

**COOPERATION IN TEACHER TRAINING BETWEEN UNIVERSITIES  
AND SCHOOLS AT CENTRAL CHINA NORMAL UNIVERSITY (CHINA) AND  
LESSONS FOR VIET NAM**

Received:  
03 – 10 – 2017  
Accepted:  
20 – 12 – 2017  
<http://jshe.ued.udn.vn/>

Tran Phan Hieu

**Abstract:** Building and improving teacher's capacity has always been regarded as a crucial factor in the success or failure of a strategy, an innovation and even an educational cause. Accordingly, Viet Nam's Communist Party and State have always considered education and training as one of the most important national strategic policies and the future of the country. Over the past years, apart from certain achievements, a number of challenges and shortcomings have existed in education and training activities in Viet Nam; hence, the quality of teacher training has been negatively affected. One of the problems is the way of cooperation in training between teacher training institutes and schools. In this article, we present experience in the training of teachers at Central China Normal University (China) and limitations in cooperation for training teachers in Viet Nam at present whereby some solutions are proposed to be implemented in training and cooperation between Viet Nam's pedagogical universities and schools in order to meet the requirements of the society.

**Key words:** educational cooperation model; teacher training; educational reform; training form; practicum.

**1. Introduction to Central China Normal University, China**

The Central China Normal University (CCNU) was established in 1903, in Wuhan city, Hubei province. It is a regional comprehensive university under direct administration of the Ministry of Education of the People's Republic of China. As one of the universities included in the Project 211, CCNU has been recognized as an important educational institution training talents for the country, as well as a leading teacher training center for higher education institutions and high

China that have admitted international students. At present, CCNU has academic links and cooperation, namely research and academic exchange, with more than 100 countries around the world, including Viet Nam. With a high-quality teaching staff of nearly 1000 professors and associate professors, modern facilities and optimized advanced training programs, CCNU is an ideal destination providing a foundation for future success to Chinese and international students. The University is famous for a large number of training programs, especially in educational sciences such as biochemistry, law, publishing management, experimental psychology, nutritional science, and linguistics. CCNU is also one of the universities assigned by the Government to train 8 national key disciplines in China.

**2. Partnership Model of teacher training at Central China Normal University**

**\* Corresponding author**

Tran Phan Hieu  
The University of Danang - University of Science and Education  
Email: tphieu@ued.udn.vn

schools. The University comprises 25 member institutes in the fields of applied sciences and educational sciences, over 60 research centers for teacher training. It is also one of the first universities in

Since the early 1990s, China has formally pursued the goal of developing a market economy, which requires innovation and reform in higher education. Most colleges and universities in China have restructured and reorganized their education management system in line with the market economy and rapid development of information technology in time of international globalization and integration. As a leading university for teacher training and high quality human resources for the country, CCNU has constantly enhanced the efficiency of managing the quality of education and training in accordance with the development of the country to meet the demands of high quality teaching staff for all school levels in China. In addition to such activities as upgrading modern facilities, updating training programs, developing new curriculum, combining teaching and research, improving the living standards of teachers, CCNU has facilitated its partnership with schools in the central region of China, which is considered a turning-point strategy in accordance with the current situation of education and training in China.

One of the most prominent points in the reform and innovation of higher education in China is that the role of government has changed from “over-centralization and bureaucratic control” to “macroscopic supervision and coordination”. Accordingly, CCNU manages to independently operate and develop based on its advantages and conditions rather than relying entirely on the governmental financial support. In addition to accomplishing the assigned objectives and tasks, CCNU has to complete key research programs and bid new research projects for diverse sources of funding. CCNU success has also proved that partnership and cooperation in education and training is an effective method in improving teacher training quality.

