

Emotional Labor Dilemmas and Coping Strategies of Novice Teachers in the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area Universities

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Abstract. With the rapid development and economic integration of the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area, applied undergraduate education plays an important role in the universities in this region. However, novice teachers often face dilemmas in emotional labor and need to cope with various pressures and challenges. This study aims to explore the emotional labor dilemmas faced by novice teachers in applied undergraduate education in the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area and propose corresponding coping strategies. Through data collection methods including questionnaires and in-depth interviews with novice teachers in applied undergraduate education in selected universities in the Greater Bay Area, this study analyzes the issues they encounter in emotional labor. It explores the coping strategies that teachers in the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area may adopt to deal with emotional labor dilemmas.

Keywords: Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area; Applied Undergraduate Teachers; Novice Teachers; Emotional Labor; Dilemmas and Coping Strategies.

1. Introduction

In recent years, with the deepening economic integration and educational cooperation in the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area, applied undergraduate education has played an increasingly important role in the universities of this region. As key players in the education system, applied undergraduate teachers play a crucial role in nurturing talent with practical skills. However, novice teachers often face challenges in emotional labor, which can significantly impact their teaching quality and professional development. Emotional labor refers to the emotional and affective efforts that teachers put into their interactions with students and the educational environment. However, emotional labor in higher education teaching can also present challenges and pressures. Teachers need to continuously express positive emotions during the teaching process while managing their own emotional states and allocating emotional resources effectively. Emotional labor may involve emotional suppression, emotional fatigue, and emotional conflicts. Therefore, teachers need to possess emotional intelligence and emotional management skills to balance emotional investment and emotional rewards, while maintaining their emotional well-being and job satisfaction.

In the context of applied undergraduate education, novice teachers face various challenges in emotional labor. Firstly, they may face a high workload, including preparing and delivering multiple courses, as well as providing personalized guidance and support to students. Secondly, students have diverse needs and expectations, and there may be cultural differences between teachers and students, requiring teachers to understand and meet students' needs effectively. Additionally, applied undergraduate teachers also need to address the alignment between industry demands and curriculum, such as integrating disciplinary knowledge with practical applications to equip students with professional competence and innovation skills.

Currently, there is relatively limited research on the challenges of emotional labor and coping strategies for novice applied undergraduate teachers in the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area. Therefore, in-depth exploration of this area holds significant theoretical and practical

implications. Understanding and addressing the challenges of emotional labor can enhance teachers' job satisfaction and professional development, thereby better promoting the sustainable development of applied undergraduate education in the region. This study aims to explore the challenges faced by novice applied undergraduate teachers in emotional labor in the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area and propose corresponding coping strategies. Through in-depth research on the emotional labor experiences of applied undergraduate teachers, this study can provide feasible recommendations and guidance for university administrators and teachers to cope with emotional labor challenges, thereby promoting the sustainable development of applied undergraduate education in the region.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Conceptual Definition of Emotional Labor and Novice Teachers

The research on emotional labor originated in the 1980s as the shift from manufacturing to a service-oriented society gradually took place, fostering increased interpersonal interactions. Emotional labor refers to the labor in which workers manage their own emotional expressions to create specific emotional states for others during interactions, with the intention of receiving rewards in return. In the context of higher education, emotional labor of higher education teachers refers to the teachers' expression of positive emotions and affect during the teaching process, effectively establishing emotional connections and resonance with students to facilitate their learning and development.

The concept of emotional labor in higher education teaching is derived from emotional labor theory and educational practices. It emphasizes the emotional expressions of teachers during interactions with students, including expressions of care, interest, support, and encouragement. The purpose of emotional labor in higher education teaching is to establish positive emotional atmospheres by fostering good teacher-student relationships and emotional connections, which in turn enhances students' learning enthusiasm, learning outcomes, and satisfaction. The core of emotional labor for higher education teachers lies in the sincerity and personalization of their emotional expressions. Teachers need to demonstrate care and understanding towards students, listen and respond to students' emotional needs, and provide emotional support and motivation to help students overcome difficulties and develop their potential. Through emotional labor, higher education teachers can foster positive emotional experiences in students, cultivate their confidence and self-motivation, and stimulate their learning interest and academic achievement.

