

Research on the influencing factors and differentiation strategies of emotional labor of teachers in applied undergraduate colleges

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Abstract: In the process of educational development in applied undergraduate institutions, teachers' emotional labor has a significant impact on teaching quality, students' growth, and teachers' own career development. However, current research on the influencing factors of teachers' emotional labor in applied undergraduate institutions is not in-depth enough, and there is a lack of targeted differential strategies. This paper analyzes various factors affecting teachers' emotional labor in applied undergraduate institutions, including school management, student characteristics, and the nature of disciplines. Based on these factors, it proposes targeted differential strategies aimed at improving the quality of teachers' emotional labor and promoting the high-quality development of applied undergraduate education.

Keywords: Applied Undergraduate Institutions; Teachers' Emotional Labor; Influencing Factors; Differential Strategies

1. Introduction

Applied undergraduate institutions aim to cultivate applied-oriented talents, emphasizing practical teaching and the development of students' vocational abilities. Under this educational model, teachers not only need to impart knowledge and skills but also invest emotions in the teaching process. They should guide students to establish correct vocational and value outlooks, and stimulate students' learning motivation and enthusiasm for practice. Teachers' emotional labor refers to the process in which teachers manage and express their emotions to achieve teaching goals during teaching. Positive emotional labor can create a favorable teaching atmosphere, enhance teacher-student interaction, and improve teaching effectiveness. Conversely, improper management of emotional labor may lead to teacher burnout, affecting teaching quality and student development.

At present, applied undergraduate institutions face numerous challenges during their rapid development, such as the transformation of teaching models and the diversification of student needs. These factors all have an impact on teachers' emotional labor. Conducting in-depth research on the influencing factors of teachers' emotional labor in applied undergraduate institutions and formulating corresponding differential strategies are of great practical significance for improving teachers' job satisfaction, enhancing teaching quality, and promoting students' all-round development. At the same time, this also helps to enrich and improve the theoretical research on teachers' emotional labor in the field of education, providing theoretical support for the reform and development of applied undergraduate education.

2. Literature Review

Hochschild (1983) introduced the concept of "emotional labor," which has since been applied in education. Teachers' emotional labor refers to the process of consciously managing and expressing emotions to meet professional and emotional needs in teaching (Li Qiong, 2020)^[1]. Defining emotional labor from a "thick concept" perspective provides a more scientific and educationally valuable framework, emphasizing its role in teachers' professional growth (Li Xishun, 2024)^[2]. Various factors influence teachers' emotional labor, including school management, leadership, and organizational climate, as well as students' behavior and individual differences (Chen Xiaohong et al., 2022)^[3]; (Yin Hongbiao, 2017)^[4]. Teachers' professional identity, experience, and personality also play significant roles (Zhao & Sun, 2023)^[5]. Positive emotional labor enhances teaching effectiveness, student development, and teachers' job satisfaction, while negative emotional labor can lead to burnout. To address emotional challenges, strategies such as improving teacher training, optimizing school management, and focusing on students' individual needs are recommended (Yang Hui et al., 2023)^[6]; (Qin Qin et al., 2022)^[7].

3. Analysis of Influencing Factors of Teachers' Emotional Labor in Applied Undergraduate Institutions

The emotional labor of teachers in applied undergraduate institutions is influenced by multiple factors. In terms of school management, the teaching management system emphasizes practical teaching and internships, while the evaluation ignores teachers' emotional efforts. Whether there is organizational support or not affects teachers' willingness to invest. There are significant differences in students' learning foundations and attitudes, and they have clear career expectations, which not only consume teachers' emotional resources but also require teachers to provide career guidance. As for teachers themselves, those with high professional identity and strong teaching abilities are more likely to invest in emotional labor, while novice teachers are prone to anxiety. In terms of disciplines, the strong practicality places heavy responsibilities on teachers, and the development requirements bring pressure for knowledge update, affecting emotional labor.

3.1 School Management Factors

3.1.1 Teaching Management System

Applied undergraduate institutions focus on cultivating applied talents and emphasize practical teaching in their curriculum. Teachers are expected to balance high-quality theoretical content with extensive guidance during internships. However, some schools' teaching evaluation systems overly focus on practical achievements and employment rates, neglecting the emotional labor teachers invest in fostering student interest and professional qualities. This unbalanced evaluation may fail to recognize teachers' emotional efforts, potentially diminishing their motivation to invest in emotional labor.

