

Review

Emotional labor of teaching

Kwok Kuen Tsang

Faulty of Education, University of Hong Kong, Pokfulam Road, Hong Kong
Email: gkk1212@hku.hk; Phone no.: 2219-3002

Accepted 02 August, 2011

Education researchers have investigated the phenomenon of emotional labor of teaching. These researchers tend to assume that teaching is similar to other occupations in service section that require employees to manage their emotions and emotional display for profile making. Therefore, teachers should perform emotional labor. Theoretically, performing emotional labor will generate emotional dissonance. In this sense, if teaching involves emotional labor, teaching should be per se unpleasant, frustrating, and even alienating. However, many studies found that emotional labor of teaching would bring desirable outcomes to teachers, such as: increase in job satisfaction, commitment, self-esteem, and work effectiveness. This article argues that the contradictory findings would be caused by the misconceptions and misinterpretations of the concept of emotional labor.

Keywords: Emotional labor, emotion work, emotion management.

INTRODUCTION

Emotional labor is the forced emotion management in work for a wage. Hochschild (1983) points out that emotional labor is a serious problem affecting the psychological and social well-being of service workers – such as flight attendants, bill collectors, and public health workers (Bono et al., 2007; Diefendorff et al., 2008; Grant et al., 2009; Hochschild, 1983; Hopfl and Linstead, 1993; James, 1993; Pugh et al., 2011; Tolich, 1993; Wharton, 1993) because they often are requested to manage and display particular emotions by the companies for profit making. In such a situation, employees are no longer able to exercise control over their emotions as their emotions become the commodities of the companies (Fineman, 2000; Hochschild, 1983). As a result, it is possible that the workers' feeling is separated from the displays (Hochschild, 1983). Such an emotional dissonance may cause self-estrangement, depersonalization, dehumanization, and emotional exhaustion (Hochschild, 1983). Thus, sociologically, the nature of emotional labor is exploitive and alienating (Scott, 1998).

In the recent decades, the educational reforms all over the worlds tend to transform education to be a service-like industry (Hargreaves, 2003). In such a context, schoolteachers are similar to service workers who have to respond to the demands and needs of the “educational

consumers”, including students and parents (Smyth et al., 2000). In this sense, teachers may also need to perform emotional labor (Hebson et al., 2007). Accordingly, they are potentially alienated (Zembylas, 2002b). This may also affect their job performance, commitment and enthusiasm (Hu"lsheger et al., 2010; Na"ring et al., 2006; Philipp and Schu"pbach, 2010). However, some researchers disagree that emotional labor is negative to teaching, because they find emotional labor may contribute to teachers' job satisfaction, commitment, and effectiveness (Hargreaves, 1998b; Isenbarger and Zembylas, 2006; Mack, 2008; Winograd, 2003). In these senses, it is necessary to understand the emotional labor of teaching, if we want to promote the quality of education in our societies.

In this article, the literature about emotional labor of teaching will be reviewed in order to facilitate our understanding about it. The reviewed articles here are only those published in English from 1995 to 2011. All the articles were searched from the CSA database and proQuest database. By searching the keywords of emotional labor/ emotion work/ emotion management and teaching/ teachers, forty-two articles were found. Among this pool, only ten were identified as relevant to this review

through reading the abstracts. The major criterion of the judgment was whether the abstract clearly stated that the article investigated the emotional labor, emotion work or emotion management of schoolteachers. If the articles were about the emotional labor, emotion work or emotion management of non-schoolteachers, they were excluded. Moreover, another nine journal articles were noted as relevant to this review based on the reference lists of the ten articles. As a result, these nineteen journal articles composed of the sources for this review.

It is suggested that learning Hochschild's theory of emotional labor or emotion-management perspective is important to understand the research on emotional labor of teaching. This is because the research is inspired and rooted in her theory. Thus, the theory will be outlined in the following before reviewing the nineteen articles.

Theory of Emotional Labor

Hochschild's theory of emotional labor has two origins: Goffman's dramaturgical theory and Marxist theory of alienation (Turner and Stets, 2005). Based on the dramaturgical theory, Hochschild (1979, 1983) illustrates that there are emotional rules, including feeling rules and expression rules, in our societies. The feeling rules specify the appropriate feeling in a given social setting. On the other hand, the expression rules are the guidance of the overt expression and display of the appropriate feeling in the given social setting. Therefore, social actors need to adjust their emotions and emotional displays according to the feeling rules and expression rules in every social situation. If they fail to do so, they will become emotional deviants (Thoits, 1990). To avoid becoming emotional deviants, they need try to change and manage their emotions and emotional display in an appropriate way. This act of emotion management is called emotion work (Hochschild, 1979, 1990). Hochschild (1979, 1990) identifies two kinds of emotional management: (1) surface acting (changing expression to change feelings) and (2) deep acting (changing feeling to change emotion expression). To some extent, every social actor always does emotion work throughout the life (Hochschild, 1979).

