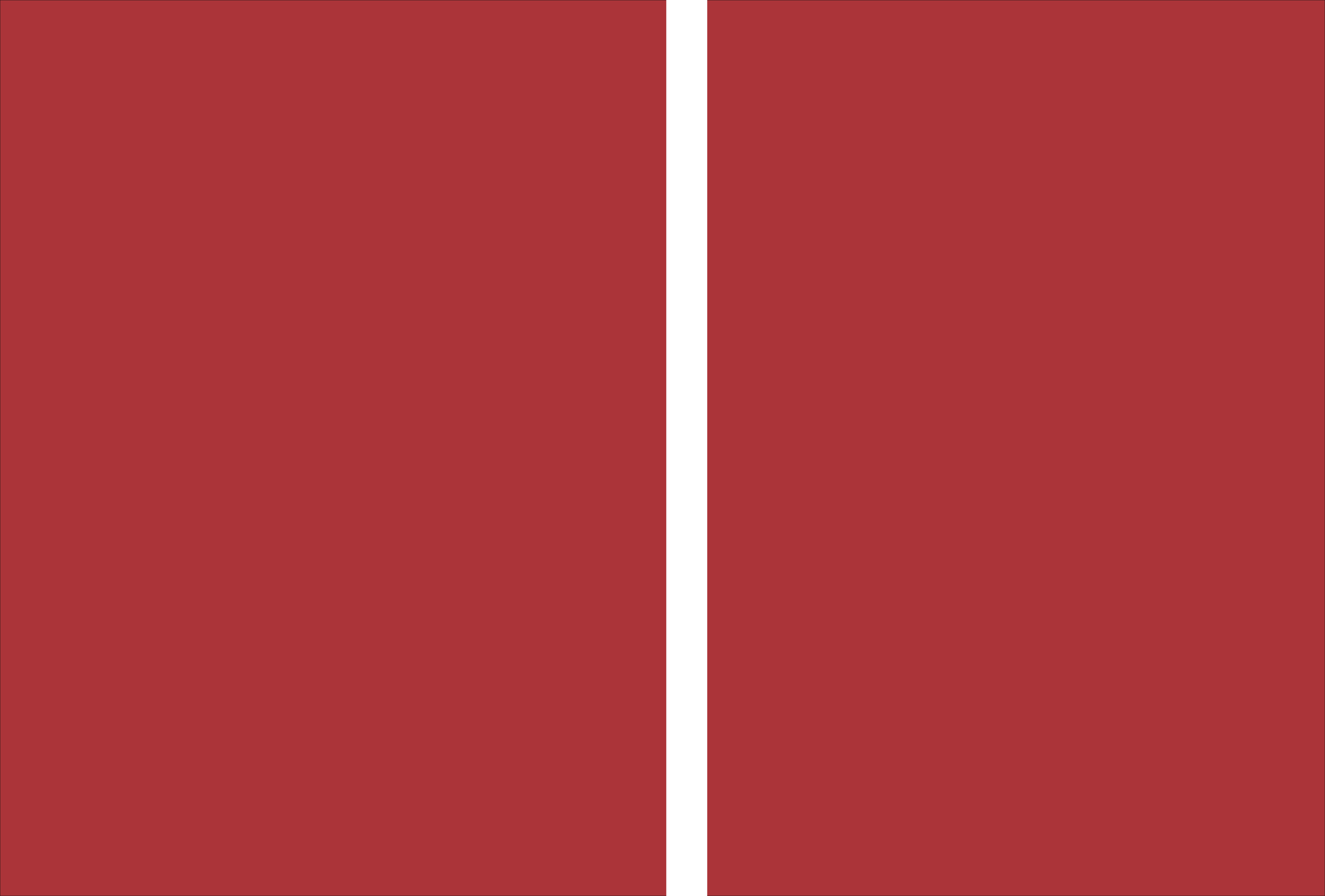Universidade do Minho
Instituto de Educação

Qi Song

From Student to Teacher: the Influence of the Contexts of Learning in Becoming a Teacher in China

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From Student to Teacher: the Influence of the Contexts of Learning in Becoming a Teacher in China

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Trabalho efetuado sob a orientação da
Professora Doutora Maria Assunção Flores
e da
Professora Doutora Sandra Raquel Gonçalves Fernandes

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DECLARAÇÃO

Nome: Qi Song
Endereço electrónico: songqi2006@gmail.com / songq@njupt.edu.cn
Número do Passaporte: EA4134734

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Orientadoras:
Professora Doutora Maria Assunção Flores
Professora Doutora Sandra Raquel Gonçalves Fernandes

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Assinatura: _Qi Song_____

STATEMENT OF INTEGRITY

I hereby declare having conducted my thesis with integrity. I confirm that I have not used plagiarism or any form of falsification of results in the process of the thesis elaboration.

I further declare that I have fully acknowledged the Code of Ethical Conduct of the University of Minho.

University of Minho, _____

Full name: _Qi Song_____

Signature: _Qi Song_____

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This PhD is the beginning of my research. As we all know, Chinese education is full of challenges. I will continue this research way, and I would like to put Prof. Flores's research together with Chinese colleagues and do something for Chinese Education. I wish I will not leave her. I hope I can be her student forever.

Abstract

Literature about Chinese new teachers is scarce, not only in Chinese language but also internationally. As the second largest economic powerful country, Chinese basic education has several problems. Existing research about new teachers focuses mainly on mentoring, induction, and comparative studies between advanced western countries and China.

This study aims to explore the influence of the contexts of learning in becoming a teacher in the elementary and middle school teachers in China. In order to explore the development in the early years of teaching, a qualitative study focusing on new teachers' personal motivations, context of training and workplace learning was undertaken.

Six schools including one primary school and five middle schools were chosen. All of these schools were located in middle China, Nanchang City, Jiangxi Province. Jiangxi Province is one of the poorest provinces in China, and Nanchang is the capital of Jiangxi Province.

Data collection took place in three phases. In regard to the 1st phase of data collection, it included 17 new teachers who participated in semi-structured interviews in June 2012. In the 2nd phase, 14 teachers participated in the semi-structured interviews carried out in December of 2012. In the 3rd phase of data collection, 119 teachers participated through the critical incident method. School leaders' views of being a new teacher were also collected through narratives of 5 school leaders.

Findings showed that Chinese teachers' motivations are very similar to previous existing literature. Low effect of initial teacher preparation, strong influence of internship of Chinese teachers, low income, heavy workload, no time to rest were identified repeatedly in data collected from teachers. Teachers' motivations, beliefs and expectations about teaching and being a teacher need to be taken into consideration by teacher educators and policy makers. Induction and mentoring should also be developed. These are great challenges in a Chinese exam-oriented system. Findings also suggest that more funding, formal laws and policies for the induction of new teachers should be set up and evaluated. Implications and recommendations for further research are presented at the end of the thesis.

Resumo

A literatura existente no domínio da formação inicial de professores na China é bastante escassa, quer na sua própria língua de origem, quer ao nível de referências e estudos internacionais sobre o contexto chinês. Apesar de a China ser considerada uma das maiores potências económicas do mundo, o sistema de ensino na China revela ainda vários problemas e dificuldades. A investigação existente sobre formação inicial de professores na China centra-se principalmente nos temas da supervisão, indução e estudos comparativos entre países avançados do ocidente e a China.

Esta investigação tem como principal objetivo analisar os contextos de aprendizagem, mormente a formação inicial de professores, e o processo tornar-se professor no contexto da China, discutindo os principais desafios e dificuldades.

A metodologia de investigação é de natureza qualitativa, sendo as entrevistas semiestruturadas, as narrativas e os incidentes críticos os principais métodos de recolha de dados. O estudo realizado envolve a participação de seis escolas (5 de ensino básico e 1 de ensino primário), localizadas na cidade de Nanchang, na província de Jiangxi. A província de Jiangxi é uma das províncias mais pobres da China e Nanchang é a sua capital. A recolha de dados decorreu em três fases diferentes. A 1ª fase baseou-se na realização de entrevistas semiestruturadas a 17 professores principiantes, em junho de 2012. Na 2ª fase, foram realizadas novamente entrevistas aos mesmos professores, em dezembro de 2012, sendo que apenas 14 dos 17 professores aceitaram participar novamente na recolha de dados.

Pretendia-se, assim, conhecer e explorar os primeiros anos de ensino por parte dos professores, as suas motivações pessoais, a formação inicial e a aprendizagem no local de trabalho. Na 3ª e última fase de recolha de dados foi utilizado o método de incidentes críticos, no qual participaram 119 professores de diferentes escolas e localidades da China. Através dos incidentes críticos pretendia-se que os professores identificassem e descrevessem um dos melhores momentos da sua atividade como professor. Para concluir a recolha de dados, foram, ainda, recolhidas narrativas escritas por parte de 5 professores com funções de coordenação e direção nas escolas, no sentido de conhecer melhor a realidade das escolas no contexto

educativo chinês, bem como o processo de adaptação dos novos professores ao local de trabalho. No que diz respeito aos resultados do estudo, é possível concluir que as motivações dos professores chineses são muito semelhantes às referidas na literatura já existente neste domínio. A pouca preparação no âmbito da sua formação inicial, o papel do estágio, a carga de trabalho, o baixo salário, a falta de tempo para descansar, foram alguns dos fatores identificados pelos professores para caracterizar a sua motivação e a adaptação ao local de trabalho. Neste sentido, é fundamental considerar as motivações, crenças e expectativas dos professores sobre o ensino e sobre o que significa ser professor na formação inicial de professores. As práticas de mentoria e de estágio na aprendizagem no local de trabalho devem ser potenciadas e desenvolvidas no sentido de alcançar melhores resultados neste âmbito. Num sistema de ensino orientado maioritariamente para os exames, estes são grandes desafios que se impõem ao modelo educativo chinês.

As conclusões do estudo apontam para a necessidade de um maior apoio na formação inicial de professores, quer através de financiamento, quer de políticas educativas e legislação favorável a processos de mentoria ou a uma integração bem sucedida por parte dos novos professores no local de trabalho. No final deste trabalho são apresentadas implicações e recomendações para futuros trabalhos de investigação.

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Abbreviations and Acronyms

BC - Before Christ

BT- Beginning Teacher

JXNU - Jiangxi Normal University

NT - New Teacher

ITE - Initial Teacher Education

TP - Teaching Practice

TE - Teacher Education

INTRODUCTION

Introduction

Research on new teachers has been a very popular and relevant topic internationally. In China research on beginning teachers began in the end of twentieth century. However, until now, China has neither special laws nor regulations for new teachers. Compared with other topics such as teacher education, research on new teacher is scarce in China. The Chinese studies on new teachers developed from the influence of some developed countries such as United States of America (USA), United Kingdom (UK), and Japan (Xu, 2002; Jiang, 2002; Zheng, 2011). Since then, the comparative research between China and developed countries were undertaken (Tian, 2011). After that, some Chinese scholars published research on new teacher regarding different issues such as induction (Ren, 2004); mentoring for novices (Zhang, 2009; Zhou, 2011); and new teachers in rural, minority regions (Tong, 2011). However, there are very few empirical international studies exploring Chinese new teachers' development (Wang, 2001; Lee & Feng, 2007). Little has been done on factors such as learning in the workplace and new teachers' development and change. School leadership and working contexts also play an important role in new teachers' lives. Thus, this study intends to explore these issues in more detail. It aimed at analyzing the transition from student teacher to new teacher, including the influences of the contexts of learning and workplace conditions. It was carried out in Nanchang City, a middle-level city in China, with Chinese new teachers, in two different stages.

This thesis is organized in five chapters. The first chapter presents the literature review on issues related to new teachers. Teachers' professional development is also discussed from the Initial Teacher Education (ITE), student to teacher's transition, teacher identity and workplace learning. As a context for professional learning, ITE has been discussed in detail by considering issues of teacher quality, teacher professionalism and professional learning. During the transition from student to teacher, there are many challenges confronting new teachers, e.g. the mismatch between initial beliefs and images, handling problematic pupils, co-operation with colleagues, etc. The practice such as practicum and induction is especially important as it allows the student teachers to put his/her theoretical knowledge into practice in the school under the supervision of the mentors before working independently.

The second chapter focuses on the methodological design of the study. The framework of the research is presented as well as the objectives that guided this research. From the established objectives, methodological options as well as the methods used for data collection are presented and justified. In this chapter, the context of the study is also described, such as the schools and participants, the school system and relevant policy as well as the laws regulating teachers and teacher education. The description of the methods and procedures used to collect and to analyze data are also presented. In the last sections of this chapter, ethical considerations as well as the limitations of the study are presented.

Chapter three and four correspond to the first and the second round of data collection. Chapter three explores and presents findings on the following topics: motivations and influences to enter a teaching degree; looking back on initial teacher education; practicum experience; images of self-as-teacher; workplace learning; learning situations as a new teacher and, finally, the interaction with students. Chapter four consists of two main parts: analysis of the results of the second round of semi-structured interviews with the new teachers and critical incidents with teachers. The first part of chapter explores the challenges, the most significant experiences and the views of teaching as a new teacher; the most satisfying experiences as a teacher; the influence of the workplace; and issues of support and socialization. The second part of Chapter four examines the most positive and negative experiences regarding the analysis of the results obtained through critical incidents with new teachers.

Chapter five analyses the critical incidents of teachers including not only new teachers but also other teachers from all over Jiangxi province. It explores the challenges, difficulties and issues of being a teacher in the Chinese context. This phase aimed to identify key moments and experiences of teaching.

The last chapter, includes the conclusions of this study and presents a brief summary of all chapters as well as the discussion of the implications of the findings in the light of international research literature. The limitations of the study and suggestions for future research in this area are discussed at the end.

CHAPTER I

1. Literature Review

This chapter presents the conceptual and theoretical background on initial teacher education (ITE), based on a literature review. It includes the discussion of topics such as new teachers, transition from student to teacher, teachers' professional development, teacher identity and workplace learning. The main findings from recent research, based on international perspectives and empirical studies, carried out in different countries and published on high quality international journals, were analyzed and summarized. Finally, some considerations about ITE in the Chinese context are described.

1.1. Initial Teacher Education as a context for professional learning

Literature suggests that although students' outcomes heavily depend on the equitable education systems, teachers are widely recognized as the most powerful determinants of pupil achievement (Hulme et al., 2013; Misra, 2014; Flores, 2011). The Mckinsey's report (in Barber & Mourshed, 2007, p. 43) confirmed that "The quality of an educational system cannot exceed the quality of its teacher (...) the only way to improve outcomes is to improve instruction". Teachers' methodological and didactic competences correlate positively with the students, irrespective of their gender, socioeconomic background and level of performance. The fully prepared teachers are generally better rated and more successful students are. Teachers with less than full preparation were found to be 'less able to adapt their instruction to promote student learning' (Darling-Hammond, 2000, p.338). However, teachers face unprecedented challenges in their role (European Commission, 2012a). These put forward new requirements for teachers (Asia Society, 2011; OECD, 2011), especially in the situation with the shifting role of school institutions in which plenty of learning resources from Internet are available for educators and pupils. Thus, improving teacher quality has become an imperative of education policy.

1.1.1. The role of ITE

Initial teacher education (ITE), also known as preservice teacher education, is the first crucial stage in a teacher's professional journey (Caena, 2014). It builds the foundations of a professional mind-set for new teachers, and offers opportunities to practice in the school with supported environment where they can discuss, reflect, or share ideas with peers and experts. The inherent complexity of teaching makes them learn the need to adapt to the teaching environment.

ITE requires student teachers to act as double roles simultaneously: learners and teachers. On the one hand, they learn how to teach pupils, and on the other hand they must help pupils in how to learn. In the context of practice, student teachers learn to analyze, question, and review ideas about attitudes, beliefs, and emotions besides the subject knowledge and competences.

Due to its complexity, ITE has been the subject of reform and debate over the last decades. Several challenges are faced in this regard (Caena, 2014):

- the fragmentation of responsibilities for ITE and induction hinders the development of a long-term system strategy and implementation policy;
- employment and job market issues affect ITE priorities;
  - ✓ policy strands such school/higher education; teacher status and recruitment affect the selection of teacher candidates;
  - ✓ for ITE the requirements might be different across countries, the heterogeneity in ITE programs can hamper professional quality and mobility;
  - ✓ regulations and priorities about education, teaching and teacher development are diverse in the content and delivery of ITE;
  - ✓ organizational issues of coordination, communication and consistency in ITE across different contexts;
  - ✓ the integration of subject knowledge, teaching practice and interdisciplinary aspects in ITE curricula is challenging;
  - ✓ quality assurance is key to ensure that a delivered ITE program meets teacher's learning needs and yields expected results.

ITE has been increasingly influenced by international developments such as European Higher Education Area development (EHEA) (Biesta, 2012). The 'comparability and compatibility' puts much pressure on teacher education practices, requiring strengthening the international academic cooperation. In addition, the mismatch of teacher qualifications and higher education requirements in different countries pose many challenges in the teacher education, e.g. quality assurance issues arising from the competing pressures of international influences. Besides that, the mobility of students is another major issue in European teacher education (Zgaga, 2013).

For an effective ITE, the student teachers should engage in reflective discussions about teaching ideas with experienced teachers or teacher educators, and link to their own teaching. They can learn the necessary knowledge related with the planning and thinking before, during and after action in the context of the classroom. Several elements have been concluded for effective ITE in the past research (Hagger & McIntyre, 2006): structured teaching practice, sustained/structured mentoring, reflective learners, reflective practice, critically examining ideas about teaching, an integrated ITE curriculum, and effective partnerships between ITE providers/universities and schools. These are tied with the aspects of effective ITE programs (Zeichner & Conklin, 2008; Flores, 2016).

1.1.2. Theory and practice in teacher education

The quality of initial teacher education (ITE) heavily depends on the alignment between the theory and practice of education (Darling-Hammond, 2013). The professional experience of ITE is critical for the translation of theory into practice. But it is imperative to redesign the teacher education programs since a big gap exists between theory and practice in teacher education (Flores, 2001; Flores, 2016; Pacheco & Flores, 1999). Many possible approaches have been proposed to bridge this gap (Delni, 2014; Dfe, 2015). However, it remains a critical issue in the teacher education world-wide for the whole twentieth century (Lanier & Little, 1986), as teaching practice varies in different programs, philosophy, aims and assessment methods (Flores et al., 2016).

During the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, the 'theory-to-practice' model was proposed (Wideen, Mayer-Smith, & Moon, 1998), which led to teacher education programs (Barone et al.,

1996) in which experts taught prospective teachers through a collection of isolated courses. Then the theory was presented with hardly any connection to practice (Barone et al., 1996; Burns & Mutton, 2013). Causes of the gap have been summarized by Fred Korthagen (2010) as one of socialization towards patterns existing in the schools, teaching complexity, the learning process within teacher education itself, and an epistemological element. Previous research showed that teaching is a profession in which feelings and emotions play an essential role (Day, 2004; Hargreaves, 1998).

To bridge the gap, Korthagen (2010) puts the emphasis on the student teachers' experiences, concerns, existing gestalts, and work towards level transitions in terms of the three-level model: gestalt, schema, and theory (Van Hiele, 1973, 1986). In England, teacher education curriculum subject knowledge has been re-emphasized and combined with the theoretical knowledge (Delni, 2014; Dfe, 2015). It stated that a curriculum that "helps students understand and explore the interconnectedness" between theory and practice, and teacher educators can use this insight to 'challenge, to question and reflect on, and to improve their teaching'. In many programs, the traditional approach of 'theory first, practice later' has been replaced by the adage 'practice first, theory later'. But for the latter, how to integrate theory and practice has yet to be solved. There have been some solutions proposed to lessen the theory/practice divide in teacher education (Darling-Hammond, 2010; Calderhead, 1989; DfE, 2015; Delni, 2014). Maintaining a good balance between theory and practice will help to develop effective teaching and its connection to student teachers' learning and development (Garbe et al., 2009). Educators attempted to re-conceptualize professional learning in teacher education (Kriewaldt & Turnidge, 2013). König et al. (2016) found that the more coherent the student-teachers perceived their university–school relationship, the better they were able to benefit from their teaching practice. The teaching practice is the key component in terms of student-teachers' self-reported planning competence, which link theory they had learned at university and practical situations. Teachers can improve practice by evaluating research evidence such as 'Seminar' (Gunn, 2007; Fry et al., 2009; Burns & Mutton, 2013). However, seminars require a complex set of cognitive, social and emotional competencies (Gunn, 2007) and are a challenging context (Demissie, 2016). The students expect to learn knowledge from seminars rather than take it as a space for practice. Government Grant Program

for ITE created in 2009 improves the process of teacher education in Brazil, stimulates their teachers to act as co-educators (supervisors) in ITE and to integrate theory and practice in ITE (Marcondes et al., 2017). Recently, from the international ITE curriculum plans, research is being included into the teacher education programs as a way of integrating it into practice (Flores, 2016). Theory and practice might be connected through the design of thoughtful coursework and the integration of high-quality clinical work (Darling-Hammond, 2017). In Spain, ITE has become more academic and professional, but there still exists distance between teaching and learning experiments at the university and in the schools (Sancho-Gil et al., 2017). In Netherlands graduation research is an initiative in the context of a primary teacher education program to articulate the personal level (research skills and inquiring attitude) and the collaborative level (contribution of the graduation research project at school).There is a need to move beyond the individual level and to improve school practice (Snoek et al., 2017).

1.1.3. Teacher quality

With the social development, people need not only knowledge, but also the ability to tackle problems, skills of communication and collaboration. These are competences required of teachers. The common competences include: sound subject knowledge, communication and collaboration skills, classroom management strategies, interpersonal, reflective and research skills, the capability of adapting practices to diverse contexts (Izumi & Evers, 2002; European Commission, 2013). These key elements of teacher quality have become standards in many contexts.

