



## Exploration of the Construction of Evaluation Standards for the Educational Practicum of State-funded Directed Pre-service Teachers: A Case Study of the Primary Education Major at Zhaoqing University

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### Abstract

To effectively enhance the efficacy of the educational practicum for state-funded directed pre-service teachers, improve the quality of their training, and consequently promote the high-quality development of rural education, this paper analyses the deficiencies within current practicum evaluation practices. It attempts to facilitate the effective improvement of practicum outcomes and training quality through the construction of robust evaluation standards. Taking Zhaoqing University as a case study and employing the Delphi method, the authors integrate theoretical frameworks with empirical research to propose a set of evaluation indicators for state-funded directed pre-service teachers that are both more valid and rational. This study aims to provide an assessment tool for the effective conduct of educational practicums for this specific cohort, thereby guaranteeing the practical effectiveness of their professional training.

**Keywords:** State-funded Directed Pre-service Teachers; Educational Practicum; Evaluation Standards.

### 1. Introduction

The educational practicum constitutes a critical component of pre-service teacher training. It not only facilitates the integration of theory and practice for student teachers but also effectively deepens their understanding and experience of the teaching profession, ultimately promoting their professional development (Zhang, 2015). In 2016, the Ministry of Education issued the *Opinions on Strengthening the Educational Practice of Normal Students*, explicitly requiring the improvement of an assessment and evaluation system for educational practice involving multiple participants. In 2020, the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China and the State Council issued the *Overall Plan for Deepening the Reform of Education Evaluation in the New Era*, stating that "education evaluation concerns the direction of educational development" and emphasizing the need to "improve the evaluation of normal colleges and take running teacher education well as the primary responsibility" (Li & Liu, 2024). The implementation of evaluation is inextricably linked to standards; the establishment of standards determines the quality of evaluation, for high quality is contingent upon high standards. Since 2021, Guangdong Province has successively promulgated documents such as the *Action Plan for Promoting High-Quality Development of Basic Education in Guangdong Province*, the *Implementation Measures for the Guangdong Province 'New Strong Teacher Project'*, the *Pilot Implementation Plan for High-Quality Development of Basic Education in Guangdong Province*, and the *Education Action Plan for the 'High-Quality Development Project of Hundreds of Counties, Thousands of Towns and Thousands of Villages' in Guangdong Province (2023-2027)*. These documents attach great importance to the high-quality training of rural teachers. As the most significant and stable channel for supplementing rural teachers, state-funded directed pre-service teachers have gradually become a group attracting increasing attention and value in teacher education research (Zhou & Xie, 2024). Consequently, in the profound advancement of education evaluation reform in the new era, scientifically constructing practicum evaluation standards specifically for this group, optimising their training schemes, and enhancing the implementation efficiency of the directed rural teacher training policy are necessary measures to elevate the high-quality development of rural education.

## 2. Problems with Current Evaluation Standards for the Educational Practicum of State-funded Directed Pre-service Teachers

Since 2018, the policy for state-funded directed pre-service teachers in Guangdong Province has been implemented for eight years. These students have become a vital supplementary force for the rural education workforce in the eastern, western, and northern regions of Guangdong, alleviating the crisis of rural teacher shortages. However, in reality, many higher education institutions (HEIs) have identified issues regarding curriculum design and training schemes during the cultivation of these students, particularly in the evaluation phase of their practicum work.

### 2.1 Lack of Pertinence in Evaluation Standards

Many scholars have observed in practice that a standardised quality evaluation system has not been established for rural teachers during the pre-service training stage. Existing practicum evaluation indicators are generalised, prioritise quantitative standards, and employ singular evaluation forms. They fail to formulate detailed standards with distinctive characteristics tailored to directed pre-service teachers. Specifically, quality standards involving local identity (rural sentiment), reserves of local knowledge, and rural teaching capabilities have not been formed. This leads to insufficient professional development among student teachers, necessitating the comprehensive promotion of evidence-based activities for educational practicum quality, the optimisation of quality evaluation standards, the construction of an educational practice evaluation system that highlights rural education attributes, and the strengthening of support for the professional growth of interns in rural educational environments (Yu et al., 2022; Shen, 2019; Li & Yi, 2025). As a special group trained specifically to serve grassroots education, state-funded pre-service teachers possess training objectives that differ significantly from ordinary normal students. There is a particular emphasis on professional beliefs rooted in the grassroots, the ability to adapt to rural educational environments, and the understanding and execution of local education policies. However, current practicum evaluation systems lack obvious specificity regarding the assessment of state-funded students. This lack of pertinence weakens the guiding role of practicum evaluation in their professional development and is detrimental to preparing them adequately for future directed service.

