

Study on the Satisfaction of the Relationship between Teachers and Students under the Impact of Double Factors in Universities

-a case study of empirical survey among the students of seven universities in China

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Abstract

Relationship between teachers and students in universities is the basis for all activities in education sector, and is to guarantee the smooth operation of the educational system. Any attention paid to the integrity of education is inseparable from the examination of the relationship between teachers and students. Although the empirical studies have indicated that the overall relationship between teachers and students of universities in China was still relatively satisfactory, and a host of issues exposed there still should not be ignored. Interaction between institutional factors and individual factors formed a natural portrayal of the relationship between teachers and students in universities.

Keywords: Relationship between teachers and students, Satisfaction, Institutional factors, Individual factors

1. Introduction

“Teachers are the persons who impart truth, teach students and clear up difficult questions”, “As far as the relationship between teachers and students is concerned, teachers teach students something moral and professional and make them one of the most talented persons”. For thousands of years, in China's traditional education, human dignity of teachers has always been respected, and relationship between teachers and students has been the mirror which reflected the pure and genuine social relations. Up to the modern society, we treated our teachers not as civilly as the manner such as “Standing in the snow in front of the house of Teacher Cheng”, “Zhangliang himself picked up shoes for his teacher”, and however, elementary mutual respect between teachers and students is the rule for the community to comply with. Discordant messages even conflicts between teachers and students have been exposed for many times in recent years, whereas they should be deep emotional by the interaction of teaching and learning. The relationship between teachers and students distorted and varied by several serious incidents which were exposed by the media attracted a wide range of social concerns intensively and extensively. But what is the actual situation today? Conflict situation between teachers and students on earth is a special case or a typical microcosm of universal significance? Based on the issues above, we launched the present empirical investigation with attempt to give novel insight.

2. Research method

The relationship between teachers and students in universities, based on the teaching behavior of teachers and accepting behavior of students, is a social relationship among people formed during the course of mutual influence and interaction. In essence, it is a concentrated expression of human interaction in such particular social situations, viz. universities and colleges; accordingly, interaction effects are not only affected by the interaction of teaching, but also closely interfered with the group identity of teachers and students, education system, social environment and so on. Along with the rapid development of higher education reform in China, traditional elite education has been gradually and successfully transformed into mass education. In this process, the relationship is undergoing profound changes imposed by the tide of the market economy and the impact of utilitarian thinking, and has been a hot academic attention focused by many researchers. However, former studies of such relationship paid too much attention to the qualitative analysis of theoretical discussions, and even if empirical researches emerged occasionally, the research quality was not quite optimistic. Consequently, we

attempted to conduct an empirical investigation with strict quality control which was of great help to obtain further observations.

The survey used the proportional stratified sampling in combination with quota sampling. Firstly, according to the two variables, viz. the level and the type of the universities, proportional stratified sampling was undertaken among the universities in Guangdong Province of China, and 7 universities were selected at random, viz. South China University of Technology, Jinan University, Guangdong University of Technology, Guangzhou University, Guangzhou Medical University, Guangdong University of Business Studies, The Guangzhou Academy of Fine Arts, respectively. Secondly, based on obtained specific data and information from 7 universities, in accordance with the indices such as population, sex, profession, grade proportion and etc., the quota matrix was established which should simulate the overall situation at its best, 413 surveyed quota were proportionally allocated to the hierarchical matrix with different features respectively, and specific samples were accomplished ultimately by the interviewers in strict accordance with the quota and quantity. Before formal investigation, small-scale pilot survey was carried out with attempts to revise and perfect the questionnaire, and ensure the smooth progress of a formal investigation.

Investigation was carried out from January 1st to 11th, 2009, a total of 413 questionnaires were issued, and 407 were recovered, of which 405 questionnaires were valid with a valid response rate of 98.1%. After verifying and testing, all survey data were manually input the statistical analysis software SPSS 16.0, and after analysis, all survey results were obtained.

