

# Popularization and Formative Evaluation of Young Teachers

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**Abstract:** With the popularization of the higher education in China, the training of young teachers has been more and more prominent. This paper, by using the “Formative Evaluation Theory”, analyzes the relationship between popularization and university young teacher training. In addition, it also profoundly discusses the two factors influencing the development of university teachers—the Formative Evaluation Idea and interpersonal relationship. Finally, the author proposes that it is a critical method to formatively evaluate young teachers by using the multi-intelligence theory.

**Key words:** popularization of higher education    young teachers    formative evaluation

With the popularization of higher education in China, a great number of young teachers have been recruited in universities. Naturally, the training and evaluation of these young teachers has become an urgent task for universities to fulfill, especially when higher education in China is encountering with globalization, popularization and informationization after our entry into WTO. The training and development of university young teachers is closely related to the development of Chinese universities and higher education in the long run. Therefore, for technically and intelligently strengthening China, the training of university young teachers should be carried out strategically.

## 1. The Relationship between Popularization and Young Teachers’ Development

With the accelerating of refreshing of university faculty, the requirement of the teaching faculty has been raised not only professionally but also ideologically. In the new century, the development of university teachers faces new challenges in how to form a teaching faculty with good ideological quality, high professional level and comprehensive ability. To develop higher education, the teaching faculty plays a critical role and young teachers are the critical supporting factor.

In 2000, the total university teaching faculty in China was 462,800, which increased to 858,000 in 2004. The number has increased nearly 400,000 and almost doubled in only 4 years. Most of the increased faculty members are young teachers who are under the age of 35 and are more than a half of the total.

At the same time, the number of university students is still increasing with the popularization of higher education. It is predicted that both the number of students and the teaching faculty in 2020 will be doubled than that of 2005. In accordance, in the future several years, there will be a booming period of recruiting young teaching faculty in universities.

## 2. A Formative Method in Teacher Evaluation

Theoretically, the Awarding/Punishing Evaluation and Formative Evaluation of teachers are based on

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different beliefs. The awarding/punishing method is to firstly suppose that an external award would stimulate teachers to be more active and innovative, which would put pressure on those who are punished and make them improve their teaching. In the meantime, those who are awarded would take a lead and help form a progressing teaching team. Whereas the formative evaluation method proposes that teachers have been well educated and should be self-advocated mainly. An internal motivation would function better than an external motivation. An outer pressure may help them reach a necessary level but can hardly make them excellent. The method suggests that teachers can reach an excellent level after getting sufficient information and plausible suggestions because, as professional teaching faculty, they possess an instinct of being qualified teachers. If the working conditions are fulfilled, they would become greatly enthusiastic and innovative.

Practically speaking, both the two evaluating methods are quite necessary in Chinese teacher evaluation. The awarding/punishing method can, in some degree, help teaching reform and mostly realize the teaching goal of universities. However, this method functions in a vertical way and can scarcely be supported and accepted by all the faculty members, thus cannot make teachers become more active in teaching. On the contrary, the formative evaluation method can combine teachers' and universities' requirements. The evaluation of teachers should be a combination of the two methods. But the main method we are using in China now is the awarding/punishing one which focuses on the assessing and ordering of the previous performance of teachers, based on which awards or punishments are given passively and which should be changed. Therefore, our teacher evaluation should focus on the formative evaluation method.

From a psychological point of view, "In an easy and comfortable working environment, a higher psychological pressure would produce a better accomplishment, while in a difficult and complicated environment, a lower psychological pressure would produce a better accomplishment." Accordingly, teachers can properly develop their personality and novelty only under suitable pressure. An awarding/punishing system can praise those who are excellent timely and warn those who fall behind which is to activate teaching reform and research. However, most young teachers have a kind of fear and worry about this method because they have only little experience and an unstable social relationship. Furthermore, the intensified contest among colleagues would affect their working environment negatively. In the conflict between a high self-expectation and a high role expectation and a lower academic, economic and social status, worrying and wandering would come side by side. The assessment and orientation of universities on teachers would greatly influence their self-evaluation of ability, personality and value system which would make them wander between negative and positive assessments of self and the outer world. The awarding/punishing method is not suitable for young teachers since the development of young teachers include three phases which are the adapting phase, the developing phase and the mature phase. For those young teachers who are in the first phase, they need more time to adapt themselves with the teaching career and environment whereas when they are assigned some "important task", they would feel much more pressure.

