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Research on the Talent Training Mode of Education Major in Applied Undergraduate Colleges and Universities

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Abstract

The core mission of applied undergraduate institutions is to cultivate high-caliber professionals who meet the practical needs of regional socioeconomic development. This orientation imposes specific requirements on the training of education majors. Currently, most applied undergraduate institutions still adhere to traditional academic training frameworks for education majors, resulting in prominent issues such as a disconnect between talent output and grassroots education demands, as well as insufficient development of practical competencies. In light of this, the article examines the diversified needs of educational positions, elucidates the importance of talent cultivation in applied undergraduate institutions' education majors, systematically analyzes existing challenges in education major training, and proposes targeted practical approaches. It aims to provide actionable strategies and theoretical support for applied undergraduate institutions to overcome training dilemmas and enhance the quality of talent development.

Keywords

Application-oriented undergraduate institutions; Pedagogy major; Talent cultivation model

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1. Introduction

As China's education modernization accelerates, the basic education sector is undergoing profound reforms focused on cultivating core competencies, which raises higher standards for frontline educators' practical skills, innovative capabilities, and job adaptability. Against this backdrop, applied undergraduate institutions in higher education systems, responsible for training applied talents, are facing significant adjustments in their pedagogy programs' positioning and training directions. Current practices reveal persistent bottlenecks in talent cultivation within these programs, substantially hindering the implementation of basic education reforms. Therefore, in-depth exploration of talent development models for pedagogy programs in applied undergraduate institutions is crucial to precisely meet grassroots education needs and drive high-quality development in basic education.

2. Diversified demand for talents in educational positions

The diversified demands for educational professionals stem from dual forces: deepening educational reforms and societal progress driving expanded educational functions. The core objective lies in achieving precise alignment between comprehensive competencies and job-specific requirements. In terms of practical skills, modern teaching positions now transcend traditional knowledge transmission, emphasizing practical abilities like instructional design based on core competencies, classroom management, and personalized guidance. Educators are also expected to possess integrated capabilities, including diagnosing educational challenges, reflecting on teaching practices, and effectively utilizing educational resources.

Regarding professional qualities, contemporary educational roles demand higher standards, requiring practitioners to combine steadfast educational convictions, inclusive pedagogical perspectives, and scientific educational philosophies. They must adapt to dynamic educational scenarios while adhering to student-centered approaches, achieving organic integration of value guidance, knowledge transmission, and skill development. From a service perspective, educational roles have expanded beyond classroom instruction to encompass after-school programs, home-school collaboration, and community education. This evolution demands professionals with cross-scenario service capabilities and collaborative awareness, enabling them to precisely meet functional needs across diverse educational contexts. Such multifaceted competencies form comprehensive, multi-level educational service capabilities, fulfilling the requirements for interdisciplinary talents in high-quality educational development.

3. The importance of talent cultivation in pedagogy majors at applied undergraduate institutions

3.1. Core support for the deepening of basic education reform

The deepening reform of basic education has created systemic demands for restructuring the professional competencies of frontline educators. As the critical link between higher education supply and basic education needs, applied undergraduate institutions' pedagogy programs play a pivotal role in talent cultivation. With core competency development at the heart of current reforms, there is an urgent need for professionals who master solid educational theories while demonstrating strong practical skills and innovative application capabilities. By focusing on regional educational realities and precisely aligning talent development strategies, applied universities can effectively bridge the gap between traditional academic training and grassroots teaching demands. This approach provides highly adaptable, practice-oriented educators essential for educational reform. Through systematic training in classroom design, personalized instruction, and problem-solving skills, these professionals directly enhance teaching quality, ensure reform concepts take root in grassroots education, and strengthen the foundational pillars of modern education development.

3.2. The intrinsic demand of promoting the characteristic development of applied undergraduate colleges

The education major serves as the cornerstone of teacher-training disciplines in applied undergraduate institutions. Its educational quality directly impacts the institution's operational effectiveness and the development of distinctive academic brands. These institutions prioritize regional socioeconomic development through cultivating applied and skilled professionals, with the Education major's precise positioning and specialized growth exemplifying this commitment. Within the framework of higher education classification, applied institutions must leverage their unique strengths to build differentiated academic systems, avoiding homogenized competition with traditional teacher-training colleges and research-oriented universities.

By optimizing talent cultivation models, enhancing practical training components, and integrating regional educational resources, these institutions can develop a distinctive advantage characterized by "solid theoretical foundations, outstanding practical skills, and regional adaptability," thereby elevating their overall academic standards and competitiveness. Simultaneously, this process drives faculty optimization, pedagogical

innovation, and practical training platform development, creating a virtuous cycle that mutually enhances disciplinary growth and institutional transformation. This approach provides crucial support for applied undergraduate institutions to achieve high-quality, specialized development.

