

# Exploration on the Academic Achievements of Chinese Government-sponsored Normal University Students from the Perspective of Two Major Classrooms

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**Abstract:** In order to train a large number of outstanding teachers, Chinese government has implemented the policy of public-funded normal education. Government-sponsored normal university students can enjoy a total tuition waiver, living allowance and employment security. Under the social background of China's difficult employment for university students, employment security has set government-sponsored normal university students at ease, as they no longer need to compete in universities for future job opportunities. From the perspective of the first-second classroom linkage, this research, with normal university undergraduates majoring in special education in Guangdong Province, China, as the investigation sample, explores the development of academic achievements under same learning environment between government-sponsored and non-government-sponsored students, so as to dissect whether there is a correlation between the academic achievement of government-sponsored students and employment security? It is found that the government-sponsored students had globally higher academic achievements in the first classroom than non-government-sponsored students, but had lower academic achievements in the second classroom, showing the conflicts in the development of the two classrooms. According to the facts, it is shown that government-sponsored students have stronger professional identity than non-government-sponsored students, and are actively engaged in the learning of the first classroom. However, the former have weaker endogenous power than the latter. Employment security affects the government-sponsored students' academic achievements in the second classroom.

**Keywords:** Two Major Classrooms, Government-Sponsored Students, Academic Achievement, Employment Security

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## 1. Introduction

In 2018, Guangdong Province, China, initiated a pilot project of government-sponsored education directed to primary and middle school teachers in the east, west and north of Guangdong, and the project involves the training of special education teachers. The important difference between government-sponsored normal university students (hereinafter referred to as GS students) and non-government-sponsored normal university students (hereinafter referred to as non-GS students) is that the former enjoy employment security that the government directly arranges their jobs after graduation. Under the social background of China's difficult employment for university

students, employment security has set GS students at ease, as they no longer need to compete in universities for future job opportunities. However, with guaranteed employment, is there any change in GS students' learning motivation? In other words, does employment security affect academic achievement? This study enrolled 46 GS students and 62 non-GS students majoring in special education from a normal university in Guangdong Province, and is to explore the development of GS and non-GS students' academic achievements under same learning context (same teachers, assessment methods, evaluation standards, etc.) from the perspective of the two major classrooms. This research aims to improve the effectiveness of China's public-sponsored teacher education policy, correct the learning attitude of GS students,

enhance their professional identity, and strengthen their professional belief.

## 2. Literature Review

According to *Management of Institutions of Higher Education*, Zhu Jiusi believes that the first classroom is the teaching activities carried out in accordance with the teaching plan, including lectures, experiments, internships, graduation projects and other teaching links. [1] Gan Lin points out that the first classroom refers to the teaching activities in traditional classroom education carried out by teachers within the prescribed teaching time according to the teaching plan and syllabus; teachers impart professional knowledge, abilities and skills to students through the first classroom; it is the main channel and main front of college and university education. [2] Zhang Yaqi believes that the first classroom is classroom teaching activities implemented according to the teaching plan during the prescribed teaching time, and the abilities are the basis of the syllabus for the first classroom. [3] Mo Qiugui indicates that the first classroom generally refers to teachers' classroom activities according to specific teaching materials and teaching plans in the planned teaching time, and the activities are standardized, abstract, concentrated, and collective event. [4] It can be simply found that the first classroom is traditional classroom teaching activities implemented according to the teaching plan, which is formulated according to the teaching syllabus. It emphasizes the leading role of teachers and the dominant status of students. The second classroom is meaningful and healthy extracurricular activities guided and organized beyond the teaching plan. Cai Keyong suggests that the second classroom refers to students-oriented various valuable and meaningful extracurricular educational activities guided and organized by the school beyond the teaching plan. [5] Wang Guohui believes that the second classroom refers to organized and planned students-oriented extracurricular education activities that are designed to train their abilities, impart knowledge and cultivate sentiment." [6] Peng Qiaoyin points out that the second classroom mainly refers to extracurricular education activities beyond the regular teaching plan prescribed by colleges and universities, and these healthy and beneficial activities are designed to enrich students' extracurricular life and improve their comprehensive quality and ability. [7] The second classroom is a supplement to the educational content of the first classroom. Usually, relying on abundant space and resources, the second classroom includes various education activities beyond the first classroom, and emphasizes the promotion of students with broader horizons, higher comprehensive abilities, and all-round development.

