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**A Narrative Inquiry Into Chinese Pre-Service Teacher Education and
Induction in Southwest China Through Cross-Cultural Teacher Development**

by

Ju Huang

A Dissertation
Submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies
through the Faculty of Education
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for
the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy at the
University of Windsor

Windsor, Ontario, Canada

2017

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**A Narrative Inquiry Into Chinese Pre-Service Teacher Education and Induction in
Southwest China Through Cross-Cultural Teacher Development**

by

Ju Huang

APPROVED BY:

C. J. Craig, External Examiner

Texas A&M University

B. Tucker

Department of History, University of Windsor

J. G. Bayley

Faculty of Education, University of Windsor

D. Ciuffetelli Parker

Faculty of Education, Brock University

S. J. Xu, Advisor

Faculty of Education, University of Windsor

February 7, 2017

DECLARATION OF ORIGINALITY

I hereby certify that I am the sole author of this thesis and that no part of this thesis has been published or submitted for publication.

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ABSTRACT

This study was founded upon my 5-year intensive fieldwork as a graduate assistant in Dr. Shijing Xu's Pre-service Teacher Education Reciprocal Learning Program (Xu, 2011b), a part of Xu and Connelly's (2013) SSHRC Partnership Grant Project between Canada and China. The study adopted Connelly and Clandinin's (1988) narrative research tradition to examine 4 participating Chinese teacher candidates' cross-cultural learning and induction experiences. The investigation revealed transitions in the process of learning to teach via cross-cultural experiences. Through the lens of "three-dimensional inquiry space" (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000) and "reciprocal learning in teacher education" (Xu, 2014), I explored experiential nuanced facets of participants' cross-cultural learning experiences in Canada and stories of induction within various educational cultures in Southwest China. Field texts were collected through participant observation, participants' reflective journals and portfolios submitted to the program during their 3-month stay in Canada, as well as interviews, debriefing notes, and participants' observations at their schools after their return to China.

The study illustrates an effective approach that fuses teacher education with cross-cultural experience. Both the benefits and challenges of this method of teacher education imply that this practice has significant potential in this interconnected world. Particular attention was paid to cross-cultural experiences' influence on the dissonance of pedagogies, teacher-student relationships, socialization, and beliefs about teaching and learning that interweave global and national curriculum boundaries. Findings revealed that cross-cultural experiences provided beginning teachers with a global perspective that

enabled them to reconsider the local situation, become reflective practitioners, and broaden their horizons. Participants' notion of being good teachers is deeply rooted in traditional Chinese culture and is heavily influenced by their cross-cultural experiences in Canada. Findings also revealed how Chinese beginning teachers struggle to find their voice and to socialize among a range past practices, lived experiences, and cross-cultural experiences.

In these competing narratives of Chinese and Western views, perspectives of what constitutes good teaching and school practices take on more than one level of meaning. It is important to consider Chinese teachers' current practices as well as how such practices will continue to change and thus influence teaching reforms in the globalized world. The study also demonstrates features of Chinese teacher induction, such as flexibility of time to reflect, significant mentorship and guidance, and various organizational assistance. There is much to be gained from studying how one becomes a teacher both in Canada and China. Chinese teachers' dedication to teaching and their efforts to improve socialization contribute to teaching and teacher education in the interconnected world.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

It is better to travel ten thousand miles than to read ten thousand books.

~ Old Chinese saying.¹

Context of the Pre-Service Teacher Education Reciprocal Learning Program

My study is contextualized in my 5-year participation in Dr. Shijing Xu's (2011a) ongoing Teacher Education Reciprocal Learning Program, which is now part of Xu and Connelly's 2013-2020 SSHRC Partnership Grant Project. This project integrates two existing programs: Xu's (2011a) Pre-Service Teacher Education Reciprocal Learning Program, and Xu and Connelly's (2009a) Canada–Sister School Network project. The purposes of Xu and Connelly's (2013b) project are to “build educational knowledge and understanding from a cross-cultural perspective and to support new approaches ... to teaching and learning in schools and teacher education programs in response to change brought on by heightened global awareness” (para. 1).

Xu first initiated the Pre-Service Teacher Education Reciprocal Learning Program with Dr. Ling Li in 2008 and it has fully developed with the involvement of Dr. Shijian Chen at Southwest University (SWU) in China since 2009 (Xu, Chen, & Huang, 2015). Since June 2010, the program has grown into a strong partnership between the University of Windsor (UW) and SWU with more new collaborative initiatives, and with the Greater Essex County District School Board (GECDSB) as a key partner. It was funded by the UW Strategic Priority Fund and SWU teacher education fund (Xu, 2011a). In 2013, Dr.

¹ This traditional saying dates back 2,500 years, when the Chinese thinker Confucius (551 BC to

Xu collaborated with Dr. Michael Connelly at the University of Toronto and succeeded in their application for a 7-year research project funded by a SSHRC Partnership Grant (Xu & Connelly, 2013a). According to Xu's (2011d) program introduction,

The Teacher Education Reciprocal Learning Program consists of two parts each year: in the fall semester teacher candidates from Southwest University come to the Faculty of Education at the University of Windsor to take pre-service classes, observe in local schools, and participate in cultural events. In the spring semester, University of Windsor teacher candidates visit SWU to attend classes, workshops and lectures at Southwest University, observe in local Chinese schools and participate in cultural activities and fieldtrips in China. The University of Windsor teacher candidates also do workshops at Southwest University to introduce Canadian culture, Canadian teacher education and Canadian school education to Southwest University students. (para. 1)

The program has intended to follow both Chinese and Canadian pre-service teacher candidates to provide ongoing intellectual and professional support. Dr. Xu and other faculty members visit SWU with the cohort of UW teacher candidates for 1 to 3 months. Chinese teacher candidates who have been to Canada and who are going to Canada are invited to participate in the hosting activities. As Dr. Xu planned, the new cohort of SWU teacher candidates improve their communicative skills in English, develop rapport with the UW teacher candidates at SWU, and enhance their understanding of teaching through these activities. Based on Xu's idea of "mutual and reciprocal learning between the East and the West" (Howe & Xu, 2013, p. 39), my study, which is a part of this long-term research program, focuses on the cross-cultural learning

and induction experiences of four Chinese beginning teachers who participated in the program in 2010 or 2011. I present the inquiries through the lens of cross-cultural dialogue and reciprocal learning (Xu, 2014) in order to determine the influence of cross-cultural experiences that interweave global and national curriculum boundaries.

Research Questions of My Study

My study attempts to explore the experience of Chinese beginning teachers who participated in the UW and SWU Reciprocal Learning Program in 2010 and 2011 by exploring the influence of their cross-cultural experience on their early teaching practice in Southwest China. I studied the lives of four Chinese beginning teachers inside and outside of the classroom with the primary goal of gaining insight into their cross-cultural learning experience in Canada and analyzing their stories of learning to teach within the Chinese cultures and school cultures in Southwest China. Particular attention is paid to the influence of cross-cultural experiences on teachers' teaching methods, teacher-student relationships, and thoughts and beliefs about teaching and learning.

Following the narrative research tradition of Connelly and Clandinin (Connelly & Clandinin, 1988; Clandinin & Connelly, 2000), this dissertation is also guided by Xu and Connelly's (2010) framework of school-based narrative inquiry. This narrative inquiry involves intensive "telling, retelling, and reliving" (Whelan, Huber, Rose, Davies, & Clandinin, 2001, p. 144) of the stories of my participants: Shan, Siyuan, Hailiang, and Weiguo, who went to Canada as students and returned to China as student teachers and took positions as beginning teachers in China.

This study is further influenced by the literature on teacher induction (Feiman-Nemser, 2001, 2010), the notion of reciprocal learning (Xu & Connelly, 2015;

Xu, 2006; Xu & Connelly, 2008), curriculum research that concentrates on the contextualized knowledge of global and local trends (Anderson-Levitt, 2008; Howe & Xu, 2013; Xu, 2011b), and the exploration of cross-cultural teacher education and teacher induction (Howe, 2005; Schlein, 2007). In addition, I consulted research on studying abroad in teacher education (Cushner, 2007a, 2007b) in shaping the investigative framework. Moreover, Conle's (1996) notion of resonance serves to bridge my participants' experiences and my work as a researcher and participant.

In this study, my participants reflected on their cross-cultural experiences and developed them professionally by reflective practice as a form of teacher professional development (Connelly & Clandinin, 1988). My inquiry explores and analyzes teachers' experiences of life and teaching as they move among multiple landscapes, rather than an examination of what cross-cultural competence they have improved, knowledge that teachers must obtain as a means of teaching in Chinese schools, or the way that knowledge of Western model of teaching and learning ought to be integrated into Chinese schooling. It has potential to contribute to teacher induction and to teacher education from a cross-cultural and global perspective. This study seeks to contribute to teachers' professional development in the Chinese context and may help school administrators across cultures to adopt more appropriate methods to support beginning teachers.

My 4-year participation in the program as a graduate assistant aids me in re-experiencing and identifying the issues related to Chinese and Canadian schools from the perspective of participating pre-service teacher candidates. Through the utilization of narrative inquiry (Clandinin & Connelly, 1995, 2000; Connelly & Clandinin, 1990), I try

to reconstruct the meaning of stories about learning, as a means of gaining access to participants and analyzing their stories. I endeavour to identify challenges and strategies that beginning teachers encounter in their first 4 years of teaching in Southwest China. I attempt to gain a sense of how Chinese beginning teachers try to educate themselves about the world and cultures around them via cross-cultural learning experiences and how they go through the induction process. My overarching research questions are:

1. What are the cross-cultural experiences of Chinese teachers in Canada?
2. What are their induction processes in their early career of teaching?
3. How has the cross-cultural learning in Canada shaped who they are as beginning teachers in Southwest China?

Social Significance of the Study

Many scholars argue that there have been increasing demands for internationalizing pre-service teacher education programs (Cushner, 2007a; Emert, 2008; Merryfield, 2000; Xu & Connelly, 2013a). Apple (2011) discusses the challenges that globalization presents to education and the implications for teacher education. He suggests that we need a teacher education system that is globally oriented. Similarly, Zhao (2010) notes that we need to help students develop the appropriate skills, knowledge, attitudes, and perspectives in the globalized world, which requires “a new generation of teachers who are able to act as global citizens, understand the global system, and deliver a globally oriented education” (p. 429). However, as the Longview Foundation for Education in World Affairs and International Understanding (2008) states, the culture of teacher education is local and has not served “the needs of future citizens of today’s globalized world” (p. 6).

Some researchers (Emert, 2008; Sleeter, 2008) also state that study abroad programs are one of the most effective ways to educate teachers in cultural responsiveness and globalized awareness. When Dr. Xu and I attended the 2014 Comparative and International Education Society (CIES) conference in Toronto, we participated in a seminar about study abroad programs, which offered a comprehensive report of the benefits of study abroad programs and cross-cultural immersion experiences in several countries. My understanding of the influence that cross-cultural experiences have on teachers' induction is aligned with them. I also realize that the unique feature of the Reciprocal Learning Program is that it consists of exchange visits of both Canadian and Chinese teacher candidates. This makes it different from the other study-abroad programs in that it aims to address the issue of "educational reciprocity and reciprocal learning" (Xu & Connelly, 2013a, p. 2).

There is a lack of empirical studies exploring the longitudinal influence of such programs on beginning teachers' early years of teaching. Therefore, there is a need to explore their lived experiences to provide a more comprehensive picture of their induction in the globalized world. Many studies focusing on beginning teachers and teacher induction have mainly focused on induction or mentorship programs and their impacts on beginning teachers (Chen & Tan, 2011; Howe, 2005, 2006; Wang, Odell & Schwille, 2008). Specifically, researchers have based their investigations on beginning teachers' changing identities (Travers, 2000) or pedagogical content knowledge (Zhu et al., 2007). Such a segmented inquiry compromises the nature of expertise in teaching. This study provides new insights into a more detailed look at how cross-cultural experiences and induction practice actually played out in schools.

My study makes visible Chinese beginning teachers' induction processes in Southwest China after their cross-cultural learning experiences in the context of Chinese educational reform and an interconnected world. This research presents the voices of those teachers as they deal with their pressing issues and concerns in becoming teachers. For beginning teachers, transitioning from a lifetime student experience in China and from being a visiting teacher candidate in Canada to being a teacher in Southwest China can be difficult. Since "life's narratives are the context for making meaning of school situations" (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990, p. 3), inquiring into beginning teachers' stories offers a window into a better understanding of how teachers make meaning from teaching experiences during the transitional stage of beginning teachers, especially for those teachers who have learned from both the Chinese and Canadian educational systems.

Mapping the Thesis

Chapter 1 is an overview of the development of my thesis. In Chapter 2, I examine the literature related to cross-cultural education and teacher induction as a means of illuminating participants' stories of teaching and learning across cultures. Chapter 3 is a methodological inquiry into some issues and challenges in my research fieldwork, with reference to different theories of educational research. Chapters 4-7, which are the core of the thesis, illustrate narratives of four participants' cross-cultural and induction experiences in Canada and China. As a narrative inquirer, I learned not to see myself as a designer of my participants' lives, interviewing them to get data that fits my research. Rather, by living with the events and stories of my participants over time and across different landscapes, I have become a narrator and also a participant in their stories.

In Chapters 8 and 9, I discuss the themes that emerge from the narratives in the

field of teacher education and teacher development in depth. I also relate my work to the broad field of education for its interdisciplinary implications and discuss the social and educational significance and implications for both policy and practice. Chapter 8 discusses the themes that emerged from my participants' narratives in the three-dimensional inquiry space, and interprets the continuities and differences among beginning teachers' experiences in the intersection of Canadian and traditional Chinese education. In Chapter 9, I relate the narratives to the literature and explore the implications. I highlight the major insights from the study, as well as call for extended support for beginning teachers. In Chapter 10, I raise my suggestions for cross-cultural teacher development and teacher induction in the globalized educational context. This dissertation stimulates narrative thinking and understanding of teacher education from a cross-cultural perspective, and it develops a concept that serves our culturally diverse children with global awareness.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

I firstly reviewed the literature on teacher induction, both in Western countries and in China. Then, I introduced the cultural and educational context of Chinese curriculum and teacher education reform. In the third section, I discussed the need for cross-cultural teacher development. In the fourth section, I examined study-abroad teacher education programs and their influence on pre-service teachers.

Teacher Induction

Teacher Induction in Western Literature

Many scholars emphasize the importance of teacher induction. There is a growing international realization that induction is “an investment that can yield enhanced instruction throughout a career lifetime, affecting the quality of what hundreds, even thousands of pupils will learn in conjunction with each teacher” (Britton, Paine, Pimm, & Raizen, 2003, p. 5). Craig (2014) reviews the issue of teacher attrition in North America and Australia and points out that “the induction of beginning teachers and their retention is a perennial problem” (p. 82). Scholars define teachers’ induction differently.

Feiman-Nemser (2010) suggests induction represents an important transition between a pre-service program and professional development opportunities. He emphasizes that induction is a process of socialization, which considers the unique process of learning to work within a new cultural setting that consists of colleagues, curriculum, and the organization. It is during this process that new teachers develop norms that accommodate the pressures of various communities. In a 3-year investigation on teacher induction in Shanghai, France, Japan, New Zealand, and Switzerland, Britton et al. (2003) developed

Feiman-Nemser's framework and stated that induction "composes a process for learning, a period of time, a unique phase in teaching and a system" (p. 19). They emphasized induction can only be "understood fully in relation to what comes before it and what comes after it" (p. 5) both in north America and internationally.

Also, induction can be seen as "a reflection of a culture's assumptions both about how teachers learn about teaching and what teaching itself involves" (Britton et al., 2003, p. 299). Similarly, Howe (2005) defines induction as the process of acculturation and becoming a professional teacher. Ciuffetelli Parker (2010) delineates a 4-year narrative inquiry study with teacher candidate participants considers the formation of their knowledge in becoming teachers. The narrative inquiry in Ciuffetelli Parker's project allows her to study candidates' beginning teacher knowledge and professional development experiences as lived and told stories.

Studies of teacher induction have primarily centred on mentoring and induction programs and their effects on beginning teachers in Western countries. Howe (2006) offers an international review of induction programs in many countries. He encourages educators to think globally and notes, "Cultural context is important when considering how induction programs from abroad could be borrowed and adapted for use at home" (p. 294). Similarly, Wang et al. (2008) review and explore the effects of teacher induction on beginning teachers' conceptions and practice of teaching; they find that support and assistance for beginning teachers have a positive impact on "teacher commitment and retention," "teacher classroom instructional practices," and "student achievement" (p. 201).

Teacher Induction in China

In China, many researchers have focused on teachers' professional development

studies (e.g., Yang, 2014; Ye & Bai, 2001) and they have called for research into more effective teacher development programs in the context of the ongoing curriculum reform. Kang, Erickson, Ryan, and Mitchell (2011) argue that the approach to teachers' professional development is "to design a series of training materials and models for the new curriculum implementation" (p. 44). Gu (2009), in her study on experienced Chinese EFL teachers' expertise, finds that most current in-service teacher development programs "are still heavily focusing on piece-meal stuffing and 'best methods'" (p. 38). Ma et al. (as cited in Kang et al., 2011) surveyed hundreds of teachers and found that, while the teachers are generally supportive of the goals of the reform, they are finding it difficult to actually implement other people's ideas about curriculum, methodology, and even about how students learn. Ma et al. suggest that the role of curriculum materials and the importance of collegial interaction are two features of teachers' professional development in China; they argued, "China's experience of regulating teachers' work and learning represents neither a resounding example of convergence to some global model nor an entirely idiosyncratic approach" (as cited in Kang et al., 2011, p. 288).

According to Qi (2012), pre-service teacher education and in-service teacher development cannot be developed further without paying attention to the connections between them. Chen (2009) advocates that integrating pre-service teacher education and in-service teacher development is one of the goals of teacher education reform. However, very few studies in this area of teacher education and induction by non-English-speaking scholars have been given international attention (Li, 2011). There is also a lack of research on beginning teachers' induction in China, which began in the 1990s (Li, 2008; Shi, 2009). Many of the studies in this area are mainly theoretical papers that focus on

“bringing in” outstanding induction programs from developed countries, such as Chen and Tan’s (2011) research on outstanding induction programs in developed countries such as the United States of America, Canada, New Zealand, Australia, England, and Japan. Shi (2009) reviews current teacher induction in China and notes that the few existing studies on teacher induction are opinion papers on policies that carry little weight compared with database studies. In summary, there is a dearth of work that draws on teachers’ real experiences or gives voice to those who work daily in the field.

This is particularly true in China, where very little literature exists on the issues of beginning teachers in southwest China. Hagin (2012) analyzes the context of Chinese teacher education reform in his thesis and points out that although China is emerging as a strong economy, the development of southwest China has been slower than the other regions. Many scholars have noted there is an urgent need to provide intellectual support through higher education, and teacher preparation must undergo substantial changes in southwest China (Bai, 2008; Guo, 2005; Meng, 2007; Wang & Phillion, 2009). However, teacher induction mainly focuses on induction programs in the developed areas like Shanghai (Britton et al., 2003; Ji, Zhou, & Xia, 2011; Ma, 1992).

In summary, I agree with the above Western literature on induction as a phase which occupies a special place within the continuum of a teacher’s career, looking both backward to pre-service teacher preparation and forward to the career of teaching, with its challenges of becoming and being a teacher in a specific cultural context. To fill the gap of research in teacher induction in China, I draw upon the ideas of induction and focus on the impact of cross-cultural teacher development on teacher induction. In this study, teacher induction is viewed as a phase in the process of learning to teach, as an act

of socialization, and as a formal program. From a narrative lens, examining induction permits an exploration of a teacher's prior preparation, which is essential for making sense of what occurs in teacher induction.

