Dilemmas and Countermeasures of Professional Development Among Young Teachers in Private Colleges and Universities

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Abstract

As China's higher education system transitions from mass-scale enrollment to universal popularization, private higher education institutions have evolved into an indispensable and vital component of the national educational framework. Young teachers constitute the core workforce of private college teaching teams, and their sustainable professional growth directly determines institutional talent cultivation quality as well as the long-term operational vitality of private universities. In current development contexts, young teachers working in private higher education commonly face multiple developmental obstacles, including insufficient occupational welfare guarantees, limited improvement of teaching and research capabilities, unclear career advancement routes, and weak professional belonging and identity. These restrictive factors seriously hinder individual career growth and impede the overall high-quality development of private higher education. Based on the actual operational characteristics and educational management status of private colleges, this paper systematically sorts out the major practical difficulties encountered by young teachers in their professional development and explores the underlying root causes. From the multi-dimensional perspectives of government policy support, institutional internal governance, and individual self-improvement, the study proposes targeted optimization strategies and improvement solutions. The research results can provide valuable theoretical references and feasible practical paths for strengthening faculty team construction and promoting sustainable professional growth of young teachers in private higher education institutions.

Keywords

Private Colleges and Universities; Young University Teachers; Professional Growth; Developmental Dilemmas; Optimization Countermeasures.

1. Introduction

With the full implementation and continuous improvement of the Private Education Promotion Law of the People's Republic of China, the scale of China's private higher education industry has achieved steady expansion. Statistical data by 2023 shows that private colleges account for more than one quarter of all domestic higher education institutions, undertaking a large proportion of applied talent training tasks for social and industrial development [1]. In private university faculty teams, young teachers under the age of 35 serve as the main force for daily classroom teaching, academic research and student moral education work. This group is in a critical developmental stage for shaping educational concepts, accumulating teaching experience and improving scientific research literacy. Their long-term professional growth is not only closely related to personal career achievement, but also profoundly affects the core competitive strength and sustainable development potential of private colleges.

Compared with public universities with stable financial support and complete policy resources, private higher education institutions are restricted by insufficient operating funds,

imperfect teacher training mechanisms and inadequate policy preference, resulting in more complex and severe professional development challenges for young teachers. At present, private colleges generally suffer from prominent problems such as frequent teacher turnover, uneven comprehensive competency of young faculty, and insufficient internal driving force for career progress [2]. These phenomena are jointly caused by incomplete external policy guarantee systems, defective institutional training and incentive mechanisms, and unclear personal career planning of young teachers themselves.

Under the overall requirement of high-quality development for modern higher education, breaking through various bottlenecks restricting young teachers' professional growth and building a comprehensive developmental support system has become a key priority of faculty team construction in private universities. On this basis, this paper systematically analyzes the realistic difficulties and deep-seated causes of young teachers' professional development in private colleges, and constructs multi-level solution strategies, which possesses important theoretical significance and practical guiding value for promoting the standardized and healthy development of private higher education.

2. Connotation of Young Teachers' Professional Development in Private Colleges and Universities

Teacher professional development refers to a lifelong and dynamic developmental process. In this process, university teachers continuously refine their professional ethics literacy, expand disciplinary theoretical reserves, optimize classroom teaching skills and upgrade comprehensive educational capabilities through persistent professional learning, practical teaching accumulation, academic reflection and external institutional support, so as to realize continuous progress in career development and professional self-value [3].

The professional growth of young teachers in private colleges not only conforms to the universal developmental laws of university teachers, but also bears distinctive characteristics of private applied education, covering four major core dimensions. First, professional ethics and educational cognition: forming correct educational values and professional responsibility awareness, adhering to the fundamental educational task of fostering virtue through education. Second, professional knowledge system improvement: consolidating systematic disciplinary theoretical knowledge, enriching modern educational pedagogical theories, and improving practical application abilities to adapt to the training orientation of applied talents. Third, comprehensive teaching and research competency upgrading: enhancing diversified capabilities including classroom teaching design, educational reform innovation, academic research exploration and student daily management. Fourth, professional identity and career literacy: establishing stable professional recognition, cultivating dedicated educational spirits, and formulating scientific and long-term personal career development plans.