For example, Canada has 'certification standards and competencies which are provincially administered' (Van Nuland, 2011, p.415). In USA, the professional standards for teaching are set to evaluate teacher candidates' skills and abilities in California (Duckor et al., 2014). New Zealand has a set of graduating teacher standards and a set of registered teacher criteria (Ell, 2011). These regulations provides the framework for what needs to be known as a practicing teacher. In Scotland, the General Teaching Council set standards for Initial Teacher Education, Full Registration (SFR), and Chartered Teachers (CT), which define the level of professional accomplishment teachers might seek to achieve. In France, a new recruitment policy for public sector requires that teachers

'are to be recruited after graduating from Master's programs organized by universities' (Lapostolle & Chevaillier, 2011, p. 451). For the European Higher Education Area (EHEA), higher qualification for teachers is seen as a means to 'raise teacher status, improve quality of teaching and foster professional development' (Flores, 2011, p.91). Due to the substantial financial crisis and teacher oversupply in Portugal an examination is set to 'demonstrate the mastery of knowledge and competencies required to teach in a given area of knowledge' and a probationary year of teaching is required before full registration (Flores, 2011, p. 92). However, this examination is not in place anymore. In Norway, teacher educators must be researchers. In this way, the teacher educators need to undertake tasks based on research, rather than simply practitioners. In Finland, all teachers must hold a master degree that integrates research and practice (Lassila, 2017). In Spain, the ITE of primary school teachers has changed from an ideological model towards a more academic one, reaching the status of a bachelor's degree (Sancho-Gil et al., 2017). In Russia, currently the specialists are prepared by the system of teacher education in the pre-schools, primary schools, general secondary educational organizations, professional educational institutions, etc. (Valeeba & Gafurov, 2017). Darling-Hammond (2017) discussed the polices of teacher education in five countries (Australia, Canada, Finland, Singapore, and the United States) and argued for the need to recruit highly able candidates into high-quality program and create teacher performance assessments, based on professional standards.

Most of the countries are moved to a university-based education as being the primary place for the education of teachers. Research and practice should be balanced within the teacher education program. Although there are standards defined for the teachers, they do not always work effectively (Ajayi, 2014).

1.2. The transition from student to teacher

Previous research has identified the reality shock or abruptness confronting new teachers as they become new teachers (Veenman, 1984; Huberman, 1991; Vonk, 1993; Salkovsky, 2015). Feelings of isolation, mismatch between idealistic expectations and classroom reality, lack of support have been identified as key features of new teachers (Veenman, 1984; Huberman, 1991). When coping

with difficulties in school, 'painful beginnings' (Huberman, 1989) may exist. In fact, the school context and personal background experiences during preservice education are key components for the early teaching experience. For success in the first year, there are three important elements: (i) a match between expectations, personality and workplace realities; (ii) evidence of impact; and (iii) using successful strategies to manage student behavior and enter the social and political culture of the school (Hebert & Worthy, 2001). The first-year teachers feel enthusiasm, anxiety and fear, as they experience the transition from trainees to full-time teachers.

For the professional development of beginning teachers two phases are defined: the threshold and the growing into the profession (Vonk, 1993). In threshold period, new teachers experience the 'transition shock' confronting with the full teaching responsibilities for the first time (Veenman, 1984). Many notions and educational conceptions developed during preservice teacher education have never impacted the student teachers during the field experiences (Zeichner & Tabachnick, 1981). For the first year of teaching, the teachers created an adjustment to existing practices in the schools (Müller-Fohrbrodt, Cloetta, & Dann, 1978; Dann et al., 1978). Brouwer and Korthagen (2005) identified the dominant influence of the school on teacher development. It is rather difficult for an individual teacher to influence established patterns in schools (Zeichner & Gore, 1990). Thus, teacher education impacts on their students' practice little (Wideen, Mayer-Smith, & Moon, 1998; Cochran-Smith & Zeichner, 2005). In the period of growing into the profession, beginning teachers are accepted by their students and colleagues, and they tend to pay more attention to the improvement of teaching skills and competencies (Vonk, 1989). For many decades, the technical-rationality model was dominant (Sprinthall et al., 1996; Imig & Switzer, 1996; Gelfuso & Dennis, 2014), but it influences the practices of the teacher education program graduates little.

Research results on the ongoing processes of newly qualified teachers showed that they had difficulties understanding and handling problematic pupils, misbehavior, and co-operation with colleagues and parents (Paulin, 2006). The major cause is to deal with disturbances in the classroom for the beginning teachers (Merav Salkovsky, 2015; Theresa, 2015; Jose, 2015). These difficulties are due to both the content of their training programs and lack of support during their induction as beginners into schools (Theresa, 2015; Jose, 2015). In Europe, only approximately half of the countries provide new teachers in their first years of teaching with some systematic

supports (e.g. induction, training, mentoring) (European Commission, 2007). The challenge in teacher education lies in finding a balance between 'the instrumental track of competence and the existential track of Bildung' (Hansen, 2007, p.29). As Kristjansson (2000, p. 12) argues, 'the sad fact is that most teacher-training programs fail to prepare teachers for work on moral and interpersonal issues; as a consequence of which teachers frequently express insecurity about how to address such issues in the classroom".

1.2.1. Teacher identity

Learning to become an effective teacher is a long and complex process. The multi-dimensional, idiosyncratic and context-specific nature includes conflicting perspectives, beliefs and practices, which are accompanied by the development of the teachers' self (Flores, 2001; Kirk & Winthrop, 2013). Previous studies showed that coping with the demands and tasks of teaching entail a continuing process of analysis of one's own beliefs and practices. The first few years of teaching were seen as a "two-way struggle in which teachers try to create their own social reality by attempting to make their work match their personal vision of how it should be, whilst at the same time being subjected to the powerful socializing forces of the school culture" (Day, 1999, p. 59). Some researchers took the identity as a mediating force as between structure and teacher agency (Giddens, 1991). Flores and Day (2006) argue that it is 'an ongoing and dynamic process which entails the making sense and (re)interpretation of one's own values and experiences'. Sachs (2001a) described this process as being open, negotiated and shifting. Maclure (1993, p. 312) commented that the identity ''should not be seen as stable—something that people have—but as, ''something that they use, to justify, explain and make sense of themselves in relation to other people, and to the contexts in which they operate''. The quality, nature and the ability of mediation is crucial in teacher development (Johnson & Golombek, 2013; Johnson & Dellagnelo, 2013; Arshavskaya, 2014; Golombek & Doran, 2014; Johnson & Worden, 2014). Growth points are the moments of dialectic of cognition and emotion ''coming into being'' (Johnson & Worden, 2014, p. 124). More recently, the formation of teacher identity in ITE have been advocated (Flores 2016; Flores et al. 2016).

Thus, professional identity constitutes a key element in becoming and effective teacher, which is helpful to teachers' self-efficacy, motivation, commitment and job satisfaction (Day, Stobart, Kington, Sammons, & Last, 2003). It entails the idea of creating or maintaining an identity, which is located in the contexts where teachers work (Sachs, 2001b). Feiman–Nemser found that teachers develop their professional identities by ''combining parts of their past, including their own experience in school and in teacher preparation, with pieces of their present'' during the early years in the profession (Feiman–Nemser, 2001, p. 1029). Also, it has been associated with 'a sense of purpose for teaching and being a teacher' (Rex & Nelson, 2004, p. 1317).

Identity is influenced by personal, social and cognitive response (Dang, 2013). Research found that the emotion climate of the school and classroom affects the practices of teaching and learning (Sutton, 2000). Teachers become vulnerable when their professional identity and moral integrity are questioned by policy changes, parents, inspectors, or colleagues (Kelchtermans, 1996). Socializing factors influence new teachers' views of teaching and of themselves as teachers. The impact of initial teacher education, former teachers and the classroom are some socializing agents (Jordell, 1987; Zeichner & Gore, 1990), but how they work depends on the personal and professional path of the teacher and on the workplace. The socialization experiences in the schooling heavily influence the process of becoming a teacher (Lortie, 1975). The early experiences such as the ecology of classroom, school norms and regulations are crucial for teachers' socialization (Jordell, 1987). In teacher socialization the micropolitics play an important role in teachers' early teaching experience (Kelchtermans & Ballet, 2002).

Flores and Day (2006) studied the ways in which the professional identities of new teachers were shaped and reshaped in their first two years of teaching. The authors found that "prior experiences as pupils seemed to play a strong mediating role in the identities which new teachers brought into their first school teaching experience", which confirms previous research (Knowles, 1992, Nimmo, Smith, Grove, Courtney, & Eland, 1994). Pre-service teacher education seemed to weakly impact on teacher identity. The workplace plays a key role in the construction of teacher' professional identities and understanding of teaching. For the new teachers, the contexts of biography, pre-service program and school culture influence the transformation of their identities.

1.2.2. The continuum of professional learning

Educational reforms revealed that teacher professionalization and professionalism are two main issues. The former is a social and political process, while the latter refers to the nature of work (Carlgren, 1999; Sockett, 1993). The professionalization is related to issues of status and public recognition. It requires new ways of educating those who will work in schools as the teachers' work changes. In Europe, for the professionalism of teaching, a body of professional knowledge and expertise was built to 'bringing Teacher Education curricula to the academic level' (Vonk, 1995, p. 272). Also, the competencies for the prospective teachers have been standardized. This often is associated with the school-based teacher training, and 'drawback' in the professionalization of teachers (Gilroy, 1999). According to the concept of lifelong learning for the teacher education (Marcelo, 1999; Perrenoud, 1993), the initial teacher education (ITE) is only preparing for the entry into the teacher profession. Induction and in-service education, training of teachers are also two crucial elements of the continuum (Marcelo, 1999).

Learning has been identified as incidental and formal learning (Eraut, 2000). For the formal learning, learning opportunities are planned, supported and developed, and learning outcomes are specified and recognized through certification. All initial teachers' professional learning seemed formally (Hagger & McIntyre, 2006, p. 48), but Eraut's later research found that most work-based learning is 'on the job' and probably therefore less formal (Eraut, 2004, p. 249).

Previous research found that "teachers need to continue to learn, be adaptive, build a sophisticated pedagogical repertoire, integrate different kinds of knowledge and apply emerging research for varying purposes" (Rolheiser, 2011, p. 13). High quality professional learning of teachers should be adapted to changes in classroom (Knight, 2011), including study groups, action research, lesson study, internet learning, and graduate programs (Fullan et al., 2006). Although these approaches work efficiently, some factors such as context and learner differences should be considered for high quality professional learning, along with the emergent models of professional learning (Knapper, 2010; Learning Forward, 2011; Wright, 2010).

For teacher learning, the collaborative inquiry model was proposed by University of Toronto in 2002, trying to link theory and practice, to address key educational issues and support the

principles of ITE program. The professional inquiries are related to curriculum design, instructional practice, teacher development, and student engagement. Research results on this model revealed several important changes in three broad areas: institutional change, change in educational practice, and change experienced by learners (Rolheiser, 2012). The stronger norms of collaborative inquiry, knowledge-building, and risk-taking have been built as mechanisms for improvement. Ideas and pedagogical practices have become embedded in the teacher education program and contributed to the instructional change and program improvement, emphasizing the importance of university-led teacher education programs and enhanced the status of ITE. Collaborative initiatives are key to effective teaching, and the model of collaborative inquiry reveals several innovative approaches to teacher learning, changes in classroom practices in schools and in university teacher education programs. These changes in educational practice have contributed to the broader knowledge in teacher education. It enhanced learning for students and teacher candidates, including subject knowledge, skills, attitudes about teacher education, understanding of educational improvement processes, etc.

As the competences of teaching professionals are profound including intellectual, cognitive and emotional demands, it is difficult for any student teacher to master them in a working context by himself/herself. It is a development process over the career within a supportive teaching team and environment.

1.2.3. Workplace learning: practicum and induction

Practice is an integrated part of ITE. It entails student teachers to experience the full range of teaching responsibilities under the supervision and assessment of school teacher educators and university. In ITE, an extended school practice at least 30 weeks should be guaranteed to interweave with coursework (Darling-Hammond, 2006). Student teachers participate in the building of the practice plan, including specific coursework, supervision and reflection about teaching, which are important to student teachers' professional development. Applying knowledge to practice experience can help to reconstruct beliefs related to effective teaching. School practice context has been seen to be effective for teacher learning as professional communities (Louise et

al., 2006). In school, teachers might have professional dialogue with colleagues, adequate teaching resource, sustained observation and feedback opportunities, joint planning and responsibility for practice (Hagger & McIntyre, 2006).

Evidence suggests that all the better school systems had integrated practicum into their teacher education program (Mckinsy report), and the school leadership is second only to classroom teaching as an influence on learning (Barber & Mourshed, 2007). To gain understanding and recognition of the learning undertaken through experience at work, a range of learning projects in multi-professional settings were discussed (Eraut, 2004). Hagger and McIntyre's (2006) process of learning through 'practical theorizing' may offer further insight about learning from the context of the school as workplace. In England, the more school-based teacher education appeared during the 1990s. Furlong et al. (2000) studied modes of teacher education. For this school-situated model of ITE, Hagger and McIntyre (2006) talked about 'communities of practice', which were defined as 'legitimate peripheral participation' (Lave & Wenger, 1991, p.30).

To develop an effective practical experience components of ITE, some issues should be addressed such as increasing interest during ITE, partnership arrangements between teacher education providers and schools, supervising teachers' identification, formalized assessment by schools of pre-service teachers on practical placement, etc. An effective teaching practice aligning the theory and the practice of teaching might be seen from the clinical model of teacher education taken by Melbourne Graduate School of Education Masters rates since 2008 (Dinham, 2012), in which the graduate teaching students analyze, intervene and evaluate from information they developed about each school student they work with during practicum. In each school, a teaching fellow or mentor/expert teacher is assigned to mentor or support candidates, and a clinical specialist assigned from the university helps to link theory with practice. Although this alignment model works well, the implementation is not easy due to financial support for the teaching fellow. In addition, the resource sharing is not readily adapted to all schools in terms of current practice. From the current practice and emerging models of practical experience for ITE, human resources are a critical factor for the successful partnerships between teacher education providers and schools. In this model, mentoring is considered successful for professional development of teachers, but mentoring of pre-service teacher's demands special training for the mentor. Schools

are not just places where pre-service teachers have opportunities to practice their pedagogies but places where they are guided in their professional learning within a theoretical framework.

Although the practical experience in school is important, the shape of it is diverse dramatically partly due to diversity in teacher education courses and providers. Generally in Europe, the courses of ITE tend to be four- or five-year university education, and mostly at master level for upper secondary teachers (Eurydice, 2013). The form and length of school-based practice in teacher education program might be different according to the adopted program model. In Australia, a minimum period of "no few than 80 days of teaching practice in school in undergraduate and double-degree teacher education program and no few than 60 days in graduate entry programs" (Australian 2016, p.36) is set for the practical experience of ITE. The period might be not continuous; some might for one or two days per week, or a two-week period or a year's "internship".

With the increasing knowledge providers, diverse opportunities are appearing for teachers' learning, which adds more complicate tasks for teachers. In these circumstances, teachers must innovate and adapt to different contexts or students, be able to make judgments about choices and trade-offs about some situations (Biesta, 2012). Therefore, to tackle these problems teachers should work cooperatively and reflect on their own and others' practices in a supportive school context starting from school in ITE and going on with continuous professional development (Talis, 2009; Day, 2011).

Teacher induction is used for the transition from teacher education to employment (Darling-Hammond, 2000; Ingersoll, 2012; Kearney, 2014a). Even though no empirical evidence shows the direct link between induction and student achievement (Darling-Hammond, et al., 2009; Ingersoll & Strong, 2011), the induction programs have been grown worldwide such as in United States (Ingersoll, 2012) and Australia (Dest, 2002; Kearney, 2014a). But the induction programs lacks a theoretical or conceptual foundation that fosters teacher learning in the early years due to the lack of understanding around it (Kearney, 2013, 2014b). The term induction with its ambiguous nature has been used interchangeably in education to mean mentoring (Wong, 2004), orientation (Martinez, 1994) and professional socialization (Lawson, 1992). A common conceptual framework for induction is that it provides the foundation for the development of localized

programs to meet the needs of beginning teachers. It mainly includes mentoring with experienced teaching in school, help with regular meetings, and assistance about lesson planning, job shadowing, course modules, or seminars at ITE institutions.

Many studies have been done on induction, for example, the effect on retention (Buchanan et al., 2013; Gujarati, 2012; Kearney, 2014a), the characteristics of specific programs (Kearney, 2014b); the effect on improving teaching and learning outcomes (Feiman-Nemser, 2001; Wang et al., 2008); policy supporting induction (Bartlett & Johnson, 2010; Smith, 2007); learning communities (O'Malley, 2010); participating teachers' perceptions of their experiences in induction (Buchanan et al., 2013; Kearney, 2013), etc. But only recently a framework was proposed which can be implemented to serve both the beginning teacher and the institution providing the induction (Sean, 2015).

The internship is possible to minimize the 'reality shock' encountered in the first year of teaching. According to research (Mark & Rod, 2001), most of the beginning teachers prefer more school-based experience throughout their teacher education program considering the pre-service education as preparation for their first year of teaching. For those beginning teachers who had experienced an internship in their final year of training, they have higher ratings for effectiveness of teacher education programs. The internship of university teacher education program had positive impact on the beginning teachers' preparation for the first year of teaching. The teacher induction integrating a workplace model of initial teacher education will help effective transition to teaching in the first year.

1.2.4. Mentoring as a workplace learning strategy

Research frequently highlights the importance of skills employed by school-based mentors in moving learning forward in situated contexts. Mentors play key roles in steering trainees coming to teaching as a second career through the process of 'knowing why', 'knowing how' and 'knowing whom' by having an awareness of each career changers 'unique circumstances' in North America (Mayotte, 2003). Thus it has been a hot topic over the last 15 years on initial teacher education and teacher induction (Bey, 1995; Gray & Gray, 1985; Hagger et al., 1995; Healy & Welchert,

1990; King & Bey, 1995; McIntyre, 1997; McIntyre et al., 1993; Yeomans & Sampson, 1994). The emergence of mentoring is due to the development of economic policy and workplace learning theory.

During the induction phase for beginning teachers, mentors often address issues of skill development and teacher survival (Clement, 1995; Dormer, 1994; Gasner, 1996; Janas, 1996; Tonnsen, 1992). In the United States, it appeared in 1986 (Hoffman et al., 1986; Thies-Sprinthall, 1986) and mentoring worked as a process of transmission in teacher professional learning. It caused experienced teachers to reflect on their own teaching knowledge, beliefs and practices and broaden their professional knowledge (Mitchell et al., 1997), which, as a workplace learning strategy, is an interactive dynamic process of professional learning.

Mentoring of beginning teachers was associated with reflective and transformational approaches to teacher learning (Mitchell, 1996; Tickle, 1994). This transformational process was seen as one of encountering and delving into the organizational norms and self-perceptions (Marsick & Watkins, 1990). Elliot and Calderhead (1993) stated that mentoring is the illumination of the images of teaching that teachers bring to their work. But research found that high amounts of mentoring support might entrench the status quo and stifle professional growth (Ballantyne et al., 1995). It is one of the main problems associated with mentoring for beginning teachers, and a recurrent aspect in teachers' induction experiences (Beynon, 1997; Jacka, 1994; Martinez, 1993). Then multiple mentoring and voluntary mentoring suggest that more attention should be paid to the provision of professional environments in which mentoring relationships can develop, not the identification of individual mentor (McNally, 1994). For adult and teacher education, the effectiveness of mentoring has been largely studied for initial teacher education and induction (Barnier & Didham, 1994; Blankemeyer & Weber, 1996; Fagan & Walter, 1982; Tellez, 1992). In the context of beginning teachers' induction, less work has been done. Mark & Rod (2001) strongly suggested that the contextualized learning or workplace learning mediated by mentors has the potential to assist beginning teachers in their development of an appropriate body of practical professional knowledge. Workplace learning is a powerful source of learning and change in individuals, groups and organizations.

Mark & Rod's (2001) survey results showed that the adoption of workplace learning strategies is

not widespread in schools. There is a large number of beginning teachers who did not identify any mentor. Mentoring as a workplace learning strategy does not depend only on the setting up of formal structures. Beginning teachers were able to form valuable professional relationships with more experienced teachers when they are in the environment with more support (Barnier & Didham, 1994). However, beginning teachers having mentors contribute to a higher sense of satisfaction with work within induction experiences (Fagan & Walter, 1982).

In order to ensure teacher quality, a continuum approach aligning ITE with induction is confirmed to be effective (Eurydice, 2011; Vaillant & Manso, 2013; Caena, 2014). The literature recommends:

- (induction) mentoring extended to ITE, with long-term guidance of student teachers by experienced mentors;

- dialogue and collaboration of school and university communities in ITE as a form of effective professional development;

- innovation and creativity in teaching and learning by consistent approaches along with the teacher education continuum.

Within this continuum approach, the cooperation and dialogue between policy makers, education institutions and professional communities are required, including the Ministry of Education, ITE providers, school leaders, teaching professionals and other education stakeholder groups. Policy cornerstones should be set in an overall strategy to link their roles and responsibilities with ITE, selection, recruitment, induction and professional development, i.e., reference framework for the competences of teachers, multiple selection mechanisms at different points of teachers' professional continuum, consistency in teacher assessment and feedback, careful selection, preparation, professional development and support of teacher educators, a common policy framework for effective school leadership.

CHAPTER II

2. The Research Design

This chapter presents the methodological design of this thesis. Firstly, the framework of the research as well as the objectives, methodological options together with the methods used for data collection are presented. Secondly, the context such as the schools, participants, and the school systems as well as the relevant policy are characterized. Lastly, the description of the methods and procedures used are also presented. Ethical considerations as well the limitations of the study are presented in the end.

2.1. A qualitative research approach

Educational research is an intellectual and professional challenging field (Freebody, 2003). In particular, research on beginning teachers has been developing based on the nature of the problems that beginning teachers encounter during the first years of teaching (Vonk, 1983; Cooke & Pang, 1991; Thomas & Kiley, 1994; Charnock & Kiley, 1995), on the factors influencing their socialisation process (e.g. Jordell, 1987; Rust, 1994; Kelchtermans & Ballet, 2002) and on their professional development over time (Vonk & Schras, 1987; Levin & Ammon, 1992; Carderhead & Shorrock, 1997; Bullough & Baughman, 1993, 1995, 1997). However, there are very few empirical studies exploring the mentoring of the first-year teachers in China (Lee, 2007). From this gap on the research, the research problem was formulated. According to Wiersma (1995, p. 21), the research problem should be the first activity of the research process because "the problem must be identified with adequate specificity" and guides the research. The research problem should be clear and concise (Mcmillan & Schumacher, 1989).

