

Traditional Elimination and Modern Reconstruction: Transformation and Reflection of the Academic Professional Identity of Western University Teachers

Xu Feng^{1,a,*}, Yang Chao^{2,b}

¹2056 Wanqing Road, Yunnan Communications Vocational Technology College, Kunming, China

²Yunnan Normal University, Kunming, China

^a40945976@qq.com, ^b815864781@qq.com

*Corresponding author

Abstract: *The occupation that university teachers engage in is essentially an academic profession. It is important for university teachers to acquire and establish specific social identities from the academic profession. The academic professional identities of western university teachers have undergone an evolving process from traditional identities (city-state Sophist, guild scholar and church cleric, and state civil servant) to modern identities (market employee) from the ancient Greek period to modern society. Each identity is not purely a substitute for the other, but has both its own typical characteristics and inheritance; in modern society, the university teachers' market employee identity, which is "market-oriented" and "contractual", poses a great challenge to the traditional identity. Therefore, in modern society, we need to integrate the advantages and limitations of the "traditional identity" and "modern identity" to the reconstruction of the academic professional identity of university teachers. It aims to restore the original identity of modern university teachers as "intellectuals" and "academics" and to realize the soul of academic freedom and the importance of cultivating talents and exploring truth.*

Keywords: *western university teachers; occupation dignity; traditional identity; modern identity*

1. Introduction

As an important operator of higher education, university teachers are engaged in professional activities that are essentially academic occupations, with "scholarship is an occupation in a material sense." [1] It is an important part of intellectuals, and in different historical periods, university teachers present different identity characteristics. "Identity" is a social symbol of a person's social status, legal status, or respectable status, which shows the social attributes of a person. The professional identity of university teachers is expressed in society by their professional status, reputation and authority, as well as by the power and rights and qualifications they receive. However, these privileges and identities are not invariable, but are constantly transforming with the changing times. Western societies, as the birthplace of the modern university, have experienced a variety of social and state occupation dignity from the ancient Greek period to modern society, which has influenced the identity and responsibility of university teachers in their academic and professional activities. Accordingly, the clarification of the characteristics and expressions of the professional identity of university teachers in different historical periods is of great historical value for the objective understanding of the identity of university teachers and the reconstruction of a reasonable occupational dignity of teachers in contemporary society.

2. The transformation historical logic of university teachers occupation dignity

2.1. The City Sophist: University Teachers as Intellectuals in the Ancient Greek Period

Ancient Greece, the origin of human civilization, also served as an important source of higher education activities. The Sophist, who emerged in the 5th century B.C., is regarded as the earliest university teacher, originally meaning "philosopher" or "wise" man. They were regarded as "wisdom authorities" by the ruling class of the city-state and the common people. By creating a system of knowledge in grammar, rhetoric (eloquence) and philosophy (dialectic/logic). By systematically training the noblemen's youngsters in thinking, expression and politics, they became politically

influential and outstanding individuals who had a significant impact on the life of the state and society. For this reason, Hegel commented that the Sophist school was the teacher of "wisdom, science, music, mathematics, etc." and that Greece, which had acquired intellectual education, "should be grateful to the Sophist". [2] In the 4th century B.C., The Academy founded by Plato, known as the first university in Western history [3], and the Lykeion founded by Aristotle are considered to be permanent higher education institutions [4]. The scholars of The Academy, Plato and Aristotle, who stressed rationality and humanism, based on philosophy, formed their own educational philosophy and guided their educational behavior through the blending of philosophy and education, so that their socio-professional identity as "City Sophist" was strengthened and they had the corresponding political status and social privileges. This is reflected in the fact that the Sophist's academic career objective and commitment is the pursuit of advanced rational knowledge. In ancient Greece, it was believed that virtue was a noble ideal to pursue, but virtue was not inborn, and only through educational development could people discover the potential of human virtue. To achieve this noble purpose, it was necessary to rely on the Sophist of the city-state. Because only the Sophist had in-depth rational knowledge, especially knowledge of virtue, and was able to convey it to the general public through the "Seven Liberal Arts"; Secondly, it is the Sophist of the city-state who serves the society with philosophical concepts and educational behaviors. It serves the nature of man on the one hand. In the ancient Greek, the people admired a meditative life rather than a materialistic one. Whereas Sophist were learned men and respected human nature, they could guide the people with reason how to explore the origin of people and things in their leisure time; They served the city-state (nation) on the other hand. The ancient Greeks believed that virtue was fundamental to the well-being and future of the city-state, and that the virtue of the citizens was closely related to the fate of the city-state. But "virtue is not inborn or naturally possessed, but is always learned and acquired through education." [5]