Different from the academic research-oriented positioning of public universities, private colleges mainly focus on cultivating high-quality applied talents for regional industries and social grassroots posts. This positioning requires young teachers to possess dual capabilities of solid theoretical teaching foundation and proficient practical operation skills, as well as certain academic innovation and social service abilities. Therefore, the professional development of young teachers in private institutions emphasizes the organic integration of theoretical teaching and industrial practice, the coordinated progress of teaching work and scientific research exploration, and the synchronous growth of individual career development and institutional high-quality construction.

3. Practical Dilemmas of Young Teachers' Professional Development in Private Colleges and Universities

3.1. Insufficient Occupational Security System and Unstable Career Development Environment

Inadequate occupational welfare and security is the primary factor restricting the steady professional growth of young teachers in private colleges. In terms of salary and welfare treatment, private universities rely mainly on student tuition fees for daily operation, resulting in strict cost control mechanisms. The basic salary level and performance bonus standards for young teachers are generally lower than those of public university teachers in the same region, lacking a sound salary growth mechanism linked with working years and professional performance. In addition, a number of private institutions fail to fully pay social insurance and housing provident fund in strict accordance with national standards, leading to insufficient social security protection for young teachers [4].

In terms of employment management, private colleges mostly adopt short-term contract employment modes with rigorous assessment standards for contract renewal. Young teachers face continuous employment pressure and job uncertainty, making it difficult for them to devote themselves fully to teaching improvement and academic research. Meanwhile, some private schools lack standardized teacher rights protection mechanisms, and young teachers are often in a disadvantaged position in professional title evaluation, welfare distribution and further education opportunities. Long-term unfair treatment easily triggers career anxiety, leads to high teacher mobility, and severely undermines the continuity and stability of professional development.

3.2. Unbalanced Teaching and Research Workload Restricts Comprehensive Competency Improvement

Teaching and scientific research are the two core modules of university teachers' professional growth, yet young teachers in private colleges generally face structural imbalance between teaching tasks and research work, which limits their competency improvement space. To reduce operating costs, private universities widely implement large-class teaching modes, assigning excessive weekly class hours to young teachers, with some teachers undertaking over 20 teaching hours per week. Coupled with heavy daily work such as lesson preparation, homework correction and student tutoring, young teachers have almost no spare time for teaching summary, educational reflection and curriculum reform innovation [5]. Most newly recruited young teachers are fresh graduates with insufficient practical teaching experience, while private colleges lack systematic pre-job and in-service training systems, resulting in slow growth of teaching abilities and difficulty in adapting to applied talent training requirements.

In the field of scientific research development, private universities have prominent deficiencies in research resource allocation, special research funds, high-level academic platforms and discipline innovation teams, making it difficult for young teachers to obtain stable research project support. Meanwhile, the internal research evaluation system of private colleges is unreasonable, which excessively emphasizes the quantity of academic achievements while ignoring research quality and the growth rules of young academic workers, bringing excessive assessment pressure to young teachers. In addition, the lack of high-level academic guidance and external exchange platforms leads to weak research thinking and insufficient innovative capabilities, making it hard for young teachers to form fixed and distinctive research directions. The dual pressure of heavy teaching tasks and rigid research assessment traps young teachers in a professional development bottleneck.

3.3. Defective Institutional Training Mechanism and Ambiguous Career Advancement Path

A complete teacher training system is an essential guarantee for young teachers' career growth, but most private colleges have not built a systematic and hierarchical professional development training system, resulting in vague career promotion paths for young faculty. First of all, institutional training content is unreasonable. Most school-level training focuses on general educational literacy and basic normative education, lacking targeted training for disciplinary characteristics, pedagogical skills improvement and practical teaching capabilities. Moreover, training forms are single and rigid, dominated by offline centralized lectures, failing to meet the personalized and diversified developmental needs of young teachers [6]. Secondly, the mentorship training system is missing. Restricted by insufficient high-level backbone teachers, private colleges cannot implement effective one-to-one mentoring guidance, so new teachers can only explore teaching and research work independently after entry, resulting in low professional growth efficiency.