This study aims to analyze the challenges, difficulties and issues of becoming and being a new teacher in China. It explores the role of ITE in the process of becoming a teacher, the influence of the contexts of learning on new teachers in elementary and middle schools in China. In order to explore the nature and process of development in the early years of teaching, a qualitative analysis was undertaken.

Qualitative research is based on a holistically view of the phenomena and "cannot be reduced to a few factors or partitioned into independent parts" (Wiersma, 1995, p. 211). According to Wiersma (1995, p. 212), qualitative research can be summarized as follows:

- The researcher operates in a natural setting and to a greater extent should maintain an open mind about what will be observed, collected, etc., in order to avoid missing something important;

- It is the perceptions of those being studied that are important, and these perceptions are to be captured in order obtain an accurate "measure" of reality;

- A priori assumptions, and certainly a priori conclusions, are to be avoided in favor of reality;

Also, according to Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2000, p. 30), qualitative research is based on a "theoretical point of view that advocates the study of direct experience taken at value; and one which sees behavior as determined by the phenomena of experience rather by extent, objective and physically described reality". Flick (2009) summarizes the key features of the qualitative research as the follows: appropriateness of methods and theories; perspectives of the participants and their diversity; reflexivity of the research and the research itself; variety of approaches and methods in qualitative research.

Furthermore, qualitative research suggests an inductive research paradigm and provides rich contextual descriptions and analysis 'to provide an understanding of the phenomenon investigated' (McMillan & Schumacher, 1989, p. 14-15). Opposite to quantitative research, which focuses on "logical positivist", qualitative research is based more on a "naturalistic-phenomenological" approach that comprises multiple realities that are socially constructed (McMillan & Schumacher, 1989).

As seen in the following table, McMillan and Schumacher (1989, p. 14-15) established the main differences between quantitative and qualitative research approaches:

Quantitative Research Approach	Qualitative Research Approach
• Establish relationships and explain causes of changes in measured social facts	• Concerned with understanding the social phenomenon from the participants' perspectives
• Established set of procedures and steps that guide the research pre-established design	• Greater flexibility in both the methods and the research process – emergent design
• Experimental or correlational designs reduce error, bias, and the extraneous variables.	• Ongoing events such as ethnography, historical research, etc.
• The researcher is detached from the study	• The researcher is " immersed" in the study
• Establish universal context-free generalizations	• Human actions are strongly influenced by the setting in which they occur

Table 1 - Differences between quantitative and qualitative research approaches

(Adapted from McMillan and Schumacher (1989, p. 14-15).

To sum up, all the presented features of qualitative research approach are in accordance with the research project reported in this thesis.

2.2. Research questions and objectives

The research questions are "the component that most directly links to all of the other components of the design" and that will influence each stage of the research project (Maxwell, 2013, p. 73). The research questions are:

1. What is the role of ITE in the process of becoming and being a new teacher?

2. How do personal and school contexts influence new teachers?

3. How do policy context, ITE context, and workplace context, and biography interplay and impact upon new teachers' understanding and practice of teaching?

4. How can mainland China reform new teachers' induction and mentoring?

2.3. Context of the study

In this section, the context of the research is described as well the formal education system in China. Elementary education in China comprises pre-school education, primary school education and middle school education (junior middle and senior middle). This research was carried out in

the context of teachers teaching in primary and middle level. Thus, the primary school comprises a period of 5 or 6 years, junior middle school comprises a period of 3 and senior middle school comprises a period of 3 years. A nine-year period of studies is compulsory in China (Xiaohuan, 2002). Basic education is the foundation of Chinese education and teacher education is the core of the education (Wu, 2006).

In many countries and in China too, the popular concept of beginning teacher circle is three years, but in some Chinese schools and policy makers, the period lasts for five years. This has great relation with Chinese school system. As explained earlier, Chinese middle school is three years plus three years. Middle school including three junior schools and three senior high schools. Most of new teachers teach from grade one to grade three, but some schools teach from junior grade one till grade two of senior high school. Only after these five years can he/she finish the beginning teacher experience. Only very few excellent teachers can stay to teach the last year of senior high school (Ren, 2004).

According to the State Education Commission of China (1994), primary (elementary) schools should arrange experienced teachers to assist each new teacher in lesson preparing, class teaching and assignment checking. Besides that, they should listen, observe and evaluate his/her teaching effect. For secondary schools, the teachers of grade one and senior secondary school are required to direct low-ranking teachers and share the responsibility of mentoring new teachers, according to the State Education Commission, 1986 (Lee, 2007).

In 1999, the Education Ministry issued "The revitalization of the 21st century action plan for education", which stated this requirement once again, and the beginning teachers' induction education has become an administrative policy.

The law in place in 1994 about the beginning teacher's induction indicated that not only in primary but also in the middle school, beginning teachers must accept no less than 120 hours of training in the first teaching year, including intensive and scatter training. The first one was organized by the city or county teacher's training school, consisting of having class, listening to the report, seeing seminars, videos, visiting organization, experiencing introduction and so on. Intensive training time should be at least one third of total training time (total is 120 hours if every semester takes 15 teaching weeks as standard, then four hours each week). Scatter training is in the school

in which the beginning teacher's work, where experienced teachers help the young teachers. It means "teaching and helping" also called mentoring or apprenticeship in China (Ren, 2004).

2.4. Phases of data collection, schools and participants

The data collection of the study took place in three phases. The following table presents a summary of the three phases of data collection, the methods used, the participants and the topics explored in each method.

Phases of data collection	Methods	Participants	Topics explored
Phase 1 **June, 2012**	Semi-structured Interview	17 New teachers	• to analyze new teachers' influences and motivations for entering the teaching profession • to reflect on teacher education, practicum experience, images of self-as-teacher, workplace learning, learning situations as a new year teacher and, the interaction with students.
Phase 2 **December, 2012**	Semi-structured Interview	14 New teachers	• to describe new teachers' experiences in the first years • to discuss issues of socialization, learning and change
	Narratives	5 School leaders	
	Critical incidents	14 New teachers	
Phase 3 **June, 2013**	Critical incidents	119 teachers	• to identify key moments and situations during first teaching experiences • to analyze key features of being a teacher in China

Table 2 - Phases of data collection, methods, participants and topics explored

Six schools, including one primary school and five middle schools, participated in the 1ˢᵗ and 2ⁿᵈ phase of data collection. These schools were chosen on the basis of the following standards: type of school (suburban and urban) and the classification (key school, second-rate school, non-key school). Key schools are the best ones, they have the best students and teacher quality and work

conditions, as well as rich funds. Second-rate is next to key school. Unlike key schools, non-key schools do not receive preferential governmental funding (Xu & Farrel, 1992).

All of these schools were located in middle China, Nanchang City, Jiangxi Province. Jiangxi Province is one of the poorest provinces in China, and Nanchang is the capital of Jiangxi Province, but it is a low-middle level city which was also called as the third-tier city in China. The following is a brief introduction of new list of China city tiers, it was classified mainly by many factors such as population, income, competitiveness, etc. Beijing (capital of China), Shanghai, Shenzhen, Guangzhou were called as the first tier; Nanjing, Chongqing, Chengdu and other advanced cities are classified as second tier, the third are such as Nanchang, Changsha, etc. Their comprehensive level belongs to middle level in China.

The following table presents the characterization of the schools which participated in our study.

Schools	Total of Teachers	Nº of Novice teachers	Type of schools	Staff	Catchment Area
A	84	18	Primary school Key school	Old plus young staff School set up in 1951, located in the city center	Urban, middle class, middle-level
B	322	40	Middle school Key school	Old plus young staff School set up in 1954, Two campuses, in city center and suburban area	Urban, *big class, middle-level
C	336	26	Middle school Second-rate key school	Old plus young staff school set up in 1980	Suburban, big class, poor-level
D	122	8	Middle school non-key school	Old plus young staff school set up in 1982	Urban, big class, middle-level
E	222	15	Middle school Second-rate key school	Old plus young staff school set up in 2005	Urban, big class, middle-level
F	185	17	Middle school Second-rate key school	Old plus young staff school set up in 1934	Suburban, big class, middle-level

*above 60 students in class

Table 3 - Characterization of the schools

2.4.1. New teachers

In regard to the participants in the study, the 1st phase of data collection included 17 new teachers

who participated in the semi-structured interviews, carried out in June 2012. Some features concerning the characterization of these teachers, namely, their gender, age, diploma, type of school and years of teaching, are presented on table 3.

#	Gender	Age	Diploma	Type of school	Years of teaching
1	Male	27	Master	Primary school	1
2	Female	26	Master	Primary school	1
3	Male	29	Master	Middle school	3
4	Male	25	Bachelor	Middle school	3
5	Female	29	Master	Middle school	3
6	Female	28	Master	Middle school	2
7	Male	28	Master	Middle school	2
8	Male	26	Master	Middle school	1
9	Female	28	Master	Middle school	2
10	Male	27	Master	Middle school	1
11	Female	25	Bachelor	Middle school	3
12	Female	24	Bachelor	Middle school	2
13	Female	25	Bachelor	Middle school	3
14	Female	25	Bachelor	Middle school	3
15	Female	26	Master	Middle school	1
16	Female	26	Master	Middle school	1
17	Female	26	Master	Middle school	1

Table 4 - Characterization of the 17 new teachers

In the 2nd phase of data collection, 14 teachers participated, again, in the semi-structured interviews, carried out in December 2012. Three (out of the 17 initial teachers) from the same middle school declined the second round interview held in December 2012. They argued that they were new teachers and they were worried if they said negative things, it will be very bad for them since they were new in the school. They also said that it was very hard for them to find such a good job. The same 14 teachers also participated later on the data collection with critical incidents methods.

The recruitment process of the novice teachers by schools followed several criteria, except for the two middle schools, who are members of the University. In the first phase, the local education bureau uses a centralized exam which includes a major and educational and psychological knowledge to evaluate student teachers. After this, each school chooses the qualified student teachers through interviews. Most of the teachers hold a master degree. The affiliated middle schools have their own recruitment rules, for they are members of the university.

The beginning teacher's major encompasses subjects such as History, Chemistry, Chinese, English, Politics, etc. They graduated from Normal University and hold bachelor or master degree. They have taken major subjects as Philosophy of Education, Psychology of Development, Sociology of Education, Curriculum Development, Educational Technology, Teaching Methods and so on in normal university. Normal bachelor includes a four-year course, including four years full-time study at university, but with short time teaching practice in a school, from one month to three months.

2.4.2. School leaders

Also in the 2ⁿᵈ phase of data collection, five school leaders participated in our study (table 4). The narrative method was used to collect data from them. In regard to their characterization, the majority were male, aged from 45 to 50 years old. In regard to their qualifications, they all hold a bachelor degree, in areas such as Education and Chemistry. In regard to their teaching experience, all of them had over 20 years of teaching.

#	Gender	Age	University Degree	Type of school	Years of teaching
1	Male	Over 45	Bachelor in Chemistry	Middle school (key school)	Over 20 years
2	Male	Over 50	Bachelor in Chemistry	Middle school (Key school)	Over 20 years
3	Female	Over 50	Bachelor in Education	Primary school (key school)	Over 20 years
4	Male	60	Bachelor in Mathematics	Middle school (non-key school)	Over 20 years
5	Male	Over 50	Bachelor in Chemistry	Middle school (key school)	Over 20 years

Table 5 - Characterization of the five school leaders

2.4.3. Teachers participating in the critical incidents

In the third phase of data collection, the participants in the study included a total of 119 teachers, from all over the Jiangxi Province. Out of these, 66 were female and 53 were male. There ages were mainly from 31 years old to 45 years old, as seen in the following table:

Age	_f_
[22-30] years old	26
[31-45] years old	60
[46-55] years old	29
[56-65] years old	4
TOTAL	119

Table 6 - Age of Participants in the Critical Incidents

Most of them hold a Bachelor's degree (90 teachers) and have more than 20 years of teaching experience (48 teachers), as shown on the following tables.

Diploma	_f_
Master	15
Bachelor	90
College	14
TOTAL	119

Table 7 - Diploma of Participants in the Critical Incidents

Years of Teaching	_f_
0-3 years	13
4-10 years	27
11-19 years	36
>20 years	43
TOTAL	119

Table 8 – Years of Teaching of Participants in the Critical Incidents

In general, the teachers were from urban, suburban, rural area, all over Jiangxi Province. Gender issues were balanced, as 66 were female and 53 male teachers. The selection of these participants took place at a national conference, held in JXNU (Jiangxi Normal University), where teachers who participated in the conference were invited to participate in a critical incidents data collection, by describing how they see themselves as a teacher in the Chinese context. Participants were informed of the objectives of the study being carried out and their participation was voluntary. In general, participants showed willingness to collaborate in the critical incidents data collection.

2.5. Methods of Data Collection

The methods used for data collection were semi-structured interviews, narratives and critical incidents. The following sections describe, in greater detail, the importance of each method to attain the research objectives.

2.5.1. Semi-structured interview

According to Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2001, p. 267) the interview is "an interchange of views between two or more people on a topic of mutual interest' based on the interaction and knowledge production. Also in the author's perspective, the main purposes of the interview is to gather information from the research objectives or to test hypothesis or suggest new ones. Kvale (1996, p. 30) sets out some of main features of the interview:

Main Features of the qualitative interview
• The topic is lived world of the subjects and their relation to it.
• Seeks to interpret the meaning of the central themes in the life worlds of the subject.
• Seeks qualitative knowledge and does not aim at quantification.
• Attempts to obtain open nuanced description of different aspects of the subjects' life worlds.
• Description of specific situations
• The interviewer exhibits an openness to new and unexpected phenomena
• Focused on particular themes
• Can sometimes be ambiguous
• Different interviewers can produce different statements

Table 9 - Main Features of the qualitative interview

Therefore, semi-structured interview was the main method selected in this research, which followed the questions designed by Flores (2002) in her study. The interview was translated to Chinese and some minor revisions were made according to the Chinese contexts (with the authors' agreement). The interview was carried out with the beginning teachers twice in two semesters. All the interviews were answered by the new teachers anonymously and translated into English by the author. Chinese teachers prefer this kind of interview, as the researcher agreed to destroy the manuscripts after the conclusion of the thesis. This decision is consistent with Chinese context. This interview consists of three parts such as the motivation (e.g. 'Why did you decide to enter a

teaching career?', 'Can you identify the main influences for this decision'), influences and learning contexts of beginning teachers in China (e.g. 'Could you identify the most relevant experiences during this period?'), as well as the impact of Initial Teacher Education (ITE) (e.g. 'Reflecting on your pre-service education how do you analyze your experiences as a student teacher?') and Teaching Practice (TP) (e.g. 'And what about your teaching practice?', 'How do you evaluate your own experiences during your teaching practice period?). Appendix 1 and Appendix 2, presented at the end of this thesis, show the Interview Protocol and guiding questions for the semi-structured interviews.

2.5.2. Critical incidents

Critical incident method, is an instrument in educational research which has been used in a variety of service contexts in recent years to explore service research issues. According to Gremler (2014), the first step is to understand what critical incident method is. The definition of critical incident method varies according to different authors. According to Ochberg (2014), a critical incident is a relatively brief occurrence involving injury, loss, conflict, discovery or change of significant proportion, usually unscripted and unanticipated, with the potential to alter existing societal norms. Critical incidents are usually traumatic, threatening the bonds of trust that bind communities, but may be positive, initiating historic consequences (Schwester, Dank, & Horning, 2008). In this study, critical incidents was used to ask the new teachers (14), in phase two, to write a story about a positive and negative aspect that they lived during the first year of their teaching. Also in phase 3, 119 participants were asked to answer two questions, following the critical incidents technique. Appendix 3 presents the questions used for the data collection with critical incidents.

2.5.3. Narratives

Narrative inquiry research approach, called narrative in short, has been used in a wide range of research fields, growing fast in more and more fields of knowledge recently. The participants are requested to tell a story, about a topic or question posed by the researcher, in an oral or written

form. It focuses mainly on detailed and complex situations, not short-term but also long-term from different stances. Unlike many qualitative frameworks, narrative research offers no automatic starting or finishing points (Tomoukou, 2008).

Narratives allow researchers to present experience holistically in all its complexity and richness. Narrative inquiry attempts to capture the 'whole story', whereas other methods tend to communicate understandings of studied subjects or phenomena at certain points, but frequently omit the important 'intervening' stages. Narrative research aims for its findings to be well grounded and supportable - it aims for verisimilitude, producing results that have appearance for truth or reality (Webster & Mertova, 2007). In order to get to know more about the contexts of these new teachers, the researcher used the narrative method in order to understand the school leaders' perspectives about school policy and contexts of both new and experienced teachers. On the basis of volunteers, 5 school leaders accepted to participate in the narratives, one declined the invitation. Appendix 4 presents the narrative guidelines for school leaders.

2.6. Data Analysis

The process of data analysis undertaken can be divided into two phases: vertical analysis and horizontal analysis (cross-case analysis) (Miles & Huberman, 1994). In the procedure of vertical analysis, each of the participants' interview was analyzed separately. In the procedure of horizontal analysis, the common patterns and differences were compared and contrasted (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). All of the interviewees were asked to write down their answers anonymously and the author assured privacy and confidentiality.

Qualitative content analysis was adopted as the method of data analysis. A wealth of data was generated from the reports and the interviews conducted with all new teachers over half a year period. The dynamic nature of the research is based on a continuum of interaction between data collection and the process of description and the interpretation (Bryman & Burgess, 1994; Kvale, 1996) in such a way that the ongoing analysis of the data provided the relevant information to guide the subsequent phase of data gathering (Guba & Lincoln, 1989; Miles & Huberman, 1994). Bryman (2004, p. 392) claims:

"This is probably the most prevalent approach to the qualitative analysis of the documents. It comprises a searching-out of underlying themes in the materials being analyzed."

For the process of data analysis, the method of "constant comparative analysis" (Glaser & Strauss, 1967) was used to look for similarities as well as differences. This process was undertaken iteratively and adjustments in the coding process were made where necessary. This enabled checking for recurring themes and the regularities as well as contrasting patterns both in each other's accounts and across teachers' responses. Categories were always double-checked and relevant quotations were transcribed to enable the reader to check the research's interpretation as well as to make his/her own interpretation.

2.7. Ethical Issues

Ethical issues were considered throughout the development of the study. There are several distinct ethical principles (Dingwall, 1980; Nachmias & Nachmias, 1981; Punch, 1994; Kvale, 1996). The commonly recognized principles include harm, autonomy, privacy, reciprocity, and equity. These principles must be considered during the design of the study and the analysis of the data.

Within the context of the study, the following questions emerged: Does the protection of participants through the informed consent process favor the formalized interaction between researcher and participant? Is this research strategy likely to cause harm, and is there any way in which such harm could be justified or excused? How can the rights of the participants be respected within a follow-up study, particularly in regard to their autonomy and privacy when findings are to be disseminated? Who will access to the information gathered? These concerns were considered from the beginning of the research and decisions were made in an attempt to ensure the rights of the participants in the study.

Due to the effect and the implications for both the participants and the setting, it is not easy to access the schools of this study. With the help of some friends in schools, and after detailed explanation about the purpose and the procedures of the study to the head teachers, it was

possible to start this research work in the chosen schools with the premise that the names of schools and participants will be anonymous.

With qualitative research, it is not easy to guarantee the direction of data collection methods such as interviews and observation. Consequently, once-off consent may not be appropriate (McDonnell et al., 2000; Holloway & Wheeler, 2002). In addition, ethics are subjective in the perspective of interpretivist (Schwandt, 1994). Herein, the constant negotiation with informants is crucial (Berg, 1995, Holloway & Wheeler, 2002), which is referred to as 'informed process consent' (Munhall, 1988; Raudonis, 1992; Behi & Nolan, 1995; Ensign, 2003). This consent makes it possible to modify the arrangements during the procedure of research.

In this research individuals participating in the study have a reasonable expectation that they will be informed of the nature of the study and may choose whether or not to participate. To start the interview with the participants, the research purpose and the procedures of the study were explained to the new teachers who started to work with less than three years' experience at the beginning. After they understood the principles of this research procedure and agreed to cooperate, it was possible to ask questions for the interview. Although the study was carried out in schools and introduced by other colleagues, the participants could refuse if they were unwilling to continue. It happened in the second phase during which three teachers refused to continue this research. More or less, there might be some pressure placed on them by peers or by superiors, especially the latter.

Due to the detailed descriptions used in qualitative research, confidentiality must be maintained in regard to individual participants and the context such as workplace. Pseudonyms may be used to individual participants (Polit & Tatano Beck, 2006). If too much personal detail is disclosed, participants will be exposed to embarrassment (Stake, 2000). In this research study, all participants were informed that the information provided to the researcher will be treated confidentiality. That means the information will not be given to anyone else.

For qualitative research, conflict can arise if the researcher has a professional interest in the study topic (Day, 1991; Robson, 1993; Lincoln & Guba, 2000). For example, education research in the teaching context might highlight the dual role of teacher and researcher. The separation of these roles is challenging (Orb et al., 2001; Casey, 2004). In other words, the relationship between the

researcher and the participants will affect the research itself.

In this study, the author's role acts as a non-participant observer (Creswell, 1994; Cohen & Manion, 1989). This means that the researcher did not interact as a participant in the procedure of the interview. The researcher's presence was kept as passive as possible. Although such policy might restrict the observations to seek out more information, it preserves the natural setting from these observations.

CHAPTER III

3. Becoming and being a new teacher in China

Based on the data analysis from the interviews, findings were organized in several main themes that emerged from the data, namely: motivations and influences to enter a teaching degree; looking back at teacher education, practicum experience, images of self-as-teacher, workplace learning, learning situations as a new year teacher and the interaction with students. These categories will be explored and presented in the first part of this chapter, followed by a discussion, at the end, of the results according to the existing literature.

3.1. Entering a teacher degree: motivations and influences

Chinese teachers identified several reasons for choosing to become a teacher. These include extrinsic and intrinsic motivations (Flores, 2011; Hauge, 2000). In this study, the main reason pointed out by the participants is related to employment opportunities (extrinsic motivations). It is important to note that teachers listed more than one reason for joining the profession. These findings are in accordance with previous research, which suggests that external praise, rewards and influences have a strong impact on the choice of becoming a teacher (Kyriacou & Coulthard, 2000; Lai et al., 2005; Gao & Trent, 2009; Manuel & Hughes, 2006). Having a secure and stable job, two or three months of vacations and, in case of the female teachers, the possibility to have more time to take care of the children and family, are some of the arguments used by teachers to justify their choices to enter teaching:

> I like being a teacher, it is very stable. (NT13, Interview 1)

> Teacher is a very stable job for a woman. (NT5, Interview1)

> I graduated from a normal university and I prefer a stable life, I wish to have more time to take care of my kids and family. (NT6, Interview 1)

> Job and income is very stable and has vacations that last three months. (NT10, Interview 1)

Also among the extrinsic reasons are the influence of significant others. In many cases, these "others" refer to the influence of relatives (parents or family members that were also teachers) or former remarkable teachers from their previous experience as students which had an impact on the choice of the teaching profession.