2.2. Guild Scholars: University Teachers as Professionals in the Medieval Period

The university teacher in the modern sense appeared in the Middle Ages. In the Middle Ages, a number of intellectuals gradually diverged from other social occupations to specialize in teaching and research of advanced knowledge and were paid accordingly. At that time, the professional university teacher was born. In the early Middle Ages, the social identity of university teachers was first denoted by guilds, and thus by the status of "guild scholars. In the 12th century, scholars, a socio-professional group, formed their own organizations, or "scholars societies" in imitation of guilds. The university was essentially a guild of scholars and intellectuals, whose interest was to bring together teachers and students interested in acquiring knowledge and pursuing advanced knowledge, and to establish a system to protect the common interests of scholars and members. As one scholar has said: "The 13th century was the century of the university because it was the century of the community organization. Wherever there was a large number of people in a given profession in every city, these people organized themselves in order to protect their interests, as well as to introduce mechanisms of monopoly in their favor." [6]

First, as a guild scholar, the teacher had the authority of a guild "workshop master". In the early Middle Ages, the teacher was the "workshop master" of the guild and the learner was the "apprentice". The workshop master, as the owner of the workshop property, acted as the mentor, while the apprentice (later the student) acted as the assistant. During this period, it was the "master-apprentice" system that formed the hierarchy of the professional status of the different groups of people in the workshop and influenced the determination of the status and relationship between teachers and students in medieval universities. Thus, the fundamental rules of the academic profession of university teachers were formed. i.e., if a teacher had more knowledge and competence, the more resources and power he could obtain; In addition, a teacher's identity as a scholar in the guild is also manifested in the right to teach independently. As an academic organization, it needed to establish a more independent system and organizational form to maintain its operation and protect the interests of teachers. In the Middle Ages, when Christianity prevailed, the church controlled the deacons of universities through political power and the provision of land, and the guilds and their members had no say in the deacons. In order to safeguard the authority of the guilds and their professional activities, they were able to gain and consolidate the right to teach by means of organized and large-scale strikes and relocations. Eventually, the diaconal authority was transferred from the Church to the guilds with the support of the Pope, and the guilds became the de facto organization for the approval of the academic profession of the university.

At this point, the guild identity of the university faculty was recognized and consolidated; again, teacher guild identity was also expressed in the independent receipt of remuneration. The university

guild was a socialized organization whose fundamental responsibility was to train the professionals needed for the social profession, which required material and financial security. In the 14th and 15th centuries, the university became salaried, and the academic profession was recognized by the government and remunerated by the municipalities, thus freeing the academic profession and the livelihood of teachers from dependence on student fees. The advent of the salary system meant "the establishment of the university teaching profession. [7] It also allowed for the further manifestation and strengthening of the guild identity of university teachers.

