

## Review of Researches on the Impact of Professional Title Policy Changes on the Academic Development of University Teachers

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### Abstract

The paper reviews the related research literature. It starts with the relationship between teaching and research and the modernity of teachers' academic development to review the related researches on the academic development of university teachers and then sorts out "the impact of professional title policy on the academic development of university teachers" scattered in various researches. On such a basis, the paper proposes the focus of the follow-up studies.

**Key words:** Professional title policy; University teachers; Academic development; Impact; Literature review

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### INTRODUCTION

The English word "academic" comes from "academy" and "academy" comes from the Latin word "academia" which comes from "Akademeia". This place is located outside of ancient Athens, where the school is famous for Plato. The word "academic" can be used to refer to the "accumulation of knowledge". In this sense, it is usually translated into "Xueshu" in Chinese. The academic development and dissemination have crossed several centuries. In 17<sup>th</sup> century, British and French religious scholars usually used academy to refer to

higher educational institutes. In English, it is called "academy", and in French, it is called "academe" or "academie". Academic in ancient China refers to the method and level of knowledge pursuing. In modern times, it includes systematic and specialized knowledge, generally referring to higher education and research. With the emergence of the Renaissance, European academic development has been changed. In the industrial revolution, it has even appeared in the modernized process. Academic development in East Asia in the mid-Qing dynasty or before was still affected by Chinese academic thoughts. Since the Meiji Restoration, academics in East Asia have developed towards that of the West, with its focus transferring from humanities to the sciences. Due to the rapid development of scientific academics, research methods of humanities have become scientific. On the whole, in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, modern academic structure is based on European and American model. Systematic sub-specialties have become very fine and interdisciplinary research and life technology have become the new developing space of academic research.

## 1. RESEARCH ON THE ACADEMIC DEVELOPMENT OF UNIVERSITY TEACHERS

### 1.1 The Relationship Between Teaching and Research

The international comparative survey conducted by German J. Enders and U. Teichler in 1995 and the social survey on "teaching culture and the socialization of teachers" conducted by Schaeper (1996) have obtained similar results: compared with teaching, professors and associate professors in universities prefer research. Many scholars have analyzed "the relationship between research and teaching" in universities at different levels from different perspectives.

Sun (2007) analyzes it with a capital theoretical perspective. In the field German universities, since German professors are employed by the government, the political capital is not attractive for most university teachers. In comparison, scientific capital is the most valuable capital, and is the prerequisite to obtain other types of capital (such as educational capital, economic capital and political capital). Sun Jin compares the attitude of German professors towards teaching capital and scientific capital. University teachers obtain teaching capital through teaching, but its value is lower than the scientific capital obtained by engaging research activities; scientific capital can improve the popularity and influence of university teachers in worldwide academic organizations, and thus decide the career development of university teachers. However, teaching capital for a long time does not have much effect on the visibility and professional development of German universities teachers, or even if it has, it is only confined within the range of the university. What is important is that scientific capital not only benefits the individual academic reputation and career development of university teachers, the university itself also benefits from the accumulated scientific capital. Therefore, German professors prefer to research.

Nan (2007) proposes a teacher decision-making model to explore the relationship between teaching and research and analyze the phenomenon of university teachers "emphasizing research, underrating teaching" from an economic perspective: first, research benefits is more than the benefits of teaching and that is the main reason why college teachers are not willing to teach but willing to engage in scientific research; second, professors' marginal benefit of teaching decreases with university reducing the budget, i.e. the growth rate of research funds is greater than that of the teaching funds; third, the marginal benefit of teaching activities increases with the increasing of scientific research level. Research can promote teaching, but teaching cannot promote scientific research. This is similar to the conclusion of Sun (2007) that German professors emphasize research and underrate teaching.

Li and Xu (2011) conduct empirical research on the following three assumptions: assumption 1: research and teaching promote each other and complement each other; teachers with strong research ability is also very good at teaching; assumption 2: teaching is the lifeline of universities and teaching effectiveness is the main indicator to assess good university teachers; assumption 3: teachers with strong research ability are the backbone of the university and they undertake important teaching tasks. Final, "teachers with strong research ability is also very good at teaching; teaching effectiveness is the main indicator to assess good university teachers; teachers with strong research ability undertake important teaching tasks" have not been prove, but been falsified, and then after reflection the researchers propose that teacher

evaluation system needs to be re-scrutinized and teaching effectiveness and research ability in the evaluation indicator also need be re-defined.

