

Cultivating Rural English Teachers' Core Competence through Tripartite Guidance Team

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Abstract

In order to cultivate rural English teachers' core competence, with the help of the tripartite interaction community, the tripartite guidance team including college experts, teaching and research staff and excellent teachers tries to offer some help and instructions for the rural English teachers through four ways of concentrated training, centralized guidance, decentralized guidance and online discussion forum. After two-year-guidance, the rural English teachers have a sense of rural affiliation, understand the nature of English and begin to teach English on the basis of thinking and understanding. Furthermore, they began to cultivate students' positive world view in the process of English teaching.

Keywords

Tripartite Interaction Community, Tripartite Guidance Team, Rural English Teachers

1. Introduction

1.1. The Necessity to Cultivate the Core Competence of Rural English Teachers

“Action Plan for the Revitalization of Teachers Education (2018-2022)” states clearly that one of the important contents of the revitalization of teachers' education is teachers' professional development and quality improvement (Ministry of Education of the People's Republic of China, 2018). Chen Baosheng, Minister of Ministry of Education of the People's Republic of China, clearly put forward that we should increase the inclination and support for the construction of rural teachers in Speech of the National Educational Work Conference in 2019. He also emphasized that 2.5 million Rural Teachers are the strength and hope to revitalize rural education.

1.2. The General Framework of the Research

In order to develop rural English teachers' professional proficiency and improve their quality, this paper put forward the following cultivating practice and ways which can be briefly shown in **Figure 1**.

With the help of Tripartite Interaction Community, the Tripartite Guidance Team guides the rural English teachers through four ways to promote their five abilities. The tripartite guidance team cultivates rural English teachers' five abilities through four ways including concentrated training, centralized guidance, decentralized guidance and online discussion forum. One concentrated training will focus on one topic. For example, one topic is about interpretation of English texts. Centralized guidance refers to the rural English teachers get together and the tripartite guidance team guides them to solve some problems at a certain time in a certain place. Decentralized guidance means the tripartite guidance team