Chinese Curriculum Reform Context and Free Teacher Education Policy

As stated above, the reform of teacher development is always related to the Chinese curriculum. Therefore, it is important to briefly examine the context of Chinese curriculum reform and teacher development.

Context of Chinese Curriculum Reform and Teacher Development

The ongoing large-scale, wide-reaching curriculum reform that began in 2001 is regarded as one of the most important events in China's educational system (The Central People's Government of the People's Republic of China, 2001; Kang et al., 2011; Paine & Fang, 2007; Zhong, 2006). Dai, Gerbino, and Daley (2011) state that education in China has been undergoing a curriculum reform that advocates "a change from a rigid, fixed curriculum and didactic pedagogy to a more flexible, school-based curriculum and inquiry-based pedagogy" (p. 139) since 2001. In China, current curriculum reform in China is encapsulated by the slogan "quality-oriented education" (*suzhi jiaoyu*), which is contrasted with "exam-oriented education" (*yingshi jiaoyu*). The reform agenda echoes in many ways of Dewey's (1938) philosophy of education, which places a preference on inquiry-based learning. The reform advocates shifting from "knowledge reproduction and didacticism to knowledge construction by students through a learner-centredness approach" (Tan & Chua, 2014, p. 686). This reform, as Xu and Connelly (2009b) argued, initiated debate on how to create balance and harmony between Western imported ideas and Chinese cultural knowledge strengths. Liu and Fang (2009) contend that China's

adoption of Western education and curriculum concepts indicates “negotiations between global dynamics, creating globalization with Chinese characteristics” (p. 411).

Xu and Connelly (2009b) in reviewing Wang’s (2007) and Ye’s (2001) work, posit, “China’s teacher education and curriculum reforms are related and are part of a larger educational policy” (p. 220). The need for improving teacher education and development to support the reform process has been recognized as a “highest priority” in China’s 11th Five-Year Plan (2006-2010) (Ryan, Kang, Mitchell, & Erickson, 2009). Paine and Fang (2006) state: “The nature of Chinese teachers’ work is changing, responding to curriculum reform and its embedded notions of the good student and good teacher” (p. 280).

Some scholars have examined how China has dealt with external globalization pressure and has maintained its own cultural traditions. As the literature on Chinese teacher education indicates, Chinese reform of teaching and teacher development is a part of and is affected by process of globalization. Cui (2006), Gu (2009), and Jin (2008) review the history of Chinese teacher education and discuss the influence of other countries on Chinese teacher education. Ding (2001) illustrates that in the two phases of 1920-1930 and 1980-1990s, “Western elements” are integrated with emerging practice; he emphasizes that this “balanced domestic and external/international influences and developed an educational system with Chinese characteristics to suit national aspirations” (p. 182). More recently, Paine and Fang (2006) quote Stromquist’s argumentation that teacher education reform can create new and hybrid kind of culture which includes the local with the global; they characterize Chinese teacher education reform as a “hybrid model that relies on both inside and outside expertise” and emphasize

that it is a model that “connects Chinese educators to foreign ones” (p. 286). Therefore, as the above discussion of the local and global context of Chinese education shows, it is imperative to develop Chinese teacher education from a cross-cultural perspective.

Free Teacher Education Policy

As the earlier discussions about the Chinese reform of teaching indicate, teacher education in China is also under reform. The Free Teacher Education Policy, which offers qualifying students the opportunity to study in 4-year pre-service programs with free tuition and a monthly stipend, was implemented by the Chinese Central Government in 2007 (General Office of the State Council of the People’s Republic of China, 2007).

Chen (2007), who is in charge of the teacher education programs at Southwest University, China, a university that has a long history in teacher education, analyses the context for the Free Education Policy and its application in China. He points out that the ongoing challenges to providing quality education to the poor rural areas, especially in West China, compelled the previous Chinese Premier, Wen Jiabao to initiate the Free Teacher Education Policy in the spring of 2007. Under this policy, pre-service teacher candidates, who choose to enrol in this free teacher education program, are obliged to make a commitment to teach in their home provinces for ten years. This is one of China’s development strategies to enhance the educational quality of less developed regions in the country, such as southwest China. Chen also advocated providing sustainable support such as providing graduate studies which waiver their entrance examination to the program participants after they graduated from SWU (Xu et al., 2015). According to the Central People’s Government of the People’s Republic of China (2010), the Master of Teaching is for pre-service graduates who have participated in the Free Teacher

Education Program and have good records in both their studies and teaching. These teachers do not need to take the entrance exams for admission to graduate schools in China and are able to take a blend of distance learning and face-to-face courses during winter and summer holidays (Y. B. Liu, personal communication, September 2013).

SWU, in Chongqing, China was formed by combining Southwest Normal University² and Southwest Agriculture University (Southwest University, 2007) in 2005. It is one of the six key universities piloting the implementation of the Free Teacher Education Policy in China (General Office of the State Council of the People's Republic of China, 2007). It has set up a system that is to provide a continuous and life-long professional support to their pre-service graduates who have become teachers in different provinces across China (S. J. Chen, personal communication, November 11, 2012). In 2011, SWU set up the Faculty of Teacher Education to adapt to the reform of the teacher education program and especially for meeting the needs of the pre-service teachers. There are two big sculptures on the both sides of the entrance gate of Faculty of Teacher Education, which connote the interaction of traditional Chinese and Western education. On the left hand side, there are some sculptures of influential Western philosophers: Plato, Aristotle, and Dewey. On the right hand side, there are prominent Chinese philosophers and educators: Confucius, Mencius, Xingzhi Tao³, and Yuanpei Cai⁴.

² In Chinese, "Normal" is "norm of model," in Chinese Shifan (Hayhoe, 2010).

³ Xingzhi Tao, 1891–1946, studied under John Dewey at Teachers College, Columbia University, returning to China in 1917. Greatly concerned for basic education in China, he founded a National Association of Mass Education Movements, and had a huge influence on school education and teacher education.

⁴ Yuanpei Cai, 1868–1940, was an influential educator, Minister of Education, President of Peking University, and founder of the *Academica Sinica*. He had achieved the highest (Jinshi) degree in China's traditional education and spent eight years at the universities of Leipzig and Berlin in Germany, as well as some time in France, between 1907 and 1916.

Improving Teacher Education and Development From a Cross-Cultural Perspective

Many studies have examined cross-cultural, or transcultural issues in teacher education and development. Zhou, Xu, and Bayley (2010), in their study of 20 Chinese university EFL teachers' beliefs about cultural teaching, point out a need for in-service teacher training programs that particularly focus on intercultural competence teaching. Howe and Xu (2013) argue for transcultural thinking in teacher education through their West-to-East and East-to-West cross-cultural narratives as teacher educators. Some researchers have focused on improving teachers' cross-cultural competence in teacher education in minority areas in China (e.g., Cai, 2012; Meng, 2007). Cai (2012), in her research on pre-service teacher education in Xinjiang province, argues that the implementation of multicultural education in teacher education is imperative to satisfy the need to develop national education reform using the new curriculum. Bai (2008) says that, despite the need for cross-cultural competence in educating Chinese students in order to be productive citizens of the 21st century, Chinese teachers are not being well prepared through pre-service education to respond to the realities of culturally diverse students and settings in China.

Despite the identified need, there have been few teacher education programs that have provided cross-cultural experience to teacher candidates (Sleeter, 2008). According to Emert (2008), cross-cultural study abroad programs may be one of the ideal ways to bring global awareness to the issue of diversity and globalization. Cochran-Smith (2005) states that pre-service teachers need cross-cultural experience that provides them with opportunities to uncover their own cultural identity, learn about other cultural groups, and examine the sociocultural aspects of education. However, the majority of the available

literature on teachers' cross-cultural experiences can be either categorized as "memoir" or "adventure travel" (Schlein, 2007). From a broad perspective, there has been discussion of globalization as reconstructing social relations. Byram (1997) has stressed that one of the primary goals of education is to enable students to acquire global citizenship.

Impact of Study Abroad and Cross-cultural Learning in Teacher Education

Study abroad programs in teacher education vary widely in intensity and duration. There are few study abroad programs that incorporate both a West-to-East and an East-to-West journey like the Teacher Education Reciprocal Learning Program does. One of the few exceptions is Hamel, Chikamori, Ono, and Williams's (2010) investigation of intercultural learning among pre-service teachers from Japan and the United States during a short-term international exchange program. Some studies have examined the positive effects of cross-cultural experience in the education of pre-service teachers. For example, these programmes benefit pre-service teacher's personal, global, intercultural, social and cultural identities, and pedagogical practices (Cushner, 2007a; Gleeson & Tait, 2012; Marquardt, 2011; Marx & Moss, 2011; Pence & MacGillivray, 2008; Tang & Choi, 2004; Young, 2010). The above-noted studies of study abroad programs have mostly featured West-to-East and West-to-West sojourns. Few investigations have documented the professional development experienced by Chinese teacher candidates as a result of studying in developed countries. Li and Edwards's (2013) paper assesses the impact of a U.K.-based professional program on curriculum innovation and change in English Language Education in Western China.

According to Sleeter (2008), studies have examined the impact and effectiveness

of study abroad programs, and such programs are viewed as positive and valuable whether they are long or short. Scoffham and Barnes (2009) document the impact of a study visit to India on students and find that the visit provides a powerful learning experience that transformed students' thinking by creating dissonance on cognitive, emotional, and existential levels. Cushner (2007b) makes a comprehensive overview of the impact of study abroad programs for pre-service teachers, and points out that this cross-cultural experience offers a unique chance as "it involves both physical and psychological transitions that engage the cognitive, affective, and behavioural domain" (p. 29). McGaha and Linder (2012) describe changes in pre-service teachers' definition of and attitudes regarding diversity after a semester-long study abroad experience program for U.S. students. Wang (2015) explores the perspectives of Canadian teacher candidates' cross-cultural learning experiences in China and finds the experience enhanced their motivation to advance their educational careers and will broaden their future students' horizons with a global perspective relevant to the increasingly diverse society in Canada. As Brindley, Quinn, and Morton (2009) suggest, "international experience can be a catalyst for accelerated professional development in pre-service teachers" (p. 532).

In particular, most of the programs are offered as an innovative way to influence pre-service teachers' development of cross-cultural competence and prepare them for teaching culturally diverse student populations (Cusher & Brenna, as cited in Marx & Moss, 2011). While the above-mentioned research has offered increasing awareness of a cross-cultural teaching perspective, we need inquiries of greater depth and process-oriented research that is guided by theoretical principles aligned with teachers' professional development. Therefore, my study aims to make up for the paucity of

current studies in education that stretch beyond surface level analysis.

Other studies show that these cross-cultural experiences may result in both benefits and challenges. Tang and Choi (2004) find that some teachers' perception of "inadequate lineage" exists between the international field experiences and their teaching practices. Pray and Marx (2010) report that teachers find it hard to apply teaching strategies in a different cultural context. Similarly, Gleeson and Tait (2012) carried out a case study examining a cross-cultural learning journey in New Zealand for Hong Kong teachers of English as a foreign language (EFL); the teachers in this study felt similar constraints when applying pedagogies they have learned in New Zealand on their return to Hong Kong.

Another significant question is how much influence a study abroad program has on subsequent teaching. Merryfield (2000) notes that little research has been conducted to date on the impact of cross-cultural study abroad programs for their graduates. Little is known about "how study abroad experiences are translated into the professional growth of programme participants" (Brindley et al., 2009, p. 525). The few studies that have followed pre-service students into the classroom after completing a study abroad program have reported mixed results, placing the impact of cross-cultural learning study abroad programs with prior life experience. Cushner (2007b) states that a cross-cultural experience "occurs twice—once during entry into the host culture and then again upon re-entry into the home culture" (p. 29). My longitudinal study attempts to fill a gap in the literature by exploring how cross-cultural experiences influence Chinese pre-service teachers' induction from a global perspective and from the perspective of the interaction of Eastern and Western culture in teacher development.

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

In this chapter, I state my understanding of narrative inquiry and the key conceptualizations of Connelly and Clandinin's narrative inquiry work, which is the methodology of my inquiry into Chinese beginning teachers. I highlight my use of a narrative form of exploration as a means of discovering the phenomena of this inquiry. I also describe the specific research procedure used in this study. Utilizing Clandinin and Connelly's (2000) "three-dimensional" life space of narrative inquiry, I offer a dialogue of narrative inquiry as both the theoretical framework and the methodology of this study.

Coming to an Understanding of Narrative Conceptualizations

Narrative inquiry is the study of "the ways humans experience the world" (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990, p. 2). As Clandinin and Connelly (2000) indicate that the focus of narrative inquiry is on narratives and stories as they are told by people themselves. Connelly and Clandinin (1990) also state, "It is equally correct to say 'inquiry into narrative' as it is 'narrative inquiry'" (p. 2). As Clandinin and Connelly (1994) explain,

By this we mean that narrative is both phenomenon and method. Narrative names the structured quality of experience to be studied, and it names the patterns of inquiry. ... We say that people by nature lead storied lives and tell stories of those lives, whereas narrative researchers describe such lives, collect and tell stories of them, and write narratives of experience. (p. 416)

My Evolving Understanding of Personal Practical Knowledge.

In the directed study course on narrative inquiry taught by Dr. Xu, I was guided

to use various narrative tools to explore my own personal practical knowledge: educational chronicles, metaphors, and teaching and learning stories. Xu and Connelly (2009b) introduced me to Connelly and Clandinin's (1988) concept of teachers' personal practical knowledge:

Personal practical knowledge is in the teacher's past experiences; in the teacher's present mind and body, and in the future plans and actions. ... It is a particular way of reconstructing the past and the intentions of the future to deal with the exigencies of a present situation. (p. 25)

I came to see how, in my narratives, the meanings, values, understandings, and reflections—what I call my “wisdom”—are gained not only from books but also from my experiences. In the beginning of my cross-cultural journey to Canada as a guide teacher for the Pre-service Teacher Education Reciprocal Learning Program, my goal was to look for the “best method” to improve students' cross-cultural communicative competence. Then, I asked myself: how can I apply what I have learned to my teaching in China? This is the catalyst to change my research interest from language teaching to teacher education and cross-cultural teacher development. Another focus that helped me to understand that the narrative meaning of teacher knowledge is the distinction between teacher knowledge and knowledge-for-teachers. Xu and Connelly (2009b) emphasize that teacher knowledge is “a narrative construct which references the totality of a person's personal practical knowledge gained from formal and informal educational experience” (p. 221). They distinguish between the knowledge and skills taught to teachers versus what teachers know through the lived experience, including what is taught to them. Why is the distinction important? In my interview with Dr. Connelly in October 2013, he illustrates

this further: “People said teachers should know this or that and set high standards to teachers. That is not the way to make better teachers. The effective way to make better teachers is see if it is linked to what teachers know” (Huang, 2014, p. 54).

Ben-Peretz points out that most studies of teacher knowledge in education are based on Western cultures and has called for studies conducted in other cultures to provide “a different view of teacher knowledge” (as cited in Sun, 2012, p. 760). My research widens the scope of teachers’ knowledge on Chinese beginning teachers. It does not begin with what the literature presents about pre-service and beginning teachers, but rather with what pre-service teacher candidates know and find in their teaching practice.

My Understanding of Teachers’ Professional Knowledge Landscape

From Xu and Connelly (2009), I have learned Connelly and Clandinin’s narrative term “the professional knowledge landscape.” Initially, I thought of it as the context in which teachers teach such as the school setting.

After hearing this term many times during my conversations with Dr. Xu and in Connelly and Xu’s (2013) workshop on narrative inquiry, I read further to understand its connotation. Clandinin and Connelly (1995) note:

A landscape metaphor allows us to talk about space, place, and time. Furthermore, it has a sense of expansiveness and the possibility of being filled with diverse relationships among people, places, things and events in different relationships. Because we see the professional knowledge landscape as composed of relationships among people, places, and things, we see it as both an intellectual and moral landscape. (pp. 4-5)

To illustrate this concept, Xu and Connelly (2009b) argue that this term focuses

on how teachers' work environments serve as contexts which "influence the development of teachers' personal practical knowledge and, reciprocally, of how this knowledge shapes teacher's response to their environments" (p. 223). Connelly (2010) also notes, "We would not use the word culture and would use 'landscape' instead ... because, the concept was broader, more nuanced and richer than the way 'cultural' was used in school-based studies" (p. 350).

I learned that the professional knowledge landscape metaphor through Craig's (2011) work, which takes into account the changing "historical, emotional, moral, and aesthetic shaping forces" (p. 22). A narrative understanding of these concepts helps me to understand beginning teachers' lived experiences in their complexity, within the critical frames of their educational and cultural contexts. In my study, the induction process of four Chinese beginning teachers who participated in the program in 2010 and 2011 is the educational phenomenon under study. How I respond to them, how I interact with them, and how I write about them is the method. I commit to examining carefully and taking note of my own assumptions and understandings about the experiences of my participants.

Narrative Inquiry as Methodology in the Inquiry

In the previous sections, I describe the development of my understanding of Connelly and Clandinin's concept of narrative inquiry. Employing narrative inquiry as the methodology encourages me both to think narratively about the experience and to learn from having been in the midst of the experience. To understand cross-cultural experiences and classroom life, I have to understand what has gone before, and where it is going, in order to interpret the present. In the following sections, I present details of the

narrative methods that I use within the research to explore my participants' cross-cultural and induction stories.

A Puzzle to Explore

As a guide teacher of the first cohort of the Pre-service Teacher Education Reciprocal Learning Program and a graduate assistant for the program, I have come across many facets of this cross-cultural experience and gained a better understanding of the connotation of Xu's (2006, 2011a) "reciprocal learning" in the program. During our weekly debriefings with students, some SWU teacher candidates expressed how much they liked Canadian schools and were highly critical of Chinese education:

One of the teacher candidates told me, "I fell in love with the school. The principal is approachable and she is even able to call every single child's name! The children are happy and engaged in learning. The teachers are so dedicated to teaching and respectful to each other. I wish I could work in such a harmonious atmosphere within schools in the future." (Field notes, November 24, 2010)

While some of my students and I were amazed by the positive concepts and practices in Canadian schools and were eager to absorb the "advanced" Western educational theories and practices, some Chinese student teachers had concerns about the effectiveness of Western education:

Another Chinese student teacher told me that he found the content of math that the teacher taught was just equal to the Grade 2 level in a Grade 5 Canadian class. Regarding the knowledge and content, Chinese students learn much more than their Canadian counterparts. Does it mean Chinese education win(s) against Western education? (Ju's journal, November 11, 2010)

The above contrasting views made me think. Dr. Xu encouraged Chinese teacher candidates to be slow to make judgments and to reflect on the positive elements of Chinese education. This was thought provoking. I considered what we could bring into China from the West and took a critical view of our own education and culture. I came to understand education in a concrete and personalized perspective. Without giving up my earlier view about the value of Western education, I have become more aware of the value of Chinese education than before. I wondered how Chinese teacher candidates' cross-cultural experiences were making and constituting their growth as beginning teachers. In turn, how would it shape their notion of teaching and learning over time and space on Chinese school landscapes? Based on the Pre-service Teacher Education Reciprocal Learning Program, I have kept in contact with those Chinese teacher candidates who are beginning teachers in different parts of China. I realize that narrative inquiry allows me to immerse myself in listening to the experiences as they tell them. It helps me to understand beginning teachers' experiences in their complexity and with their dynamics, within the critical frames of their educational and cultural contexts.

I believe that narrative inquiry is the ideal methodology for my study because it will enable me to find out more about my participants' experiences and make the voices of these Chinese beginning teachers.

Positioning Myself in the Research

My position in this study is rooted in an understanding of narrative inquiry, that all experience is personal and relational (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Huber & Clandinin, 2002; Xu & Connelly, 2008). As Clandinin and Connelly (2000) point out, the

relationship between the researcher and participants is central in narrative inquiry, and researchers cannot predict it at the outset.