3.1.2 Organizational Support and Atmosphere

The organizational support and atmosphere created by the school have a significant impact on teachers' emotional labor. In applied undergraduate institutions, when school leaders attach great importance to teachers' career development, they will actively provide teachers with a wide variety of training opportunities, such as organizing teachers to participate in domestic and international professional academic seminars, industry training courses, etc., enabling teachers to access cutting-edge disciplinary knowledge and advanced teaching concepts and methods. At the same time, sufficient support is given in terms of teaching resources, with complete teaching equipment, abundant teaching materials, etc. equipped to provide a solid guarantee for teachers' teaching work. In such an environment, teachers deeply feel the care and attention from the organization and will naturally be more willing to invest in emotional labor, treating teaching work with greater enthusiasm and a stronger sense of responsibility. Conversely, if the school's organizational atmosphere is tense and there is a lack of platforms and mechanisms for cooperation and communication among teachers, once teachers encounter problems in daily teaching and student management, it will be difficult for them to obtain effective advice and support from their colleagues, leaving them in a helpless situation.

3.2 Student-related Factors

3.2.1 Students' Learning Foundations and Attitudes

The sources of students in applied undergraduate institutions are diverse, resulting in significant differences in students' learning foundations and attitudes. Some students do not have a solid grasp of basic knowledge before entering university. When facing university-level professional courses, they often feel overwhelmed and are prone to developing a fear of difficulties. This poses higher requirements for teachers' teaching and emotional guidance abilities.

In teaching, teachers need to spend extra time and energy to make up for students' knowledge deficiencies and use diverse teaching methods to stimulate students' interests. For students with weak foundations, teachers should start from basic knowledge points and use examples, analogies, etc. to help them understand abstract concepts. In practical courses, some students are not proficient in operations and lack the spirit of active exploration, relying too much on teachers' guidance. Teachers not only need to patiently explain the operation steps but also constantly encourage students to overcome their fears and take bold attempts. This process consumes a large amount of teachers' emotional resources.

3.2.2 Students' Career Expectations and Demands

Compared with students in ordinary undergraduate institutions, students in applied undergraduate institutions pay more attention to their career development and have clear career-oriented expectations for teaching content and practical opportunities.

When teaching, in addition to imparting professional knowledge, teachers also need to deeply understand the development trends and professional requirements of various industries to provide students with accurate career planning guidance and the latest employment information. For example, teachers of business majors need to track the operation models of various enterprises and changes in talent demands, and integrate actual cases into teaching to make the teaching more in line with workplace needs. At the same time, according to students' individual career interests and specialties, personalized career planning plans are formulated to answer various questions they encounter during the job-hunting process.

3.3 Teachers' Own Factors

3.3.1 Professional Identity and Values

In applied undergraduate institutions, teachers' professional identity and values have a profound impact on their emotional labor. Teachers who highly recognize the concept of applied-talent cultivation are well aware that their work is of great significance for students' career development and regard teaching as a key way to realize their self-value. They actively invest in emotional labor, focus on cultivating students' practical abilities and professional qualities, and pay full attention to students' growth, not just limited to academic performance. Conversely, if teachers have insufficient understanding of the value of applied education and think that it is not as profound and connotative as academic-oriented education, they are likely to lack enthusiasm and motivation in their work. During teaching interactions, it is difficult for them to fully engage in emotion management, and they may be perfunctory or indifferent to students' questions and needs, unable to build a good teacher-student relationship, ultimately affecting the teaching effectiveness and students' learning experiences.

3.3.2 Teaching Abilities and Experience

Teachers with strong teaching abilities and rich experience are more calm and confident in teaching. Relying on the experience accumulated over a long period, they can keenly perceive the changes in students' learning states and needs and flexibly adjust teaching strategies according to students' feedback. When dealing with students' problems and conflicts, they can also use communication skills and educational wisdom to resolve conflicts and maintain good teaching order. For example, in classroom discussions, they can not only stimulate students to actively participate and have intellectual collisions but also skillfully guide when the discussion deviates from the topic or there are differences, promoting the in-depth progress of the discussion. However, novice teachers, due to their lack of teaching experience, are prone to anxiety and helplessness when facing complex teaching situations and students' problems. When dealing with classroom discipline problems, they may lack effective management methods, leading to a loss of control of the situation. This not only affects the teaching progress but also disturbs their own emotions, thus reducing the quality and effectiveness of emotional labor.