The definition of novice teachers has been an important topic in educational research over the past few decades. In the 1980s, scholars such as Berliner (1988) proposed five primary stages of teacher professional competence development based on teachers' learning and mastery of professional knowledge and skills in teaching. Among them, Burlinger considered internship teachers with 1-2 years of teaching experience as novices, while Steffi categorized novice teachers as being in the preparation stage. In the 1990s, the scope of teacher knowledge research expanded to include specific subjects and teacher education. Studies on the professional development and professionalization of intern teachers indicate that their professional development is influenced by various factors, including family life, personal practical experiences, educational background, and teacher education programs they have received. However, due to the lack of experience in emotional labor skills and emotional labor awareness, intern teachers face challenges in establishing good emotional connections and engaging in emotional interactions. They are susceptible to emotional fatigue, difficulties in emotional regulation, and emotional dissonance associated with emotional labor. Despite having relatively limited teaching experience, research has found that intern teachers experience frequent positive emotions in the classroom. This suggests that intern teachers may exhibit a stronger enthusiasm and positivity towards their teaching work, despite the challenges they may face in emotional labor.

In summary, the definition of novice teachers has evolved and expanded over the past few decades. The professional development of intern teachers is influenced by various factors, with the lack of emotional labor skills and awareness being one of the main challenges they face in establishing emotional connections and coping with emotional labor issues. However, the positive emotions displayed by intern teachers in the teaching process may provide them with motivation and opportunities for professional growth. Future research can further explore the specific issues related to emotional labor in intern teachers and propose relevant support and training strategies to promote their professional development and emotional well-being.

2.2. Theoretical Framework of Emotional Labor

The theoretical framework of emotional labor originated with Hochschild's introduction of the concept in his book "The Managed Heart" in the 1980s. Hochschild proposed that in addition to physical and intellectual labor, individuals also engage in emotional labor, and emphasized that emotional management also consumes energy (Hochschild, p. 56). In 1993, Ashforth and Humphrey put forth four strategies of emotional labor, which require employees to maintain calm and neutral emotions in response to environmental stimuli in order to focus on their primary tasks (Ashforth & Humphrey, p. 96). In 1996, Morris described the process of emotional labor, suggesting that individuals exhibit desired emotional behaviors that align with organizational requirements through effort, planning, and self-control in interpersonal interactions (Morris, p. 987). From this perspective, many scholars have recognized emotional labor as an integral component of work that influences employees' experiences and outcomes in various contexts.

Hochschild introduced two behavioral strategies for emotional labor: deep acting and surface acting (Hochschild, 1983, p. 63). Deep acting refers to an employee's efforts to align their internal emotional feelings with the emotional performance required by the job (Hochschild, 1983, p. 63). Surface acting involves employees disguising or hiding their true emotional feelings by altering their external expressions and behaviors to display the emotions demanded by their work (Hochschild, 1983, p. 63). Building on Hochschild's work, Ashforth and Humphrey proposed a third strategy called genuine acting, in which individuals spontaneously and authentically experience and express the desired emotion without deliberate effort (Ashforth & Humphrey, 1993).

Teachers' emotional labor strategies are largely based on service industry standards and are generally categorized into surface acting, deep acting, and natural acting (Ashforth & Humphrey, 1993). In the contemporary 21st century, emotions play a significant role in the classroom environment where English is taught as a language. In this regard, the new era has given a fresh perspective to the development of teachers' professionalism, emphasizing the efficient use of emotional labor strategies as practice English teachers in primary schools (Park, 2003, p. 24). It is essential for teachers to recognize the coordination and cooperation between emotion and rationality in emotional labor, highlighting the rationality of emotion in education. Consequently, numerous scholars have acknowledged that emotional labor cannot be ignored in teachers' personal development and teaching practice, realizing the importance of employing emotional labor strategies to regulate teachers' emotions (Grandey, 2000, p. 95).

Grandey divided emotional labor strategies into two dimensions: surface acting and deep acting (Grandey, 2000, p. 95). Diefendorff proposed a third dimension based on this two-dimensional approach, known as naturalistic performance strategies (Diefendorff, 2002). Teachers' emotional labor also includes their perceptual acting regarding their self-emotional recognition (Diefendorff, 2002).