In this study, commitments and relationship have been established. Being privileged to be a guide teacher and graduate assistant for the program, I lived with the 2010 and 2011 cohort for 3 months during their visits to Canada. My fieldwork consists of 4 to 5 days a week of university classes and school visits, as well as cultural visits on weekends from September to December 2011. Though studying at UW in Canada, I continued to keep contact with the program participants through emails and phone calls as a graduate assistant and paid follow-up visits when I returned to China in every Spring/Summer 2012 to 2015.

Xu and Connelly (2010) point out that a researcher's task is "how best to become part of the life space of those studied and how best to enter into their daily work" (p. 351). As the Reciprocal Learning Program is an ongoing program, when Dr. Xu and UW program participants visited SWU, she conversed with the program participants at homecoming events. They shared their struggles, tensions, puzzlement, concerns, and happiness about their early years of teaching. I felt a sense of urgency and a responsibility to explore their lived experiences as beginning teachers in the context of Chinese educational reform. In our personal lives, my participants, the other program alumni, and I have become good friends. For example, whenever Dr. Xu visited SWU, some program participants returned to SWU to meet her; whenever I returned to China during the summer, Siyuan visited me with Shan by taking a 2-hour train trip from his city; whenever I visited his city for field work, he picked me up at the train station.

Research Design and Procedures

Ethical Consideration of the Research

My ethical review of this study is built on the research ethics protocol for the Reciprocal Learning Program. Research Ethics Board clearance was obtained to cover the program between UW and SWU from April 2011 to June 7, 2013 (REB # 11-095). Ethical clearance was also obtained to cover the social Partnership Grant Project, which is focused on “Reciprocal Learning of Teacher Education and School Education between Canada and China” (REB # 13-196 A). REB clearance covers the second part of the research data collection in the large SSHRC Partnership Grant Project, which focuses on the Reciprocal Learning Program. Although the geographical distance in China and Canada, I followed SWU teacher candidates by emails, QQ or WeChat⁵ groups; we meet SWU teacher candidates or Chinese beginning teachers at the alumni reunion events when Dr. Xu and the new cohort of UW teacher candidates visit SWU in spring each year. Alumni of the Reciprocal Learning Program were invited to attend the annual conference for the Partnership project of Reciprocal Learning of Teacher Education and School Education between China and Canada.

Since 2011, I, as a graduate assistant of the Reciprocal Learning Program, met and interacted with program participants and as well as people in the school settings. I intended to present a picture of the dynamics and diversity of Chinese beginning teachers' induction, in which they were not homogeneous but different from person to person. I had invited more than four participants to participate in my study because I was worried that some of them may leave the profession of teaching or withdraw from the

⁵ It is a mobile text and voice messaging communication service.

research. It turned out that no participant who offered consent withdrew. As Xu (2006) posits in her research on Chinese immigrant family, she “followed the flow of life on a changing landscape” (p. 12). During my intensive fieldwork to follow Chinese teacher candidates who participated in the program and work in Southwest China, my attention was drawn more to some beginning teachers: Siyuan, Shan, and another Chinese beginning teacher when they were at the risk of leaving the profession of teaching in their transition from teacher candidates to beginning teachers, from Canada to China. I use pseudonyms for all my participants and for their past and present school placements and employment. Shan Li and Siyuan Wang chose their own pseudonyms.

I considered how convenient it was for me to conduct observations and I was able to follow intensively. Three of my four participants are in the city where I am living and one participant is in another city that is two hours away by train. In alignment with the ethical protocol of the University of Windsor, I identified these four participants. In May 2013, I sent recruitment letters to Shan Li 李山, Siyuan Wang 王思源, Weiguo 杨卫国, and Hailiang Wu 吴海亮 after I received my University of Windsor Research Ethical Board (REB) clearance. They all agreed to participate in my research. They came from two visiting groups. Shan, Siyuan, and Hailiang were from the first cohort of 2010, in which I was their guide teacher. Weiguo was from the 2011 cohort, in which I was the graduate assistant for the Reciprocal Learning Program.

Shan Li is a biology teacher in a high school in Chongqing; Siyuan Wang is a biology teacher in one of the high schools in Donghe city; Weiguo is an English teacher and a head teacher of a high school in Chongqing; and Hailiang is a geography teacher

and a head teacher in the same school. All of their schools are key schools⁶ in China. Although there is no requirement for ethics clearance in China, I received permission from Chinese schools before collecting field texts. As an observing researcher, I became a participant in part of their lives. I helped the teachers talk to some misbehaving students. I debriefed their teaching and motivated them to improve when teaching the lesson the second time. I also encouraged my participants to write reflections because their everyday teaching and communication with children are meaningful and valuable. I became a good friend to them and their families. It was the intensive fieldwork of working with the alumni of the Reciprocal Learning Program, as well as my work as graduate assistant in different school settings in Canada and China, that I realized how the issue of Chinese beginning teachers' induction stood out.

I am cautious in regards to both the way in which I approach my participants and the privacy of my participants. Chase (2005) addresses the limitations of interviews as a source of narrative data. She points out that since narrative researchers often publish longer stories from individuals' narratives, this increases the risk that narrators will feel vulnerable or exposed by the narrative work. When doing participating observation, Hailiang was reluctant to invite me to the meeting of his Teaching and Research Group because "the issues discussed in the meeting on preparation for Gaokao⁷ should be confidential" (personal communication, July 2014). Similarly, Shan told me that he would invite me to the meeting if he became the leader of the Teaching and Research Group. When I was going to attend a meeting for head teachers at the end of the semester,

⁶ Key schools are schools distinguished from ordinary schools by their academic reputation and are generally allocated more resources by the state.

⁷ The College Entrance Examination, or commonly known as Gaokao, is an academic examination held annually in the mainland China.

one of Weiguo's colleagues advised me not to observe it because "some sensitive topics would be discussed" (personal communication, June 2014). I followed these suggestions and ensured that participants were able to talk about their experiences without risk of influencing their careers.

From working on the REB application process, I have learned to understand ethical considerations in narrative inquiry. Connelly and Clandinin (2006) point out that "as a narrative inquirer, it is important to have a better understanding of what it means to undertake a life study and live in an ethical way" (p. 483). Xu draws particular attention to the need for reciprocity in the research relationship. She notes, "we need to consider how to do our research so that it is beneficial to our participants" (personal communication, December 18, 2013). For example, when using a focus group method, Dr. Xu pointed out, "focus group discussions are not only for research purposes, but more for the purpose of enhancing participants' cross-cultural learning in the program" (Xu, 2014). I came to understand that the focus and priority of my study should be my participants. I reminded myself to develop an "ethical attitude" (Josselson, 2007). I continued to learn how to adopt an attitude of emphatic listening and take care of the participants. I sent my participants the transcriptions of their conversations and interview sessions for their review and they were all touched. They expressed their appreciation and continuous support of the program and the transcription recorded their personal and professional growth. They were also given the opportunity to do member checking by providing feedback on the field texts and the field text analysis.

Field Text Collection

In this section, I elaborate on various methods that I used in collecting the field

texts for this research. In narrative inquiry, field texts refer to the data resources. My thesis is contextualized in the Reciprocal Learning Program, in which participants are required to submit reflections on a weekly basis and compiled newsletters and portfolios. As a guide teacher and major graduate assistant, I worked with the 2010 and 2011 cohorts of Chinese teacher candidates, from which I later recruited my thesis research participants. All the fieldwork that I collected as a guide teacher and graduate assistant has been part of this field text collection. Connelly and Clandinin (1990) note various methods for collecting field texts: “the shared experience, journals, interview transcripts, others’ observations, storytelling, letter writing, autobiographical writing, documents such as class plans and newsletters, and writing such as rules, principles, pictures, metaphors, and personal philosophies” (p. 5). I entered the inquiry process without a preconceived structure of interview question, but, instead, drew meaning and understanding from the texts as the participants reiterated and illustrated themes related to cross-cultural experiences, which “had not been immediately apparent to them” (Schlein, 2007, p. 106). The field text collection of this study is comprised of two stages.

The first stage collects texts from my own field notes, as well as participants’ portfolios and reflections submitted to the Reciprocal Learning Program about their study in Canada in 2010 and 2011. To obtain better understanding of the phenomenon, the field text collection is carried out over a relatively long period. I wrote observational field notes while we facilitated activities and school visits in Windsor since 2010. Chinese participants of the Reciprocal Learning Program were required to keep reflections that included their daily experiences in Canada. As part of the program requirements, they completed their portfolios in which they reflected and summarized their own learning,

with a special focus on language development, cultural understanding, class observation, and teaching practice.

The second stage of field text collection in this study involves my personal communications and interviews with participating Chinese teachers. From 2011 to 2015, the interviews and conversations were conducted in Chinese and were audiotaped, transcribed verbatim, and translated when necessary, with the consent of participants. Also included were journal entries of some teacher participants and my participant observation in their classrooms and extra-curricular activities as a graduate assistant in September 2013, from April 2014 to September 2014, and April 2015 to July 2015. My intent with all of these texts is to record the narrative expressions and record the nuance and richness of the teachers' lived experience. In summary, I use the following data collection methods: conversations, interviews, field notes, participant observations, and document analysis. As I inquire into the lives of these beginning teachers, I become part of their lives. They also become part of my life and experiences.

Conversations. Clandinin and Connelly (2000) state that, “researchers who establish intimate participatory relationships with participants find it difficult to conduct such interviews with participants” (p. 110). Conversations with individual teachers or with the group, either recorded and transcribed or just remembered and noted, make up the main source of my field texts. Since I have developed mutual trust with participants during their visit to Canada, I prefer conversations to interviews.

When having conversations with program participants, I asked questions such as “What did you learn from your cross-cultural experience in Canada?” at the outset. I assumed that the participants had much to say on the impact of the cross-cultural

experience on them. However, it seemed that they did not recall their distant memories of the cross-cultural trip accurately. Fortunately, I gradually learned how to carry conversations by joining in Dr. Xu's conversations with program participants. She talked with them when visiting them in their residence. On the bus during field trips and cultural activities, she chatted with them in a casual way. Dr. Xu always starts with talking about the participants' everyday teaching and learning in their new schools and it turns out that what we discussed covered more than the questions we asked. This illustrates the principle of experiences: continuity of and interaction in the program.

Interviews. I used in-depth one-on-one interviews and focus groups to collect field texts related to the Reciprocal Learning Program. According to Creswell (2005), the advantage of the interview is to provide more details concerning the participants' experiences. Having been a research assistant in a study on transnational migration and having taking part in the ethical review application for the SSHRC Partnership Program, I have learned that researchers should let participants "take the lead" (Xu, 2006; Xu, Connelly, He, & Phillion, 2007) and talk about their everyday lives, rather than imposing questions on them.

In my study, I made an effort to be a good listener by attending to and caring about the experiences described by the beginning teachers. From Xu's (2006) discussion on the importance of places for participants, I am aware that the conditions under which the interviews take place (i.e., time of day, place) shape the interviews. For example, when I conducted interviews in teachers' offices with other teachers and students by their side, the teachers were not as relaxed and comfortable as they were in interviews in coffee shops, in their homes, and in their offices when they were alone. I have established

trust and intimate relationships with the program participants during their cross-cultural trip to Canada. Each interview lasted around 40-60 minutes and is conducted in Chinese, which is our native language. Although I provided interview protocols in the consent form to participants beforehand, these interviews became conversations sometimes. After the interviews, the transcripts were sent back to the participants for revision and verification.

Participants returned to SWU to do their master's programs in the summer. It is an extension of their Free Teacher Education to offer continuous life-long professional support to beginning teachers. When taking graduate courses on campus at SWU, participants were not preoccupied with teaching on a full-time basis. They were able to step back from their teaching practices to gain insights into those practices, and to bring about a rich understanding of the nature of the phenomenon of moving from the Canadian to the Chinese teaching contexts. I also conversed with several students and their parents, according to their willingness and level of comfort. In a more formal interview, I also interviewed the director of Shan's grade, the director of the office of teachers' professional development of Siyuan's school and Siyuan's colleagues, and Weiguo's colleagues.

Field notes. As Clandinin and Connelly (2000) point out, these are “the most important ways of recording the ongoing bits of nothingness that fill out days” (p. 104). While interviewing participants for one of her SSHRC projects, I have learned the importance of taking field notes on time, which completes the information that the transcripts fail to capture. Writing field notes on time is of great importance. I gradually realized that I can capture field experiences in a full and nuanced way. I wrote down the

settings and conditions of each conversation and meeting with program participants, (i.e., time, location, background, and other related information). In my study, I recorded as many details as I could as I communicated with participants and joined in their classroom observations. I also noted the exterior conditions, settings, and my inner feelings. In the beginning, my advisor referred to my entries as “shopping lists.” Gradually, my journal entries during this inquiry became a combination of detailed field notes on my visits to the schools interwoven with reflections on how I feel about the experience. I have learned to turn inward to recount my delight and tension, as well as my inquiries into the experiences of the beginning teachers.

Participant observation. My goal for participant observation within this inquiry is to understand how beginning teachers teach and learn in schools and at university. The first stage of observation was conducted in Windsor, Canada from September to December in 2010 and September to December in 2011, when I was a guide teacher and a graduate student in the Joint PhD program. The second stage of participant observation in this study is also based on the Reciprocal Learning Program. My participant observation in classrooms, other school programs and events is from April 2013 to September 2013, April 2014 to September 2014, and March to July 2015 in participants’ schools in China with my participants’ and the schools’ consents.

During this study, I conducted participant observation and recorded some of the Chinese pre-service teachers’ experiences during their school practicum in both Canada and China. Later, in my own study, observation provided me with a hands-on experience in which I learned more about the realities of teaching and learning in Chinese schools. For example, when observing Weiguó’s teaching, I learned to think of the school

situation as a “mini-world, a life space, where things are experienced in ways that I might not yet understand” (Xu & Connelly, 2010, p.356) instead of just judging from my own experiences.

I came to realize that my situation, as a research assistant in the program and as a graduate student, was quite different from that of my participants. This shift in my way of thinking about a situation became one of the most challenging aspects of my inquiry as I continually found myself on the edge of judging and evaluating the activities in the life space. Specifically, the observations included beginning Chinese teachers’ interaction with students in their classrooms and staff rooms, and with other teachers and administrators inside and outside of their classrooms. My role in the observation was a participant observer, in which I *wrote* detailed notes and *took* the opportunity to learn from the beginning teachers. I also debriefed some touching teaching moments. My observations also included classroom decorations (such as wall art) (Xu, 2014) and teachers’ office decorations. Furthermore, I observed the participants’ interaction with their peers and instructors in their graduate course in the summer. I recorded a detailed portrait of the participants’ activities. My observation within the school and university settings served to remind me of the particularities of Chinese schooling.

Document analysis. There are several forms of documents used in my study. I collected policy documents related to beginning teacher’s induction and other contextual documents related to the participants. The participants’ personal journals, portfolios, lesson plans, photographs, and reports at the end of the semester or reflections on their coursework assignments were also collected with their consent. The communications of

school staff members who work professionally with the participants provided me with multiple perspectives.

From Field Text to Research Text

In order to derive research texts from field texts, I constructed a “chronicled or summarized account of what is contained within different sets of field texts” (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 131). Research texts should be only a small part of the overall data that are composed with participants, whereas the amount of field texts that I have collected is much larger.

Specifically, I sorted my field texts, which included sets of transcribed interviews, transcripts of reunion meetings, participants’ reflections, my field notes, and email communication. I placed these in chronological order for each participant. I also recorded the dates, topics involved, and contexts for each of these field texts. Then, I printed out these texts for further analysis. While I was reading and rereading these texts carefully, I used colour markers or sticky notes whenever I identified any meaningful incidents or interesting thoughts from the participants. I realized that I came to a critical point in the research process when I had to determine how to effectively report my participants’ authentic cross-cultural and induction experiences. As I pondered my participants’ experiences by reading the field texts, I gradually arrived at an understanding that these teachers are living in their own authentic worlds that can only be revealed by their unique narrative threads and tensions, rather than some commonalities that I had attempted to identify.

My supervisor, Dr. Xu, used to ask me: “Are your participants’ lives standing still? Write their shifting lives rather than keep asking them the influence of the cross-cultural

experience” (Field notes, July 2014). Indeed, as a narrative inquirer, I need to identify themes and threads, and synthesize them when I analyze and report participants’ “shifting lives.” To this end, I decided to utilize “three-dimensional narrative inquiry space” (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000), which is the principal feature of the field text analysis for this narrative inquiry into beginning teachers. This analytical inquiry consists of several spaces: the temporal (past, present, and future), the personal and the social (interaction), and the contextual (situation and place). This allowed me to examine experiences according to past, present, and future perspectives, along with the social and personal significance of those experiences. The third dimension of place enabled me to consider the contexts of Canada and China as important factors in this inquiry.

While the three-dimensional narrative inquiry space provides me with a lens to examine my participants’ experiences, I also applied three specific interpretative tools: broadening, burrowing, and storying and restorying. According to Connelly and Clandinin (1990) and Craig (2013), broadening is a background that the participants’ stories establish. It situates the research texts in the social, historical journey of events that took place in Canada and China. In my study, I analyzed the context in which this research was situated and participants’ learning and teaching events took place. This includes how the reciprocal learning program in this study was practised, and how participants were situated in the curriculum reform in Chinese schools. I described the background of each participant by examining the details in the whole set of data. I also mentioned elements such as their general family background, values, and social or intellectual life as it related to the study. I delineated the temporal, interactional, and environmental connections among and between the field texts.

Burrowing, in contrast, involves a deeper look at the tensions the beginning teacher participants experienced while coping with the challenges in their induction. I looked closely at particulars and created a detailed account of each participant's experiences of induction. As Connelly and Clandinin (1990) suggest, they “focused on the events’ emotional, moral, and aesthetic qualities; then asked why the event was associated with these feelings ... [which] was aimed at reconstructing a story of the event from the point of view of the person at the time the event occurred” (p. 11). This was the reconstructing of events from the point of view of the participants involved in the study.

Finally, storying and re-storying captures transitions in the participants’ social and personal lives as they made sense of their lived experiences in a way that make them visible to research audience. Storying and re-storying offers a means of deeper contemplation about the challenges and dilemmas experienced by Chinese teacher candidates.

Research Text and Researcher’s Role

I have a dual role in the research. First, I am the researcher of this study. Therefore, my role is to narratively inquire into the moments, relationships, memories, incidents, and considerations that the teacher participants chose to tell me. I also try my best to facilitate their professional growth. As Connelly and Clandinin (1990) describe, the process of narrative inquiry is a shared narrative unity between researcher and participant and it can be seen as benefiting not just the researcher but the research participant in so many ways. Weiguo and Hailiang said we had benefited our own professional learning by having reflected alongside the students through observing. Second, as a participant of the reciprocal learning program, I had unique connections

with the teacher participants in the context of cross-cultural experience in Canada at this particular time in each of our lives.

In exploring the lived experiences of Chinese beginning teacher participants in my study, I chose to retell many of the stories that had been fashioned out of our relationship during and after our Canadian experience. I finally began to draft a narrative account of each participant in relation to my narrative.

I realized that it was impossible for me to retell all the stories that my participants told me because teachers live multiple stories. These stories comprise many plotlines and are related to each other, changing, flowing and competing. I went back to my field notes frequently as I constructed research texts. I spent many hours reading and re-reading the field texts in order to “uncover some common themes and narrative threads” (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 83) in the narratives that were offered by each participant. I tried to understand how each of them approaches his or her world. I wanted to go beyond just articulating common themes; Rather, I wanted to discover unique themes and other narrative threads that were woven into each of the teacher participants’ respective lives. I looked for emergent threads within the narrative accounts of each participant to determine if the evidence is strong enough to characterize a recurring, unifying idea as a theme. Attending to all the characters in my participants’ stories, including teachers, parents, school staff, and community members in combination with all field texts, I then identified storylines and sequenced and organized the story elements. This allowed me to identify elements of a story in the field texts, sequence and organize the story elements, and then present a retold story that conveys the individual experiences.

