

Analysis of the Growth Dilemmas and Countermeasures for Newly Employed Young Teachers in Private Colleges

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Abstract: The pace of educational development in China is rapid. Currently, both the quantity and quality of colleges and universities have significantly improved. Private colleges and universities, as a critical component of higher education, continue to optimize teaching resources and enrich their faculty. However, numerous challenges persist in the professional growth of newly recruited young teachers in private colleges and universities. The absence of clear objectives and effective pathways for teacher development impacts both the growth of private colleges and universities and the individual development of educators. This paper primarily analyzes the challenges faced by newly recruited young teachers in private colleges and universities and explores effective countermeasures to facilitate their better development.

Keywords: Private colleges and universities; New young teachers; Growth dilemma; Countermeasures

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1. Introduction

The qualifications required for teaching positions in China's private colleges and universities have risen, with most teachers holding bachelor's or master's degrees, and the number of doctoral graduates increasing in some institutions. These young educators bring vitality to the development of educational resources in private colleges and universities and possess advanced educational concepts and substantial professional knowledge reserves^[1].

However, the professional development of these young teachers has been less than satisfactory after joining their institutions. The primary reason lies in their enthusiasm being unmatched by clear growth objectives. Although they possess extensive subject-matter knowledge, they often lack educational experience and professional competencies. These issues create significant challenges for young teachers in transitioning from the role of a student to that of an educator. This transition difficulty represents a major obstacle to their growth after entering the profession^[2].

It is essential to understand the growth challenges faced by newly recruited young teachers accurately and propose appropriate solutions to address these issues effectively.

2. The growth dilemma of new young teachers in private colleges and universities

Newly employed young teachers in private colleges and universities face significant challenges in adapting to changes in identity and role. To successfully integrate into the working environment and fulfill their educational responsibilities, they must develop quickly. However, numerous difficulties hinder this growth, driven by various factors. An analysis of these issues is presented from three perspectives: the school, the college, and the teachers themselves.

2.1. Schools do not understand the needs of young teachers

The current growth situation of newly employed young teachers in private colleges and universities indicates that schools, as the primary agents of teacher training, often fail to fully investigate and address the growth needs of their teachers. A significant contributing factor to this limitation is the heavy workload of teachers in private institutions. These teachers are expected to balance teaching and research responsibilities, leaving schools with insufficient resources to conduct thorough investigations into their specific needs ^[3].

Additionally, young teachers experience considerable work pressure, having to participate in various activities that can compromise the quality and accuracy of survey results. This inadequacy in investigation processes leads to a misalignment in later training programs ^[4]. For instance, while some teachers might require professional development in teaching methodologies, others might prioritize curriculum development expertise. However, actual training often relies on general approaches, such as teaching university-wide methods, which fail to address these diverse needs effectively.

Consequently, training outcomes are often suboptimal, leaving teachers dissatisfied with their professional development experiences. Furthermore, the criteria and mechanisms for evaluating training programs and assessing teacher performance are not scientifically designed, further exacerbating the disconnect between training efforts and the practical growth requirements of young teachers ^[5].

2.2. The role of the training body of the college is not obvious

In the professional development and growth of young and middle-aged teachers in private colleges and universities, secondary colleges are expected to serve as the main organizational entities. However, based on the current school management framework, the role of these colleges is limited. Both the colleges and the teacher management centers demonstrate insufficient initiative in organizing and implementing professional training for young teachers, resulting in weak execution.

An analysis of secondary colleges' involvement in the growth of young teachers reveals a lack of organizational capability and awareness, which negatively impacts teacher development ^[6]. Furthermore, the unclear division of responsibilities in training programs exacerbates the issue. Overlapping teaching and administrative duties assigned to young teachers increases their workload, further impeding their professional growth. Investigations and interviews conducted with young teachers in private colleges and universities indicate that many teachers are burdened with multiple roles, and their primary responsibilities are not clearly defined, which diminishes their learning motivation and available energy ^[7].

Additionally, the professional atmosphere within secondary colleges is often inadequate. Professional activities are limited in scope and typically consist of basic tasks such as attending lectures and evaluating classes. This lack of depth in professional activities undermines the development of a robust professional culture in secondary colleges.

