

Study on Correlation between Enrollment Motivation and Learning Engagement of Postgraduates of English Education

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Abstract

With the continuous promotion of the reform of higher education system, as well as the continuous deepening of the popularity of higher education, our country's postgraduate education has entered a new development stage. In the past ten years, the enrollment of various majors has been expanding, and the number of students has also achieved substantial growth. Among them, the proportion of postgraduates of English education is also expanding. For a postgraduate student majoring in English Education, whether he has the correct admission motivation, whether he agrees with the chosen major and whether he is interested in the major he is learning are very important for his professional learning and his own development. In the study of second language acquisition, motivation and learning engagement are both important factors that influence learners' individual differences in second language learning. However, as an important part of learning motivation, the motivation of admission has not been paid enough attention in the previous research field of motivation. In addition, there are few researches on the correlation between enrollment motivation and learning engagement at home and abroad, and few take master of English education as the research object. Therefore, based on relevant theories and researches, this paper takes the full-time postgraduates of English Education of Class 2021 of University X as the research subjects, explores their enrollment motivation and learning engagement through questionnaire, and analyzes the correlation between them. In order to make full use of the motivation to improve the academic input of master of subject English education to provide some feasible suggestions. The research focuses on the following three questions: (1) What is the enrollment motivation of postgraduates of English Education? (2) How do the postgraduates of English Education engage in learning? (3) What are the reasons that influence the learning engagement of postgraduates of English Education? It is found that students' enrollment motivation is diversified and the degree of learning engagement is insufficient. Besides, most students are lack of scientific planning during postgraduate period. Moreover, most of students are lack of educational belief and practice. The study makes some suggestions to address these problems.

Keywords

Postgraduates of English Education; Postgraduate Training; Enrollment Motivation; Learning Engagement.

1. Introduction

Postgraduate education is an important part of the national higher education system (Ma Qiang, Cai Maohua, Liu Yunchun, 2013). With the number of postgraduate applicants increasing and the enrollment constantly expanding, China has become one of the countries with the largest scale of postgraduate education in the world (Xu Guoquan, 2010). As for the major of English Education, the number of applicants is increasing year by year. With the continuous expansion of postgraduate enrollment, a new problem begins to appear: How to improve the quality of education as the enrollment rate keeps increasing (Chang&Yeh,2012). Therefore, we should

pay attention to the reasons of the increasing enrollment rate, and take corresponding measures to improve the teaching quality. To some extent, the enrollment motivation of postgraduates of English education reveals the reason why the number of applicants for this major increases year by year.

In addition, students' learning engagement has been increasingly applied to educational practice in recent years. Learning engagement can predict academic performance and achievement of students (Greene et al., 2004). Therefore, investigating the gap between students' motivation to attend school and learning engagement can help educators understand the reasons behind the changes in students' behavior, and make corresponding adjustments to improve students' learning engagement, thus improving the quality of education. Therefore, this study takes the students majoring in English Education in the School of Foreign Languages of University X in 2021 as an example, adopts the method of questionnaire to explore the gap between their enrollment motivation and learning engagement, obtains some useful information through in-depth analysis of the research materials and data, and puts forward some suggestions for the school to improve the teaching quality of the postgraduates of English education.

2. Literature Review

Motivation is considered one of the most important factors in determining success in learning a second language. Research has shown that motivation directly affects how second language learners interact with native speakers, how much input they receive in their second language acquisition, how high their overall level of second language proficiency is, and how long they maintain their second language ability after language learning, (Gardner, 1992). What's more, according to Dörnyei (1998), the high degree of motivation can compensate for a considerable deficit of one's language abilities and learning conditions. In fact, for the vast majority of second language learners, you can learn the language if you have strong motivation to do it.