3. Results and discussions

3.1 Overall satisfaction of the relationship between teachers and students

In the Fourth National Forum on teacher morality on September 8th, 2009, Professor Gu Mingyuan, president of the Chinese Society of Education gave us the presentation more than concern that “Considerable issues appeared in the current educational practice, and tension between teachers and students has become a more common phenomenon” (Li, 2009). What is the real situation of the relationship between teachers and students in universities of Guangdong province? The present survey brought us slightly desirable answers. Among the surveyed students, 47.0% was satisfied about the relationship, while 39.3% considered that to be general. If we give an accurate number to evaluate the satisfaction, for example, 1 for very dissatisfied, and 5 for very satisfied, the average grades for the relationship evaluated by students was 3.5 with the standard deviation of 0.751. Although the overall rating is still in a state of positive affirmation, but the point that we still could not neglect was the fact that only 5.2% was very satisfied while 8.5% was dissatisfied or very dissatisfied.

After the background data analysis of the surveyed students, we found that there was a statistically significant correlation between student's gender and overall satisfaction of the relationship between teachers and students. Chi-square value was 17.016, and significance level was 0.002 ($p < 0.05$), which indicated that there was difference between girls and boys in the evaluation of satisfaction. Evaluation results were better in girls than in boys, and among them, 60.7% girls were very or slightly satisfied about the relationship while only 45.6% boys correspondingly did. However, it is important to note that other background data, such as schools, majors, grades and educational backgrounds, failed to get through the significance test with the overall satisfaction, indicating that in the present survey, there were no correlations between satisfaction and those factors.

3.2 Factors affecting the relationship between teachers and students

3.2.1 Institutional factors

Chinese higher education in the past two decades has been stepped into the track of fast development, and one of the most remarkable features was to accomplish the transition from elite education to mass education. There is no doubt that an increasing number of ordinary people get access to enjoy high-quality education, but during the transition process, higher education system has been affected by utilitarian thinking which had a profound impact on the industrialization of education. Education tended to be an approach to obtain benefits, higher education academy became institutions gaining plenty of money, and thus profit maximization became the primary and positive choice in colleges and universities. However, when higher education gradually fade its sacred cloak and revealed the nature of goods baldly, the dignity of teachers tended to get further degradation under the rules of trading in the market. If teachers without sacred sense, and students without awe sense, original sacred relationship between teachers and students tended to become secular trading relationship, and antagonisms and competitions between them could be inevitable. Therefore, it is not hard to understand why 45.9% of the surveyed students believed that the current education system was the most cardinal factor affecting the relationship in present survey, much higher than the factors listed in the second order such as general mood of

society (19.2%) and the facet of teachers (19.2%).

Under the guidance of higher education popularization, enlarging enrollment in the universities became an inevitable choice for the development of education. In retrospect, higher education enrollment once was considered as a good recipe for solving lots of issues in the field of education, and even economy, and so on. It greatly promoted the development of the country and society, but as time went by, the defects hidden by policy began to emerge gradually. The enlargement of higher education scale required the simultaneous development of teachers, but due to the sudden enrollment, the ratio of students to teachers increased steeply, and the development of teachers obviously lagged behind the expansion of student scale, which had a direct impact on the positive and effective interaction between teachers and students and teaching quality improvement. Taken Guangdong province as a case, a survey showed that the ratio of teachers to students in Guangdong colleges or university was 1:43.92 in 2004, far higher than the national average level, 1:16.2 (2004).

Data from the present survey sufficiently convinced that the enrollment had brought a negative effect on the relationship between teachers and students. More than 75.1% of the surveyed students believed that the current ratio was uncoordinated, and teachers had no spare time to care about every single student; 63.6% considered that teaching quality declined, which could not meet up with the knowledge-seeking psychology of students. As the employment pressure that was once temporarily delayed during a period has been released altogether in recent years, 54.4% of the surveyed students strongly felt the increasing employment pressure, and thus became unsatisfied with teachers and schools. Moreover, 45.1% considered that enlarging enrollment caused the drop of the quality of new students and affected the enthusiasm of teaching.

3.2.2 Individual factors

The relationship between teachers and students is the emotional experience established in the process of mutual communicating and exchanging. It derives from the teaching and accepting, and is centered on education and teaching activities. It continuously expands outward, and merging with psychological relations, personal relations, moral relations, and tends to be an emotional connection with multiple attributes. Behavior and performance from both sides have a direct impact on the harmonious degree of relationship construction.