The quality of university young teachers consists of three parts including professional quality, knowledge quality and competence quality. Professor Zhu Yongxin has researched deeply on the quality of an ideal teacher. He thinks that an ideal teacher should be a teacher with a far-reaching ideal, strong enthusiasm and poetic sense, self-confidence, self-independence and a continuous self-challenge, he should also be cooperative, personally attractive, kind, respectable, excellence-seeking and innovative. At the same time, he should be a teacher who is trying to be an all-rounder and is concerned with human fortune and responsibility and is perseverant and would never give up in front of setbacks.

For young teachers themselves, what is more important is to know not only how excellent they are in their team but also what the universities' expect of them. Based on their present performance, they should be aware of

their own development orientation. For the universities, they should provide as much training and development opportunities as possible for teachers.

Compared with the students' over-duty problem caused by the social, educational and economic pressures which has been recognized and taken care of, teachers' too much pressure problem has not really been recognized by our society. We should be aware that it is from good teachers' excellent teaching that come good students. Only if a good teaching environment has been provided may the teachers become energetic and uniquely qualified enough to face their students. A basic way to solve teachers' psychological problem is to reduce the "pressure". But it is very difficult if not impossible for most universities to reduce the pressure in the present situation when higher education is being popularized in China. Some educators pointed out that the psychological problems are not caused by their teaching job but by the evaluation system in which the teaching performance is closely related to their promotion and salary, even their career.

### **3. The Interpersonal Relationship of University Young Teachers**

The interpersonal relationship is composed of the relationships among the three groups of the leaders, the teaching faculty and the students.

#### **3.1 Teachers and Students**

Generally speaking, the relationship between students and teachers, compared with the close contact relationship between middle school teachers and students, is less frequent. But in universities, one of teachers' main psychological characters is to make their students be somebody, which is their objective of struggle. To achieve the goal, most teachers work heartedly. They feel great encouragement, excitement and relief at seeing the healthy growth of their students. University students stay a long time at school and some of them spend as long as seven years (based on the university's credit system, it's common for them to spend three or seven years at school, and some further their study to be post-graduates). Therefore, the relationship between students and teachers will last steadily for a long period. The direction and help in students' study and thought offered by teachers satisfy students' psychological need of becoming somebody. Students will never forget those teachers who manage to meticulously direct them in their college life. Consequently, the close relationship between teachers and students will be memorized by students for a long time, even as long as their life time.

#### **3.2 Teachers and Teachers**

Established on the basis of the socialism public ownership, the relationship between teachers and teachers is one of equality, mutual aid, cooperation and friendly affection as well as competition and coordination. This kind of relationship is a combination of three psychological factors: higher understanding, emotion and behavior, which, therefore, is of higher level.

In accordance with how to deal with interpersonal relationships among young university teachers, the team of this research project develops an experiment by designing a questionnaire for the newly recruited teachers in the process of their pre-post training in 2005. The number of questionnaires is 201, and one of the questions is: "Use one sentence to describe your attitude towards the situation when you and your friend have a conflict of interests." The four mainly chosen conclusions are: 18 teachers chose to give way to their friends; 5 teachers chose themselves to be the centre; 120 chose fair competition and the rest had other choices.

Generally speaking, the interpersonal relationships among university teachers are of the following characteristics:

A. The main task of University teachers is to teach students and do some scientific research, and the other common goal is to develop their students in an all-round way --- morally, intellectually and physically, on the

basis of which the interpersonal relationships among university teachers are established.