Furthermore, the professional title promotion channel is blocked. The title evaluation standards of private colleges basically copy the assessment mode of public universities, which takes academic papers and research projects as the core evaluation indicators and ignores teachers' practical teaching performance and educational achievements, leading to extremely difficult title promotion for young teachers. At the same time, private colleges rarely formulate personalized career development plans for young teachers, and there is a serious separation between professional and administrative promotion channels. The lack of clear developmental orientation and promotion space greatly reduces young teachers' enthusiasm for career progress.

3.4. Low Professional Identity and Deficient Endogenous Developmental Motivation

Professional identity and occupational belonging are the internal driving forces supporting teachers' long-term professional development. However, young teachers in private colleges generally have weak professional identity and insufficient active developmental motivation. From the social perspective, the public still has stereotyped prejudice against private education, and the social recognition of private university teachers is far lower than that of public university teachers, resulting in low social status and insufficient professional accomplishment sense [7]. From the institutional perspective, most private colleges take economic benefits and teaching operation as their core goals, ignoring humanistic care for young teachers and neglecting their career development demands. The lack of a positive academic atmosphere and harmonious working environment weakens young teachers' sense of institutional belonging.

From the individual perspective, quite a few young teachers regard private college posts as temporary transitional jobs and lack long-term stable career planning. Faced with heavy work pressure, limited promotion channels and unsatisfactory salary treatment, they are prone to negative emotions such as job burnout and occupational slackness. The lack of active self-improvement awareness and autonomous learning motivation leads to passive and stagnant professional development status.

4. Root Causes of Young Teachers' Professional Development Dilemmas

4.1. Imperfect External Policy Support and Unbalanced Policy Environment

The national and local policy support system for private college teachers is not yet complete. Private university teachers cannot enjoy equal policy treatment with public university teachers in terms of professional title evaluation, scientific research project application,

continuing education training and social security benefits, forming obvious institutional discrimination and unfair policy environment. In addition, the government's supervision and management mechanism for private college operation is not perfect. Many private institutions have problems such as irregular salary payment, inadequate teacher rights protection and insufficient faculty training investment, while the government lacks effective supervision, restraint and rectification measures, failing to build a fair and standardized external developmental environment for young teachers.

4.2. Utilitarian School-Running Orientation and Defective Institutional Management System

Most private colleges adopt a typical utilitarian school-running philosophy, which prioritizes short-term economic benefits and enrollment scale over long-term faculty team construction and educational quality improvement [8]. Universities have insufficient investment in teacher training, scientific research funds, platform construction and welfare security. The internal assessment system takes teaching workload as the single core indicator, ignoring the regular growth rules and long-term developmental needs of young teachers. The absence of people-oriented management concepts and systematic training, assessment and incentive mechanisms makes young teachers lack stable institutional support for professional growth.

4.3. Insufficient Self-Planning Awareness and Weak Comprehensive Developmental Ability

Many young teachers lack clear career positioning and scientific developmental goals. After entering private colleges, they cannot quickly complete role transformation and adaptive adjustment, showing low initiative in autonomous learning, educational reflection and ability improvement. Faced with various developmental dilemmas in work and career, young teachers lack active coping awareness and effective problem-solving abilities. Most teachers rely passively on institutional training and external opportunities, lacking the initiative to explore innovative growth paths. Meanwhile, insufficient career resilience makes them vulnerable to negative emotions when encountering setbacks, further weakening endogenous motivation for professional progress.

5. Optimization Countermeasures for Breaking Professional Development Dilemmas

5.1. Government Level: Improve Policy System Construction and Build a Fair Developmental Environment

First, the government should further optimize private education policy laws and regulations, clarify the equal legal status of private and public university teachers, and ensure that young private college teachers enjoy equal rights in title evaluation, scientific research application, vocational training and social security treatment, completely eliminating institutional policy discrimination [9]. Second, increase special financial investment in private higher education, set up special funds for private college faculty construction, support the construction of teaching reform projects and discipline research platforms, and alleviate institutional operational pressure. Third, strengthen standardized supervision over private college operation, standardize teacher recruitment, salary distribution, welfare guarantee and title evaluation management mechanisms, and fully protect the legitimate occupational rights and interests of young teachers. Fourth, build resource sharing and teacher exchange platforms between public and private universities, realize the sharing of high-quality teaching resources and academic platforms, and expand the developmental space for young teachers in private colleges.