> My parents are both teachers, I felt being a teacher is a very honorable profession. (NT9, Interview 1)

> I became a teacher because most of my families are teachers. (NT10, Interview 1)

> During my teaching life in poor area, a Junior middle school teacher Miss XXX, a Chinese language teachers was the biggest influence on me, even during her cancer period, she never gave up teaching. So I think the dedication is the most important cause of education. (NT8, Interview 1)

However, some participants also identified strong personal motivations to become a teacher, referring that they liked education and being a teacher was like a "dream coming true". These intrinsic motivations are also referred by other international research studies in Portugal (Flores, 2001, 2002), Sweden and Portugal (Flores & Niklasson, 2014), and Australia (Watt & Richardson, 2008), along with altruistic reasons related to the contribution to society and the social utility of the profession (Watt & Richardson, 2008; Lin et al., 2012).

> To be a teacher was my dream in childhood. Being a teacher can realize my own value and satisfy my spiritual needs. (NT2, Interview 1)

> The reason why I became a teacher was because it was my initial dream. When I was still a child, I wanted to be a teacher. (NT3, Interview 1)

> I worked as a volunteer teacher in a poor area; I was moved by those teachers who devoted themselves to education. (NT8, Interview 1)

It is also important to notice that many teachers refer that they became teachers because they had no other choice, since they graduated from a Normal University. As mentioned earlier, in Chinese context, many students enter a teacher education program due to lack of financial support (Su et al., 2001). This argument was mentioned in most of the teachers' accounts (9 out of 17

teachers) when they were asked about why they entered a teaching degree. This was followed by other explanations related to the extrinsic or intrinsic motivations mentioned above.

> China's college entrance examination system is so terrible that I had no choice but to go to normal University, and then become a teacher after graduation. (NT16, Interview 1)

> I graduated from a Normal University; I got free-pay chance. If I broke the contract, I would loose a large sum of money. I could not pay the tuition fee in college that was the reason why I chose a free-pay Normal University. (NT5, Interview 1)

3.2. Looking back on Initial Teacher Education (ITE)

In regard to Chinese new teachers' perceptions on their initial teacher education, the participants mainly talked about their curriculum and practicum. The most important topics reported by teachers were related to the subjects they considered most important (e.g. Pedagogy and Psychology, Methodology, etc.) and to their experiences during internship or practicum. Subjects such as Pedagogy and Psychology are very important in the normal university study. Strong professional knowledge is also identified by student teachers, as they emphasize that Chinese education belongs to the examination-oriented education system (Hu, 2006).

> For one thing, teachers' professional knowledge, for example, a math teacher must be very familiar with his or her mathematic professional knowledge (I think teaching is a very professional job). Dealing with students and their ability to communicate in this regard is also very important. (NT5, Interview 1)

> Teachers' professional knowledge is very important, but also necessary, of course, disciplinary expertise, psychological health education, knowledge and so on. (NT7, Interview 1)

> Professional knowledge, education teaching theory, methodology theory. (NT15, Interview 1)

> Actual class teaching during the internship and practicum is very important. (NT1, Interview 1)

> Practicum during bachelor, real teaching during master study in middle school were very important. (NT16, Interview 1)

Communication abilities were discussed only once respectively. This has great relation with induction in China. Neither the government nor the school, even the beginning teachers themselves never take it for granted. Induction was only talked by one teacher. This is in accordance with the neglected area of induction in China for some time (e.g. Ren, 2004, in Chinese; Wang, 2006).

3.2.1. Practicum experience

Workplace conditions and teacher socialization play a key role in shaping new teachers' attitudes towards teaching (Zeichner & Gore, 1990; Flores, 2001, 2011). Practicum was discussed broadly in the semi-structured interviews. Some of the following quotes illustrate teachers 'complaints about the short period available for practicum:

> The most relevant experiences are the day-to-day teaching; in simple teaching work we can get a lot of experience and knowledge. (NT6, Interview 1)

> Practicum was too short for me. More importantly, I had been preparing for the master entrance exam during that period. The most important thing that affected me was my part-time teacher job during my master study. (NT5, Interview 1)

> Education Internship is too short and the preparation of the master entrance exam occupied too much time. So my internship was not very obvious. The main work of education practice was class management. The best one which really improved my professional growth was my part time job as a teacher in a training center as teacher. (NT7, Interview 1)

> During practicum, I attended lesson preparation, group activities with other old teachers, observed outstanding teachers' lessons, had learnt some teaching experience. But there is little chance to take classes, the internship period is too short. (NT14, Interview 1)

When asked to look back on their experiences during their practicum, several teachers present a negative attitude towards their teaching practice, mainly due its duration. Other teachers refer to their practicum as a relevant experience for their learning and professional growth, although they

express some difficulties related to the short time for teaching:

> Not very good, I could not master too many things, teaching technique, teaching experience, and so on. (NT1, Interview 1)

> I felt teaching is more important than theory study. Practicum is too short. As a normal university student, we learn more than three years of theory but only two or three months of practicum. (NT6, Interview 1)

> I worked hard during practicum. I got a lot of experience in class management but I could not study much in teaching ability for I had only two classes to teach during my practicum in those two months. (NT9, Interview 1)

> I communicated a lot with my mentor. I learnt a lot. But time is too short. And I did not have a formal teaching practice. (NT16, Interview 1)

> I felt a lot in teaching practice, and the teaching practice made me more inclined to be a teacher. But the time is too short that I cannot learn enough. (NT2, Interview 1)

> This period experience at school was very important for my afterwards independent class, it laid a good foundation for me. But it was too short, I think practicum should be at least half a year. (NT14, Interview 1)

3.2.2. Images of Self-as-Teacher

The conception of Chinese new teachers is quite different from western countries. Only after fulfilling four-year systematic major study called bachelor degree plus very short-term practicing time (but usually around one at most two months) can they be formal new teachers in most areas in present China. Images of self-as-teacher pointed to a broad understanding of their role, one which included the more technical and cultural, but also the more personal and educational dimensions (Flores, 2004). Chinese teachers are different from western teachers for the long history's affect, especially of Confucius' and other old educator's great influence. Most of new teachers said that teaching includes several parts, they quote old Chinese educator's old saying: "teacher is the one who could propagate the doctrine, impart professional knowledge, and resolve doubts":

> A good teacher should not only teach knowledge, should also set himself or herself as students' example, teach kids ideals, beliefs, especially in the lower grades of the students. (NT1, Interview 1)

> As an old saying says 'a teacher passes on knowledge, educates on various subjects, and solves problems'. (NT7, Interview 1)

Most of teachers said that teaching profession is noble and needs dedication. They use a widespread traditional metaphor:

> The teacher is students' growing navigation, just like candles, burning themselves, light student. (NT2, Interview 1)

> The teacher is a noble profession, needs dedication spirit. (NT8, Interview 1)

> Firstly, impart knowledge, communicate with students, guide students grow up. For another, quoting Confucius' words "Teaching others teaches yourself". (NT3, Interview 1)

> To cultivate more excellent students, let students learn knowledge while they learn to behave. Through education, make children and yourself further growth and progress. (NT4, Interview 1)

In summary, the new teachers identified their roles as teachers in several categories, most still use Hanyu's (about more than 1200 years ago, Tang Dynasty) old saying 'impart knowledge, solve problems, teaching study techniques, set examples". Seven teachers also said their role as teachers have emotional elements; they take students as family, even brother or sisters. This has great relation with their young ages.

> Students are friends and brothers. (NT3, Interview 1)

> In work teacher is a teacher, in life, he/she is a friend. (NT12, Interview 1)

> Teachers are students' parents. (NT17, Interview 1)

> Teachers were respected by students and their parents, affected students greatly. (NT5,

Interview 1)

> The teacher is the student's guide, sets a good example for students. Leave the best side to the students. To keep on learning and improving themselves. (NT9, Interview 1)

> To be a primary school teacher, teacher should be like a mother to care for little children. Love and care for them like your kids, take them as your kids. As an unmarried woman, I just graduated from school, it really took me some time to accommodate this situation. (NT2, Interview 1)

This is in line with Flores' personal and educational dimensions (Flores, 2004), who also highlights the teachers to whom being a teacher was a rewarding experience.

3.3. Workplace Learning

Research shows that teacher and teaching quality are the most powerful predictors of student success. In short, principals ensure higher student achievement by assuring better teaching. In order to achieve this, effective administrators have a new teacher induction program available for all newly hired teachers, which then become part of the lifelong, sustained professional development program for the district or school (Wong, 2004). For example, Chinese Taipei has recently established a one-year internship for beginning (Howe, 2006), but for mainland China there are no formal induction law or regulation; the induction only exists in some school's as school-based training (Yuan, 2006).

In regard to data collected in this study, Chinese new teachers considered that teaching and learning are two processes that are mutual interrelated, together with students' growth. Teachers used Lao-tsm's saying to describe their teaching and learning processes, they said they grow up with students; this has great relation with Chinese traditional education thoughts:

> Teacher study together with students through their teaching, and they also improved together with students they taught, especially for new teachers. (NT3, Interview 1)

> Teaching benefits teachers and students, their professional knowledge and teaching ability

are also rising in the teaching process. (NT5, Interview 1)

Firstly, teachers and students interacted, teachers also study together through teaching. Secondly, respect students' dominant position, exerting the function of teachers' leading role. Thirdly, fun learning, willing to constantly learn and happy teaching. (NT15, Interview 1)

Some other teachers also think that teaching and learning is the process of teacher instructing students, and teach how student learn by themselves but only as a supplement. "Two seemingly conflicting stereotypes exist about Asian students: (i) they are committed to a low level, rote-biased (or "surface") approach to learning; (ii) they achieve disproportionately well, particularly at tertiary level" (Biggs, 1991, p.27). Chinese educators came to realize the traditional way's shortcoming and try to change the situation from exam-oriented Education to quality exam (decreed by 'Chinese Education Reform and Development Sketch' & 'Implementation Opinions', 1993).

Students are the main part in the teaching and studying, teachers guide students. Let students to think more, to say more, and summarize themselves. Teacher only supplemented students' inadequacies. (NT9, Interview 1)

Firstly, teachers and students interacted, teachers also study together through teaching. Secondly, respect students' dominant position, exerting the function of teachers' leading role. Thirdly, fun learning, willing to constantly learn and happy teaching. (NT15, Interview 1)

Only two teachers think that teaching and learning processes also include the process of imparting knowledge by teachers themselves:

It is to impart knowledge to students, and to instruct students. (NT1, Interview 1)

I wish my students had good study habits, understand civilization, known etiquette, then the academic performance comes. (NT9, Interview 1)

New teachers also revealed a diverse range of images of the school as a workplace, which pointed to their situational understanding (Day, 1999). Flores (2004) sees the school as a place where

teachers do their teaching and where students learn; encompassing a wide variety of characteristics combining its social, personal, organizational and political dimensions.

Most of new teachers expressed their first experiences as a teacher in their school as positive, two teachers described them as negative, and other five teachers said it is half positive and half negative. Most teacher think that teaching is too heavy, which is in line with previous international literature (Flores, 2001; Flores & Day, 2006; Beltman, Mansfild, & Price, 2011). In Chinese contexts, heavy workload has been highlighted by several authors (Lee & Feng, 2007; Gao, 2008; Gu & Li, 2013).

> The mentor of mine is kind to me. But my teaching is too heavy, the income is poor, although it is better than other non-key schools in Nanchang City. (NT 1 teacher, Interview 1)

> Very tough, it took me too much time to prepare for the class. As a Chemistry teacher, it needs much more time and exercise by teachers first than other subjects. It was really boring to do so many exercises and labs in such a suburban school. The conditions are too bad. The teaching is very, very heavy, the school did not take me as a beginner. I also act as a class adviser. I was from the countryside, I had to raise my brother who was also a senior student, I had to be a class adviser to earn more money. (NT16, Interview 1)

Other teachers said the income is very poor compared with the expensive housing price and high living cost. Low salary was also identified by other authors (Gu & Li, 2013), but poor salary and high cost living prices, especially crazy house prices were retreated through the interviews from the beginning to the end.

> Exciting, challenging for me. This middle school is very beautiful, and the conditions are very good, it is the best one in Nanchang City. But as a new teacher, I could find great pressure, such as money, diploma, I only hold bachelor degree while most of new teachers hold a master degree. (NT4, Interview 1)

The importance of workplace conditions for beginning teachers has been widely explored in the literature of beginning teachers (Weiss, 1999; Flores, 2001, 2004; Williams et al., 2001). Rosenholtz (1989) defined the school as workplace, emphasizing the needs of beginning teachers

which affect teacher quality and commitment.

The new teachers also talked about school leadership:

> 'The president is from our department, also a professor majored in Education Science. She changed this old school a lot. I can learn a lot from her. (NT, Interview 1)

> This school can offer good chance and condition than other non-key schools, I can learn from the experienced teachers. But the teaching is too heavy. (NT12, Interview 1)

As for the beginning teachers' perceptions regarding their job during these first months, only two teachers think that it was positive; both of them are from the same middle school. As mentioned before, this school has abundant funds not only from government but also from the university. It owns independent recruitment system and incomparable workplace conditions.

In this study, the first months are considered by 8 teachers as a very negative experience, 6 of them showed a neutral position and one teacher had a mid-term position. Teachers referred that good leadership and environment are very important:

> Love the job, more fulfilling, happy, work and life are inseparable, with excellent leadership, teacher exchanges, and in the second year of teaching, school organize us to go to England attend training, I can learn foreign advanced teaching education. In a word, the first year in teaching here make me strong and grow up as a new teacher. (NT12, Interview 1)

Other teachers considered their job during those first months as a neutral experience; they just talk about this process like telling a story:

> 'Teacher needs great patience, holds hope. Also needs upgrade education teaching concept. To be able to keep pace with time, and be glad to teach.'(NT15, Interview 1)

More than half new teachers considered this phase as a negative process. Four of the teachers found it very hard for them to adapt to the job for various reasons. Issues such as most of colleagues are female, heavy workload, low income, bad school contexts are recurring in their accounts:

Most of primary school teachers are female, primary school needs teacher with great patience and be very lovely. As a male teacher, at the beginning, I found it very difficult for me to lay down an identity. Half a semester, I adapt to this work. This work is very stable, but the income is still low, and this school is located in the flourishing urban area, housing prices are expensive. (NT1, Interview 1)

Teachers also stated that they felt too busy, they did not rest, especially the teaching task was too heavy and they felt great pressure:

I felt teachers are very busy, teaching is much harder than imagined, with great responsibility. I am working on new campus, and I have to do too many things without stop. (NT5, Interview 1)

The teaching is too heavy, I have to teach, and no time to rest at all. Most of new teachers felt so. (NT6, Interview 1)

There are a diverse range of images of the school as a workplace. When describing their school as a workplace, many teachers revealed a positive attitude. The gap between the rich and the poor is very big:

In our large office, we have both new teachers as us and old teachers, we have very good condition, we have PC and air-conditioned. We can communicate with both mentors and new teachers with the same subjects. (NT4, Interview 1)

Good, most of new teachers are hard-working class advisers. (NT7, Interview 1)

Very good, this school has computerized multi-media teaching equipment and network for teachers. (NT12, Interview 1)

Very good, like home. (NT14, Interview 1)

Only four teachers considered their school as a workplace very negative. Most of them are from the same school, a suburban middle school. The school is very small and old, it belongs to historic building which cannot be destroyed at ease:

There are 16 teachers in a little office, can you imagine how crowded we are. This primary school lies in Jiangxi Normal University, it is in the city center, it is too small. (NT2, Interview 1)

There are more than ten teachers in a very little office, but only two PC in the office. The campus is very terrible. (NT17, Interview 1)

Beginning teachers also spoke of the relation with students, colleagues, school leaders and students' parents. The aspect of new teacher-colleague are also talked widely, especially on mentor-mentee (Rowley, 1999; Achinstein, 2006). Most of teachers expressed positive attitudes towards colleagues' reactions:

This school is very good, opportunities and challenges are both exit here in this school. (NT5, Interview 1)

Colleagues are harmonious, great help for new teachers. (NT9, Interview 1)

The colleagues get along with each other very well, and they can monitor their teaching. (NT12, Interview 1)

This question is divided into two parts: the principal and the other staff. Most of the teachers considered this aspect positive, referring that their principal and their staff are both very good:

Principal are very nice and very capable, under her leadership, our school has completely changed. But deep-seated defects or difficult cannot change in a short time and depends on only one principal. The school's hardware conditions are not good, the buildings are too small and old. (NT2, Interview 1)

Principal is very kind, concerned about teachers, but I think the principal may be concerned more about old teachers than new teachers in some degree. Relationship between colleagues are nice. The hardware conditions are not good. (NT9, Interview 1)

The school leader is ok, but the hardware is very bad. (NT7, Interview 1)

The principal's management philosophy is good and know how to behave well. The

school's hardware condition is very bad, even worse than my old middle school. (NT17, Interview 1)

About the existing facilities, seven teachers said they were positive. All of the teachers belong to a school in the city center:

The school leader is very nice and active. School active thinking, vision and innovation. But the school hardware needs to be strengthened. (NT8, Interview 1)

Principal is good but the hardware conditions needs improve. (NT10, Interview 1)

When asked if there is any particular activity aimed at introducing new teachers to the school or to their new responsibilities as a teacher, all teachers said there is no particular activity aimed at introducing them to this school. Most of teachers said the professional development is required for the new teachers and teaching record and that class management must be improved:

Hope that the new teachers' professional development to be able improve as soon as possible, be able to be an excellent teacher not only teach but also be a good class adviser. (NT5)

Specific goal: new teachers' teaching performance should be high and qualities should improve, new teachers professional development can be improved quickly. (NT6)

Four teachers mentioned the mentoring process, meaning that old teachers help new teachers:

Mentoring, one old teacher to one new teacher, old teacher help new teacher prepare lessons and observe their class etc. (NT1)

School leader require new teachers should study from old teachers, and grow up quickly. (NT9)

More communication with experienced teachers, improve teaching ability as quick as possible. (NT16)

When asked about colleagues teaching the same subject as their subject, teachers reported collective lesson preparation, observation of each other's class, research activities, communication and discussion with others as the most recurring subjects they talked in the semi-structured interview. Collective lesson preparation is the most frequent one referred to by the beginning teachers.

> Collective lesson preparation and observe each other's class, discuss teaching experience (NT2)

> Collective lesson preparation, help, guide and teach activities between experienced and new teachers, research activities. (N7)

> Collective lesson preparation, observation class, discussion class, teaching, research, study together. (NT5)

Regarding the kind of support teachers had, they mentioned all kinds of support such as excellent show class with experienced and other excellent teachers from other schools; new teachers contest/race courses; teaching and research activities, attending training and exchange; long-distance study that also including internet online study; school-based training. However, attending training and exchange activities are the most recurrent ones in new teachers' accounts:

> Go out to attend training, for example, go to other secondary schools to exchange. (NT3)

> Short-term training in United Kingdom. (NT11)

> Listen to other teachers' lesson. (NT10)

> Excellent show class, race courses, teaching and research courses. (NT1)

> Doing teaching research with old teachers. (NT8)

Along with teaching and research activities, long-distance study, also called internet online studying, appeared many times:

Provincial and city professional training, annual conference and Internet training. (NT13)

Long-distance teaching training. (NT17)

When new teachers were asked to describe a situation from which they learned during this period and how did it happen, most of teachers referred to their teaching aspect. Teachers talked about their teaching growth, reflection, their attitude towards the job and the willingness to improve their teaching ability:

I described the first year as "reflection, growth, harvest". My profession developed fast, I learned how to reflect, I grew up during this period of teaching. But the most obvious progress for me is I have learned how to coordinate the relation between the teacher and student. (NT1, Interview1)

From the familiarity with senior high school subject teaching content, the teacher can improve their teaching ability, and learn to take seriously his/her own teaching. (NT12, Interview1)

Better to grasp the quality of teaching, the effect of class management ability, as well as vocational training, collective classes, lectures summary, the reflection of class. (NT15, Interview1)

I got married, and gave birth to a little girl. I made rapid progress in these two years and became top three in the new teachers. (NT17, Interview1)

The second most recurring situation they learnt during this period is the relation with the teachers and students. Student-teacher relationships predict two important student behavioral outcomes, academic achievement and disciplinary problems (Crosnoe, Johnson, & Elder, 2004). This points to the importance of the student-teacher relationship and it is similar to western contexts (Good & Brophy, 1974; Klem & Connell, 2004):

The salary is poor, but spiritual harvest is not consistent with material harvest, the former one is by far greater than the latter one. I am so happy together with my students. (NT2, Interview1)

> The relation between students and teacher is like friend and teacher, I am very proud of
> that. (NT8, Interview1)

Among all duties required of a teacher, the most demanding is mainly about student aspects, such as impart knowledge, educate students, how to make them learn to think, rely on themselves, help them how to be develop, improve their performance. This has great relation with Chinese education system, exam-oriented education and pedagogy and the students' scores are almost the only judging criterion for new teachers. For Chinese students, the aim of learning focuses solely on passing examinations (Kirkpatrick & Zang, 2011). This particular approach, at its worst, can stifle a student's imagination, creativity, and sense of self, qualities which are crucial for a child's ultimate success in and out of the classroom (Kirkpatrick & Zang, 2011). While the push has inspired innovative reforms in a number of schools and met with considerable in-principal support, on a wider scale implementation of the reforms is hampered by insufficient resources, conceptual ambiguity and conservative resistance. The goals of the new curriculum are still not reflected in the examinations and frequently conflict with teacher, student and parental goals in a society where examination outcomes have lifelong consequences (Dello-Iacovo, 2009).

