and accept, including incentives. It is necessary to control student activities with rules, so that they can be carried out in accordance with the teachers' intention. The development of incentive

mechanisms can enhance the sense of responsibility of team members and team competitiveness. Third, it is important to clarify the activities of teachers. Every step of the cooperative learning requires teachers' careful guidance. Otherwise, it will become a mere formality. The guidance of teachers includes the content interpretation before the activities, which also requires teachers' great attention during the design. During the design, teachers should conduct careful consideration about what they talk about first and the next and what materials should be provided to students in their activities. Fourth, it is important to choose and develop questions. Cooperative learning takes questions as a link. The teachers' choice and development of questions in the cooperative learning decides whether the cooperative learning can be effective conducted. In theory, any question in the curriculum can be the subject of the cooperative learning. However, theoretical issues, questions that students do not have practical experience to support and the questions with strong closure require the teachers' specific interpretation and simplification, require the teachers to carry out the necessary development so that problems can be linked with the students' knowledge structure.

4.2 The guidance capacity for cooperative learning

In cooperative learning, the classroom activities of teachers and students can have great changes. Learning in cooperation and cooperation in learning cooperation are the basic activities of students' learning. If the teacher does not have the ability to give students the guidance for cooperation capacity, collaborative learning will become a mere form of "cooperation without activities" or "activities without cooperation". In the guidance for cooperative Learning, students should be allowed to learn to express themselves and have the courage to express their views. They should learn how to listen in order to grasp the core of the views of others. They should learn how to reflect and discover the characteristics and shortcomings of the views of themselves and others. They should learn how to sum up and grasp the course content and enrich and develop themselves through activities.

4.3 The monitoring capacity of cooperative learning

In cooperative learning, student activities are relatively free and dispersed, which is certainly in conflict with the established learning content and learning time. Therefore, teachers must conduct effective monitoring of the entire learning process, so that students' learning can have the "loose appearance without being loose in spirit", realizing the organic unity of the content, time and activities, so that everyone can have participation, enjoyment and development. It is especially important that timely guidance should be given to students who have encountered problems and have

drifted away from the learning process. Positive remedial measures should be taken to help them obtain the necessary development, so that they can effectively participate in the learning process. The results of such study can guide their future work and life.

5. Life-long education teachers should have the awareness and ability for self-improvement and to set an example for students

Teachers are role models of students and educational activity is the noble life activity that faces life and needs the care and concern for life. In the classroom of life-long education, teachers should influence students with their own personal charm, guide students with their profound knowledge, and teach them to love learning and love of life. To accomplish this goal of teaching, teachers must have the following capacities:

5.1 Continuously broadening their knowledge scope

Although life-long education teachers are usually experts in their own fields of research, teaching is often related to all aspects of the nature, society, work and life. This requires teachers to broaden their knowledge as much as possible. Of course, no matter how broad it is, one cannot have a profound understanding of every aspect of the students' research. Therefore, the ability to identify problems that is based on the appropriate knowledge and the spirit to learn modestly are very important to teachers.

5.2 It is necessary to learn and acquire the necessary knowledge and methods for scientific research

The purposes for the life-long education students to enter the classroom are often to acquire a particular aspect of knowledge or to solve a problem. What they are asking for is to transform knowledge into their own intrinsic things, or to obtain the methods for solving problems. Therefore, teachers must guide students in research-based learning. In the ways of conducting research, scientific research can be divided into such methods as sampling, observation, survey, questionnaire, experiments, comparison, prediction and statistics. In the ways of thinking, it can be divided into classification, induction, deduction, analysis, synthesis, abstraction and generalization. In addition, it involves the knowledge related to research format and procedures, such as the establishment of research title, argument, outcome discussion and report

writing. Teachers are not only required to master such knowledge, but are to teach the knowledge to students in the organization of research practice, so that students can also understand and be familiar with the basic scientific research methods and skills and acquire self-learning method.

5.3 It is necessary to have good psychological quality

The good and steady psychological quality of teachers is conducive to the smooth development of teaching activities. It can also have a positive psychological impact on the students and will more easily achieve the desired teaching objectives.

The first is the role of teachers' adaptability. As mentioned before, life-long education teachers may come from all walks of life. Their successful teaching relies on whether they can adapt to the role conversion and convert their multiple roles in education ideas, work method, interpersonal relationships and living environment, in order to be competent in their social career role of "teaching and training people".

The second is the mental perception. The mental perception is people's psychological ability to perceive themselves or others. Teachers should be good at quickly and accurately understanding the students' initial feelings and conduct motivation under their external behavior, and provide timely help and encouragement. It is not difficult to find in the reality of education that teachers with strong perception all have such a psychological quality as "empathy". The so-called "empathy" is to fully comprehend the other people's thoughts, feeling and behavior. Rogers, an American psychologist understands it as the ability to experience the other people's spiritual world as experiencing their own spiritual world. As for the teacher's "empathy", certain Chinese

psychologists have described it as "the intention to enter the students' mental world ,

experience profoundly the feelings of students, have an objective understanding of students, a tolerance to students, in order to build a new type of teacher-student relationship of 'respecting the teachers, loving the students, and maintain the equality between teachers and students'".

The third is the emotional control power. The power of control is the concentrated expression of the human will, but it is also permeated with cognitive intelligence and emotional intelligence. The power of emotional control enables people to have emotional stability,   firm target and bold and effective action. The teachers' power of emotional control can enable them to participate in education and teaching activities in a positive emotional state. The teachers' emotional control power is a very important educational tool, which on the one hand, can bring spiritual comfort to the students, and on the other hand, can cause irreparable harm to students.

The fourth is psychological forbearance. Psychological forbearance refers to the individual's ability to resist existing facts or accidental attacks. Teachers live under the circumstances with many setbacks and situational stimuli and they have to coordinate with the relationship between schools, community, family and students. Teachers with strong forbearance have ready psychological preparation to bear the setbacks on the educational environment, student situation, social justice and self-development. Even in frustration, they will take the right way to deal with setbacks, quickly free themselves from the negative psychological effects caused by frustration, learn to become strong and courageous from the frustration and affect the students with their own good psychological adjusting ability.

The fifth is education expression. Education expression is the ability of an individual for self-display, self-development and self-enhancement. The strong education expression of teachers not only means that they dare to show themselves, but also means that they are good at self-development in the professional work. That is to say, education expression not only embodies the individual's master of education and teaching skills, which demonstrates the teachers' good performance of wit, but also embodies the maturity of the individual's self-consciousness, which demonstrates the teachers' self-esteem, self-confidence, self-reliance and independence. The wit of teachers is a necessary quality of teachers for their educational work.

To sum up, life-long education teachers carry the mission to improve the quality of people's life, meet people's cultural needs and career advancement. They must continuously sum up experience in practice, in order to enhance their teaching ability.

References

1. Wu Mingen & Luo Yishan. The cultural consciousness of teachers for their professional development. China Education Daily, December 27, 2008.

2. Learning to be: The world of education today and tomorrow. UNESCO Education Series. Educational Science Press, August 2000.

3. Middle- and long-term planning framework of Shanghai life-long education reform and development（2008-2020）.