When I reached the research texts, I listed the topics, threads, and themes that emerged out of the data of each participant and found that the overlapping topics and themes of participants fell into the frame of time: the “during” and “after” of their cross-cultural experiences in Canada. Given that time is such a basic and powerful component to understand change, it made sense to me to let it become the structure of each participant’s stories. I chose to include the “during” section of “cross-cultural experience in Canada,” the “after” section of “induction experience in China,” and “stories going forward” in all participants’ stories in order to emphasize the fact that we all had a “during” and an “after” together. I wrote each section in a way that presents experiences in a community of friends, colleagues, and research participants. In each section, sub-themes were then formulated on the basis of repetitive patterns in the narrative accounts of participants.

I looked across the individual narrative accounts “to inquire into resonant threads or patterns that [I] could discern” (Clandinin, 2013, p. 132) and then retold the stories of the participants’ initial transition of entry into Canada and reentry to China. This was done according to the themes they emphasized, which surfaced from their stories of experience and are related to their induction experiences. For example, in Shan’s stories, the tension between his educational dream and his teaching practice emerges and becomes the center of his first year of teaching. In Siyuan’s stories, he repeatedly revealed the intention of leaving the profession during his first year of teaching. His narratives was centred on why he wanted to leave and how he struggled to adapt and acculturate to his school in the process of induction. In Hailiang’s stories, he repeatedly mentioned his teaching philosophy of connecting geography to everyday life. In

Weiguo's stories, being a reflective teacher is a habit he formed since he had participated in the program and he attributed his success to this habit. I organized each participant's stories in separate individual portrait chapters and entitled each story section with the name of the person, such as "Shan's narratives," "Siyuan's narratives," "Hailiang's narratives," and "Weiguo's narrative." At the beginning of each chapter, I wrote an introductory section to assist the reader in coming to know the history I had with each teacher participant and added some meta-narratives to state my relation with the participants.

In order to improve validity of my research texts, participants were given the opportunity to review the interviews and verify the transcripts and drafts of their narratives. I sent my participants' narratives back for their review and member checking. I also met the participants to discuss my research texts. Informed by the approach to member checking outlined by Clandinin and Connelly (2000), I also asked my participants questions such as "Is this you? Do you see yourself here? Is this the character you want to be when this is read by others?" (p. 148). Some were excited and thankful for the opportunity, and one of them asked for a copy of the Chinese version of his story to keep. Others expressed feelings of satisfaction and appreciation, and they were grateful that their experiences would be shared with others. As I worked through the feedback provided by the participants after the verification meetings, I realized that their responses helped deepen the ways I composed the research texts in many ways.

Theoretical Framework: Three-Dimensional Life Space of Narrative Inquiry

I used the three-dimensional life space (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Xu & Connelly, 2009b) of narrative inquiry: temporality (past-present-future), sociality

(social-personal), and place as a framework to examine the situations and interactions of Chinese teachers' experiences as they unfold in their cross-cultural landscape.

From Xu and Connelly's (2009) statement that learning to think narratively is more important than learning definitions, steps, and methods, I have learned that narrative inquiry is also "a way of thinking about life" (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Connelly & Clandinin, 1990, 2006; Xu & Connelly, 2009b). At the outset of my doctoral study, I categorized beginning teachers' development into several aspects: development of teachers' identity, beliefs, and cross-cultural competence, etc. Dr. Xu advised me to start from the participants' lived experience and think of teachers' induction process as a part of their life-long professional development (personal communication, November 25, 2013). It is an intriguing suggestion and I took it up. I realized that thinking narratively means investing a huge amount of time and energy in getting involved with my participants (Xu et al., 2007). As a researcher, I need to keep away from my intention to get my participants to "tell me the influence of the cross-cultural experience on you". I remind myself that everyone, myself included, is subject to "temporal and contextual contingencies" (Conle, 1999, p.16).

A narrative understanding of the concepts of temporality, sociality and place allows me to reconstruct the seemingly fragmented moments of people's lived experience in narrative unity in a three-dimensional narrative inquiry space from the past to the present and future, in personal and social dimensions, and at different places.

Temporality in Beginning Teachers' Narrative Inquiry

My study has a strong temporal sense. After their cross-cultural trip to Canada, the Chinese teacher candidates who had participated in the Reciprocal Learning Program

returned to SWU to finish their pre-service program. Then, they graduated and entered schools and communities in different places in China. As no experience can stand alone in time, the stories from these beginning teachers do not merely reflect experiences they had at the moment they were told, but also served as a reflection of their teacher preparation in the past and their expectations for the future.

In this study, I paid particular attention to this dimension so that I could take every possible opportunity to notice my participants' changing stories of learning to teach. For example, Siyuan, one of the participants, stated that he had learned a lot from his cross-cultural learning experience in Canada, but he mentioned little about topics related to the application to his teaching practice. Then, he talked non-stop about his struggles in his schools. Although his words were not directly relevant to the questions I asked, they were valuable and represented the focus of his life at that time. Furthermore, I learned to follow and transform an interviewer-interviewee's relationship into that of a narrator and listener. I now realize that it is important not to rush the interview process. It is important to participants' stories, which may or may be not relevant to the research topic and often for several hours (personal communication, August 2011). Listening to participants allows me to see how they make meaning of their experience. Also, I learn to witness and deal with silence and a wide range of emotions in the interviews.

Sociality in Beginning Teachers' Narrative Inquiry

In my study I attended to the beginning teachers' attitudes, "feelings, hopes, desires, aesthetic reactions, and moral dispositions of the person" (Connelly & Clandinin, 2006, p. 480). In addition, I described teachers' social conditions, which refer to "the context including administration, policy, community, and so on" (Connelly & Clandinin, 2006, p. 480). Those social conditions shape events and teachers' lives.

Clandinin and Connelly (2000) point out that the relationship between participant and inquirer is another dimension of the "sociality commonplace" (p. 56). According to Connelly and Clandinin (1990), narrative inquiry is a process of "collaboration involving mutual storytelling and restoring as the research process. The researcher needs to be aware of constructing a relationship in which both voices are heard" (p. 4). Bearing this in mind, I delve into a series of questions: How do I negotiate this relationship with participants? What collaborative exploration takes place with my participants during our work together? As a graduate assistant for the program, I have followed the program participants since 2011. I talked with them in conversations and at reunion meetings and encouraged them when they were in difficulty. Because we spent 3 months together and established trusting relationships during our 3-month stay in Canada in the Reciprocal learning program between SWU and UW, the program participants were comfortable sharing their inner feeling and frustrating or exciting stories with me. I resonated with their experiences because we have shared experiences.

Place in Beginning Teachers' Narrative Inquiry

Different contexts lead to different experiences, and require different interpretations. A narrative inquiry method requires that stories or experiences should be

located in the continuum of place in order to be studied (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000).

When learning about human experience, the inquirer should understand that people behave or experience things differently in different situations, and that their perspective may change when they move from one living space to another. A beginning teacher may behave differently in the classroom, in the staffroom, in parent/teacher interviews, and in graduate courses. As Xu and Connelly (2009b) put it, “place is a determining factor and changes a teacher’s identity as she/he moves from place to place” (p. 224). In my study, the term “place” refers to different living situations or environments such as schools in Windsor, Canada; the Canadian and Chinese university campuses; the participants’ families; and their schools in China. As Huber and Clandinin (2002) point out, the narrative inquirer should also consider the temporality of places, events, and things. In my study, the places the Chinese pre-service teachers have lived and experienced also have temporal characteristics.

CHAPTER 4

NEVER LOSE THE INITIAL ASPIRATION: SHAN'S NARRATIVES⁸

In this chapter, I retell stories of Shan's cross-cultural experience in Canada in 2010 and of how he nurtures his initial educational dream as a beginning teacher in China. In retelling his life stories, I choose to tell many details of his observations in the pre-service program and in the school placements in Windsor, Canada, and of his induction experience in his early years of teaching in China. Narrative inquiry helps me to better reveal what has shaped the Chinese beginning teachers' current and ongoing professional changes, world perspectives, challenges and experiences.

Shan was born and raised in Anhui province, China. His father was a government official, and his mother stayed home to take care of Shan, who was their only child. Shan was greatly influenced by his Chinese Language Arts teacher in the secondary school and cited Confucianism as a major influence: "Due to the influence of my Chinese Language Arts teacher, I follow Confucianism. I am indifferent to fame and fortune and therefore am easily managed. I will always consider others and try to be a gentleman although gentlemen tend to get the short end of the stick"⁹ (personal communication, May 4, 2013). Though Shan had grown up wanting to be an engineer, he did not do well in the Gaokao test, at which time his father suggested to him to become a teacher instead. Shan had never considered teaching as a career choice, but he followed his father's advice and went on to major in biology at SWU. While studying at SWU, Shan won the first prize in a campus-wide teaching competition in which SWU teacher candidates demonstrated

⁸ Pseudonyms have been used for names of all schools and participants in the study.

⁹ All words in double quotation marks and in extended quotations are direct translations from my participants' words, except where indicated. At times, the translation may read somewhat awkwardly in English, but in these cases I wanted to keep it close to the literal meaning of the original phrases, even if the phrasing is unfamiliar to native English speakers.

their teaching skills. When the Reciprocal Learning Program recruited SWU teacher candidates, Dr. Shijian Chen, Vice President of SWU, who developed the program with Dr. Shijing Xu, decided that the winners could attend the pre-departure training. However, only those who passed the final English tests of the pre-departure training could go to Canada. I came to know Shan and other Chinese teacher candidates of the first cohort while I was teaching in the pre-departure training. After a class, Shan confided in me about some of his concerns. Because he lacked confidence in his English ability, he was afraid that he would lose the opportunity to study abroad.

I wanted to help him overcome his fears, so I encouraged him to be more engaged with the group of teacher candidates, and to find ways to develop his English skills. He was eager to follow through on this advice and volunteered to help Siyuan, the leader of the group, with group visa applications. This helped him to integrate with the group and develop positive relationships with his fellow group members. To develop his English language skills, Shan interviewed his high school biology teacher about the latest curriculum reform in China for one of his assignments. Based on this interview, he wrote a 3,000-word report in English: the longest report that Shan had ever written in English. I later spoke with Shan about the pre-departure experience, and he reflected on this time with a great deal of pride: “When looking back on the pre-departure training, I feel a great sense of achievement. I developed solid relationships with other participants and learned a great deal” (personal communication, January 1, 2011). With the efforts of the instructors and students, 22 teacher candidates, including Shan, passed the written and oral tests at the end of the three-month pre-departure training.

Cross-Cultural Experience in Canada

To illustrate Shan's story and lived experience more fully in the three-dimensional life space (Connelly & Clandinin, 2000), I retell the stories of Shan's cross-cultural experience in Canada from my field notes as a guide teacher, Shan's weekly reflections, and debriefing meeting minutes. As a guide teacher for the first cohort, I faced a dilemma when transitioning from my role as a language teacher to a teacher developer. Following the development of the Reciprocal Program, I found evolving stories about my participants as our lives interwove.

“I Hope to Learn the Different Approaches to Teaching”

After the pre-departure training, 22 Chinese teacher candidates and I, as the guide teacher, began our three-month cross-cultural experience in September 2010 in Windsor. We audited the pre-service program of the Faculty of Education at UW in the first month. Dr. Xu held a seminar on how to be a reflective teacher and required us to write weekly reflections and held debriefing meetings. Since Chinese teacher candidates had not written reflections, Shan proposed that everybody share them, and provided examples by uploading his own reflections to our QQ group. In one of Shan's reflections from the first week, he pointed out that the pre-service program in Canada emphasized teacher candidates' motivation to teach and described his experience in his first biology class:

As soon as the class began, the professor asked us to fill out a questionnaire, in which the first question was “why do you want to be a teacher?” It was the second time I had been asked this question that day. I want to be a teacher because I want to help students . . . “What do we expect to learn from this course?” I hope to

learn the different approaches to teaching in Canada. (Shan's reflection, September 15, 2010)

The following day, impressed by Shan's keen observation after reading his reflection, we talked about his plans during the three-month stay in Canada. Shan stated his reflection after the first week of observation:

I find Canadian professors are different from Chinese professors who focus on lecturing the textbook. I feel that they give students freedom and respect each person's opinion in Canada. Chinese students' thinking is too scripted—only a few of them are innovative. I want to motivate my students to think independently and take action. (Field notes, September 16, 2010)

“A Good Lesson Should Be Interesting”

With the purpose of learning “the different approaches to teaching,” Shan paid particular attention to teaching strategies. In the second week of auditing the pre-service program, he wrote on some of the differences between Chinese and Canadian pedagogies:

Canadian professors emphasize that the class should be interesting. For example, the only requirement for lesson planning in the biology class was “making your topics interesting.” It is different from China, where Chinese professors may not emphasize that teacher candidates' presentations should be interesting. (Shan's reflection, September 19, 2010)

When observing teacher candidates' presentations of their lesson-plans in the biology class, he posed two questions: “How do Canadian teacher candidates make their classes interesting?” and “What are the knowledge and skills they focus on?” (Field notes,

October 2, 2010). He was impressed by his Canadian classmates' creative and innovative presentations, and he reflected on "the advanced teaching strategies":

Although their way of teaching is not drastically different from the Chinese way, the effects of class discussions are totally different. If the assessment approach and criteria are different, what are the functions of the advanced teaching philosophy and strategies? I am writing to encourage myself to make some changes in this aspect.

(Shan's reflection, September 17, 2010)

"Do You Like Math?"

Chinese teacher candidates had two school placements (2 weeks each) in the local schools of the Great Essex County District School Board, Windsor, Ontario, Canada.

Shan was placed in the Southwood Public School. One time, when I accompanied the Chinese student teachers in their school placements, I observed a Grade 7 math class with Shan. Mrs. Baker, his associate teacher, had students do an exercise in which the final question caught our attention: "Do you like math?" Shan helped Mrs. Baker mark after the quiz.

Shan helped Mrs. Baker mark after the quiz. To our surprise, we found a few students wrote, "It depends." At first, Shan did not give these students points. Then, Mrs. Baker checked Shan's marking and gave those students points. Shan agreed with Mrs. Baker and offered his reasoning for this change:

I like this question. It is impossible to find this question on tests in China because teachers predict that all students will write, "Yes." I hope that I can include the question on a test one day: "Do you like biology?" In fact, it involves the most basic question in education: "What on earth is the purpose of education and

why?” This is the question I consider most often since I arrived in Canada. (Field notes, October 27, 2010)

During a debriefing meeting with Chinese student teachers the following week, Shan said, “I feel ashamed that we emphasize the importance of teaching strategies too much in China, which is too superficial. Although I won first prize in the teaching competition in SWU, I do not think I live up to this award now” (Debriefing meeting minutes, November 5, 2010). He continued, “It is too narrow-minded to think of how to prepare one lesson well. If teachers only focus on achieving the goals for one lesson, how can they achieve the overall goals of education?” (Debriefing meeting minutes, November 5, 2010).

“Is There Anything in Common?”

Sometimes, debriefing meetings were held with the Chinese teacher candidates at the end of the day or on weekends; sometimes, the school principal or teachers did it with them at the school. After two weeks of the first school placement, Chinese student teachers were placed in three secondary schools to observe for 2 weeks. I visited them at their schools, observed and debriefed together.

One day, Shan told me that Mrs. Taylor, a special education teacher and the contact person for Chinese student teachers at West Windsor High School, would hold a meeting to debrief with them. As a guide teacher, I attended the debriefing meeting with seven Chinese student teachers. At the beginning of the meeting, Mrs. Taylor asked us about the similar and different aspects between Canadian and Chinese education. We listed many differences, for example, school uniforms, time schedules on school days, and special education. However, when Mrs. Taylor asked, “Is there anything in

common?” (Field notes, November 9, 2010), we all fell silent. After the discussion, Shan wrote in his reflection in Chinese:

“Is there anything in common?” “Didn’t we observe this point?” After consideration, I find some similar things: there are naughty students in both Canadian and Chinese schools that toss around paper balls...Does it mean that we don’t have sharp eyes? I do not think so. (Shan’s reflection, November 9, 2010)

On the same day, a debriefing meeting was held for SWU teacher candidates in the Faculty of Education after school. Mrs. Gabriella, the director of the field experience, asked SWU teacher candidates the same question: “Have you found any similarities?” Shan, who was standing beside Mrs. Gabriella, thought for a while and replied, “Usually, we focus on the differences of Chinese and Canadian education” (Field notes, November 9, 2010). Shan spoke to me in Chinese afterwards:

I thought for a long time about the fact that we could not find similarities. I agree with Dr. Xu’s views about the advantages of Chinese education. However, as a visiting student, how much can I know about Canadian education from my observation? During my 2-month experience in Canada, the more I observe and reflect, the more I feel that Canadian education is advanced, and the issues of education in China become rather grim. I believe that time will tell us the answer. Although I am passionate about making changes in China, I do not have the ability to do so since I am young. When I am finally capable of doing it, I fear that reality will dull my ambition by then. I have observed the different education system in Canada. (Interview with Shan, December 12, 2010)

At this point in the conversation, the look on Shan’s face, which had been amiable,

transformed into one of impassioned excitement as he raised his voice and asserted that these differences had profoundly influenced on his understanding of teaching. This made me wonder about the ongoing narratives of his induction in China. What do “differences” mean to a Chinese teacher candidate who is exposed to both Canadian and Chinese schooling? How do the cross-cultural experiences in Canada influence them? The narratives and themes that follow help explore these questions.

Being a Beginning Teacher in China: Shan’s Cross-Cultural Experience

I retell Shan’s cross-cultural experience in Canada with particular attention to how he learned “the different approaches to teaching in Canada.” I feel strongly about his desire to inspire students to be independent thinkers and make his teaching interesting in China. I have kept in touch with Shan, attended debriefing meetings with Shan and other Chinese teacher candidates of the first cohort, conducted conversational interviews with Shan, and wrote my field notes. In the following parts of the chapter, I retell Shan’s induction experience as a beginning teacher from his first year of teaching to the fourth year of teaching in Chongqing, China.

Conflicting Philosophies of Teaching in First Year of Teaching

When Shan returned from Canada to SWU in December 2010, another program participant told him that Xinhua High School was recruiting because of its booming student numbers. Shan applied to Xinhua High School¹⁰ and was hired. In the summer of 2011, he attended a school-based, 4-week, new teacher training. When he came back to SWU to visit me on one of the weekends, we talked about his training, and he said: “The training introduced us to the motto of my school: “life is education,” as well as the

¹⁰ The high school in China includes junior high (Grade 7-9) and senior high (Grade 10-12).

discipline; however, it focused on theories rather than teaching practice”(Interview with Shan, August 25, 2010).

“Why are there so many differences?” After Shan finished training as a beginning teacher, I paid him a visit before he started at Xinhua High School. He was happy to see me and showed me around the campus in downtown Chongqing. There were some sculptures and posters on campus to demonstrate the school’s long history and mottos of education. I learned that Mr. Xingzhi Tao (1891-1946), a famous Chinese educator and a follower of Dewey, founded Xinhua High School in the 1930s (Xinhua High School, 2012).

In front of a poster of “life is education,” Shan told me that Mr. Tao had made this concept the principle of Xinhua High School. He commented in Chinese:

Education should originate from and be applied to life. Canadian biology textbooks do not focus on difficult and systematic concepts since we may not use the specific knowledge learned in high school in our daily lives in the future. ... I am glad to know that the new curriculum reform in China targets this aspect.