From the Marxist perspective, however, Hochschild indicates that the problem in post-industrial societies is that emotion management is not only the act in private life, for many people, but also the work done for a wage. This kind of emotion management is called emotional labor (Hochschild, 1983, 1990). She (1983) discovers that more and more enterprises, especially the service-related, tend to sell employees' emotions for profit making. In such a situation, employees are no longer able to exercise control over their emotions. For instance, flight attendants are required by their employers to keep smiling and show

warmth toward consumers because smiling and warmth are the selling points of the airlines (Hochschild, 1983). One possible consequence of emotional labor is emotional dissonance, which is incongruence between feelings and displays (Hochschild, 1983). The higher the degree of emotional dissonance, the higher the degree of alienation, dehumanization, and depersonalization (Ashforth and Tomiuk, 2000; Diefendorff, et al., 2008; Hochschild, 1983; Hopfl and Linstead, 1993; Lewig and Dollard, 2003).

Although emotional labor may be very common in post-industrial societies, it does not mean any occupation involves this kind of labor. Hochschild (1983, p. 147) associates emotional labor with the jobs that require employees (1) to have face-to-face or voice-to-voice contacts with the public, (2) to produce a positive or negative emotional state in other persons, and (3) to tolerate others' supervision and control over their emotional activities.

The Review: Emotional Labor of Teaching

Based on Hochschild's theory of emotional labor, the research on emotional labor of teaching has focused on two research questions: whether teaching involves emotional labor and what the effects of emotional labor of teaching are.

In some sense, teaching may possess the first two job characteristics related to emotional labor described above. Although there may not be explicit supervision over the emotional activities of teachers, the researchers have argued that teaching can be a form of emotional labor if teachers' emotions are prescribed by emotional rules of teaching that function as the emotional control exercised by employers (Zembylas, 2002b). Therefore, identifying the emotional rules is essential to indicate whether teaching involves emotional labor in the literature.

Three articles among the nineteen discuss the emotional rules of teaching (Winograd, 2003; Zembylas, 2002b, 2005). Basically, these articles suggest the emotional rules of teaching may be implicit and disguised as teacher professionalism that constrained teachers' emotional activities (Zembylas, 2002b, 2005). According to Zembylas' (2005) study, a generally emotional rule of teaching is to avoid expressing too strong and too weak emotions. More specifically, Winograd's (2003) self-study reveals five emotional rules of teaching: (1) to love and to show enthusiasm for students; (2) to be enthusiastic and passionate about subject matter; (3) to avoid the display of extreme emotions like anger, joy and sadness; (4) to love their work; and (5) to have a sense of humor and laugh at their own mistakes and the peccadilloes of students. If teachers cannot manage their emotions appropriate according to the rules, they will be treated as

unprofessional (Zembylas, 2002b, 2005). As a result, teachers need to perform emotional labor. Generally, these findings are accepted by other researchers. In other words, the researchers agree that teaching involve emotional labor. Thus, they have investigated the outcomes of the emotional labor of teaching.

There are four articles out of the nineteen that show the outcomes tend to be negative (Çukur, 2009; Hu'Ishegeret al., 2010; Na'ring, et al., 2006; Philipp and Schu'pbach, 2010). Basically, the authors regard the emotional labor of teaching as the emotional management strategies: surface acting and deep acting. By using quantitative measurement and statistical analysis, Çukur (2009), Hu'Isheger, et al (2010), Na'ring, et al (2006), Philipp and Schu'pbach (2010) indicate that the surface acting may cause to depersonalization and emotional exhaustion rather than deep acting.