3.3. Consolidating the foundation of talent support for educational modernization

The essence of educational modernization lies in achieving high-quality development, with talent serving as the core driver. The talent cultivation in pedagogy programs at applied undergraduate institutions plays an irreplaceable role in strengthening the talent foundation for educational modernization. This comprehensive upgrade encompasses multiple dimensions, including educational philosophy, systems, governance, and technology, urgently requiring a well-structured, high-quality, and sufficient professional education workforce. Leveraging their geographical reach and grassroots-oriented advantages, applied undergraduate institutions can precisely meet regional and tiered talent demands, cultivating versatile educators with both expertise and practical skills. This not only strengthens local education teams but also optimizes regional talent distribution.

Furthermore, these institutions integrate cutting-edge elements like modern educational technology and governance concepts into their training programs, empowering educators to proactively adapt to modernization requirements and master core competencies in teaching methodologies and governance. By consistently delivering high-caliber applied education professionals, these institutions enhance the overall service capacity of the education system, providing stable talent support for educational modernization and advancing the goal of building a strong education nation.

4. Problems in talent cultivation of education major in applied undergraduate colleges and universities

4.1. Unclear training orientation and insufficient emphasis on applied characteristics

The education programs in applied undergraduate institutions often suffer from ambiguous positioning, failing to align their educational orientations with the practical demands of frontline teaching positions. This disconnect makes it challenging to effectively highlight the applied nature of these programs. Some institutions still cling to the academic training approach of traditional teacher-training colleges, prioritizing theoretical knowledge over developing essential practical skills and job-specific competencies required for applied professionals. Such misalignment traps talent cultivation in a “neither fish nor fowl” dilemma, unable to meet the academic standards of research-oriented universities while failing to address the immediate needs of frontline educators for hands-on talent.

Moreover, this lack of clear positioning results in homogeneous development plans for program graduates, making it difficult to distinguish themselves within the higher education ecosystem and intensifying competition with similar programs. More critically, the unclear educational positioning permeates every aspect of teaching implementation, causing curriculum design, instructional methods, and assessment systems to fail in precisely aligning with applied training objectives. This ultimately leads to a disconnect between the quality of graduates and societal demands, hindering both the sustainable development of these programs and the effective realization of institutional educational goals [1].

4.2. The curriculum system is unbalanced, and the connection between theory and practice is not smooth

The curriculum system of pedagogy majors in applied undergraduate institutions exhibits significant imbalances. The most prominent issue is the disproportionately high proportion of theoretical courses, while practical courses remain insufficient in both coverage and fragmented design, failing to establish a systematic chain for cultivating practical competencies. Course content still predominantly relies on traditional pedagogical theories, often presenting abstract educational principles and classic theoretical interpretations.

These courses lack precise alignment with cutting-edge practices in basic education reform and regional educational development needs. They fail to accurately connect with practical reforms in basic education and regional educational demands, nor can they timely

incorporate modern educational technologies and core competency cultivation. This results in severely inadequate timeliness and practical relevance of course content.

More critically, theoretical and practical courses lack systematic integration, remaining relatively disconnected. Theoretical instruction fails to provide targeted guidance for practical components, while practical components struggle to effectively reinforce the absorption of theoretical knowledge. This imbalanced curriculum system not only hinders students' systematic improvement in practical skills but also impedes their deep understanding and flexible application of educational theories, ultimately making it difficult for students to quickly adapt to the actual job requirements of grassroots education positions [2].

4.3. Weakness in practical teaching and lack of quality assurance mechanisms

The weakness in practical teaching components remains a widespread shortcoming in talent cultivation for pedagogy majors at applied undergraduate institutions. This issue manifests in multiple aspects, including monotonous practical teaching content, lagging development of training platforms, and insufficient practical guidance. Current practical teaching designs exhibit homogeneity and superficiality, predominantly relying on basic formats, like classroom simulations and short-term concentrated internships. These approaches lack deep integration with authentic teaching scenarios in grassroots schools, failing to comprehensively cover the entire educational process, including instructional design, classroom management, student supervision, home-school collaboration, and educational evaluation.

Consequently, students cannot fully immerse themselves in real-world teaching requirements. Meanwhile, institutional collaboration with grassroots education organizations remains superficial, lacking stable practical teaching bases and collaborative talent development mechanisms. This results in insufficient practical training resources and limited practical positions, making it difficult to meet students 'large-scale and routine practical training needs. More critically, the quality assurance mechanism for practical teaching is severely lacking.

There are neither scientific practical assessment standards nor comprehensive process supervision systems and effectiveness feedback mechanisms. This renders practical teaching superficial, unable to effectively evaluate students' practical abilities or optimize talent cultivation plans based on practical outcomes. Furthermore, practical assessments predominantly adopt single-result-oriented evaluation models, which fail to accurately reflect students 'practical competency levels. The assessment results also cannot effectively inform the optimization of practical teaching plans, ultimately leading to superficial practical teaching that fails to genuinely enhance students' practical application abilities [3].