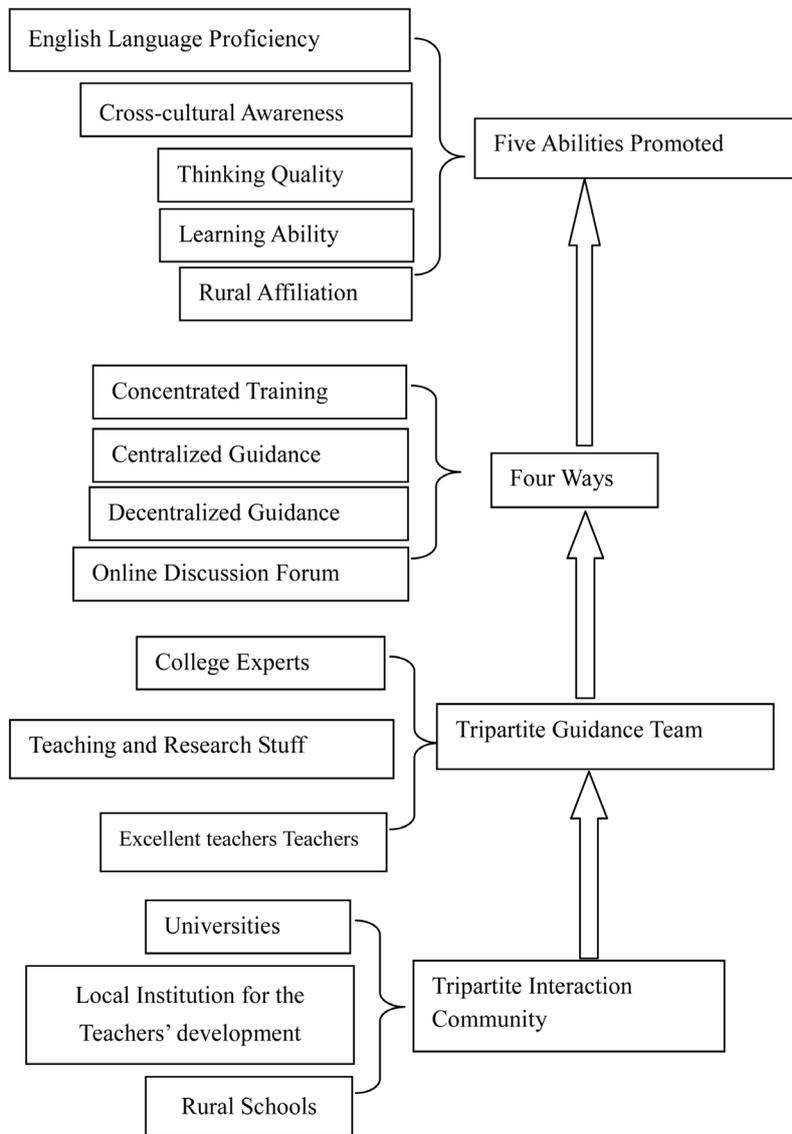


Figure 1. The guidance framework.

enter into the rural English class to observe, to evaluate and to guide the rural English teachers respectively. On the online discussion forum, the tripartite guidance team and the rural English teachers will discuss and communicate freely and conveniently. All in all, the main purpose is to cultivate rural English teachers' core competence.

1.3. The Research Process

After determining the 60 rural English guided teachers, the tripartite guidance team will set up guidance profiles for each of the rural teachers to record the guidance contents, time, ways, problems, suggestions, gains, etc. Meanwhile, the tripartite guidance team will make questionnaires and interviews on the 60 rural teachers to know the guidance effectiveness, efficiency and problems and modify their guidance plan according to the reflections of the 60 rural teachers.

1.4. An Example of Cultivating the Ability of Interpreting Text

An example of cultivating the rural English teachers' ability of interpreting texts, one of the core competences of rural English teachers, is shown in **Table 1**.

Through the guidance of interpreting texts, the rural teachers' ability of deeper analyzing texts is improved. Through analyzing texts in a deeper level and different aspects, teachers and students will think critically and have a clear awareness of cross-cultural and finally get a full understanding of the text. It is clearly stated that language ability, thinking quality, cultural awareness and learning ability are the core competences of students in the "*English Curriculum Standards for Senior High Schools (2017)*" issued by Ministry of Education of the People's Republic of China in 2017. So, interpreting texts deeply is a good way to cultivating students' critical core competences.

2. Literature Review and Definition of Concepts

2.1. The Origin of Core Competence

Early in 1997, Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development put forward the concept of competence. It doesn't confine to knowledge and skills. It involves the ability to solve complex problems by drawing on and mobilizing psychological resources (including skills and attitudes) in a particular context. In 2008, European Commission explained competence further. A competence is not limited to cognitive elements (involving the use of theory, concepts or tacit knowledge); it also encompasses functional aspects (involving technical skills) as well as interpersonal attribute (e.g. social or organizational skills) and ethical values. A competence is therefore a broader concept that may actually comprise skills (as well as attitudes, knowledge, etc.) (Cedefop, 2008).

In 2014, Ministry of Education of the People's Republic of China issued "Opinions on Deepening Curriculum Reform in an All-round Way and Implementing the Fundamental Task of Cultivating Students". It is the first time that the Core Quality System of Chinese Students' Development was put forward. In

Table 1. Rural English teachers' ability of interpreting texts.

