

Teaching, Researching, and Surviving: A Qualitative Document-Based Narrative Synthesis of Teacher-Researcher Role Conflict in Higher Education

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Abstract

Teacher-researchers in higher education are increasingly expected to teach, publish, support students, perform administrative work, and contribute to institutional development. These responsibilities are often described as mutually reinforcing, but they may become difficult to sustain when time, autonomy, workload allocation, leadership support, and research infrastructure are insufficient. This article presents a qualitative document-based narrative synthesis of how teacher-researcher role conflict is represented in contemporary higher education scholarship. Guided by Role Conflict Theory and supported by the Job Demands-Resources perspective and professional identity negotiation, the study analyzes how published documents narrate competing role expectations, institutional demands, available resources, coping practices, boundary management, and consequences for professional sustainability. The synthesis prioritizes scholarship published from 2020 to 2026 while retaining foundational theoretical and methodological sources. The analysis distinguishes workload intensity from role incompatibility and short-term coping from sustainable role configuration. It proposes six sensitizing configurations: role accommodation, role integration, role displacement, boundary externalization, sacrificial coping, and sustainable role configuration. The article argues that continued performance should not be interpreted automatically as sustainability because productivity may be maintained through recurrent personal sacrifice and boundary erosion. The findings have implications for workload policy, research support, mentoring, protected research time, and institutional recognition of both teaching and research.

Keywords: Teacher-Researchers, Role Conflict, Teaching-Research Nexus, Professional Identity, Job Demands-Resources, Qualitative Document Analysis, Narrative Synthesis, Academic Workload, Professional Sustainability

1. Introduction

Higher education academics increasingly work in environments where teaching, research, student support, institutional service, and professional development are expected to coexist. Teaching requires immediate and scheduled attention to course preparation, delivery, assessment, feedback, advising, and administrative responsibilities. Research requires uninterrupted intellectual work, methodological decision-making, writing, collaboration, revision, and publication. These two areas may complement each other, yet they may also compete for the same limited time, energy, and institutional resources.

This article focuses on teacher-researchers, or academics whose professional roles require meaningful engagement in both teaching and research. The issue is not simply that academics are busy. The more important problem is role conflict: the condition in which fulfilling one legitimate role expectation makes it difficult to fulfil another. A teacher-researcher may be able to manage a heavy workload when expectations are clearly sequenced and properly supported. Conflict becomes more visible when teaching demands displace research time while publication and research engagement remain institutionally consequential.

Recent scholarship continues to associate academic workload, productivity demands, identity negotiation, well-being, and work-life boundaries with the sustainability of academic work. However, the literature remains dispersed across studies of workload, research productivity, professional identity, burnout, work-life balance, and institutional support. As a result, teacher-researcher role conflict is often discussed indirectly or treated as an individual time-management problem rather than as a structured interaction among institutional expectations, resources, identity, and career sustainability.

This study addresses that gap by synthesizing how contemporary higher education scholarship constructs and narrates teacher-researcher role conflict. It uses published scholarly documents as the analytical corpus and applies qualitative document analysis together with narrative synthesis. The aim is not to estimate prevalence or test a causal model. Rather, the study examines how the literature represents the emergence of conflict, the resources that buffer or intensify it, the identity positions through which it is interpreted, the coping and boundary practices used by academics, and the consequences narrated for sustainable professional life.

1.1 Study Aim

The purpose of this qualitative document-based narrative study is to examine how teacher-researcher role conflict is represented across contemporary higher education scholarship. Specifically, the study identifies how published documents narrate the interaction of institutional demands, professional expectations, resource conditions, identity negotiation, coping practices, and consequences for well-being, teaching practice, research engagement, work-life boundaries, and career sustainability.

1.2 Research Questions

The central research question is: How is teacher-researcher role conflict constructed and narrated across contemporary higher education scholarship?

- a. What institutional, professional, and contextual conditions are represented as creating or intensifying conflict between teaching and research roles?
- b. How do scholarly narratives represent the influence of teaching-research conflict on professional identity?
- c. What coping, prioritization, boundary-management, and role-negotiation strategies are represented across the documentary corpus?
- d. How are consequences for well-being, teaching practice, research engagement, work-life boundaries, and career sustainability narrated in the literature?
- e. How do dominant, divergent, and evolving narratives of teaching-research conflict, adaptation, and professional sustainability vary across contexts and publication periods?



