

Role Conflict and Adjustment: A Study on Duty Performance of Part-time Head Teachers in Chinese Universities

Zhenlin Zhang^{1,2}

¹Institute of Educational Science, Huazhong University of Science and Technology, Wuhan, Hubei, China

²School of education and psychology, Hubei Engineering University, Xiaogan, Hubei, China

Abstract:

Part-time head teachers in Chinese universities play an important role in managing student affairs and boosting development of students. In this study, 9 head teachers from G university in Hubei, China were invited to semi-structured interviews. The interview content is encoded and analyzed to build an analysis framework based on role theory. The study found that: head teacher's role identification affects role taking in positively correlated manner; improved duty performance capability, innovative work methods and work attitude affect head teacher's role taking; conflicts within, between and outside roles exist objectively and impact student development. Therefore, there is need to value head teachers' work, enhance the sense of role identity; strengthen professional qualification training, improve role taking capability; strengthen organizational and personal coordination, and reduce role conflicts. Based on empirical methods, this study reveals role conflicts of part-time head teachers, and provides empirical materials for the management of student affairs in higher education in China.

Keywords: colleges and universities, part-time head, teacher role theory ,conflict and adjustment

I. INTRODUCTION

In China, head teachers constitute one major body of student affairs management and ideological and political education team, who are responsible for guiding students in aspects of ideology, study and life. The education department requires that each class in colleges and universities must have a part-time head teacher for full class management. The policy also encourages outstanding teachers to hold the post concurrently. Colleges and universities should care about them in politics, work, and life, and give appropriate preference in terms of policies and treatment. Regarding part-time head teacher, the researcher observed that: Some part-time head teachers have a sense of pride and happiness in class work, perform their duties well, and often create a variety of excellent educational stories; some have complaints, thinking that class

work is difficult and time-consuming, thus unwilling to do this job concurrently; some people are in an intermediate state, but mainly fulfilling their duties according to departmental requirements without sufficient innovation in work. The researcher searched CNKI literature and found that the existing literature on part-time head teachers in colleges and universities mainly concerns the following aspects, such as head teachers and ideological and political education, head teachers' work content, the competency model for head teachers, head teacher team construction, and work method innovation of head teachers, etc.

Regarding head teachers' role, Wang Zhao and Liao Heng [1] compared the roles of head teacher and instructor, and believed that university head teacher group encounters real difficulties such as "difficult positioning, difficult penetration, and difficult handling" owing to role ambiguity, role conflict, and weak role. Tian Tingting, Xie Li, Yang Liping [2] analyzed the role conflict manifestation of part-time head teachers, such as limitation of time, different knowledge literacy, and chaotic role boundaries. Lu Jianwen [3] proposed that part-time head teachers should realize the role transition from "life nanny" to "growth mentor", from "autocratic parent" to "close friend" and from "college student life designer" to "career consultant". To sum up, the existing literature is mainly based on work practice summaries and lacks systematic empirical research; the discussion perspective mostly proceeds from the changes in education authorities' work requirements for head teachers, such as "three-wide education", career development, employment and entrepreneurship, etc., but seldom or rarely discusses role problem of head teachers. Based on this, this study focuses on why different part-time head teachers present different states in actual work, their identification with part-time head teachers, and the resulting differences in working methods, and what is the logic behind.

II. MATERIALS AND METHODOLOGY

This study is mainly carried out in the school the researcher work in -Hubei G College, which is a provincial public university in Hubei Province. Upgraded to a university in 2000, it is a newly established university. The school currently offers 60 majors, with 17 teaching colleges, about 15,000 full-time undergraduate and junior college students, 337 classes, and 266 head teachers, of which 209 are teachers holding the post concurrently. See Table 1 for the specific situation of the head teachers.