3.4 Disciplinary Factors

3.4.1 Disciplinary Practicality

The disciplines in applied undergraduate institutions are highly practical, especially in engineering, business, and other fields. For disciplines with strong practicality, teachers assume multiple responsibilities in practical teaching and invest more emotional labor. Take engineering experimental teaching as an example. Ensuring students' safety is the top priority. Teachers need to explain the experimental operation procedures and safety precautions in detail, constantly pay attention to students' operations, and promptly correct dangerous actions. At the same time, they need to guide students to correctly operate the experimental equipment, which means that teachers themselves must be familiar with the equipment principles and operation methods and clearly impart them to students. The experimental process is full of uncertainties, such as equipment failures, abnormal results, and students' operational errors occur frequently. Facing these situations, teachers must remain calm and patiently help students analyze and solve problems. During this process, they bear a great deal of tension and anxiety, which greatly increases the intensity of emotional labor.

3.4.2 Disciplinary Development Requirements

The development speeds and requirements of different disciplines vary. The disciplines in applied undergraduate institutions are closely linked to industries and need to be continuously updated in line with industry trends. Take the computer science discipline as an example. With the rapid development of information technology, new programming languages, algorithms, and software frameworks are constantly emerging. In order to keep the teaching content up-to-date and meet the disciplinary development requirements, teachers need to spend a lot of their personal time learning new technologies and new methods. They not only have to conduct in-depth research on new knowledge but also need to consider how to skillfully integrate it into the existing teaching system and adjust the teaching syllabus and course content. This continuous pressure of knowledge update affects teachers' emotional states. Being in a state of high-intensity learning and teaching adjustment for a long time, teachers are prone to fatigue and anxiety, which in turn affects their investment of emotional labor in teaching and reduces their teaching enthusiasm and initiative.

4. Differential Strategies for Teachers' Emotional Labor in Applied Undergraduate Institutions

Applied undergraduate institutions can formulate differential strategies for teachers' emotional labor from multiple aspects. In terms of school management, optimize the teaching management system and create a good atmosphere; in view of students' characteristics, implement personalized teaching and tutoring and strengthen career guidance; in terms of improving teachers' own qualities, enhance professional identity and teaching abilities; in adapting to disciplinary characteristics, strengthen practical teaching support and promote the update and integration of disciplinary knowledge.

4.1 Strategies Based on School Management

4.1.1 Optimize the Teaching Management System

When constructing the teaching management system, schools should focus on balance, rationality, and a human-centered approach. Practical teaching tasks should be thoughtfully arranged based on research into the needs of each major and teachers' capabilities, ensuring workload balance to prevent teacher fatigue and maintain emotional labor quality. The teaching evaluation system should move beyond traditional indicators like practical achievements and employment rates, incorporating teachers' emotional labor. Evaluating how teachers engage students emotionally, their interactions, and emotional support can offer a more comprehensive assessment. A multi-dimensional evaluation, including student, peer, and teaching supervision feedback, can ensure a fair, objective recognition of teachers' emotional labor and teaching effectiveness.

4.1.2 Create a Good Organizational Support Atmosphere

School leaders should establish regular communication with teachers, organizing symposiums to address their challenges and career needs. Personalized training plans should be created based on teachers' development stages, offering various opportunities like expert lectures, high-level seminars, and online learning platforms to enhance teaching skills. Emotional management training should also be provided to help teachers cope with teaching pressures and maintain a positive emotional state. Encouraging teamwork and collaboration among teachers through curriculum groups and professional departments fosters resource-sharing, mutual support, and collective problem-solving, creating a positive work environment where teachers feel valued and motivated to invest in emotional labor.