Motivation for enrollment is one type of motivation. It refers to one of human motivation in the field of learning, which is an intrinsic motivation closely related to people's needs, and also an important part of learning motivation. School enrollment motivation is embodied in education, and then it is transformed into the form of specific individual learning intentions, desires, interests, etc. Besides, it plays an important role in motivating, guiding and maintaining individual learning activities. According to Taylor, Morgan and Gibbs (1988), motivation for enrollment is based on the concept of "orientation". This term is used to describe the student's goals, expectations, and attitudes for starting a new course. It is defined as "all those attitudes and goals that express the student's personal learning process". It is the sum total of these purposes that constitutes the individual context in which each student learns.

The theory of learning engagement originated in the 1930s. In its early days, the theory focused on the time students spend on learning, believing that the time they spend on learning was proportional to the knowledge they acquired, which was the concept of "Time on Task". Later, some scholars put forward the "Quality of Effort Theory" in response to this idea. According to this theory, students' study time and the quality of their effort should be considered to judge their learning engagement. This theory has laid an ideological foundation for the development of students' learning engagement theory. American scholar Astin (1984) defined learning engagement as the physical and psychological strength students spend on learning activities, which mainly includes students' thinking level, learning motivation and in-depth discussion in the course.

Although enrollment motivation and learning engagement are two separate concepts, they are intrinsically related to each other. Few scholars at home and abroad have explored the combination of enrollment motivation and learning engagement, and the existing researches

mainly focus on undergraduate students. Tzu-Ling Hsieh (2022) explored the differences in enrollment motivation and commitment of freshmen from the same education department from three universities with different academic levels. The research results show that the academic level of the university is not a factor affecting the enrollment motivation. Intrinsic motivation is the most important variable to predict engagement behaviors and teachers' career aspirations. Yang Qin (2018) investigated the full-time students of 2016 postgraduates of English Education in Central China Normal University and the backbone of ethnic minorities. Through questionnaire survey and interview, she explored the current situation of their initial enrollment motivation and learning engagement, and analyzed the correlation between the two, in order to provide some feasible ways to make full use of enrollment motivation to improve the learning engagement of postgraduates of subject English education. Some suggestions on the subject. Dai Mengya (2019) conducted a questionnaire survey and interview on the enrollment motivation, learning engagement and professional commitment of public funded normal university students, and then summarized the characteristics of public funded normal university students' enrollment motivation, learning engagement and professional commitment based on the analysis of the survey data. Finally, the problems and influencing factors of public funded normal university students' enrollment motivation, learning engagement and professional commitment were analyzed from a macro perspective. The author put forward relevant suggestions from the three aspects of policy, middle school and public normal university students. Chen Hong (2021) learned about the basic situation of learning motivation and learning engagement of local normal university students by revising and quoting others' questionnaires, analyzed the influence of local normal university students' learning motivation on learning engagement, and supplemented the research results with interviews. The research results show that the overall motivation and learning engagement of local normal university students are at a medium level, and the motivation of local normal university students has a significant regression effect on learning engagement.

To sum up, there are few researches on the motivation and learning engagement of postgraduates of English education at home and abroad. However, the existing researches mainly focus on undergraduate students. Therefore, this study takes the students majoring in Subject teaching (English) in the School of Foreign Languages of University X in 2021 as an example, adopts the method of questionnaire survey to explore the gap between their enrollment motivation and learning engagement, and obtains some useful information through in-depth analysis of the survey materials and data, and puts forward some suggestions for the university to improve the training quality of English education postgraduates.

3. Research Design

3.1. Research Questions

The purpose of this study is to investigate the enrollment motivation and learning engagement of postgraduates majoring in English Education, and to explore the correlation between enrollment motivation and learning engagement. It aims to expand the previous research and fill the gap in the research field of correlation between enrollment motivation and learning engagement.

In order to realize the purpose of this study, this study is devoted to exploring the following three questions:

- (1) What is the enrollment motivation of postgraduates of English Education?
- (2) How does the postgraduates of English Education engage in learning after the enrollment?
- (3) What are the factors that influence learning engagement of postgraduates of English Education?