2.3. National civil servants: university teachers as academics in modern society

At the end of the 19th century, when the Renaissance liberated human nature and enhanced human subjectivity and the European nation-state emerged, a secularization of the modern university based on national development became the internal logic for the establishment of the identity of university teachers. University teachers were mainly dependent on kingship or government, and eventually acquired the identity of civil servants, a legitimate public position confirmed and recognized by the government. In recent times, the origin of the civil servants status of university teachers is closely related to the high expectations of the state and government for the mission of discovering and innovating knowledge in universities under the guidance of creative rationality. For example, in modern Germany, Neo-humanists put more emphasis on the reform of the national education system and advocated that the ideological basis and values of the "culture for state" should be established for the transformation and development of universities. Their main purpose was not only to train the specialists needed by the government, but also to provide an excellent cultural atmosphere and a solid intellectual foundation for national development through the creation of rational activities. For this reason, most of the professors and associate professors were appointed by the government and held high political, economic and social status and played an important role in the academic and professional activities of the university faculty with the national interest as the highest goal. For example, the German National Education Act of 1794 stated that university teachers had to be selected and recruited through the university as well as the state, then appointed directly by the Ministry of National Education, and teachers were state employees^[8]; in Italy, chair professors serve in the cabinet and its legislature and occupy a pivotal position in the education committees of the cabinet and the legislature; in Britain, where university teachers remained faithful to tradition but used their exalted academic power to easily become the guests of government ministers^[9]. In France, university teachers, as the senior spokespersons of the social ruling class" are entitled to allocate future power resources of society. The social ruling class also pays extreme attention to the consolidation of the status of these teachers." [10]

There are two main aspects of the establishment of the national civil servants identity of university teachers in modern times: Firstly, the state civil servants identity of university teachers has been manifested through the academic career entrance qualification and evaluation system. To ensure that scientific research becomes a professional academic profession, the "professorship system" was first introduced at the University of Berlin in 1816 to ensure the professional competence and dedication of teachers to science. According to the professorship system, the prerequisite for professorship is a doctoral degree. Moreover, applicants for professorship must submit a professorship thesis and give a public lecture; Secondly, a large number of universities appoint highly qualified scholars to university professorships. With these practices, "there is a great deal of interest in being trained as such a teacher by those who want to pursue research. This situation makes it possible for a teacher to use his academic freedom to focus most of his teaching efforts on the scientific training of a few future researchers." [11]

Thirdly, standards of scientific research and competence are used as criteria for evaluating teachers' academic careers. The most important criterion for evaluating the appointment and academic status of teachers is their unique scientific ability and innovative results; In addition, the identities of civil servants of university teachers are also highlighted through the social roles of teachers. In the modern society, the social role of university teachers is manifested as: first, pure scientific inquiry. Rather than equating natural science with practical technology, pure science reflects on and explores the world as a whole from a variety of perspectives, thus enabling one to grasp the unifying principles of the world and its meaning and making one a subject of the world. Consequently, it is possible for university teachers to adhere to the principle of academic activity for the sake of science in accordance with the laws and requirements of scientific activity, without the need to justify their existence by assuming more and more specific social functions; second, to cultivate people with subjectivity. The university teacher becomes the creator of the world by virtue of his or her profound knowledge and original talent, implants the truth in the hearts of students, and guides them to an attitude of life that reveres independence and is modest and dignified but not conceited.

2.4. Industrial employees: university teachers as industrial marketeers in modern society

In the early 20th century, the contractual rules became the general law of the market as capitalism grew and the market economy expanded. The contractual rules changed the contractual relationship between the government and the university, society and the university, and the university and the faculty into a contractualized relationship between the "commissioner" and the "commissioneer". As a party to the contract - the "commissioneer" - university teachers, despite the relatively liberal academic environment, have become increasingly and inevitably subject to the rules of the market contract and have been given the status of "industrial employees" status. The academic professional interests of university teachers have also shifted from value rationality to industrial rationality and belief ethics to responsibility ethics [12].