2. Theoretical and Conceptual Orientation

The study is principally informed by Role Conflict Theory, supported by the Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) perspective and interpreted through professional identity negotiation. Role Conflict Theory, grounded in Kahn et al.'s (1964) organizational role framework, explains why simultaneously legitimate expectations can become incompatible. In the teacher-researcher context, teaching and research contain different temporal rhythms, forms of accountability, and patterns of recognition. Conflict may emerge when satisfying one role expectation reduces the capacity to meet another.

The JD-R perspective complements this explanation by distinguishing between job demands that require sustained effort and resources that help individuals accomplish professional objectives, manage pressure, and protect well-being. For academics, demands include teaching load, publication pressure, assessment work, administration, and student support. Resources include autonomy, protected research time, mentoring, leadership support, collegial networks, workload flexibility, and research infrastructure.

Professional identity provides the interpretive level of the framework. Teacher-researchers do not merely perform tasks; they interpret teaching and research as elements of who they are professionally. The same workload may therefore be narrated differently depending on whether an academic primarily identifies as a teacher, a researcher, or an integrated teacher-researcher. Identity also changes across institutional transitions, career stages, publication experiences, mentoring relationships, and policy environments.

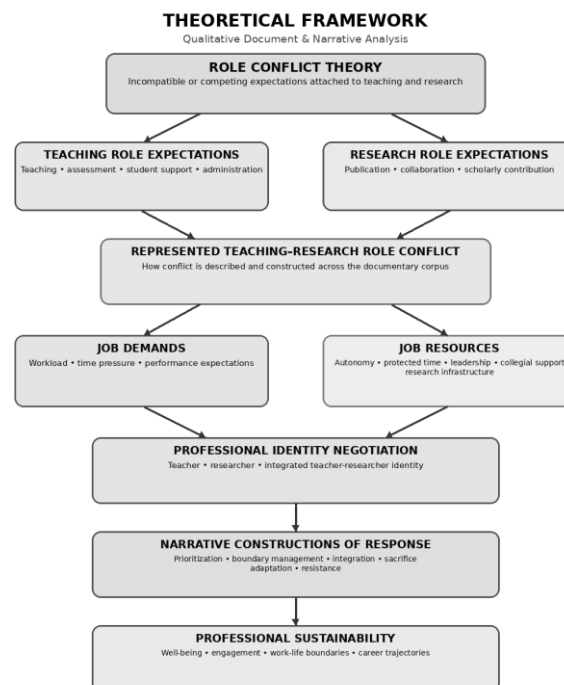


Figure 1. Theoretical framework aligned with qualitative document and narrative analysis

Figure 1 presents the theoretical framework as an interpretive progression from role conflict to teaching and research expectations, represented teaching-research conflict, job demands and resources, professional identity negotiation, narrative constructions of response, and professional sustainability. The arrows organize the theoretical logic of the synthesis; they do not represent statistically tested causal pathways.

2.1 Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework translates the theoretical lenses into sensitizing domains for qualitative document analysis and cross-document narrative synthesis. It begins with the documentary corpus and proceeds to the demands represented in the literature, including teaching, research, administration, and institutional expectations. It then considers resource and contextual conditions, such as time, autonomy, support, infrastructure, career stage, and institutional context.

At the center of the framework is teaching-research role conflict as represented in documentary evidence. Narrative analysis examines how authors and reported academic accounts construct incompatibility, tension, turning points, and shifts in professional identity. Coping and role-negotiation narratives are then examined in relation to prioritization, boundary management, integration, support-seeking, sacrifice, adaptation, and resistance. The final synthesis considers whether the literature constructs these trajectories as survival, adaptation, resistance, role integration, or professional sustainability.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Document-Based Narrative Analysis Pathway