TABLE I. Basic situation of the head teachers in the school of the study subjects

Gender	Total	Political Status	Professional title			Education background			Age (years)			Head teacher working years (years)		Number of classes in charge	
			Other party member	Advanced	Intermediate	Senior and intermediate	degree and master's	doctor's degree and	≤ 35	36-45	≥ 46	≤ 5	> 5	1	≥ 2
male	154	107	47	48	68	38	105	49	58	67	29	108	46	98	56
female	112	91	21	27	67	18	98	14	38	56	18	73	39	77	35

(Data source, sorted out according to G University data)

This study mainly adopts semi-structured interviews, which not only allows interviewees to freely express their experiences, ideas and suggestions, but also enables the researcher and interviewees to focus more on the issues. Interviews are mainly carried out during job meetings amid communication with other head teachers, daily management work exchanges, and conversations similar to chats. The interview questions are mainly based on the above-mentioned literature research and the directions set by the problem research, such as the demographic information of the interviewee, the work situation of the head teacher; role identification with part-time head teacher; head teacher's usual work situation (role taking); how one deals with the relationship between class work and teaching, scientific research, management, and family life (role conflict); how to do well in class work and better promote student development (role taking).

In order to make the interviewees of this study more representative, the researcher conducted sampling based on the distribution of head teachers in Hubei G College mentioned above. The sampling mainly gives consideration to three factors. The first is difference in students' disciplines, and three interviewees were selected from disciplines of liberal arts, science, engineering; the second is difference in the main identities of part-time head teachers, 5 full-time teachers, 2 instructors, and 2 non-teacher professional and technical personnel were selected respectively; the third concerns factors such as education background, title, age, number of classes in charge, and head teacher working years in comprehensive consideration.

Due to research ethics, this paper indicates the interviewees with head teachers B1-B9 (see Table 2). In the semi-structured interview process, this study mainly focuses on authenticity, which is mainly reflected in three aspects of objective authenticity, constructive authenticity and existential authenticity. That is, things actually happen. The interviewees' narration of events, particularly emotional and conceptual factors, is real though the interviewees have emotional and conceptual factors in the narrative. Therefore, when quoting interview materials, the researcher tries to use the vocabulary, language, discourse style, and various metaphors of the interviewee to achieve authenticity of the study.

TABLE II. Background information of the interviewed head teachers

Interviewee	Discipline	Gender	Main Identity	Age (years)	Education	Title	Number of classes in charge	Number of years working
B1	Liberal Arts	Male	Full-time Teacher	52	Master	Professor	1	20
B2	Liberal Arts	Female	Full-time Teacher	36	Master	Lecturer	1	6
B3	Liberal Arts	Female	Instructor	27	Bachelor	Teaching Assistant	3	5
B4	Science	Male	Full-time Teacher	54	Doctor	Professor	1	17
B5	Science	Female	professional technician	45	Bachelor	Experimentalist	2	10
B6	Science	Female	Full-time Teacher	33	Master	Lecturer	2	7

B7	Engin eering	Male	professional technician	41	Master	associa te profess or	4	15
B8	Engin eering	Male	Full-time Teacher	50	Doctor	Profess or	1	7
B9	Engin eering	Male	Instructor	38	Bachel or	Lectur er	4	11

Based on the existing research, this study analyzes the problems of part-time head teachers using role theory. "Role" is a noun in drama, originally referring to characters in drama. In the 1920s and 1930s, the sociologist G. H. Mead introduced it into social psychology and developed it into one basic theory of sociology to study people's social behavior and personality. Sociologists believe that "social role refers to a set of norms and behavioral patterns of rights and obligations consistent with certain social status and identity, which is people's behavior expectations towards people with specific identities. The theory emphasizes that people play roles in a specific social structure which defines individuals' status, rights and obligations." [4] Sociology's research on roles focuses on three aspects, namely: the individual plays a certain role in social life, the individual role-playing is subject to social constraints, and social operation depends on role taking [5].

III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1 Role Identification and Virtue Cultivation Via Education

In the interview, a head teacher expressed her simple feelings about class work:

I know that a student means 100% importance for a family, who bears all the hope of a family. The college gives me the job of head teacher out of trust. The parents send students to me out of trust. Students consult me in case of difficulties and confusion out of trust. I should live up to this trust. (B4)

Role identification includes not only overall identification of specific roles, but also identification of the responsibilities and obligations of specific roles, and the identification of responsibilities and obligations will directly affect the work effect. In the interview, the head teachers have a clear understanding towards the roles as ideological and political workers, instructor and leader of student growth, know respective responsibilities well, showing high

identification.