Guidance Purpose	Improve the Rural English Teachers' Ability of Interpreting Texts		
Duration of the Guidance	June, 2018-December, 2018		
Ways of the Guidance	Concentrated Training (3 times)	Cultivating the Ability of Text Interpretation by Using Thematic Teaching	3 Hours
		English Deep Learning Based on English Core Competence	3 Hours
		Developing Students' Core Competence through Creative English Class	3 Hours
		Solving Rural English Teachers' Problems and Puzzles	3 Hours
	Centralized Guidance (3 times)	Solving Rural English Teachers' Problems and Puzzles	3 Hours
		Solving Rural English Teachers' Problems and Puzzles	3 Hours
		Solving Rural English Teachers' Problems and Puzzles	3 Hours
	Decentralized Guidance (6 times)	Attending 10 Rural English Teachers' Normal Class and Evaluating them	2 days
		Attending 10 Rural English Teachers' Normal Class and Evaluating them	2 days
		Attending 10 Rural English Teachers' Normal Class and Evaluating them	2 days
		Attending 10 Rural English Teachers' Normal Class and Evaluating them	2 days
		Attending 10 Rural English Teachers' Normal Class and Evaluating them	2 days
Online Discussion Forum	Discussing and Communicating Daily Teaching Gains, Problems and Suggestions, etc.	Any Time	

September, 2016, the Core Quality System of Chinese Students' Development was formally issued (Ministry of Education of the People's Republic of China, 2014).

2.2. The Concept of Core Competence of Rural English Teachers

On one hand, English subject is different from other subjects in China, because English is a foreign language for Chinese students. Any teaching and learning must be on the basis of English language proficiency and skills. In addition, language is Language is the carrier of thinking. English, as a foreign language, it conveys different thinking and culture naturally. It is helpful to cultivate students' cultural awareness and international vision in the collision and blending of Chinese and Western Cultures. On the other hand, rural schools are short of

English teachers. Moreover, most rural students have few chances to meet foreigners and communicate with them, so there are fewer phenomena to learn English.

Based on the particularity of English subject and the predicament of rural English Teaching, rural English teachers' core competence includes rural affiliation. That is to say, rural English teachers are willing to be a rural English teacher and they will improve their English teaching and learning methods according to the real teaching and learning situation in the rural schools. They like to devote to the rural English teaching and learning. Most importantly, they have solid English professional knowledge and awareness of lifelong learning. They will learn continuously. They also have cross-cultural awareness and creative thinking. They are able to cultivate students' world view, outlook on life and sense of worth in the collision and blending of Chinese and Western Cultures.

2.3. Cooperation between Universities and Schools at Home and Abroad to Train Primary and Secondary School Teachers

2.3.1. The Development of "University-Schools" Partnership

Early in 1896, American educator, Dewey, founded University Primary School which shows the partnership between universities and schools. In 1980s, American Holmes Group also advocated the cooperation between universities and schools in their Report on Teachers Tomorrow. Bev Yardley and Graeme Lock put forward the partnership between universities and schools in 2004.

2.3.2. The Current Partnership between Universities and Schools in China

The team of Wang Qiang of Beijing Normal University has carried out a cooperative action research between college and middle school English teachers (Wang & Li, 2017). Yang Luxin Team of Beijing Foreign Studies University has carried out a practical research on the development of primary and secondary English teachers under the professional guidance of University researchers. Li Baorong team of Beijing Institute of Education has also carried out a practical research on School-based Research of middle school English teachers based on action learning. Niu Ruixue also put forward the difficulties and strategies of the cooperation between universities and schools in 2006.

2.4. The Concept of Tripartite Community

The Tripartite Interaction Community includes universities, rural schools and local institution for the teachers' development. The local institution for the teachers' development will bridge university and rural schools. It will be responsible for the communication between rural schools and the tripartite guidance and arrange guiding places. The college experts, the teaching and research staff and excellent teachers compose of the tripartite guidance team. The teaching and research staff connects college experts and excellent teachers and help college experts guide excellent teachers improve their model lesson.

