

Study on the Survival Dilemma of Young Teachers in Chinese Universities

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Abstract: At present, in the eyes of many people, the career of college teachers is decent, easy, no need to sit, and there are winter and summer holidays, there are also many young students to "enter the university" flock, and even hundreds of people apply for a college teaching. But the reality is that the young teachers in colleges and universities bear great responsibility and pressure. By issuing 200 questionnaires and conducting in-depth interviews with 10 Chinese university teachers, this study focuses on the current survival dilemma faced by young teachers. The results show that they are generally in a state of anxiety, low satisfaction with work and life; Under the dual pressure of teaching and research; Difficulty in promotion of professional title; The utilitarian tendency of scientific research is serious. All kinds of signs show that the current living conditions of young teachers in Chinese universities are not optimistic, which is related to the strict scientific research evaluation policies implemented by various universities, and indicates that the administrative departments of Chinese universities need to adjust their management strategies. Although respondents have reservations about whether Chinese universities can solve the survival dilemma of young teachers in a short period of time, they are still optimistic that the current practices of universities will improve over time, and they will still maintain their love for the profession of teachers and their passion for scientific research.

Keywords: Young Teachers; Survival Dilemma; Chinese University; Work Stress; Study.

1. Introduction

1.1. Research Background

At present, in the eyes of many people, the career of college teachers is decent, easy, no need to sit, and there are winter and summer holidays, there are also many young students to "enter the university" flock, and even hundreds of people apply for a college teaching. But the reality is that the young teachers in Chinese colleges and universities bear great responsibility and pressure. It is not as "easy and beautiful" as imagined. In recent years, the frequent occurrence of depression and suicide among young teachers in Chinese colleges and universities has aroused widespread concern in the society, once again bringing the survival dilemma of young teachers to the fore. Through the investigation and research of the academic community, more people have turned their attention to young teachers in colleges and universities.

With the development of The Times, the group of young teachers in Chinese universities are generally postgraduates or doctoral students who have received higher education, and some are even highly educated talents who have returned from overseas. They are the main body of college teachers. As a new generation of intellectuals, they have their own personality and ideas, more active thinking, and strong learning ability and acceptance ability, which will affect their attitude towards teaching and scientific research, and further affect the effect of teaching and scientific research. Therefore, young teachers will be placed on high expectations when they enter colleges and universities. The administrative departments of universities will sign contracts for scientific research tasks with young teachers when they are introduced. At present, under the goal of building "double first-class" universities, young teachers are forced to do a lot of scientific

research tasks, resulting in the pressure on young teachers is inevitable and must be faced.

1.2. Research Questions

Starting from the professional characteristics of young university teachers, this paper focuses on the current working conditions of young university teachers in China, and whether they are satisfied with their current working and living conditions. Are there teaching and research pressures? Which is more stressful, teaching or research? Is there pressure for promotion? By questionnaire survey, the researchers selected 10 young teachers from different universities for in-depth interviews. The results show that young teachers have a series of difficulties, which provides empirical evidence for the revision of the management system and title evaluation system of university administrative departments, hoping to truly alleviate the work pressure of teachers. In this way, teachers can still have love for teaching and passion for scientific research.

2. Methodology

This study adopts a combination of quantitative and qualitative research methods, focusing on a series of survival pressures of young university teachers, such as the pressure of teaching and scientific research, the pressure of professional title promotion, the pressure of year-end assessment, etc. Accordingly, this study takes young teachers' awareness and attitude towards teaching and scientific research and their concerns about professional title promotion as dimensions, and combines the consulted data. Construct the specific index system of the questionnaire, and finally form the self-compiled questionnaire. In addition, the interview subjects in this study were selected by the principle of purpose-based sampling. Considering that the research content rarely involved sensitive issues of group interests or

relationships, the study contacted the subjects by blind selection and email, and finally determined 10 co-participants. Some of these co-participants are not young teachers. The researcher hopes to obtain more objective views through in-depth interviews from the third perspective. The respondents had a reasonable distribution of job titles: three lecturers, three associate professors, and four professors. This will make the results of the survey more objective. The characteristics of the 10 co-participants are shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Characteristics of co-participants