Head teacher is a job demanding conscientiousness. Although it is very tiresome, as long as you put your heart and soul into it, you will harvest a lot of fun. This fun is to have pupils everywhere. I often say that investing in business gains limited harvest; investing in students wins priceless harvest. This priceless value means to see students grow into talents and contribute to society in the future (B8)

Stryker used the concept of commitment in his research on the degree of significance in identity, thinking that commitment indicates the individual's relationship with others and social organizations, and the degree of commitment to a specific role. With higher degree and intensity of personal commitment to a certain role, one will be more proactive, active, and effective in specific work; vice versa. In the interview, a head teacher shared a story about fulfilling commitment. Although time has passed, he was still excited.

There was one quite excellent student in my class. Unfortunately, she was diagnosed with stage III lymphoma during her senior year and was then treated in the hospital. During a visit, she proposed to complete the graduation thesis defense to get the graduation certificate and degree certificate, and then take postgraduate entrance examination after physical recovery. I was very touched at that time and promised her that I would help her graduate successfully. For this commitment, her thesis adviser and I borrowed a lot of books and downloaded a lot of materials. We visited the hospital many times along with her classmates with similar thesis topic selection to show or read the literature to her and help clarify her thoughts. The students helped her print the thesis...Finally, a special graduation thesis defense meeting was held in the ward, thus fulfilling my commitment to her. This means lesson for both me and other students. (B1)

In conclusion, the interviewed teachers generally identify with the role of head teacher. This identification has both simple emotions and political heights; it is based on personal experience as well as understanding and comprehension of education policies. Moreover, the significance of identification affects role behavior. That is, with higher identification with the role of head teacher, the teacher will be more involved in the role, and will actively create conditions to take the role.

3.2 Role Taking and Student Development

For head teachers, role taking means the teacher performs duties in accordance with the responsibilities and norms stipulated by the organization in response to organization requirement. While fulfilling this role, teachers will enhance their understanding towards the social role of ideological and political workers and strengthen sense of responsibility and mission in virtue cultivation and student development. As one interviewee said:

As for how to act as a head teacher, I really haven't summarized it properly. How to say it, at

the beginning, it is basically to follow the requirements of the academic team. For example, stick to weekend comment and have a better understanding of the students' overall situation. When one devotes more to the job, it involves the development of party members, academic development, postgraduate entrance examination guidance, employment work, etc... I have been a head teacher for 7 years. As far as I'm concerned that I have a deep understanding of the school's head teacher work regulations, and I clearly know the university's purpose of training people. (B6)

It can be seen from this head teacher's narration that with the time passage in role taking and work experience accumulation, he has higher identification with the role of head teacher, and has higher consciousness and efficiency in performing duties. Of course, the role-taking effect also depends on knowledge and working method needed for the corresponding role, as well as investment of time and energy. For head teachers, study of political theory is the most fundamental. At the same time, to be qualified for the complex, meticulous, and tedious work, they must have certain knowledge in pedagogy, psychology, and sociology. An interviewee narrated his process of improving work ability.

As an instructor, I certainly have to take the role of head teacher concurrently. At the beginning, I have somewhat "dread of incompetence" as I'm a man of engineering discipline who knew little about ideological and political education, higher education, psychology, and management science, and also, I was young and lacked experience. Pre-job training, instructor ability training project and skill competition helped me improve a lot. As a party member, I then participated in political studies organized by the school, participated in the "three meetings and one lesson" organized by the branch. Besides, I usually read some papers and books at work, and consult experienced and senior head teacher for advice. I feel that I have improved a lot. (B9)

As far as head teacher is concerned, in addition to knowledge reserves and accumulation, summary and application of laws, he/she also needs to replace the old with the new, and find the excitement in student work, and innovate methods and ways, and continuously enhance pertinence, sense of the times and attractiveness. For instance, any interviewee mentioned:

I usually visit students' dormitories, and communicate with them. As long as I have time, I will participate in some of their group activities and so on. As a head teacher, I pay great attention to the development of class style and study style. For instance, I organize activities like "writing a letter to me at senior year", postgraduate entrance examination experience, professional competition experience exchange meetings to direct students to take the initiative to think and plan and so on. Our class has a pass rate of 76% in postgraduate entrance examination, and students have won many honors in subject competitions and other social

practice activities. (B5)

From the above discussion, we can conclude that an excellent head teacher has to do a lot at least three aspects in order to better take his role. The first is to practice internal skills, consolidate Marxist theoretical foundation and professional quality in ideological and political work; the second is to follow the law, think broadly, do the job bit by bit, innovate working methods, and enhance pertinence and effectiveness. The third is to hold a feeling of passion, perseverance and awe in work and put all heart into it.