### 2.2 Singularity of Evaluation Subjects

Evaluation subjects refer to individuals or groups participating in the assessment of the practicum performance of state-funded pre-service teachers. They observe and judge performance from different perspectives, collectively constituting the participants of the evaluation. Yun (2012), Tian (2014), and Ren and Li (2024) point out that currently, the educational practicum evaluation of state-funded directed pre-service teachers is predominantly undertaken by university supervisors. The comments from supervisors at the practicum schools serve merely as a reference for the final evaluation, and students' personal opinions are often neglected. There is a lack of necessary communication during the evaluation process between university supervisors, base supervisors (mentors at schools), and interns, as well as a lack of participation from other evaluation subjects, such as parents and pupils. This evaluation model, characterised by a singularity of subjects, not only struggles to comprehensively cover the multi-dimensional, authentic performance of students in teaching, communication, and management during the practicum but is also limited by the subjectivity of the evaluators, restricting the role of evaluation in promoting and guiding the professional growth of these students.

### 2.3 Over-simplification of the Evaluation Indicator System

Research by Yang and Duan (2015), Shen (2019), and Zhang and Chen (2023) indicates that practicum evaluation scales in most institutions simply apply a general teacher competence framework. They focus predominantly on classroom teaching hours and lesson plan writing, paying insufficient attention to deep-level competencies such as innovative teaching methods, positive teacher-student interaction, and the ability to handle emergencies. Furthermore, there is a lack of detailed measurement regarding comprehensive abilities such as professional ethics, class management, and home-school communication. This trend towards simplification tends to guide directed pre-service teachers to focus on form rather than substance and reality during their practicums, weakening the directional value of evaluation in enhancing their professional capabilities.

### 2.4 Lack of Formative Evaluation Measures and Standards

Studies show that current practicum evaluation work for state-funded directed pre-service teachers emphasises summative evaluation (results) whilst lacking formative evaluation (process) (Gao et al., 2025). In evaluations, base supervisors are often busy and lack a sense of responsibility for training interns, while university supervisors, lacking frontline practical experience, simplify evaluations and downplay process data. Consequently, the evaluations given are generally inflated and lack substantive meaning. Research by Li and Yi (2025) indicates that only a small minority of institutions utilise process evaluation tools such as growth portfolios; the majority still rely on the final practicum report score as the sole basis for evaluation, lacking dynamic tracking of the practicum process. Numerous surveys point to the drawback of "valuing results over process" in current evaluations, ignoring the growth and changes of students throughout the practicum cycle. This makes it difficult for the evaluation to fully capture the processes of reflection, improvement, and innovation of directed pre-service teachers in practice. It neither provides targeted guidance for

difficulties encountered during the practicum nor truly reflects the students' shortcomings and room for improvement, thereby diminishing the role of evaluation in sustaining their practical growth.

## 2.5 Disconnect Between Evaluation Standards and Rural Needs

The training of state-funded directed pre-service teachers is a crucial link in rural revitalisation. Currently, practicum evaluations pay scant attention to actual needs within the rural education context, such as psychological counselling for left-behind children, multi-disciplinary integrated teaching, and rural local culture courses. This disconnect in pre-service practice will result in directed pre-service teachers struggling to be competent in future rural education and teaching work, necessitating significant time to understand and integrate into the countryside, thus delaying the process of improving rural education quality.