(Interview with Shan, August 30, 2011)

I agreed with Shan and said, “Learning is closely linked with real life in schools in Canada.” Shan replied:

It is also advocated in China now. But I wonder why there are so many differences between education in China and in the West? They are two totally different models. I doubt the trend of learning from the U.S. model in education will continue because the situation in China is different. ... Do they have any exam guidelines in the West; In China, teachers need exam guidelines and they do

not know how to teach without them. (Interview with Shan, August 30, 2011)

While Shan was speaking, his voice grew louder when emphasizing the differences between the Chinese and Canadian education systems. When asked what the new curriculum of biology advocates, Shan replied “student-centred,” and “inquiry-based learning” (Interview with Shan, August 30, 2011). However, he also pointed out there were cases of pseudo inquiry-based learning. He told me that he attended a workshop called “*Comparison of Chinese and American inquiry-based learning.*” There was an example he quoted on why earthworms crawl out of the ground after the rain: “The answer to this question is still up for debate” (Huang & Xu, 2015, p. 477). He continued:

As a biology teacher, I should teach my students how to think and explore science as well as how to develop their problem-solving skills. I do not think teachers in Canadian classrooms make any definitive claims because the process of the inquiry is more important than the answer to the question. (Interview with Shan, August 30, 2011)

Shan recalled his observations of a writing lesson on the topic of “Better,” taught by his associate teacher, Mrs. Baker, at Southwood Public School in Windsor, Canada:

Canadian students wrote about interesting topics: PS3 is better than X-BOX¹¹; small dogs are better than big dogs. Chinese students may be not able to write on these topics because they know that they could not get good grades if they compare two computer games. Their imagination completely falls behind their Canadian counterparts. I must encourage my students to be brave and independent thinkers, and teach them how to think. ... Although I have been trying to expand

¹¹ PS is a handheld game console produced by Sony, and the XBOX Portable is an American handheld game console

my thinking, I was educated this way, and it is hard for me to know how to change my students. (Interview with Shan, August 30, 2011)

“I have to find the balance.” With the hope of cultivating students to be “brave and independent thinkers” and puzzling over the differences in Canadian and Chinese education, Shan began his first year of teaching. I expected that his students and colleagues at the school would like him. When Shan visited me at the end of the first semester, I began our conversation by asking him, “Have you adapted to your school after one semester of teaching?” Shan answered, “No, I have not. Some of my students have made some progress, and I will continue to motivate them and change the others.

“How do you motivate them?” I asked.

He replied: “For instance, I talked about different learning styles that I observed in Canadian classrooms and how their Canadian counterparts learned...I told them about the special needs students in Centre Secondary School” (Interview with Shan, January 3, 2012). All of a sudden, Shan changed the topic and said: “Frankly, I have a lot of pressure. Teachers face pressure from all sides if they cannot improve their students’ test scores.”

I understood his dilemma and encouraged him to teach in his own way.

Shan replied, “There will be some warning signs, like being transferred to teach junior high school if teachers fail to improve students’ test scores. The administrators only evaluate teachers according to their students’ test scores.”

I asked, “It is hard for the beginning teachers to compete with the veteran teacher.”

Two of Shan's three classes were at the bottom of the grade in the first mid-term examination. When asked the reason, he answered: "I did not realize writing exercises do improve the students' ability to answer questions on the exam at the beginning. Instead, I focused on developing their ways of thinking" (Interview with Shan, January 3, 2012).

In practice, Shan wanted to encourage students' discussion and independent thinking rather than memorizing the standard answer. After going over the exercises, he always encouraged his students to consider that their answer might not be correct in some circumstances. However, Shan puzzled over some students' response:

Some students are not happy: "How can you tell us that this is not the only answer to the question? How can we recite it? What should we do?" When I tell students that my answers differ from the standard answers, they say, "Mr. Li, could you please stop preaching. What is in the textbook is the truth. Do not confuse us." (Interview with Shan, January 3, 2012)

Shan was frustrated by the fact that students just wanted to memorize standardized answers: "Students place too much emphasis on the examinations. If they do not perform well in the exam, they may attribute their failure to their teachers" (Interview with Shan, January 3, 2012).

"You may need to find the balance between focusing on key concepts and improving students' abilities to think independently," I advised.

Shan replied, "Yes, I have to find the balance; however, I still assign the least homework, and I am proud that I have not occupied any students' time after class" (Interview with Shan, January 3, 2012).

“Feeling a sense of powerlessness.” Shan also had difficulties with other teachers, particularly when suggesting changing lesson plans to the Teaching and Research Group. When discussing the order of lessons, he proposed teaching Mendal’s laws before meiosis, suggesting, “This order is consistent with the development of the scientific discovery. It is the order of the latest text book although teaching meiosis first may make it easier for students to understand the Mendal’s laws” (Interview with Shan, January 3, 2012).

However, the director and other colleagues insisted on teaching according to the old textbooks, stating that there was no difference so long as students’ test scores were high. Shan did not understand why his colleagues insisted on teaching based on the old textbooks rather than the latest curriculum reform, ending the anecdote with a rhetorical question: “Is it because they do not want to change?”

All teachers, according to Shan, especially the new teachers, are required to open their classes to colleagues and members of the supervision committee, which consist of administrators and leaders of the specific Teaching and Research Group¹² (jiaoyanzu 教研组), for observation. Under the pressure of improving students’ test scores, several incidents occurred to make Shan doubt his choice of being a teacher. Shan said:

Mr. Ding, one of the veteran biology teachers, came to observe one of my classes without advance notice. After teaching, I went to Mr. Ding’s office for advice because I did not teach well that time. Mr. Ding just said he would help me and would write positive comment on my lesson. However, other colleagues told me

¹² It is composed of teachers from the same disciplines, such as Biology Teaching and Research Group, aiming to improve the quality of teaching by organizing teachers’ research work, summarizing and communicating their teaching experiences, increasing teachers’ professional skill.

that Mr. Ding said my class was the worst and had serious problems in teaching.

(Interview with Shan, April 30, 2012)

Another incident happened after one of Shan's classes did not do well in an exam. Mr. Wu, a head teacher and a physics teacher of this class, observed one of Shan's classes. At a meeting of all the department chairs, Mr. Wu criticized Shan's teaching and said he had significant problems. Shan was despondent:

I could not understand why Mr. Wu did not communicate with me directly. I did not offend anyone, but people tend to form stereotypes about new teachers, and it is hard to remove that negative impression. All my friends think I am a good teacher, but none of the administrators think so. They just evaluate us by the students' test scores or whether we stay in the office after class. (Interview with Shan, April 30, 2012)

He told me that he might not be able to continue to teach Grade 12 since his "students' test scores were not good enough" (Interview with Shan, April 30, 2012). When I asked whether he considered compromising and shifting the focus on improving students' test scores, Shan said it was not his "initial intention to teach." He then offered insights into his ideal teaching situation: "It is meaningless to teach just for the test. I want to teach as my educational dream, but I find I can't teach my way. ... If the situation does not change, I will consider changing my career" (Interview with Shan, April 30, 2012). I asked whether he had communicated with his colleagues and if they had shared similar feelings. Shan detailed some of his frustration:

It is hard to find any of my colleagues with such innovative thinking because they do not have the cross-cultural experience. I observed and experienced different

approaches to teaching in Canada. I saw, then I reflected and compared, and I formed my own ideas... Therefore, I felt puzzled. I do not know what I am pursuing exactly, and this is why I feel lost. When I observed in West Windsor High School, I liked the science teacher, Mr. Downes. I remember asking Mr. Downes a question about whether he felt bored of teaching after 13 years. To my surprise, he replied “Yes!” even though I never saw any attitude of “being bored” from him. Mr. Downes explained that he should not reveal any sign of impatience in front of the students since teachers’ attitudes could heavily influence students’ moods. I still keep a book he gave to me, and it inspires me to hold on to my dreams. I am in pain because I think a lot. I feel a sense of powerlessness.

(Interview with Shan, April 30, 2012)

Making Changes in the Classroom in Second Year of Teaching

In the second year of teaching, Shan continued to teach his best class to Grade 12 and two new classes in Grade 11. Although Shan felt hurtful in two classroom observations, his colleagues of the Teaching and Research Group of Biology in his grade believed in his teaching ability. They suggested that he participate in a school-based teaching competition.

Feeling a sense of acknowledgement. The first *New Sprout* (*Xin miao* 新苗) Teaching Competition was held as “a way of training novice teachers who have less than three years of experience” in Xinhua High School (Huang & Xu, 2015). The principal observed and praised Shan’s teaching, and he won the first prize in this competition. The award is an acknowledgement of Shan’s teaching ability. Shan shared his pedagogy of connecting teaching to students’ everyday lives in a homecoming activity, which was

held by some 2010 and 2011 cohorts who returned to SWU for graduate studies:

Take the *gongkaike* 公开课¹³ (public lesson) as an example. I began the class with the problem of a dairy-product shortage ... a super powerful cow can produce three times more than others. How do we apply what we learn to solve the problem of a lack of milk? ... Students are motivated when they can apply what they have learned to a real-life situation. I normally start teaching with what students are interested in and have access to in their real lives. (Field notes, July 21, 2013)

“How do you come up with such ideas?” I asked.

Shan replied, “Because I believe I should make teaching interesting. My school was founded by Mr. Tao Xingzhi, who advocated for ‘life is education,’ which implies that education should originate from and be applied to life” (Field notes, July 21, 2013).

Shan’s words resonated with Mei, another participant of 2010 SWU cohort, who was teaching junior high school in Guizhou province in southwest China. She said, “I am disappointed and do not have a sense of achievement after one year of teaching” (Field notes, July 21, 2013). Shan advised her to make a small change in her daily teaching. He encouraged, “Nothing is perfect. I had a class that was ranked at the bottom in every subject and, fortunately, I adjusted my expectations. My goal is to enjoy teaching and enable my students to learn with joy” (Field notes, July 21, 2013).

When asked why he did not worry in the second year of teaching any more, Shan recalled his experience:

¹³ Public or open lesson (*gongkaike* 公开课) is a feature in Chinese teacher development. It involves a teacher giving a lesson to an audience of peers to observe and then is followed by a debriefing meeting in which the observers provide critical comments. These peers come from within or outside the school. Words in single quotation marks include technical terms of the educational system, such as ‘public lessons’, ‘tejjiaoshi 特级教师’

My thoughts were most active at that time. On the one hand, I became familiar with the situation in local high schools. On the other hand, I still held on to my previous ideas. I realized that it was not the time for practising inquiry-based teaching in Grade 12 and I felt obligated to engage in writing and reviewing exercises. Therefore, I put aside my innovative ideas and focused on having students to write and review exercises.

Shan admitted that people should compromise sometimes. This statement resonated with me as he offered his thoughts on the future of teaching: “I believe that we are the mainstay of future teachers. The new wave will push forward and the old one will fade away. Young teachers will hold up the sky one day” (Field notes, July 21, 2013).

Feeling a sense of confusion. When I came back to SWU in the summer of 2013, Shan and Siyuan visited me. Shan was dismayed to tell us that he had a bad time due to an issue with one of his students:

I confiscated a student’s iPod Touch because she played with it in class. When I returned the phone to the girl, she found her personal photo album was viewed. Then, she made a scene ... with the head teacher’s coordination, the girl asked me to compensate her with a 500-RMB Casio watch. To make matters worse, the girl’s mother texted me at night and advised me to teach another class. I felt disrespected. ... Although many subject teachers ignore that girl due to her low scores, I often spent time encouraging her. (Ju’s field notes, May 3, 2013)

Siyuan commented, “It hurts Shan’s dignity. For Shan, it is important to have boundaries between students and teacher” (Field notes, May 3, 2013). Shan agreed with

Siyuan. Without any further consequence, Shan continued to teach in the class and no one mentioned this incident anymore.

In a phone conversation with me at a later date, Shan mentioned his updated opinion: “A job is a job ... boundary between students and teachers should be clear cut” (Interview with Shan, December 6, 2013). Shan said that his colleagues thought differently:

Some teachers feel that, if they can improve students’ scores by showing concern for their students, they will do it. This way of thinking is utilitarian. If the veteran head teachers place emphasis on caring students, the beginning teachers will feel it is right and they should learn from them ... however, I told my colleagues that a head teacher is a head teacher, and not the parent of students. How can you do everything for students like their parents? (Interview with Shan, December 6, 2013)

When I asked Shan why his idea on the teacher-student relationship was different from others, he elaborated on his observations of the teacher’s role in Canada. He mentioned that the contact teacher at West Windsor High School, who always emphasized the boundary between students and teachers, and being professional. He recalled that there was a button in the class for emergencies in the school. He reminded me of the function of the button: “If a teacher presses it, another professional learning support teacher will come to deal with the students” (Interview with Shan, December 6, 2013).

Keeping the Original Aspiration in Third and Fourth Years of Teaching

Shan was successful as a second-year beginning teacher in teaching Grade 12, and

he was assigned to teach Grade 12 again on campus in downtown Chongqing.

“I will not judge which type of inquiry pedagogy is better.” In the summer of 2014, I shared the transcripts of our interviews with Shan for review and verification. Shan was deeply touched to read the transcripts. The transcripts reminded him how he described himself as a teacher who had gradually lost his motivation to teach (Huang & Xu, 2015).

Shan: How could I have such deep thoughts at that time? I was so thoughtful back then. Since the interview took place not long after my Windsor experience back then, I had lots of thoughts about education. Thanks to your record, I am thinking about how I've grown as a teacher.

Ju: Shan, can you see changes in yourself from the interview in August 2011 to now?

Shan: I am gradually experiencing less and less fun from working as a teacher as time goes by. I feel it is very difficult to motivate myself in such an environment in my school ... people will work, but will not try their best. I will keep my original aspiration and hope it leads me to succeed. (Interview with Shan, August 6, 2014)

When asked about his updated idea on inquiry-based learning, he had different views on inquiry-based learning, stating that:

I will not judge which way of inquiry pedagogy is better in China or the West.

However, we could focus on what skills or abilities we want to cultivate.

Although inquiry pedagogy in the West is like being a shepherd—I mean teachers do not provide much guidance—the whole atmosphere is open. It is worth our

learning. I do not think 'copying' or 'borrowing' superficial activities will work for Chinese education. Even though I only had only a four-week school placement in Canada, I noticed and remembered many details about educational practice from this experience. I feel fortunate to know Mrs. Taylor, Mrs. Baker and Mr. Downes, whom I believe to be the best teachers. If I have another chance to go back to Windsor to observe classrooms, I would have a different perspective and pay attention to more details. (Interview with Shan, August 6, 2014)

I encouraged Shan to practice according to the principles of the curriculum reform and improve students' academic performance. Shan replied:

It is not realistic to improve students' academic achievements merely through the curriculum reform. Contexts in China and Canada are different. In China, it is impossible for students to get good grades if students do not spend much time on learning. (Interview with Shan, August 6, 2014)

He said he had been looking for a point of balance, and made an analogy of balancing on a number scale. By using Siyuan and himself as examples, he said:

Siyuan and I are looking for the way to provide excellent education. We are approaching zero [on the scale] from opposite ends. ... Siyuan started from negative two while I began from positive two. In the end, he may end up at minus one while I will be at minus one. We are compromising in our own way: on some things we cannot; on others we can. (Interview with Shan, August 6, 2014)

Shan iterated the importance of compromise:

At the beginning of my teaching career, my attitude was 'No compromise!'; however, now I am able to compromise ... remember my initial dreams and seize

opportunities whenever they appear. As an old saying goes, “Everybody wants to change the world when s/he is a child, however, we are changed by the world in the end.” (Interview with Shan, August 6, 2014)

Being a mentor to Mr. Wang. In the above conversation, Shan told me that he chose to teach Grade 11 on the campus in downtown Chongqing. However, the announcement of Shan’s new placement came quickly: he would teach the 11th grade and would be required to move to the Ningping campus in the countryside. In the next faculty meeting, before the new semester began, Shan was appointed to be the leader of the Lesson Preparation Group¹⁴ (beikezu 备课组) of Grade 11 of the Ningping campus. Shan called me and expressed his mixed feelings at this appointment: Although he had the seniority of the group as the only one who had taught Grade 12 twice, he was “in an awkward position because [he was] the youngest teacher” (Field notes, September 6, 2014). I encouraged Shan that it was an excellent chance for him to “make some changes,” and to obtain more discretion to practice his educational goals (Field notes, September 6, 2014).

As the leader of the Lesson Preparation Group, Shan was responsible for hosting a weekly meeting of the lesson preparation group and decided what content should be covered. His fellow biology teachers agreed on the order of teaching Mendal’s laws this time in contrast to the arguments from three years ago. In one conversation, Shan asked me whether he should report Mr. Wang’s issues to the administrators. Mr. Wang, one of the biology teachers in Shan’s group, got complaints from his students for his poor quality of teaching and unsatisfactory academic results. He understood Mr. Wang’s

¹⁴ In Chinese schools, lesson preparation consists of teachers in the department of the same subject and at the same grade level.

frustration. He was concerned that the administrators might not be patient and might transfer Mr. Wang to a junior high school, which would be a kind of penalty. Shan spent time and energy helping Mr. Wang by observing his classes and discussing with him how to teach concepts; however, sometimes, Mr. Wang could not apply the teaching strategies into practice. Shan had to ask him to focus on having students write exercises and review because he would not make mistakes this way.

Stories Going Forward: Continuing the Connection With the Reciprocal Learning Program

In the above narratives, I retell Shan's narratives of keeping his original aspiration since his cross-cultural experience in Canada. A fifth cohort of UW teacher candidates visited SWU in March 2015. When Shan visited Dr. Xu, he told her how his new campus incorporated Mr. Tao Xingzhi's philosophy that "life is education" through an experimental field where students planted trees, fruits, and vegetables. He invited the UW group to visit the Ningping campus.

Another visit was scheduled for a daylong teaching practice in English and biology by the UW teacher candidates. Shan demonstrated a biology lesson for Jane, a UW teacher candidate in biology, who taught a lesson on natural selection in another of Shan's classes. He asked Jane about the teaching goal of the lesson, and if "the goal [was] requested by the curriculum". Jane said that she designed the goal by herself based on both her understanding of the topic and curriculum requirements. Shan explained: "In China, we have exam guidelines and curriculum. Teachers usually plan lessons based on exam guideline" (personal communication, April 15, 2015). Jane understood this situation and suggest that perhaps this is "because there is Gaokao and students have to strive to get good grades", and as a result "there is usually one specific answer to a

question on test” (personal communication, April 15, 2015). While Shan liked Jane’s inquiry activity of “flying airplane,” he had concerns about the efficiency of class time. Regard to students’ responses to the question of “What can you tell me about factors influence Natural Selection? It seemed for Jane that students recited previously memorized answers. Shan commented, “Chinese students might not get used to an open-ended inquiry question. I do not like students to recite the ‘standard’ answer” (Field notes, April 15, 2015). He raised his concern in the end of the conversation: “I would like to guide students in inquiry learning, but students, parents as well as administrators do not want to take the risk of affecting students’ test grades. I wonder whether Canadian teachers have such pressure” (Field notes, April 15, 2015).

Shan wants to have the opportunity to be a head teacher and establish a sister class with one of the high school in Windsor next year. Shan expressed again that he genuinely appreciated the program and my writing to record his growth as a teacher: “I want to achieve my educational dream... As my teaching experience grows, I can achieve less and less ... see my growth with your help. I used to think I didn’t change, however, I did change, and became mature” (Interview with Shan, April 15, 2015).

In this chapter, I recounted Shan’s narrative. These stories reveal differences between China and Canada in terms of learning and conception of good teaching. They also show Shan’s values of teaching and teacher-student relationship in Chinese context. The stories suggest more questions than answers for the question of cross-cultural teacher development and teacher induction in my inquiry. In the following chapter, my inquiry into Chinese beginning teacher’s induction is taken up with Siyuan’s narrative, a story about contemplation to exit.

