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大学英语教师的专业身份认同危机及应对研究 [*A Qualitative Study on College English Teachers' Professional Identity: Crises and Strategies*]. 郝彩虹 [Hao Caihong]. 重庆, 中国: 重庆大学出版社 [Chongqing, China: Chongqing University Press], 2014. 235pp. (paperback), ¥32, ISBN: 978-756-2475-83-5.

Since the late 1990s, with the blossoming of reforms in higher education in China, faculty positions have become highly competitive. The doctoral degree has become an essential faculty entry qualification. The quantity and quality of published papers, with the latter usually being judged by the status of the journals, has increasingly become the most important criterion in faculty recruitment, performance evaluation, and award granting in Chinese universities. Hao Caihong observed that many college English teachers, whose work has traditionally been teaching-oriented rather than research-oriented, have chosen to study for doctoral degrees in English or other non-English disciplines in order to meet the requirements of the changing and increasingly demanding policy. Hao's research began with delineating the predicament that these teachers have been suffering from in their professional development, and attributing their predicament to a professional identity crisis, which features the lack of a sense of belonging or meaning in their professional life.

Taking as research participants 11 Chinese college English teachers, either studying for or already having received their doctoral degrees when first interviewed, Hao focused her seven year longitudinal research on the evolution of the professional identity crises these teachers faced and their coping strategies. Employing the perspective of identity theory and teacher professional socialization theory, she investigated how these college English teachers made choices and reconstructed their professional identities in the current policy and institutional context. It was thus possible to explore the status quo of teachers' professional lives and their ways of coping with crises in their professional lives. Hao's research found that college English teachers' professional identity evolved as a consequence of personal choice and response to the powerful influence of institutional policy constraints. Through the processes of individualization and socialization, like two sides of a coin in their professional life, these teachers

constructed professional identities. Hao argued that tension between teachers' personal demands and institutional environment directly triggered crises of socialization and individualization in their professional life.

This socialization crisis was embodied two forms: 1) Teachers passively internalized institutional rules and expectations; 2) Teachers were unwilling or unable to meet the standards and requirements of their institution. The individualization crisis was manifested in terms of a predicament whereby teachers were struggling so hard to meet institutional demands that it was difficult to nurture and maintain their uniqueness and creativity in professional life. Furthermore, due to unwritten disciplinary barriers in faculty performance evaluation, the institutions tended to highlight English teachers' academic performance in the discipline of English. As a result, teachers' professional identity crises intensified, especially in the case of English teachers with doctoral degrees in non-English disciplines. Hao subsequently identified three typical orientations among teachers' coping strategies: the active accommodation orientation, the game-playing orientation, and the rational conforming orientation. These different orientations eventually led to a differentiation in the content and status of their professional identity. It is worth noting that these teachers' coping strategies shared an implied theme that Hao did not articulate explicitly in her book. That is, all the teachers had somewhat willingly or unwillingly compromised with their institutional context, and then rationalized their compromises so as to locate themselves in the reality of their context. Hao considered such rationalization as individuals' reconciliation with the institution, the precondition of which was the reconciliation between the individuals and themselves.

Based on the empirical findings of her longitudinal research, Hao reflected on the appropriateness of the concept of identity in the Chinese context and then reinterpreted the connotation of this concept. She developed the illuminating insight that in most cases in a Chinese context, the concept of identity actually implied "obedience" and "attachment" more than "belongingness" and "commitment". The latter two are usually considered as the essence of identity in the Western theoretical paradigm. We could expand and deepen Hao's reinterpretation of identity in the sense of Erikson's concept of cultural consolidation². To be specific, if teachers tend to integrate their identity

² See E. H. Erikson (1968). *Identity: Youth and crisis*. New York, NY: W. W. Norton, p. 32.

development within the dominant institutional culture and accept that culture as part of themselves, the chances are that the dominating, self-congratulatory and even unreasonable aspects of the current institutional culture would be encouraged and reinforced.

Just as Palmer indicated, “It becomes pathological when the heart becomes a wholly owned subsidiary of the organization, when we internalize organizational logic and allow it to overwhelm the logic of our own lives”³. It is precisely for this reason that I am not as optimistic as the author about the relationship between Chinese college teachers and their institutional environment. It is reasonable to assume that the sense of integration and meaning in teachers’ professional life would inevitably be fragmented under the intrusion of the dominating institutional culture into teachers’ inner lives. Also the fabric of academic culture would be fragmented, which would further lead the future of disciplines down dead end paths. Just like a mirror, Hao’s research has reflected the living situations of college teachers as a community and the academic ecology of Chinese universities, stimulating deep thought and concern about the academic culture and prospects of Chinese universities.

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The relationship between power and curriculum has always been a topic of much

³ P. J. Palmer (2007). *The courage to teach: Exploring the inner landscape of a teacher's life* (10th ed.). San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, p. 174.