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Examining Elementary Teachers' Attitudes toward the Teacher Ranking System in China

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State University of New York
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Examining Elementary Teachers' Attitudes toward the Teacher Ranking System in China

A Thesis in
Multidisciplinary Studies

By

Siyuan Liu

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of the Requirements
for the Degree of

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Abstract

This study examined the general attitudes of Chinese teachers towards the teacher ranking system in China and if the ranking system motivates teachers to work harder. One hundred and eighty-seven teachers from 54 elementary schools in Beijing of China were surveyed using Charlotte Danielson Frame Work for Teaching Evaluation. The results show a positive correlation between the relationship of years of teaching and attainment of higher titles. This suggests teaching with more years of experience attained higher titles. A negative correlation appeared between years of teaching and education levels. Thus, teachers who taught for more years tended to have lower education levels. Teachers who attained higher titles were viewed as more structural and skilled teachers. In general, most teachers held positive attitudes towards this ranking system.

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Introduction

When it comes to the term “evaluation” in the educational field, people usually think about students’ academic achievement evaluation. We typically assess learning through students’ learning outcomes, even though teaching and learning are bidirectional factors (Leblanc & Bearison, 2004). Teachers play an important role in the learning process. Schools usually use tests to assess students’ performance, but how can schools assess teaching? Program for International Student Assessment (PISA) 2012 reported that Chinese students outperformed their peers in all three areas: mathematics, reading and science. Mean math score of students in Shanghai was 613 while the U.S. peers’ mean score was 581; the mean reading score of students in Shanghai was 570 and 498 for U.S. students; the average science score for Shanghai students was 580 and 497 for U.S. students. These scores represent considerable differences in achievement between U.S. and Chinese students. So to what can the difference be attributed? PISA (2012) also pointed out that it is essential to find ways to make teaching more effective for all students, and that teaching effectively affects students’ academic achievement.

Teacher’s Evaluation in the U.S.

Evaluating teaching effectiveness using only students’ achievement has become a heated topic. The meaning of evaluation in Latin “is not in order to prove, but in order to improve” (Wang & Cheng, 2012). Well-designed teacher evaluation programs could have a direct and lasting effect on individual teacher performance (Taylor & Tyler, 2012). Based on different cultural backgrounds, teachers are prepared in different ways and as a result, evaluation systems can vary to meet various expectations. Teacher evaluation in the United State can be traced back to 19th century, but only gained lots of attention since the 1980s (Wang & Cheng, 2012). During

the 19th century, the U.S. also made substantial progress understanding how to better evaluate teachers. The U.S. evaluation system focuses on developmental evaluation, which involves classroom observations. The teacher evaluation systems in use throughout the U.S. tend to be based on the models of Danielson (2013) and Marzano (2011). Both models aim on four dimensions: planning and preparation, the classroom environment, professional responsibilities and instruction. Both models are used to guide pre-service teacher training programs as well as evaluate in-service teachers and school administrators (Neilsen, 2014).

These two models were created to examine teachers' qualification and their capability in teaching. Furthermore, Weems and Rogers (2010) identified four different methods to evaluate teachers from a different perspective. The first one is the principal observation of a teacher's teaching. It is the most traditional form. Observations can be as short as 20 minutes to as long as several lessons; during this time period, observations can be formal or unannounced. The formal evaluation provides time for teachers to prepare which makes most of the formal evaluations are in a good standard. Comparing with the formal evaluation, the unannounced observations can show how teachers design the lesson plan and how well teachers implement the plan to achieve the instructional goals. The informal evaluation reveals the day to day teaching of a "real" classroom. However, this method has some limitations. For example, the principal may come to observe on a "bad day" when everything is not going very well for an otherwise strong teacher.

The second evaluation method is the peer/mentor evaluation where schools in the U.S. encourage teachers to work collaboratively to assist each other in efforts to strengthen teaching. Experienced teachers can help young teachers to deal with discipline and academic problems that lead to the high attrition rate (Weems & Rogers, 2010).

The third evaluation method is based on teacher's portfolios. Portfolio documents are a record of teachers' experiences and work. The portfolios include rich information, which reveals student achievement, teachers' knowledge of information, teachers' teachings styles, and their efforts to improve students' work (Johnson & Smith, 2008).

The last but not least evaluation method is student evaluation. Teachers teach students and the students' feedback is the most widely used measurement, sometimes being the only sources to evaluate teachers (Seldin, 1989). The academic progress of students is an important sign of strong teaching. Though student ratings and academic progress are the most important measures of teaching effectiveness (Stanford University Newsletter On Teaching, 1997), student ratings are not objective enough to be the only measure of a teacher's effectiveness as students might have bias towards the teacher. Additionally, a student may not have had the opportunity to develop the background information necessary to judge all the aspects of a teachers' performance or the course. Students may be more willing to say good things about the teachers if the teachers have developed good relationships with students outside of the classroom (Chen & Yeager, 2011). Thus, it is essential to gather different evaluation results from different sources to make an evaluation system fair and inclusive. Kane et al. (2011) found that teachers who received higher classroom practice scores on Cincinnati's evaluation rubric also systematically had higher value-added test-scores. With a reliable evaluation system, schools are able to develop effective improvement plans and encourage teachers to become more effective in classroom management, planning, and lesson presentation.