### **2.1. Cooperation between CCNU and governments at all levels in the central region of China to train teachers and governmental officials and increase financial support to CCNU**

Governments at all levels in China participate and contribute to education both in financial and spiritual support. Cooperation between CCNU and other pedagogical universities and education departments in the China central provinces facilitates CCNU understanding of recruitment criteria for teachers at

various school levels, the needs of enrollment and teacher training in the following years. Based on its training scale and actual demand, CCNU set up relevant annual recruitment target to improve the quality of training. In recent years, the rate of admission to CCNU has been relatively low due to the high entrance scores and fierce competition to the teacher training major. This is mainly because graduates of teacher training normally get good jobs after graduation apart from the fact that teaching is a highly respected career in the Chinese society. According to annual statistics of CCNU, the rate of graduates getting good jobs (after one year of graduation) was 93% - a considerably high percentage which could be an exemplary case study for pedagogical universities in Viet Nam.

Regarding collaboration with governmental agencies, CCNU regularly bids a number of research projects publicly with large funding from the local authorities. CCNU is also bidding for capacity improving for in-service school teachers of provincial departments of education. More importantly, these relationships create opportunities for practicum for CCNU’s pre-service teachers.

### **2.2. Roadmap for undergraduate of teacher training major at CCNU**

With a large scale of training, CCNU has cooperated with many educational institutions, public and private schools in the Central region of China. At the beginning of each school year, the University’s management board holds meetings with local authorities, especially representatives from provincial education departments to build plans for cooperation and request for sending senior students to conduct practicum at schools under their administration.

After completing the first two years of professional knowledge, in their third year at CCNU, students attend pedagogical professional skills courses and join real school hours at assigned schools. In other words, in their sixth (out of eight) semester at CCNU, in addition to taking theoretical courses, these juniors are required to join team-working activities and observe classes at assigned schools at the beginning of each week. In fact, many juniors participate in group work with school pupils at different school levels during their four years at CCNU. This is the time when students get to know

how to manage pupils, organize a team or a group work activity, etc. Their performance and attitude in team-working activities at assigned schools is one of the grading criteria for evaluation of the high school observation activity in the third year.

In their final year at CCNU, students attend a one-year pre-service training (or practicum), divided into two phases, at assigned educational institutions. The first phase takes place in the seventh semester when students work as teaching assistants, counselors, and mentors for school pupils. Each week, these seniors have to teach at least two classes at assigned schools and attend a meeting at CCNU (usually on Friday afternoons) where they can share difficulties, exchange experiences and support each other. In the next semester, they only do practicum at assigned schools and write graduation reports. At assigned schools, they will be required to teach and manage a class under a school teacher's supervision. At this time, they are treated as full-time school teachers who can participate in all school meetings and extracurricular activities. In addition, each senior student receives a financial support for the practicum equivalent to 40% of the national minimum wage regulated by the government.

### **2.3. Method of assessment for undergraduates of teacher training major**

Assessment activity is an on-going process during the four-year teacher training program (from enrollment to graduation). Like universities in Europe and Viet Nam, CCNU applies the credit-based training system. In the first three academic years, students study theoretical subjects and their performance is evaluated using grades and credit-based ranking. The percentage of outstanding and excellent students in CCNU is fairly limited due to its strict grading system.

CCNU students are highly aware of self-studying and learner's autonomy, so they spend on average 14 hours a day on studying which is possibly three times as much as that of ordinary Vietnamese students. Normally, CCNU students attend a 90-minute class and spend 270 minutes self-studying on a typical day. Yet, in reality, some statistics by students majoring in psychology show that the self-study time of a typical CCNU student is much higher than the above-mentioned figure, and that 96% of those who were interviewed said that they spent from 6 to 8 hours self-

studying at the library. This is very common at CCNU where the library is open all days (even at weekends). Hence, the number of CCNU students going to the library is extremely huge. In order to accommodate the study needs of students, the library is significantly large with over 2500 seats (excluding canteens, rooms for group works) and is electronically managed. There, students can search for information using library computers, or check-in and check-out books, which motivates their self-studying.