2.3. Young teachers' own responsibilities are ambiguous

Although private colleges and universities differ in management and work orientation from public institutions, young teachers in both settings face similar challenges in their career development, particularly a tendency to prioritize research over teaching. This trend stems primarily from the fact that scientific research outcomes significantly influence the career prospects of young teachers. Consequently, a substantial portion of their time and energy is devoted to research, often at the expense of teaching development. This imbalance hinders the enhancement of teaching skills and overall teaching quality, which is detrimental to the educational mission of private colleges and universities ^[8].

Regarding responsibility orientation, young teachers are often required to undertake both teaching and administrative duties. While administrative responsibilities are intended to support teaching, they frequently involve complex and time-consuming tasks. These additional demands make it challenging for young teachers to focus on improving their teaching abilities ^[9].

Moreover, the advancement of information technology has transformed teaching methods and approaches in higher education. To adapt to modern educational demands, teachers must integrate these technological advancements into their teaching practices to enhance instructional quality. However, many young teachers concentrate excessively on their academic fields while neglecting the integration of information technology into their teaching. This oversight adversely affects their overall professional development and limits their ability to meet contemporary educational requirements ^[10].

3. Countermeasures for the growth of new young teachers in private colleges and universities

3.1. Enhance young teachers' self-awareness of professional development

A significant challenge in the professional development of young teachers in private colleges and universities is the lack of professional autonomy. Many young teachers become accustomed to passively participating in their work and struggle to exercise their professional independence. Due to limited social and professional experience, they often follow institutional directives without prioritizing their own professional growth ^[11].

Professional autonomy is not necessarily tied to teaching experience but rather to an individual's sense of agency and practical capabilities. The development of this autonomy involves awareness of one's current professional standing, evaluation of professional skills, and planning for future development. Only by cultivating independent professional development can teachers take responsibility, critically reflect on their status, and continuously enhance their competencies.

Young teachers, as professionals in education, must maintain a broad and advanced knowledge base. This requires consistent effort to update their knowledge and skills throughout their careers. Reflection, critical thinking, and exploration are key to achieving professional development goals. Such development is not a short-term endeavor tied to specific training sessions or promotions; it represents the realization of self-worth within the educational field and the fulfillment of their role in teaching and mentoring students ^[12].

To facilitate this growth, traditional one-size-fits-all management approaches in schools should evolve to provide teachers with more opportunities for professional autonomy and diverse pathways for development. Such changes can foster a more conducive environment for independent teacher growth ^[13].

3.2. Develop scientific professional growth goals

The pursuit of personal growth is an intrinsic aspiration for young teachers in private colleges and universities, but this pursuit can be hindered by various external factors. Some administrators in private institutions view their employment relationships with teachers as contractual and transitory, leading to significant staff turnover. As a result, there is often a reluctance to invest in teacher training due to concerns about potential financial losses if teachers leave after receiving training. This perspective leads schools to prioritize investments in physical infrastructure over talent development ^[14].

However, the professional growth of young teachers ultimately depends on their self-perception and commitment to improvement. External support and resources from schools are only secondary to the teachers' internal motivation and clarity of goals. Young teachers must develop a comprehensive understanding of their professional growth objectives and optimize their achievements within the constraints of available school resources.

In setting these goals, teachers should first define their current roles, future aspirations, and professional missions. Schools can assist by aligning institutional goals, program requirements, and individual potential to create tailored and actionable growth plans. The content of these goals should account for the teachers' interests, teaching subjects, unique skills, and capacity for growth.

Professional growth goals can be structured around two dimensions:

- (1) Content-based goals: These include personal and professional development objectives such as career advancement, work performance, and continuing education.
- (2) Time-based goals: These outline timelines for achieving specific milestones, addressing challenges, and resolving existing issues.

By establishing clear, detailed, and personalized growth goals, young teachers can enhance their development in a structured and meaningful manner.

3.3. Establish a mentoring system for young teachers

Young teachers in private colleges and universities often face challenges integrating into teaching roles during their initial period of employment. To facilitate their growth and smooth role transition, a mentoring system can be adopted. Under this system, experienced teachers with extensive teaching backgrounds are assigned to guide young teachers, fostering their professional development.