3.2.2.1 Behavior of teacher's love

For teachers, the positive expression of teacher's love is not only helpful to the advancement of teaching practice, but also the lubricant to ameliorate the feelings between teachers and students, which is of great help to enhance the satisfaction of the relationship. In order to get further investigation about the effects of behavior of teacher's love on the overall satisfaction of the relationship, the present study divided such behavior into four kernel variables in detail, namely teacher's care to students, communication frequency between teachers and students, attitudes during the communication between them, difficulty in their communication. Above four variables as independent variables, overall satisfaction of the relationship as the dependent variable, all those variables were undertaken multiple linear regression analysis. All variables were evaluated respectively according to the extent from weak to strong revealed from the facts.

As seen from table 5, the regression model passed the significance test, and was statistically significant and better explanatory ($F=51.270$, $P=0.000<0.05$; correlation coefficient=0.605, determination coefficient=0.366, adjusted determination coefficient=0.358). T values of four independent variables were 5.566, 5.156, 4.934, -3.629, respectively, and corresponding significance levels were all 0.000 ($p<0.05$), which indicated that there were statistical correlation between overall satisfaction and any one of the four kernel variables. As seen from the direction and size of the standardized regression coefficients Beta, teachers care more about students, communicate with them in a higher frequency, be kinder during the process of exchanging, and then the overall satisfactory of students to the relationship will be higher (positive correlation), while more difficult communication between teachers and students, lower the satisfaction rating (inverse relationship).

3.2.2.2 Role expectations

Traditional educational philosophy paid too much attention on the passive acceptance status during the process of students' knowledge-learning, and often neglected its subjective initiative in the building of the relationship between teachers and students. With the pervasion of people-centered thinking in the modern educational philosophy, more and more scholars begin to re-examine the issues of status equality between teachers and students. Key point between teachers and students should be the relationship between "one human" and "another human", and equal intersubjective relationship between "you" and "me", which becomes the mainstream gradually (Shao, 2007, PP. 13-19). Such view will be no doubt helpful to eliminate the teacher-centered idea, and pay more attention to students' independent personality.

Interaction between teachers and students in the long term will inevitably form the expectations of social roles on each other. Connotation of role expectations contains many aspects, such as beliefs, subjective initiative, the exertion of rights and obligations, and so on. For university students, if the ideal teacher's role expected in their mind is quite different from the true feelings, a negative impact on the evaluation of the relationship will be imposed. 70.7% of the surveyed students considered the ideal relationship between teachers and students to be a friend type, and such ratio was far higher than the second order, democratic type (18.3%). Ideal and reality usually speak different languages, as seen from the true feeling of students, and merely 14.4% of the surveyed students thought that role played by their teachers was friend and confidant. The vast majority (88.3%) felt that the role played by teachers was still initiator of knowledge. Higher expectations and the gap from the reality were prone to make students dissatisfied with their teachers and thus gave a negative evaluation to them. Long and large accumulation of such situations could lead to the intensification of conflicts between teachers and students.

4. Conclusions and discussions

Relationship between teachers and students in universities is the basis for all activities in education sector, and is to guarantee the smooth operation of the educational system. Any attention paid to the integrity of education is inseparable from the examination of the relationship between teachers and students. Although the empirical studies have indicated that the overall relationship between teachers and students of universities in China was still relatively satisfactory, a host of issues exposed there still should not be ignored. The existing education system lagged behind the requirements of social development where utilitarian thinking proliferated greatly, the education system failed to exert its due effects and power, and thus considerable incongruities appeared in higher education during the development of Chinese social transformation. Institutional defects had a direct impact on the real interaction between teachers and students in universities. Teachers had no spare time to care about every single student, and teachers' love to students that was of great help to ameliorate the feelings between the teachers and students was lack under the current education system. When ideal teacher role expected by the students could not be balanced against their real experience, once conflict or extreme events occurred, it could be easy for students to produce non-rational impulse behavior. Interaction between institutional factors and individual factors formed a natural portrayal of the relationship between teachers and students in universities.

Innovating irrational education system is the premise of recovering the dissimilated relationship between teachers and students. As the practice subject of the relationship, teachers should play a positive and cardinal role in the interaction. Cyxomjnhcknn once said, "A host of conflicts in the schools which end in the great misfortune in education often root in the teachers that were not good at communicating with their students." Teachers can not merely play the basic role as an initiator of knowledge. They should give more concern and communicating chance to students, and consider them as an individual with equal status as themselves. When teachers improve themselves in the teaching skill, moral level and other aspects, and put their own personal impact profoundly on the emotional communication with students, they will exert their bigger influence, and establish a more harmonious and positive relationship between them.