In modern society, as the market system and contractual rules have penetrated, the goals and missions of the academic profession have also undergone significant changes, and the modern identity of university teachers - "industrial employees" - has been established. At the same time, the traditional identity of university teachers has also been greatly threatened and challenged. First, the tenured professorship, the traditional identity of teachers, has been quietly transformed. The tenured professorship has been increasingly called into question and criticized, and the number of tenured professors has been gradually reduced and replaced by a large number of part-time professors. For example, some universities in the United States have even abolished the tenured professorship; The tenured professorship has also been "doomed" in the United Kingdom, where the university tradition is more prominent; Second, the evaluation mechanism of the teachers has changed dramatically. It has become an important rule in the academic evaluation of teachers for the new rule "Either promote or leave", and it has become a common phenomenon that "research is emphasized over teaching". To meet the needs of the state and the market, teachers have shifted the focus of their academic careers to practical and fast-acting "applied research"; Thirdly, "accountability system" results in a more effective and prestigious university career. With the expansion of higher education, the growing consumption of resources, and the demand from governments and investors for universities to take on more social responsibility, "accountability system" appeared and began to influence universities and their academic professional life. It requires a quantitative assessment of the quality and effectiveness of the work of university faculty. Therefore, number of research projects and funding, academic papers, academic autographs, patents and certificates of awards, etc., became fixed indicators for society and universities to assess the level and quality of faculty members' academic careers; Fourthly, the academic career loyalty of teachers was explicitly changed. As university teachers' need for external funding and external market recognition increasingly become the basic laws that dominate their academic professional lives, which leads to a shift in university teachers' career from disciplinary professional loyalty to external market loyalty; Fifth, the academic capital became an important indicator of identifying faculty status. In the 1980s, scholarship became a form of capital in the marketplace, i.e.: academic capital. In addition, the decreasing financial support for universities in most Western countries, it forced university faculty to find new ways of funding. This demand coincided with the demand for knowledge in society and the market. This is when academia, as a means of knowledge discovery and innovation, was introduced to the market as a form of capital that could promote economic growth and technological progress, and became "academic capitalism".

3. Reflection on the evolution of occupation dignity of university teachers and modern reconstruction

From ancient Greece to contemporary society, the continuous transformation of the occupation dignity of university teachers is an objective and inescapable trend underlying the development of the academic profession of teachers. They are both distinctive and inherited, and each of them is closely related to the social and cultural development of the time, representing the different requirements for the academic profession of university teachers in each period of socio-economic and cultural development. From a dialectical point of view, university teachers' professional identities of different periods have fulfilled their corresponding historical missions in specific historical periods. But at the same time, its historical limitations may also bring certain adverse effects on the development of higher education and the professional values of university teachers. Before the 20th century, the traditional identities of the academic profession of university teachers, including the identity of city Sophist, guild scholars, church clergy and national civil servants, all have reflected some commonalities and have positive historical values, although they emerged in different historical periods: First, it reflects the high academic authority of university teachers. In the ancient Greek period, the authority of Sophist status

came from the philosophical discernment of intellectuals on advanced knowledge; In the Middle Ages, the authority of the guild scholars and ecclesiastical clergy came from the diverse academic privileges that university teachers acquired through hard struggle; In the modern era the authority of the identity of civil servants derives from the state's need for intellectual innovation; Secondly, it manifests the spirit of academic freedom of the university. By guaranteeing the freedom of academic professional activities through the unique intellectual authority and academic privileges, the traditional status of civil servants was free from state or religious interference, maintaining academic independence and manifesting the spirit of academic freedom; Thirdly, the occupation dignity of teachers has its reliance on academic organizations or institutions. Whether it is the academy in the Greek period, the guild or professorship in the Middle Ages, or the lectureship in modern society, all of these are essentially academic organizations whose objective is to protect the interests of teachers in the cultivation of human resources and academic research through the establishment of certain academic institutions; However, in a modern sense, some prominent limitations exist in the traditional identity of university teachers: The first is that conventional university teachers' academic authority is mainly achieved and sheltered through a high degree of class privilege, and the status privilege with hierarchical characteristics is formed once the privilege is held by a specific group of teachers. The privileged status of teachers can possess and hold limited quality higher education resources, and the problems of class and educational inequity in education will be highlighted; Secondly, regardless of whether the traditional identity is sheltered by the state or religion, the professional challenge and motivation of teachers are greatly affected once they acquire a tenured professional status (e.g., chair professor in Germany and tenured professor in the United States), which reduces the efficiency and responsibility of teachers' work; Thirdly, the conventional status of teachers as academic authorities reinforces the status of teachers, placing them as the ultimate authority and center of the teacher-student relationship, and leaving students as the passive receptors of learning and the "vulnerable" in the acquisition of knowledge.