By examining these dimensions, the paper seeks to provide insights into effective emotional labor strategies for teachers in the contemporary educational landscape. This research will contribute to a deeper understanding of the complex role of emotions in the classroom and the importance of emotional labor in teachers' professional development. Do not number your paper: All manuscripts must be in English, also the table and figure texts, otherwise we cannot publish your paper. Please

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3. Methodology

This study focuses on novice teachers in higher education institutions in the Greater Bay Area, including Guangdong, Hong Kong, and Macau. The research will utilize a combination of questionnaire surveys and interviews to collect data from the sample and analyze the current status, challenges, and influencing factors of emotional labor among novice teachers. The study will employ a literature review approach to clarify the core concepts of emotional labor and explore the theoretical foundations of emotional labor. Through visual analysis of the China National Knowledge Infrastructure (CNKI) database, the research will gain insights into the current research trends and gaps in the field. This will inform the identification of dimensions for constructing relevant mechanisms for managing emotional labor by social organizations, educational institutions, and individual teachers. The ultimate aim is to propose strategies for optimizing emotional labor.

3.1. Research Questions:

Emotional labor is a self-regulation behavior that helps individuals adapt to social life and is a manifestation of human psychological activities. With the accelerated pace of China's higher education reform and development, higher demands have been placed on the quality of the teaching workforce. Novice teachers in the Greater Bay Area are a crucial part of the teaching force, as they bear the responsibility of educating students while facing challenges in emotional labor. Their emotional labor conditions will impact the quality of educational work and have implications for teachers' psychological well-being. Therefore, the specific research questions of this study are as follows:

Research Question 1: What are the concepts and mechanisms of emotional labor among novice teachers in the Greater Bay Area?

Research Question 2: What is the current status of emotional labor challenges among novice teachers in the Greater Bay Area and what are the influencing factors?

Research Question 3: How can emotional labor management for novice teachers in the Greater Bay Area be improved in a targeted manner?

By addressing these research questions, this study aims to deepen our understanding of emotional labor among novice teachers in the Greater Bay Area, provide valuable insights to enhance their emotional well-being and teaching experiences.

3.2. Research Participants:

The study will focus on novice teachers in local universities in the Greater Bay Area. A total of 215 questionnaires will be distributed, emphasizing the anonymity and academic nature of the survey to increase the response rate. After careful screening, a total of 172 valid questionnaires were collected, resulting in an effective response rate of 80%.

3.3. Research Instrument:

3.3.1. Questionnaire

This study utilized a questionnaire survey method. The research subjects were novice teachers in higher education institutions in the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area. In this survey,

we distributed questionnaires to the participants to obtain data on the current situation of emotional labor, the use of emotional regulation strategies, and cognitive-perceptual behaviors among novice teachers in higher education institutions. The construction of the questionnaire was based on the scale developed by Grandey and classified emotional labor into three dimensions: surface acting, deep acting, and natural acting, following Diefendorff's categorization. We also revised the questionnaire based on the findings of Zhu Shenhai's related studies in 2020.

The emotional labor questionnaire in this study consists of four dimensions: surface acting, deep acting, natural acting, and emotional awareness. It includes a total of 20 items, with 6 items in the surface acting dimension, 7 items in the deep acting dimension, 4 items in the natural acting dimension, and 3 items in the perceptual behavior dimension. The questionnaire utilizes a 5-point Likert scale (1 represents strongly disagree, and 5 represents strongly agree). The questions in the questionnaire describe the specific manifestations of emotional labor during the internship period of novice teachers in higher education institutions, and are designed to align with their expressive habits.

The following are the dimensions, distribution of items, and examples of the questionnaire:

Surface Acting Dimension:

- Putting on a smile to appear friendly and cheerful.
- Hiding negative emotions to avoid adversely affecting students.
- Maintaining a neutral emotional expression, not revealing true emotions.
- Using positive language and tone when interacting with students.
- Controlling emotional expressions to avoid excessive emotional fluctuations.
- Ensuring consistency between words and actions when interacting with students.