Characteristic	Category	Quantity	Characteristic	Category	Quantity
Sex	male	6	Job Title	professor	4
	female	4		associate professor	3
Subject Category	classical	4		lecturer	3
	scientific	5	Position	assume a managerial position	2
	commercial	1		no managerial position	8

Results

As early as more than ten years ago, a survey of Chinese scholars showed that university teachers mainly carried out academic work around teaching and research activities, and the proportion of time engaged in these two kinds of activities accounted for about 80% of their working time. With the improvement of the qualifications of university teachers, their academic activities gradually shifted to research [1]. In other words, teachers with high professional titles generally spend more time on research and management, while teachers with low professional titles have a higher proportion of teaching time [2]. By 2023, the situation in Chinese universities has not changed, and the interviewees in this paper said that they are still under the double pressure of teaching and research, especially the young teachers who have just entered the profession, and they have to bear both heavy teaching tasks and research task assessment.

2.1. Young Teachers Bear the Double Pressure of Teaching and Scientific Research

By sorting out the interview data, the researchers found that young teachers, especially those who have just been working for one or two years, bear heavy teaching tasks, are busy with class every day, and have no time to pay attention to scientific research, but they cannot complete the requirements of the school's scientific research assessment. They are under the double pressure of teaching and scientific research.

As a newly hired young teacher, courseware, teaching calendar, teaching plans and so on need to be prepared from the beginning, the school will have a lot of training and assessment for us, the teaching affairs office, teaching and research office will come to listen to the class at any time, the pressure is very great. Although we do not have to sit in class, if there is no class, I am basically in the office when I am free. I come in very early every day, read books, write papers and do projects, and go back very late, working more than 12 hours a day. Of course, there is still some energy to spend on writing bids, running relationships, these things, hate can not be a day as two days to come. (Doctor of Literature Lecturer, male, June 3,2023)

I have to take four different classes this semester, which

adds up to 14 classes a week, which is equivalent to doing nothing, and I have been in a state of preparing for class. In the first year of work, I did not read a complete book, so there is no way to absorb new knowledge, which is a very scary thing for young teachers who read and teach for a career. I have no time for scientific research, but the year-end assessment also requires that a certain number and quality of papers must be published, and this is linked to the year-end performance assessment. Makes me anxious all day. (PhD Lecturer in Economics, female, June 10, 2023)

For teachers like me who teach basic courses, we have to undertake a lot of teaching tasks, it is difficult to have leisure time to study and research. (Doctor of Law Lecturer, male, August 06, 2023)

2.2. Young Teachers are Generally in a State of Anxiety and have Low Satisfaction with Work and Life

The low salary of young teachers and the large living expenses lead to the low satisfaction of young teachers on work and life.

At this age, I just have the elderly and the young. On the one hand, I need to support my parents, on the other hand, I also face the pressure of marriage, buying a house, and raising the next generation. The pressure of family and work is concentrated in this age group, and the double pressure of life and work makes me feel like I am being tortured crazy." She refers to her anxiety as "green pepper" (that is, the anxiety of young teachers). (PhD Lecturer in Economics, female, June 10, 2023)

The current work pressure is very big, if in the next three years cannot get the associate professor title, the salary will drop, and the serious will leave. So I have to focus most of my energy on academics and research. There's no time to fall in love or find someone. (Doctor of Literature Lecturer, male, June 3,2023)

2.3. Although Young Teachers Admit That Teaching is Very Important, They Tend to Devote More Time to Scientific Research

Under the guidance of the school's policy of "attaching importance to scientific research and neglecting teaching", most young teachers give priority to scientific research in the allocation of teaching and research time, although they all agree that teaching is very important (see Table 2).