The Evaluation System in China

In comparison with the evaluation system in the U.S., the Ministry of Education of China published a well-structured system for evaluating teachers in 1986. The Ministry of Education's

evaluation system includes peer observation, teachers' accomplishment, students' academic achievement scores, teachers' teaching styles, and test scores. The system differentiates teachers with specific titles. Titles are associated with teachers' benefits. For example, within the attainment of higher titles teachers may have better benefits such as full coverage of health insurance and higher salaries, as well as opportunities for further promotion. The ranking system is considered professional and widely used to evaluate teacher effectiveness and self-development across the country. Teacher rank titles serve as a proxy for teacher's qualification as the titles are attained through the assessment of several dimensions of teachers. Teacher self-development is extremely important (Karachiwalla, 2010). Parents and students view teachers with higher titles as more prepared and effective teachers. The title system was developed to motivate teachers to move along titles to gain more benefits, better salaries, and prestige in the field.

Originally, the ranking system included four different levels with three titles — (a) teachers without a title, (b) first class, (c) advanced, and (d) specialized (Minister of Education, 1986). The initial purpose of this regulation was to protect teachers' legitimate rights and interests. After few years of practice and implementation, in 2009, the system became more structured. This had a positive effect on teaching effectiveness and teacher's self-development in different cities in China (Chen & Peng, 2016). The Ministry of Education then decided to combine the year-to-year general employment system (teaching in schools by contract) and the ranking system to motivate teachers to work for titles and tenure (Cai & Xia, 2016). Teachers who attained titles became more likely to be tenured in schools. This new regulation attracted more and more teachers and schools to implement this ranking system. However, since there were only three titles with limited numbers in each category, this high competitive system

involved a hard “cap” concept. For instance, if the hard cap number for the first class titled teacher is 5, and there are 6 teachers meet the requirement. Then one teacher will be moved down and assigned as a second class titled teacher instead. The decision of choosing who to be moved down is not easy. The government therefore instituted a five title system to make this system more precise. The Ministry of Education (2009) later expanded to six levels with five titles (specialized, advanced, first-class, second-class, third-class) excluding the non-titled. The procedure of attaining titles became more difficult, especially on the high levels.

This complicated evaluation system does increase teachers’ enthusiasm and create a competitive environment in which they could improve (Li, 1990). As stated before, teachers can receive more benefits as they attain higher titles. The benefits can be in the form of a promotion and higher salaries. The system offers a new way to recognize teachers’ work, and brings a sense of career achievement (Chen & Peng, 2016). Furthermore, it helps improve teachers’ professionalism (Tang, 2015). This evaluation system is multidimensional. It takes into account variables such as minimum numbers of years in the field, number of publications in peer-reviewed journals or books, student performance on state tests, teaching awards etc. The awards for teaching can be distinguished by three different levels: district, provincial, and national. The higher level rewards earned, the higher the likelihood that they will attain higher titles.

Public lessons also play an important role in China’s ranking system as teaching awards primarily are based on feedback or scores associated with observed public lessons. A public lesson is a showcase of a teacher’s teaching in front of a group of professions. The group may include the principal, administrators, and fellow teachers from and outside of the school. The public lesson provides the opportunity for the teacher to showcase his or her original teaching styles and teacher’s self-development. It can provide objective opinions from experts in

educational field in order to improve teacher's professional development. However, public lessons also received criticism from the field and public because some teachers only select “good students” for the public lesson. In order to have a more impressive effect, some teachers rehearse lessons many times with their students before the real “public lessons”. In other words, some of the public lessons have become the product of many rehearsals (Li, 2008). Teachers tend to select their best students to participate and sometimes even start preparing a month earlier. They may have a transcript for the public lesson so that students are provided with the answers prior to the public lesson or know the “right question” to ask to avoid awkward silence. Most of the public lessons are interesting, fun, and way different from their normal classes. It is therefore not reliable to judge teachers’ teaching ability through the public lesson. However, it remains important for teachers’ evaluations (Chen, 1995). Although teachers cannot use the whole structure they composed in public lessons during their day-to-day lessons, they can adapt the spotlights from the public lesson into their daily teaching. Since all schools in Beijing use the same textbooks, public lesson offers opportunities for teachers to explore various approaches to teach the same lesson.

