

# Investigation and Analysis of the Status Quo of Normal University Students' Teaching Internship——Taking Taishan University as an Example

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## Abstract

Teaching internship is an effective form of cooperation between university and primary and middle school. Teaching internship can promote the improvement of the teaching quality of internship primary and secondary schools, and also promote the integration of theoretical knowledge and practical experience by college students, and promote the professional development of college students. In order to grasp the situation pertaining to normal students' teaching internship, we conducted a questionnaire survey on a sample of normal students. The survey results show that the teaching effect of teaching internship is satisfactory, and through teaching internship, the teaching ability of normal students has also been developed, which has promoted the professional development of normal students.

**Keywords:** teaching internship, questionnaire, normal students

## 1. Introduction

In 2007, China's Ministry of Education issued "Opinions on Vigorously Promoting the Internship Teaching of Normal Students." As a result of the ministry's promotion efforts, there have been an increasing number of schools participating in internship teaching, with more and more aided schools being covered. Tens of thousands of normal students choose to complete internship tasks in the form of internship teaching. In 2016, the Ministry of Education also released "Opinions on Strengthening the Education Practice of Normal Students," which clearly pointed out the need to actively carry out internship teaching and replacement training, encourage and guide normal students to penetrate weak schools and rural primary and secondary schools, build a number of exemplary educational practice bases, and establish a long-term cooperative win-win mechanism for normal students' education practice, teacher training, education teaching research, base school development, etc.

As of the beginning of 2016, there were 7.12 million students in rural primary and secondary schools in Shandong Province, of which 2.43 million were in rural schools, accounting for 62.7% and 21.4% of the total number of students, respectively. There were 546,300 rural teachers, including 180,400 rural teachers that respectively account for 63.8% and 21.0% of the total number of teachers (Shandong Provincial Department of Education, 2016). This demonstrates that rural education accounts for the majority of basic education in Shandong Province. In recent years, the gap between urban and rural education in China has become increasingly obvious. The uneven distribution of educational resources in urban versus rural areas has also led to a decline in the quality of rural education and a large number of rural teachers. In light of this, normal college students' internship teaching is an important measure for improving the quality of rural education.

As part of specialist training, teaching internship is one of the effective forms of normal university students' professional development, which can integrate theoretical knowledge and practical experience (Benkirane, Hamza, Sbihi, & Arabi, 2019; Nghia & Tai, 2017; Sharzadin et al., 2019). Many countries have used teaching internship models to better prepare and enhance normal students' value in the workforce (Amer & Ibrahim, 2017; Ledger & Vidovich, 2018). Adjusting teacher preparation to establish school-university partnerships can help candidates develop teacher identities and exceptional skills by providing supportive experiences in challenging situations (Tracz, Beare, & Torgerson, 2018). At present, normal students' internship belongs to the typical "university-primary and middle school" cooperation model, integrating classroom knowledge and theory

and applying it to the real context of practical experiences related to university students' future careers (Pruekpramool, Kanyaprasith, Phonphok, & Diem, 2018). Since the 1980s, university–school cooperation (hereinafter referred to as U–S cooperation) has gradually become a worldwide trend in teacher education reform, giving rise to the United Kingdom Partnership School (teacher partnership schools, TPS) and American teacher professional development schools (professional development schools, PDS), two models of “symbiotic” teacher education cooperation (Grau, Calcagni, Preiss, & Ortiz, 2017; Imants & Van der Wal, 2020). In Australia, the push for effective school–university partnerships has a decade-long history, such as the New South Wales (NSW) State Government-funded Hub School partnerships program (Young, 2020) and the National Partnership Agreement on Improving Teacher Quality Program driven by the Council of Australian Governments (Ledger & Vidovich, 2018).

Since 2010, Taishan University has arranged for normal college students to take a 6-month educational internship in primary and secondary schools in Tai'an. The arrival of intern students has not only injected fresh vitality into these schools, relieving the pressure exerted by teacher shortage, enabling the opening of full courses and improving the quality of teaching in rural schools, it has also played a role in promoting development and improvement among normal students. In order to grasp the situation pertaining to normal students' teaching internship, we conducted a questionnaire survey on a sample of normal students.