4.2 Strategies Aimed at Students' Characteristics

4.2.1 Personalized Teaching and Tutoring

Teachers should assess each student's learning foundation and attitude through tests, classroom observation, and assignment analysis. Based on this, personalized teaching strategies should be implemented, including tutoring plans for students with weak foundations, such as one-on-one sessions and study groups. Teachers should also monitor students' emotional states, providing support when negative emotions arise, and offering encouragement through sincere communication. Positive reinforcement and motivation can help students build confidence, improve their learning abilities, and maintain a positive emotional atmosphere.

4.2.2 Strengthen Career Guidance and Communication

Teachers should actively understand students' career expectations through surveys, interviews, and assessments, integrating career planning into daily lessons. In professional courses, they should introduce industry trends, career prospects, and talent requirements to help students understand their future career paths. Regular career lectures with experts and corporate visits can provide students with real-world insights into industries and job roles. Maintaining open communication through classroom interactions, Q&A sessions, and online channels allows teachers to offer personalized career guidance, including resume reviews and mock interviews, to help students achieve their career goals.

4.3 Strategies for Improving Teachers' Own Qualities

4.3.1 Strengthening Professional Identity and Values Education

Schools should prioritize the education of teachers' professional identity and values through systematic training and lectures, involving experts to discuss the trends and goals of applied undergraduate education. Teachers should be encouraged to participate in key tasks like curriculum development and teaching reforms to enhance their sense of responsibility. Teachers should also reflect on their practices, adjust their professional values, and approach teaching with a positive attitude, integrating emotional labor to care for and guide students while fulfilling their professional values.

4.3.2 Improving Teaching Abilities and Experience

Teachers should embrace lifelong learning by engaging in training, academic exchanges, and staying updated on new research and teaching innovations. Participation in teaching skills courses and academic seminars helps improve their abilities and broaden their horizons. For new teachers, a mentor-apprentice system is effective for enhancing teaching and emotion-management skills. Experienced teachers should guide new ones, while new teachers actively learn through observation and seminars. Additionally, teachers should regularly reflect on their teaching, identify areas for improvement, and refine their methods to enhance both teaching quality and emotional labor.

4.4 Strategies to Adapt to Disciplinary Characteristics

4.4.1 Strengthening Support and Management for Practical Teaching

For practical disciplines, schools should invest in updated hardware facilities, such as advanced equipment for engineering and business training centers with simulation software. The practical teaching management system should clarify teacher and student responsibilities, with detailed syllabuses, procedures, and safety protocols. Teachers should ensure safety, provide technical guidance, and monitor students' progress. They should also manage their emotional resources, balancing students' learning needs and emotional states, while encouraging innovation and ensuring effective practical teaching.

4.4.2 Promoting the Update and Integration of Disciplinary Knowledge

Schools should encourage teachers to stay updated on discipline developments by offering discipline development funds to support participation in academic conferences, research projects, and industry practices. These opportunities help teachers stay at the forefront of their fields, innovate knowledge, and align teaching content with industry needs. Additionally, schools should promote interdisciplinary collaboration by forming teaching teams, developing interdisciplinary courses, and conducting joint research projects. This approach enhances teachers' knowledge, fosters innovation, and supports emotional labor, ultimately improving teaching quality.

5. Conclusion

The emotional labor of teachers in applied undergraduate institutions is influenced by multiple factors such as school management, students, teachers themselves, and disciplines. These factors are intertwined and jointly act on the process of teachers' emotional labor. Through in-depth analysis of these influencing factors, this paper proposes targeted differential strategies aimed at improving the quality of teachers' emotional labor and promoting the development of applied undergraduate education. In terms of school management, optimizing the teaching management system and creating a good organizational atmosphere can provide support for teachers' emotional labor; implementing personalized teaching and strengthening career guidance according to students' characteristics can help reduce teachers' emotional burden and im-



prove teaching effectiveness; improving teachers' own qualities, enhancing professional identity and teaching abilities, is the key to teachers' effective emotional labor; adapting to disciplinary characteristics, strengthening practical teaching support, and promoting the update of disciplinary knowledge can meet the emotional labor needs of teachers in different disciplines. In the future, applied undergraduate institutions should continuously pay attention to the issue of teachers' emotional labor and constantly improve relevant strategies and measures. At the same time, further in-depth research on the internal mechanisms of teachers' emotional labor and the dynamic changes of influencing factors should be carried out to provide more powerful support for the professional development of teachers and the improvement of education and teaching quality.

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