In cases where public lessons are not overvalued, districts always assign well trained teaching researchers. Teaching researcher is a unique position in the Chinese education system. Most teaching researchers have more than 10 years of teaching experience and have attained high titles. Their job is to supervise teaching across the district in their specific field. For example, Chinese teaching researchers oversee the Chinese teachings in the district. The teaching researcher plays a leading role in guiding teachers’ teaching and guiding the curriculum of each lesson. The teaching researchers have different requirements and tasks compared to other teachers. The teaching researchers have studied the content standards of the modules in the

Course Standards carefully and repeatedly on the basis of the spirit and philosophy of the Chinese Curriculum Standards. Teaching researchers in each observe teaching, evaluate, view and grade a teacher's lesson plan and teaching after the observation, organize the teachers' research, and actively offer assistance. At the end of semester, teaching researchers organize outstanding teachers to assess their teaching through students' tests and performances. In the teachers' teaching and research work, the teaching researchers must constantly observe teachers' teaching in detail and offer encouragement to motivate and inspire teachers to improve students' performance.

As we all know, China is a test-driven country, not surprisingly, teachers are also required to take exams for their title ranking. Teaching observation and writing exams are two main parts of the evaluation. On the one hand, writing exams aim to check teachers' content knowledge. On the other hand, a public lesson offers the opportunity to assess a teacher's ability to teach (using a different group of students instead of their own students to teach an actual lesson in front of peers, principals, and teaching researchers from districts). Karachiwalla (2010) noted teacher salaries are based on objective and subjective performance measures in China. Though it may not be the best way to relate students' academic achievement to teachers' salaries, it is accepted as the evaluation system has been seen as successful (Weisberg et al. 2009). Teachers are working hard to attain titles in order to receive higher salaries and professional status.

Unfortunately, with the rapid social-economic development, this ranking system has lagged behind because of the lack of a strong management system and other issues, especially the competition among teachers for titles (Jiang, 2011). Some of the schools and districts misuse this system to assign teachers more work or make teachers work overtime. Schools turn into a

competitive company where teachers compete for their titles, rights, and promotion rather than focus on teaching. This creates negative effects in the evaluation system. There's an obvious limitation of this evaluation system - it is not specific enough. It just has five titles, are those same titled teachers at the same level? The variances in groups are larger than between groups (Jiang, 2009). The quota assignment is small and even smaller at the rural schools. The assessment indicators mainly depend on the macroscopically provisions approved by each school which means big schools get more titles numbers. Because of the shortage of teachers, most teachers do not have formal education training in college or do not have a bachelor's degree. This is among the reasons the Education Department published such a strict and difficult evaluation system to motivate teachers. There were a total of 1198 specialized title teachers in Beijing with only about 700 teachers still teaching, the other 400 teachers retired (Human Resources Department, 2013). This lack of advancement seriously dampens the enthusiasm of teachers and seriously affects the stability of keeping teachers and long-term development (Chen & Peng, 2016). Most of the specialized teachers are attaining their titles one year before their retirement. Attaining the highest title seems more like an honor as opposed to being able to utilize their expertise in the field.

Some argue that the evaluation system is not scientific enough and effective because the section of testing teachers teaching ability should be more objective (Chen & Peng, 2016). Further, teachers' evaluations are not always aligned with teacher self-development, student test scores are not equal to teaching effectiveness, and qualifications are not equal to the scientific and comprehensive measures, and may not be fair (Jiang, 2009). Also, the teaching researchers and other evaluating committee members who grade teachers should be involved in more classroom observation time instead of 15 or 20 minutes of micro-teaching. There is also a

question of effectiveness after teachers attain their titles. Let's say a teacher already achieves the specialized title, what else can encourage him/her to be a better teacher? How should schools manage the teachers who already have attained the highest title?

Teacher self-development holds the key for raising students' achievement (Weems & Rogers, 2010). In China, teachers' salaries and promotions are closely associated with student performance in exams. High school teachers are recognized and rewarded according to the number of students who are accepted by the "key" universities (Shao & Tamashiro, 2013). It is the same for the elementary school teachers in China. If high numbers of students get into good middle schools, the teachers will be rewarded and get promotion. This procedure and the title system motivates teachers to focus more on test scores and get more involved in their students' lives. Since teachers get more involved in students' lives so they can help students from many different perspectives, such as after-class tutoring, online tutoring and home visits, which promotes strong academic growth for most of the elementary school students in China. Evaluation in the education sector may be better understood from the developmental perspective rather than a traditional principal-agent model (Taylor & Tyler, 2012). When teachers clearly understand what is expected for success, it is better from the development perspective when compared to the system in which a principal comes by once in a while.