After the 20th century, the emergence of the "industrial employee" status of university teachers was of "landmark" significance, which realized the transformation of the "traditional identity" of university teachers into a "modern identity". The identity of "industrial employees" reflects the characteristics of the times, but also has positive values and problems that need to be solved. In terms of positive significance: firstly, the core of market contractualization is that both parties to the contract are equal subjects. The emergence of university teachers' "industrial employee" has gradually eliminated the privileged hierarchy of teachers' traditional identity and made the equality feature obvious; Secondly, the aim of market contractualization is to pursue higher efficiency. The industrial employee status of university teachers gives teachers more responsibilities within the framework of contracts or agreements to complete their teaching, research and social service work on time and in a quantitative manner, thereby to increase the efficiency of their professional activities and boost the fulfillment of university functions and missions; However, there are two sides to the coin, and the "industrial employee" of university teachers in modern society generates an obvious identity crisis and a decline in status: Firstly, the market contractualization of the pursuit of highly efficient academic professional work has largely led to the accentuation of the instrumental value orientation of the academic profession of teachers. As teaching becomes a means of training professional talents, the marketization and utilitarianization of disciplinary research and social services are prominent, and academic professional academic misconduct, academic foam, academic corruption and other problems of academic ethical misconduct become prominent, which deviates from the proper mission of teachers and the crisis of existence brought about by the identity of teachers; Secondly, internal university faculty management emphasizes efficiency over humanity. Market indenture management emphasizes the contractual appointment system for teachers, and the academic work of teachers emphasizes explicit quantitative results assessment rather than invisible influence and process evaluation. "Contractualization" of efficiency also leads to unhealthy competition among university faculty; Thirdly, the academic freedom of faculty members is restricted and challenged. Government and market demands are the external drivers of faculty contractualization, but they are often in response to real needs, the needs of the moment, which may not be consistent with the truth of university faculty's academic career activities, and they are realized through institutional design and control of faculty academic freedom; Fourthly, this marketization has made university teachers step down from the "altar" to the "mundane world" and entertain the public, which largely eliminated the elegance of university teachers and the image of intellectual authority, and brought university teachers an unexpected identity crisis.

Therefore, in modern society, it is necessary to reconstruct a reasonable occupation dignity of university teachers. This reconstruction, on the one hand, has to reflect the characteristics of the society

of the time, and on the other hand, has to highlight the shining points of the traditional identity of the society; In other words, it should realize the effective integration of "traditional identity" and "modern identity".^[12] In other words, we have to integrate the qualities of the Sophist's courage in the pursuit of truth in the ancient Greek period; the medieval university teachers' courage in the pursuit of academic autonomy in the face of the powerful and the noble; and the modern university teachers' service to the state in the search for the truth; the modern society teachers' academic virtue of knowledge and the search for truth; Integrating the social qualities of modern university teachers who value efficiency and the pursuit of equality; On the other hand, it is important to highlight the academic freedom of the traditional identity, the respect for knowledge and the teachers, and the mission to disseminate, discover, and innovate advanced knowledge, but also the spirit of efficiency, responsibility, and equality of the modern "market-oriented" identity. Ultimately, our university teachers' academic and professional activities will return to the essence of academic freedom, which is to foster the search for talent and truth.

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