

Growth Dilemmas of Compulsory-education Teachers' Children and Their Causes

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Abstract: *Society assumes teachers' children enjoy superior academic performance and behavior, carefully sheltered in an educational "ivory tower," yet they face complex psychological growth dilemmas. These problems directly affect family harmony, teachers' personal lives, teaching quality, and ultimately the development of the next generation. This paper explores the psychological growth dilemmas of teachers' children and briefly analyzes their causes.*

Keywords: Compulsory education; Teachers' children; Psychological dilemma.

1. The Growth Dilemma of Children from Compulsory-Stage Teacher Families

1.1 Teacher-children Group Misunderstood by Privilege Labels

Bourdieu divides capital into three types: economic, cultural, and social. Primary and secondary teachers hold more cultural capital than the general public but less than elite groups like university professors; they sit in the middle stratum. Judged by income and other factors, their economic and social capital place them at the bottom of that middle layer. Many teachers have their children attend the same school to maximize the benefits of their cultural capital.

Research shows teacher-children generally outperform peers; they account for 72.6% of school-level awards and dominate prizes below city level. Though holding little economic capital, teachers possess local educational social capital and, within the school field, high "authority status" and dominant discourse power, wielding controlling cultural and social capital. Whether or not the child studies in the same school, parental capital influences learning and life. The humanistic atmosphere of teacher families usually boosts grades and overall quality. It is assumed that with more home resources, teacher-children excel and succeed more easily.

1.2 The Loss in Compulsory-stage Teacher-children's Growth

Because teacher-children are thought to enjoy superior parental cultural capital, society expects top grades and conduct; coupled with immaturity, they can rarely voice their thoughts and troubles. Sheltered in an "ivory tower," they become a vulnerable group in public discourse. In reality, teaching one's own child is bumpy; a "blind spot under the lamp" appears. During compulsory schooling, teacher capital "projected" onto offspring carries hidden "dysfunctions": extra care may distort self-

assessment; excessive superiority breeds over-ambition, hindering growth. Meanwhile, teachers may focus on school duties and neglect their own children's development.

In recent years, adolescents have frequently exhibited anomic behavior stemming from pathological mindsets. Mild cases hinder their own development; severe ones harm families and society. On one hand, compulsory-education teachers are key guides during adolescence, and emotionally immature pupils need extra care; on the other, teachers' own children navigate the same critical phase, and their special status often breeds more complex psychological dilemmas.

2. Social “externally driven” Factors

2.1 Strengthen the Teaching Corps

In 2023 the Ministry of Education issued “Opinions on Implementing the National Excellence in Primary and Secondary Teacher Training Plan.” The document demands solid training of “National Excellence” postgraduates to supply high-quality teachers for schools and shore up the foundation of education. It sets new requirements and expectations for the profession, posing fresh career challenges for rank-and-file teachers.

2.2 Intensify Occupational Pressure on Teachers

Compulsory education is a public good the state must guarantee, covering primary and junior-high schooling. National policy prioritizes pupils' physical and mental health. At this stage a teacher's patient guidance is vital, so educators shoulder heavier safety duties and face greater occupational stress.

2.3 The Vanished “secondary-normal” Generation Projects Its Regrets onto the Next

After the one-child policy, the number of only children soared and parental expectations skyrocketed; “chicken-baby” parenting became a pathological norm. This stems from adults' dissatisfaction with present life and lack of future security; they transfer personal hopes and social pressure onto their children, ignoring the youngsters' mental health.

Teachers' personal histories and training shape their attitudes and methods toward their own kids. Compulsory-education teachers differ from senior-high or university faculty: the former work in the stage society sees as most pressure-laden, so they grasp study's hardship; the latter, with higher status, more easily stay calm about their children's growth. Before the post-90s cohort entered the workforce, most K-9 teachers were born in the 60s, 70s or 80s and graduated from “secondary normal” schools, rarely holding bachelor's degrees. These “secondary-normal” graduates had top grades, solid basics and strong learning ability.

3. Teacher Families: “Internal Factors Intertwined”

The main reason teachers and their children drift apart is “occupational disease.” When people value their profession, they easily fall into “role rigidity.” This manifests chiefly in “role dissonance” and “field confusion.”

3.1 The “Role Dissonance” Problem

Mead proposed role theory. Since ancient times China has granted the roles of parent and teacher lofty

status and the social expectation of “saint-like” selfless devotion. The two roles interact and bleed into each other in practice. The familiar saying “A teacher for a day, a father for life” shows we have long conflated them to affirm their importance. While the roles overlap, they cannot be equated. A teacher’s mission is to influence learners—imparting values, knowledge, and answers—so they fit social norms. A parent’s role is protector and nurturer bound by blood. For teacher-parents, the parental role is ascribed; being a good parent comes first. Many ambitious, excellent teachers pour themselves into their job and, back home, fail to switch roles, acting too much the educator and blurring the parent-child bond. They treat their children as students, overlooking the warmth and emotional support parents should give. The weight and uniqueness of compulsory education demand total teacher commitment, crowding out the parent role, yet close companionship is indispensable during youth.

Parental “role dissonance” distorts the roles their children play at home. In compulsory-education teacher families, the child’s salient home role remains “student”; all traditional ethical expectations attached to the child role lose their anchor, creating extra burdens—secondary loads derived from the student role.

3.2 The “Field Confusion” Problem

After high school, students gradually mature, and teachers mainly focus on subject instruction. Before that, however, compulsory education is a legally sanctioned space for disciplining students, with an unbridgeable gulf between teacher and pupil. Respecting teachers and valuing education is a fine Chinese tradition; teachers hold absolute authority and “discursive power” is highly centralized. A family, unlike a school, exists chiefly to provide the conditions for members’ physical, psychological and social well-being. School time and space mark the boundary of the student role; that role, originally bounded, now spills into the home because of parents’ jobs. When teacher-parents transplant school-style relationships and discipline into the family, “field displacement” occurs, undermining family cohesion.

Children who attend their parents’ schools are more affected by this field. Bronfenbrenner’s ecological systems theory divides influences on development into micro-, meso-, exo- and macrosystems. A parent’s workplace is a typical exosystem; its features shape parent-child interaction. Teacher’s kids studying in the same class or school stand too close to the parental workplace, absorbing parental work stress and temperament more readily.

Foucault used the “panopticon” to describe how school architecture subjects students to minute, total surveillance. Teachers often extend this panoptic discipline home, managing children with extreme control. An over-controlled setting can stunt personality growth, leave the child without independent decision-making skills, hamper healthy peer relationships, and even spark resistance or rebellion against the control, producing anxiety and depression.

4. Conclusion

In recent years China has paid close attention to primary and secondary teachers’ work stress and mental health. Scholarly output on work-family conflict among teachers is ample and varied. The education of teachers’ own children is a key research topic; this group is seen as having distinctive educational needs because they receive at home influences unlike those affecting other children. They face unique pressures tied to their parents’ profession. Whether they overcome these difficulties and thrive bears on teachers’ own balance and well-being, on the quality of instruction they can deliver, and ultimately on the improvement of compulsory education overall.

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