What should be included in university teachers' work? Teaching, research and social services. Teaching is derived from the ancient tradition of the medieval university. Students gather in all the way into the university in order to learn the previous discovery, and the main task of teachers is to transfer the existing knowledge to students. In 1809, a German scholar, William Humboldt, learning from the experience of University Halle and Goettingen University, proposed to "unify teaching and research" and promoted that the creation of new knowledge was the most important work of university teachers. Then, in 1862, the United States enacted *Morrill Act*, requiring land-grant colleges "without excluding other scientific and classical disciplines and including military tactics discipline...teach agricultural and craft-related disciplines, thereby to promote liberal arts and practical education in the life of various sectors of the working class" (Wang, 1993). This event adds a new job function to university teachers - social services.

In the three job functions of university teachers, which one should occupy the most time? The former president of Stanford University, Donald Kennedy says: "Teaching is the most important work of higher education." American scholar Flexner, German scholar Jaspers, and British scholar Bernard all agreed that the research should be the most important work of teachers, "outstanding researchers are recognized and responsible professors who are good at inspiring students"; "the teaching should use the content of their research"; "research controls teaching, and scientific research acts as a teaching method." Although different scholars have focused on their own perspective, with the current social progress, national development, changes in the academic reward system and the requirement of individual professional title evaluation of teachers, research has become the primary and most basic function, and teaching and social services have become a derivative functions. With this mainstream view, if you want to become a scholar, you have to become a researcher. Naturally the number of published monographs and papers has become the major measurement to evaluate academic productivity.

On the above-mentioned state of higher education in the United States, Boyer (1990) once said: "Ironically, just as the social responsibility of higher education continues to expand, incentive mechanism for university professors becomes narrower; just when the task of higher education is diverse, the academics develops in the direction towards simplification." In order to change this situation, faced with numerous colleges and universities varying in nature and mission, Boyer believed that the time has come to give the familiar and sublime "academics" a broader and richer connotation. To this

end, he led a team of researchers. Based on extensive research, in 1990, he published a research report entitled “Academic Reflections—on Key Areas Professors’ Work”. The research report re-defined the word “academic”. Theoretically, Boyer’s diverse academic concept has completed the extension of the concept of academic, putting “comprehensive”, “application” and “teaching” into the category of academic research.

## 1.2 The Modernity of the Academic Development of Teachers

What is modernity? Weber pointed out in *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* that the basic feature of modernity is rational pursuit of interests. You can look at this from two aspects: One is the pursuit of economic interests and the other hand is the rationalization accompanied by the profit-driven nature of capital, particularly reflecting in the calculation rationalization it contains: with the rational pursuit of capitalist profit, the appropriate behavior is capital calculation oriented (Kapitalrechnung).

Slaughter and Leslie and others proposed in 1997 that, roughly from the beginning of the 1980s, with the advent of the era of globalization, universities and academia in the United States, Britain, Canada and Australia and other countries began to enter the era of academic capitalism. Academic capitalism means that academic research has become academic industry and continues to get involved in market activities.

Zhang and Xu (2013) pointed out that one of the notable features of contemporary academic activities is that universities and academic institutions are entering into and passing through modernity. This change means that economic interests going first have replaced academic supremacy, and material benefit principles have replaced the academic moral principles. This is a trend emerging in contemporary academic activities and it must be highly concerned. Yu (2008) pointed out three cultural flaws of contemporary university research: the cooperation culture which emphasizes the form, shallow transplant multidisciplinary culture and group utilitarian culture. Since 1990s, China’s social reality which takes economic construction as the center has strengthened the utilitarian values of scientific research.

The combination of academic aggression and modernity is an important root causing academic misconduct. Dominated by rationalism, researchers are provided with more quantitative scientific research tasks by the management system. Scholars are increasingly being involved in operation rules of the management machine and are materialized as a part of the management machine and run at the improved speed and efficiency of the management machine. The quantitative research tasks provided by the management system continue to grow and there is a gap between the growing number and the ability of the teachers and researchers to complete

the tasks. The tension has formed with the management system improving technical efficiency and the natural ability of researchers to complete tasks. This is essentially a conflict between science and the humanities performed in academic field (Zhang, 2013).