## 3. Main Basis for Constructing Practicum Evaluation Standards for Directed Pre-service Teachers

### 3.1 Macro Policy Guidance: From "Breaking the Five Onlys" to "Four Evaluations"

In 2020, the state promulgated the *Overall Plan for Deepening the Reform of Education Evaluation in the New Era*, elevating education evaluation to the height of national governance modernisation for the first time. It proposed the simultaneous "breaking of the Five Onlys" and the "establishment of scientific guidance", requiring normal colleges to "take the efficacy of fostering virtue through education as the fundamental standard", and specifically emphasising "strengthening process, developmental, and practical evaluation". For state-funded directed pre-service teachers, evaluation must transcend the quantitative worship of "teaching hours, number of papers, and number of awards" and shift towards a comprehensive examination of "ethical practice, teaching ability, educational efficacy, and rural sentiment", providing value coordinates for screening practicum evaluation indicators (Ren & Li, 2024). Thus, carrying out multi-subject, whole-process, and all-round evaluation standard construction for the directed pre-service teacher group to continuously improve the quality of educational practicums is an important guarantee for implementing teacher education professional accreditation requirements and is an inherent meaning of China's educational reform. Subsequently, the *Implementation Plan for Audit and Assessment of Undergraduate Education and Teaching in General Higher Education Institutions (2021—2025)* listed the "educational practice link" as a Tier 1 indicator, proposing to "establish education practicum standards, implement practicum qualification access, improve the dual-tutor system, and form practicum portfolios". It further detailed requirements: prior to practicum, there must be "clear standards and measurable objectives"; during practicum, there must be "university-local dual tutors, stationed guidance, and remote patrol guidance"; and post-practicum, there must be "multi-subject evaluation and continuous improvement reports". These provide a direct policy basis for the practicum evaluation model for directed pre-service teachers.

### 3.2 Micro Guidance from Teacher Education Professional Accreditation Standards

To standardise and guide the construction of teacher education majors, establish a sound teacher education quality assurance system, and continuously improve teacher training quality, the Ministry of Education issued the *Implementation Measures for the Accreditation of Teacher Education Majors in General Higher Education Institutions (Provisional)* in 2017. It classified and formulated accreditation standards for teacher education majors, proposing more specific graduation requirements for student teachers and gradually unveiling the inspection of training objectives, concepts, modes, teaching systems, quality, and evaluation standards in higher teacher education. Consequently, the concept of developmental evaluation has gradually emerged, emphasising the promotion of student teachers' reflection and self-improvement through evaluation (Li, 2019). The accreditation standards specify five graduation requirements that interns should demonstrate in real contexts: "professional ethics norms, teaching implementation, class guidance, comprehensive education, and reflective improvement". Each graduation requirement is decomposed into observable "key performances", such as "teaching implementation" corresponding to "designing unit teaching schemes based on curriculum standards", "using pedagogical content knowledge to carry out differentiated teaching", and "utilising multiple evaluations to adjust teaching strategies". Detailed and concrete accreditation standards provide micro-level guidance for constructing the practicum evaluation system for directed pre-service teachers.

### 3.3 Regional Contract Dimension: Guangdong Province's Directed Training Agreement and "Service Period" Quality Demands

According to the *Implementation Measures for the State-funded Directed Training of Primary and Secondary School Teachers in East, West, and North Guangdong*, directed pre-service teachers in the Guangdong region must fulfil a contract of six years, including no less than five years of service in primary schools in towns and villages or below. The agreement lists "failure in educational practicum assessment" as a statutory circumstance for delayed graduation or termination of the agreement, and grants the county education bureau a "one-vote veto right on practicum quality". The training agreement further clarifies the basic qualities that rural teachers should possess before assuming their posts. Therefore, under the requirements of default costs and post demands, HEIs should make appropriate responses and adjustments when training directed pre-service teachers. Elements such as "local curriculum, rural home visits, and

emotional commitment", which were originally detached from traditional practicum evaluation, should be front-loaded to the practicum stage and made explicit and measurable within the evaluation indicators.

#### 4. Construction Principles and Indicator Analysis of Practicum Evaluation Standards for Directed Pre-service Teachers

A scientific educational practicum evaluation indicator system is the foundation for scientifically evaluating educational practicums and improving their quality (Wu et al., 2021). This paper takes the Primary Education major at Zhaoqing University as an example to explore the construction of an evaluation standard system. As an evaluation system examining the quality of educational practicums for directed pre-service teachers in the western Guangdong region, it follows the principles of scientificity, systematicity, operability, and goal-orientation. It fully references requirements from documents such as the *Implementation Measures for the Accreditation of Teacher Education Majors (Provisional)*, the *Overall Plan for Deepening the Reform of Education Evaluation in the New Era*, and the *Implementation Plan for Audit and Assessment (2021—2025)* to construct a standard system covering all necessary elements (as shown in Table 1).

The horizontal Tier 1 evaluation standards are closely linked to graduation requirements, establishing four core dimensions: "Practising Professional Ethics, Learning to Teach, Learning to Educate, and Learning to Develop". This ensures that the evaluation standards are consistent with the training objectives of student teachers, guiding state-funded directed pre-service teachers to gradually deepen their professional cognition, clarify development paths, and enhance teaching practice abilities during the practicum, comprehensively covering all aspects and key elements of the work. Vertically, each level of indicator is decomposed into multiple sub-indicators, making the layers distinct and logically clear. Ultimately, a 4-level evaluation indicator system is established, divided into 9 Tier 2 indicators, covering 14 Tier 3 indicators and 63 Tier 4 indicators.