Deep Acting Dimension:

- Attempting to genuinely generate authentic emotional experiences from within.
- Sincerely understanding the needs and emotional states of students.
- Forcing oneself to treat students with positive emotions.
- Reminding oneself to focus on students' learning progress and achievements.
- Using positive thinking to change one's emotional state.
- Striving to understand the emotional motivations behind students' behaviors.

Natural Acting Dimension:

- Expressing genuine emotional experiences, without deliberate concealment or imposition.
- Naturally responding to changes and needs in students' emotions.
- Exhibiting sincerity and warmth when interacting with students.
- Avoiding excessive emotional displays.
- Listening to students and providing emotional support as needed.
- Responding to students' questions and concerns in a genuine and natural manner.

Emotional Awareness Dimension:

The above description provides the composition of the dimensions, distribution of items, and examples of the questionnaire. The questionnaire used a 5-point Likert scale (1=strongly disagree to 5=strongly agree) to assess the extent of emotional labor in each item. The questionnaire design aims to describe and evaluate the specific manifestations of emotional labor during the internship period of novice teachers, aligning with their actual expressive habits.

Table 1. Questionnaire dimension composition, item distribution and item sample

Dimensions		Amount	Distribution of items	Sample item
Surface Acting	pretend	2	Item1, 4	Item1. Even if I feel tired, I will pretend to be energetic in class.
	restrain	2	Item7, 17	Item7. I hold back my discomfort when I confront students or colleagues.
	conceal	2	Item2, 12	Item2. When blamed by others, I will hide my grievances.
Deep Acting	change of perception	3	Item11, 18, 20	Item11. Even if misunderstood by other people, I will try my best to calm myself down, patiently explain, and seek solutions.
	attention diversion	2	Item3, 6	Item6. In the formal class, I will try to focus on the class, so that I don't feel nervous.
	isolate	2	Item13, 19	Item13. If I have problems with my family or colleagues, I will return to class and focus on my students and work.
Natural Acting	release	2	Item8, 10	Item10. I feel very gratified when I am recognized by students or parents.
	emotion venting	2	Item14, 16	Item16. A lot of the time the emotions I show to my students come naturally.
Emotion Recognition	perceptual acting	3	Item5, 9, 15	Item15. As an English teacher, my job requires showing positive emotions to students.

Table 2. Descriptive statistics of each dimension of emotional labor strategy

Dimension	Minimum value	Maximum value	Mean value	Standard deviation
Surface Acting	5.000	1.166	3.723	0.917
Deep Acting	4.000	1.500	3.197	0.705
Natural Acting	4.750	1.000	3.584	0.901
Perceptual Acting	5.000	1.000	3.895	0.903
Total questionnaire quantity	4.687	1.166	3.600	0.856

4. Findings

Based on the data obtained through relevant research methods, the difficulties faced by novice teachers in the emotional labor process in higher education institutions can be summarized into three aspects: policy and social status challenges, educational work environment and organizational challenges, and personal emotional competence and professional growth challenges. Below is an elaboration on each specific aspect:

- Policy and Social Status Challenges:

At the policy level, higher education institutions do not prioritize the emotional labor of novice teachers. The lack of effective incentives and specialized emotional management training programs for novice teachers contributes to a decline in their emotional labor level. Additionally, there exist disparities in social status and cultural background perceptions of teachers within society, making it difficult for novice teachers to understand the educational beliefs of students' parents and vice versa. Such differences can lead to unpleasant emotional experiences and increase the challenges of emotional labor for novice teachers.

- **Educational Work Environment and Organizational Challenges:**

Novice teachers in higher education face multiple challenges beyond fulfilling teaching objectives. They need to constantly enhance their professional skills, balance institutional missions with the needs of students and parents, engage in parent-school cooperation, and address students' and parents' psychological concerns. These additional tasks consume a significant amount of their time, increase work pressure, and reduce enthusiasm for the teaching profession. Prolonged emotional labor can result in emotional fatigue and burnout.

- **Personal Emotional Competence and Professional Growth Challenges:**

Effective emotion regulation skills and self-awareness are essential for teachers to effectively manage their own emotions and understand and support students' emotional needs. However, not all novice teachers possess these skills, which can exacerbate the emotional labor they experience. Limited opportunities for career development and advancement can hinder the growth of novice teachers and restrict their ability to handle emotional labor effectively.