The mentoring system aims not only to impart knowledge and skills but also to address challenges from ideological, conceptual, and practical perspectives ^[15]. Mentors can share insights and experiences that are not typically found in textbooks or formal training programs. The selection of mentors is crucial to the success of this system. Mentors should possess rich teaching experience, strong ethical values, and practical capabilities, as well as notable achievements in teaching and research.

Effective mentorship enables young teachers to receive guidance in professional, personal, and academic areas, helping them develop into educators with positive values, strong ethics, and robust abilities. The role of mentors extends beyond instruction; they act as coaches, demonstrating effective teaching practices, problem-solving strategies, and the culture of private colleges.

Young teachers, under their mentors' guidance, should adopt a collaborative teaching approach, focusing on observing and learning from demonstrations while gradually engaging in deeper participation. This process enhances their understanding of higher education practices, refines their teaching skills, and strengthens their alignment with institutional values. Through this mentorship, young teachers integrate into the educational

community of the college and establish themselves as key contributors.

3.4. Promoting young teachers' participation in practical work

Most young teachers in private colleges and universities, aside from a minority with prior experience, begin their teaching careers immediately after graduating from higher education institutions. While they are equipped with theoretical knowledge and progressive ideas, they often lack practical skills. Enhancing practical experience is essential for improving the teaching quality in private colleges.

One approach is for schools to collaborate with enterprises to offer practical training opportunities. This allows young teachers to acquire professional skills, aligning with the goal of cultivating dual-competency teachers proficient in both theoretical and practical aspects of their field. Schools can organize temporary placement programs, typically lasting two to three months, tailored to the teachers' professional disciplines.

During these placements, young teachers gain insight into industry trends, learn to operate advanced technologies and equipment, and incorporate these new skills into their teaching practices. Additionally, these experiences enable teachers to address teaching challenges through practical applications or by consulting experienced professionals in the field.

To ensure effective participation, schools should establish robust assessment and management mechanisms. This includes clearly defining the objectives, conditions, and expectations of practical training, as well as aligning the placement's duration, professional focus, and tasks with the teachers' areas of expertise.

Evaluation criteria for these programs can involve dual assessments by both the school and the enterprise, with results influencing incentives such as allowances. Linking assessment outcomes to tangible rewards motivates young teachers to actively participate and excel in practical training, ultimately benefiting their professional development and enhancing teaching quality.

3.5. Create a supportive environment for young teachers

Young teachers in private colleges and universities are generally employed under contract-based arrangements rather than being part of a formal establishment. Consequently, teacher management requires improvement through an enterprise management approach.

Firstly, it is essential to ensure humane management practices by respecting the professional rights of young teachers and granting them autonomy in their professional development. Excessive constraints on teachers' professional responsibilities should be avoided to create a work environment that allows them to explore their potential freely.

Secondly, fostering a sense of ownership among teachers is crucial. Providing opportunities for teachers to participate in school management not only enhances their sense of responsibility but also strengthens their commitment to their roles within the institution. This approach promotes the rapid growth of young teachers, strengthens their loyalty to the institution, and helps reduce teacher turnover.

Thirdly, creating a positive cultural environment within the school is vital. Establishing trust among staff members and encouraging active participation from young teachers fosters a more collaborative and supportive atmosphere. Respect for individuality in both professional and personal contexts helps create a pleasant and comfortable working environment, contributing to a more humane management culture.

Finally, a comprehensive incentive system should be established, combining both internal and external motivators. Internal motivation arises from teachers' sense of responsibility and achievement in their roles, while external motivation includes material and non-material rewards provided by the institution. To ensure

effectiveness, the incentive system should align with the needs of the teachers, thereby stimulating their enthusiasm and unlocking their potential for growth.

4. Conclusion

In conclusion, young teachers in private colleges and universities must swiftly transition from being students to becoming educators, integrating into the teaching environment of higher education institutions. This process requires ongoing development and enhancement of their professional capabilities, practical skills, and overall competencies.

However, the current growth trajectory of young teachers reveals challenges arising from institutional, departmental, and personal factors, which hinder their development. Addressing these challenges necessitates that young teachers prioritize their growth, clearly define their objectives, balance research and teaching responsibilities, actively engage in practical activities, and learn from experienced mentors. By continuously refining their professional and teaching skills, young teachers can evolve into competent educators who meet the demands of modern higher education.

Disclosure statement

The author declares no conflict of interest.

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