The assessment scheme for final year students consists of three components: graduation report or graduation thesis, high school observation assessment done by the schools evaluating the students' working attitude and pedagogical skills, and evaluation by students' practicum supervisors.

Before their seventh semester at CCNU, senior students are recommended a list of schools for practicum. In the following week, a 5-6-day professional training course is organized normally in the last week of August each year. Participants include senior students and supervisors for their practicum at assigned schools. The content of the course is grading criteria for evaluating the senior's performance, team-working skills, etc. The training course is funded by CCNU and responding departments of education. The supervisors (school teachers) joining the training course will be given VIP cards for their meals and accommodation at a 3-star hotel operated by CCNU.

After completing the training course, CCNU senior students and their supervisors visit assigned schools for high school observation and practicum. In the first phase (seventh semester), the students' assessment is based on their working attitude instead of scores. In the second phase (eighth semester), students start working as pre-service teachers assigned to teach 10% of class hours of their supervisors, equivalent to 2 lessons per week. In addition, they have to teach 8 lessons of their choice under observation of both their supervisors at assigned schools and lecturers at CCNU. These two evaluations are completely independent and become two separate grades. Also, in this semester, students are required to write graduation reports whose themes are possibly relevant to either their experiences during the practicum or their professional knowledge. (Vietnamese students have these assignments as well). During the

process of writing reports, students contact their lecturers at CCNU for supervision and complete the reports by May. After that, they have to inform the training institution of organizing a session for presenting reports.

The most prominent thing in the practicum and writing reports is group work requirements. The students are divided into groups of 2-3 students supervised by a school teacher. In addition to working as a pre-service teacher, students are required to work as cameramen to record all of their teaching hours (and burn into CDs) so that they can later review for self-assessment, identification and correction of their mistakes. Moreover, all CDs, considered as a kind of practicum diary, are sent to the training institution upon their completing the practicum at schools. CCNU lecturers then use these CDs as materials for teaching methodology and professional pedagogical skills.

### **3. Overview of teacher training in Viet Nam from the perspective of cooperation between universities of education and schools**

Through research and practical teaching experience in Viet Nam for many years, we have found that education and training activities of professional pedagogical skills, especially practicum - an extremely important step in the process of teacher training at Vietnamese universities, still have a number of shortcomings as follows.

Firstly, pedagogical universities in Viet Nam have not yet developed a standardized theoretical framework of teacher training including both personality and pedagogical skills. Most pedagogical universities principally focus on teaching theoretical or academic subjects rather than providing a standard role model teacher. Perhaps, the first and also the last perception of a role model teacher for students to observe and follow is their university lecturers whose image has gradually become “distorted” and “ugly” as a result of the development of the market economy. In addition, the current teaching methods, content and activities in training pedagogical skills are relatively simple, not yet designed as a skill-based system or a suitable training procedure. Accordingly, the current assessment for pedagogical practicums has not been based on specific

standards yet rather arbitrary. As a result, the creativity and activeness of students and the sense of responsibility of supervisors are not strongly motivated. The practicum content has not modeled steps, stages and the entire process of pre-service training into a standardized system, which otherwise would not only help students follow easily and do self-evaluation but also gives supervisors and administrators specific criteria to evaluate the students’ performance more precisely and objectively.

Secondly, the current cooperation between pedagogical universities and schools is weak. This partnership only takes place on the macro level, not intensively, so it has not been effective yet. In fact, most pedagogical universities in Viet Nam seem to neglect their responsibility for closely supervising students in their practicums at schools and just give students words of encouragement after completing their tasks of recommending schools for the practicum. Students have to be responsible for all activities on their own under the supervision of a school teacher during the practicum. The second supervisor (university lecturer) usually visits the schools once or twice to collect general information without a specific and regular plan for the whole practicum period.