The concept of academic achievement is complex and dynamic. Many scholars define it through analysis and research on the structural elements of academic achievement. Wood R. suggests that academic achievement is achieved in school, and it should be understood in this context. [8] Goodman, RH and Zimmerman, WG (2000) believe that academic achievement must be defined beyond that measured

by standardized tests (such as advanced thinking skills, intellectual curiosity and creativity), and must incorporate work skills, civic awareness, artistic appreciation, character and value formation, etc. [9] Norman E. Gronlund suggests that academic achievement is the initially expected learning effect realized by a student in the process of receiving education. [10] Generally speaking, academic achievement refers to the fluctuations of a student's academic performance in a certain period of time, as well as the student's academic-related extracurricular practice, subject knowledge application, and development direction after the completion of the study in this specific time interval. Choice. [11] Academic achievement is the final academic gain that a student obtains through school education activities and under the guidance of teachers; it mainly covers three aspects -- knowledge and skills, abilities and academic emotion gains, and the three are believed to be closely related and complementary. [12] Academic achievement can also be defined as the main learning outcomes of a student in school education, including the gains in knowledge learning (learning tasks, study habits, etc.) and in life (thoughts, moral qualities, school life behavior, etc.). [13] The academic achievement of a university student is the sum of the learning results, learning behaviors and attitudes of the university in a certain period of time; it mainly includes two parts behavioral performance and objective performance. [14] Although scholars defined academic achievement differently, they share a consistent essence. Academic achievement is one of a student's learning achievements; it refers to the academic performance, covers the student's cognitive ability, learning interest and other aspects, and emphasizes comprehensive quality of student's all-round development. The academic achievement of a university student includes the educational achievements obtained by the student in the broad sense as well as the school records in the narrow sense.

Generally speaking, the academic achievement of a university student is the learning achievement obtained by the student during university days, and can be divided into two dimensions: the first classroom and the second classroom. Therefore, from on the perspective of the first-second classroom linkage, this research explores the development of GS and non-GS students' academic achievements under the same learning context, and analyzes whether there is a correlation between the academic achievements of GS students and employment security.

## 3. Method

The research enrolled the undergraduate students majoring in special education from a normal university in Guangdong Province, including 108 students from 3 classes. Specifically, Class 1 are GS students, and Classes 2 and 3 are non-GS students; there are 46 GS students and 62 non-GS students (as shown in Table 1). Data analysis method was adopted in the research to mainly dissect the development of students' academic achievements during the freshman to junior year. The data include two parts -- the academic achievements of

the first and second classrooms. The academic achievement data of the first classroom was sourced from the scores of 30 professional courses, including "Directed Walking", "Teacher Language", "Educational Research Methods", *etc.* According to the course types, the 30 courses were divided into three major course modules --basic courses, required professional courses, and elective professional courses for data analysis. According to the assessment method, the 30 courses were divided into general assessment courses and examination courses for data analysis. The analysis on the academic achievement data of the second classroom is based on the Students' Comprehensive Quality Evaluation Method (2020 Edition) of the university, and the students' specific

performances in moral education, ability, sports and others (such CET-4, CET-6, positions of student cadres, awards, *etc.*) were included in the academic achievements of the second classroom.

**Table 1.** Basic Information of the Research Objects.

Variable	Category	Number	Percentage
Student	GS students	46	42.59%
	non-GS students	62	57.41%
Class	Class 1 (GS students)	46	42.59%
	Class 2 (non-GS students)	30	27.78%
	Class 3 (non-GS students)	32	29.63%

**Table 2.** Overall Course Grades.

	Major Scores (M±SD)		T	P
	GS students (N=46)	non-GS students (N=62)		
basic courses	78.32±3.97	76.70±5.75	1.729	0.087
required professional courses	87.17±2.87	85.81±3.57	2.114	0.037*
elective professional courses	88.73±1.77	87.50±1.91	3.411	0.001**
assessment courses	88.58±1.31	87.52±1.64	3.593	0.000**
examination courses	85.04±3.08	83.51±3.88	2.213	0.029*
freshman stage	81.47±3.32	79.85±4.84	2.051	0.043*
sophomore stage	87.61±1.97	86.20±2.36	3.290	0.001**
junior stage	87.59±2.53	86.45±2.91	2.130	0.035*

\*  $p<0.05$  \*\*  $p<0.01$ .

