

# Research on Organizational Support for Career Development of Young Teachers in Private Higher Education Institutions

Yang Xin

School of Education, Guangdong Baiyun University, Guangzhou, China

## Abstract

**This study investigates organizational support for career development among young teachers at 15 private higher education institutions in Guangdong Province. The findings reveal multiple challenges including insufficient training resources, inadequate emphasis on research initiatives, imperfect professional title evaluation procedures, limited salary and welfare benefits, and underdeveloped organizational culture. Recommendations include adopting teacher-centered management philosophies, optimizing faculty management mechanisms, and fostering a supportive organizational environment to enhance institutional support for young teachers' career growth.**

## Keywords

**Private higher education, young teachers; career development, organizational support.**

## 1. Introduction

Young teachers constitute a vital component of university human resources. Effective organizations rely on talent cultivation, and this principle holds true for private higher education institutions. As the driving force behind institutional development, young teachers significantly influence the quality of private universities. To address this, national and provincial policies have been implemented to advance teacher workforce development. In 2021, the State Council revised the "Implementation Regulations of the Law on Promoting Private Education" to emphasize "legally safeguarding faculty benefits, ensuring equal treatment for private school teachers, and standardizing support for strengthening teaching staff development." In 2020, the "Guangdong Province New Era Teacher Development System Construction Implementation Plan" issued by the Guangdong Provincial Department of Education and other departments emphasized the need to "prioritize the smooth flow of teacher career development pathways and improve the teacher development system, effectively safeguarding the legitimate rights and interests of teachers in private schools." In 2021, the "Guangdong Province Reform Implementation Opinions on Strengthening Teacher Team Building in the New Era" further stressed the importance of "solidifying support service systems for university faculty development and enhancing mentorship programs for young teachers." According to the "Age Structure of Full-time Higher Education Faculty by Age Group" report published on December 29, 2022 by the Ministry of Education's official website, China has 1,272,519 young teachers (under 45 years old), accounting for 67.5% of the total. [1] Compared with public universities, private institutions have a higher proportion of young teachers, whose career development directly impacts teaching quality. Therefore, it is crucial to focus on the career development of young teachers in private universities and comprehensively explore organizational support mechanisms for their professional growth.

## 2. Theoretical Foundation and Research Methods

The study of teacher career development originated from the "Teacher Concern Questionnaire" compiled by Fuller in the 1960s. Subsequently, this research became a focal point in global

education circles and gradually gained momentum. Scholars hold varying interpretations of the essence of university faculty development. By synthesizing existing research and applying organizational support theory, this paper investigates the current status of organizational support for young teachers' career development at 15 private universities in Guangdong Province.

## **2.1. The Connotation of Professional Development for Young Faculty in Private Higher Education Institutions**

Career development refers to the dynamic process where individuals continuously adjust their career plans based on personal needs and development goals from entering to leaving a profession, thereby achieving career advancement and fulfillment. Literature review reveals that researchers have varying definitions of professional development across different contexts, but generally focus on aspects such as competency growth, salary progression, and promotion opportunities. Teacher professional development denotes the continuous enrichment and refinement of educators' professional roles. Given that university faculty members shoulder dual responsibilities in teaching and research, their professional development typically encompasses both pedagogical enhancement and disciplinary expertise cultivation. Pan Maoyuan (2007) analyzed the connotation of university teacher development through broad and narrow perspectives: Broadly speaking, it refers to all active university teachers engaging in theoretical learning and practical work, continuously improving their professional competence through various methods; Narrowly speaking, it specifically targets novice university teachers, aiming to help them quickly adapt to professional roles, maintain dedication to teaching, and sustain a positive professional attitude[2]. Wu Qinghua (2013) defined young faculty professional development as encompassing two dimensions: disciplinary expertise and teaching proficiency[3]. Zhang Bei (2014) proposed that young faculty professional development covers multiple aspects including academic title advancement, performance evaluation, office facilities, and research team collaboration[4]. Zhou Jing (2019) proposed that the professional development of young university teachers can be interpreted from four dimensions: teaching development, career development, organizational development, and personal development[5]. Yu Yulan (2021) defined the professional development of young university teachers as a process where individuals utilize organizational and social resources to fully leverage their capabilities in their professional fields, thereby achieving career goals and realizing job value[6]. Integrating these perspectives, this study defines the professional development of young teachers in private universities as: the process through which they master knowledge and skills at various career stages, ultimately progressing toward maturity in areas such as teaching development, professional growth, promotion, and salary/benefit increases.