- **Cultural adaptation and cross-cultural stress:**

In the international and multicultural environment of the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area, novice teachers may encounter challenges related to cultural adaptation and cross-cultural communication. They must adapt to and understand students and colleagues from diverse cultural backgrounds, which adds complexity to their emotional labor.

- **Regional specialties:**

Within the Greater Bay Area, novice teachers face the demand for integrating innovation and entrepreneurship education. They may experience pressure to incorporate innovative elements into their teaching practices, foster students' innovation capabilities, and contribute to the entrepreneurial ecosystem. These expectations increase the emotional labor burden, requiring them to deliver high-quality education while meeting these regional demands.

By incorporating these aspects, the challenges faced by novice teachers in the Greater Bay Area's emotional labor process capture the nuanced context and unique characteristics of the region's higher education landscape.

5. Strategies to Address the Challenges:

Based on relevant research, the following strategies can be implemented to address the challenges faced by novice teachers in higher education in the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area. These strategies encompass social, organizational, and individual levels, considering the significant impact they have on the emotional labor of novice teachers:

- **Policy support and professional development training:** Education authorities at various levels can introduce policies and provide specialized support measures for novice teachers, including emotional labor training, cross-cultural education, innovative teaching methods training, and information technology training. These initiatives can enhance the professional knowledge and abilities of novice teachers, thereby elevating their proficiency in managing emotional labor.
- **Organizational support within schools:** Administrators in higher education institutions should strengthen support and care for novice teachers, valuing their emotional labor and providing necessary assistance. Schools can establish emotional labor support teams or dedicated organizations to offer services such as emotional counseling, psychological guidance, and career development guidance, helping novice teachers cope with emotional stress and overcome work challenges.
- **Career development opportunities:** Providing career development and advancement opportunities for novice teachers is crucial. Encouraging their participation in teaching and research projects, collaboration within professional teams, and academic exchange activities can enhance their professional growth and career satisfaction while reducing emotional labor pressure.
- **Establish collaborative platforms and resource sharing:** Setting up interdisciplinary collaboration platforms and mechanisms for resource sharing can promote cooperation and

communication among teachers. This fosters the sharing of experiences, joint problem-solving, and alleviation of collaboration pressure.

- Provision of information technology support and training: Offering information technology support and training to teachers helps them acquire proficiency in educational tools and online platforms, effectively integrating them into their teaching practices. This alleviates the pressure associated with technological literacy and enhances teaching effectiveness and workflow efficiency.

- Emphasize cross-regional cooperation and provide emotional support for teachers: Promoting experience sharing and collaborative research among teachers through cross-disciplinary exchange, joint training, and teacher cooperation projects is essential. Establishing mechanisms to support teachers' emotional labor and offering services such as psychological counseling and career development guidance contribute to the synergistic development of regional education and the enhancement of teacher well-being. By implementing these strategies and measures, the challenges faced by teachers in higher education in the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area can be addressed. This, in turn, helps create a supportive work environment, promotes teacher emotional well-being and job satisfaction, and ultimately enhances the quality of education and teaching standards.

6. Conclusion

This study thoroughly explores the strategies for addressing the emotional labor of novice teachers in local higher education institutions in the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area. Through questionnaire surveys, it was found that novice teachers in this region perform exceptionally well in emotional labor strategies. Additionally, interviews revealed several challenges they face, including policies, teacher social status, educational environment, and personal emotional competence and professional growth. Of particular concern is the unique cultural and educational environment of the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area, which presents specific challenges for novice teachers, such as cultural adaptation, cross-cultural communication needs, self-confidence challenges in dealing with international and multicultural student populations, pressures of innovative teaching, and balancing research and teaching responsibilities. Moreover, the characteristics of higher education in this region also present specific difficulties for teachers in terms of teamwork, information technology application, and meeting individual student needs. To address these unique challenges, this study proposes a series of strategies, including strengthening policy support, providing specialized training, offering more career development opportunities for teachers, and establishing collaborative platforms for resource sharing. These strategies aim to enhance the emotional labor capacity of novice teachers in the region and promote their professional growth.

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