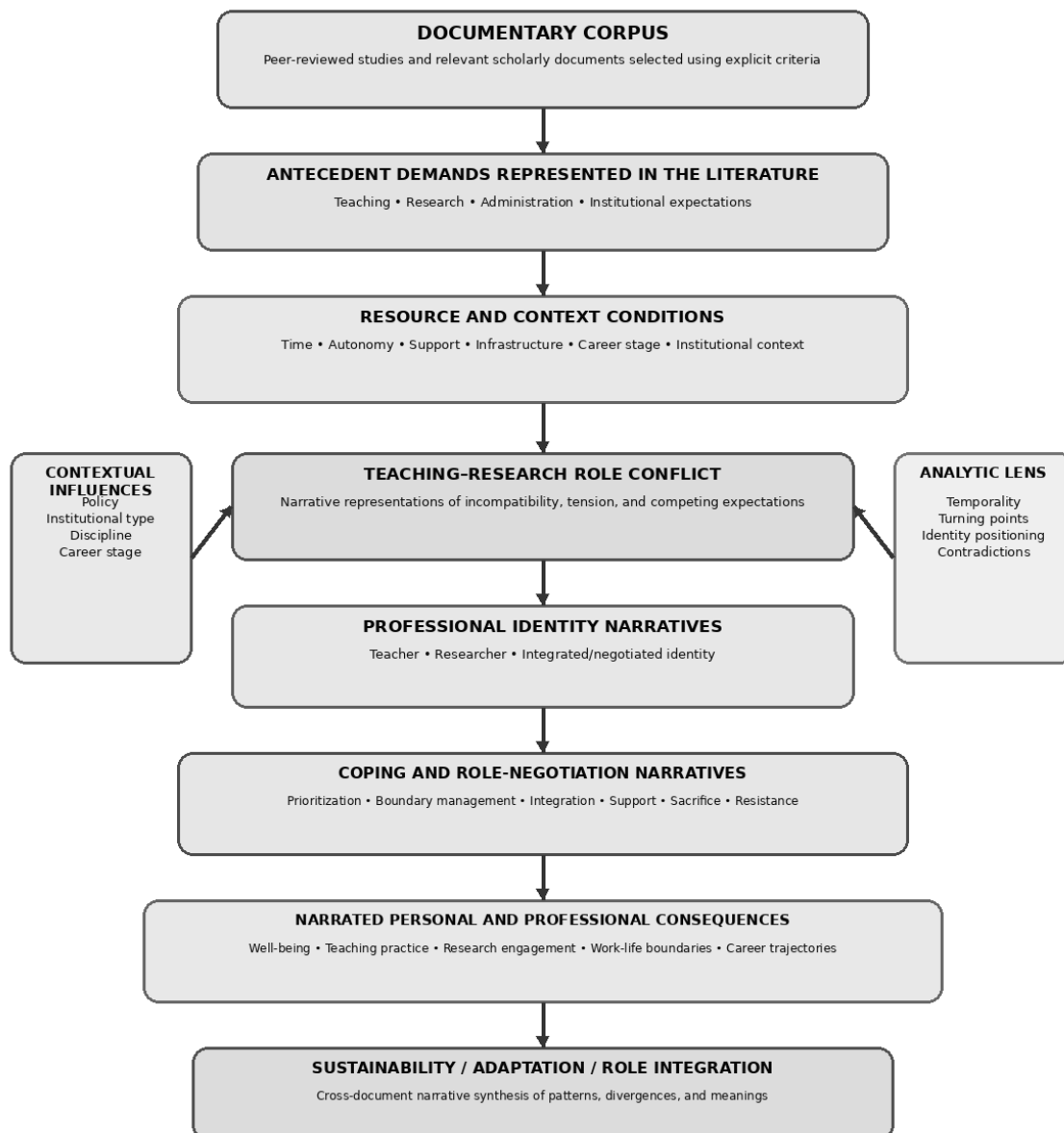


Figure 2. Conceptual framework and analytic pathway for document-based narrative analysis

Figure 2 operationalizes the theoretical orientation as an analytic pathway. The framework is dynamic and recursive. Contextual influences such as policy, institutional type, discipline, and career stage may shape how conflict is represented. Likewise, identity can shape interpretations of conflict, coping practices can reshape access to resources, and professional consequences can alter later career narratives.

3. Literature Review and Research Gap

Contemporary academics are expected to demonstrate teaching quality, research productivity, student responsiveness, and institutional contribution. Although teaching and research are often described as complementary, their coexistence may create pressure when expectations exceed available capacity. The literature suggests that teacher-researcher conflict should be understood as more than individual time management. It reflects the interaction between institutional structures and academics' interpretations of competing professional expectations.

Teaching and research are both central to academic work, but they are operationally different. Teaching is often scheduled, visible, and immediately responsive. It requires preparation, delivery, assessment, feedback, advising, and student support. Research requires sustained concentration, scholarly reading, data work, writing, collaboration, peer review, and revision. These activities can reinforce one another when institutions provide time, autonomy, and recognition. They become conflictual when they compete for finite cognitive and temporal resources.