3.2. Questionnaire Preparation

The questionnaire is divided into three parts, including 20 questions, including 19 completely closed questions and 1 half closed question. The first part investigates basic information, including 6 questions, the second part investigates motivation before and after enrollment, including 4 questions, and the third part investigates learning engagement, including 10 questions.

3.3. Research Subjects

This questionnaire is first filled out by members of the group, next modified, and then invited students outside the group to fill out the questionnaire. This questionnaire was issued to full-time students of the postgraduates of English Education of University X in 2021. A total of 63 questionnaires were sent out. All of them were recovered with 100% recovery rate and effective rate. The sample of this survey basically covers all the students of the postgraduates of English Education at University X in 2021, which can fully reflect the current situation of students.

4. Research Results

4.1. Basic Information of Postgraduates of English Education

In the sample group, 90% of the English education postgraduates are female students. In terms of age distribution, most of the postgraduates students of English education are about 23 years old. From the perspective of undergraduate learning experience, 82% of the students graduated from non-normal universities, and there are many cross-major students, accounting for 71% of the total number. Among them, 51% of the students majored in English (non-normal), 20% of the students majored in non-English, and only 29% of the students majored in normal English. In terms of study hour after class, the time of most postgraduates of English education is short, 60% of the students spend less than 3 hours on study after class, 35% of the students spend 3-6 hours on study. Finally, in terms of teaching qualification and teaching experience, 63% of the graduate students have obtained the teacher qualification certificate. Most students have teaching experience and want to be a teacher in the future.

4.2. Motivation Enrollment to Postgraduates of English Education

With the diversified development of today's society, economy and culture, the enrollment motivation of English education postgraduates shows a diversified trend of change. Among the sampled graduate students, most of them have a relatively clear purpose to study English majors. In the questionnaire, the enrollment motivation is mainly composed of five factors: self-actualization, life style, knowledge seeking and enterprising, interests and hobbies, and external influences. Their intensity from high to low is: self-actualization, knowledge seeking and enterprising, interests and hobbies, life style, and external influences. However, we can also see from the results that 12% of the surveyed graduate students chose to study for postgraduate degree in English education because of their parents' advice. Those who don't want to enter the society temporarily and avoid employment account for 30%. These are realities that we cannot ignore.

When choosing English Education, a large proportion of students have relatively clear goals. 90% want to improve their educational degree, 88% want to become an English teacher in the future, 74% want to obtain professional learning opportunities, 44% are interested in English, 34% love English education, 34% think English teaching is a decent job, 32% think English teaching is a decent job, enrich themselves, enrich their spiritual world. From the above results, we can see that the majority of students choose graduate school is influenced by positive factors such as self-improvement and interest in their major. But there are also 42% of the students do not

have a strong desire to study English major. They just want to escape the employment pressure, or they choose to study in English Education just out of parents' requirements or other negative factors.

4.3. Learning Engagement of Postgraduates of English Education

The study of postgraduates of English Education mainly includes three aspects: classroom learning, conducting research and investigation, and practicing teaching skills. According to the survey, 70% of the students have read at least 2 required books and taken notes in academic lectures carefully, 62% of the students have completed the tasks assigned by teachers carefully, 56% of the students have listened carefully and completed homework, 38% of the students have made study plans carefully, and 28% of the students have actively participated in the major competition. Such as teaching skills competition, FLTRP Cup competition and so on. 10% of the students have participated in scientific research projects. Most of the students can complete the learning tasks seriously, but they are passive in the aspects of improving their teaching skills and conducting scientific research.

4.4. Factors Influencing the Learning Engagement of Postgraduates of English Education

In face of academic pressure, employment pressure, interpersonal pressure and so on, English education postgraduates need to consider many aspects, and these factors will more or less affect their learning engagement. In view of the low degree of learning engagement, students show the following reasons. According to the survey, the majority of students reflect that their low level of learning engagement is due to their lack of efforts, 60% of students recognize that they are lack of practice and are divorced from reality, 44% of students claim that the timetable of curriculum is unreasonable, 38% of students view that the class size is inappropriate, these reasons should arouse the attention of the training institutions and education administrators of postgraduates of English education. 22.22% of the students recognize that they are not suitable for the study of their major. 20% of the students are occupied by part-time jobs. 15.56% of the students found that they are not suitable for graduate learning, and 6.67% of the students choose other reasons.