3. Research Subjects

The research subjects are 60 rural English teachers who come from 10 different cities. The 60 rural English teachers are selected through four procedures. First, the rural teaching researchers recommend rural teachers who are going to be guided by the tripartite guidance team to the city teaching researchers. Then, the city teaching researchers and the rural teaching researchers evaluate, analyze, discuss and determine the final guided teachers according to their personal files and English teaching reality. Second, the tripartite guidance team will select the guided subjects in terms of their age, teaching age, teaching attitudes, teaching styles, teaching situation, etc. Third, the tripartite guidance team will send the list of guided teachers to their school leaders and get permission. Fourth, if the school leaders agree the selected teachers to be guided by the tripartite guidance team, the team will get the agreement of the selected teachers. Only they are willing to be guided, they can be on the list of research subjects. The four procedures will guarantee the effectiveness and efficiency of the guidance.

4. Research Purposes

In the past five years, the author of this paper has been the project executor of the national English teachers training project undertaken by the university, participating the whole process of the preliminary investigation, training curriculum design and follow-up survey guidance after training of the 8 projects, “*National Training Program (2015)—Teachers Training Team Replacement Out-of-production Training Project in Rural Primary and Secondary Schools of Hebei Province*”, “*National Training Program (2017)—Training Program for Teachers of Rural Primary and Secondary Schools in Hebei Province*”, etc.

So the author has a better understanding of the current situation and problems of English teachers in rural villages, which are mainly manifested in the following three points. First, English teachers in rural villages do not have a solid knowledge of English. English pronunciation has a serious local accent. The interpretation of English text is not deep and in a round angle. Their integration ability of textbooks is poor. Their teaching method is single and conservative. The essence of English language and the deep meaning behind the English text cannot be deeply excavated in daily English teaching, which leads to the teaching staying in the dull, tedious and inefficient shallow level. Second, English teachers in rural villages have weak awareness of lifelong learning. On the one hand, the vitality, depth and frequency of school-based and inter-school teaching and research of English teachers in rural villages are insufficient. On the other hand, rural English teachers lack learning motivation and enthusiasm. Moreover, their learning ability is insufficient. Third, some English teachers in rural villages lack local affiliation. Some English teachers in rural villages simply attribute the poor English teaching efficiency to the poor source of students in rural villages. They do not think how to improve individual teaching ability according to the actual situation in order to improve the efficiency of English teaching in rural villages

and serve English teaching better.

Based on the current situation and problems of English teachers in rural villages, three purposes in this research are put forward.

Make rural English teachers understand and master the nature of the language of English, which enable them to teach according to the nature of English and guide their students to recite English vocabulary and rules on the basis of understanding instead of reciting without thinking and understanding (Mei & Wang, 2018). Moreover, the rural English teachers own the ability to instruct students observe, analyze, compare and evaluate consciously in the process of English teaching and learning.

Cultivate rural English teachers' cross-cultural awareness and creative thinking. Through analyzing and enjoying English texts, rural English teachers will guide their students have a critical, rational understanding and acceptance of different cultures which do not confine to different cultures of different nations, but refer to different cultures of different cities, families, even individuals. In this way, the rural teachers not only broaden the horizon of rural students but help them form correct world view, outlook on life and sense of worth.

Activate rural English teachers' learning desire and sense of rural affiliation. Promote communication and cooperation between rural teachers to improve their teaching ability. Encourage rural English teachers to learn continuously, meanwhile, cultivate rural English teachers' responsibility for rural English teaching. Help them solve problems in accordance with the real situation in rural schools.

5. Research Methods

In the process of this research, the research team mainly used investigation method and action research.

5.1. Investigation Method

Before making the research plan, 1000 questionnaires were handout out to 1000 rural English teachers to collect information about rural English teaching situation and difficulties. Meanwhile, the research team also interviewed 100 rural English teachers to collect more information about the rural teaching situation and difficulties. On the basis of the collecting information through questionnaires and interviews, the research team made out the research plan and cultivating model. In the middle of the process of the guidance, the research team also handed out 120 questionnaires to the research subjects to know what are their evaluation of the cultivating model and interview the rural teachers continuously to collect their attitudes towards the guidance model. According to the the results of questionnaires and interviews, the research team modify their cultivating plan duly. After the cultivating circle, another investigation was carried out to collect information of the satisfaction, suggestions, gains and effects of the guidance.