## 2. Questionnaire and Data Analysis

In order to grasp the situation of students' internship teaching in our school, we compiled the “Questionnaire for Internship Teaching for Normal University Students.” The questionnaire mainly includes the status of internship schools, characteristics pertaining to internship students' lives, the internship teaching effect, and an internship student self-development evaluation. The survey questionnaire was distributed to internship students via the Internet. In total, 72 questionnaires were recovered, with all 72 being valid. Among the internship student survey participants, males accounted for 48.61% and females accounted for 51.39%. By discipline, physics students accounted for 88.89% and chemistry students accounted for 11.11%. Analysis revealed the questionnaire's Cronbach's  $\alpha$  coefficient to be 0.871, indicating that the questionnaire has high reliability.

### 2.1 The Internship School's Basic Situation

The situation of these internship schools is as follows. Elementary school accounts for 31.94%, junior high school accounts for 61.11%, high school accounts for 4.17%, and complete middle school accounts for 2.78%. Among them, 41.67% of the schools are in the county, 34.72% are resident in the township, and 23.61% are in the countryside. The proportion of internship students who expressed that they were “very satisfied” and “relatively satisfied” with the interns was 37.50% and 36.11%, respectively.

Support students' living conditions directly impact teaching, especially in the case of support students from cities. They need a certain period of time to adapt to the internship school's work and living environment. Interns' self-reported level of satisfaction with the internship school's accommodation arrangements was as follows: 27.78% were “very satisfied,” 36.11% were “relatively satisfied,” and 22.22% were “basically satisfied.” Meanwhile, 23.61% of interns indicated that internship school life was “very convenient and without difficulty,” 63.89% indicated that it was “somewhat difficult, but the school helped solve it,” and 12.50% said that they “have difficulties and never solved”.

These survey results shows that the proportion of interns who believe that internship school leaders and teachers are “very supportive” and “relatively supportive” with respect to attitudes toward internship support is 59.72% and 29.17%, respectively. The ratio of (intermediate and middle school) students who felt “very welcome” and “more welcome” at their internship school was 63.89% and 29.17%, respectively, showing that local education administration departments and internship schools are very supportive of normal students and internship teaching work and can provide a relatively comfortable teaching environment.

### 2.2 Interns' Pre-Teaching Work Preparation Status

The pre-internship training that normal college students receive mainly includes trial lectures (69.44%), internship mobilization (63.89%), and educational probation (43.06%). Intern preparation includes professional knowledge review (86.11%), educational probation (63.89%), microteaching training (29.17%), and internship school research (27.78%).

The survey results show that 55.56% of internship schools have provided pre-job training for interns, and 88.89% have assigned instructors to the interns. Interns said that the ratio of instructors who were “very serious” and “relatively serious” was 65.28% and 26.39%, respectively, with 62.5% of instructors offering weekly guidance. It can be seen that during the internship process, intern instructors are serious and responsible and can

effectively play a positive leading role with respect to internships.

After completing a semester of internship, interns reported believing that normal students' required pre-job training should include basic teaching skills (95.83%), classroom management (87.50%), teaching routines (75.00%), teacher psychological knowledge (75.00%), student psychological knowledge (75.00%), and information technology (55.56%), demonstrating that normal students realize what kind of knowledge is urgently needed in primary and middle school teaching through internship.

### 2.3 Interns' Teaching Situation

Table 1 shows interns undertaking courses in various grades within the internship school, while Table 2 shows the courses that the interns teach. The data in Table 1 and Table 2 indicate that normal students have undertaken at least two courses within the internship school, and 56.94% of normal students have taught courses that are unrelated to the majors they studied. Only 43.06% of the interns' courses were in accordance with their majors, which leads to problems and can even result in students being misled during the teaching process since the interns do not understand the courses. Moreover, the professional knowledge they acquired cannot be utilized nor can they achieve the purpose of participating in internship teaching. In addition to undertaking teaching tasks, university students also undertake tasks such as correcting assignments, tutoring, class management, teaching management, and teaching research. It is evident that many internship schools are too dependent on interns. After the normal students arrive at these schools, they are burdened with many courses and demanding tasks.