Workload and institutional expectations are major structural conditions through which conflict develops. Academic workload extends beyond classroom contact hours to preparation, assessment, supervision, student communication, committee work, administration, and quality assurance. Research expectations may remain constant even when teaching and administrative demands intensify. Apparent difficulties in research productivity may therefore reflect structural constraints rather than limited motivation or capability.

The effect of these demands depends partly on available resources. Protected research time, mentoring, supportive leadership, collegial networks, flexible workload models, and research infrastructure can help teacher-researchers manage competing expectations. However, resources are not interchangeable. Collegial support may reduce emotional strain but cannot replace lost research time. Research funding may support a project but may not reduce teaching pressure. Thus, the fit between demands and resources is more important than the mere presence of support.

Professional identity gives role conflict personal meaning. Teacher-researchers may identify primarily as teachers, researchers, or integrated teacher-researchers. Tension becomes particularly significant when institutional definitions of success diverge from an academic's preferred identity. For instance, an academic who strongly values teaching may experience strain if institutional recognition privileges publication, while a research-oriented academic may experience heavy teaching as a constraint on scholarly development.

The literature also shows that teacher-researchers exercise agency. They prioritize, negotiate, segment roles, seek support, protect research time, collaborate, integrate teaching and research, or move work into personal time. These strategies may enable short-term performance, but they are not always sustainable. Research completed during evenings and weekends may preserve publication output while weakening work-life boundaries. The distinction between coping and sustainability is therefore central to this synthesis.

A research gap remains in understanding how teacher-researcher conflict is constructed temporally and narratively across documents. Quantitative studies can identify associations among workload, productivity, resources, and well-being, but they provide less insight into how academics interpret critical experiences, reconstruct identity, manage sacrifice, and narrate sustainability across time. This study addresses the gap by placing teaching-research role conflict itself at the center of document-based narrative synthesis.

4. Methodology

This study adopts qualitative document analysis and narrative synthesis to examine how teacher-researcher role conflict is constructed across contemporary higher education scholarship. It does not use interviews, surveys, observations, or other forms of primary data collection. The unit of analysis is the scholarly document and, within each document, the textual account through which teaching-research tensions, institutional conditions, professional identity, coping, and sustainability are represented.

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The study is positioned within an interpretivist-constructivist paradigm. Published research is treated not simply as a repository of findings but as a set of situated texts through which academic experiences are selected, framed, interpreted, and communicated. The analysis therefore seeks to understand meanings and narrative constructions rather than to estimate a single objective effect size.

The corpus comprises peer-reviewed journal articles and other scholarly publications that directly address teacher-researchers, the teaching-research nexus, academic workload, research engagement, professional identity, role conflict, job demands and resources, coping, well-being, or professional sustainability in higher education. Purposive criterion sampling is used because included documents must contain substantive qualitative, conceptual, or mixed-method evidence relevant to the phenomenon.

The principal publication window is 2020 to 2026 to maintain contemporary relevance, while earlier works are retained for foundational theories and methodological concepts. Inclusion requires relevance to higher education academic work and sufficient textual detail to support interpretive analysis. Exclusions include duplicates, publications outside higher education, sources focused on teaching or research without relevance to their interaction, sources lacking adequate scholarly or interpretive detail, and unavailable full texts.

Document identification is organized through structured searches of Scopus, Web of Science, ERIC, and other appropriate academic databases. Search terms combine teacher-researcher, teaching-research conflict, academic workload, research productivity, research engagement, professional identity, role conflict, Job Demands-Resources, coping, work-life balance, well-being, and academic sustainability. PRISMA 2020 principles are used to report identification, screening, eligibility, and inclusion decisions; PRISMA is treated as a reporting structure, not as the analytic method.

A structured extraction matrix records bibliographic information, study context, population or setting, methodology, key findings or arguments, and relevant passages. Additional fields capture temporal markers, critical incidents, identity positions, institutional demands and resources, coping strategies, outcomes, contradictions, and narrative resolutions. This matrix provides an audit trail from source selection to interpretation.