> Impart knowledge and how to deal with workmates, leaders, students. My puzzle was the
> relation with bad students, and part of workmates. (NT3, Interview 1)

> Teacher's main task is impart knowledge and educate students well. The teaching is too
> heavy and it entails to have time to learn and improve teaching skills. As a class adviser,
> I also need too much time and energy that is very bad for a new teacher's development.
> (NT 11, Interview 1)

The most recurring confusion is about new teachers' difficulty, they must rely on themselves, they must handle complex situations which is in line with Chinese literature (Ren, 2004):

> Impart knowledge and educate students. My present puzzle is as a beginning teacher,
> every class should be wonderful, each class should fully mobilized the enthusiasm of
> students', the students' score is the only factor assessing teachers' performance. (NT5,
> Interview 1)

The most important thing is how to cultivate the good habits of students, improve their ideological and moral standards. The biggest confusion is how to improve student consciousness so that they can be diligent. I learned how to survive myself in teaching as a new teacher. (NT9, Interview 1)

3.3.1. Interaction with Students

When asked about the students they taught, almost every teacher expressed very positive attitude, except one. They said they like their students very much; the students are very cute and lovely. Three teachers said they perceive their work with students as negative, as they complained about the problem of only kid of today's China. These kids are spoiled and have a lot of psychological problems. The quality of the students in non-key school is much worse than in other key school. The relationship with students is a very important research topic in China. Most teachers said their relationship with students is positive. They described it as friendship, parents, brothers and sisters, this is in line with earlier work (Li, 2001).

I get along well with them like good friends. (NT5, Interview 1)

I can manage them very well and also get along well with them like friends. (NT6, Interview 1)

They respect me and are also afraid of me. (NT9, Interview 1)

I felt there is the relationship between teacher and student is very simple and pure, rarely be able to get along with each other like friends, but there are very few students can take teacher as friend. (NT17, Interview 1)

All new teachers referred that there was no change for the way they interact with the students. They said they are very close to their students and their relationship with them is more equal than old teachers:

Compared with old teachers, we did not have restriction on the topic we talked about. (NT5, Interview 1)

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Almost no difference, strict with them but also take them as friends. (NT13, Interview 1)

Easier to communicate, ages are close with students, more easy to be friends and close to each other. (NT14, Interview 1)

More to consider the issue from the perspective of students, a better understanding of the behavior and thinking of students. (NT15, Interview 1)

To conclude and summarize this chapter, it was possible to analyze the motivations, influences and learning contexts of beginning teachers in China, as well as their ITE and practicum. Findings showed that employment opportunities, personal interests (intrinsic reasons), influence of 'significant others', influence of 'social status appeared as the main motivations for Chinese teachers to become teachers. In regard to their ITE, the most important subjects were Pedagogy, Psychology and Methodology, but the most important of all was internship or practicum. Also, strong professional knowledge was stressed by participants, as Chinese education is considered an examination-oriented education system (Hu, 2006). Findings also reveal the importance of practicum for new teachers, which is in accordance with the neglected area of induction in China for some time (Ren, 2004; Wang, 2006). However, some participants presented a less positive view of their practicum, but this is mainly due to its short duration. In China, the graduates in normal (teaching) universities have only one or at most two months' internship because of the shortages of financial support and the stakeholders' policy compared with the western countries. Some of them do not have formal teaching practice or even a mentor during their teaching practice. Some new teachers participating in this research look at their practicum negatively. They said their practicing periods are too short and have poor opportunities for professional learning in classrooms. The answers to these questions are not easy as they are related to the political, economic, culture and other social issues (Flores, 2000). More attention needs to be paid to the connection between student teachers' motivations for entering teaching, the social status of the teaching profession and the professional learning contexts for becoming a teacher. International literature has pointed out the importance of workplace learning and the need to expand the articulation between the different components of initial teacher education curriculum and

practicum within the same program of teacher education (Flores, 2004, 2016). Findings from this study also stress the importance of giving more attention to practicum as a context of professional learning but they also highlight the key role of ITE curriculum in the process of becoming a teacher. Issues such as student teachers' beliefs about teaching and being a teacher, their motivations and expectations need to be taken into consideration by teacher educators in initial teacher education. Also, more attention needs to be paid to mentoring and induction as the early years of the teaching career are crucial in terms of professional learning and teacher retention.

CHAPTER IV

4. Being a new teacher: challenges, difficulties and issues of identity

This chapter consists of two main parts: analysis of the results of the second round of semi-structured interviews and the critical incidents with teachers. The first part includes the challenges, the most significant experiences and the views of teaching as a new teacher; the most satisfying experiences as a teacher; the influence of the workplace; and issues of support and socialization. The second part examines the most positive and negative experiences regarding the analysis of the results obtained through critical incidents with new teachers.

4.1. Perceptions regarding their job

Bogler (2001) stated that teachers' occupation perceptions strongly affected their satisfaction. In the present study, teachers were asked if they had changed their perceptions regarding their job during the last year. More than half of new teachers (8 out of 14) said that they had changed their perceptions regarding their job during the last year; four of them said the change was negative, they felt great pressure, poor salary via expensive house price and no time to rest. Despite the intentions to increase government investment in education, with the continual decline in the central government's allocations to education, educational financing and provision has heavily relied upon the financial abilities of local governments and individual contributions (Mok, 2008). The teacher profession are badly paid and treated. It has great different from Chinese powerful economic development, China only invests a little sum of money on basic education (Guo & Wu, 2005). Some teachers argue they changed their perceptions:

> 'More and more tired of this job. (NT7, Interview 2)

> 'Great pressure, salary is very poor, a lot classes.'(NT8, Interview 2)

> 'Great pressure, not enough money to raise myself, especially no time to rest after being
> a class adviser. '(NT9, Interview 2)

> 'My concept of teachers have changed in some degree. After this year, I felt I am too tired

to have time to rest, poor money, too boring as a class adviser. '(NT10, Interview 2)

'I have the same ideas, love teaching, in spite of poor salary, working conditions, no time to rest.'(NT16, Interview 2)

'Last year I made some progress to be successful in teaching or, at least taught in every class the same level of discipline inside the top.' (NT17 teacher)

'The performance is positive and made great progress. But I am very difficult and I do not have time to rest. (NT10, Interview 2)

'On the whole, I have made some progress and become more patient, had more exchange with students. But there are still many shortcomings that need to be improved.'(NT16, Interview 2)

Few teachers state that there are no changes on their perceptions regarding their job during the last year:

'In fact, I do not think I have made some change, I just have more expectations for life. I have great pressure, I am not young anymore, so I wish I can be an excellent teacher.'(NT2, Interview 2)

'No, I still like this job. I cherish this job very much for this is almost the best middle school in Jiangxi Province. It is so hard to find job nowadays. (NT4, Interview 2)

'I like this job, no change.'(NT5, Interview 2)

4.1.1. The most challenging tasks

Data were collected from six schools, although only 14 teachers participated in the second-round interview, but they are from different schools. As for the most challenging duties, they felt all kinds of challenging duties, not centralized but very dispersed. Teachers referred that among all duties required of them as a teacher, to cultivate students and how to teach them well, are the most challenging:

'The most challenging and hardest thing is how to cultivate and developing students' ability.'(NT1, Interview 2)

'Let every student like you and study hard.'(NT13, Interview 2)

Teachers said that the most challenging duties are how to make every student develop and do the best. One teacher mentioned that some students bring much negative effect to the other students. How to help them became the big challenge for her because the shortage of funds, the government allows each school to recruit some "school choice students", their entrance exam usually does not reach enrolment mark. They pay extra money, also called (sponsorship fees) to get the admission, but they often bring much negative effects to school and other students. Such as they often reduce the average score and bring some problems such as disciplinary issues, etc.

'The hardest thing is the most difficult thing. For me, the hardest thing is not to be able to let every student do their best and display their talents.'(NT2, Interview 2)

'How to teach and educate, manage academically and morally poor students, for me, that is the most difficult and challenging for me. Half of my class is the students who choose to Study in Non-designated Schools, they paid sponsorship fees to study here. (NT9, Interview 2)

One teacher said the most challenging issue is how to make breakthrough in his own teaching, and how to outshine himself in such a good school among all the beginning teachers. This has great relation with Chinese examination-oriented education system.

'The most challenging thing for me is to have some breakthrough in my teaching. This school is the best one in Jiangxi Province, and there so many good teachers and the students' quality is first-rate. I wish to outshine others in these new teachers.'(NT3, Interview 2)

One teacher said that the most challenging duty is how to understand students for most of the kids are the single one in their families, they have a lot of problems. By 1979, China had begun implementing the so-called one child policy, which severely restricts couples' childbearing (Hardee, Xie, & Gu, 2004). The policy has been beneficial in terms of curbing population growth, aiding

economic growth, and improving the health and welfare of women and children. On the negative side there are concerns about demographic and sex imbalance and the psychological effects for a generation of only children in the cities (Hesketh & Xu, 1997).

Two beginning teachers said the most challenging duties are how to make every student like them. Most of teachers and students spent more than 8 hours a day at school every day, positive relationship of teacher and student are good for both of them. In the classroom environment, the interpersonal relationship between teacher and student is an important element contributing to the learning process of teachers (Brekelmans, Wubbels & Brok, 2002):

'The most challenging is to let every student like me.'(NT5, Interview 2)

'Let every student like you and study hard.'(NT13, Interview 2)

One teacher said the most challenging is how to communicate with students and how to manage them. Teachers who were perceived as having greater interpersonal solidarity and a more positive communicating style (more dramatic, open, relaxed, impression leaving, and friendly) were perceived as more effective (Andersen, Norton, & Nussbaum, 1981):

'The communication with the students, student management.'(NT6, Interview 2)

'Adhere to this low income job.'(NT7, Interview 2)

'You must like their nanny, every day from seven a.m., start to follow sixty or seventy students, until almost ten in the evening. That is really very labour-intensive, I really feel to be mentally and physically exhausted.' (NT10, Interview 2)

'Puppy love phenomenon is very serious, and students surf Internet, indulge game all night.' (NT17, Interview 2)

4.1.2. The most significant experiences

New teachers talked about as the most significant teaching experience in the last year, for

example, to master the practical teaching experience, better understanding of teaching; think carefully about teaching. They also refer to heavy workload problem such as great pressure and no time to rest. The relationship with students, including the communication with them as well as their parents, the recognition by students were also referred by teachers.

When talked about whether they have changed their behavior / performance / understanding since beginning of the year, most of the new teachers said there are changes in every aspects. For instance, they are more active than before, and they said that is hard to be a good teacher etc. Only one teacher reported that he did not changed his behavior/performance/understanding) since the beginning of the year:

> 'There are some changes, in the aspect of teaching, I put more emphasis on the knowledge students learnt, and formed a good habit of independent learning. I think to be a good teacher is really not easy.'(NT2 teacher, Interview 2)

> 'Yes, I felt I am more and more fit for the job, but I am really tired of this job.'(NT 7 teacher, Interview 2)

> 'I have a new understanding of marriage and family, felt that husband and wife how to get along really is an art, two people for a lifetime to get along well, is really not easy.'(NT 17 teacher, Interview 2)

The new teachers said that the change happened in two big aspects, teaching and student sides. Only few talked about policy and other aspects. Because Chinese teaching is a kind of exam-oriented system, the most important way to judge whether a teacher is good or not depends on his/her students' records. Exam-oriented education systems have negative influences on Chinese students, it viewed education as nothing more than merely passing examinations. Teachers also mentioned the teaching issues such as teaching methods, lesson preparation, the relationship with students, improve express language style, make class more active, make a breakthrough in teaching, etc. Exam-oriented education in China's negative influences have also been discussed by researchers (Kirkpatrick & Zang, 2011; Deng & Poon-McBrayer, 2004).

> 'Try to think how to prepare lessons.' (NT5, Interview 2)

> 'Teaching, especially the new breakthrough on teaching, good husband and wife is

necessary for both sides' mutual respect.' (NT17, Interview 2)

In new teachers' speech the relationship with students and cultivate students' habit, student management are also emphasized. For teaching is not just teacher's teaching but also including students' study:

'The class is more active than before, and I become integrated with students.'(NT1, Interview 2)

'On the behavior element, compared with at the beginning as a teacher, the enthusiasm of communication with students declined.' (NT15, Interview 2)

Only one teacher mentioned the policy, the contradiction of the exam-oriented and the quality education. He refers that exam-oriented still prevail in today's China:

'Especially the contradiction between exam-oriented education and quality education, I feel particularly entangled.'(NT2, Interview 2)

Most of new teachers said they have changed in regard to teaching aspects. For Chinese teachers, teaching is the most important factor in an exam-oriented education system:

'I cannot teach my students well to get quality study under the exam-oriented exam backgrounds.'(NT2, Interview 2)

'I want to be a good teacher with great responsibility.'(NT3, Interview 2)

'Let the students learn more and more relaxed.'(NT4, Interview 2)

'Get more working experience. (NT5, Interview 2)

'Because I have responsibility and obligation, I wish to be a good teacher and set good example to my students.'(NT6, Interview 2)

'Because I want to develop students' good habits is the foundation of education.'(NT8, Interview 2)

'Students do not behave consciously, or not consciously as I hoped, so I must be strict with them.'(NT9, Interview 2)

'It is very hard to teach students.'(NT10, Interview 2)

'As a teacher and a class adviser at the same time, you need to improve your knowledge and management ability.' (NT13, Interview 2)

'Because students have made some progress under my supervision.'(NT16, Interview 2)

'Some example from my workmates, I felt there is some change in the way and the relation with my husband.'(NT17, Interview 2)

Only one new teacher expressed the change as negative:

'The passion and interest get from the beginning at the teaching decrease overtime; I am keenly aware of the poorness of the teacher occupation, particularly working in such an ordinary school as me; the pressure of life and the working intensity affects me negatively.' (NT15 teacher, Interview 2)

All of new teachers said they have changed during the last academic year, but there are three new teachers expressed they also did not changed in some aspects:

'The reason why I have not changed, proves that I am only an ordinary teacher, my strength is too small.' (NT2, Interview 2)

'Have been a class adviser so that I do not have time to make any change.' (NT7, Interview 2)

Regarding the most challenge and rewarding experiences, teachers said they can remember different peculiar experiences of themselves. Only one teacher said there are no particular things that she can remember:

'I was most afraid to hear people secretly about evaluation, talk about you in secret, especially in secret.' (NT1, Interview 2)

'One afternoon, many students in trust are at lunch break, a student is very naughty, the teacher's props accidentally was eaten into the stomach. I was almost scared to death at the time, quickly put the child to the hospital. Fortunately, the child had no big problem.' (NT2, Interview 2)

'In the second round of review of senior high graduate, as a Chemistry teacher, I can't do any lab to students, I can only be boring for students to review, use duck-stuffing" type of teaching mode to help students to go over lessons to prepare for the college entrance exam.' (NT3, Interview 2)

'In teaching, my throat is sick, we are on new campus, it is very remote. But a student ran far into the drugstore buy medicine for me. Imagine that, it was very, very hot outside particularly at noon, and the temperature reached 40 degrees. I was so moved that I was in tears soon.' (NT4, Interview 2)

'I teach high school graduating class, every student and teacher pressure is very great, very tiring. I cannot remember my birthday. But my students bought a cake for me and celebrate my birthday. I was tired but my face was so many diligent and cute students, I felt I am so happy every day.' (NT5, Interview 2)

'Once in a test, a student broke the examination discipline, and opened his mobile phone. He and I were in a conflict quickly, despite the final reconciliation, but this thing has great negative impact on my future teaching.'(NT6, Interview 2)

'There is a period of time, every day I have nightmares. I dreamed of beating students.' (NT7, Interview 2)

'Nowadays, it is a very popular phenomenon that many students' parents overindulged their kids at ease, and the children were almost spoiled by their parents. It brought too much trouble to teachers. They are so hard to manage, sometimes they took the teacher's words take like a passing wind. They do not respect teachers. I really feel very hurt self-esteem.'(NT9, Interview 2)

'During the period of acting as class adviser, I get up very early and go to bed very late, I even had no time to attend my best friend's wedding. I do not have rest time. I even have to work on weekends.'(NT10, Interview 2)

'I teach History subject, it is a minor subject in school. The students are not serious in my class. In my class, some students even fall asleep. '(NT13, Interview 2)

'Some time ago, there was a student that committed suicide and died on weekend in a university near our school. Because I am also working as an office assistant, I saw all these, and I was frightened.' (NT15, Interview 2)

Regarding what teachers consider to be more satisfying, teachers referred the good attitude of

their students. For instance, they are very kind and close to the new teachers, and they take the teachers as friends. This was affected by traditional Chinese culture. Chinese ancient educationist Confucius (about BC 551) take his student Zi Lu both student and friend, their relation is equal: Thompson (1998) says, "The most powerful weapon available to secondary teachers who want to foster a favorable learning climate is a positive relationship with our students." So the relationship of student and teacher are very important for both of them:

> 'My students like me very much, they take me as their brother, father, friend.'(NT 6 teacher, Interview 2)

> 'There are few students who are confident and obedient.'(NT10, Interview 2)

> 'Students are willing to be my friend.'(NT17, Interview 2)

Four teachers said the most satisfying aspect is the recognition of their students and students' good evaluation, they like their teachers' class very much, and get good records to pay back to their teachers. This has great relation with Chinese exam-oriented education system which has brought much negative effect to not only teachers but also students. Some teachers also mention dissatisfaction with the low income:

> 'Students' good academic performance is the most satisfying thing for me. Especially I was not in charge of key class but only an ordinary one, it was called parallel class. This proved that the hard work and great effort over last year have not been paid in vain. But wages are the most dissatisfied aspects.'(NT7, Interview 2)

> 'Students are very interested in my class, they take History subject as listening to story, I put the most boring history lesson into an interesting and attractive one, students are so easy and happy to learn. I am so proud of myself on this.'(NT13, Interview 2)

One teacher said the most satisfying is the vocational perspective, he even said this is the only reason to attract and support him to stay in the school:

> 'Vocational perspective, this is an affiliated primary school of Jiangxi Normal University, count as one of the very best in Jiangxi Province. And the president is an Education

Science professor, she pioneered many of the teaching reform. Most of the teachers here (90%) are female teacher. I felt the vocational perspective is the only one which is the only reason to attract and support me to stay here.'(NT1, Interview 2)

One teacher said the most satisfying thing is the good workmates, new teachers too; she said they can encourage her to make more and more progress:

'The young teachers who came here with me together (my workmates), their teaching passion as well as strong ability and cleverness encourage and enable me to try to make progress all the time... this is the most satisfying.'(NT2 Interview 2)

Another teacher said that what students' expect from the new teacher is the most satisfying:

'Every day, the students in class showing the expecting eyes to me, that is the most satisfying for me.'(NT4, Interview 2)

4.2. Developing as a new teacher

4.2.1. The most unforgettable moments

Teachers were asked to look back on their own experiences as a teacher during the last year, what kind of learning experiences they could remember. The most recurring one was the apprenticeship experience, that is also to say, study from old, experienced teachers, listening to their class, learn from them. They said, although they hold a master degree, they found teaching a profound thing and need gradual development. China has a long tradition of experienced teachers helping beginning teachers and some schools have established appropriate formal systems (Lee & Feng, 2007). Chinese mentorship has also attracted some researchers' attention (Wang, 2001; Wang, Strong, & Odell, 2004; Lee & Feng, 2007).

'At first, I think I was a master, teaching students is a simple thing. But in the process of learning with old teachers, especially learn how to improve my teaching ability and

technique, make me change my idea totally. Now I think being a teacher is really a very profound knowledge, needs not empty talk but practical experience. '(NT2, Interview 2)

'Listening to the old teacher's class, learning multimedia teaching, learn how to have better exchanges with students, reflect on my teaching after going home at night (reflective teaching).'(NT3, Interview 2)

'The chemistry teachers' collective preparation for lessons, old teacher teach new teachers how to demonstrate complex lab to students, turn complex knowledge into simple and easy to understand.'(NT4, Interview 2)

'Learn from old teachers and our school's network platform.'(NT13, Interview 2)

'I go to the affiliated middle school of Jiangxi Normal University to listen to class. An old teacher's lecture is very comprehensive, lively, and thorough, I really feel I learned a lot.' (NT17, Interview 2)

Three teachers said it is not so important to listen to old teachers' class while it is very important to listen to other teachers' class. The findings reveal that mentors provide four forms of support: provision of information, mutual lesson observation, collaborative lesson preparation and discussion in the office. Factors affecting mentoring support include teaching workload, grade and subject, style of mentor–protégé interactions, relationships between mentor and mentee, incentives for the mentors, and collegial culture (Ren, 2004).

'As a new teacher just posting, I think I didn't have much opportunity to learn.'(NT7, Interview 2)

'What I remember most is the experience that I go to Nanjing City to attend the whole country's senior school good teachers' efficient observation class activities, I think I really learned a lot from that.'(NT15, Interview 2)

Two teachers said learning multimedia teaching, courseware is the learning experience they can remember. In urban and suburban schools, most of school take modern multimedia teaching equipment. The working conditions are better than in the countryside in China which needs more attention by researchers, policy makers and schools, local and central government. Two other teachers said collective lesson preparation is an important learning experience they can remember

most. This is part of the most popular traditional way for new teachers (Ren, 2004):

'Teachers' collective preparation for lessons, including old teachers and young teachers. The activities we share such as collective reading with students.'(NT5, Interview 2)

Also, one teacher said that reflective teaching is very important. Previous research shows that reflective thinking is one of the critical factors in solving design problems (Hong & Choi, 2011).

One teacher said induction for beginning teachers is the only learning experience he can remember most:

'The induction for new teachers at the beginning of the school year I can remember most, although it is not useful for my future teaching, and the period is very short. But at least I was able to get to know my leader and colleagues.'(NT9, Interview 2)

One teacher said network platform is the learning experience she can remember. This female teacher is the only one left in the second round interviews from the affiliated middle school. Only this school has network for teachers:

'Learn from old teachers and our school's network platform.'(NT13, Interview 2)

Regarding whether they changed, why and in what way, most of teachers said there were changes. They said teaching profession needs active teachers, taking this job as a means of getting a social position, love to work in such a good school, improving teaching efficiency, etc.:

'In fact, I put the teacher this occupation as a means to get social position, also an occupation that proves my ability. '(NT2, Interview 2)

'Among so many occupations I felt this job is the most one suitable for me. I love this job so much, and I am so proud and happy to work in such a good middle school.'(NT3, Interview 2)

'Improve teaching efficiency, and adopt various means of teaching.'(NT4, Interview 2)

Teachers also expressed they have changed in some ways but they have very negative attitudes, they report poor salary via expensive house prices and high living cost, bad students quality, great pressure, no rest, bad working treatment, unfair reward policy, etc.. Incentive and evaluation policy for mentor and mentee are part of the mentorship.