It is essential to evaluate teacher's self-development and professionalism of teaching in order to provide an excellent education for students. It is also important to exam how teachers feel about this ranking system. Tang (2015) pointed out that this ranking system cannot really reflect the work of teachers because it is difficult to play its positive incentive function, so that teachers' behavior and professional development are deviated from the right direction. Teachers hold different opinions and attitudes toward this ranking system, some teachers teach just for

attaining titles and higher salaries. In order to attain higher titles, they spent plenty of time to prepare their academic researches or projects instead of preparing lesson plans (Huang, 1988).

To understand more about the Chinese teacher ranking system, this study sought to answer three research questions.

- (1) What is the relationship among teachers' titles and their education and years of teaching in the field?
- (2) Whether teachers with different titles have different attitudes toward high titled teachers?
- (3) What are teachers' attitudes toward this ranking system?

Method

Participants

Participants were one hundred and eighty-seven teachers randomly selected from fifty-four elementary schools (ten rural schools and forty-four urban schools) in Beijing, China. These schools are average schools in their own regions based on the student's achievement. All teachers participated on a voluntary basis. Among the participants, 57 were male teachers and 130 were female teachers. One hundred and sixty-one attained titles, 26 were without titles and 44 attained advanced and specialized titles (high titles). The majority of participants were math, Chinese, or English teachers with 32.1% being math teachers (n=60), 21.4% were Chinese teachers (n = 40), 19.8% were teachers teaching both math and Chinese (n=37), 15% were English teachers, and 11.7% (n = 22) were teachers of other subjects. There were not many

specialized titled teachers participating as male teachers retire at 60 years old and female teachers retired at age of 50 in China.

Materials and Procedure

The survey instrument used in the study was adopted from the Danielson (2013) evaluation model. There were three sections of the survey instrument. Section one was used to collect demographic information from participants as well as the subject of teaching, and the number of years of teaching. Section two asked teachers questions on their attitudes toward high titled teacher's qualifications in various areas which include planning and preparation, classroom management, instruction, and professional responsibilities. This section included 29 questions using Likert scale. The questions also explored districts' involvement and teachers' general attitude (from strongly agree to strongly disagree) toward the evaluation system. Section three included open-ended questions that asked teachers to express their experience of attaining titles and their general attitude about the ranking system.

The survey instrument was distributed via two different ways, online or paper hardcopies through site coordinators. The site coordinators chose either the online survey or the hard copies. A link through WeChat was sent to the teachers who were interested in participating, hard copies of surveys were delivered to the schools' mailboxes. The majority of teachers in the rural schools used hard copies while teachers in the urban schools used the online survey. One hundred hard copies of the survey that were distributed to ten rural schools got a 70% response rate. Two hundred online surveys were sent out, and got a 58.5% response rate. The average response rate was 62.3%.

Table 1 presents the percentage of various titled teachers in different age groups. Majority teachers were in the 40-49 age group.

Table 1 Percentage of distribution in different ages

	Nre	3rd Class	2nd Class	1st Class	Advanced	Specialized
Age						
20-29	73.1 (N=19)	75.0 (N=6)	21.3 (N=10)	6.5 (N=4)	0	0
30-39	26.9 (N=7)	25.0 (N=2)	57.4 (N=27)	35.5 (N=22)	19.4 (N=7)	0
40-49	0	0	21.3 (N=10)	51.6 (N=32)	61.1 (N=22)	50.0 (N=4)
50+	0	0	0	6.5 (N=4)	19.4 (N=7)	50.0 (N=4)

Table 2 displays the percentage of teaching years of teachers and attained titles. The majority of participants were teachers who taught 21 to 30 years.

Table 2 Percentage of distribution with different teaching years

	Nre	3rd Class	2nd Class	1st Class	Advanced	Specialized
Teaching Years						
<1	11.5 (N=3)	0	0	0	0	0
1-3	53.8 (N=14)	62.5 (N=5)	14.9 (N=7)	3.2 (N=2)	0	0
4-6	15.4 (N=4)	12.5 (N=1)	23.4 (N=11)	11.3 (N=7)	0	0
7-10	9.2 (N=5)	12.5 (N=1)	17.0 (N=8)	9.7 (N=6)	2.8 (N=1)	0
11-15	0	12.5 (N=1)	21.3 (N=10)	9.7 (N=6)	13.9 (N=5)	0
16-20	0	0	23.4 (N=11)	19.4 (N=12)	33.3 (N=12)	25.0 (N=2)
21-30	0	0	0	45.2 (N=28)	36.1 (N=13)	37.5 (N=3)

Table 3 presents the percentage of the highest education of teachers with different titles. A total of 91.4% had bachelor's degrees. One teacher of the first class titled and another three teachers of the advanced titles graduated from high school only.