5.2. Institutional Level: Optimize Internal Governance and Build a Full-Cycle Support System

Firstly, improve the salary and welfare guarantee system to enhance occupational stability. Private colleges should optimize the salary structure of young teachers, appropriately raise basic salary and performance reward standards, and establish a dynamic salary growth mechanism linked with working seniority, teaching quality and educational achievements. Strictly implement full payment of social insurance and housing provident fund, and enrich supporting welfare such as housing subsidies and regular physical examination benefits, so as to enhance young teachers' sense of gain and belonging. Promote long-term stable contract employment modes to reduce career uncertainty.

Secondly, balance teaching and research allocation to build competency upgrading platforms. Scientifically control the weekly teaching hours of young teachers to avoid excessive work overload. Build a systematic pre-job and in-service training system through teaching skill competitions, open demonstration courses and teaching seminars. Implement a one-to-one senior teacher mentoring system to rapidly improve young teachers' practical teaching abilities. Increase investment in scientific research funds, build school-level academic platforms and innovation teams, invite external experts to carry out academic guidance, simplify project application procedures, and establish a quality-oriented research evaluation mechanism to encourage applied and innovative research [10].

Thirdly, construct hierarchical training systems and unblock career promotion paths. Formulate personalized staged development plans for young teachers according to disciplinary characteristics and working years, and adopt diversified training modes combining online learning and offline practice, theoretical lectures and practical exercises. Reform the professional title evaluation system, reduce the weight of paper quantity indicators, and increase the assessment proportion of teaching performance, practical ability and educational effectiveness. Build multi-dimensional promotion channels suitable for teaching-oriented, research-oriented and practice-oriented teachers, break the barriers between professional and administrative posts, and provide diversified career development options.

Fourthly, strengthen humanistic care and campus cultural construction. Adhere to people-oriented institutional management, pay attention to the work pressure and living demands of young teachers, and carry out regular academic exchanges and team building activities to create a positive and harmonious working atmosphere. Smooth teacher opinion feedback and rights protection channels, enhance young teachers' sense of participation and ownership in institutional construction, and effectively improve their professional identity and occupational belonging.

5.3. Individual Level: Strengthen Self-Cognition and Stimulate Endogenous Growth Motivation

Young teachers should establish correct educational values and professional cognition, fully recognize the educational mission and social value of private higher education, abandon the temporary job mentality, and formulate scientific and long-term personal career development plans based on institutional applied education positioning. Actively participate in various institutional training, academic conferences and practical exchange activities, continuously enrich disciplinary knowledge reserves, polish classroom teaching skills and accumulate academic research experience through persistent learning and practice.

Young teachers should insist on educational reflection and innovative exploration, take the initiative to participate in curriculum reform and practical teaching research, and gradually form personalized and distinctive research directions. Continuously enhance psychological resilience and professional literacy, actively respond to work pressure and developmental

difficulties with a positive attitude, overcome job burnout and passive development status, and finally realize the coordinated growth of personal professional progress and institutional high-quality development.

6. Conclusion

The professional development of young teachers in private colleges is a systematic project that determines the long-term quality and development level of private higher education. The multiple developmental dilemmas including insufficient occupational security, imbalanced teaching and research workload, defective training systems and low professional identity are the result of the joint influence of external policies, institutional management and individual factors. To solve these problems, joint efforts and coordinated optimization from the government, private colleges and individual teachers are required.

The government needs to improve policy guarantee mechanisms and increase financial support to create a fair and standardized external developmental environment. Private colleges should update utilitarian school-running concepts, optimize internal training, incentive and guarantee systems, and provide comprehensive support for young teachers' career growth. Young teachers need to strengthen self-development awareness, improve comprehensive professional capabilities, and activate endogenous growth motivation.

Only by constructing a trinity collaborative development system of "policy guidance, institutional support and individual initiative" can we effectively break through the professional development bottlenecks of young teachers in private colleges, cultivate a stable, high-quality and innovative young faculty team, and promote the sustainable high-quality development of private higher education. Future research can further combine the differentiated school-running characteristics of private colleges, deepen the research on faculty management system reform and personalized growth paths, so as to provide more targeted theoretical support and practical schemes for the construction of young teacher teams in private higher education.

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