As Wolfe (1992, pp.103) states, "even though one teacher may desire to be mentor another, unless an attractive reward system is in place a teacher may not choose to mentor. Recruiting teachers who desire to mentor through a reward system based on meaningful incentives and preparing teachers for the complexities of mentoring should be basic principle undergoing any mentoring program". In China, because of the short of funds and fair reward and evaluation policy for mentorship, this widespread phenomenon was referred to by researchers (Tian, 2011). The government should build formal policy for the incentive and evaluation policy for mentorship, offer enough special funds.

> 'Wages are poor and even continue to decrease every year with the soaring prices. Housing prices continue to rise, can you imagine, from the end of last year to now, not more than half a year, it rose more than 20 percent! How can I afford so expensive apartment?' (NT8, Interview 2)

> 'The quality of students is getting worse, there are many bad students (who pay extra money in order to study here in this key school) negatively affect the whole class. (NT9, Interview 2)

Few teachers said they felt no changes, because they like this job, only one teacher said she felt no change for her old strong desire of leaving this bad school decreases as time goes by:

> 'I do not change for my job, I always firmly stick to my views in regard to my work.'(NT6, Interview 2)

> 'Because my dream is to be a good teacher, love whatever you do.'(NT16 , Interview 2)

> 'When I was new here in this school, I particularly wanted to leave here, go to the city to work. But as time went on, now I feel this desire is not so strong.'(NT17, Interview 2)

Nias (1987) argued British teachers (primary and middle schools) work in a historically determined context that encourages individualism, isolation, a belief in one's own autonomy and the investment of personal resources. She concluded that each of these condition stresses the importance in teaching of the teacher as a person (as distinct from, though not as proposed to, the teacher as the possessor of occupational knowledge and skills). The self is a crucial element in the way teachers themselves construe the nature of their job (Nias, 1987, p.178). Almost all teacher said they can define themselves as teachers, but only one of them was able to explain in detail:

 'I am very careful and diligent as a teacher, I hope that my students are good at everything, I can define myself as a teacher.'(NT2, Interview 2)

Only one teacher did not say anything about whether he can define himself as a teacher, he just said there was still a big gap between the dreams.

'I think there is still a big gap between the dreams' (NT15, Interview 2)

Most of students take an old Chinese ancient educator Han yu's (more than one thousand years ago) saying 'The teacher is the one who could propagate the doctrine, impart professional knowledge and resolve doubts.' To describe the teachers' meaning:

'The teacher means imparting knowledge and educating students.'(NT2, Interview 2)

'Concerned about the growth of students.'(NT3, Interview 2)

'Teachers means students' friends, parents, partners.'(NT8, Interview 2)

'To make a living, life occupation, a job after four-year study in university.'(NT15, Interview 2)

'Teaching and educating students, a stable, low wages, hard work.'(NT7, Interview 2)

4.2.2. Being a teacher and good teaching

Regarding how teachers see themselves as teachers, most of teachers said that teacher's role is mainly concerned about students, impart knowledge, solve their problems, cultivate students, be their guide:

'Very important, very meaningful.' (NT6, Interview 2)

'Teacher's students' guide, helper. But teachers also means great effort with low income.'(NT9, Interview 2)'

'Educate students is more important than impart knowledge to them.' (NT17, Interview 2)

Other four teachers hold very negative attitudes regarding the role of the teachers, they said teachers meant hard-work and great disbursement via low income:

'The teacher is noble, but the teacher's pressure is very big, income is too low.'(NT8, Interview 2)

Different teachers have different opinions on what is good teaching, so these new teachers' definition about good teaching is very wide and different. Five teachers said that good teaching meant teacher and their students' communication, it is a mutual interaction and process, students' leading role and teachers' teaching is like only a kind of supplement. The story of beginning teaching usually includes several themes: reality shock, the lonely struggle to survive, and a loss of idealization (Feiman-Nemser, 2003).

'Good teaching is supposed to be interesting, the teachers and students participate together.'(NT6, Interview 2)

'Good teaching should include teacher's teaching and students' learning, based on the students' autonomous learning, teachers guide as supplement.'(NT13, Interview 2)

'Good teacher should fully play students' main roles and teachers' leading functions. A three dimensional teaching target, including the following things: the classroom atmosphere is good, the teaching effectiveness is high, improve the students' test scores.'(NT 15 teacher, Interview 2)

Some teachers said good teaching meant good grades. This has great relation with Chinese exam-oriented education system. Few teachers think that good teaching means no restriction, make students more free to study. While the push has inspired innovative reforms in a number of schools and met with considerable in-principal support, on a wider scale implementation of the reforms is hampered by insufficient resources, conceptual ambiguity and conservative resistance. The goals of the new curriculum are still not reflected in the examinations and frequently conflict with teacher, student and parental goals in a society where examination outcomes have lifelong consequences (Dello-lacovo, 2009). These three new teachers' accounts are in accordance with the real situation in China.

> 'I think that good teaching is like this: method and style is not fixed, not too many restrictions. Students learn well, easy to learn.'(NT2, Interview 2)

> 'Students learn easily, good teaching should has obvious effect.'(NT4, Interview 2)

> 'High efficiency to teach students and impart knowledge, cultivate students' ability.'(NT1, Interview 2)

Other teachers also said good teaching focuses on the recognition by others, such as students, colleagues and students' parents:

> 'Students love, parents, colleagues are recognized.'(NT3, Interview 2)

> 'Popular among students, students with good grades.'(NT5, Interview 2)

> 'Students actively participate in their own teaching, the interaction between teachers and students is very good, student love their teaching.'(NT16, Interview 2)

> 'Good teaching is making study serve the practical purpose.'(NT17, Interview 2)

4.2.3. Most rewarding experiences as a teacher

Teachers were asked about the most relevant experiences. Thus, the most relevant experiences during that period are very different. Three teachers have talked about their own growth, studying by themselves. Three teachers indicate that listening to old teachers' lectures are the most relevant experiences. Two teachers think that book reading and listening to lesson preparation are the most relevant features. Also, training organized by school are relevant. Courses' evaluation was referred to by one teacher. Reflective teaching was identified by one teacher as the most relevant experience. Class adviser training was identified by one teacher. Meetings are also identified as the most relevant experience as well as listening to experts' lecture. As for the description of the situation from which they have learned during that period, beginning teacher have many sorts of descriptions. The following quotes illustrate this:

> 'Read professional book as well as educational and psychological books at home.'(NT8, Interview 2)

> 'Take Prof. XXX academic seminar on how to estimate the degree of difficulty.' (NT15, Interview 2)

> 'Discuss with other workmates in the office, especially with other new teachers.'(NT7, Interview 2)

> 'Discussion with not only old teachers but also new teachers from my age.'(NT13, Interview 2)

Taking part in expert's seminar, reflective teaching and attending research activities were stated by teachers. These are also forms of apprenticeship in China:

> 'All of our School Chinese language teachers listen to famous teachers and experts' lectures and seminars in multimedia class.'(NT2, Interview 2)

> 'Consider how to teach well in spare time, and reflect on my teaching every day after going home at night.'(NT3, Interview 2)

> 'Attending teaching and research activities.'(NT1, Interview 2)

Study with students, take teaching as a process of studying together with students, grow with them as teaching them was pointed by one teacher:

> 'New teacher study with their student together, listen to old teachers' lessons.'(NT5, Interview 2)

> 'Take public class to old teachers and students, get guidance and suggestion from other teachers.'(NT10, Interview 2)

> 'Sometimes I cannot devote myself to my class preparation.'(NT17, Interview 2)

Regarding what teachers learnt from the most relevant experiences, most of new teachers' accounts focus on teaching fields, such as collecting topics, learn how to distinguish the focus and the difficult part, teaching methods, how to manage class, how to predict students, exam rates, studying with the curriculum standard, exam paper, etc.:

> 'Teaching technique and parts of knowledge.'(NT7, Interview 2)

> 'How to predict the students I taught in my proposition exam passing rate, good rate and discrimination.'(NT15, Interview 2)

> 'Understanding the new college entrance examination question types.'(NT17, Interview 2)

Two teachers said studying with good old (outstanding) teachers was of paramount importance. One teacher said he has learnt communication skills with students, and expanding knowledge scope with old teachers. The relationship with colleagues and leaders, how to set good examples for students, and tolerance were also mentioned by other teachers.

When asked about how these most relevant experiences happened, a new teacher said it happened through many kinds of activities, such as the school leader's organization, for example. Teacher leaders assume a wide range of roles to support school and student success: resource provider, instructional specialist, curriculum specialist, classroom supporter, learning facilitator, mentor, school leader, data coach, catalyst for change, learner (Harrison & Killion, 2007). Flores

(2004, 2006) also emphasized the important role of school leadership in shape and reshaping new teachers' identity and in their learning in the workplace.

4.3. Experiences of teaching in the workplace

Workplace for most of Chinese new teachers is just a place to work, but some of them enrich this concept. They said the school is a platform where the teacher teaches and students study, they develop themselves together. It is, therefore, essential to identify the factors that might foster or hinder teacher learning if schools as learning communities are to be developed and if meaningful continuing professional development of teachers is to occur and flourish (Flores, 2004):

> 'School is a communication platform, teachers and students are both subjects of learning.'(NT6, Interview 2)

> 'The school is to train the next generation, both teachers and students can develop, progress, learn together, and grow. But mostly it is for students to work and study, laying the foundation of their development.'(NT17, Interview 2)

Only two teachers said that school is only a workplace except for sleep, no other meaning and value was added:

> 'School is the place I stayed all the time every day in addition to sleeping time.'(NT7, Interview 2)

> 'No definition at all, just a teacher's workplace, that's all.'(NT9, Interview 2)

Three teachers said school is not only just a workplace but also a second "home" for them, a unit, harmony place, including entertainment and functional facilities. It therefore should be a good, and comfortable place for the teachers and their students:

> 'School is the place where students study, is also a "small society" in which students can learn other things. School should be clean and tidy, like teacher and students' home. The

relationship among the workmates and subordinates are in unity, harmony.'(NT2, Interview 2)

One teacher expressed a different opinion. He said that a school is not only a stable, secure place but a school should also give teachers good expectations, such as good salary and other things:

'If school needs teachers to be secure, stable, efficient teaching, the school should give the teacher stable expectations, such as income and other things.'(NT1, Interview 2)

Most of teachers said they learnt with other colleagues, especially good old teachers. This is consistent with Chinese main way of cultivating new teachers which is mentioned many times:

'Study with Mr. XXX in our school, an experienced teacher.'(NT8, Interview 2)

'Old teachers in my office, teaching and research group leader, director.'(NT10, interview 2)

Some teachers said they learnt not only from workmates but also from students, from their master, from an expert. Only one teacher said she learned to study by herself. In regard to the effects on teachers' attitudes and practices of teaching, six beginning teachers said that they are more confident and more positive in regard to teaching. They can grasp the teaching methods, technique and other details better than before:

'Let my teaching effect can be improved, in terms of new class, I will focus more on the practice.'(NT16, Interview 2)

'Try to learn my colleagues' advantage. '(NT3, Interview 2)

'I put the old teachers' teaching method I learnt into my own teaching practice.'(NT9, Interview 2)

One teacher said he has learnt all kinds of teaching philosophy and etc. One teacher said sometimes he is very negative, and another teacher said nothing.

4.3.1. Issues of support and socialization

Concerning the support that teachers had during the last year, five teachers said there is no support at all. Although most of schools take mentorship as the main and even the only way as the new teachers' cultivation, some schools still do not have any form for new teacher or mentorship is only a namely form (Ren, 2004).

Teachers were asked about the main difficulties they had to face. Most of beginning teachers said low income is the most difficulty that they have. This phenomenon occurred especially popular in non-key schools for key school salary is higher than theirs and teachers have more chances to earn extra money such as part-time tutor, etc.:

'No money, no money to raise families, no money to pay so expensive house price, and no time to rest.'(NT8, Interview 2)

'No experience, no money. Long working time.'(NT9, Interview 2)

'Long time working time. No money. You paid so much but you get so little.'(NT10, Interview 2)

Several teachers mentioned no rest and long working time as the biggest difficulties that they have, these problems relate to heavy workload problems. Also, teaching needs further progress, for instance, language is not rich, knowledge is not wide, and the lack of systematic test points are also mentioned by the new teachers. Teaching problem concerns close to Chinese exam-oriented education system as also referred to by the participants:

'Style transformation, primary schools need teacher with active character.'(NT1, Interview 2)

'The lack of systematic test points.'(NT5, Interview 2)

Some teachers referred poor working experiences and no detailed guidance as the main difficulties. One teacher states that official work affects negatively normal teaching. Also teachers mentioned that profound and abstract content is very hard to make students to understand. One

teacher talked about the bad student quality, saying that this was the main difficulty that she had to face.

> 'Serious efforts to learn the major knowledge, rational use of time, improve their comprehensive quality. We have to pinch and scrape.'(NT2, Interview 2)

> 'I sum up my experience and correct it by myself, live more economically.'(NT6, Interview 2)

> 'I am always been pinching and scraping without ever wasting a single cent.'(NT8, Interview 2)

> 'The more I attend old teachers' lectures the more I learn, and try to reflect on my teaching every day, save money on food and expenses.'(NT9 teacher)

Regarding the kind of support teachers would like to have, most teachers said that they wish to have more time to rest and a better salary. This is consistent with earlier analysis with heavy workload and low salary:

> 'Old teacher helped me on how to change teaching style and teaching technique. I wish to have better wages and more time to rest.'(NT1, Interview 2)

> 'Teaching management, but I think professional knowledge need more. Better salary, more time to rest.'(NT6, Interview 2)

Teachers also said they wished to get good experienced teachers' guide:

> 'Old teachers' technical guide.'(NT4, Interview 2)

> 'I wish to have famous teacher's guide, I wish to have more money and more time to rest.'(NT16, Interview 2)

Teachers said they wished to have more regular training, more professional knowledge, more teaching management, more learning opportunities, new teacher induction, more teaching skills, more opportunities to learn and communicate in their and other schools.

4.3.2. Positive and negative experiences as a teacher

All of the beginning teachers were asked, in the second round of interviews, to write a short story about one positive situation and one negative situation that they lived during the first years of teaching. These critical incidents will be presented in the form of vignettes, in the following section, to better illustrate some of the teachers lived experiences and reflections, in the form of a summary by the researcher, who transcribed and translated the teachers' accounts.

> *Positive aspect: attend old teacher's lectures, reflective thinking. Reflection is an important kind of self-development and way to improve professional quality for new teachers. New teachers should have strong reflective awareness, more care for new teacher's practical teaching ability.*
> *Negative aspect: no induction at all; one rude attitude to bad students made him more rebellious. I realized my mistake in the end. Know more about students' psychological problem. Treat bad students the same as good students.*

> *Positive aspect: meet a good supervisor, he worked with very serious attitude. She always helped me and encouraged me. Although our school does not have formal training for new teachers, so many new teachers just privately find a good mentor.*
> *Negative aspects: Heavy workload, no time to rest, we are very, very tired. We must work day and night, we have to stay at school from 7am to 10 pm. Low salary, makes us sick.*

> *Positive aspect: attend seminar*
> *Negative aspect: No formal induction, student quality is very poor. Only one-kid policy, low salary and expensive flat, poor funds, he cannot earn money as other teachers for he teaches Politics, this is not an important subject for students. Politics subject is very dull and boring for students. Wish to change a new job but it is impossible for it is very hard to find a job. Student are very fragile, have a lot of psychological problems.*

> *Negative aspect: I taught three classes, imagine that, heavy workload as if I am a machine. One is key class, the others are ordinary. All of their scores are very bad for this school is a bad one. No time to rest, go home till 9:30 pm every day. Low income, I had to raise my brother for my parents are very poor. I am 28 years old, very old for a woman. Still single. No time to have boyfriend at all.*

> *Positive aspect: this job is very suitable for woman, very stable, pure, bring big sense of accomplishment and satisfaction.*
> *Negative: great frustration, heavy workload, a class has over 70 students, my throat was almost destroyed.*

These accounts illustrate most of new teachers lived experience as teachers in their school contexts. Gender and family issues are discussed in most of the critical incidents. Issues such as heavy workload and lack of time are also identified. In China, it is very hard to find a stable job unless you have a good "background", unless your parents are senior official or very rich. Otherwise it would be very hard for you to find a job except if you are excellent.

Strong effect of workplace conditions in shaping beginning teachers' practices and attitudes towards teaching can be identified in news teachers' accounts (Flores, 2001). Workplace conditions affect new teachers quality and commitment, morale, etc. (Rosenholtz, 1989; Weiss, 1999). The present study found that most of Chinese new teachers (from city center) do not care for workplace conditions very much. Some new teachers from suburban mentioned bad workplace conditions compared with school in urban Nanchang city. Low salary, poor student quality were identified.

Although schools do not have formal training for beginning teachers, many new teachers privately find a mentor. In recent years there has been an increase in the number of programs offering support, guidance, and orientation for beginning teachers during the transition into their first teaching job (Smith, 2004). Induction programs, including mentorship, serve to bridge the transition from pre service to in-service teaching (Hellsten, Prytula, Ebanks, & Lai, 2009).

The heavy workload is recurring through the interviews, especially for middle school new teachers for most of their students live at school and they have night self-study. Chinese new teachers burnout was seldom talked in relevant research, only in very few, even rare literature (Zheng, 2007; Cheng & Liu, 2006). Due to the low salary and poor funds, most of middle school teachers act as a coach in secret for the school, this is also a hot topic in China (Huang, 2007; Wang, 2012). Only for important subjects such as Chinese, Math, English, Chemistry, Physics which are necessary majors for entrance exam, teachers have opportunities to be personal teacher. The bonus is very high. It is a kind of important supplement for new teachers.

4.4. School leaders' views of being a new teacher

School leaders' views were also included in this research. The narratives allowed to get to know more about the contexts of new teachers and understand the school leaders' perspectives about school policy and contexts of both new and experienced teachers. On the basis of volunteers, 5 school leaders accepted to participate in the narratives. A summary of their perspectives in presented in the following section, organized in the form of vignettes.

Xinjian Middle school is a second-rate key school. Most of new teachers graduated from very good Jiangxi Normal University (JXNU) and hold Master degree. He did not think that middle school needs Master degree for he thinks that the standard of new teacher should have at least five years teaching experience. And school needs younger new teachers, teachers with Master are usually above 25 years ago. Generally speaking, school leadership always arrange new teacher to teach from Grade 1, junior school to senior school, the period is five years. Only with that can a new teacher become an "experienced" teacher. After these five years, the school leader will let good new teacher to teach the last year of senior school (the most important year).

Most of new teachers are post-80s and post 90s, this school did not have specific training policy for new teachers, the most traditional and typical way is the mentoring and school-based training. The other is collective lesson preparation, public lessons and expert's lectures. School requires the first year new teacher to follow an old teacher to study, but this is not a mandatory requirement. Our new teacher was mainly recruited by Jiangxi province and Nanchang City unified recruitment, and must hold Master degree. After the examination organized by the Education Bureau, then school has a face-to-face interview, mainly with these criteria: General Education knowledge (educational concepts, such as psychology and education), professional knowledge, teaching skills. New teachers will be required to act as teacher advisers, because they just begin to work, they have no family burden, the female teachers won't act as class adviser if they have a baby. In the past most of students mainly from the rural students' families are not rich and they study hard. But it changed greatly, because the school is near the Nanchang new district named Hong Gutan, the best two middle schools, the attached middle school of Jiangxi Normal University (the best one in Jiangxi province) and No. 2 Nanchang Middle School set new campuses here not far away from us. As a result, many excellent students went there. Furthermore, half of the students are transient students, every student should pay twelve thousand of the sponsorship fee each year, can drop twenty points in the senior high school entrance exam. The school leader thinks that middle schools do not need teachers who hold Master, master's plasticity is weaker than undergraduate. But with the enrolment extension of universities, the supply of university graduates exceeds social demand, and students' qualities is getting worse and worse. As the principal of a school, he thinks Chinese education system has lots of problems. Most of school leaders rarely care about the growth of new teachers, for example, if the new teachers are new, they cannot give birth to egg at all, but old teachers, just like old hens, their ability of laying eggs is very strong. Chinese education is exam-oriented, the enrolment rate is the only evaluation criteria to judge a school and a teacher. Our fund is not enough for new teachers, the enthusiasm of the teachers work is getting worse, especially in the case of the new teachers. He thinks the government should

formulate specific policy for new teachers and the new teachers should have at least of one year's internship with wages so that they can devote themselves to teaching.

The school includes twenty administrative staff, consisted of two campuses, the old one was located in the city center, another lied in the new district named Honggutan of Nanchang City. So we recruited many new teachers in these years, now we have about forty or fifty new teachers (with three years of teaching as calibration). The school was founded in 1954, has seventy years of history. It used to be a very ordinary high school, in the 1970' to 1980' of the last century it developed fast and grew up into a key high school, and quickly exceed No.2 School and became top 1 middle school. The reason why this school developed so fast is as following: Firstly, it was an attached middle school of Jiang Normal University, when the other middle school's teachers was most from second-rate normal university, this school has already recruited the best teachers from Jiangxi Normal University. Now this school has already employed teachers who hold master from top 6 normal universities in China. Secondly, it has rich funds not only from the government but also from Jiangxi Normal University. Thirdly, this school also has the best students all over the whole province, and the teachers' professional development has strong support. New teachers' salary is much higher than other schools, and the school also provides temporary houses for new teachers. Some old teachers act as Curriculum theory Co-master tutor in Jiangxi Normal University. As for a small part of new teachers who hold bachelor (we also recruit fraction undergraduate for they hold national scholarship, they can have position from government directly, do not occupy our school's posts) has much more opportunities to work for in-service master. Our teachers have very strong education research tradition and system, schools attach importance to the teaching and scientific research, it was regulated that published a paper that city-level awards three hundred yuan, eight hundred yuan reward of national level. All these policies can be carried out because we have powerful background –Jiangxi Normal University. The new teacher's specific policy in our school was called as "Qinlan Project, we usually arrange old teacher and new teacher "group one" ties method, also was called as mentoring and tutoring in China. Furthermore, we also have school-based training, public lectures, regular competition for new teachers, experts' lectures, collective lesson preparation, Education and Psychology guidance, teaching and research group communication activities. There are four key classes in each grade (key class name is zero point class), our transient students' performance is also very good. I can say our school has the best students not only in Nanchang City but also in Jiangxi Province.