Table 3 Percentage of distribution with different education level

	None	3rd Class	2nd Class	1st Class	Advanced	Specialized
Education						
High School	0	0	0	1.6 (N=1)	8.3 (N=3)	0
Community College	0	12.5 (N=1)	0	0	0	0
Undergraduate	96.2 (N=25)	62.5 (N=5)	95.7 (N=45)	93.5 (N=58)	86.1 (N=31)	87.5 (N=7)
Graduate	3.8 (N=1)	25.0 (N=2)	4.3 (N=2)	4.8 (N=3)	5.6 (N=2)	12.5 (N=1)

Results

The first research question aims to examine the relationship among the attained titles, education, and years of teaching. To answer this question, the Pearson correlation coefficient was calculated to assess the relationship of the years of teaching, education and attained titles. The correlation between teaching years and titles was significant, $r = .732$, $p < 0.01$. This shows that the more years that teachers have been in teaching, the higher titles that the teachers tended to have. There was also a high correlation between education level and teaching years, $r = -.220$, $p < 0.01$. This indicates that the more years that participants have been teaching, the lower of education they got.

Table 4 presents the correlation of teachers' different attitudes about high titled teachers in various areas. The high correlation found between questions from each section indicates each question response had a relationship with responses to the other questions. There was, however, not a statistically significant correlation between preparation and teachers' attitudes of the evaluation system. There was not a statistically significant correlation between classroom management and districts involvement.

Table 4. Correlation among attitudes toward high titled teachers

	Prep.	Management	Instruction	Pro.	Attitude	Dis. Involvement
Prep.	1					
Management	.575**	1				
Instruction	.318*	.579**	1			
Pro.	.445**	.603**	.742**	1		
Attitude	.283	.361*	.559**	.588**	1	
Dis. Involvement	.366*	.211	.508**	.557**	.557**	1

Notes: Prep. = preparation and planning, Management = classroom management, Pro. = professional responsibilities, Attitude = teachers' attitudes of the evaluation system, Dis. Involvement = districts' involvement.

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

* . Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

The second research questions asked: Whether teachers with different titles have different attitudes toward higher titled teachers? A series of one-way ANOVA calculations examined teachers' attitudes toward high titled teachers' abilities in the areas of teaching preparation, classroom management, and attitudes towards the evaluation system.

Preparation and Planning

A one-way ANOVA to compared responses on whether high titled teachers have demonstrated knowledge of content and pedagogy across the groups. Significant differences were found between groups $F(5,181) = 2.57, p < 0.05$. Paired comparison showed the significant difference was between the third-class titled teachers ($M = 2.25, SD = 0.71$) and the advanced titled teachers ($M = 1.33, SD = 0.63$). This indicates that the advanced titled teachers agreed that high titled teachers have the better ability of understanding pedagogy than other teachers, the third class titled teachers on the other hand thought high titled teachers' knowledge of pedagogy was no better than other teachers.

Classroom Management

There was another statistically significant finding [$F(5,181) = 2.51, p < 0.05$] for the question "if high titled teachers always create an environment of respect and support, if they promote the development of positive self-concept for all the students?" Post hoc comparisons using the Turkey HSD test indicated the mean score of advanced titled teachers ($M = 1.67, SD = 0.83$) was significantly different from the third-class titled teachers ($M = 2.88, SD = 1.72$)

This indicates that the advanced titled teachers agree that high titled teachers always create an environment of respect and support, they also promote the development of positive self-concept for all the students, but third class titled teachers thought there were no differences between high titled teachers than other teachers.

Instruction

A one-way ANOVA compared the different attitudes of the teachers' attitudes of high titled teachers' instructional skills. For the question "High titled teachers can demonstrate

flexibility and responsiveness” at the instruction section a statistically significant [$F(5,181) = 2.62, p < 0.05$] was found. Post hoc comparisons using the Turkey HSD test indicate the mean score for the specialized titled teachers and third-class titled teachers ($M = 2.5, SD = 0.93$) were significantly different from advanced titled teachers ($M = 1.67, SD = 0.79$). This indicates that the advanced teachers thought high titled teachers can always demonstrate flexibility and responsiveness while the third titled teachers thought the high titled teachers were not different from other teachers.

Professional Responsibilities

There was a significant difference of whether high titled teachers always communicate with students' families [$F(5,181) = 3.54, p < 0.05$]. Pair comparison showed that the specialized titled teachers ($M = 1.75, SD = 1.04$) were significantly different from the third-class teachers ($M = 3.38, SD = 1.85$). This indicates that specialized teachers agreed that high titled teachers did communicate with students' families a lot while third class titled teachers didn't agree that high titled teachers always communicate with students' families.

District Involvement

There was a significant difference of district involvement at the $p < 0.05$ level for the six different attitudes $F(5,181) = 2.51, p = 0.032$. Paired comparison found that the difference are between the third-class titled teachers ($M = 2.62, SD = 0.74$) and the advanced titled teachers ($M = 1.72, SD = 0.78$) which revealed that third titled teachers didn't think that the district involve enough for helping teachers getting titles but advanced titled teachers thought the district helped a lot.