CHAPTER 5

CONTEMPLATING AN EXIT: SIYUAN'S NARRATIVES

The name Siyuan, a pseudonym chosen by the participant, comes from a famous Chinese saying “Yinshui siyuan” 饮水思源 (Be grateful of favours received and do not forget where you came from). I met both Siyuan and Shan in the pre-departure training of the Reciprocal Learning Program. Shan, who was Siyuan's roommate since the training, commented, “Siyuan is my role model. He is a very helpful person and hardworking: he got up at 6:00 a.m. to read English, and worked until midnight every day in the pre-departure training” (Field notes, September 19, 2011). Siyuan was the only one who accepted the role of group leader among his cohort and, as such, was responsible for helping with invitation letters, visa applications, and collecting group members' results of tuberculosis (TB) tests with Shan.

Coming from a single-parent low-income family in the countryside of Sichuan province, Siyuan is appreciative to his high school teacher: “It is my high school head teacher's caring nature that inspired me to become a teacher ... get my tuition fees waived and secure several scholarships” (Interview with Siyuan, July 30, 2013). When he graduated from high school in 2007, Siyuan followed his grandfather's suggestion and was enrolled in the Free Teacher Education Program in SWU in China. In one conversation, he emphasized:

I would like to strive for a better life of my family ... do not think I will be a teacher for the rest of my life. I wished to be a teacher of unique style and have a profound understanding of education, characteristics of high school students. It was my family that wanted me to apply for the pre-service program. I did not

have any choice because I had the responsibility for my family. (Interview with Siyuan, August 27, 2011)

Cross-Cultural Experiences in Canada

During his 3-month stay in Canada, Siyuan was also a valuable helper to the program coordinator, and myself, the guide teacher. He was an excellent mediator and offered insightful suggestions on how to make our cohort a harmonious community. For example, he was attuned to how some students preferred to be spoken to, and suggested I changed my tone to accommodate each student. In the school placement, he was also the group leader in a six-person group and coordinated between schools and student teachers. In the field trips, he was the person who did the head check and carried food and drinks, and when we did the cleaning on the last day, he made sure all kitchen items and bedding were cleaned and packed carefully.

In the first month, Siyuan and other candidates audited the pre-service program at the University of Windsor. When asked why they wanted to be a teacher during a class discussion in one of the biology teachable class in the pre-service program, Siyuan's response spoke of his experience with his high school teaching: "I want to be a teacher because I want to make a difference in my students' lives. I have seen so many people's lives changed thanks to good education and I believe in the power of education" (Field notes, October 20, 2010).

"The Principal and the Teachers Are Equal in Canada"

After auditing courses in the pre-service program, Siyuan attended a 2-week school placement in Westwood Elementary School with other five Chinese teacher candidates. As the guide teacher, I accompanied them to visit the school on the first day.

All of us felt the warm welcoming atmosphere as soon as we arrived. The principal, Mrs. Lucas, announced our arrival at a meeting and wrote down our Chinese names to practice pronouncing them. Then, she gave us a campus tour and we were amazed to find she could call each student's name. At the end of the observation on the first day, Mrs. Lucas debriefed with us. Siyuan wrote a reflection about his first day in English:

The principal, Mrs. Lucas, welcomed us warmly by shaking hands with each one of us. She sat down with us, talked about what we saw, and explained the basic information about the school to us. Teachers always say "hello" to each other. Those people work together to make the school run smoothly. (Siyuan's reflection, October 22, 2010)

On the second Friday of the school placement, it was the monthly teachers' professional development day, and we were invited to participate. During the Professional Learning Community, Mrs. Lucas, the principal, discussed the Education Quality and Accountability Office (EQAO) with teachers. She sat with the teachers just like their friend, and teachers were free to interrupt each other's talk. Siyuan wrote a reflection in English on this experience:

The principal and the teachers are equal in Canada. Teachers and other staff do not work for the principal, but work with the principal. No one is superior to another. This fair atmosphere makes the principal, teachers and other staff work together more effectively. In my school, I will respect each colleague, whatever subject he (she) is teaching. Respecting every staff in the school; we just do different kinds of jobs to help students to learn. When it comes to the principal, I will give him/her the same respect. The principal is responsible for providing the

teachers [with] whatever they need to teach. I won't hesitate to ask for help.
(Siyuan's reflection, October 22, 2010)

“No Learning Will Happen Without Relationship in Canada”

The harmonious and collegial atmosphere of Westwood Elementary School touched both Chinese teacher candidates and me. In our weekly debriefing after the second week of school placement, Siyuan shared his several observations in English:

It was my associate teacher Mr. Lorb's 3rd grade class. A girl seemed to be very happy today. Mr. Lorb asked her to share her happiness. He listened to her carefully. We should have ears for the students. No learning will happen without relationship. The teacher should be concerned about the characteristics of the students, both psychologically and physically, which will make the relationship much easier to build. Teachers stand at the gate of the school to welcome students in the morning and accompany them all throughout the school day. If students like the teacher, their scores will be good. Through building relationships with students, teachers' charisma will be formed. (Debriefing meeting minutes, October 23, 2010)

He also shared another observation about Mr. Brown's Grade six class in the weekly debriefing: “A student fell asleep in class. Mr. Brown, the associate teacher, did not wake him up. He asked us, who was observing in the class as student teachers, not to disturb this student” (Debriefing meeting minutes, October 23, 2010). Siyuan and other Chinese student teachers were impressed the way that Mr. Brown treated this student with great patience.

Siyuan commented, “If a student falls asleep in Chinese classroom, the teacher

must feel disrespectful and be angry with him/her” (Debriefing meeting minutes, October 23, 2010). He continued, “I will show my care to each of student, and let him or her know I am always there to listen and help” (Debriefing meeting minutes, October 23, 2010).

Teaching in China as a Beginning Teacher

In the previous section, I retold Siyuan’s cross-cultural experience in Canada, and felt strongly about his reflection of the teacher-student, teacher-principal relationship in Canada. I am confident in him and wish him to be an excellent teacher in his school in China. I follow Siyuan during his first three years’ of teaching in China through the interviews, my field notes, and debriefing meetings. The chronology of Siyuan’s induction experiences at Furen High School is organized around his intention of leaving his school. Words like ‘alone’ and ‘isolated’ punctuated his narrative as a beginning teacher.

Encountering Challenges and Opportunities as an Intern

It was in the middle of December when Siyuan and other program participants successfully finished their three-month cross-cultural experiences in Canada. Siyuan was successfully employed by Furen High School one month after he returned to China.

Professional landscape of Furen High School. Siyuan was thrilled to introduce me to his school, which is one of the best high schools in the province, where 70-80% of his school’s graduates are accepted by key universities each year. This is a stark contrast with the 3% overall provincial average percentage of students who passed the cutoff score for entering key universities. He described that he “will have no regret if teaching in Furen.” In his resume, he wrote: “I want to be given a chance to revitalize my ‘cell’ of

education and contribute to education” (Interview with Siyuan, August 27, 2011). Siyuan considered several issues based on his observations in the school placement in Windsor, Canada: “how to establish a harmonious relationship between teachers and students; how to make students learn happily and efficiently; how to develop each student’s individualized learning plan and help him/her to reach his/her best potential” (Field notes, January 3, 2011). Siyuan was assigned to teach two classes of biology in Grade 7 as a student teacher¹⁵ in the last semester of his pre-service program.

The reality was “too harsh.” As soon as Siyuan returned to the main campus after teaching as a student teacher, I went to his city to visit him in August 2011. Into a comfortable armchair in a nearby teahouse he sank, pressured down by a physical exhaustion that haunted his body and seemed to reach his soul, Siyuan explained his daily routine: “I usually get up at 6 a.m. and go to bed around 1 a.m. I worked overtime and went to sleep at 4 a.m. each day this week” (Interview with Siyuan, August 27, 2011). When asked how the reality differed from his expectations, he told me that he found the reality was “too harsh”:

The situation was different than I expected. It is said that teachers’ work will be evaluated according to students’ test scores and administrators will talk with teachers whose students are ranked at the bottom. As a student teacher, I earned only 600 Yuan a month after the deduction of insurance. Teachers of different subjects and grade levels earn varying salaries ... I am not able to contribute to my family’s finances. (Interview with Siyuan, August 27, 2011)

¹⁵ Some schools in China require the fourth year teacher candidates to have several months’ school placement in their schools in their fourth year of the pre-service program.

In a seminar organized by the Institute for Educational Research of the city, Siyuan found that “[Senior teachers] do not listen carefully when attending the seminar on the new curriculum.” He suggested, “They think they only need to lecture on key concepts in teaching, but the curriculum reform should be about more than changing textbooks” (Interview with Siyuan, August 27, 2011). After the seminar, he discussed with a biology researcher about how to do inquiry-based learning under the latest curriculum. To his surprise, the researcher bluntly told him that inquiry in teaching was not needed and teachers had to cut some inquiry content. He recalled one of his conversations with Dr. Xu:

I predicted that this school should emphasize the Gaokao. Since we are lucky to study abroad through the program and learn from Dr. Xu, we observed different approaches to learning and teaching. Dr. Xu gave us an example of teaching nutrition in inquiry-based way. Students could sort out different nutrition elements by reading food product labels; however, it is impossible for us to do this here due to the lack of teaching time and the excessive pressure of the Gaokao. Dr. Xu said that the new curriculum reform and tests should be reconciled and students would feel more at ease and less stressed about taking tests under the new curriculum. (Interview with Siyuan, August 27, 2011)

When asked his opinions of the new cohort of SWU teacher candidates, Siyuan answered in Chinese:

When I first saw some teachers yell at their students in my school, I was astonished and did not think it was acceptable because I just came back from Canada then and was greatly influenced by how teachers and students created a

democratic atmosphere in the classrooms in Canada. I strongly recommended that [SWU teacher candidates] should observe elementary schools and I love the excellent teachers there. Different teaching philosophies in Canadian and Chinese education collide. ... Canadian teachers employ a student-centred teaching style, which most Chinese teachers do not possess. If [SWU teacher candidates] are going to teach high school after they return to China, though they might “borrow” some teaching strategies from Canada, they may not demonstrate their advantages of having cross-cultural experience in Canada if the Gaokao does not reform. (Interview with Siyuan, August 27, 2011)

Siyuan was grappling with his career path:

I am going to give myself three years to see whether I can find my place and form my own style of teaching, as well as find a sense of accomplishment. I do not think that I will be a teacher for the rest of my life. My idea is in conflict with my family, who could not understand why I spend time on learning English and preparing for studying abroad. According to them, working in Furen High School is as good as climbing up to the sky.¹⁶ (Interview with Siyuan, August 27, 2011)

Feeling a sense of greatest achievement. In the above conversation, I was surprised that Siyuan had the idea of leaving his school from the beginning of his teaching. He stated that beginning teachers have both “challenges” and “opportunities”:

Challenges and opportunities co-exist. For example, veteran teachers may not want to teach according to the new curriculum. It is challenging to teach concepts properly because we do not know whether our ways of teaching fit students'

¹⁶ This Chinese metaphor (已经登天了) about climbing up to the sky means achieving the highest level beyond people's expectation.

understanding; inquiry-based experiments are important in biology teaching; however, we have to just integrate the idea of inquiry into thinking [rather than spending time on it]. (Interview with Siyuan, August 27, 2011)

Siyuan recalled the freedom that he introduced students to something beyond the textbook when teaching in Grade 7. He shared a story that gave him a great sense of accomplishment:

It was a lesson about the digestive system. When talking about the function of the bile, I expanded it to the topic of “animal rights.” Without any previous preparation, I told students a story: A mother bear killed her baby because she did not want her child to suffer the pain of having its gall bladder milked daily by human beings. I told my students how great the motherly love was and emphasized that they should protect animals because animals also have the right to love and be loved. ... Although it was an impromptu talk, to my surprise, the whole class stood up and clapped simultaneously. It is the time that I feel the greatest sense of achievement since I became a teacher. (Interview with Siyuan, August 27, 2011)

In a later conversation, Siyuan still reminisced about the lesson and stated, “I like this lesson because I feel it is like a TED program that allows teachers to share their interests with students while allowing students to express their own views”(Interview with Siyuan, March 17, 2012). He recalled this scene, stating that he had not had a similar experience since and that “such opportunities come by chance, not by diligent search” (Interview with Siyuan, March 17, 2012).

Learning From Others in First Year of Teaching

In the first year of teaching, Siyuan taught biology to four Grade 10 classes in

September 2011. In the first winter vacation after fall semester, Siyuan came to visit me and we had a long conversation in a nearby café.

“Feeling disconnected to the students.” When talking about the influence of the cross-cultural experiences, Siyuan missed the fair and harmonious relationship between teachers and students that he observed at Westwood Elementary School. In his teaching practice, Siyuan felt “disconnected from the students and even could not remember their names, or which students performed well” (Interview with Siyuan, March 17, 2012).

When asked the reason, Siyuan told me that biology teachers needed to teach four classes numbering more than 200 students:

Some administrators in the school do not value biology because they thought biology was a simple subject consisting of the lowest percentage on the Gaokao. When our Teaching and Research Group of biology asked for more teaching time, the administrators asked us whether we wanted to increase the status of biology in the school. According to them, working in Furen High School is as good as to climb up to the sky and we should not ask for other things. (Interview with Siyuan, March 17, 2012)

After the first test, Siyuan made an effort to talk to those 200 students individually, and spent so much time talking that his throat became sore. With Siyuan’s effort, two of his four classes ranked in the top two of ten classes for Grade 10. He shared how he motivated his students to study:

The test scores of one of my classes always rank at the bottom of the grade. One time, I finished the last period of afternoon classes and began to answer students' questions without having eaten supper. I stayed for 2 hours because there were too

many students came to ask me questions. Another time, I spent 200 Yuan out of my pocket to buy the Ferrero Rocher chocolate to cheer up students who did poorly on the test. In the next monthly test, students' test scores rose from the bottom of 10 classes to fourth and maintained it for the rest of the semester.

(Interview with Siyuan, March 17, 2012)

Siyuan shared his sense of achievement:

One of my students was ranked at the bottom of the class on each test and was addicted to computer games. His head teacher almost gave him up. His mother was so worried and she cried in front of me when she talked with me each time. Then, I often talked with this boy and he made dramatic changes. He is no longer late for class and his academic performance ranks in the middle, rather than at the bottom. Teaching is exerting influence on students' emotion. (Interview with Siyuan, March 17, 2012)

I was touched by the anecdotes that Siyuan shared with me and identified with his narratives of helping students to fulfill their potentials. Siyuan reiterated the harmonious relationship he experienced at Westwood Elementary School impressed him most during the cross-cultural experience.

Ways of educating beginning teachers. Early the next day, Siyuan came to my apartment again and he talked about his school's schedule: "Teachers, especially the beginning teachers, have to stay in the office to answer questions for 1 hour of the 2-hour break at noon. I feel so tired that I do not know what I teach without nap at noon" (Interview with Siyuan, March 18, 2012). I was surprised by this schedule because students and teachers normally have at least a 2-hour break at noon in Chinese schools.

He explained the background of the practice: “This is considered to be teachers’ devotion and dedication. My school starts cultivating its own beginning teachers because it is hard for the veteran teachers, who transfer from other schools, to adapt to and understand the school's culture deeply” (Interview with Siyuan, March 18, 2012).

Siyuan said, “Mentorship is one way to educate beginning teachers” (Interview with Siyuan, March 18, 2012). He was paired with Mr. Yang, a biology teacher with 15-year teaching experience. Siyuan called him Shifu¹⁷ and audited all of the biology lessons he taught in Grade 10:

I use the strategy of “Qu cu qu jing 去粗取精” (selecting the essence and discarding the dreg). For example, Mr. Yang changes a conclusion into an inquiry question; he always has one highlight in each lesson. Due to the lack of experiences, I cannot find answers to some detailed questions from the curriculum like “how many periods of classes should be spent to teach a concept?” and “what are the important and difficult concepts for students?” (Interview with Siyuan, March 18, 2012)

In addition to the mentoring system, Siyuan mentioned that the Young Teachers Study Group was another way of “training beginning teachers.” He bluntly stated that this group might “harm [him] rather than helping because the theory in the seminars is one thing, but the practice is another thing” (Interview with Siyuan, March 17, 2012). He further explained the gap between theory and practice, stating that rather than discussing series of topics, such as “how to make teaching meet the requirements of the new curriculum reform and fit different levels of the students,” in the teaching practice, the

¹⁷ Shifu (师傅) roughly translates to mentor and master.

school focuses on “how to improve students’ test scores and improve the efficiency of 40-minute teaching” (Interview with Siyuan, March 18, 2012). Siyuan expressed worries that he prepared his teaching “solely to prepare students for tests when teaching under this environment” (Interview with Siyuan, March 18, 2012).

He considered the dilemma of his professional development at his school:

The biology teacher’s professional development is more difficult and slower than other subject teachers. I worried more about the prospect of my school rather than the low salary I got. I worried that the longer I stay at the school, the lower my ability for lesson planning. In some schools, teachers discuss many academic issues in the Teaching and Research Group meetings while teachers in biology Teaching and Research Group just complain in my school. (Interview with Siyuan, March 18, 2012)

“I felt guilty and bad for her.” Two months later, Siyuan and Shan visited me together at SWU during Chinese Labour day. Siyuan told us that he finally got a chance to participate in some of the public lessons for his grade; however, he did not know how to design activities according to the advanced principle since the daily classes were not taught that way. Veteran teachers and administrators raise many comments after the public class but “nobody would give us constructive advices on how to improve classes” (Interview with Siyuan, May 3, 2012).

In a public lesson among the three campuses, Siyuan even witnessed one of the experienced teachers from the same Teaching and Research Group harshly criticizing another teacher. As Siyuan described, the veteran teacher criticized the public-lesson teacher in front of students, thereby embarrassing her and discrediting her to her students.

In Siyuan's view, "It was embarrassing and it caused me to feel badly for the teacher" (Interview with Siyuan, May 3, 2012).

Siyuan was not the only one who held this opinion. He explained that: "I said 'I do not find anything wrong with her teaching' at that time. I could feel the tension from observing teachers"(Interview with Siyuan, May 3, 2012). As for Mrs. Lu, the lead teacher of the Teaching and Research Group at Furen, Siyuan said, "Mrs. Lu also commented that even if one teacher has different opinion on teaching, they should have one-to-one interaction with her afterwards" (Interview with Siyuan, May 3, 2012).

Siyuan missed his school placements in Canada. He said:

Though the lessons Canadian teachers teach in the class were not difficult, there was something we might not be able to learn, such as respect each person in the elementary school. We can borrow some ideas from teaching strategies but we could not just 'copy' their way because it will not work due to cultural differences.

There are also differences in the level of education in China and education in the southwest area is in dire need of support. (Interview with Siyuan, May 3, 2012)

Siyuan sat with his head thrown back upon the cushion of the chair and looked quite tired. He said that he felt bored because there was "a lack of challenge in teaching" (Interview with Siyuan and Shan, May 3, 2012). When asked about his sense of achievement, Siyuan said, "I never feel satisfied and my work is not recognized. What I have done seems to be unimportant" (Interview with Siyuan and Shan, May 3, 2012). He told me that this was in part due to the fact that administrators criticized him because he did "not want to make students learn as hard as other teachers" (Field notes, May 3, 2012).

Shan shared similar feelings: “My thinking is contrary to the focus of my school. We overestimate ourselves and believe we are super when we are not” (Interview with Siyuan and Shan, May 3, 2012). Siyuan said, “ I will continue to look for what I am eager to do and what will make me feel challenged” (Field notes, May 3, 2012).

Shan and Siyuan’s words resonated with me. I wondered why Siyuan and Shan, who were excellent teacher candidates and worked hard to be good teachers, did not feel valued. Siyuan even wanted to leave the teaching profession in his first year of teaching.