Academic misconduct mainly comes from external pressure of continuous quantitative research tasks and academic evaluation mechanism. An, Zeng, and Yu (2011) pointed out that teachers’ research performance evaluation in universities in China has made great progress since the late 1980s, and after 2000 it has formed a relatively stable evaluation system. Although there is some controversy in the evaluation content and evaluation methods, it is also an indisputable fact that it has promoted the development of China’s scientific research cause to some extent. However, in entering into the 21<sup>st</sup> century, with the progress of the era and the launching of related evaluation research, problems in China’s research evaluation system such as excessive quantification and single evaluation approaches gradually exposed, which have aroused widespread controversy in the scientific community.

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## 2. THE IMPACT OF PROFESSIONAL TITLE POLICY ON THE ACADEMIC DEVELOPMENT OF UNIVERSITY TEACHERS

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On the impact of professional title policy on the academic development of university teachers, there are not specific discussions or evidence. However, some points of views were scattered in related research and they are mainly about problems in academic motivation, research output, academic innovation and academic ethics caused by professional title policy.

**Academic motivation:** With the growing of quantitative scientific research tasks provided by the management system, the scholars’ value is transferred from the pursuit of academics to the pursuit of economic interests. From the perspective of the inner motivation of academic research, the motivation of academic research has changed from “for academic sake” to “for economic interests”. Therefore, personal economic interests are put above academic truth. Academics itself are no longer the purpose of academic activities, but the tool and approach to achieve personal interests. The capital principle overarches everything and academic principles are expelled out of the academic field. Utilitarian has replaced idealism. Noble spiritual values of scholars such as sublime academic ethics are likely to be banished.

**Academic innovation:** In 2005, Qian Xuesen said:

Now China is not fully developed, and an important reason is that there is not a university which is able to follow the model of cultivating scientific, technical and inventive talents. It does not have anything unique or innovative, and there is always no “outstanding” talents.

Professor Qian revealed a lack of academic innovation in contemporary China. What are the reasons? Cui (2013) believes that Chinese academic type morphology is college academic ceremony rather than innovative academic ceremony, which lacks or even does not generate social factors of innovative ideas. Text rather than the wisdom of it has been touted as the sacred object in the academic ceremony, and innovative thinking is excluded, innovation scholars are exiled, and innovation emotional energy cannot be bred, accumulated and improved. In this context, the ritualized aspirations of innovative academic activities vanish into thin air, thus losing an academic life form to effectively agitate innovative thinking. Xu (2012) from the dimension of “national action” explored the problem. He believes that, based on the construction of academic innovation discourse system of “national action”, academic innovation strategy and its practice logic has shown a distinct integrated feature. Although this feature to some extent has given academic innovation indispensable external support, however, it is difficult for the “exogenous academic production model” constructed under this precondition to achieve self-consistent with its logic of practice, which also has led to an academic innovative alienation. Kang (2012) through qualitative research method - interview, concludes that university personnel system such as qualification configuration mechanism, the selecting and hiring mechanism, the evaluation mechanism and the incentive mechanism is the main factor influencing university teachers’ academic innovation. In addition, single knowledge structure of university teachers, young teachers in low material benefits and the adverse environment of administration of universities and academic utilitarian are the unfavorable factors which impact the academic innovation of university teachers.

Research outputs and academic ethics: under the influence of the professional title policy, China has become a powerhouse of scientific publishing. Feng and Tang (2013) pointed out that the number of SCI papers produced in China has soared from 41,417 in 2002 to 193,733 in 2012, ranking second in the world followed the US, but the corruption of publishing behavior has tarnished the achievement.

Zhong (2012) points out in the life autobiography research that the research policy is a major external reason of the research of university teachers.

Years ago, I spontaneously took to the road of scientific research and under the guidance of scientific research policy have experienced the starting point of research to the “top” and then gradually getting into trouble, from early harmonious adaptation to the later gradually falling behind, it is related to the evolution of research policy of the school. The mutation of school research policy (specially referring to the research policy reforms regarding professional title assessment in 2009) makes me feel unsuited and it is just like a train which suddenly accelerates and makes people feel uncomfortable.

Looking at studies on the professional title policy changes affecting the academic development of university teachers, the proportion of empirical research such as quantitative and qualitative research has improved, but there is little microscopic case prospect research of changes of academic development of Chinese university teachers using the time clue. What are the key indicators of the domestic professional title accreditation policy? How do these indicators change in the past decade? Around the index system, to establish a dynamic scale and curves of the decade, to explore under what measurement teachers’ satisfaction, motivation, contribution rate is the maximum or the minimum, and finally to propose the impact of professional title policy on professional development mechanism should be a research area which can be dug deeper.

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