General Attitudes of the Ranking System

The third research question asked: What are teachers' attitudes toward this ranking system? Majority of teachers are positive about the system, 89.84% of teachers agreed that the system is fair and the motivation of getting titles has a positive effect on teachers' teaching.

Responses to questions on teachers' attitudes towards the ranking system showed a statistical significance difference [$F(5,181) = 3.25, p < 0.05$] among groups. Post hoc comparisons using Turkey HSD test showed a significant difference between the advance-titled teachers ($M=2.06, SD=1.03$) and the second-class titled teachers ($M=2.83, SD=1.36$). This indicates that the advanced titled teachers thought this system was fair but second class titled teachers were not sure.

Discussion and Conclusion

This study investigated the relationship among the teaching years, the educational degree, and attained title. The result indicates that teachers with more years of teaching experience tend to have attained higher titles. Interestingly, there was a negative relationship between the number of years teaching and highest education degree that teachers had earned. Results of this study may be attributed to all of the high titled teachers who participated were older than 50 years old. When they became teachers 30 years ago, teacher preparation colleges were not yet fully developed. The highest necessary degree to become a teacher was only high school.

A very interesting finding is that most of the significant differences were found between the third class titled teachers and advanced teachers. Most of the high titled teachers thought highly about themselves. They preferred to choose all the options associated with them being

outstanding performers. Teachers with lower titles agreed that high titled teachers did develop well at certain areas. For example, the high titled teachers are good at setting instructional outcomes, managing classroom procedure, establishing the culture of learning and engaging students.

Planning and Preparation

According to the findings, teachers were in agreement that high titled teachers are good at setting instructional outcomes, which indicates high titled teachers are aware of what students are expected to learn. However, there was an area of disagreement indicated between third class titled teachers and advanced teachers in that they did not think high titled teachers had better knowledge of content and pedagogy than other teachers. One possible explanation is that teachers in China tend to create lesson plans in-group. Group development of lesson plans provides the opportunity for teachers with less experience to learn from experienced teachers. Through the process teachers are provided the opportunity to hear and exchange teaching ideas and observe whether other teachers have demonstrated knowledge of content and pedagogy. Through this process, the third titled teachers may have already adopted teaching ideas from the experienced teachers. However, third-class titled teachers have no idea how much effort and time that the high titled teachers spent on creating those lesson plans.

Classroom Management

All teachers agreed that high titled teachers are more capable of managing classroom procedure as well as establishing the culture of learning. Third class titled teachers did have some disagreements with advanced teachers in the area of behavior management. The advanced titled teachers thought they are capable of creating a positive and respectful learning

environment. Nevertheless, third-titled teachers disagreed that the advanced-titled teachers create better learning environment than other teachers. Unfortunately, it is difficult to judge what kinds of teaching environment they are able to create. The method of classroom observation is not well developed in China; teaching researchers will only be able to observe different classrooms before the final and midterm due to the large number of classrooms need to be observed. In many cases, the less participation of the third party (teaching researchers) may create bias between high titled teachers and lower titled teachers when they observe each other's class. The reason for the difference may be that different teachers have various teaching styles and they are more comfortable with their own teaching styles. They may have different expectations and hold different viewpoints of the same lesson. When third-class titled teachers observe advanced titled teachers' classroom they may think the high titled teachers' classroom environment is not different from other teachers, or the third class titled teachers may think they can do better. When the advanced teachers observe third class titled teachers' class, they may only notice the difference of teaching styles. They may have a bias and want other teachers to teach lessons in the same way they teach.

Third titled teachers also thought they could manage their students' behaviors the same as the high titled teachers. In China, many elementary schools tend to assign outstanding/top students to lower titled teachers or none titled teachers. High titled teachers tend to get a group of students who need more help. The differences of the student body may have an impact on the teaching and learning process. It is difficult to judge which classroom is better without taking the needs of the students in each respective classroom into consideration.

Professional Responsibilities

The findings from the professional responsibilities section showed that third class titled teachers tend to agree that there were no differences between high titled teachers and other teachers which the advanced titled teachers didn't agree. All teachers, including the high titled teachers, should have shown responsiveness and flexibility to their students and their work, third class titled teachers argued that there's no such theory like high titled teachers show more responsiveness and flexibility. The statistically significant findings indicated maybe it's time for all teachers to consider their missions and visions and how they become more responsiveness and flexibility. The findings support the notion that teachers believe high titled teachers spend lots of time communicating with students and know better how to engage students in class.