## 4. Result

### 4.1. Academic Achievements in the First Classroom

The T-test analysis on the course grades of the GS and non-GS students suggested the following results (Table 2). First, in terms of the course modules, there was no significant difference of the basic courses; however, there was a significant difference of the required professional courses ( $p<0.05$ ), as the GS students had better course scores than the non-GS students; moreover, the difference of the elective professional courses was extremely significant ( $p<0.01$ ), and the GS students have stronger grades than the non-GS students. Second, in terms of the evaluation method, the GS students

had better scores in the general assessment courses than the non-GS students, and the difference was highly significant ( $p<0.01$ ); there is also significant difference of the examination courses ( $p<0.05$ ), and the GS students had better scores than the non-GS students. Third, in terms of the learning stage, a significant difference existed in the freshman stage ( $p<0.05$ ), and the GS students had better course performance than the non-GS students; there was an extremely significant difference in the sophomore stage ( $p<0.01$ ), and the GS students were obviously stronger than the non-GS students in the course performance; there was a significant difference in the junior year ( $p<0.05$ ), and the GS students were stronger than the non-GS students in the course performance.

**Table 3.** Performance Differences in Different Learning Stages and Evaluation Methods.

		Major Scores (M±SD)		T	P
		GS students (N=46)	non-GS students (N=62)		
freshman stage	assessment	89.20±1.25	87.85±1.53	4.890	0.000**
	examination	76.31±5.50	74.52±7.80	1.398	0.165
sophomore stage	assessment	89.42±1.24	88.36±1.88	3.532	0.001**
	examination	85.07±3.37	83.17±3.68	2.740	0.007**
junior stage	assessment	86.80±2.20	85.90±2.20	2.110	0.037*
	examination	87.84±3.01	86.70±3.55	1.926	0.057

\*  $p<0.05$  \*\*  $p<0.01$ .

T test was used to analyze the course performances between the GS and non-GS students at different learning stages and based on different assessment methods, and the following results were obtained (Table 3). First, during the freshman year, the GS students were highly significantly stronger than the

non-GS students in the general assessment courses ( $p<0.01$ ), while the two showed no significant difference in the examination courses. Second, during the sophomore year, the GS students were highly significantly stronger than the non-GS students in both the general assessment courses and the

examination courses ( $p<0.01$ ). Third, in the junior year, the GS students were significantly stronger than the non-GS students in

the general examination courses ( $p<0.05$ ), but the two showed no significant difference in the examination courses.

**Table 4.** Performance Differences in Different Course Modules and Learning Stages.

		Major Scores (M±SD)		T	P
		GS students (N=46)	non-GS students (N=62)		
basic courses	freshman stage	76.31±5.50	74.52±7.80	1.398	0.165
	sophomore stage	81.34±2.55	79.98±3.43	2.364	0.020*
required professional courses	sophomore stage	89.23±2.84	87.24±3.63	3.088	0.003**
	junior stage	85.93±3.33	84.96±3.96	1.344	0.182
elective professional courses	freshman stage	89.20±1.25	87.85±1.53	4.890	0.000**
	sophomore stage	88.70±1.85	87.53±2.02	3.086	0.003**
	junior stage	88.63±2.28	87.38±2.47	2.681	0.009**

\*  $p<0.05$  \*\*  $p<0.01$ .

T test was used to analyze the course scores between the GS and non-GS students in different learning stages and course modules, suggesting the following results (Table 4). First, in terms of the basic professional courses, no significant difference of the freshman-year course performance existed between the two groups, while the GS students were significantly better than the non-GS students in the sophomore-year course performance ( $p<0.05$ ). Second, in

terms of the required professional courses, the GS students were extremely significantly better than the non-GS students in the sophomore-year course scores ( $p<0.01$ ), while the two showed no significant difference in the junior-year course performance. Third, in terms of the elective professional courses, the GS students were extremely significantly better than the non-GS students in all of the freshmen, sophomore, and junior-year course scores ( $p<0.01$ ).

**Table 5.** Performance Differences in Different Course Modules and Different Evaluation Methods.

		Major Scores (M±SD)		T	P
		GS students (N=46)	non-GS students (N=62)		
basic courses	assessment	88.80±0.81	88.56±0.82	1.511	0.134
	examination	75.70±4.91	73.74±7.11	1.696	0.093
required professional courses	assessment	89.91±3.08	87.34±4.75	3.413	0.001**
	examination	86.78±3.04	85.60±3.67	1.773	0.079
elective professional courses	assessment	88.44±1.36	87.44±1.60	3.396	0.001**
	examination	89.25±2.98	87.59±3.12	2.789	0.006**

\*  $p<0.05$  \*\*  $p<0.01$ .