3.3 Role Conflict and Responsibility Undertaking

As ideological and political worker, head teacher of colleges and universities is first a manager. The management involves student affairs, such as excellence selection and evaluation, scholarship and grants evaluation, etc.; students' daily behavior standards, such as class style, study style construction, entrance education, graduation education, etc.; student safety and stability, such as education and care for special student groups, participation in emergency handling. In student management, on the one hand, the head teacher should narrow the distance with the students through heart-to-heart talks, conversations, weekend comments, etc., and strive to become students' teachers and friends. On the other hand, they must manage the students strictly following the management system and standard requirements, which will incur intra-role conflicts.

A very excellent male student in my class was a student cadre and a preparatory party member, but was caught cheating in an exam invigilated by me and other teachers. After the exam, he confessed his mistake to me in tears. At that time, I was very conflicted because if I reported to the Academic Affairs Office, he would be punished, would be disqualified for preparatory party member, and would also face graduation problem; but if I didn't report, it would obviously go against the purpose of virtue cultivation via education, which is not in line with school regulations and is also irresponsible for the incident. (B3)

Head teacher is a result of aggregation of multiple roles and has the characteristics of role cluster. According to interviews, a full-time teacher said that part-time head teachers are exposed to very obvious conflicts between roles. It is because such part-time head teacher is a teacher first and must be able to give lessons; secondly, as a professional technician, he must pursue academic honor. Such role conflict is very obvious in young teachers.

I usually feel very tired at work. In teaching, I have to teach 4 courses a week and a total of 20 lessons, including 2 basic professional courses, and I have to make a lot of efforts in preparing for the experimental courses. In addition, I give directions for students' graduation thesis, basically 6-8 people. The most worried matter is scientific research which concerns job title evaluation. Hence, I have to write project plans, report topics, make experiments, and write

papers...very strenuous. The most guilty thing is to handle emergencies such as class and children, I have to shorten scientific research time. (B2)

People are the sum of social relations. After the head teacher returns home after work, he (she) should let go of the role of head teacher and assume family role, fulfilling the responsibilities as parents, children, and husband and wife. However, often due to job factors, especially when there are urgent tasks to handle, there is need to constantly squeeze time, leading to endless conflicts. In the interview, compared to middle-aged head teachers with lower family burden, young head teachers, especially female, more mentioned that the role of head teacher causes time, energy, and emotional conflict to a certain extent, and some even complained it a lot.

It's not easy for female teachers. You see, in addition to teaching tasks and scientific research, I have to take care of children at home. Now that two-child policy is implemented, another baby has come. A lot of child care tasks fall on me. As a result, I feel an inability to do scientific research and many things are difficult to balance and so on. In particular, I feel emotionally guilty towards family members, so head teacher feels powerless in energy. (B6)

As for conflict with other jobs, this is fine for me. The first is that I am older and the child has gone to college, so there is no family burden; the second is that I've won title. As far as our college is concerned, young people have a heavier burden in both teaching and scientific research, which is especially uneasy for females. For example, after the implementation of two child policy, female teachers under 40 are basically giving birth to the second child, which is too difficult. (B7)

In summary, from the perspective of role theory, firstly, head teachers commonly face conflicts within, between and outside roles in the daily work. Secondly, such conflict is more obviously reflected from young head teachers based on the interviews. The possible reason is that they are the backbone of teaching and research, thus assuming relatively heavy teaching and research tasks; while senior head teachers are generally competent for teaching, and have won professional titles, and bear smaller family burden, so the role conflict is unobvious. Thirdly, it is impossible to determine head teacher working years, which is also called the relationship between experience accumulation and role conflict from the interview.

IV. CONCLUSION

4.1 Pay More Attention to Class Work and Enhance Sense of Identity

The role theory believes that a role serves as the link between individual and society. On the one hand, the individual acts on the society through role taking. On the other hand, individual with subjectivity is not a puppet restricted by the role. His ideology and values will indirectly affect the role taking. Therefore, the degree of individual identification with the undertaken role

directly determines the effect of role taking.