Communication

Even though students experience their learning of information first hand with teachers, it is important for teachers to communicate with students' families as well. The only issue is that the findings bring forth a concern that higher titles teachers may be busier than other teachers. They have many meetings to attend, and lots of research to conduct, which may allow for less time than other teachers to communicate with students' families. The high titled teachers may think they already spent a sufficient amount of time talking with the parents while other teachers think their time in communicating with parents is not enough.

District Involvement

District involvement always plays an important role in the teaching system. The third-class titled teachers thought the district should be more involved. How can districts better support the lower titled teachers? One of the teachers wrote, "Young teachers can also be well-developed teachers and some of the young teachers were even better than the experienced

teachers.” Some teachers also mentioned that the procedure and preparation for getting titles are stressful: they already have a large size class to teach; fill all the paperwork to apply for a title; prepare for the public lesson; and prepare for the written test. A young teacher wrote, “I want to get a title, but I heard the procedure can be extremely frustrated.”

One reason this system could be stressful may be due to the small proportion and “cap” number of high titled teachers among teachers’ candidates. The small portion and number of high title teaches may be attributed to the idea that most teachers who have the opportunity to apply already had personal connections with some administrators or knew someone from the districts (Chen & Peng, 2016). So does this ranking system motivate teachers in the right direction? This ranking system should be open, and give opportunities for every teacher who meets the requirement.

Advanced titled teachers thought districts already did a lot of work and provided enough opportunities for teachers to move forward. The results suggest districts appear to provide more opportunities to high titled teachers. However, the districts also provided chances for lower titled teachers to learn and communicate with high titled teachers to help lower titled teachers improve. The reason why districts offer more opportunities to the high titled teachers may be from a belief that high titled teachers are more capable of handling the task that districts assign to them. It also may be that is it perceived as a motivator for the lower titled teachers to get higher titles. All teachers did find it helpful that district provided opportunities for them to communicate with high titled teachers.

Interestingly, most teachers retire before they attain high titles. Some of the teacher participants put forward the notion that titles should in direct proportion to their teaching years. If the ranking system assigned titles according to the years of teaching experience, what would

schools and districts be able to do with excellent young teachers? What would happen if teachers with more experience were not that good? One of the teachers suggested that, “Titles are not supposed to be the only standard to testify a teacher’s teaching but if a teacher remains teaching for more than five years without achieving a title, this would indicate a problem.” However, this title system briefly indicate teachers qualification and motivate teachers grow professionally.

In conclusion, the findings indicate the participating teachers agree that the ranking system motivates them to work harder and grow professionally. In other words, they have positive attitudes toward this ranking system. Most of the no-titled teachers commented that they considered specialized teachers as role models. Other lower titled teachers admitted that specialized titled teachers do have better qualifications in teaching. There was no doubt that high titled teachers do have their shining points. Although this ranking system is not mature enough, it does create a guideline for teachers to prove themselves and it makes sure that teachers do not slack off in their work.

Though this research was carefully prepared, I am still aware of its limitations and shortcomings. One limitation of this study is the sample size. A small number of specialized titles teachers were involved because most of the specialized teachers were retired. Therefore, it would be inappropriate to generalize the finding to large groups. Future studies designed to examine titled teachers’ attitudes should have involved more participants with high titles.

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Appendix

Evaluation System in Chinese Elementary Schools
TEACHERS BACKGROUND INFORMATION (Please check all applicable) 教师背景信息

Dear teachers, this survey is based on the evaluation system in Chinese elementary schools. It is conducted to see how the teachers feel about this particular system. How do other teachers think about high titled teachers? This research will be published on SUNY Buffalo State Educational Journal and might be published on some other educational journals in the future. It will be a good opportunity to let scholars from all over the world know your schools and also let them know how the Chinese elementary schools like. This survey is anonymous. It is only require your schools' name. It will only take 10-15 minutes to fill it out. I really appreciate your participation, your answers are importance for me.

此问卷基于中国小学教师评教系统, 对于教师参与评教的想法感受, 以及其他教师对于高职称教师的教学外事方面进行调查。此研究将在在纽约布法罗教育专刊出版, 将来还会出版于其他教育专刊。通过这个机会, 可以让其他国家的学者了解你的学校, 并且让他们了解中国小学的现状。此问卷为匿名问卷, 仅需要您学校的名字, 可能会占用您十五分钟来完成, 十分感谢您的参与, 您的回答对此次调查很重要。

Name of School (学校名): _____ Grade (所教年级): _____ Subject (所教科目): _____

1. Age 年龄: 20-29 30-39 40-49 50+

2. Gender 性别: Male 男 Female 女

3. Years of teaching 教龄: < 1 1-3 4-6 7-10 11-15 16-20 21-30 30+

4. Title 职称: No title 没有职称 Third-class 三级 Second-class 二级 First-class 一级 Advanced 高级 Specialized 特级

6. Highest level of education 学历: Completed junior high school 初中 Completed secondary/high school 高中 Completed community college or technical college 技职 职高 Completed undergraduate university degree 大学本科 Completed graduate/advanced university degree 硕士研究生

7. Grades have been taught 教过的年级: K 幼儿园 First Grade 一年级 Second Grade 二年级 Third Grade 三年级 Fourth Grade 四年级 Fifth Grade 五年级 Sixth Grade 六年级

This questionnaire is adapted from Charlotte Danielson's framework of teaching.