Narrative analysis proceeds in five stages. First, each document is read holistically to identify its central account of the teaching-research relationship. Second, narrative segments are coded for demands, resources, conflict, identity, agency, coping, boundaries, well-being, and sustainability. Third, temporal and explanatory structures are mapped by examining how conflict is said to emerge, intensify, change, or become resolved. Fourth, documents are compared for recurring storylines, counter-narratives, contextual differences, and silences. Fifth, cross-document synthesis develops higher-order narrative patterns explaining how teacher-researcher role conflict is constructed across the evidence base.

Analytical rigour is supported through transparent inclusion criteria, repeated reading, systematic comparison, negative-case attention, reflexive memoing, codebook development, and a documented decision trail. Appraisal informs interpretive weight rather than functioning as an automatic exclusion threshold. Context-rich and methodologically transparent sources are given greater explanatory weight, while conceptually useful but less detailed sources are used cautiously.

4.1 Ethical Considerations

The study uses published and publicly or institutionally accessible scholarly documents and does not involve direct human participants. Ethical practice centers on accurate representation of source authors, responsible quotation and paraphrase, transparent inclusion and exclusion decisions, appropriate citation, and avoidance of



decontextualizing findings from the original studies. Any institutional requirements concerning ethics review or exemption for secondary documentary research should be followed.

5. Findings and Interpretive Synthesis

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The documentary corpus converges around a recurring interpretive sequence. Competing teaching and research expectations are narrated through institutional resource conditions, interpreted through professional identity, managed through coping and boundary practices, and connected to consequences for well-being and career sustainability. These patterns represent constructions in the published literature rather than direct observations of teacher-researchers.

The central analytical issue is the tension created when teaching and research impose simultaneous demands on limited time, attention, and professional resources. Teaching commonly requires immediate responsiveness through preparation, assessment, student support, and administration. Research depends on sustained intellectual engagement, writing, collaboration, and publication. Conflict emerges when fulfilling one set of expectations constrains the capacity to meet the other.

This distinction is theoretically important because role conflict is not synonymous with workload. An academic may manage substantial work when responsibilities are compatible, adequately resourced, and clearly prioritized. Role conflict becomes more pronounced when legitimate expectations compete. For example, immediate teaching obligations may displace research activity while research performance remains central to career progression. Thus, teacher-researcher conflict arises not merely from holding two roles, but from the institutional conditions under which those roles must coexist.

Role conflict must therefore be situated within the organizational environment of higher education. Teacher-researchers operate in systems that may simultaneously expect teaching quality, student responsiveness, publication, research engagement, administration, and institutional service. From the JD-R perspective, workload, time pressure, publication expectations, and administrative responsibilities function as demands. Autonomy, protected research time, leadership support, mentoring, workload flexibility, and research infrastructure function as resources.

Professional identity adds an important interpretive dimension. Teacher-researchers do not simply perform multiple tasks; they attach meaning to teaching and research as components of who they are professionally. Role conflict may become especially significant when institutional definitions of academic success diverge from individuals' preferred professional identities. Narrative accounts of publication success or rejection, promotion, workload change, doctoral study, leadership transition, and mentoring may become turning points through which identities are reconstructed.

Teaching-research conflict may also have consequences beyond research productivity. It may affect well-being, job satisfaction, teaching practice, work-life boundaries, and career sustainability. However, the analysis should avoid assuming that all professional demands are negative. Teaching may create workload pressure while also providing professional meaning. Research may create publication pressure while also providing intellectual satisfaction and career development.

Across the literature, teacher-researchers are represented as active agents who develop strategies for managing competing demands. These include prioritization, protecting research time, integrating teaching and research, collaboration, seeking institutional support, boundary management, and temporary reduction of investment in particular activities. The effectiveness of these strategies depends partly on available institutional resources. Individual coping should therefore not be treated as a substitute for organizational responsibility.

6. Integrated Theoretical Interpretation

The integrated interpretation is best understood as a multi-level and recursive explanatory model rather than a linear chain of variables. Role Conflict Theory identifies the structural problem: legitimate teaching and research expectations can become incompatible when fulfilling one role obstructs another. The JD-R perspective explains



the conditions under which that incompatibility becomes more or less consequential by distinguishing demands from available resources. Professional identity explains why comparable conditions acquire different meanings for different academics. Agency and sustainability connect these explanations across time.