However, there are thirteen articles arguing that the emotional labor of teaching is not necessarily negative; rather, it tends to be positive to teachers and teaching (Hargreaves, 1998a, 1998b, 2000; Hebson, et al., 2007; Intrator, 2006; Isenbarger and Zembylas, 2006; Mack, 2008; O'Connor, 2008; Oplatka, 2007; Price, 2001; Winograd, 2003; Yuu, 2010; Zembylas, 2004a). These researchers claim that the emotional labor of teaching has use-value (Hargreaves, 1998a). The use-value should be love (Hargreaves, 1998a, 1998b, 2000), case (Isenbarger and Zembylas, 2006; Zembylas, 2004a), and passion (Intrator, 2006). In other words, the emotional labor of teaching may be voluntary-based (Oplatka, 2007) and intrinsically rewarding (Hebson, et al., 2007; O'Connor, 2008; Price, 2001; Yuu, 2010). Thus, performing emotional labor may enhance teachers' job commitment, satisfaction, excitement, self-fulfillment, and professional identity through case studies, in-depth interviews, and participation observations (Hargreaves, 1998b, 2000; Hebson, et al., 2007; Isenbarger and Zembylas, 2006; Mack, 2008; O'Connor, 2008; Winograd, 2003; Yuu, 2010; Zembylas, 2004a).

DISCUSSION

In the literature, it is commonly agreed that teaching involves emotional labor, because teachers' emotional activities are governed by the emotional rules of teaching (Winograd, 2003; Zembylas, 2002a, 2005). According to the emotional rules, teachers need to control and manage their emotions by surface acting and deep acting. Therefore, some researchers refer the emotional labor of teaching to these two emotion management strategies and find that the emotional labor of teaching may be alienating to teachers (e.g. Çukur, 2009; Hu'Isheger, et al., 2010; Na'ring, et al., 2006; Philipp and Schu'pbach, 2010). On the other hand, other researchers argue that the

emotional labor of teaching is not alienating, because it contains use-value, including love, care, and passion (e.g. Hargreaves, 1998a, 1998b, 2000; Intrator, 2006; Isenbarger and Zembylas, 2006).

Nevertheless, it is noted that the literature may misinterpret the original meaning of emotional labor. The literature ignores the central characteristic of the Hochschild's conception of emotional labor: "emotions 'preformed' by employees were exploited for profit as a vital part of the capitalist labor process" (Hebson, et al., 2007, p. 681). This implies that emotion management is emotional labor only if "emotional control represents a condition of employment for an institution or company" (Yuu, 2010, pp. 64). Therefore, if teachers' emotion management is only prescribed by emotional rules, it may not be necessarily emotional labor (Yuu, 2010). In this sense, the previous research may just demonstrate the effects of prescriptive emotion management of teaching rather than emotional labor of teaching (Hebson, et al., 2007), because the research has not successfully indicated how teachers' emotions are constrained by the schools or school administrators, in addition to the emotional rules.

It is predictable that some researchers may disagree with the viewpoint, because they think that emotional labor has use-value (e.g. Hargreaves, 1998a, 1998b, 2000). Therefore, the emotional labor of teaching is represented by the form of love, care and passion. However, it is argued that this is a misconception of emotional labor. Actually, Hochschild (1983, 1990) clearly distinguishes emotional labor from emotion work, as we have mentioned. The former is the exchange-value of emotion management, while the latter is the use-value. She states: "emotional labor is sold for a wage and therefore has exchange value ... emotion work ... refer[s] to these same acts in a private context where they have use value" (Hochschild, 1983, pp. 7). In this sense, the researchers who argue the emotional labor of teaching is love, care and passion may confuse the two concepts, i.e. using the concept of emotional labor to describe the concept of emotion work.

In fact, it is difficult operationally to separate emotional labor and emotion work in teaching. As Oplatka (2007) demonstrates, the emotion management of teaching may happen in both the public life (e.g. emotion management in classroom teaching for a wage) and the private life (example emotion management in the friendship between teachers and students outside classroom) of teachers. Since teachers may build friendships with students, for example, the distinction between public life and private life in teaching may become blurred. Teacher emotions may be governed not only by emotional rules of teaching, but also by more general emotional rules in private life, such as, for example: "we should love and care our friends", "we should be nice to our friends", "we should not hate our

friends” and the like. Therefore, it is difficult for researchers to judge whether it is emotion work or emotional labor, for instance, when teachers say they try to manage their expression of anger and show care to students.

To overcome the conceptual and operational difficulties, Tolich (1993) suggests using the concepts of autonomous emotion management and regulated emotion management instead of emotion work and emotional labor. According to him, autonomous emotion management refers to the emotional displays that are regulated by employees themselves without external controls, while regulated emotion management refers to the emotional displays of employees that are controlled by others. It is argued that this pair of concepts still encounters a problem – how to distinguish “regulated” and “autonomous” in teaching. As we have mentioned, there is no explicit authority constraining teacher emotions, so in this sense all emotion management of teachers should be autonomous. On the other hand, studies also show that teachers sometime feel external pressures that force them to display or suppress some kinds of emotions (Zembylas, 2002a, 2004b, 2005). Should we treat this kind of emotional management of teaching as autonomous or regulated?