5. Analysis and Discussion

5.1. Diversified Enrollment Motivation and Insufficient Learning Efforts

It can be seen from the enrollment motivation of the English education postgraduates, that they have a strong purpose to study postgraduate, and the enrollment motivation tends to be diversified. Most of the students' enrollment motivation is positive. But there are also a small number of students' enrollment motivation is negative, and then influence their study, research and teaching practice during the postgraduate learning. Psychology believes that motivation is the internal desire to directly influence one's activities. And enrollment motivation is the internal motivation to directly influence students' learning. The results of the survey show that 80% of students feel that they don't study hard enough and have insufficient learning motivation. Some postgraduates don't put study in the first place, preferring to spend their time on other things such as part-time jobs. Although most postgraduates can attribute the factors affecting their study to subjective factors, they rarely make changes in their actions. In the case of lack of enthusiasm for postgraduate study, "elite" postgraduate education is difficult to cultivate "elite" (Ma Qiang, CAI Maohua, Liu Yunchun, 2013).

5.2. Lack of Scientific Planning during Postgraduate Study

Students majoring in English Education should weigh their interests and long-term development with a broad vision, see the overall development trend of the society, firmly

believe in development, and not be bound by temporary difficulties, especially not be blinded by minor material interests at the moment. In the survey results, up to 38% of the students do not have a plan for study and scientific research. They just listen to the arrangement of the tutor. Some postgraduate students focus their time on other things, such as part-time jobs. In the postgraduate stage, training units and supervisors should not only pay more attention to the cultivation of innovative ability and scientific research ability of postgraduates, but also focus on the development of career planning and the improvement of professional quality of postgraduate students.

5.3. Lack of Educational Belief and Practice

English education postgraduates emphasis on practical skills, and its employment plan is clear, that is, middle school English teacher. Therefore, as a postgraduate of English education, we should take it as the center in our learning period and carry out all the learning related to improving English teaching skills. According to the survey results, although as many as 88% of the students want to be an English teacher in the future, only 34% of the students are interested in English education. As a future middle school English teacher, they should establish a firm belief in education, so that they can give full play to their passion for education and educate students well. In addition, only 28% of the students have participated in the teaching competition, which shows that most of the students lack the corresponding awareness and motivation in teaching, and fail to promote learning through competition and consolidate their professional skills in the competition.

6. Suggestions and Conclusion

In response to the problems identified in the above survey, the study summarizes the following two aspects of recommendations. On the one hand, for the postgraduates of English Education, they should adjust their mentality and cultivate their interest in the major. Besides, they should set up clear learning goal, make study plan, actively participate in discipline competitions, etc. They can improve their research and teaching ability, enrich their postgraduate study career through these aspects. On the other hand, for the training and management units of English Education postgraduates, they can optimize the teaching content and methods, develop various evaluation systems, mobilize the learning interest of postgraduates, and further consolidate and strengthen the learning motivation of postgraduates. Secondly, in order to combine theoretical learning with practical learning, administrator can arrange students to practice their teaching skills in the middle school on a regular basis at the beginning of the postgraduate study. In addition, colleges and universities should adjust the curriculum arrangement, implement small class teaching, appropriately organize the timetable of curriculum. Finally, differentiated teaching should be carried out according to talents. Psychological counseling and career planning should be provided for students who are not adapted to the study of this major. For the students who do not adapt to graduate study, provide them with psychological counseling and postgraduate life experience sharing meetings and symposiums, so that students can realize their own personality traits, existing and potential resource advantages, comparative analysis of their strengths and weaknesses, so as to purposefully plan their own study and life.

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