At the structural level, high workload can be demanding without necessarily producing role incompatibility. Conflict becomes analytically salient when teaching and research requirements compete for the same finite temporal, cognitive, or institutional resources. The structural question is therefore not only how much work academics do, but whether the work is organized in ways that allow legitimate roles to be fulfilled without systematic displacement.

At the demand-resource level, similar teaching and research expectations do not necessarily generate equivalent outcomes. Academics differ in access to protected research time, autonomy, mentoring, collegial support, workload flexibility, and research infrastructure. The theoretical emphasis is therefore on demand-resource fit. A resource is meaningful when it corresponds to the actual demand that creates pressure.

At the identity level, teacher-researchers interpret role conflict through their sense of legitimate academic work. Some may experience teaching as the core of professional meaning; others may experience research as central to recognition and career direction; others may seek integration between the two. Professional identity is therefore treated as negotiated rather than fixed.

At the level of agency and boundary practices, conflict is managed through prioritization, segmentation, integration, collaboration, resistance, support-seeking, and boundary management. These practices can alter how demands are experienced, but they may also relocate unresolved pressure into personal time. The final level concerns professional sustainability: whether teaching and research expectations, available resources, identity, and work-life boundaries remain sufficiently aligned without routine dependence on personal sacrifice.

Table 1. Division of explanatory labour within the integrated theoretical model

Analytical level	Primary question	Theoretical lens	Interpretive focus
Structural incompatibility	What creates conflict?	Role Conflict Theory	Competing teaching and research expectations
Demand-resource conditions	What intensifies or buffers it?	JD-R perspective	Workload, time, autonomy, support, infrastructure
Professional identity	How is it interpreted?	Identity negotiation	Teacher, researcher, and integrated identities
Agency and boundaries	How is it managed?	Integrated synthesis	Prioritization, integration, segmentation, sacrifice
Professional sustainability	What happens over time?	Integrated model	Well-being, boundaries, engagement, and career continuity

7. From Coping to Sustainable Role Configuration

A central contribution of the synthesis is the distinction between coping and sustainability. Coping refers to strategies that allow teacher-researchers to continue meeting immediate expectations. Sustainability refers to a longer-term configuration in which role expectations, resources, boundaries, and professional identity are sufficiently aligned to support continued participation without routine sacrifice.

The synthesis proposes six sensitizing configurations. These are interpretive constructs developed through narrative synthesis. They are not validated scales, fixed stages, prevalence estimates, or universal categories. Their purpose is to give researchers and institutions a vocabulary for interpreting how teacher-researcher role conflict is managed and narrated.

Table 2. Sensitizing role configurations derived from the narrative synthesis

Configuration	Core meaning	Indicative narrative pattern
Role accommodation	Competing expectations are managed through feasible adjustment.	Teaching and research remain demanding but manageable because conditions allow adjustment.
Role integration	Teaching and research become mutually reinforcing.	Research informs teaching; teaching generates research questions or scholarly outputs.
Role displacement	One role repeatedly crowds out another.	Immediate teaching or administrative work displaces research, or research pressure reduces teaching development.
Boundary externalization	Unresolved institutional demands move into personal time.	Evenings, weekends, family time, and recovery periods absorb unfinished academic work.
Sacrificial coping	Performance is maintained through persistent personal cost.	Output continues, but well-being, rest, family time, or professional meaning is weakened.
Sustainable role configuration	Expectations, resources, boundaries, and identity are sufficiently aligned.	Teaching and research coexist without routine dependence on personal sacrifice.

8. Discussion

The findings suggest that teacher-researcher role conflict should be interpreted as a structured and narrated condition rather than as a simple workload problem. Workload matters, but it is not the whole explanation. The key analytical issue is whether teaching and research expectations are compatible within available time, resources, institutional recognition, and professional identity. This reframing avoids blaming individual academics for structural misalignment while still recognizing their agency in negotiating competing demands.

The synthesis also clarifies why institutional support must be differentiated. Generic encouragement to publish or manage time is unlikely to resolve conflict when academics lack protected research time, workload flexibility, mentoring, or research infrastructure. Similarly, support that addresses emotional strain may be valuable but insufficient when the root problem is the absence of time for sustained scholarly work. Institutions should therefore examine the specific demand-resource relationships that shape teacher-researcher experience.

The distinction between coping and sustainability is especially important for higher education leadership. Continued performance may conceal hidden costs. An academic who publishes by working at night or on weekends may appear productive, but such productivity may depend on boundary erosion. An institution that measures output without examining the conditions under which output is produced may mistake sacrificial coping for sustainable academic development.