## **2.2. The fundamental concept of Organizational Support Theory**

Organizational Support Theory was introduced by Eisenberg in 1986, initially applied in management science. It posits that employees develop an overall perception of whether an organization cares about their development, values their contributions, and prioritizes their well-being. Grounded in the "Social Person" hypothesis, this theory suggests that managers should not only oversee production tasks but also serve as mediators between frontline workers and management, listening to staff opinions, understanding emotional needs, and addressing them. Management should focus on meeting employee demands while maintaining harmonious relationships with both superiors and colleagues[7].

The Organizational Support Theory posits that organizational support fulfills employees' material and emotional needs. When employees perceive organizational reciprocation for their efforts, they work more diligently to benefit the organization. Access to significant value resources (e.g., salary increases, developmental training opportunities) fosters a sense of

obligation. Through reciprocal principles, employees reduce absenteeism by improving both internal and external performance, thereby supporting organizational goals. The theory's core concept is "perception" – how employees gauge an organization's recognition of their contributions and well-being through its actions during work processes. Superior support holds particular significance. As organizational agents, supervisors typically evaluate employees and communicate organizational goals and values. Employees often interpret supervisors' attitudes as manifestations of organizational support. Eisenberg et al. further introduced the concept of perceived organizational commitment, describing employees' unilateral perception of organizational promises and behaviors. Four key factors influence organizational support: human resource management measures, employer-employee relationships, organizational equity, and employee characteristics. Riegel et al. confirmed significant correlations between organizational support and employee organizational commitment, job satisfaction, performance, and turnover intentions[8].

### **2.3. The internal logical relationship between the career development of young teachers in private colleges and universities and organizational support**

For young faculty in private universities, their organizational context is essentially the institution itself. When young faculty members sign labor contracts with private universities, they undertake the fundamental mission of cultivating virtue and nurturing talent. From an organizational behavior perspective, the relationship between private universities and young teachers exhibits characteristics typical of employer-employee dynamics[9]. In social contexts, individuals cannot survive in isolation—they must operate within specific organizational frameworks where their psychological states and behaviors are influenced by these environments, which in turn impact organizational effectiveness[10]. Young faculty at private universities represent unique individuals who also function as social beings, with their professional growth constrained by multiple external factors. They eagerly seek recognition of their value from both institutions and society. As crucial components of university faculty teams, young teachers must comply with institutional requirements while collaborating to achieve developmental objectives, with their professional growth being inseparable from institutional support. Compared to corporate employees, young teachers demonstrate greater urgency in seeking institutional backing. The primary function of private universities lies in creating collaborative platforms where young teachers, driven by strong career aspirations, consciously engage in faculty development communities. Given that these institutions employ self-appointed faculty members, they primarily oversee professional training. Consequently, the training programs, merit-based promotion systems, and decision-making processes that incorporate faculty input all reflect institutional recognition and support for young educators' professional growth. When young faculty members experience substantial organizational support from private universities, they develop emotional connections and sense of obligation toward their institutions. Moreover, when facing challenges, receiving assistance and guidance from these institutions enhances their perception of institutional commitment to their professional development needs, thereby boosting career confidence. This demonstrates that organizational support positively impacts young teachers' career progression through individual-level effects. To advance career development for young faculty in private universities, efforts should focus on cultivating a supportive organizational culture and strengthening institutional development.

### **2.4. Questionnaire Design and Sample Selection**

To objectively assess the current state of organizational support for career development among young faculty in Guangdong's private universities, this study employed questionnaire surveys. The questionnaire design referenced existing research by Gao Yuan (2016), Shi Yuqing (2016),

Dong Peijun (2019), Zhou Jing (2019), Wang Qiaoling (2019), and Zheng Xiaofeng (2021), while incorporating practical considerations from private university faculty. The questionnaire consists of five sections with 43 questions: Section 1 covers personal information (10 items); Section 2 examines teaching development (6 items); Section 3 investigates professional growth (11 items); Section 4 analyzes promotion opportunities (4 items); Section 5 evaluates salary and benefit increases (8 items); and Section 6 assesses organizational climate (4 items). This survey was distributed to 7 private undergraduate universities and 8 private higher vocational schools. To ensure objectivity and authenticity, all questionnaires were completed anonymously without disclosing any personal information of respondents. After developing the questionnaire, a pilot survey was conducted with selected participants. Based on their feedback, the final version of the formal questionnaire was finalized. Following two rounds of distribution, a total of 826 valid questionnaires were collected.