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Table 1. Overall satisfaction of the relationship between teachers and students

Satisfaction evaluation	Population	Effective percentage (%)	Accumulative percentage (%)
Very	21	5.2	5.2
Slight	189	47.0	52.2
General	158	39.3	91.5
Not	30	7.5	99.0
Very not	4	1.0	100.0
Sum up	402	100.0	——

Table 2. Gender and overall satisfaction (%)

Gender Satisfaction	Man	Woman
Very	5.3	4.4
Slight	40.3	56.3
General	46.4	29.2
Not	6.2	10.1
Very not	1.8	——
Sum up	100.0	100.0
$\chi^2=17.016$ df=4 p=0.002 Contingency coefficient =0.206		

Table 3. Main factors affecting the relationship

Main factors	Population	Effective percentage(%)	Accumulative percentage(%)
Educational system	177	45.9	45.9
General mood of society	74	19.2	65.0
Facet of teachers	74	19.2	84.2
Facet of students	46	11.9	96.1
Others	15	3.9	100.0
Sum up	386	100.0	——

Table 4. Effects of enlarging enrollment on the relationship

Effects	Population	Percentage (%)
The current ration of teachers to students was uncoordinated, and teachers had no spare time to care about every single student	301	75.1
The teaching quality declined, which could not meet up with the knowledge-seeking psychology of students	255	63.6
The employment pressure increased, and thus students became unsatisfied with teachers and schools	218	54.4
The reduction of new students' quality affected the enthusiasm of teaching	181	45.1
Others	11	2.7

Note: Multiple-choice items, and cumulative percentage could be more than 100%

Table 5. Multiple linear regression analysis of effects of behavior of teacher's love on the overall satisfaction of the relationship

Model	Overall satisfaction of the relationship between teachers and students			
	B	Beta	t	Sig
(Constant)	1.001	—	4.203	0.000
Teacher's care to students	0.274	0.269	5.566	0.000
Communication frequency between teachers and students	0.261	0.237	5.156	0.000
Attitudes during the communication between teachers and students	0.295	0.225	4.934	0.000
Difficulty in the communication between teachers and students	-0.226	-0.159	-3.629	0.000
$R = 0.605$ $R^2 = 0.366$ Adjusted $R^2 = 0.358$ $F = 51.270$ $Sig = 0.000$				

Table 6. Role played by teachers in students' lives

Role	Population	Percentage (%)
Initiator of knowledge	356	88.3
Leader of students' groups	76	18.9
Friend and confidant	58	14.4
Imitational model	49	12.2
Surrogate for parent	19	4.7
Others	12	3.0

Note: Multiple-choice items, and cumulative percentage could be more than 100%

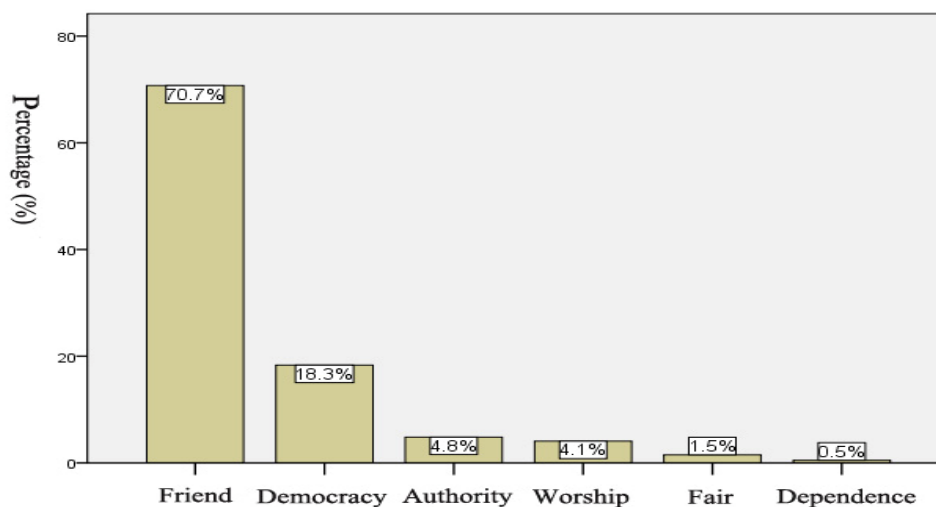


Figure 1. Ideal relationship between teachers and students in the mind of university students