The attached primary of Jiangxi normal school has 86 staff altogether, including 2 administrative staff, 84 professional teachers. There are 1900 students, the school has 60 years of history, is located in the city center, on old campus of Jiangxi Normal University. Because of historical reasons, the buildings are very old, a part of the classroom has been classified as dangerous (Chinese buildings are very poor and have short life-span). Since the new headmaster came here for three years, the school has made rapid progress. The principal used to be an Education Science professor. She used the concept of "ecological ideas of education" to run this school in accordance with the direction of the new curriculum reform. This school used the most traditional way called "node pairs" to train new teachers, which is mentoring. There are 18 new teachers, most of them hold master degree. The school takes small classes, from Grade one to the third grade, the students of every class are not more than 50 students, Grade One, not more than 48. In

addition we also reduce not only old but also new teacher's workload, but to tell the truth, their workload is still very big. And the school also give them subsidy. We also encourage the old teachers and new teachers help each, the new teachers also teach their mentor how to do courseware and take multimedia teaching.

The school has 122 teachers, including a school hospital doctor, there are 12 teachers also took administrative work, most of them are new teachers. Those teachers have about one thousand seven hundred Yuan as subsidies every year. The school was founded in 1982, most of the teachers have undergraduate and Master's degree. The school recruits new teachers mainly through the examination organized by Jiangxi province and Nanchang City, and then the school will take an interview and choose good new teachers. The school has two thousand students. School teacher training policy is mainly mentoring, collective lesson preparation, new teaching contest, teaching and research group for integration and other methods, the new teachers will attend city unified organizational training pre-service. The school will also organize young teachers to participate in good teachers' lectures in advanced area.

There are 4800 students in this school, 246 teachers, including 24 administrative staff, 222 full time teachers. The school has a total of 15 new teachers, most of them are undergraduate only a small part hold master. Our school develops fast and grow up with Nanchang University's foundation. It reset in 2005 and moved to the new campus at the time, our school's new teacher training policy is similar with other schools, such as mentoring, school-based training etc. We share double funding not only from Jiangxi Province but also from Nanchang City. We established IS network platform, the realization of the information platform, new teachers and old teachers can communicate anonymously that get very good effect. We called this school-based training as information school based training. We sent some good new English language teachers to England for one month. We recruit new teachers by ourselves for we are the attached middle school, we think that undergraduate are younger than master, middle school do not need so much major knowledge, so undergraduate has more plasticity than master.

Despite the existence of differences in terms of school contexts, in the views of the school leaders it is possible to identify challenges for new teachers. Although mentoring seems to be a key concern for school leaders, the ways in which guidance and support that are put into place in the schools vary from attending seminars to getting help from a senior teacher. In general, the school leaders' views provide interesting data to understand better beginning teachers' perceptions described earlier in this thesis.

Most teachers refer that their perceptions have changed. They point out the low income, heavy workload and no time to rest as the main difficulties faced. These problems are consistent with

earlier research (Flores & Day, 2006; Flores, 2010; Gu, Sammons, & Mehta, 2008). The most challenging duties are related mostly to students. This has great relation with Chinese exam-oriented education system (Li & Li, 2010; Kirkpatrick & Zang, 2011). The most significant experiences are related to teaching. Heavy workload such as no time to rest and great pressure are also mentioned. Most of new teachers claimed that they have changed in two big aspects: teaching and students, especially in regard to students' scores.

As far as the most unforgettable experiences are concerned, the new teachers spoke of apprenticeship experiences. This is because there has been a tradition in China for experienced teachers helping beginning teachers (Lee & Feng, 2007). Most of teachers said they have changed, five among them changed negatively. Short of funds, no law and policy for induction and new teachers are recurrent elements in Chinese research (Ren, 2004) along with heavy workload and unfair reward policy also discussed. The participants said that good teaching is a mutual interaction process.

The most relevant experiences are mainly about students, and the description of the situations from which they learnt focus on the study with experienced teachers. Most of them said they learnt in teaching fields, this is because exam-oriented education is about teachers' teaching and students' learning. Most of new teachers said they learnt by themselves. China has neither law nor policy for new teachers (Ren, 2004). As for the workplace, most of new teachers described the school is a platform where the teacher teaches and the student studies.

Several teachers said they had no support and they learned from experienced teachers. Mentoring is the main way for cultivating new teachers in China, but in many schools, even this form is only a kind of namely form (Ren, 2004).

CHAPTER V

5. Teaching and being a teacher in the Chinese context

This chapter analyses data from the critical incidents collected from teachers from all over Jiangxi Province, including new teachers and experienced teachers. It aims to discuss teaching and being a new teacher in the Chinese context. It explores the challenges, difficulties and issues of identity in the Chinese context. This phase aimed to identify key moments and experiences of teaching during the first experiences. It presents Chinese teachers' consideration about themselves as professionals. They were asked "Do you consider yourself as "professional" in your teaching life? Why? Why not?".

5.1. Feeling like a professional in the Chinese context

When answering the question if teachers feel like a professional in the Chinese context, most of the teachers (68 out of 119) said they felt as professionals claiming several reasons. Among these, 48 out of 68 teachers referred aspects such as the fact that they are full-time teachers with long time experience, have good teaching method/skills, training, scientific research ability such as publishing paper, good teaching performance, good reflective habits, among others. Teaching is not only a job but also a profession and even a craft/art (He, 2004, p.1, in Chinese).

Chinese higher education differs greatly from western countries. In normal university also called as Teacher University, only students who graduate from this kind of specific school can be primary, junior and senior high school teachers. So most of people choose this job even before entering university. Chinese teaching job provides a sense of stability and dropout rates are low (Liu & Onwuegbuzie, 2012). It is very hard to find a good job in China and the teaching profession is very stable now. So teachers have very long teaching experiences and teaching is the only job in their entire life. "In ancient times those who wanted to learn would seek out a teacher, one who could propagate the doctrine, impart professional knowledge, and resolve doubts" (Han, Song Dynasty, one thousand year ago). Most of Chinese even today take these three basic skills as the doctrine as teaching profession (Wu, 2013). The teachers' quotes illustrate this:

'I have more than 20 years teaching experiences, I have a set of my own teaching method and evaluation mechanism.'

'I often attend at all kinds of short-term training and have strong publication, guide students in their contest.'

'I am a full-time teacher without other administrative duties, I got excellence in annual evaluation every times.'

'I teach the subject the same as the major I learnt at the university.'

'I am very familiar with new standards, with students I taught, I have my own teaching methods, I am capable of teaching at all levels, all grades.'

'I am a fulltime teacher, a professional for I have never engaged in a second job, teaching profession is the only the source of livelihood.'

Some teachers also acknowledged other responsibilities of the teaching profession, such as from the moral angle. For example, they emphasized not only impart knowledge, but a focus on the teaching technique. Moral and ethics are discussing widely for a long time with close connection with teaching (Fenstermacher, 1990). Teachers' quotes are presented below:

'As a professional, you must impart knowledge, cultivate students as well as abide by the professional ethics.'

'Pay attention to cultivate students' moral for it is the most important thing. Care for the formation of the thinking method, not instant success, blind sea, by rote.'

In addition, other issues were mentioned such as: the love for the job, spirit of dedication, care for students, setting good examples for students, good command of materials and familiar with students' psychological change, amongst others.

A large number of teachers (51 teachers out of 119) answered that they did not consider themselves as a "professional". Most of them argued that a professional is a never-ending issue

that can never be filled. Chinese ancient educationist Confucius (about BC551-479) once said 'Teaching students according to their attitude; Instruction knows no class distinction; when I walk along with two others, they may serve me as my teachers. I will select their good qualities and follow them, their bad qualities and avoid them; learn as if you could not reach your object, and were always fearing also lest you should lose it; The silent treasuring up of knowledge, learning without satiety, and instructing others without being wearied—which one of these things belongs to me? Teaching others teach yourself.' Confucius' teaching thoughts have a deep and long influence on Chinese teachers' thinking for several thousands of years.

Therefore, when teachers do not recognize themselves as professionals, this has great relation with Chinese national characteristic, being modest is a traditional virtue. And they emphasized long-life study, never too old to learn, such as seen in these quotes from teachers:

> 'There are many places that need to be improved, although great efforts have been made, but only at the exploratory stage.'

> 'As a new English teacher, I even dare not to speak with foreigners. How can I say I am a professional?'

> 'In the process of teaching, teaching others teaches yourself, teacher and students study together, both of them need to improve.'

> 'I have more than 20 years of teaching years, but I felt I am not a professional, there is still much room for improvement and there are many others who are better than me. '

> 'My teaching age is very long, but I feel I am still weak in scientific research and education writing.'

> 'Different students have different characteristics, we should teach students in accordance with their attitude. So teaching is like an art, it has no limit.'

> 'My professional knowledge is not solid enough, there are still many shortcomings in the major knowledge and teaching, communication skill with students.'

> 'At present, the teaching mode in China is not educating and cultivating students but only

teaching, teaching system is exam-oriented.'

'I did not get the first prize in the mid-term exam, it proved that I am not good enough.'

'I graduated from Jiangxi Normal University, the best one in my province, and majored in Chinese Language, but I felt studying has no limit, I still need to learn more in the aspect of teaching and communication skill.'

'My professional knowledge is not enough, and as a rural teacher, I have few opportunity to attend any in-service training. And I did not graduate from normal university but a common one, I did not hold bachelor degree but college.'

Teaching is a professional work and the new teachers expressed that they are too young, they do not know how to combine theoretical knowledge with practical teaching. They also state that the conditions of rural schools are very bad, they do not have much chance as in the city center schools. They even forced to teach other subjects owing to the terrible shortage of teachers.

'I'm just a Chinese language teacher, but I was forced to teach other subjects for rural school has a very serious and widespread phenomenon, we are short of teachers, once they find better job in city center they would leave as soon as possible. How can I say I am a professional?'

'Although I have been a teachers of 13 years, I have taught any subject except Chinese language and Chemistry.'

China is developing very fast and it became the world economy's locomotive. But the gap between the province and even the different area of one city has big gaps. For schools, education also develops very unevenly, not only in resources but also in other fields (Tu, 2004).

5.2. Best part of teaching and being a teacher

According to Kit (2004)[1], when The National Teachers Hall of Fame were asked teachers the

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[1] Available at: http://www.wholechildeducation.org/blog/ed-pulse-poll-results-whats-the-best-part-about-being-a-

question "what is the best part of teaching and being teacher?", nearly half of the 483 educators agreed that "The best part is the sparkle in the eye when he/she grasps what I am trying to express" (42%). In addition to this, the highlight of teaching is making connections: "When I see them make connections between different things we are teaching them" (24%), as shown in figure 1.
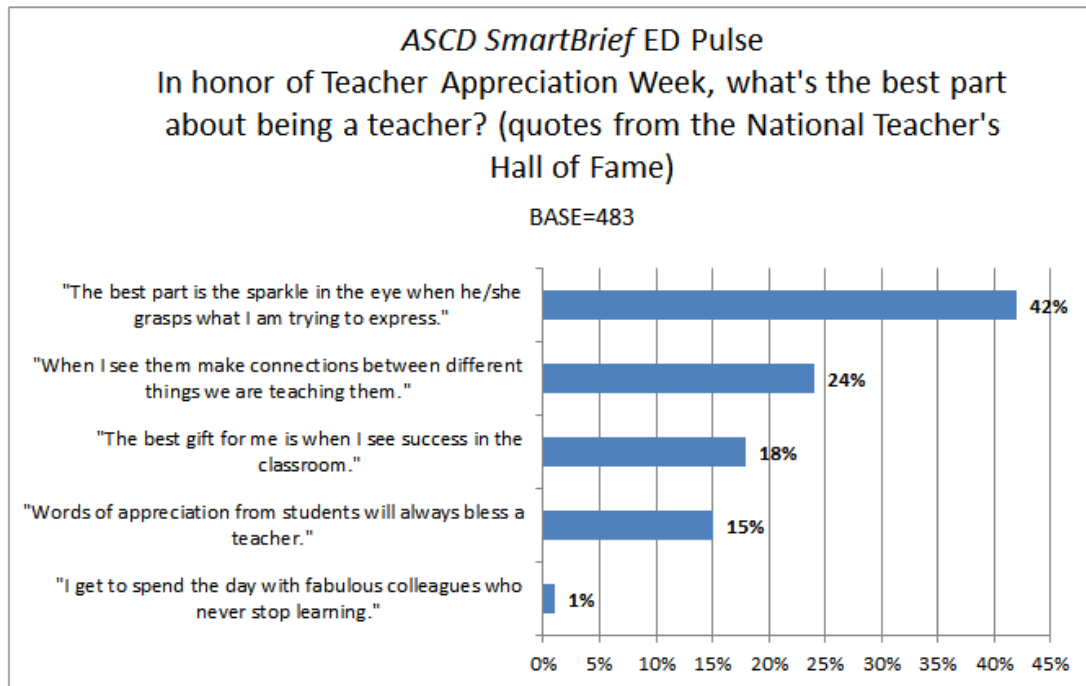

Figure 1 - National Teacher's Hall of Fame (Kit, 2014)

In this study, teachers were also asked to write about the best part that they remember in their teaching life. From the data analysis, several categories were identified from teacher's responses, which are presented in the following section. These are related to the following topics: issues related to students, related to teaching itself; related to teaching outcomes; related to support in the workplace, and finally, related to the classroom.

5.2.1. Related to Students

As teachers, they can recount numerous highs and lows in their teaching career. They might

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teacher

experience many great moments while teaching, and they are happy and enthusiastic about their profession. On the other hand, they also suffered the confusion of choosing teaching as a career. Especially when the students seemed uninterested.

Most of teachers chose teaching as a career because they love inspiring young people to love learning as much as they do. They love elementary-aged students and look forward to harnessing their endless energy into learning. All of them enjoy the moment when a student's world expands just a little bit because of something teachers have taught them. But in some moments the students are not sure they are capable of learning. In such scenarios, the teacher feels like he/she can fly when he/she helps students who think they cannot learn to achieve things as they are far away from what they ever dreamed. There are other moments too. For example, a parent tells the teacher with tears in their eyes that they finally feel like they have someone fighting for their child. Or a regular education teacher thanks for helping them work with a student. Or a student said, "I know that my science teacher wants me to love science and my math teacher wants me to love math, and that's great, but you want me to love learning everything – and that's why I know I can come to you for anything." Besides these, there are some experiences that are related with the student.

As discussed previously in this study, the motivation for choosing the teaching occupation is related to extrinsic and intrinsic reasons, such as employment opportunities and personal interests, so most of teachers said that they have some special experiences hard to forget. The following quotes reveal some examples of special experiences lived by these teachers:

> Students celebrate teachers' day for me.

> I spent the moon festival with students not with my family (Usually on the moon festival, the family are reunited at home).

> Students bought a big cake for my birthday, they sent me a card and said I am their teacher forever.

> I got a card on my birthday from a past student, he used to be my student long time ago, and whom I often criticized in the past.

> Students give gifts to me, although they are cheap ones, but I found that the students like

me very much.

I had a successful public class for the students gave me great support.

I had ever taught a student with poor academic records, he is very tall, but he asked to sit in the back of the classroom, I found his merits and often praise, encourage him. In the end, he got Beijing University's admission letter, the best one in China.

Once there was a girl whose performance is not very good, I help her to change the studying technique, she got excellent in Math exam.

I got sick and was sent to hospital, many students came to see me, including the students I taught before. There was an old student of mine 16 years ago came to see me too.

Students remember my birthday and celebrate for me, I myself cannot remember often.

A past student met me on a bus recognized me quickly, he pay the ticket fee for me.

Because I was pregnant I had to stop working for several months, all of my students cried sadly.

Once I got sick, felt painful in stomach, but I insist on having class without asking to leave.

When I came back to the office at noon, I felt so bad that I cannot go to the cafeteria, I found there was a box of food on my table. Students use other teacher's electric circuit to cook for me.

I asked a weeks' leaving for some business, students sent messages to me and ask me whether I got sick.

I went to Nanchang to attend a training without notifying students, they sent message to me. I was deeply move by them for I am just a new teacher.

The first time I acted as class adviser, I gave mobilization meeting to Grade 3 senior high school students. A conflict broke out between the students and practice teachers. I solved the problem in short time.

A student of mine who won the second prize in national Physics competition suddenly dropped out, I spent so much time and energy, and I felt so sad.

A student fall into sleep in my public class, I did not criticize him and talk to him and know the reason.

A student of mine told me that she wish to be a teacher as me after she grows up.

> I got sick but I still persist in taking class to students for I had promised that I would spend the Christmas with the students.

> I care for kids as my own kids.

> I care for students as my brothers and sisters

> Students are the center of teaching, they need more caring, and they need your help.

All of these are special experiences for teachers that hard to forget. These experiences make teachers enjoy the pleasure from the teaching during their career.

5.2.2. Related to teaching outcomes

The education system in China is very much based exam-orientation and a teacher-centered system. In fact, in spite of the "new curriculum reform" and quality education undertaken from 2001, the idea that quality education is an established policy that cannot be reverted (Ren, 2004), that curriculum reform must be carried out, and that any attempt to return to old curriculums may end in failure (Zhong, 2006, p.370). The reality is, however, quite different because the paramount place of examinations in the system remains practically untouched (Gu & Li, 2013). Students' performance, and teaching outcomes are the only criterion to judge a teacher's level. Gu & Day (2007) pointed out that students' academic scores have strong internal drive to enable teachers to remain immense strength. Therefore, it is not surprising that 56 teachers emphasized that teaching outcomes is on top 2 position in their memory:

> Participate in the national demonstration class contest, get top ten young teachers champion

> Attend Yuanding Cup contest, get No.2.

> High rate of college entrance exam, and a substantial increase.

> Selected as outstanding young backbone teacher of Nanchang City.

Give open class to whole school in 2012.

High rate of college entrance exam, the four classes I taught got top four positions in the grade.

Chosen as good and excellent teacher.

Most of the students got the first second rate university admission in the first grade 3 of my senior high school, I am so happy about that, I can never forget all my life. A bad student got a university admission.

A bad student got good performance in the senior high entrance exam.

The first open class got the other teachers' recognition and praise.

Great pressure I had overcome, insist on, and got top one in the final exam.

The first time I attended a contest in the county, got No1 in junior teachers.

Chosen as their favorite teacher, and I was the only one who was not a class adviser.

The class I taught, the admission of college entrance exam rate was No.1, got recognition by students.

Student got 138, excellence in the college entrance exam, Chinese language subject, imagine how difficult it was!

Every time in the senior high entrance exam, always top three in school.

Took the other teacher's class, the worst one in the grade, after my teaching got No. 1.

In the class, when I do composition evaluation to students, all of them got very excited.

Equation, the function of the explanation I explained, those hard concepts became very easy that the students can understand easily.

There are 18 students that got excellence/full score in the final exam in one semester, one third of the class.

Give confidence, praise to bad students instead of criticizing them, respect them, you can get their trust.

Once there was a bad student. All the teachers gave up except me, as a new teacher, I

was very aggressive, I talk to him and finally he became good student.

5.2.3. Related to teaching itself

Good teaching ability is a comprehensive concept that mainly refers that teacher has good command of major knowledge, the good skill of transmitting knowledge to students, holding all kinds of teaching skills and good communications with students and colleagues as well as students' parents, etc. One set of characteristics of good teaching, extracted from the quotes includes:

Teaching benefits not only students but also teachers, we learn and improve each other.

I have good ability in dealing with teaching and studying.

I felt teacher and student relationship is very important.

I felt my extensive major and teaching knowledge help me a lot.

I care for changing the teaching skills according to different students, especially to bad students with poor score.

I felt it is very important to cultivate students' conscious habits.

In the education practice experience, I learnt very good teaching skills and got rich practical experience. I learnt a lot in the affiliated middle school of JXNU.

Also in the critical incidents, some teachers said that they cannot remember the best experience during their career. This means that they cannot remember or they felt it is too common or unworthy talking about it. For example, they said that:

Life is like water, too common, no particular thing.

Too many, cannot remember.

Too many, cannot describe clearly with words.

I feel that to insist on this common job is the most excellent experience.

Accountability is taking responsibility for one's actions. For the educational systems the core of accountability is student learning. "The real accountability system is in the tasks that students are asked to do.", as argued by City, Elmore, Fiarman, and Teitel (2009). Thus improving and refining instructional practice so that students can engage in learning tasks is the most important responsibility of teaching profession. In this sense, internal and external accountability appeared in the data from teachers. For the former, individuals and groups take on personal, professional and collective responsibility for continuous improvement (Hargreaves & Shirley, 2009). For the latter, system leaders reassure the public through transparency, monitoring and selective intervention that their system is performing in line with societal expectations and requirements. As some teachers cannot remember the best experience during teaching, the internal and external accountability might be the main components to push them to improve students' performance.

5.2.4. Related to support in the workplace

Teaching cultures have been classified into two main types: isolation and collaboration. For the first type, most teachers teach alone, with little sharing of resources and ideas, even less discussion and observation of others' practice. For the collaboration type, teachers can help and support each other, discuss the common concerns and problems and work together. In addition, a balkanized culture presented by Hargreaves and Macmillan (1992) describes the particular patterns of inter-relationships among teachers and found that "In the conventional school, balkanization resulted in teacher isolation. In the new innovative school, balkanization was reconstructed in new forms, suggesting that balkanization remains dominant feature even in nontraditional schools". The common restructuring problem was the failure to confront the fundamental issues of status, politics, and leadership. As the current system is difficult to satisfy the requirements of students in modern society, balkanization will continue to pervade secondary schools with its deleterious consequences.

Chinese beginning teachers have poor policy on induction and mentorship is almost the only way

to cultivate new teachers. And a large sum of teachers in China are from suburban or rural area in China. Most of them said they have few opportunities to attend in-service training. This also has great relation of Chinese exam-oriented system. As a result, examples of success have become great attraction for teachers.

Go to other school to observe.

Go to foreign language school to study.