Emerging Tensions in Second Year of Teaching

In the second year, the director of the Teaching and Learning Group and his mentor changed in the second year. Siyuan felt significant pressure because he spent time preparing for studying abroad and one of his classes performed at the bottom in a test.

“This is the most depressing time.” One day, Mrs. Wang, the head teacher of Siyuan’s class, advised him to consider teaching on another campus if he could not improve students’ academic achievements. Siyuan was despondent when he retold me how he responded:

“Mrs. Wang, your son and I are of the same age, will you treat him like this if he has some difficulties?” ... After I finish teaching this cohort of students, I will decide whether I continue to teach or not. (Interview with Siyuan, May 19, 2013)

This conversation with Mrs. Wang elicited my empathy, motivating me to encourage Siyuan. He conceded that he was frustrated: “I feel most depressed when they doubt my ability to teach. I even doubt myself” (Interview with Siyuan, May 19, 2013). He went on to explain his frustration in detail, highlighting a Chinese teaching approach known as *hang*, which is not to be confused with the English word of the same spelling.

To *hang* a student in a Chinese context is to pressure them to perform well academically, specifically with respect to tests:

For young teachers, there is no platform for us in such an excellent school. ... They grow slowly and do not have their own ideas. They must follow the experienced teachers to push students hard. It is a pity to survive here. There are no teaching strategies and the art of teaching and teachers is just to *hang*¹⁸ students. The good thing is that the school is beginning to change; though it is a long process. It needs new teachers. ... I just want to teach for three years and move to another profession because I cannot find any challenges teaching this way. Although teaching is simple in my school, it is simple only in my school due to its focus on pushing students to memorize. If you want to be an excellent teacher, teaching will be difficult and you 'll spend a lot of time and effort. ... I may continue to teach as long as I am able to learn something new. (Interview with Siyuan, May 19, 2013)

When a new cohort of University of Windsor teacher candidates came to Chongqing in May 2013, Siyuan and Shan came to visit them. Siyuan talked about his unpleasant experience when checking his pay cheque with Mrs. Lin, the assistant of the principal:

She said, “If any beginning teachers have any problem with the low salary and have the skills to get a better job, they can leave.”

Shan commented, “It is viewed that the beginning teachers should endure hardship and the administrators are demanding to them.”

¹⁸ ‘Hong’ (夯) means to push or pressure students to perform.

Siyuan replied, “I do not have the sense of belonging although I have been in the school for almost 2 years.”

Dr. Xu advised, “Why don’t you communicate with the principal?”

Siyuan answered, I cannot. Some talented teachers quit their teaching in my school. One of the math teachers placed an emphasis on cultivating students’ independent thinking, rather than their scores. He was then transferred to teach a few Math Olympiad lessons and ended up with quitting his job in the school. Mr. Wu, an English teacher, openly admitted that he had too much pressure and could not release it due to the pressure of raising students’ test scores. He quit his job soon after the incident and found a teaching position in a key school in Chongqing.

My sense of crisis is from three of my concerns: The first one is I do not think I have learned a lot this year; my second concern is that I need to make ends meet; my third concern is whether students’ test scores would be increased and I will not be blamed by the administrators.

Shan commented, “I feel I live in the heaven when I see what Siyuan experiences.”

Siyuan replied, “I hope that I can enjoy the happiness of being a successful teacher. So far, the happiest thing I have experienced is that the entire students of the class stood up and clapped for me after I talked about the topic of ‘animal rights’” (Field notes, May 19, 2013).

“Students’ horizons are very important.” Two months later. During the summer at the end of the second year of teaching, some Chinese teachers in the first

cohort came back to SWU for graduate studies. Siyuan returned to Chongqing, and he still wanted to leave his school and felt inspired when recalling a story told by Dr. Xu:

I still remembered the stories that Dr. Xu told us about one of her friends, who taught math in a school in countryside for more than ten years and became a vice principal in the best school in Beijing through his efforts. It is inspiring! I will accumulate richly and break forth vastly (厚积薄发¹⁹). Expanding my students' horizons is important. (Field notes, July 31, 2013).

Siyuan told me that, to expand his students' horizon, he invited students to prepare three-minute duty reports about the scientific breakthrough or anything they were interested in biology. In the first duty report, he had to do the report by himself because there was no volunteer. He went onto say the following:

I am glad that one student volunteered to talk about various ways to cure AIDS in the second time of duty report; however, his report occupied 20 minutes of the class time. There were no volunteers after this student for a long time. Although some extra-curriculum information is not relevant to the test, I hope to spend ten to fifteen minutes to introduce something new each lesson. Although students are busy with the exam, I spend one period of lesson talking about Induced Pluripotent Stem Cells (IPS), then, after several days, the Nobel Prize came out and the winner in biology research had conducted research about IPS. (Field notes, July 30, 2013)

Siyuan told me that one of the influences of the cross-cultural experiences was how he should guide students in career planning. He always encouraged his students to

¹⁹ A famous saying meaning to lay a solid foundation, and the time will come for people to shine.

study abroad or choose universities in big cities to broaden their horizons. He reflected on his own experience and said:

My only goal in junior high was to go to the key senior high school. When I was in senior high school, it was to enter key universities. My horizon was very limited before going to the university. After the Canadian experience, I feel it is important to expand students' horizons and discover that students know little about different majors when applying for universities. (Interview with Siyuan, July 30, 2013)

At the end of the second year of teaching, Siyuan said, "I could not continue working in the field of education despite having high expectations at the very beginning" (Interview with Siyuan, July 30, 2013). He emphatically spoke of how deeply he was touched by Dr. Xu: "Dr. Xu gave up a lot of things she had owned and focused on education because she saw the potential of Chinese education. Her choice was made in a more difficult situation than mine and I cannot match her" (Interview with Siyuan, July 30, 2013).

He stated that he did not find such role models in Furen and most of the teachers in his school were "cut from one mould." He noted, "teachers in his school described themselves as *Hang Jiang*"²⁰ (Interview with Siyuan, July 31, 2013). I asked him to describe the practice of *hang*, or pushing students to work hard for writing exercises. For example, he observed that "one of the biology teachers in the Teaching and Research Group asked students to come to his office to take dictations at noon" and added that "Biology is a science subject" he could not "accept the practice of dictation" (Interview

²⁰ *Hang Jiang* (夯匠) means teachers who are good at pushing students to study hard.

with Siyuan, July 31, 2013). The only teacher who “had the art of teaching” was his previous mentor Mr. Yang, but he “did not focus on teaching anymore” (Interview with Siyuan, July 30, 2013).

Connecting Personal and Global Environment in Third Year of Teaching

When I visited Siyuan in the second semester of his third year, I observed and talked with him after class, in the library, and when we had lunch together.

“Connect your professional development to the school’s development.” Like many other Chinese schools, Siyuan shared teacher’s office with other teachers of his grade. When I visited Siyuan in his city, Siyuan introduced me to Mr. Yang, his first mentor and Mr. Guo, the director of the Office of Teachers' Professional Development. I made an appointment to talk with Mr. Guo in the teacher’s office.

He was delighted to accept it. He recalled his own experience of becoming an excellent teacher and researcher through keeping writing and publishing. He commented that Siyuan was “a teacher with deep thought and great potential”, and emphasized that the school supported young teachers through a series of activities. After the talk, Siyuan commented when we had lunch together, “Mr. Guo is a good teacher and excellent researcher. I admire him because he reads all the time; however, there is a huge gap between what the school advocates and the practice” (Interview with Siyuan, May 15, 2014).

Siyuan compared education in West China and Shanghai, saying he preferring the latter:

The lessons in Shanghai are deeper and pay attention to many humanistic things, rather than just how to teach. The problem with education in West China is that it

only focuses on “how to teach ... however, educators also need classes like TED, which is thought-provoking. In West China, many activities are initiated by the school, such as the innovative classroom, and flip classroom; however, why do all of them only exist for a short period of time? I think about the reasons and find that it is because nothing has changed under the Gaokao. I want to accomplish something more than helping students excel on tests. (Interview with Siyuan, May 17, 2014)

Siyuan emphasized that he was interested in “developing a school-based curriculum and making it into a system” and wanted to “work with experts to compile a journal that connects high school textbooks to the recent academic achievements in biology.” (Interview with Siyuan, May 17, 2014) Siyuan iterated his belief, “It is very important to open a window to students and make them pay attention to what happens around the world.” (Interview with Siyuan, May 17, 2014) I agreed with his plan and advised him to seek the support from the administrators.

Following my suggestion, Siyuan went to meet Mrs. Li, the vice principal, to discuss his professional development. The next day, after his conversation with Mrs. Li, he called me. Siyuan sounded tired and he said that he stayed up awake the night following this conversation:

I told [Mrs. Li] that I had been looking for a platform to do something next year and I had two plans: opening an elective course of biology, and teaching bilingual biology. Mrs. Lin did not agree with me and asked me to give up these ideas. She advised me to connect my professional development to the school’s development. She pushed me to take dictation in the biology class. (Interview with Siyuan, June 4, 2014)

Siyuan continued:

When I told Mrs. Lin that I wanted to be a head teacher (班主任 banzhuren), she criticized me for not standing up when parents came to talk with me in a parent-teacher meeting. When asked what was pivotal in teaching a class, I replied that it should be the effectiveness of each lesson; however, she corrected me, stating that it should be how to coordinate with each subject teacher. On the next day, when talking with Mr. Guo, the director of Teacher's Professional Development Office, about the same question, Mr. Guo told me a different answer. He held the view that the most important thing was the quality and effectiveness of class. I was confused which one I should follow. (Interview with Siyuan, June 4, 2014)

Siyuan found those comments to be “hurtful and incomprehensible” (Interview with Siyuan, June 4, 2014). He worried he might not have bright future at this school since the vice principal thought of him in that way. He proclaimed,

For a teacher, the most important thing was how to deal with his/her relationship with administrators, rather than with students. I like the harmonious relationship between colleagues and administrators in Canada. Teachers should work with the principals rather than work for them. (Interview with Siyuan, June 4, 2014)

“I wish I could be like her and hold onto my dream.” The conversation with the vice principal was a trigger for Siyuan's decision to leave his school. The fact that the vice principal pushed him to take dictation in the class touched his baseline and basic belief on classroom teaching. It made him feel not in charge of his own teaching when he previously felt in charge. He said, “But .. [the vice principal] bought into the plan to

humiliate, and chase people off ... just to have her version of pushing students to get high scores in test at the expense of our own. ... It was really awful. They just went after people, who did not want to be “moulded” to the principal’s version of classroom teaching” (Interview with Siyuan, June 4, 2014).

One day in May 2014, Siyuan called me and said he would go to Chongqing for an interview at Jialin High School. According to him, Jialin High School “is doing quality education, and although their students’ academic backgrounds are not as good as [his] school, it emphasizes public lessons and helps beginner teachers to grow professionally” (personal communication, May 31, 2014). When I met him after the first round of the recruitment, he said that he did not do well in the pen-and-pencil test since the last part of the exercises were based on a different elective biology textbook in his city. Siyuan and I were anxious to wait for the phone call to inform him to attend the interview in the afternoon. Fortunately, Siyuan got the chance to be in the interview.

After Siyuan finished the interview, it was over 6:30 p.m. He said that he did not feel tired and hungry although he was too excited to fall asleep last night. I asked what the interviewers asked him and how he thought his performance in the interview. Siyuan told me that when the interviewer asked who had most influence on him, he replied that he was “touched by Dr. Xu’s spirit of learning” and wished he “could be like Dr. Xu, who could hold tight to her dreams”. He also said that he wanted “to keep learning and never give up” (Interview with Siyuan, May 31, 2014). In another question about how to be an excellent high school biology teacher, he replied:

I did not answer the question from the perspective of increasing teachers’ knowledge. Instead, I paid more attention to teachers’ development and career

plan because they should have bigger and better prospect[s] after the new curriculum reform. I want to open a systematic elective course of biology since an elective course is an inevitable trend in the school. (Field notes, May 31, 2014)

Siyuan said, “No matter the result of the interview is, I will feel no more regrets”(Interview with Siyuan, May 31, 2014). He stated that he worked diligently to continue learning because he had “a sense of crisis” (Interview with Siyuan, May 31, 2014).

Stories Going Forward: Being an Irreplaceable Teacher

In the above narratives, I retell Siyuan’s narratives of an excellent teacher candidate to a beginning teacher who wants to leave his school. In the end of the third year of teaching, Siyuan visited me in Chongqing. He reflected on his conversation with the vice principal about “connecting the professional development with school’s development”:

I used to think it was impossible to teach in an inquiry-based learning class or to cultivate students’ independent thinking; however, I feel I can make it if I familiarize myself with the textbooks and reference books. I can spend time on improving students' independent thinking. (Interview with Siyuan, August 17, 2014)

In the summer of 2014, Siyuan attended a training of Biology Olympiad Camp, paying for the travel and accommodation himself. He offered an explanation:

I have a strong sense of crisis and anxiety. I have been looking for a way for my career path for a long time. Teaching the Biology Olympiad is challenging and will make me an irreplaceable teacher. If I do not leave the school, I will be the

only teacher who is able to teach Biology Olympiad; if I want to leave, I can equip myself with a unique skill because being a teacher in Furen was not enough to find a good teaching position. (Interview with Siyuan, August 17, 2014)

Siyuan decided to give himself one more chance. If he did “not succeed in teaching Biology Olympic with the support from the school,” he would consider leaving the profession (Field notes, August 18, 2014). In 2015, A Call for Papers went out to the program alumni for the third *Canada-China Reciprocal Learning in Teacher Education and School Education* conference. Siyuan wanted to write a presentation about teachers’ professional development, specifically about “how novice teachers develop under the hierarchy system at school; how they develop in the Teaching and Research Group; and how the group supports or suppresses their development” (Field notes, August 18, 2014). He emphasized in his reflection in English,

Over the past 4 years, I have made a number of attempts and combined them with my observation in Canada. I find that West China has problems at the basic levels of education. I also find that the positive aspects of education in China. We have to seek the suitable plan for reform through thorough investigation. The objective is to benefit the student's lifelong development. Our teachers, who can fuel this wave of reform, can even become leaders. (Interview with Siyuan, August 18, 2014)

CHAPTER 6

CONNECTING TEACHING TO DAILY LIFE: HAILIANG'S NARRATIVES

Before going to Canada as a guide teacher, I taught English at Southwest University. Hailiang was in my English listening course. He majored in Geography and loves the subject thanks to his high school teacher who “made geography interesting” and who “was patient with students” (Field notes, July 15, 2010). He still remembers that he asked his geography teacher questions during class breaks and that the teacher went to his seat to answer them.

At the end of the second year of his four-year pre-service teacher education program at SWU, Hailiang was recommended by the Faculty of Geography as one of the 22 teacher candidates to participate in the Reciprocal Learning Program. I got to know him more when he studied at the University of Windsor in Fall 2010.

Cross-Cultural Experiences in Canada

“I Should Respect Each Student”

In the first weekly debriefing, Hailiang shared with us another observation about Mr. Veek's geography class:

When we did a Canadian geography bingo game, one of teacher candidates raise[d] his hand and said the set-up of the game was unfair because it would make the weak team weaker and the strong one stronger. ... I was shocked because it could have caused Mr. Veek to lose face; however, the students and the teacher still greet and respect each other in class. (Debriefing meeting minutes, October 27, 2010)

Mr. Veek's words resonated with Hailiang: “Teachers should respect their students. Do not shout or yell at them. Students may forget what you said, but they will

never forget how you make them feel” (Field notes, October 27, 2010).

“Geography Is a Subject That Connects Closely to Nature”

In the first 2-week school placement, Hailiang was the team leader of six Chinese teacher candidates who had their practicum at Wellington Elementary School. When I visited this school, he enthusiastically introduced me to Mr. Seal, who was his associate teacher and his role model “not only because of his passion, but because he is always able to engage students” (Field notes, October 25, 2010).

One time, Hailiang and I observed a Grade 7 science lesson in which Mr. Seal taught about the function and uses of a screw. It was interesting that Mr. Seal invited Hailiang, who wore glasses, to show the screws on his glasses. Students seemed inquisitive and interested in examining Hailiang’s glasses. After the class, Hailiang said, “When I become a teacher, I will do my best to apply what I learned in his class and become an excellent teacher like him” (Interview with Hailiang, October 25, 2010).

Hailiang and other teacher candidates were impressed by the fact that elementary school teachers taught almost all subjects in the school. He told me he was touched by Mr. Seal’s words that “we are teaching geography, math or English, but most importantly, we are teachers! We have to know how to educate people and how to teach. Students are flames and teachers should kindle the flames” (Field notes, October 25, 2010).

Dr. Xu encouraged Chinese student teachers to engage in extra-curricular activities in local schools such as the breakfast program, field trips or after-school programs as part of their practicum. Some Chinese student teachers participated in after-school programs to help children with their homework or teach them Chinese calligraphy. In his weekly reflections, Hailiang wrote one of his reflections in English:

The teachers use some real life objects for students to count: coin, labels and stickers when teaching students numeracy. When tutoring a student “8 + 9” in the after-school program, I have the student count different objects several times. I finally see a very typical approach to basic education in the West: they focus on practice and the students’ experiential education, and students are guided to learn from the concepts and gradually learn deeper. When teaching theory and concepts, teachers in Canada are always connecting with students' experiences and give a lot of real-life examples. I hope to make good use of this approach. For example, I will link weather and climate to concepts they are familiar with through their daily lives. (Hailiang’s reflection, October 27, 2010)

Feeling Inspired by the Exam

On our first visit to Forest High School during the second school placement, it was Monday assembly. Mr. Gordon, the principal, had students offer their best wishes to a student who was celebrating his birthday. Hailiang wrote an observation in the weekly reflection in English:

Although this is only two words, I could feel the love and respect that the teachers gave to the student ... I should respect each student. I have to make them feel that they are important and improve their confidence and sense of community.

(Hailiang’s reflection, October 27, 2010, edited for style and grammar)

After his 2-week practicum in a local high school in Windsor, Hailiang reiterated this finding in the weekly debriefing and shared a story from another Grade 10 geography class: “When talking about why clouds cause rain, the teacher took a paper napkin as an example: the tissue represents the cloud. When the napkin paper /cloud absorbs too much

water, it can not trap the moisture anymore” (Debriefing meeting minutes, November 10, 2010).

In a following conversation with me, he said he would not have thought of this example to explain precipitation to his students if he had not observed classes in Canada:

It is such an excellent and easy example to help students understand! I must try to relate things in our daily lives to teaching. There should be a lot of examples like this. For example, when describing the folding landscape, I can use a stack of towels and push both sides. Students can see the pleats in the towel. I would like to hold my geography class outside the classroom sometimes. For example, when talking about folds and faults, I would take the students to a place where there are folds and faults, so they can experience them first-hand. (Field notes, November 10, 2010)

He then told me he was inspired by the flexible exams in the high school. For example, the associate teacher asked students to mark the legend and direction of a craft in the Great Lakes district. They also made a latitudinal and longitudinal section of the earth using popsicle sticks. He said,

This form of exam in Canadian schools is like a research-based project at university. I wonder if I could use this kind of flexible exam in the future. The possibility is slight, but not zero. In the class of Mrs. Boose, who is my associate teacher in Grade 11, students form groups of one to five persons and write an essay on a topic like, How do you think the U.S. government will respond and reduce the negative impact when China's economy overtakes that of the U.S.?