5. Practical strategies for the talent training model of education major in applied undergraduate higher education institutions

5.1. Anchoring the orientation of applied training and clarifying the core direction of talent cultivation

To address the ambiguity in talent cultivation positioning for pedagogy majors at applied undergraduate institutions, the key lies in aligning with institutional educational orientations and regional basic education needs, precisely defining applied training objectives, and clarifying core talent development directions. Universities should establish research teams comprising education experts, grassroots educators, and faculty members to systematically analyze the essential competencies required by regional basic education reforms, thereby developing talent cultivation specifications tailored to local demands.

Building on this foundation, institutions must redefine talent development goals by abandoning the singular focus of traditional academic training and establishing applied-oriented core objectives. Practical skills, job adaptability, and innovative capabilities should be integrated throughout the entire talent development process. Additionally, universities should implement dynamic adjustment mechanisms for training positioning, regularly tracking regional basic education developments and evolving talent demands to optimize training directions and specifications.

This ensures precise alignment between talent output and societal needs. Furthermore, enhancing the conceptual interpretation of training positioning and guiding faculty and students through specialized lectures and teaching seminars will help clarify the core principles of applied training. By fostering synergy between teaching and learning, institutions can ultimately establish a professional training framework with regional adaptability and differentiated advantages.

5.2. Reconstructing the curriculum system and strengthening the systematic connection between theory and practice

To address the imbalance in curriculum systems and the disconnect between theory and practice, universities should reconstruct their course structures with a focus on applied talent development needs, strengthening systematic integration of theoretical and practical components. In optimizing course frameworks, institutions must move beyond traditional discipline-oriented curricula to establish demand-driven modular systems. This involves rationally adjusting the ratio of theoretical to practical courses, reducing redundant content in purely theoretical courses, and introducing specialized modules focused on cultivating practical competencies in grassroots education. Examples include teaching design guided by core competencies, educational problem diagnosis and intervention, and integration of modern educational technologies.

Regarding content updates, universities should align with the latest trends in basic education reform, eliminating outdated theories and obsolete case studies while incorporating regional educational characteristics, cutting-edge evaluation concepts, and diversified teaching methods to ensure contemporary relevance and practical applicability. Additionally, universities should establish dynamic review and optimization mechanisms. Review teams composed of industry-academia partners, grassroots education experts, and professional teachers should regularly assess curriculum suitability and make timely adjustments to course modules and content, ensuring the system remains in sync with applied talent development goals and the evolving demands of basic education reform [4].

5.3. Empower the upgrading of practical teaching and build a whole-chain quality assurance system

Enhancing the quality of practical teaching is the cornerstone for cultivating applied talents, requiring the establishment of a comprehensive quality assurance system. To optimize practical teaching content, universities should move beyond traditional classroom simulations and short-term internships, developing a tiered practical teaching framework that covers the entire educational process, from instructional design and classroom implementation to student management, home-school communication, and educational evaluation, while ensuring precise alignment between practical content and grassroots teaching positions.

In terms of training platform development, institutions should deepen collaboration with local primary/secondary schools, kindergartens, and community education centers, transcending superficial partnerships to establish stable, deeply integrated practical teaching bases. This involves creating a dual-track platform combining “in-school simulated training + off-campus real-world practice” to provide students with immersive, all-encompassing practical experiences. Simultaneously, upgrading on-campus training platforms through modern educational technology to simulate authentic teaching scenarios will meet the demands of routine practical training.

For quality assurance mechanisms, universities must implement a full-chain practical teaching management system, define clear standards for each phase, and form dual-mentor teams comprising both on-campus instructors and off-campus practitioners to ensure comprehensive guidance and supervision throughout the practical process. Furthermore, universities can develop a scientific and diversified practical assessment system, moving beyond a single outcome-oriented evaluation model.

This system should incorporate practical attitude, process performance, skill enhancement, and reflective summaries into the assessment framework. Simultaneously, a feedback and improvement mechanism for practical teaching effectiveness should be established. By regularly conducting surveys and seminars to gather feedback from both practice units and students, the practical teaching plan can be continuously optimized,

ensuring steady improvement in the quality of practical education [5].

6. Conclusion

In conclusion, the optimization and restructuring of talent cultivation models for pedagogy majors in applied undergraduate institutions represent both an inevitable response to basic education reform demands and a strategic implementation of higher education classification development. This approach serves as the core pathway for the discipline to overcome developmental bottlenecks and achieve high-quality growth. By clarifying core talent development objectives, strengthening systematic integration of theory and practice, and establishing comprehensive quality assurance systems, universities can effectively address current challenges such as weak practical teaching and inadequate quality assurance. Moving forward, applied undergraduate institutions should further enhance collaborative education mechanisms with grassroots educational institutions, refine dynamic evaluation and feedback systems for talent cultivation quality, and promote deep integration and efficiency improvements across all talent development stages. These efforts will provide solid talent support for advancing educational modernization.

Disclosure statement

The author declares no conflict of interest.

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