Since the adjustment and reform of colleges' departments in 1952, China has inherited the school-year teaching model of the former Soviet Union and established a head teacher working system. This system is very important for closely grasping students' ideological trends, strengthening ideological and political work, and boosting student development. The education authority defines head teacher as the backbone of colleges and universities engaged in moral education as well as ideological and political education of college students, who are the director and guide for college students' healthy growth. Head teacher's identification with their role will affect their role taking, that is, duty performance and function execution. Therefore, first, colleges and universities must further clarify the position of head teacher in ideological and political work, and clarify division of their work responsibilities and responsibilities as full-time instructor. Second, appropriate preferential treatment should be given to head teachers. According to the interview, most head teachers are also full-time teachers. They not only have heavy teaching work, but also have responsibility to do student ideological and political work in spare time, which is very hard. The time constraints and fragmentation are bound to affect scientific research. In the context of emphasis on scientific research assessment and scientific research championships, without appropriate incentives, the gap between head teachers' labor and responsibilities and their return will widen, resulting in psychological imbalance and decreased enthusiasm. To this end, it is recommended that colleges and universities should truly implement preferential policies in head teacher system reform to strengthen their sense of identification and make them wholeheartedly engage in student ideological and political education and class management.

4.2 Strengthen Professional Ability Training and Improve Role-taking Ability

First, strengthen professional training. According to the "Work Regulations for Head Teachers (Interim)" of the university in this case study -Hubei G College's, the document is divided into five parts: General Provisions, Appointment of Head Teachers, Work Responsibilities of Head Teachers, Work Assessment of Head Teachers, and Supplementary Provisions. There is no content regarding cultivation and training, treatment and rights. In the interview, except head teacher 9 (a full-time instructor who concurrently serves as a head teacher) who mentioned that he continuously improves himself through the role as instructor, more head teachers, such as head teacher 6 in the interview, improve ability via work summary, experience accumulation, and communication with others. Therefore, colleges and universities should attach importance to the training of head teachers, establish pre-job training and on-the-job training systems, enrich training contents, and innovate training modes.

Second, there is need to study and follow the rules. As a ideological and political worker,

head teacher faces the diversification of post-00s college students in terms of life, study, thinking and behavior styles, and needs multiple professional knowledge and comprehensive skills in the process of role taking, such as ideological and political education, pedagogy, psychology, management science, sociology in addition to other skills such as club organization, speech, interpersonal communication, propaganda. It is therefore necessary to encourage the majority of ideological and political workers to study the laws of virtue cultivation, follow the laws, and promote students' growth.

4.3 Strengthen Organizational and Personal Coordination, Reduce role Conflicts

Role conflict refers to individual conflict in behaviors due to the different requirements of different positions for different roles. As mentioned above, there are conflicts within, between and outside roles for head teachers, which involve both social factors such as government expectations, social expectations, school requirements, and system pressure, and individual factors such as age, work experience, personality and temperament, personal role expectations, etc. Part-time head teacher means a responsibility complex. To this end, in terms of organizational coordination, we must pay attention to formulating role norms for head teacher to enhance their sense of role identity; attach importance to role training to enhance their ability to perform duties; establish an evaluation mechanism to stimulate the motivation and ability in role taking.

It is the luck of life if a person meets a good teacher. It is the glory of a school to have a good teacher, and it is the hope of the nation that batches of good teachers constantly show up. As a head teacher, in addition to the organization's attention and concern, he must plan his roles, and improve his role-taking ability, and link teaching and educating people with the future of the nation. Also, he must learn time management, learn to divide labor, learn to deal with stress, and improve the art of life as well as knowledge in work, act as a guide, friend and confidant in students' growth path.

V. DEFICIENCIES AND OUTLOOKS

Due to sampling limitation in qualitative research, this study can only partially reflect some representative head teachers' summary of personal experience based on actual work and feelings. The findings and discussions of the study may not be extended to cover all head teachers. This study proceeds from data analysis, resorts to role theory, provides the possibility of discussion on how to do a good job as a head teacher, and provides a reference for university administrators regarding how to adhere to the student-centered concept, center on students, care for and serve students, and promote student development. Subsequently, the researcher will compile a part-time head teacher job role conflict scale based on qualitative research and

literature reference, and make measurements of a larger range to find new conclusions.

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