Thirdly, the connection between university lecturers, school teachers and students is relatively weak. There is hardly a real connection or regular meetings between the two partners of teacher training – pedagogical universities and schools. It is very likely that the second supervisor (university lecturer) plays an ambiguous role in their students’ practicum. In fact, it is easy to see that during the practicum, they are seldom present at schools to exchange professional knowledge or to evaluate the students’ performance. This situation is probably due to the lack of a specific and obligatory mechanism of cooperation between university lecturers and school teachers.

Last but not least, the duration of practicum in Viet Nam is too short. The eight-week pre-service training is considerably inadequate to do this extremely important job - educating future generations. The practicum is the most suitable time to generate various positive and valuable experiences to senior students of teacher training major. It is a truth that the students’ passion and

serious pursuit for teaching as a career are shaped in this short period. Despite having applied the credit-based system in training, most pedagogical universities in Viet Nam still focus on theoretical and academic training rather than innovating the teaching methods and perceptions, putting students under the pressure of “achievement disease”.

#### **4. Recommendations to strengthen cooperation in teacher training at Vietnamese universities: lessons from Central China Normal University (China)**

Strengthening cooperation in teacher training between pedagogical universities and schools is an extremely urgent and necessary requirement for education reform and international integration in Viet Nam for the time being. This partnership is highly effective with double benefits such as utilizing the training environment, reducing the cost of training, enhancing the reputation of universities, etc. However, the current situation of teacher training in Viet Nam still faces plenty of drawbacks to be solved. Based on researches on the training mechanism at CCNU in recent years, the following recommendations are proposed with reference to the analysis, the benchmark and evaluation of the current situation of teacher training in Viet Nam.

The first suggestion is developing a mechanism of cooperation and partnership with mutual benefits between pedagogical universities and schools in Viet Nam. First of all, it is necessary to restructure the cooperation mechanism between the two partners. Universities need to organize meetings with the local government and education departments to build a particular sharing mechanism, i.e. sharing training responsibilities and difficulties. Accordingly, universities and governments at all levels from central (Ministry of Education and Training) to local (local authorities and educational departments) should agree on a particular financial support for school teachers working as practicum supervisors, the duration of the practicum, and grading criteria for assessment so that they can reduce financial difficulties and shortcomings mentioned above. It is necessary to regulate the functions and missions of university supervisors, school supervisors and students.

Secondly, the practicum duration should be longer as it is considered the most important subject for students’ graduation consideration. As mentioned previously, the current practicum duration of Vietnamese students is too short as compared to that at CCNU ones (over 1/3 of the CCNU high school observation period and 1/9 of the practicum period, not including the period of visiting schools before the observation and practicum periods). With the significance of the practicum, it is absolutely essential to increase the amount of time to at least one semester of the academic year based on the conditions and operation of local schools.

Thirdly, the grading scheme for practicum assessment has to be developed to include multiple criteria for more accurate results. The practicum evaluation method should be revised by dividing the current assessment criteria into clear and specific components such as working attitude, level of completion, team-working skills, class management ability, professional knowledge, teacher’s personality, and pedagogical skills. These innovating criteria have to be communicated to university lecturers, school teachers, and students before the practicum begins so that they can fully understand evaluation criteria and minimize the “achievement disease”, contributing to the improvement of the training quality and enhancing the university’s brand name. Moreover, the assessment components should not be totally given by school teachers as usual, but 20% of which should be given by university lecturers and 10% of which by school professional groups in order to ensure objectiveness in evaluation.

Fourthly, the standards of a role model teacher should be developed. The model teacher’s personality and professional requirements need to be standardized based on current demands of the Viet Nam society. The first group of standards should regulate the teacher’s personality and morality. It is necessary to permanently dismiss disqualified teachers, and strictly discipline those who violate teachers’ morality. Also, it is important to enhance professional knowledge and nominate teachers for advanced training as university lecturers.