T test was applied to analyze the course scores between the GS and non-GS students in different course modules and assessment methods, leading to the following results (Table 5). First, in terms of the basic professional courses, the GS and non-GS students showed no significant differences in the general assessment courses and the examination courses. Second, in terms of the required professional courses, the GS

students were extremely significantly better than the non-GS students in the general assessment courses ( $p<0.01$ ), but the two showed no significant difference in the examination courses. In terms of the elective professional courses, the GS students were extremely significantly better than the non-GS students in the performances of both the general assessment courses and the examination courses ( $p<0.01$ ).

**Table 6.** Performance Differences in Individual Courses.

Course	Major Scores (M±SD)		T	P
	GS students (N=46)	non-GS students (N=62)		
Educational Psychology	88.80±0.81	88.57±0.82	1.511	0.134
Statistics in Education and Psychology	74.46±7.75	72.71±11.55	0.940	0.350
Curriculum and Teaching Theory	80.35±5.80	79.26±7.29	0.836	0.405
Human Anatomy Psychology	74.13±7.04	71.60±9.96	1.549	0.124
Psycho-metrics	73.87±5.01	71.39±6.49	2.243	0.027*
Educational Research Methods	89.91±3.08	87.34±4.75	3.413	0.001**
Introduction to Visual Impairment	92.67±3.43	88.90±4.29	4.909	0.000**
Introduction to Autism	85.11±4.35	85.47±5.34	-0.373	0.710
Theory and Practice of Individualized education	85.59±3.87	83.47±3.25	3.088	0.003**
Theory and Practice of Integrated Education	85.17±6.60	86.29±6.75	-0.858	0.393
Assessment to Special Children	83.24±3.35	82.60±6.27	0.876	0.383
Class Management of Special Education	86.76±4.68	85.73±5.58	1.020	0.310
Introduction to Gifted Education	88.89±3.25	86.73±4.30	2.979	0.004**
Orientation and Mobility	91.70±2.49	89.71±2.73	3.877	0.000**
Introduction to Communication Disorders	88.89±2.07	88.39±2.75	1.088	0.279

Course	Major Scores (M±SD)		T	P
	GS students (N=46)	non-GS students (N=62)		
Teachers' Language	89.85±1.40	87.87±1.71	6.402	0.000**
Professional Ethics of Teachers	88.54±2.04	87.82±2.32	1.678	0.096
Cognitive Training for Special Children	88.44±2.05	87.40±3.19	2.042	0.044*
Introduction to Preschool Special Education	89.96±4.29	87.60±3.86	2.994	0.003**
Education of Learning Disabled	90.33±1.55	90.03±2.17	0.781	0.436
Teaching Materials and Methods for Intellectual Disabilities	87.87±3.35	87.07±3.83	1.140	0.257
Attention Deficit and Hyperactivity Disorder	83.72±5.37	82.50±4.75	1.247	0.215
Theory and Application of Multiple Intelligence	89.46±3.33	89.10±3.28	0.560	0.577
Sensory Integration Training	92.33±2.58	91.36±3.05	1.744	0.084
Introduction to Cerebral Palsy	86.94±2.56	86.37±3.29	1.001	0.319
Teaching Materials and Methods of Hearing Handicapped	84.67±5.77	82.27±7.05	1.888	0.062
Introduction to Early Intervention	92.28±2.44	91.07±3.07	2.222	0.028*
Introduction to Severe and Multiple Handicapped Education	86.48±2.55	86.27±2.23	0.442	0.659
Teaching Materials and Methods of Giftedness	92.57±3.34	90.77±3.32	2.763	0.007**
Therapeutic Practice of Autism	84.33±3.42	81.84±4.69	3.046	0.003**

\*  $p < 0.05$  \*\*  $p < 0.01$ .

T test was taken to analyze the GS and non-GS students' academic performances of individual courses, getting the following results (Table 6). Among the 30 courses, the two student groups were significantly different in the academic performance of 12 courses ( $p < 0.05$ ), including 1 basic professional course, 4 required professional courses and 8 elective professional courses, and the GS students were superior to the non-GS students in all of the 12 courses. For example, in the scope of the required professional courses, the GS students had significantly higher scores than the non-GS students in Educational Research Methods and Introduction to Visual Disorder.