Table 1. Interns undertaking courses in various grades

Teaching grade	Percent	Teaching grade	Percent
first grade	6.94%	seventh grade	13.89%
second grade	8.33%	eighth grade	30.56%
third grade	4.17%	ninth grade	11.11%
fourth grade	5.56%	first grade of high school	4.17%
fifth grade	2.78%	second grade of high school	1.39%
sixth grade	11.11%		

Table 2. Courses taught by interns

Course	Percent	Course	Percent
Physics	40.28%	Chemistry	9.72%
Math	34.72%	Local course	9.72%
Chinese	25.00%	Art	6.94%
English	20.83%	History	5.56%
Moral and Legal	16.67%	Biology	5.56%
Music	13.89%	School-based curriculum	5.56%
Science	12.50%	Geography	4.17%
Physical Education	11.11%	Chinese Traditional Culture	4.17%

A majority of interns (95.83%) said that they "completed the teaching work of the internship independently". Regarding work intensity at internship schools, 18.06% described the workload as "very big," 47.22% described it as "large," and 30.56% thought it was "average." Regarding the difficulty of internship teaching, the interns described it as "very difficult," "relatively difficult," and "general" at 12.5%, 34.72%, and 43.06%, respectively. Regarding the pressure they felt due to internship work, the interns reported "very pressured," "relatively pressured," and "general" at 12.5%, 31.94%, and 47.22%, respectively. This shows that interns can adapt to primary and middle school teaching work and successfully complete all teaching tasks.

Intern preparation and instructional design are achieved mainly through "instructor guidance from internship schools" (52.78%), "completely by oneself/independently" (36.11%), and through "advice from internship school colleagues" (9.72%). Furthermore, 87.5% of the interns said that they "prepared a complete lesson plan for each lesson," while 8.06% said that "The internship school hosts a teaching and research activity once a week." This shows that in addition to normal teaching work, interns also actively participate in various teaching and research activities within the internship school, which plays an important role in promoting their professional development.

#### 2.4 Self-Evaluation of the Effect of Teaching Internship

During the internship teaching process, the interns considered the following the persons the most helpful to them, in descending order: internship school instructors (56.94%), internship school colleagues (26.39%), internship classmates (13.89%), and college instructors (1.39%). This shows that internship schools still pay more attention to guiding internship students, while college instructors have not played a visible helping role, since there are no college teachers stationed at internship schools.

Interns believe that the university courses that have a significant impact on their internship support include teacher education courses (68.06%), subject professional courses (63.89%) and subject education courses (61.11%). From the perspective of serving as primary and secondary school teachers, interns believe that the important knowledge they need to learn the most is, in descending order, subject professional knowledge (77.78%), subject education knowledge (62.5%), instructional design knowledge (56.94%), modern education theoretical knowledge (54.17%), and cultural knowledge other than professional knowledge (44.44%). This shows that normal students' mastery of the subject's professional knowledge should be strengthened; at the same time, there is a more urgent need for courses that can cultivate and improve normal students' teaching abilities.

The proportion of interns who described their classroom teaching effect as "very good" and "relatively good" is 15.28% and 56.94%, respectively. Moreover, 38.89% of interns said that they engaged in daily teaching reflection, and 51.39% reported engaging in weekly teaching reflection. Interns believe that the main factors affecting the effect of internship support include, in descending order, guidance during internship (61.11%), their own efforts (50%), pre-internship training (45.83%), the number of practical lectures (43.06%), and internship school choice (43.06%). This shows that college students who support education can complete teaching tasks smoothly, reflect on them, and strive to improve their teaching abilities.

To address the question "How do you evaluate your performance in the following aspects of the internship teaching process?" a 5-point Likert-type self-assessment method was used in statistical analysis, with the five levels being "very consistent," "more consistent," "general," "not very consistent," and "very inconsistent," each assigned points numbered 5, 4, 3, 2, and 1, respectively. Each topic's score reflects the project intern's degree of recognition. Statistical results show that the subject's average score is 4.11 points, which is at the "more consistent" level. Communication with internship school instructors, getting along with internship school colleagues, Mandarin, internship school leadership, and communication and interaction with students comprise this score. Meanwhile, the scores for experimental demonstration and operation abilities exceed the average score. These results show that internship students are quite satisfied with their performance of these abilities; however, classroom management and textbook analysis need to be strengthened.