Simultaneously, the evaluation indicator system centres on the training goal of "being willing to go, able to stay, and able to teach well", highlighting the mission of state-funded directed pre-service teachers to serve rural education and the special qualities required of them as future rural teachers. For instance, in the "Learning to Teach" dimension, in addition to conventional teaching design, implementation, and evaluation capabilities, distinctive indicators such as "integration of local culture", "interdisciplinary teaching ability", and "education techniques for left-behind children" are designed to make the evaluation content more relevant to the actual needs of rural education. Furthermore, this principle emphasises the feedback function of evaluation results. Through results from different dimensions of evaluation standards, student teachers can further recognise their own strengths and weaknesses, clarify directions for professional growth, and achieve the goal of promoting learning and teaching through evaluation.

Considering feasibility and concretisation, this system advocates for multiple evaluation subjects, such as university team-leading teachers, practicum school mentors, student self-assessment, and peer assessment, to enhance the objectivity and comprehensiveness of the evaluation. In terms of indicator phrasing, explicit and observable behavioural statements are adopted as much as possible to make the evaluation standards clear and actionable.

Enhancing the efficacy of educational practicums for directed pre-service teachers is a pivotal step in improving their practical abilities and training quality, and an essential move to effectively promote the high-quality development of rural education. Only by building more effective and rational evaluation indicators can we continuously activate enthusiasm and training motivation in all links of the practicum process, promote the improvement of practical effectiveness, make the development of directed pre-service teachers more practically significant, and progressively promote the high-quality development of rural education and the balanced allocation of educational resources in China.

**Table 1: Practicum Evaluation Standard System for Directed Pre-service Teachers (Example: Zhaoqing University Primary Education Major)**

| Tier 1 Indicator                  | Tier 2 Indicator              | Tier 3 Indicator                | Tier 4 Indicator   |
|-----------------------------------|-------------------------------|---------------------------------|--|
| 1. Practising Professional Ethics | 1.1 Professional Ethics Norms | 1.1.1 The 'Four Haves' Standard | 1.1.1.1 Possess a sense of professional mission to take root in the grassroots and serve rural education. 1.1.1.2 Maintain integrity in teaching and possess moral sentiment. 1.1.1.3 Master interdisciplinary teaching abilities. 1.1.1.4 Pay attention to vulnerable student groups and master educational guidance techniques for left-behind children. |
|                                   |                               | 1.1.2 Professional              | 1.1.2.1 Abide by the professional code of conduct for teachers.  |

|                        |                                 |  |   |
|------------------------|---------------------------------|--|---|
|                        |                                 | Code of Conduct                          | 1.1.2.2 Follow grassroots education policies and regulations.   |
|                        | 1.2 Educational Sentiments      | 1.2.1 Professional Identity              | 1.2.1.1 Possess a strong identity as a rural teacher and a sense of emotional belonging.  |
|                        |                                 | 1.2.2 Rural Sentiment (Local Attachment) | 1.2.2.1 Actively understand local customs and habits; adapt to life in township schools. 1.2.2.2 Master knowledge of the rural region; design educational activities featuring township characteristics. 1.2.2.3 Possess a firm determination to take root in the countryside.  |
|                        |                                 | 1.2.3 Sustainable Development            | 1.2.3.1 Understand the policy positioning of state-funded directed pre-service teachers. 1.2.3.2 Be able to plan a development path in combination with directed policies.  |
| 2. Learning to Teach   | 2.1 Subject Literacy            | 2.1.1 Subject Knowledge System           | 2.1.1.1 Accurately grasp core subject concepts and key teaching difficulties. 2.1.1.2 Systematically formulate three-level teaching plans: semester, unit, and lesson period.   |
|                        |                                 | 2.1.2 Subject Association Ability        | 2.1.2.1 Continuously track the frontiers of the subject and conduct educational innovation research.  |
|                        | 2.2 Teaching Ability            | 2.2.1 Instructional Design               | 2.2.1.1 Formulate measurable teaching objectives based on curriculum standards. 2.2.1.2 Design layered teaching schemes for students with different learning styles to achieve individualised instruction.  |
|                        |                                 | 2.2.2 Teaching Implementation            | 2.2.2.1 Be able to use standardised teaching language. 2.2.2.2 Blackboard writing design is clear, organised, and highlights key points. 2.2.2.3 Flexibly use various teaching methods; effectively manage the classroom and handle emergencies. 2.2.2.4 Master modern teaching tools; proficiently use subject-specific software and intelligent teaching equipment. |
|                        |                                 | 2.2.3 Academic Evaluation                | 2.2.3.1 Be able to design diversified academic evaluation tools and grading criteria. 2.2.3.2 Use data analysis technology to track student learning effectiveness.   |
|                        |                                 | 2.2.4 Teaching Innovation                | 2.2.4.1 Integrate local culture into instructional design. 2.2.4.2 Be able to innovate teaching content or methods in a timely manner.  |
| 3. Learning to Educate | 3.1 Class Management & Guidance | 3.1.1 Moral Education Awareness          | 3.1.1.1 Possess the teaching philosophy of 'moral education first'. 3.1.1.2 Understand the principles and methods of primary school moral education. 3.1.1.3 Master the characteristics and laws of primary school students' character formation. 3.1.1.4 Consciously cultivate students' moral character in daily work.  |
|                        |                                 | 3.1.2 Class Management                   | 3.1.2.1 Master methods of class collective construction and organisation of class educational activities. 3.1.2.2 Master methods of student development guidance and comprehensive quality evaluation. 3.1.2.3 Possess the ability for daily class hygiene and safety management, and response to emergencies.  |
|                        |                                 | 3.1.3 Psychological Counselling          | 3.1.3.1 Actively pay attention to students' mental health. 3.1.3.2 Basically master psychological counselling methods. 3.1.3.3 Be familiar with the characteristics of primary school students' psychological development. 3.1.3.4 Consciously organise students to participate in mental health education activities.  |