It is not to say that teaching does not involve emotional labor. Instead, it is suggested that the existing investigation about the emotional labor of teaching is insufficient due to the misconceptions and misinterpretations of the concept of emotional labor. To some extent, the misconceptions and misinterpretations may be caused by the difficulty to distinguish the concept of emotional labor from emotion work in teaching conceptually and operationally.

Indeed, the major limitation of this review is that it only reviews nineteen journal articles published in English and indexed by CSA and ProQuest databases. Actually, there may be books, chapters and other articles about this topic published in other language and not indexed by the two databases. In other words, this review may not be comprehensive. Thus, a further review should include these works. Nevertheless, this article can also give some suggestions to the further research on the emotional labor of teaching based on the review.

If further research wants to accurately understand the emotional labor of teaching, the researchers should remember the characteristic of emotional labor (exchange-value, exploitative, and alienating) and should distinguish emotional labor from emotion work conceptually and operationally. To achieve these, it may be appropriate to interview teachers and ask them to (1) “describe a real situation that was important to you in which you experienced a deep emotion”, (2) “describe as full and concretely as possible a real situation to fit your feelings or changed your feelings to fit the situation”

(Hochschild, 1983, pp. 13), and (3) “describe particular episodes of positive and negative emotion with students, colleagues, administrators, and parents” (Hargreaves, 2001, pp. 1058). Through the responses for awareness of emotional management, it is possible for us to understand (1) teachers tend to perform emotional labor or emotion work in teaching; (2) when teachers perform emotional labor and emotion work; (3) why they perform emotional labor in some situations and emotion work in other situations; and (4) what the consequences of emotional labor and emotion work of teaching are.

REFERENCES

- Ashforth BE, Tomiuk MA (2000). Emotional labour and authenticity: Views from service agents. In S. Fineman (Ed.), *Emotion in organizations* (2nd ed. pp 184-203). London: Sage Publications.
- Bono JE, Foldes HJ, Vinson G, Muros JP (2007). Workplace emotions: The role of supervision and leadership. *J. Appl. Psychol.* 92(5):1357-1367. doi: 10.1037/0021-9010.92.5.1357
- Çukur CŞ (2009). The development of the Teacher Emotional Labor Scale (TELS): Validity and reliability. *Educ. I Sci. Theory and Practice*, 9(2):559-574.
- Diefendorff JM, Richard EM, Yang J (2008). Linking emotion regulation strategies to affective events and negative emotions at work. *J. Vocational Behav.* 73(3): 498-508. doi: 10.1016/j.jvb.2008.09.006
- Fineman S (2000). Commodifying the emotionally intelligent. In S. Fineman (Ed.), *Emotion in organizations* (2nd ed. pp 101-114). London: Sage Publications.
- Grant D, Morales A, Sallaz JJ (2009). Pathways to meaning: A new approach to studying emotions at work. *Ame. J. Sociol.* 115(2):327-364.
- Hargreaves A (1998a). The emotional politics of teaching and teacher development: With implications for educational leadership. *Int. J. Leadership in Educ.*, 1(4): 315-336. doi: 10.1080/1360312980010401
- Hargreaves A (1998b). The emotional practice of teaching. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 14(8):835-854.
- Hargreaves A (2000). Mixed emotions: Teachers' perceptions of their interactions with students. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 16:811-826.
- Hargreaves A (2001). Emotional geographies of teaching. *Teachers College Record*, 103(6):1056-1080.
- Hargreaves A (2003). *Teaching in the knowledge society: Education in the age of insecurity*. Maidenhead: Open University Press.
- Hobson G, Earnshaw J, Marchington L (2007). Too emotional to be capable? The changing nature of emotion work in definitions of 'capable teaching'. *J. Educ. Policy*, 22(6):675-694.
- Hochschild AR (1979). Emotion work, feeling rules, and social structure. *Ame. J. Sociol.* 85(3):551-575.
- Hochschild AR (1983). *The managed heart : Commercialization of human feeling*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Hochschild AR. (1990). Ideology and emotion management: A perspective and path for future research. In T. D. Kemper (Ed.), *Research agendas in the sociology of emotions* (pp. 117-142). Albany: State University of New York Press.
- Hopfl H, Linstead S (1993). Passion and performance: Suffering and the carrying of organizational roles. In S. Fineman (Ed.), *Emotion in organization* (pp. 76-93). London: Sage Publications.
- Hu'Isheger UR, Lang JWB, Maier GNW (2010). Emotional labor, strain, and performance: Testing reciprocal relationships in a longitudinal panel study. *J. Occupational Health Psychol.* 15(4), 505-521.
- Intrator SM (2006). Beginning teachers and the emotional drama of the classroom. *J. Teacher Educ.* 57(3):233-239.
- Isenbarger L, Zembylas M (2006). The emotional labour of caring in teaching. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 22(1):120-134. doi:10.1016/j.tate.2005.07.002
- James N (1993). Divisions of emotional labour: Disclosure and cancer. In S. Fineman (Ed.), *Emotion in organizations* (pp. 94-117). London:

- Stage Publications.
- Lewig KA, Dollard MF (2003). Emotional dissonance, emotional exhaustion and job satisfaction in call centre workers. *Eur. J. Work and Organizational Psychol.* 12(4):366-392. doi: 10.1080/13594320344000200
- Mack N (2008). Energy and enthusiasm: Don't start the school year without them. *English J.* 98(1):18-25.
- Naaring Gr, Briët M, Brouwers A (2006). Beyond demand-control: Emotional labour and symptoms of burnout in teachers. *Work and Stress*, 20(4):303-315.
- O'Connor KE (2008). "You choose to care": Teachers, emotions and professional identity. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 24:117-126.
- Oplatka I (2007). Managing emotions in teaching: Toward an understanding of emotion displays and caring as nonprescribed role elements. *Teachers College Record*, 109(6):1374-1400.
- Philipp A, Schüpbach H (2010). Longitudinal effects of emotional labor on emotional exhaustion and dedication of teachers. *J. Occupational Health Psychol.* 15(4):494-504.
- Price H (2001). Emotional labour in the classroom: A psychoanalytic perspective. *J. Soc. Work Practice*, 15(2):161-180.
- Pugh SD, Groth M, Hennig-Thurau T (2011). Willing and able to fake emotions: A closer examination of the link between emotional dissonance and employee well-being. *J. Appl. Psychol.* 96 (2): 377-390.
- Scott WR (1998). *Organizations: Rational, natural, and open systems* (4th ed.). Upper Saddle River: Prentice Hall. Pp. 322-325.
- Smyth J, Dow A, Hattam R, Reid A, Shacklock G (2000). *Teacher's work in a globalizing economy*. London: The Falmer Press. Pp. 15-55
- Thoits PA (1990). Emotional deviance: Research agendas. In T. D. Kemper (Ed.), *Research agendas in the sociology of emotions* (pp. 180-203). Albany: State University of New York Press.
- Tolich MB (1993). Alienating and liberating emotions at work: Supermarket clerks' performance of customer service. *J. Contemporary Ethnography*, 22(3): 361-381. doi: 10.1177/089124193022003004
- Turner JH, Stets JE. (2005). *The sociology of emotions*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. Pp. 36-46.
- Wharton AS (1993). The affective consequences of service work: Managing emotions on the job. *Work and Occupations*, 20(2):205-232. doi: 10.1177/0730888493020002004
- Winograd K (2003). The functions of teacher emotions: The good, the bad, and the ugly. *Teachers College Record*, 105(9):1641-1673.
- Yuu K (2010). Expressing emotions in teaching: Inducement, suppression, and disclosure as caring profession. *Educational Studies in Japan: International Yearbook*, 5:63-78.
- Zembylas M (2002a). Constructing genealogies of teachers' emotions in science teaching. *J. Res. in Sci. Teaching*, 39(1):79-103.
- Zembylas M (2002b). Structures of feeling in curriculum and teaching: Theorizing the emotional rules. *Educational Theory*, 52(2):187-208.
- Zembylas M (2004a). Emotion metaphors and emotional labor in science teaching. *Science Education*, 88(3):301-324. doi: 10.1002/sce.10116
- Zembylas M (2004b). The emotional characteristics of teaching: An ethnographic study of one teacher. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 20(2):185-201. doi: 10.1016/j.tate.2003.09.008
- Zembylas M (2005). Discursive practices, genealogies, and emotional rules: A poststructuralist view on emotion and identity in teaching. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 21(8):935-948. doi: 10.1016/j.tate.2005.06.005