#### 4.2. Academic Achievements in the Second Classroom

The analysis was first conducted on the basis of honorary awards. Class 1 with 46 students had 12 individual awards, including 2 provincial-level cultural and sports awards and 10 college-level cultural and sports awards. The per capita award rate for the GS students was 0.26. Class 2 with 30 students had 17 individual awards, including 2 provincial innovation and entrepreneurship awards, 4 provincial cultural and sports awards, 1 university-level cultural and sports awards, and 2 university-level innovation and entrepreneurship awards, 3 university-level cultural and sports awards, 5 college-level cultural and sports awards. Class 3 with 32 students had 11 individual awards, including 4 provincial-level cultural and sports awards, 3 university-level cultural and sports awards, and 4 college-level cultural and sports awards. The per capita award rate for the non-GS students was 0.45. Then, analysis was carried out on the grade examinations. There was a significant difference in the passing rates of the CET-4 and CET-6 between the GS and non-GS students. The passing rate of CET-4 in Class 1 was 60.87%, which was significantly lower than 86.67% in Class 2 and 84.38% in Class 3; the passing rate of CET-6 in Class 1 was 8.70%, which was significantly lower than 16.67% in Class 2 and 21.88% in Class 3. Finally, the analysis was based on the profile of student cadres. Class 1 had 10 student leaders (21.74%), while Classes 2 and 3 had 12 (40.00%) and 12 (37.5%) student leaders, respectively. It can be seen that the proportion of the GS students serving as student cadres was

very small, and the student cadre positions of the non-GS students were better than those of the GS students.

## 5. Discussion

In terms of the first classroom, as suggested from the multi-dimensional analysis on the academic performances of the 30 courses, the overall academic performance of the GS students was higher than that of the non-GS students. In this research, the difference is attributed to professional identity. The professional identity of a student refers to the student's cognition and feelings constructed subjectively on the study program and connected with the program features on the basis of the student's self-evaluation, and it is specifically reflected as the student's cognition of the professional features and the consequent inner emotional experience and behavioral investment. [15] Due to the "particularity" of special education program, non-GS students are easily subject to professional cognition deviations, which are manifested as thin affections for the program; some students might not apply for the major out of their original intention, and might be passively transferred to the program for some adjustment factors. During the freshman year, many students have a strong desire for program transfer. However, the students of the government-sponsored teacher-training program are enrolled in advance. When candidates apply for colleges or universities after the National College Entrance Examination in China, the students applying for such early approval programs have clearer wishes, stronger goals, and then higher professional identity. Weak professional identity would lead to negative emotions and lack of enthusiasm for learning, resulting in lower learning motivation and relatively poor academic achievements.

The academic performances of the second classroom were analyzed on the basis of grade test scores, positions as student leaders and individual awards, suggesting that the academic achievements of the non-GS students were weaker than those of the non-GS students. In this research, it is attributed to the students' endogenous power. A student's endogenous power is the internal strength and subjective initiative for self-development, a built-in power system that promotes

student to grow, develop and become talents, and the core and essential force for the student to achieve self-development. [16] The GS students had higher academic achievements in the first classroom, showing that they have invested more time and energy; however, they failed to do well in the second classroom, which is not conducive to their overall development. On the whole, the GS students were not very motivated to participate in the second classroom, and showed a low passing rate in the grade examinations; they performed poor in serving as the student cadres; besides, they were significantly weaker than the non-GS students in competitions, regardless of level, category and number of awards. The GS students were weak in endogenous power, resulting in their poorer academic achievements in the second classroom than the non-GS students.

Based on the analysis on the academic achievements of the first and second classrooms, it is found in the research that employment security affects the GS students' academic achievements in the second classroom. Comparing with non-GS students, GS students have the advantage of employment security, which means that they can be employed after graduation. The human capital stock of university students formed by human capital investment affects the employ-ability. The increase in human capital investment can add to their human capital content, and at the same time increase their human capital stock, thereby promoting the employ ability. [17] Without the employment pressure, the GS students tend to show a negative attitude in the accumulation of human capital and self-improvement, and even have the idea of "all I need to do is learn the professional courses, complete the learning tasks, and graduate successfully". However, non-GS students, due to the lack of employment security, need to accumulate more human capital to cope with the highly competitive job market, and it has become an important task to improve their comprehensive competitiveness in multiple ways.

## 6. Conclusion

Compared with the non-GS students, the GS students have higher academic achievement in the first classroom yet lower academic achievement in the second classroom, showing the conflicts in the development of the two major classrooms. The academic achievements in the two major classrooms shows that the GS students have stronger professional identity than the non-GS students, and have been actively engaged in learning; however, the GS students have weaker endogenous power, suggesting the impact of employment security on their academic performances in the second classroom. Therefore, colleges and universities must innovate the assessment mechanism and improve the training model for government-sponsored students; the instructors should master the development law and scientifically guide the development of government-sponsored students; the government-sponsored students should enhance their endogenous power and identity responsibility. Following this path, government-sponsored students can continuously improve their academic achievements and enhance their sense of professional identity as a teacher.

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