Table 3. Interns' self-evaluation of various abilities

Subject	Average
Communication with the instructor of the internship school	4.39
Get along with your colleagues in an internship school	4.33
Mandarin Chinese	4.32
Get along with the leaders of the internship school	4.22
Interaction with students	4.19
Experimental demonstration ability	4.14
Experimental operation ability	4.11
Lesson preparation	4.10
Basic teaching skills	4.01
Modern Information Technology Application	3.97
Deal with classroom emergencies	3.97
Classroom management	3.96
Organize class meetings	3.94
Ability to analyze textbooks	3.9

The response options for the question "How do you evaluate the development of the following abilities compared to before internship support?" were "very satisfactory", "quite satisfactory", "general", "unsatisfactory", and "very unsatisfactory". In statistical analysis, points numbered 3, 2, and 1 were assigned, respectively. This subject's average score was 2.53 points. The ability to communicate with students, get along

with colleagues, write lesson plans, express language, analyze textbooks, evaluate teaching, study research, and organize and design teaching were all above average. The reason the level of the three strokes ability (i.e., pen, chalk, and brushes) has not improved much is mainly because primary and secondary school classroom teaching is now largely multimedia, with less content being delivered through writing on the blackboard and other similar delivery methods. Meanwhile, rural schools' required teacher and student training in Putonghua is insufficient, resulting in the inadequate improvement of interns' Mandarin.

Table 4. Interns' self-evaluation of ability development

subject	average
Ability to communicate with students	2.67
Ability to get along with colleagues	2.65
Lesson writing ability	2.63
language expression skills	2.61
Teaching material analysis ability	2.61
Teaching evaluation ability	2.60
Teaching research ability	2.60
Organizational teaching ability	2.57
Instructional design ability	2.54
Speaking ability	2.47
Courseware making ability	2.46
Experimental operation ability	2.43
Experimental demonstration ability	2.43
Brushes and chalk, pen writing skill	2.35
Mandarin Chinese	2.28

As for top-post internship support activities, 72.22% of college students said that they were "very supportive" while 23.61% said that they were "more supportive." In addition, after a semester of teaching support, compared with before teaching, 45.83% of college students' attitudes toward a teaching career were "45% more than before," and 38.89% were "38% the same as before." The undergraduates who support education said that they were "very satisfied" with their overall evaluation of their internship work. The proportions who were "relatively satisfied" and "basically satisfied" were 31.94% and 50%, respectively. Compared with expected value at the internship stage, 36.11% of college students thought that it was "higher than expected," and 45.83% thought that the "harvest and expected value are basically the same." Furthermore, 31.94% of college students who support education said that they were "willing to stay in the internship unit after the internship," and 30.56% said that they were "unwilling." The survey results indicate that the majority of undergraduates who support education recognize the teaching profession during internship, support teaching, actively practice during the teaching process, gradually recognize the role of the teacher, internalize career expectations, and prepare for future entry to the teaching profession.

### 3. Conclusions

Although teaching internship has achieved positive results, there are still some problems, mainly manifested as follows: (1) Though teaching internship basically meets normal students' internship needs and the needs of qualified teachers within internship schools, normal students' teaching goals setting, analysis of academic conditions, and grasp of teaching difficulties are not guaranteed, and it is difficult to guarantee the quality of internship and teaching, especially when there is inconsistency between the teaching subject and interns' majors. (2) Internship students can ensure the normal operation of the internship school's teaching order and the teaching of each course. However, college students have a short work cycle and insufficient practical experience. During the actual teaching process, they often undertake more onerous teaching and management tasks. In addition, the living conditions in some areas are relatively difficult, coupled with a lack of effective supervision from the education administration department; thus, some normal students are likely to be afraid to participate in rural education, meaning that the sustainable improvement of the quality of teaching in rural schools cannot be guaranteed. In order to ensure that interns can become better and more swiftly qualified for top-level internship teaching, in addition to strengthening students' teaching-related training during the school period, it is recommended that the relevant administrative education departments and teachers in the relevant places of study be trained to systematically support teaching students with respect to pre-job training and targeted training

related to teaching reform ideas, and teaching materials and methods.

In the practice of internship, normal university students become full-time teachers for the first time—from class to class, teaching to tutoring, class construction to student management, teaching design to teaching research—thus allowing these prospective teachers to experience a teacher’s professional life first hand. Teaching internship is a key practice link in completing teacher education. It is also an important step in forging good moral character among normal students. It creates a real situation for ideal and belief education. As student teachers, normal students can actively participate in teaching-related activities, actively carry out professional ability training, and implement classroom theoretical knowledge in teaching practice.

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