The fifth recommendation is investment in aiding facilities and equipment for students’ professional

training and practicums as education reform requires a major investment. At present, the pedagogical universities and colleges in Viet Nam seriously lack modern and high-tech facilities for teaching and learning, and the current facilities are seriously degraded. Compared to pedagogical universities in the world, it is difficult for Viet Nam universities to keep up with their quality of training. In fact, CCNU, as an example, is totally operated and managed by an electronic management system through the fingerprint and video recording system. The library is so modern that it is easy to exactly know the number of students coming to study and search for documents through the video recording system. CCNU students do not need to contact librarians for checking out books as in Vietnamese universities. That the lighting system and automatic air conditioning, reading rooms and group working rooms are all upgraded and connected to the internet, etc. motivates and facilitates students to study and do research.

Last but not least, funding for school teacher supervisors should be regulated to motivate and enhance their sense of responsibility. Today, there are not many benefits or support to school teachers in the weak relationship of training cooperation between universities and schools, so their supervision is not always effective. Thus, it is important to provide financial support and higher wages for school teacher supervisors and to include supervision as a required task and evaluation criteria for the yearly assessment for the quality of school teachers.

## 5. Conclusion

Teacher training is the key task of pedagogical universities which is clearly defined in their mission. In order to accommodate such a respected mission in the context of education reform, universities are recommended to constantly renovate and improve the quality of training. Apart from accessing new knowledge related to the disciplines, pedagogical universities should enhance the quality of professional training for students. In addition, it is essential to develop the mechanisms of strong cooperation in training and in the process of sending students for practicums at partner schools. Moreover, building and perfecting the grading scheme and components for pre-service teachers' evaluation, and investment in facilities for teaching and learning are other recommendations to continuously boost the quality of teacher training in Viet Nam.

## References

- [1] Altet M. (2002). *“Une Démarche de Recherche sur la Pratique Enseignante: L'analyse Plurielle”*. Revue française de pédagogie.
- [2] Blanchard-Laville Cl. & Fablet D. (2000). *L'analyse des Pratiques Professionnelles*. L'Harmattan Publishing House, Paris.
- [3] Ministry of Education and Training (2004). *Renovation of Teaching Content and Methodology at Pedagogical Universities*. Proceedings.

## LIÊN KẾT ĐÀO TẠO GIÁO VIÊN GIỮA CƠ SỞ GIÁO DỤC ĐẠI HỌC VỚI TRƯỜNG PHỔ THÔNG TẠI TRƯỜNG ĐẠI HỌC SƯ PHẠM HOA TRUNG (TRUNG QUỐC) VÀ BÀI HỌC CHO VIỆT NAM

**Tóm tắt:** Đào tạo, bồi dưỡng để nâng cao chất lượng đội ngũ giáo viên luôn được xem là yếu tố then chốt quyết định sự thành công hay thất bại của một chiến lược, một cuộc đổi mới và thậm chí là cả một sự nghiệp giáo dục. Chính vì lẽ đó mà Đảng và Nhà nước ta luôn xem giáo dục và đào tạo là quốc sách hàng đầu, là tương lai của dân tộc. Trong nhiều năm qua, bên cạnh những thành tích đã được ghi nhận, giáo dục đào tạo ở nước ta vẫn tồn tại nhiều bất cập, ảnh hưởng tiêu cực đến chất lượng đào tạo giáo viên. Một trong số đó là vấn đề phương thức gắn kết trong đào tạo giữa cơ sở đào tạo giáo viên với các trường phổ thông. Trong khuôn khổ của bài viết, chúng tôi đề cập kinh nghiệm đào tạo giáo viên tại Trường Đại học Sư phạm Hoa Trung (Trung Quốc) và những hạn chế còn tồn tại trong kết nối đào tạo giáo viên ở Việt Nam hiện nay, từ đó gợi ý một số giải pháp trong đào tạo và thực hiện liên kết giữa các trường Đại học sư phạm ở nước ta với cơ sở sử dụng giáo viên đáp ứng yêu cầu xã hội.

**Từ khóa:** liên kết đào tạo; đào tạo giáo viên; đổi mới giáo dục; mô hình đào tạo.