### 3. Existing Problems

Through questionnaire surveys and interviews, this study investigates the current status of support for young faculty development organizations at private higher education institutions in Guangdong Province. The research selected young faculty members from 7 private undergraduate universities and 8 private vocational colleges as subjects, conducting empirical investigations at the organizational support level. The survey reveals the following issues in support systems for young faculty development:

#### 3.1. Insufficient Training Support for Young Faculty

Teacher training is a cyclical and long-term process with delayed outcomes. Consequently, educational investments and benefits do not always align. Some private universities prioritize profit maximization over funding for young faculty development. To reduce labor costs, some institutions assign excessive teaching tasks to young faculty instead of hiring more staff. This practice prevents young faculty from fully utilizing their time for professional development and research. Survey data shows that 30.63% of respondents reported heavy course teaching loads, while 4.96% indicated extremely heavy burdens. These figures demonstrate that young faculty members at some private universities bear substantial teaching responsibilities, with teaching commitments consuming significant time and energy, making it difficult to efficiently conduct research and professional development.

Regarding faculty training, private universities currently allocate limited funds for teacher development. Additionally, these institutions exhibit contradictory attitudes toward academic advancement programs. On one hand, private universities encourage young faculty members to pursue higher education qualifications to strengthen their teaching staff. On the other hand, these institutions often create barriers to academic advancement for young teachers. This attitude stems from some young educators using private universities as stepping stones during their career development. After accumulating substantial teaching experience and meeting academic requirements, they typically transition to public universities or more competitive private institutions. Consequently, private universities generally show limited support for young teachers' academic growth, often screening candidates during selection processes for advanced training programs. Teacher A commented: "Our university does support academic advancement, but funding is minimal – all expenses must be covered by the teachers themselves." Overall, due to various constraints, private universities currently lack adequate organizational support in terms of financial and time resources required for young teachers' professional development.

### **3.2. Private Universities Need to Enhance Support for Young Faculty's Research Development**

Organizational support theory posits that prioritizing employees' career development demonstrates respect and attention. Typically, trained staff exhibit strong accountability and drive to contribute more to their organizations. Analysis of interviews and survey data reveals existing issues in research support for young faculty at private universities.

Firstly, the construction of research teams within these institutions requires urgent improvement. In private universities, the faculty structure exhibits a pronounced dual-tier trend. Retired senior full-time teachers lack the energy to engage in research, while newly graduated young teachers with lower professional ranks struggle to accumulate sufficient experience in scientific research. Most young faculty members rarely conduct independent research, relying instead on joining research teams and participating in academic studies to enhance their capabilities. However, private universities still lack well-established research team structures, with high-quality, top-tier research groups remaining relatively scarce[11].

Secondly, the development of research platforms requires improvement. Due to weaker research capabilities compared to traditional public universities, private institutions face challenges in securing external funding such as corporate project grants and government research initiatives. Additionally, insufficient investment in research infrastructure leaves these institutions unable to allocate adequate funds for ongoing research, hindering young faculty from conducting effective studies and achieving significant breakthroughs.

### **3.3. The job title evaluation procedures in private universities need refinement**

Although private universities have established relevant regulations for faculty evaluations, various practical issues persist in implementation.

First, some institutions adopt a "seniority-based promotion" system during evaluations, creating perceived unfairness among competent young faculty members, which has contributed to rising turnover rates among younger staff. Secondly, some private universities exhibit unfair practices in their academic title evaluation processes, with transparency being questioned. On one hand, when formulating policies for faculty development, young teachers often receive minimal input. In many cases, they are merely "those who are told," which casts doubt on the transparency of policy formulation and raises questions about procedural fairness[12]. On the other hand, inequities persist during implementation. First, the prevailing trend of prioritizing research over teaching has become institutionalized. Survey data reveals that research achievements dominate both position promotions and title evaluations—76.63% of respondents cited research output as the primary criterion for promotion at private universities, while 86.8% stated it was the main factor for position advancement. Second, interviews indicate that although these institutions have established evaluation rules, leadership's subjective influence inevitably affects actual assessments. Teacher D remarked: "Some school regulations for faculty promotions appear well-designed on paper, but problems arise during implementation—they aren't evaluated according to established standards." This demonstrates that private universities' autonomous authority in academic title evaluations is a double-edged sword. When implemented effectively, it strengthens faculty development; when mishandled, it breeds resentment among young teachers and accelerates talent loss.

