

Henan Educator Resigns Over ‘Lazarus Chicken’ Paper

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A school administrator in central China has resigned after drawing fire for claiming that her students used “mind power” and “energy” to uncook hard-boiled eggs, and that one later hatched a chick.

“I caused a social disturbance and I’m very, very sorry for this,” Guo Ping, the principal of Zhengzhou Chunlin Vocational Training School in Henan province, told state broadcaster China Central Television on Wednesday. The school has been temporarily closed due to false advertising following an investigation.

In a paper published last June in Portrait Geography, a non-peer-reviewed domestic journal, Guo Ping and her co-author, Chinese language teacher Guo Taian (no relation), claimed that students had successfully reversed the cooking process after several eggs were fully boiled in hot water.

According to the two educators, 10 people witnessed the experiment conducted in August 2020 — two months after their paper was published, a discrepancy that has not been explained. Then a follow-up paper involving two more authors claimed that three weeks after the experiment, one of the seven “reversed eggs” produced a chicken at a farm owned by Guo Taian, according to screenshots of the now-inaccessible papers.

陈静雯	家长	孙宜含妈妈
赵美群	家长	陈静雯妈妈
郭太安	教师	新郑郭店镇张辛完全小学校



图 1 鸡蛋由生变熟在返生图示

实验过程：(1)有新郑市龙湖镇后湖村村民，专程到郭太安养鸡场，取新鲜鸡蛋数枚。(2)将 10 枚鸡分别给予编号，

A screenshot from one of the papers published in Portrait Geography supposedly shows the “reverse cooking” process. From Weibo

The team’s improbable experiment attracted considerable attention online, with many on social media calling out what they view as bogus science.

“Even Hogwarts wouldn’t dare to teach this,” one user wrote on microblogging platform Weibo, where hashtags about the case have been viewed over 100 million times. “Surely Teacher Guo should have a place among this year’s Nobel nominees,” quipped another.

Following the backlash, the Jilin Press and Publication Bureau, the regulatory body that oversees Portrait Geography, appointed a team to investigate how the flimsy-on-facts paper was published in the first place. Earlier, an editor at the journal had reportedly told domestic media that submitted papers were not screened for content: As long as they were accompanied by the 750 yuan (\$115) fee, the journal published them.

As of Tuesday, authorities had suspended the journal for rectification.

The controversy follows repeated cases of fraud and dishonesty — plagiarism, ghostwriting, and image manipulation, among other issues — in Chinese academic publishing in recent years. Some such scandals have involved prominent Chinese scientists and led to mass retractions by journals. To combat academic fraud, dozens of government agencies issued a joint memo in 2018 outlining 43 penalties for dishonest academics and institutions, such as restricting promotion and terminating research grants.

Before her apology Wednesday, Guo Ping, a self-described scholar in cultivating “human potential” and an enthusiastic believer in psychic powers, had stood by her experiment and its supposed results. She told domestic media on Monday that she was simply “exploring unknown science.”

Founded in 2009, Zhengzhou Chunlin Vocational Training School offers “brain development courses” for middle school-aged children, including in a dubious art known as “quantum speed reading.” According to Guo Ping, annual tuition fees at her school range from 60,000 yuan to over 100,000 yuan. In 2019, the principal also reportedly had her students try to uncook boiled mung beans.

Sixth Tone’s phone calls to Zhengzhou Chunlin Vocational Training School went unanswered on Tuesday and Wednesday.



A portrait of Guo Ping, principal of Zhengzhou Chunlin Vocational Training School and co-author of the “Lazarus egg” papers. From Weibo

Last October, Zhengzhou Chunlin Vocational Training School and the Academic Committee of the Chinese Academy of Management Science (CAMS) — a government-affiliated research institute that is reportedly mired in its own internal issues — jointly organized a seminar on “human body science.” During the event, Guo Taian presented their conclusions to dozens of researchers and science enthusiasts from state institutions and top universities, including Shanghai’s Tongji University.

But when reached by Sixth Tone, a member of the CAMS Academic Committee said he was unfamiliar with the seminar. Another CAMS staff member surnamed Yang told Sixth Tone that the academy has been working on “clearing its secondary affiliations,” without elaborating.

In addition to the vocational school and the journal, the Zhengzhou farm where the Lazarus chicken supposedly hatched is also under investigation for suspected marketing fraud.

This article has been updated with new information.

Editor: David Paulk.

(Header image: People Visual)

education

fraud