1. Planning and Preparation 计划与准备						
High titled teachers in my school: 我校职称较高的教师	Strongly Agree 非常赞同	Somewhat Agree 有些赞同	Indifferent 中立	Somewhat Disagree 有些不赞同	Strongly Disagree 非常不赞同	N/A 不回答
1a. Have demonstrated knowledge of content and pedagogy. 对教学内容与教育学理论了解。						
1b. Have demonstrated knowledge of students. 可以更好地向学生展示知识准备。						
1c. Have set instructional outcomes. 能够提前制定出教学计划并获得较好的教学成果。						
1d. Have demonstrated knowledge of resources. 能更好展示出对不同教育资源的了解与认知。						
1e. Have designed coherent instruction and spent more time to prepare lesson plans. 能设计出更清晰的教学指导并花更长时间准备教案。						
1f. Always design students' assessments in order to improve teaching. 为了提高教学质量总能设计出有效的学生评价系统。						
2. The Classroom Management						
2a. Always create an environment of respect and rapport. Promote the development of positive self-concept for all the students. 能营造出和谐且互相尊重的课堂环境, 能积极促进学生的自我认知及发展。						
2b. Can establish a culture for learning. 能创造其独特的学习文化。						
2c. Can manage classroom procedure. 能较好管理班级, 按部就班完成教学任务。						
2d. Can manage students' behavior. 能较好管理学生的行为。						
2e. Can organize physical space and make sure the safety. 能管理学生的活动空间, 确保学生安全。						

This questionnaire is adapted from Charlotte Danielson's framework of teaching.

3. Instruction

High titled teachers in my school : 我校职称较高的教师	Strongly Agree 非常赞同	Somewhat Agree 比较赞同	Indifferent 中立	Somewhat Disagree 有些反对	Strongly Disagree 非常反对	N/A 不回答
3a. Always have communication with students about their learning. 都偏向于参与学生交流学习方面的问题。						
3b. Always use questioning and discussion techniques. 经常运用问题以及讨论这两种方式组织课堂。						
3c. Always know how to engage students in learning. 更了解如何吸引学生学习。						
3d. Always use assessment in instruction. 会有效运用评估评价来指导学生。						
3e. Can demonstrate flexibility and responsiveness. 在教学方面能展现出更强的灵活性与责任感。						

4. Professional Responsibilities

4a. Can always reflect on teaching. 可以更有效的反馈自己的教学。						
4b. Always maintain accurate records of their students. 通常会持有学生精确的记录(学习, 生活)。						
4c. Always communicate with families. 常常与学生的家庭沟通。						
4d. Always participate in a professional community. 更容易或更经常加入专业学术型的团队。						
4e. All have academic achievement in their field. 都在其相关领域有一定的成就(发表文章, 书籍)。						
4f. Are developing and growing professionally. 都在专业性上有发展并且成长。						
4g. Are more likely to get a promotion and a better benefit system. 更容易升职并且有更好的福利待遇。						

This questionnaire is adapted from Charlotte Danielson's framework of teaching.

5. Attitude towards the Evaluation System

5a. It will take more time to prepare the test and supporting materials if teachers want to get higher titles. 考取职称越高, 需要为职称考试准备的时间越长, 需要的材料越多。						
5b. This evaluation system is fair to all the teachers in my school, every teacher can get a chance to take the test. 职称系统对于所有老师都是公平的, 每位老师都能得到相同的机会。						
5c. This evaluation system shows a reliable and brief picture of teachers' capacity. 职称高低能够可靠地显示出教师的教学水平。						

6. Districts Involvement

6a. District always organize teachers to observe high title teachers' classroom. 学区会经常组织教师观摩高职称教师授课。						
6b. District always encourage high titled teachers to share their experience and tips of how to get titles. 学区经常鼓励高职称教师分享他们考取职称经验。						
6c. District always give more opportunity (research, international cooperation, publish books, etc.) to teachers with high titles. 学区会倾向于给高职称教师更多机会 (发表文章, 书籍, 做研究, 国际交流等)						

Thank you for participating, your information is important for this research. For the further study, I'd love to know your experience of getting a title and feelings of this ranking system. I really appreciate if you'd like to share.

感谢您的参与, 您的信息对这次的研究很重要。为了更进一步的研究, 我很期待您能分享一些您在职称考试时遇到的困难, 感受以及经验。