|                        |                                 |                                  |   |
|------------------------|---------------------------------|----------------------------------|---|
|                        | 3.2 Curriculum Education        | 3.2.1 Education Philosophy       | 3.2.1.1 Understand the connotation of curriculum-based education (educating through the curriculum). 3.2.1.2 Possess the philosophy and awareness of teaching and educating people. 3.2.1.3 Possess the philosophy of combining collective education with individual education.   |
|                        |                                 | 3.2.2 Education Practice         | 3.2.2.1 Possess the ability to create a good educational environment. 3.2.2.2 Understand core subject literacy; master methods and strategies for curriculum-based education. 3.2.2.3 Be able to consciously implement educational activities in combination with curriculum teaching. 3.2.2.4 Possess the ability to select appropriate educational methods for collectives and individuals. |
|                        | 3.3 Activity Education          | 3.3.1 Thematic Education         | 3.3.1.1 Possess the philosophy and awareness of educating through educational activities. 3.3.1.2 Master basic methods and strategies for educating through educational activities.   |
|                        |                                 | 3.3.2 Extracurricular Activities | 3.3.2.1 Possess knowledge of organising and managing extracurricular activities. 3.3.2.2 Possess basic abilities to organise and manage extracurricular activities.   |
| 4. Learning to Develop | 4.1 Professional Development    | 4.1.1 Self-Reflection            | 4.1.1.1 Systematically organise teaching material archives such as lesson plans and courseware. 4.1.1.2 Regularly write educational practicum reflection journals.  |
|                        |                                 | 4.1.2 Lifelong Learning          | 4.1.2.1 Formulate and execute a reading plan. 4.1.2.2 Actively participate in relevant vocational training. 4.1.2.3 Normalise the use of digital education resources for learning. 4.1.2.4 Actively participate in collective lesson preparation, lesson observation, and evaluation within the teaching research group.  |
|                        |                                 | 4.1.3 Teaching Research Ability  | 4.1.3.1 Master basic academic paper writing methods. 4.1.3.2 Participate in teaching research activities and accumulate gains. 4.1.3.3 Participate in teaching reform research projects and practical innovation.   |
|                        | 4.2 Communication & Cooperation | 4.2.1 Student Communication      | 4.2.1.1 Be able to communicate with students with an attitude of respect, equality, and inclusivity. 4.2.1.2 Understand students' learning and psychological needs through conversation. 4.2.1.3 Establish a good teacher-student interaction and communication mechanism.  |
|                        |                                 | 4.2.2 Parent Communication       | 4.2.2.1 Regularly communicate student performance with parents via home visits or telephone. 4.2.2.2 Organise parent meetings and clearly convey educational philosophies to form educational synergy.  |
|                        |                                 | 4.2.3 Colleague Collaboration    | 4.2.3.1 Cooperate and assist practicum partners. 4.2.3.2 Actively communicate with practicum supervisors, humbly accept suggestions, and improve teaching.  |

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