### **3.4. Private universities need to enhance salary and welfare support for young faculty members**

According to Maslow's hierarchy of needs, the most fundamental and urgent requirement for young teachers is basic survival needs. If private universities fail to provide adequate salaries to meet these essential living demands, young faculty members are likely to consider leaving.

Through analyzing salary and welfare satisfaction surveys among young faculty in Guangdong Province's private universities, this study identifies the following issues:

**Inadequate salary levels.** Regarding salary satisfaction, 22.28% of young faculty reported dissatisfaction, 13.44% expressed strong dissatisfaction, and 46.13% indicated average satisfaction. Overall, the salary levels offered by private universities remain significantly lower than those of public institutions, lacking competitive advantages.

**Insufficient welfare benefits.** Survey data reveals that 45.64% of respondents rated their university's welfare benefits as average, 23.85% reported dissatisfaction, 12.23% expressed strong dissatisfaction, while only 15.25% were relatively satisfied. Notably, merely 3.03% reported being highly satisfied with their institution's welfare benefits. These findings indicate inadequate welfare protections, which may undermine the work motivation of young faculty members at private universities.

### **3.5. The organizational climate in private universities requires optimization.**

The organizational environment plays a crucial role in the career development of young faculty members, profoundly influencing their emotional state and engagement in teaching tasks. A positive organizational atmosphere enables young teachers to work with mental and physical ease, while negative environments may lead to restlessness and frequent thoughts of leaving their positions[13]. Research indicates that some leaders in private universities neglect regular communication with staff. As these institutions typically do not implement fixed office hours for faculty, young teachers bear heavy teaching and administrative responsibilities during campus stays, resulting in minimal interaction with supervisors and colleagues. Beyond daily teaching duties, young teachers rarely remain on campus, and even during routine meetings, they seldom participate actively. This makes it challenging for university leadership to truly understand their faculty's genuine concerns. Furthermore, given the generally lower status of young teachers in private universities, many hesitate to voice legitimate demands, further diminishing communication channels between administrators and students. Additionally, some young teachers perceive that these institutions prioritize student needs over addressing their own voices or concerns.

## **4. Optimize The Path**

Based on an analysis of existing challenges in organizational support for young faculty development at private universities, improvements can be made through three key aspects: establishing teacher-centered management philosophies, optimizing institutional governance systems, and fostering a supportive organizational culture.

### **4.1. Cultivating Teacher-Centric Management Philosophy**

Interviews reveal that some young faculty members perceive their institutions as prioritizing student needs while neglecting the developmental requirements of young teachers. This indicates that many private universities have not shifted their management paradigms or fully recognized the critical importance of young faculty. As primary workplaces for young educators, private universities play a vital role in supporting their professional growth. Therefore, these institutions should transition from a "task-focused" to a "people-oriented" approach, acknowledging that faculty development is essential for institutional advancement. Universities should establish teaching-centric talent selection criteria and implement scientific incentive mechanisms to foster positive interactions between faculty and institutions, enabling young teachers to actively enhance their instructional capabilities. Additionally, private universities need to move beyond overemphasizing academic credentials while neglecting skill development, actively exploring effective pathways to improve teaching quality. Administrators of private universities should fully recognize the vital role young faculty

members play in institutional development. When advancing the growth of private higher education institutions, it is essential to actively address the career development needs of young teachers and safeguard their legitimate rights and interests.

#### **4.2. Optimizing Management Mechanisms for Young Faculty in Private Universities**

A survey reveals that 12.23% of young faculty members at private universities consider teacher training programs significantly beneficial for their career development, while 40.07% perceive them as relatively helpful. This indicates that such training initiatives play a crucial role in advancing the professional growth of young educators. To enhance career development for young teachers at private universities, institutions should actively refine their training systems. These programs must account for individual learning capacities, align with institutional philosophies, and address diverse developmental needs through targeted training integrated into institutional plans. A structured approach should be implemented, including tiered management tailored to different academic qualifications and professional titles, supported by digital campus platforms for categorized training. Training formats may include, but are not limited to, on-campus/off-campus lectures, academic seminars, overseas study opportunities, corporate internships, professional association exchanges, online courses, and teaching competitions, all aligned with specific career stages[14]. The scientific and comprehensive nature of this training system should remain integral throughout young faculty's career progression, providing clear pathways and safeguards for their professional development.