Table 2. Comparison of time invested by young teachers in teaching and scientific research

Issue	Percent				
"Teaching plays a very important role in my job." Do you agree or disagree?	A.in full agreement 45.6%	B.basicall y agree 54.4%	C.unclear 0%	D.Basicall y disagree 0%	E.entirely disagree 0%
How do you spend your time on teaching compared to research?	A.Much more than scientific research0%	B.A little more than science10.6%	C.Both are equivalent 14%	D.A little less than research30.8%	E.Much less than research 44.6%

My personal experience is 40 to 60, four is teaching, six is scientific research. While I admit that teaching is very important for an undergraduate institution, there is too much pressure for young teachers to do research, forcing us to put research first in our time allocation. (Associate Professor, Doctor of Science, female, July 09,2023)

For a long time, the assessment and evaluation of schools are mostly based on scientific research results, and teaching only needs to complete the number of hours. Influenced by this "baton", many teachers spend most of their energy on scientific research, while teaching is only done as a "task". (Doctor of Law Lecturer, male, August 06, 2023)

As a result of the policy orientation of "emphasis on scientific research, light on teaching" in colleges and universities, teachers' input in teaching is ignored, and the focus of teachers' work must be tilted to scientific research. Therefore, teachers will naturally invest much less time and energy in teaching, which is also reflected in the questionnaire. (See Table 3)

Table 3. Teacher promotion and evaluation according to the survey results

Issue	Percent			
What is the main basis for teacher promotion at present?	teaching results 0%	B.achievements in scientific research 73%	C.Both of them 27%	D.else 0%
Teaching or research, which is regularly reviewed?	A.teaching 25%	B.scientific research 44.3%	C.teaching and research, but research is more important 30.7%	D.else 0%

2.4. Difficulty in Promotion of Professional Titles of Young Teachers.

The school has the orientation of "attaching importance to scientific research and neglecting teaching". Young teachers bear heavy teaching tasks, have no time for scientific research, and are at a disadvantage in scientific research, which leads to difficulties in promotion of professional titles.

For teachers like me who teach basic courses, we must undertake a lot of teaching tasks, it is difficult to have leisure time to study and research. In addition, the original teaching is some classical theoretical knowledge system, it is difficult to make breakthroughs in scientific research, and over time, the ability of scientific research is dropped. Without scientific research, there is no way to pass the evaluation of professional titles, so now, my title is still a lecturer, although the students' evaluation of my teaching is very good, but it is useless. (Doctor of Law Lecturer, male, August 06, 2023)

Young teachers are generally the main undertakers of teaching tasks, and in the current school environment of "emphasis on scientific research, light on teaching", young teachers who take on excessive teaching tasks and are at a disadvantage in scientific research are in a disadvantageous position in salary distribution and professional title promotion. (Doctor of Architecture Professor, male, Dean of Secondary College, August 06, 2023)

I have two advantages: first, the teaching is not bad, students give me a grade is OK; The second is to write a lot of textbooks. But when it comes to judging professors, the panel doesn't look at how many courses you've taught or how many high-quality textbooks you've written. Papers and research projects are the hard indicators; No matter how good the teaching is, the paper is not enough, or cannot be evaluated.

So this year's title review, I failed again. (Associate Professor, Doctor of Science, male, July 09, 2023)

2.5. Serious Utilitarian Tendency of Scientific Research.

Through interviews, we learned that under the guidance of the school's scientific research policies, teachers' scientific research has deviated from the original direction and gradually started to be utilitarian. Instead of exploring the problems encountered in teaching, teachers engage in scientific research for the purpose of improving salaries and evaluating professional titles, which seriously affects the value judgment of young teachers. Although teachers have a solid grasp of professional discipline knowledge, many young teachers focus their work on scientific research, resulting in coping ideas in teaching, not paying attention to the latest frontier knowledge of the discipline (see Figure 1), not updating teaching plans in time, and the structure of professional discipline knowledge is relatively simple and outdated. Unable to update and supplement the knowledge of the discipline in a timely manner, the teaching ideas lag behind, and it is difficult to effectively transfer, transform or expand knowledge in the teaching process, so that the teaching effectiveness of some teachers is questioned.