The proposed configurations provide a vocabulary for future inquiry. Role accommodation and role integration represent more enabling patterns. Role displacement, boundary externalization, and sacrificial coping represent less sustainable patterns. Sustainable role configuration represents an evaluative horizon rather than a guaranteed outcome. The configurations can be tested and refined through empirical studies across institutional type, career stage, discipline, employment conditions, and national contexts.

9. Implications for Higher Education

The synthesis has implications for workload policy, research leadership, mentoring, and academic career development. If teacher-researcher conflict is produced partly by misalignment between institutional expectations and resources, institutional responses should extend beyond advising academics to improve time management. Workload allocation, teaching schedules, research expectations, protected research time, administrative demands, mentoring, research infrastructure, and recognition systems require systematic review.

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Institutions may also need more differentiated approaches to academic development. Teacher-researchers differ by career stage, discipline, contract type, professional identity, and access to resources. Uniform expectations may therefore create unequal experiences of role conflict. A sustainable approach would aim not only to increase output but to create conditions under which teaching and research can coexist in professionally meaningful and personally sustainable ways.

For researchers, the study supports further qualitative, longitudinal, and comparative inquiry into how teacher-researcher role conflict develops over time. Future studies may examine how academics move between role accommodation, integration, displacement, boundary externalization, sacrificial coping, and sustainable configuration. Such work can clarify whether these configurations vary by institutional culture, gender, career stage, workload model, and research policy environment.

10. Limitations

This synthesis is limited by its reliance on published scholarly representations rather than direct access to teacher-researchers' lived accounts. The corpus may include qualitative, quantitative, mixed-method, conceptual, and review documents, and such heterogeneity requires careful appraisal. The 2020 to 2026 publication window increases contemporary relevance but may exclude earlier empirical work relevant to particular contexts. The findings are also shaped by database coverage, language, indexing, access, search terms, and the availability of full texts. Narrative synthesis is interpretive; therefore, reflexive memoing, negative-case attention, and a transparent extraction matrix reduce but do not remove researcher influence. Where screening and coding are completed by a single reviewer, the absence of independent duplicate screening or coding should be declared as a methodological limitation.

11. Conclusion

This qualitative document-based narrative synthesis shows that teacher-researcher role conflict is represented in contemporary higher education scholarship as more than workload intensity. Conflict becomes salient when legitimate teaching and research expectations compete for finite temporal, cognitive, and institutional resources. Role Conflict Theory explains this incompatibility, the JD-R perspective clarifies the conditions that intensify or buffer it, and professional identity negotiation explains how comparable conditions acquire different professional meanings.

The study contributes a distinction between coping and sustainability. Role accommodation, role integration, role displacement, boundary externalization, sacrificial coping, and sustainable role configuration provide a sensitizing vocabulary for interpreting how academics manage competing expectations. The central implication is that continued performance does not necessarily indicate a sustainable role configuration. Productivity maintained through recurrent work-life boundary erosion or personal sacrifice may conceal unresolved structural conflict. For higher education institutions, the findings direct attention to alignment among workload allocation, research expectations, protected research time, administrative demands, mentoring, infrastructure, and career evaluation. Future research should test and refine the proposed configurations across career stages, disciplines, institutional types, employment conditions, and national contexts. The framework shifts the analytical question from how academics can simply accomplish more to the conditions under which teaching and research can coexist in professionally meaningful and personally sustainable ways.



Declarations

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CRediT authorship contribution statement: To be finalized by the authors before submission. The submitted file identifies Anna Sheila Crisostomo, Michael Canoy Legion, Leonila Clamo, and Christine Joy Cudillo as authors.

Ethical statement: The study uses published scholarly documents and does not involve direct recruitment of human participants, interviews, recordings, or identifiable primary data collection. Ethical practice concerns responsible representation, transparent selection, accurate citation, and careful interpretation of source materials.

Declaration of interests: The authors declare no competing interests.

Data availability: The documentary corpus, screening log, extraction matrix, and coding notes may be made available by the corresponding author upon reasonable request, subject to copyright and access restrictions for included sources.

AI usage: AI assistance was used for language editing and manuscript formatting only. The authors remain responsible for the scholarly content, source verification, interpretations, and final submission.

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