B. Consistence of need, that is, they all expect academic and scientific achievements.

C. The position of being worthy of the name of teacher makes teachers consciously control their own deeds and behaviors and be strict with themselves.

D. The interpersonal relationship among teachers is mainly adjusted by ideal, virtue, talents and dedication. A long time contact and being accepted through common practice form a commonly obeyed norm, which is a huge spiritual force maintaining and adjusting their words and behaviors.

E. The stability of their professional position. Most of them are teachers for a lifetime, which helps to establish stable interpersonal relationships.

F. The main characteristic of teachers' work is individual labor, of stronger independence and ownership in addition to their often individual activities, which makes them to stay alone most of the time. This situation would easily result in their tendency of a mutual contempt which leads to exhaustion of talents.

Apart from the interpersonal relationships among teachers, the relationship between teachers and the auxiliary teaching members is also that of cooperation for the same educational goal. Their jobs and posts are different, but necessary for the school as a whole. Therefore, all the three teams are indispensable, and they need to coordinate and support each other, which shapes the main characteristic of the relationship between teachers and workers.

### **3.3 Teachers and the Leaders**

The relationship between leaders and teachers is a vertical one. Leaders' attitude, working motivation and working effect play an important part in balancing the relationship. The good relationship between teachers and leaders is established on the basis of the Party's mass line which requires leaders to believe in the mass and they should "come from and go to the mass". What the leaders are doing is to research and collect suggestions and then analyze and induce through which the party policies, working lines would be taught to teachers and which would lead them to faithfulness and success in work. Every word and action of the leaders will greatly affect teachers' understanding, behavior and emotion. Therefore, what teachers require of the leaders is belief in politics, support in work and care in life, conditions for accomplishing the task and a positive evaluation after fulfilling their career accomplishment. This kind of fulfillment is the foundation of a good leader and mass relationship.

To have a psychological balance is quite significant to acquire a good interpersonal relationship between teachers. The so called psychological balance refers to a harmoniously friendly, generous and cooperative attitude. This harmony will result from the satisfaction of one's self respect and feeling of honour and the recognition of the respect and belief of his/her work. If there is not such a balance, the individual teacher would feel a kind of discrimination and constraint which would result in self inferiority, shame, disappointment, depression and an unsatisfactorily negative emotion that is presented as a disharmony between human and the environment. Thus, both the leaders and the teachers should suitably realize and deal with individual differences, improve the communication approaches and use a mutual criticism method to get rid of interpersonal obstacles and form a united and harmonious team.

## **4. Implication of Multiple Intelligence Theory on Young Teachers' Development**

The Multiple Intelligence Theory of American professor Howard Gardner, psychologist in the Graduate Academy in Harvard, has broadly and profoundly influenced education reform in many Western countries including the United States. The study of this theory will play a significant role in improving the all-round education, the deepening of curriculum reform and teaching reform in China. Through a combined study of psychology, physiology, education and art, Professor Gardner proved that human mind and human thinking method are multiple. When dealing with problems, human beings need a combination of multiple intelligence. The core education

method of Multiple Intelligence Theory lies in that the ability of human beings is multiple and the starting point of education is not how clever the children are but how teachers make them clever in some aspects.

Professor Gardner's multiple intelligence theory is only a general taxonomy study of human intelligence. A young teacher who has just begun his/her teaching career could only possess some kinds of the 7 intelligences. In all the intelligences owned by the young teachers, only one or two of the intelligences would play a critical role in the intelligence structure while all the others would be in a subordinate position. Any individual can have a naturally magnificent intelligence structure and personality formation if she/he could get careful instructions and easy development environment. Professor Gardner's Multiple Intelligence Theory provides us with a multiple aspect method in assessing teachers and students as well as it leads us to a reevaluation of our education theory, teaching strategy and evaluation system. Thus, the Multiple Intelligence Theory is an effective method in the processing evaluation of young university teachers.

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