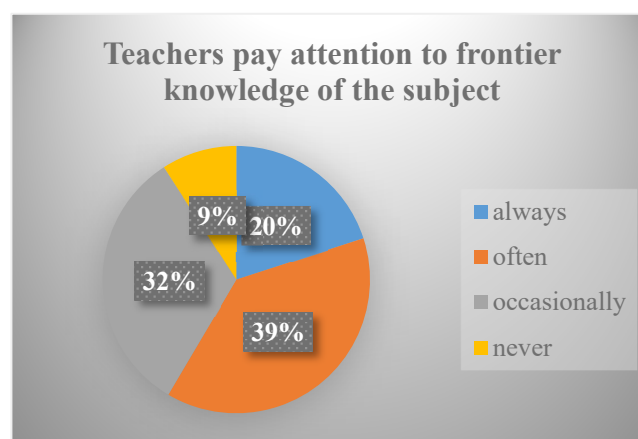


Figure 1. Teachers pay attention to the frontier edge knowledge of the subject

In the aspect of scientific research evaluation, too much emphasis is placed on quantitative assessment such as project approval, funding, number of published papers and magazine level, which leads to a serious utilitarian tendency of scientific research, which affects the value judgment of young teachers and the cultivation of a good teaching atmosphere. In this case, many young teachers regard teaching as a helpless means of making a living, blindly pursue scientific research, and ignore the cultivation of their own teaching and academic ability. If this goes on, the decline in teaching quality is inevitable, and in the long run, it will be very unfavorable to the development of education. (Doctor of Architecture Professor, male, Dean of Secondary College, August 06, 2023)

As a college teacher, every year must declare a lot of research projects, in the domestic colleges and universities generally "emphasis on scientific research, light teaching" background, young teachers focus on classroom teaching lack of institutional protection. (Associate Professor, Doctor of Science, female, July 09, 2023)

Now many teachers mind is not in teaching, class courseware are many years ago, do not update courseware, focus on scientific research, because we all know that the

class is good, no scientific research the same title promotion hopeless. (Associate Professor, Doctor of Science, male, July 09, 2023)

As far as I know, my colleagues around me are immersed in scientific research, which I think is the truest portrayal of school teachers. Teachers have limited energy, so "teaching" will inevitably lose "scientific research". But the current school's orientation is "emphasis on scientific research, light teaching", under this orientation, teachers have no choice but to choose scientific research, or the title promotion is hopeless, the most realistic is the salary cannot go up. Therefore, you can only choose to do what is most beneficial to you, and at this time, teaching is not enough. (Associate Professor, Doctor of Science, female, September 02, 2023)

This tendency of more and more utilitarian scientific research also exists in other universities in China, this view can be seen from the speech of Lai Ming, a member of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference, the full-time vice chairman of the Central Committee of the JiuSan Society, and the director of the Department of Science and Technology of the Ministry of Construction, at the CPPCC meeting, Lai Ming pointed out that because the evaluation of scientific research attaches too much importance to the number of awards and papers, Evaluation results are directly linked to the interests of scientific research units and personnel, resulting in the process of scientific research eager for quick success, tired of desperately competing for projects, willing to piece together articles, and neglect to do research, which directly affects the quality and efficiency of scientific research, and even gives rise to various scientific research fraud [3].

3. Conclusion

Based on the interview records of the interviewees, the researchers provided clear perspectives:

3.1. Young Teachers in Chinese Higher Education Institution are Generally Faced with Excessive Development Pressure and Low Overall Salary, which has a Certain Impact on Their Work Enthusiasm and Living Condition

Due to low income and rising cost of living, young teachers can hardly bear the pressure of life. In addition, in recent years, Chinese universities are generally faced with the task of building "double first-class" universities. Therefore, colleges and universities generally "pay more attention to research than teaching", and implement the policies of "no promotion or resignation" and "no promotion or transfer" for young teachers within a specified period of time, which further increases the pressure on young teachers. This kind of pressure is reflected in all aspects of the existence of young teachers, which makes young teachers generally in a state of "anxiety".