**Improve the Career Development Evaluation Mechanism for Young Faculty Members.** To establish an effective evaluation system for young faculty members in private universities, it is essential to align with their career development plans and actual progress, ensuring purposeful, phased implementation. Private universities should prioritize building practical evaluation mechanisms, strengthen enforcement of assessment procedures, develop scientific evaluation criteria, and provide feedback on results. This feedback serves not only to validate career development plans but also to measure training effectiveness and inform improvement strategies. Universities must formulate clear career development plans with defined objectives, content, and pathways, establishing support systems[15]. Building on this foundation, institutions should mobilize all departments and colleges to refine professional development frameworks, particularly by establishing comprehensive evaluation mechanisms that align with faculty career goals.

**Enhance Compensation and Benefits Incentives.** Survey data reveals dissatisfaction levels: 22.28% reported partial dissatisfaction, 13.44% expressed strong dissatisfaction, while 46.13% had average satisfaction. These figures indicate that compensation packages for young faculty members in private universities require enhancement. Therefore, private universities should improve their salary systems by appropriately increasing salaries for young faculty members based on inflation rates, while establishing detailed and quantified compensation management mechanisms. A three-tiered compensation system integrating base pay, position allowances, and performance incentives should be implemented to promote the development of a rational compensation framework[16]. Secondly, these institutions can enhance welfare benefits for young teachers through measures like transportation subsidies and housing allowances. Collective benefits such as free cafeteria meals and discounted housing rentals could also be introduced to alleviate living costs and strengthen organizational support and belonging among young faculty. Finally, private universities should improve social security coverage for young teachers by increasing investments in housing provident funds, social insurance, and occupational annuities. This reduces concerns about pension contributions and ensures competitive salary packages within peer institutions, enabling better career engagement. The

full utilization of compensation and benefits incentives helps boost work enthusiasm, enhance team morale, improve organizational performance, and drive high-quality development.

**Ensuring Fairness in Professional Title Evaluation Systems** For young faculty in private universities, promotion directly impacts their careers. Therefore, institutional policies regarding professional title advancement must prioritize fairness, eliminating any "seniority-based" practices. The evaluation system should recognize young teachers with strong research capabilities and outstanding teaching skills within universities. When conducting professional title evaluations, fairness must be ensured, and "work experience" should not be the sole criterion. Secondly, balanced evaluation standards for research and teaching abilities are crucial. Analysis of survey data shows that research achievements play a dominant role in both position promotions and professional title evaluations. Considering the nature of private universities, practical competence could serve as a key criterion for evaluating young faculty members[17]. While research capability remains an important indicator in private university evaluations, it shouldn't dominate promotion decisions, which might undermine teaching competencies. Professional title evaluations should prioritize teaching abilities over research achievements, ensuring balanced assessments. Only through this approach can the fairness of the evaluation system be truly maintained.

### 4.3. Creating a Positive Organizational Climate

The organizational support theory suggests that fostering a positive organizational environment enhances employees' sense of belonging. A supportive atmosphere enables young teachers to work with enthusiasm, improving both their efficiency and instructional quality. Survey data reveals that 5.94% of young faculty at private universities report minimal emphasis on organizational climate, 11.86% consider it relatively unimportant, while 45.64% perceive average attention. This indicates that some private universities need to enhance their emphasis on fostering a positive organizational culture. First, these institutions could establish diverse communication platforms such as Young Faculty Associations and Doctoral Forum for Young Scholars. These platforms facilitate interactions between young faculty members, management teams, and students alike, creating an open and collaborative environment. Such initiatives help strengthen faculty engagement, provide equal opportunities for dialogue, enable effective communication between leadership and staff, and cultivate organizational trust and support among young educators. Second, private universities should prioritize campus cultural development by building distinctive institutional identities and spiritual values. This helps align young teachers' personal aspirations with institutional principles, thereby strengthening organizational cohesion and unity[18].

## 5. Conclusion

The rise of private higher education not only meets diverse academic needs but also significantly contributes to national educational advancement and socioeconomic progress. Over time, private universities have evolved from being supplementary institutions into vital components of China's higher education system. As the backbone of talent cultivation, young faculty members—primarily responsible for teaching and research—serve as the cornerstone of these institutions. Their professional growth remains the key driver for achieving high-quality development in private universities. Only by having a highly professional team of young teachers can we ensure the excellent quality of private higher education. Therefore, the career development of young teachers is crucial to the overall development of private colleges and universities.

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