Go to Qingdao City to study, get deep harvest from famous teachers.

Multi-media application technique learning with other teachers.

First time to go to other school to attend old teachers' seminar.

Take part in the national training program organized by Jiangxi Normal University, learn from famous teachers from all over the whole country and famous professors from Jiangxi Normal University.

Listening to a lot of excellent teachers' seminars.

Go to No.2 Nanchang middle school, the second best one in Nanchang City, listen to a famous teacher.

I have a chance to change my job from the countryside to the city center, once in a public class of mine, a famous teacher gave me a lot of good and precious advice.

I joined a training study in a certain school in Jiangsu Province which organized by my school in 2002.

The communication with old and famous teachers.

Collaborative cultures foster people to learn from each other, concern the common points and work jointly to solve problems. It is not easy to develop such cultures. As Nias et al. (1989) stated, there is a need of "high degree of both security and openness among teachers to work well".

5.2.5. Related to the Classroom

Classroom discourse is a key topic in educational sciences. When students are involved in a dialogic teaching, the learning is most effective (Wells & Arauz, 2006). "Dialogic teaching harnesses the power of talk to engage children, stimulate and extend their thinking, and advance their learning and understanding" (Alexander, 2006, p. 37). Student autonomy, and students influencing the course of action in the classroom, are also features of dialogic teaching. Such dialogic teaching results in many classroom episode. Classroom episode means some episodes happened that teachers can remember. The following quotes relate to classroom episodes which are not easy to forget:

> First time in the lab.
>
> The first time to attend the army training with new students (all new teachers must join in a period of army training).
>
> The first time of acting as class adviser.
>
> The first time telling the dean advice, the leader organized all teachers together to discuss my suggestion and praise me.
>
> My class was made into video.
>
> I had long time teaching experience in the rural area, the big gap with the city center made me cherish every day.

Previous research shows that the short classroom episodes is an important way to make the pupils learn to communicate (Bishop & Goffree, 1986; Ferreira, Martinho, & Menezes, 2011). The quality of the classroom discourse is mainly determined by the teachers' actions. The teacher can have the opportunity to explore with the students some ideas, which is not easy to be forgotten.

In teacher education context, the analysis of classroom episode allows prospective teachers to search for information as they need. In the classroom context, the prospective teachers will have to comprehend what is at stake and to make adequate instructional decisions immediately. Around classroom episodes, the challenges are immense and the work is focused on the teacher's

didactical knowledge.

5.2.6. Other dimensions

Besides those five most frequent topics, caring about students, setting a good example, public class, in-service study, tourism experience were mentioned as well.

> As a new teacher, I felt very negative in many aspects, an old teacher helped me a lot, care about me, persuade me as if she were my mother, I gave up the idea of quitting job. Now, I became an excellent young teacher in my present school.
>
> As teachers, you need to care for every action and word of your own, you are the model that students try to imitate, you set example to them.
>
> I am more than 50 years old, I graduated from a college, but now I hold master degree. I insist on in-service study from bachelor to master. I am a school leader, I felt this is very important for teachers, so I advocate teachers take in-service study. And take some relevant policy. Teachers support me very much.
>
> Public class is an experience that I will never forget.
>
> School organize us to go to Putuo Mountain to have a tourism.

Most of teachers said they felt as professionals for several reasons. In Chinese contexts, only those who graduate from normal universities also called Teachers University can be teachers in primary and middle schools. Among them, most think that they are full-time teacher with long working experiences. They have good teaching methods, scientific research ability, good teaching performance and good reflective habits. Chinese teachers are much stable than western countries. Some others acknowledge that they are professionals from the moral perspective, responsibility as well as the meaning of teaching profession. However, several (43) teachers said they did not feel as professionals for they think that teaching is a bottomless pit that can never be filled. Some new teachers think that they are new teachers, they lack experience.

As for the best part of teaching, several categories were identified. Some special experiences are hard to forget, teaching outcomes, teaching performances, good teaching ability, studying with

good old teachers are the most considered. These have great relation with Chinese exam-oriented education system and mentorship system.

CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

6. Conclusions and Implications

In this section, conclusions and implications are discussed according to the four research questions defined in the methodology chapter. A brief discussion of the main results and findings from data analysis is explored and implications for the study and research of teacher education in China are also addressed.

The first research question was the following: *What is the role of ITE in the process of becoming and being a new teacher?*

China has the largest education system in the world. According to the Department of China Education (Department, 2015), until 2015 there are approximately 15.39 million teachers in school for 306 million students: 2.05 million for pre-school education, 9.18 million for compulsory education, 2.54 million for high school (including vocational education), 1.57 million for higher education, and 50 thousand for special education. Education is the driving force behind economic growth (Yizengaw, 2008). The rapid economic growth of China might be highly dependent on the education system, and the teacher quality, which are related to the ITE (Song, 2008). ITE has a vital place in the new teachers' development, it links pre-service and in-service together. For a long time, there has been a tradition in China of experienced teachers helping beginning teachers (Lee & Feng, 2004). When new teachers are not supported at school they may become classroom focused as an individual survival strategy (Flores, 2006). Results based on our research show that mentoring is almost the only way in ITE that exists for cultivating new teachers in China (Ren, 2004). But many schools cannot guarantee to implement policies very well because of the shortage of funds (Marcondes et al., 2017). Little relevance was affiliated to more formal contexts of learning such as short-term in-service education courses which were said to have had a weak impact on teacher learning (Flores, 2002). But Chinese contexts are totally different from Flores' (2002) conclusions. Short-term in-service education and long-term in-service are very important for Chinese teachers' professional development. Especially they improve their academic diploma through in-service education, and they often attend all kinds of short-term in-service education. Findings from our study suggest that more attention should be given to ITE as the early years of

the teaching career are crucial in terms of professional learning and teacher retention. Fortunately, some advanced areas have taken awareness of this serious problem. Teacher induction in Shanghai has been cited as an exemplary practice, in which schools provide formal and contract mentoring (at least 2h a week) for new, probationary teachers (Lee & Day, 2016). Although the amount of teachers in China have attained required educational level, there are still many teachers who do not have (Zhou & Zhu 2007). The shortage of qualified teachers is still a serious problem in rural schools, and most of the in-service teachers urgently demand on-site school-based continuing training to achieve the professional preparation for the change of program.

The second research question is: *How do personal and school contexts influence new teachers?* Learning to become an effective teacher is a long and complex process (Flores & Day, 2006). It has been recognized that the transition from student to newly qualified teacher (NQT) can be difficult. It has been called a dramatic and traumatic change and even a culture or reality shock (Capel, 1998). Based on our findings, initial teacher education had a weak impact in determining beginning teachers' professional behavior. In this research, the most recurring topic is new teachers' difficulty. They must rely on themselves. They must grope in the darkness which is in line with most of Chinese but also western literature (Ren, 2004). Personal factors play an important role in influencing new teachers' identity. The data also points out that most of Chinese teachers do not care for the workplace conditions as much as western teachers do. Only a few teachers considered their school as a very negative workplace because there is a great gap between the city center and the countryside. Most of the school leaders and mentors, colleagues are very effective which was different from Flores' research (Gitomer, 2007; Flores, 2002).

The third research question is the following: *How do policy context, ITE context, and workplace context, and biography interplay and impact upon new teachers' understanding and practice of teaching?*
Becoming a teacher is a complex process (Cochran-Smith & Villegas, 2016; European Comission, 2013). This question aimed to analyze how policy, training, workplace context and biography context influence teachers' understanding and practices in the early years of teaching. As shown

throughout our research, the policy for new teachers did not get enough attention at the national policy and local government level, not to mention the school leader and even new teachers themselves. This finding supports Flores' research carried out in the Portuguese context (Flores, 2006).

New teachers undervalued initial teacher education and teaching practice and they highlighted the strong influence of the norms and values of the workplace on the process of (re)learning in practice and/or 'unlearning' the 'unreal' theories acquired at university (Flores, 2006). New teachers in Chinese context also underestimate ITE but attach great importance to teaching practice. Data point to interesting findings which are not similar to western contexts. The school culture and leadership were key factors in determining the nature of teachers' learning in the workplaces (Marcondes et al., 2017). Chinese new teachers take workplace only as a place to work, a platform where teachers teach and students study. Low income and heavy workload were recurrent in the data analysis. The school culture and leadership are not so important as in western contexts. The student quality, no time to rest and the great pressure stand out in their narratives. This has great relation with the exam-oriented policy that has dominated Chinese basic education. Learning was seen more as an individual and lonely business rather than a joint venture (Flores, 2003). While Chinese new teachers' learning was more a joint venture, they mainly learned with the guide of mentors through a series of collective activities, such as collective lesson preparation, mutual observation, research activities, communication, discussion with others, etc.

The pre-service teacher-education programs are very important for the preparation of highly qualified teaching work force. In China, graduates from teacher training programs specialize in the teaching for tests (Gu, 2006), which makes them face many challenges in this information world. Today students are very different from those of a couple of decades ago (Song, 2008). More and more students are equipped with advanced educational technology such as computers and internet services in the rich cities, which requires teachers to have the skills to use these tools. In addition, as the employers pay more attention to the creativity and originality of the potential employees instead of knowledge from the textbooks (Kayange, 2016), the skills of creative thinking, problem solving, and decision making are required for teachers to add during their teaching. Furthermore, international knowledge, foreign languages, and cultural understanding are also

becoming more and more important for students, which adds to the challenges of the shortage of international education in China.

In China, teacher education pays more attention to the theory than practice (Lu, 2013). The duration of the practicum is only 10 weeks (Msiska & Salik, 2016), which is not sufficient for the teachers to prepare for the teaching (Zhou & Zhu, 2007), and teacher education programmers are not aligned with practice (Zhu & Han 2006). During the teaching, most teachers do not get students involved in the learning process, which ignores training important skills for students, such as communication skills, team work, critical thinking, imagination and leadership skills.

Finally, the fourth research question is: *How can mainland China reform new teachers' induction and mentoring?*

Firstly, the central government and all local level government should set formal laws especially for new teachers, offering the necessary guarantee for their learning and development in the workplace. Secondly, universities and schools - as training institutions – are called into question in the preparation of pre-service teachers if ITE programs are to be successful and if effective and meaningful professional learning experiences are to be promoted (Flores, 2016). This should be taken in consideration by policymakers, teacher educators and school leaders. Reform current education system, set four-year bachelor plus one-year internship with pay policy as western countries are some of the suggestions. The short duration of the teaching practicum was a major problem mentioned by almost every new teacher in this study. Especially for the 21st century skill requirements such as collaboration, digital literacy, critical thinking and the capabilities to help students thrive in today's world (Pacific, 2010; Partnership 2010), the extension of the practicum period and the abandonment of the old lecture method are recommended in favor of new collaborative, team centered methods (Kayange, 2016).

Thirdly, China should implement complete school-based training for new teachers. Government at all levels should increase the funds for new teachers which were identified by most of the school leaders', on their narratives. Decrease the mentor and new teachers working time and give them bonus, and increase teachers' income and their workload (Gu & Day, 2013). New teachers must undertake the same responsibilities as old teachers did as well as act as a class manager, which

is similar to Flores' research (Flores, 2002). Deeply implementing quality education, reducing the focus on exam-oriented education's negative impact to new teachers are some of the ways that mainland China can reform new teachers' induction and mentoring. Exam-oriented almost ruined Chinese kids' innovative skills and thinking ability (Ren, 2009).

The research about Chinese new teachers is very scare, not only nationally but also internationally, but the topic of new teacher is one of the most popular in today's research filed. This PhD thesis included a study of new teachers in middle level city in China based on Flores' framework for the Chinese context. The author wishes to draw attention to the government and policy makers, educators and school leaders at all levels as well as new teachers themselves to emphasize the importance of ITE based on this research. Future research should focus on new teachers in Chinese context such as a comparative study between advanced area and poor area, China and an advanced contexts such as Europe.

There are very few empirical studies exploring the mentoring of the first-year teachers in China. John Chi-kin Lee had studied new teachers in Guangzhou city (Lee, 2007), but the study has two limitations: one is that he just talked about the mentoring support in China, the other is that the research area is a developed city in China. For the first one, there are other forms of new teachers training in China. For the second, the research area is Guangzhou, which is close to Hong Kong, and is one of the richest region in China. Jian Wang focused on comparative new teachers' training and mentoring among China, USA and United Kingdom (Wang, 2001). He used two American and Chinese cases to contrast mentor-novice conversations about teaching (Wang, 2004). He did not address what novices actually learned in each setting, which is an area of research that is still weak and undeveloped in the research on learning to teach (Wang, 2001; Lee, 2007). In addition, Wang studied two Chinese novice teachers and their mentor (Lee, 2007), and remarked the research on the relationship between mentoring practice, what novices claim that they learn, and what they are able to do in teaching is still an important area of teacher mentoring that is worthy further exploration (Lee,2007).

Previous work on new teachers focused on a comparative study between China and the developed countries such as the USA, UK and Australia. But they were mainly concerned on the induction of the beginning teachers and little has been discussed on other factors such as mentoring. In

addition, the school leadership and work contexts also play an important role for new teachers' learning and development. In this study, several aspects such as induction, mentoring and school leadership were discussed and analyzed by comparing them with those in Portugal, a typical European country. Although Portugal and China have different social and education system and histories, the education has no borders and the goals of education are the same. Especially in today's world, Portugal and China have incomparable good relationship. UK, Japan, and USA have set very good beginning teachers system and Portugal has realized the importance and begun to take some action. Findings from this study point to the need to explore further different ways of developing induction in various ways and formats in order to meet the challenges, needs and difficulties of new teachers in the contexts in which they work. Exploring the collaborative dimension between experienced and new teachers is a good possibility. Another possibility is getting new teachers together and developing a course for them taking into account the contexts in which they work. In this contexts school leaders and universities have a great role to play.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1 - Interview Protocol – New Teachers (1st Phase)

Topics	Questions
Introduction	Thank the participants for their collaboration in the study. Present the objectives of the study and clarify ethical issues.
School experiences	1. *Looking back on your own schooling background as a student, what are the most significant experiences?*
Entry teacher education	2. *Why did you decide to enter a teaching career?*
	3. *Can you identify the main influence for this decision?*
Teacher Education	4. *Reflecting on your pre-service education, how do you analyze your experiences as a student teacher?*
Teaching practice and actual teaching	5. *Could you identify the most relevant experiences during this period?*
	6. *And what about your teaching practice?*
	7. *How do you evaluate your own experiences during your teaching practice period?*
Self-Perceptions as teacher (images, role, beliefs)	8. *Could you define yourself as a teacher?*
	9. *What does it mean for you to be a teacher?*
	10. *How do you see your role as a teacher?*
	11. *How do you see the teaching/learning process(es)?*
	12. *How do you define good teaching? Why?*
First experiences as a teacher	13. *Could you describe your first experiences as a teacher in this school?*
	14. *Did you change your perceptions regarding your job during these first months? Why and in what way? Could you describe any particular event or events you can remember?*
	15. *Could you describe a situation from which you learned during this period? How did it happen?*
	16. *Among all duties required of you as a teacher, which do you find most demanding and challenging so far? What about the most satisfying ones? How did you learn to handle these duties?*
School as a workplace	17. *How do you describe the school as a workplace?*
	18. *What impressions do you have of the schools in which you are teaching?*
	19. *What about your colleagues' reactions?*
	20. *What about the principal? And other staff? And the existing facilities?*
Students	21. *What are your students like?*
	22. *How do you perceive your work with students?*
	23. *Could you describe your relationship with them?*
	24. *Did you change the way you interact with them?*
School Policy	25. *Could you describe the school's policy (in terms of educational goals and staff professional development)?*
	26. *Is there any particular activity aimed at introducing you to this school or to your new responsibilities as a teacher?*
	27. *What about your colleagues teaching the same subject?*
	28. *What kind of support have you had so far?*
Closing	29. *Would you like to add anything else to what was said?* Thank the participants for their collaboration in the study.

Appendix 2 - Interview Protocol – New Teachers (2ⁿᵈ Phase)

Topics	Questions
Introduction	Thank the participants for their collaboration in the study. Present the objectives of the study and clarify ethical issues.
First Year of Teaching (Overall evaluation)	1. *How do you evaluate your experience throughout the last academic year?*
	2. *What were the most significant experiences during the last year?*
	3. *Have you changed your behavior/performance/understanding) since beginning of the year until now? In what way? Why? If not, why not?*
	4. *Have you changed your perceptions regarding your job during the last year?*
	5. *Why and in what way?*
	6. *Could you describe any particular event or events you can remember?*
Self-Perceptions as teacher (images, role, beliefs)	7. *Could you define yourself as a teacher?*
	8. *What does it mean for you to be a teacher?*
	9. *How do you see your role as a teacher?*
	10. *How do you define good teaching?*
School as workplace	11. *How do you define the school as a workplace?*
	12. *Among all duties required of you as a teacher, which you do you find most challenging?*
	13. *What about the most satisfying?*
Contexts, process and Nature of learning	14. *Looking back on your own experiences as a teacher during the last year, what kind of learning experiences can you remember?*
	15. *What were the most relevant experiences during that period?*
	16. *Could you describe a situation form which you have learned during this period?*
	17. *What did you learn?*
	18. *How did it happen?*
	19. *With whom did you learn?*
	20. *What were effects on your attitudes to and practices of teaching? Please give examples.*
Support (Induction)	21. *What kind of support have you had during the last year?*
	22. *What were the main difficulties you had to face?*
	23. *How did you face them?*
	24. *What kind of support would you like to have had?*
Closing	25. *Would you like to add anything else to what was said?* Thank the participants for their collaboration in the study.

Appendix 3 - Critical Incidents of New Teachers (2ⁿᵈ Phase)

Please write a story about **one positive** and **one negative** aspect that you lived during your first year of their teaching. You should describe the context of the situation, the participants, when it occurred, what happened, why you chose this situation and what you have learned from it.

Positive aspect

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_____
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_____
_____
_____

Negative aspect

_____
_____
_____
_____
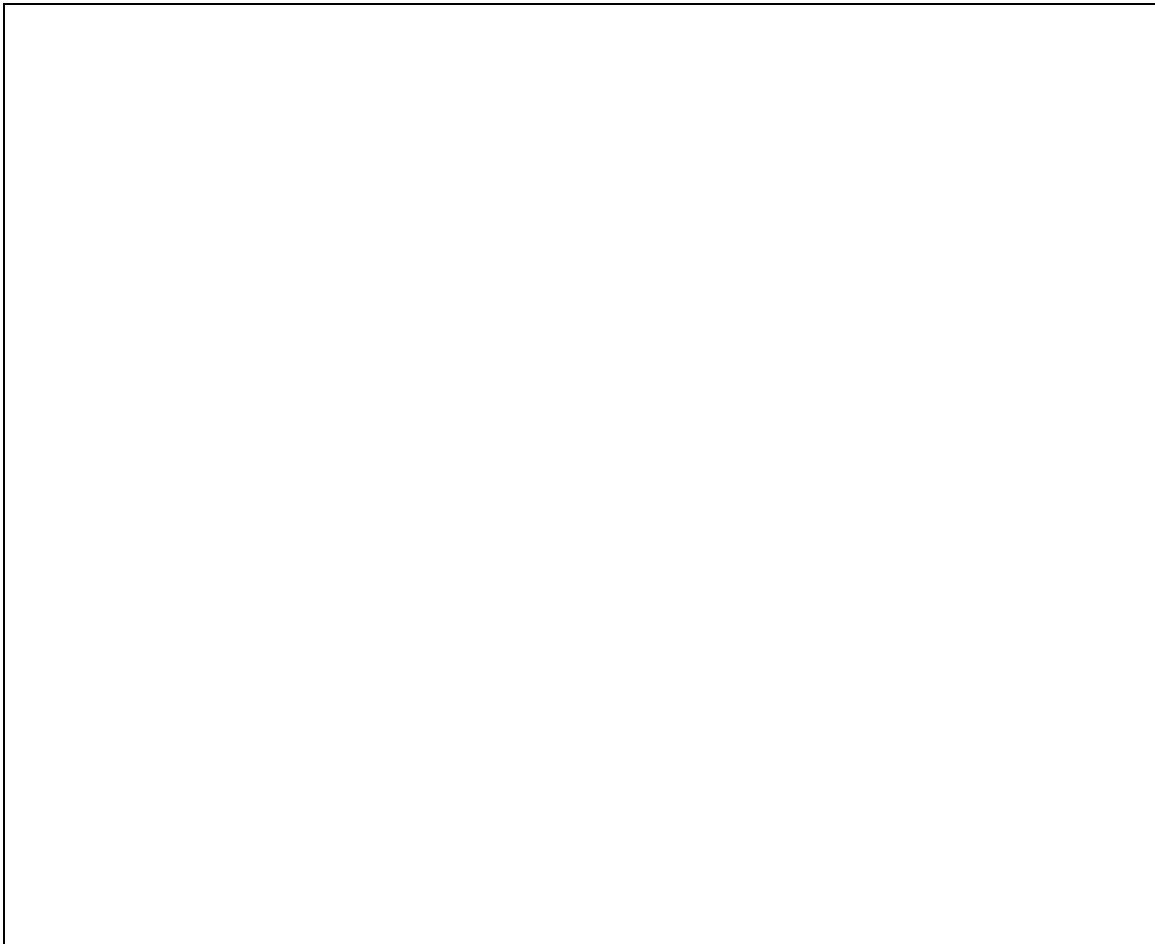_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

Thank you for your collaboration.

Appendix 4 - Guidelines for the School Leader's Narratives (2ⁿᵈ Phase)

Please write a narrative based on your perspectives about the topic of school policy and contexts of both new and experienced teachers. The following guidelines can support you reflection:

- Brief introduction of the school (including the type of the school, number of new teachers)

- Policy for new teachers

- Workplace and school contexts for new teachers

- Induction such as training and mentoring

- Views about new teachers (reform and improvements)

Thank you for your collaboration.

Appendix 5 - Critical Incidents of Teachers (3ʳᵈ Phase)

1. Do you consider yourself **as a professional** in your teaching life? If not, why?

    _____
    _____
    _____
    _____
    _____
    _____
    _____

2. Please describe the **most excellent part** that you remember in your teaching life.

    _____
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    _____
    _____
    _____
    _____
    _____
    _____
    _____
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    _____
    _____
    _____

Thank you for your collaboration.