3.2. The Phenomenon of "Paying More Attention to Research Than Teaching" in Schools and the Deterioration of Academic Ecology are also Important Reasons for The Low Work-Life Satisfaction of Young Teachers

Young teachers are generally the main undertakers of

teaching tasks. They take on too much teaching tasks, leading to a disadvantage in scientific research, which further leads to their disadvantage in salary distribution and professional title promotion.

3.3. The Utilitarian Tendency of Scientific Research Work is Serious, Which Affects the Value Judgment of Young Teachers.

In the aspect of scientific research evaluation, too much emphasis is placed on quantitative assessment such as project approval, funding, number of published papers and magazine level. Under such circumstances, many young teachers regard teaching as a helpless means of making a living and blindly pursue scientific research, ignoring the cultivation of their own teaching and academic ability. If this goes on, the decline in teaching quality is inevitable, and in the long run, it will be very unfavorable to the development of education.

4. Suggestions

4.1. Teaching Management Level

4.1.1. Establish a Scientific and Reasonable Scientific Research Evaluation System

Colleges and universities should change the "project first" assessment system. Shen Wenqin, associate professor of the School of Education of Peking University, has been engaged in research on the training of scientific research talents for a long time, he believes that different types of colleges and universities will take national topics as a mandatory standard for promotion, and its rationality is worth discussing: "Whether you can apply for national self-science projects is not only to see the academic level." Research at home and abroad shows that many factors affect the project application results, such as the scientific research strength of the unit, the reputation of the applicant, the influence in the academic community, the existing research results, the popularity of the research topic, and of course, some luck components. As far as I know, only Chinese mainland, Hong Kong and some British universities use such competitive project funds as a mandatory criterion for promotion." [4] Therefore, different universities should formulate scientific and reasonable scientific research assessment systems according to their own positioning, and completely change the "thesis only" and "project only" assessment systems. 5.1.2 Teaching management should carry out teaching management with teaching and academic thought, attach importance to teaching, improve the status of teaching, advocate teaching and academic ideal, create a strong teaching and academic atmosphere, and fully mobilize teachers' enthusiasm in teaching and academic development.

4.1.2. Establish a Scientific and Reasonable Promotion System for Teachers' Professional Titles

In order to develop teaching and learning, it is necessary to completely reform the current teacher promotion system, improve teachers' inspection requirements in teaching and weaken the standards of research. This is not only beneficial for improving the status of teaching, but also for inspiring teachers' enthusiasm in teaching.

4.2. Teacher Level

4.2.1. Teachers Should Change Their Attitude and Cognition Towards Teaching, Firmly Establish the Professional Ideal of Teaching and Academic, and Put the Idea of "Teaching is Academic" [5] into Teaching Practice

The attitude and cognition of college teachers towards teaching directly affect and restrict the teaching quality and teaching academic level of the school [6]. According to the survey results, almost all the interviewed teachers agree that teaching occupies a very important position in their work, but in the allocation of working time, they spend much more time on scientific research than teaching. This shows that the teacher's attitude to teaching is inconsistent with the actual action, there is a suspicion of duplicity. Teachers' cognition of teaching is also very one-sided, and they still cannot get rid of the influence of traditional academic concepts. They believe that only scientific research, publishing papers, publishing monographs and so on are academic, while teaching is simply the output of knowledge, which cannot be called academic at all. Teachers' one-sided cognition of teaching is not conducive to the development of teachers' teaching expertise and the improvement of their teaching level.

4.2.2. Teachers Should Get Rid of Utilitarianism, Recognize Their Own Identity as Scholars, and Pay Attention to Teaching

Teachers should also fully recognize the academic nature of teaching, treat it as scientific research, treat it as academic, actively study teaching academia, and strive to enhance the awareness of improving teaching academia [7]. Only by truly realizing the importance of academic teaching can teachers measure and guide teaching work based on academic standards, fully immerse themselves in teaching practice, stimulate enthusiasm for research and development of teaching academia. University advocate that teachers should break free from utilitarianism, recognize their academic identity, establish good teacher-student relationships with students, and use their passionate pursuit of advanced knowledge to infect and stimulate students' enthusiasm and initiative for learning and knowledge. Improving the quality of teaching in this way is no longer just empty talk.

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