5.2. Action Research

Both the teachers in the tripartite guidance team and the rural English teachers will establish their personal files. In their files, the guiding contents, problems, reflections, gains, improvements, etc. are recorded in detail. The guidance team will read, check and analyze the personal file of each guided rural English teacher to offer targeted instruction to them (Zhang, 2010).

6. Results and Discussion

With the help of the Tripartite Interaction Community, the Tripartite Guidance Team cultivates the 60 rural English teachers' core competence through four ways. **Table 2** shows the results of the guidance.

From **Table 2**, it can be seen that the rural attitudes towards teaching and researching activities changed a lot. Most rural English teachers take part in the teaching and researching activities after the tripartite guidance and they became more satisfied with the current teaching and researching activities. Rural English teachers teaching methods and attitudes changed a lot, which can be seen in **Table 3**.

From **Table 3**, it can be seen most rural English teachers began to teach English on the basis of the nature of the Language of English after the tripartite guidance. They became fully aware of cultivating students' positive world view in the process of teaching English. More rural English teachers began to have a strong sense of rural affiliation and become satisfied with their rural English teaching work and they started to study and improve their teaching methods

Table 2. Rural English teachers' attitudes towards teaching and research activities.

Investigation Topic	Attitudes towards teaching and researching activities		
	The number of choosing the choice (Multiple Choices)		
	Before the guidance	After the guidance	
	There are little resources.	47	5
	There are much resources.	12	55
	It focuses on form, not contents.	46	4
	It focuses contents, not form.	7	51
Choices	There is no leader to activate the activities.	58	0
	There are leaders to activate the activities.	3	57
	Teachers are unwilling to share.	35	4
	Teachers are willing to share.	5	50

according to the real rural teaching and learning situation. Moreover, rural English teachers are willing to accept guidance. It can be shown in **Table 4**.

According to **Table 4**, 46 of the 60 rural English teachers are very pleased to get the guidance from the tripartite guidance team and 13 of the 60 rural English teachers are also willing to get the guidance. There is only one teacher who is not willing to get the guidance. From the statistics, it is easy for us to infer the guidance is helpful and popular with the rural English teachers.

7. Conclusion

After two-year guidance of the tripartite team, the 60 rural English teachers' English core competence was highly improved. First, they became more satisfied with being a rural English teacher. Second, they are more willing to take part in teaching and research activities and share their ideas with each other. Moreover, they have the consciousness of life-long learning to improve their English

Table 3. Rural English teachers' teaching methods and satisfaction with rural teaching.

Investigation Topic	Teaching Methods and Satisfaction with Rural Teaching		
	The number of choosing the choice (Multiple Choices)		
		Before the guidance	After the guidance
Choices	Make students recite a lot of things mechanically.	44	3
	Make students recite necessary things on the basis of thinking and understanding.	22	56
	Interpret English texts in different aspects.	16	44
	Interpret English texts in few aspects.	30	9
	Try to cultivate students' positive world view.	18	38
	There is much time to cultivate students' positive world view.	35	7
	Be satisfied with rural English teaching work.	25	38
	Be not very satisfied with rural English teaching work.	35	24

Table 4. Willingness of rural English teachers to accept guidance.

Choices	Responses
be quite willing to	46
be willing to	13
be reluctant to	1
be unwilling to	0

teaching ability. Most importantly, they understood the nature of the language of English. They are more likely to teach English through understanding, thinking and assessing. In this way, the rural English teaching entered into a deepening level.

As a result, it deepens the reform of rural English teachers' education, clarifies and focuses on the goal of professional development of English teachers in rural villages, and improves the effectiveness of the construction of English teachers in rural villages. Meanwhile, the cooperation mode of the tripartite guidance team, the training strategies, approaches, methods, experiences and lessons, etc. can be used for reference by teachers, educators and researchers.

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Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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