This is a very deep topic, and I could not guarantee I could answer it. Mrs. Boose,

my associate teacher, regards her teaching as a platform to stimulate students' thinking so they can express their views and exchange ideas with each other. I feel my own power is limited, and it will take a long time to change the way education is currently delivered in China. (Interview with Hailiang, November 15, 2010)

Teaching in China as a Beginning Teacher

Connecting Teaching to Daily Life in First Year of Teaching

After his return to SWU, Hailiang had his one-semester practicum in Jialin High School and then became an intern teacher to teach two Grade 8 geography classes in this fourth year of the pre-service program. He connected his teaching to students' daily lives and had a strong sense of achievement: "It is one of the best teaching experiences. My students loved me. They lined up to greet me when they met me on campus" (Field notes, May 2011). As soon as he graduated in 2012, Hailiang was employed as a geography teacher and head teacher of Class 18 in Grade 10.

"Spring rain moistens things silently" (Run wu xi wu sheng 润物细无声).²¹ In May 2013, I visited Chongqing and interviewed Shan and Hailiang with Dr. Xu during the Chinese dragon-boat festival (Xu, Chen & Huang, 2015). Dr. Xu asked them the meaning of the program and how to improve it. Hailiang reflected on his cross-cultural experiences and said, "It is an exaggeration to suggest that significant changes have occurred after three months ... I tell myself that I should do things differently. Though the

²¹ I am using the same set of interview data that have been published in a book chapter written by Xu, Chen, & Huang, 2015. This is a line from an ancient Chinese poem about a rainy spring evening. The spring rain moistens things gently without making sound.

changes may not be innovative, I should at least make some changes” (Interview with S. Li, & H. L. Wu, June 15, 2013).

Hailiang hoped to “instil good life principles and study habit into details in students’ everyday life”: He raised his puzzlement about educating a student who had broken up with a girl in the class:

I will encourage or praise students if they did some good deeds or help others; I will criticize them if they did not do well. However, sometimes, I felt what I said was like soy beans stuck in the cracks between stones, while some teachers’ words are like water, which can be infiltrated into the cracks. When I talked with this male student, he agreed that now was not a good time to develop intimate relationship with girls. He said that if he became rich and powerful in future, every girl would fall in love with him. I was shocked to hear this. (Interview with S. Li, & H. L. Wu, June 15, 2013)

This conversation made him think how to motivate students to study: “When I ask students why they need to study, students with good academic performances say they study hard to enter an elite university and make their families’ lives better” (Interview with S. Li, & H. L. Wu, June 15, 2013). He found most students linked their purpose to profit. Although he understood this, he felt some students were extreme in their thinking.

Dr. Xu offered her thoughts in response: “In China, we emphasize that teachers need to impart knowledge and educate people (jiao shu yu ren 教书育人). In the process of modernization, we may focus too much on academic achievements rather than on cultivating students to be genuine persons in society” (Interview with S. Li, & H. L. Wu, June 15, 2013). Hailiang stated his puzzlement: “We hope our students can learn to

pursue happiness rather than fame and fortune. However, I dare not teach them our values because the impact on them may be negative” (Interview with S. Li, & H. L. Wu, June 15, 2013).

Dr. Xu advised Hailiang to hold a class meeting with his students to discuss the purpose of learning without mentioning the name of the boy. Dr. Xu emphasized the notion that “there is no definite answer to this question as long as students can think and grow through the discussion ... let the students themselves find the answer” (Interview with S. Li, & H. L. Wu, June 15, 2013). Hailiang wanted to adopt Dr. Xu’s approach but he had reservations, noting that as a beginning teacher, he was not sure about his own thinking. Dr. Xu encouraged him and offered advice on what effective head teachers ought to do, stating, “They should influence students ... be caring, to keep some of the traditional values, and also to learn the valuable lessons of the West” (Interview with S. Li, & H. L. Wu, June 15, 2013). Hailiang expressed his appreciation for the suggestions:

It is important for teachers to guide students to think, rather than imposing their values on them. I do not think Western education is perfect or much better than Chinese education, although the social, cultural and educational environment in the West attracted me. The drastic differences between Canada and China in population size result in different problems and approaches ... inspires me to think that it is necessary to make the Chinese education system attractive. (Interview with S. Li, & H. L. Wu, June 15, 2013)

When talking about the current educational reform, Hailiang said, “Beginning teachers have to adjust to the current education system first, and then make some innovations,” concluding that he needs to “teach effectively in order to have [his] own

ideas and make contribution to the educational reform” (Interview with S. Li, & H. L. Wu, June 15, 2013).

Shan did not agree with Hailiang’s view, and made an analogy using his biology background to express his ideas on change:

Just as the cells of tomatoes and potatoes could be blended into a new cell and produce a new species, nothing is impossible as long as you dare to think. We do not need to simply follow the old way of teaching as the veteran teachers do. (Xu, Chen, & Huang, 2015, p. 150)

He noted that they could change a little bit and inspire others to make changes in their fields. Dr. Xu commented that their views are not contradictory, and encouraged them to change their classroom teaching:

As a beginning teacher, Hailiang emphasized he had to be familiar with the whole system in order to know how to initiate change would be similar to how the “(spring rain) moistens things silently” (run wu xi wu sheng 润物细无声); allowing students to be affected positively. (Interview with S. Li, & H. L. Wu, June 15, 2013)

“Vivifying geography.” One month later, Hailiang reiterated his views on changes at another alumni meeting with Siyuan, Min, another program alumni, and me when some Chinese beginning teachers of the first cohort returned to SWU for their graduate studies in the summer vacation: “I believe that many teachers in our first cohort are willing to change if given the chance” (Interview with Hailiang, July 31, 2013).

In September 2013, I did fieldwork and observed Chinese beginning teachers in their school as a graduate assistant for the Reciprocal Learning program. I went to Jialin High School and observed Hailiang and Weiguo, who are Chinese beginning teachers.

When visiting his class, the first thing I noticed was a mission statement posted above the blackboard that said, “Diligence, responsibility, discipline” (勤恳、担当、遵纪). Hailiang emphasized the ideal characteristics of a head teacher as “responsible and loving” (Interview with Hailiang, September 09, 2013). He pointed out the differences in education between China and abroad:

In China, we emphasize collectivism, and regard the whole class as a community. These responsibilities, according to the Chinese way of thinking, are mandatory because teachers should guide students’ thinking and develop a good relationship with them. All these responsibilities have their background in our culture. (Interview with Hailiang, September 09, 2013)

Hailiang went to school at 7:30 a.m. and stayed for the entire day until the self-study classes finished at 10:00 p.m. He did not take a nap at noon. He recounted that when he began teaching Grade 10, he was happy to find the latest geography curriculum advocated for “vivifying geography (di li sheng huo hua 地理生活化),” which meant to connect geography to everyday lives. He believed that “everything could be seen and explained from the perspective of geography.” Mr. Yan, a senior teacher in the Teaching and Research Group of Geography, advocated for "viewing life from a geographical perspective (sheng shuo di li hua 生活地理化).” Hailiang quickly connected Mr. Yan’s principle of teaching with the lessons he observed in Canada and how his associate teacher there engaged students with close-to-life examples. He summarized his approach, saying, “Geography is a subject that needs to relate to the students’ lives so that they want to learn because the information is useful. This is why students love my geography class” (Field notes, September 9, 2013).

When I observed Hailiang's lesson, I noticed students' posters, supervised by Hailiang, reporting on the air quality in the hallway. He told me that, with the goal of extending geography from the classroom to the community, he had organized this voluntary project with students to update information about atmospheric particulate matter (PM2.5), which is an air pollutant. He also took students to visit the Faculty of Geography and the Observatory in SWU. Since Hailiang had studied abroad and was a proficient English speaker, he told me that he had been invited to be a tutor for Youth Master Project (YMP)²², an international environmental protection project at Jialin High School. He said,

I am influenced by the notion that “geography is a subject that firmly connects to nature,” which is emphasized in the pre-service teacher education program at the University of Windsor. Recalling that one assignment for the geography class at UW is to plan a 1-day local field trip, I decided to focus on local pollution problems in students' daily lives. For example, I circled the question “What is causing the pollution of Ma'an stream?”²³ and guided my students to find out the causes, impact of the pollution and who is responsible. I also took some students to the Yangzi River to collect some samples and examine the quality of the water. (Interview with Hailiang, November 11, 2013)

²² The Jialin High School started Youth Master Project since 2003. This plan was originated from the youth education for sustainable development & environmental program in Sweden in 1999. See: <http://www.goymp.org/en/frontpage>

²³ Ma'an stream is near the campus of Jialin High School.

Removing the Teacher–Student Boundary in Second Year of Teaching

When I came back to China to do my fieldwork for my doctoral dissertation at Hailiang’s school in 2014, I explained to him that my research, which is based on the Reciprocal Learning Project, focuses on the Chinese beginning teacher’s induction. He replied: “I do not feel I am a beginning teacher although this is my third year. Actually, my colleagues say that I behave like a senior teacher” (Interview with Hailiang, May 14, 2014).

“Remove the boundary.” Hailiang recalled that, at the beginning of Grade 10, some members of the class committee²⁴ did not make enough effort to fulfill their duties because “they thought they were buddies of the head teacher. I had to tell them that they should accomplish their tasks when they were supposed to” (Interview with Hailiang, May 14, 2014). Hailiang explained that he became strict with the new group of students in Class 18 at Grade 10 because he was worried that students “would be too relaxed to study” (Interview with Hailiang, May 14, 2014).

Then, Hailiang offered a reflection in this conversation:

Although I do not criticize my students, they write in their weekly reflection: “I dare not zone out for a moment during geography class” ... are scared of me because I am strict. This is common for beginning male teachers. I conceal my personality from students and seem to lose my temper easily, when, in fact, I have a very mild manner. If I were only a subject teacher as opposed to a head teacher, I would get along well with them. However, I am a head teacher and I am not

²⁴ In China, the class committee is a group of students consisting of the monitor, the person in charge of cleaning the blackboard, discipline, etc.

much older than they are. Therefore, I have to be mindful of the boundary.

(Interview with Hailiang, May 14, 2014)

When Hailiang said that he had to “be mindful of the boundary,” I recalled an incident during his practicum in an elementary school in Canada. On one of the visits to the school, Hailiang’s associate teacher asked me to remind him that student teachers are not supposed to talk with students alone in the classroom. Hailiang agreed, and this incident made him aware of the boundary between teachers and students.

Later this week, I saw Hailiang criticize a student for his poor homework in the teachers’ office. The student responded in a candid manner: “Mr. Wu, we know that you want to prove yourself to be an excellent teacher if we perform well in the Gaokao, but I do not like that you push us so hard” (Field notes, May 19, 2014). Hailiang felt sad because students did not understand him. He said, “I want to remove the boundary between my students and me, especially when they enter Grade 12” (Field notes, May 19, 2014).

I reminded him about Principal Schaffner’s lecture “Classroom teacher and the 21st century schoolteacher.” Principal Schaffner was invited to the University of Windsor by the Reciprocal Learning Program. During the question-and-answer session, one SWU teacher candidate asked how beginning teachers dealt with students. The speaker, who was a principal, replied, “Beginning teachers need to be friendly but [teachers and students] are not friends” (Field notes, May 19, 2014). Hailiang agreed and offered a summary of his thoughts on the subject: “The most reasonable teaching strategy is to cultivate [the students’] abilities of self-managing. It is more effective than either not disciplining them or disciplining them excessively” (Field notes, May 19, 2014). I urged

him to encourage students to look forward. Hailiang agreed with me: “As long as they pass the Gaokao²⁵, their options will widen” (Field notes, May 19, November 1, 2014).

Internationalizing your temperament. When I observed Hailiang’s class, I found that he added information about diversity and multiculturalism when reviewing the demographics of East Asia. I noticed that he used “First Nation” rather than “First Nations” by mistake. As Hailiang and I debriefed his lesson after the class, I pointed out the error. He appreciated my observation and the sustainable support of this program, “This research will promote our personal growth. The themes, strengths and weaknesses of my teaching will emerge when I relay how I design my lessons. It is valuable to me and will improve my teaching” (Interview with Hailiang, June 15, 2014). He also pointed out he felt more pressure and faced more challenges with respect to teaching when teaching Grade 11. He had to “wait until [he taught] Grade 10 next time to use situational learning, interactive learning, and presentations next year” (Interview with Hailiang, June 15, 2014).

He said that teaching from cross-cultural perspectives, which involves spending more individual time with each student, would be great if the teachers had enough time to guide students in the class, but that such an approach “is not realistic now”, and it is hard for him to carry out since the number of students in Chinese classrooms is considerably higher than their Canadian counterparts and because “teachers need to make sure students secure high grades” (Interview with Hailiang, June 15, 2014). When I asked Hailiang about his education philosophy, he reiterated his views:

²⁵ The Gaokao is a national exam for entering universities.

First, they should not only focus on learning; second, they have to be bright and open-minded rather than bookworms. When they study, they should study attentively; when they play, they have to play hard. It is like a famous Chinese saying: “Civilize your mind, brutalize your body, and internationalize your temperament (lao qi jin gu, lian qi ti fu, guo ji hua qi shi ye 劳其筋骨，练其体肤，国际化其视野).” (Interview with Hailiang, June 16, 2014)

When Hailiang talked about internationalizing one’s temperament, I recalled a conversation I had with him in Windsor. Hailiang believed that his cross-cultural experiences in Canada would make him a teacher with strong cross-cultural awareness and a global mindset. He wanted to add international and cross-cultural elements in teaching geography.

Improving Understanding Between Teacher and Students in Third year of Teaching

Hailiang had changing ideas on the teacher and students relationship this year.

Hurt by a student’s message. During the summer school for Grade 11 students in Jialin High School, Hailiang and I met in a cafeteria near the campus where he detailed an interaction he had with a student whose comments had hurt him:

One of my colleagues told me that he was willing to tutor some students after class if there was any need. However, he didn’t want to teach those who do not want to learn. When I passed these words to the monitor to recruit students, I indicated that “class clowns,” such as Tim, who liked to talk in the class, were not suitable candidates for tutoring. Then, I received an anonymous text criticizing my actions: “You always told me you wouldn’t look at us through a coloured lens

and would treat us equally without discrimination. Although I was doubtful, I believed in you. However, what you did today disappointed me.” (Interview with Hailiang, July 8, 2014)

Hailiang expressed a feeling of regret and guilt when reading this text, and sought reaffirmation from other students:

I went back to the office and spent an hour replying to this message after the evening self-study class. At that time, four students came into the office. I asked them if I treated them equally. One student replied immediately: “Yes, you treat us equally.” As soon as I heard this, tears filled my eyes. Not long after these students came back, more than ten girls sent text messages to comfort and acknowledge me. Then, I got another message from the same phone number, “I didn’t know my message would make you so sad. Please forgive what I sent.” (Interview with Hailiang, July 8, 2014)

Hailiang reflected on this incident, which touched him deeply:

It is crucial that people communicate and understand each other. Whenever possible, teachers should not make students feel that they look at them through a colour-lens. Although exams are important and teachers focus on scores, they cannot make their students feel neglected or that they are of no value. The good thing is the students are so kind that they comfort me and accept me. I am going to explain to them why I had to be so strict with them in Grade 11. I hope that students can also gradually understand why I want to be a good listener and be close to them in Grade 12. (Interview with Hailiang, July 8, 2014)

Being labeled as a “class clown” upset the student, who then sent Hailiang a message; Hailiang, in turn, felt frustrated because this student thought Hailiang was unfair, despite the fact that Hailiang’s intention was to make sure everybody had the opportunity to learn. What touched Hailiang most was his students’ comfort and empathy. Inspired by his cross-cultural experience, he wanted to be a fair teacher and respect students, like Canadian teachers. To adapt to the environment in China, he had to continuously modify his role since the beginning of his teaching career. When teaching Grade 10, for example, he wished to reach mutual understanding with his students, while in Grade 11, his strategy was to make sure each student followed his instruction. During this time, he was strict with his students and felt distant from them. In Grade 12, he hoped that his students could seek help from him whenever they need under the huge pressure of the Gaokao.

“I will be ready to help you.” To motivate students to study, Hailiang held a meeting about orienting students to Grade 12. He listed a precise timetable of milestone dates in Grade 12, and elaborated explicitly on the different times that students get offers to the tier 1 and tier 2 universities. He worried that “some students would not care about their future. They do not even know the importance of achieving a score line for key universities. Their efforts will be paid off” (Interview with Hailiang, July 4, 2014).

Hailiang’s worries were easy to understand. Hailiang himself was accepted to SWU, a 211 Project²⁶ university, because of his high Gaokao scores. As a head teacher, he took it as his responsibility to help student secure their academic success by earning high Gaokao scores. Then, Hailiang held a class meeting, wrote a poem, and planned to

²⁶ University of 211 Project (The 211 Project is a strategic cross-century project formulated by the Chinese government for the implementation of the strategy of invigorating the country through science, technology and education.

have students read it at the parent-teacher meeting. Students rehearsed it during the class meeting:

We are in Grade 12 in high school; missions lie on our shoulders.

As students in Grade 12, we know the responsibilities on our shoulders.

As students in Grade 12, we know the expectation our parents have of us.

For our extraordinary dream, we work from early morning to late evening.

In order to live up to our parents' expectation, we seize every minute.

As students of Grade 12, we will say farewell to sloppiness, laziness and helplessness.

As students of Grade 12, we embrace diligence and responsibility.

To live up to our parents, we strive to give our best efforts.

Dear parents, we need your trust and encouragement.

Please believe in me and we will make you be proud of us.

人在高三，使命在肩头。

作为高三人，我们深知自己肩上的重担。

作为高三人，我们深知父母期盼的目光

为了我们不凡的梦想，我们披星戴月。

为了父母殷切的目光，我们只争朝夕。

我们有压力，更有动力。我们有耐心，更有信心！我们有志气，更有霸气。

高三的我们，告别散漫，告别懒惰，告别彷徨

高三的我们，拥抱规划，拥抱勤奋，拥抱责任

人在高三，使命在肩。唯有勤逸，方至新天

为不辜负父母，我一定努力，一定全力以赴。

亲爱的爸爸妈妈，我需要您的信任。我需要您的鼓励

请相信我！我一定是您最骄傲的孩子！

After the rehearsal, Hailiang asked students to clean their seats for their parents to use and write a few words that they wanted to tell their parents on a note on their desks. More than 20 books and exercises/test sheets were usually piled on each desk, and some students even put a big basket by their seats to hold extra books. Hailiang then asked the students to write a few words to their parents, and he would send the messages to parents in the afternoon. With great emotion, he spoke to his class about the importance of Grade 12:

You may encounter a lot of problems in Grade 12. Whenever you feel helpless, lonely or weak, please believe that, as your teacher, I know what you think and will be ready to help you, just as your parents accompany you and support you unconditionally. (Interview with Hailiang, July 4, 2014)

“I gave them my whole heart.” Each month, students in Grade 12 must take several tests, known as ‘model tests’, which are designed to prepare them for the Gaokao and which put significant pressure on Hailiang. He was frustrated because his students did not perform well in the first model test. He spoke about his role as a head teacher: “My social circle was very closed and some teachers’ horizons were very narrow. It seemed that, every day, my life was centred on the Gaokao” (Field notes, December 12, 2014). He summarized his feelings in another conversation:

I feel it is hard for me to continue my job. Some teachers do not want to share their classroom management strategies because they do not want other teachers to copy and catch up with them. I don’t like to see this kind of things happen. Their work is about technical and trivial things. I worry that this will make me increasingly close-minded. (Interview with Hailiang, September 5, 2014)

He hoped the situation would improve after the Gaokao reform, and expressed his concern about his career path:

I hope my students will be brave enough to fight for a better life. I give my students my whole heart; however, it is not easy to win their hearts and their approval since they already have their independent personalities. I am still confused about my future, and it is embarrassing. I worry about how much I need to do to be an excellent educator. It is very likely that my own value system will remain at a superficial level. I do not have a solid foundation or understanding of traditional Chinese culture. Anyway, I cannot reach as high a level as Mr. Xingzhi Tao and Mr. Shuming Liang²⁷ who learnt from Dewey. I will try my best.

(Interview with Hailiang, September 5, 2014)

Following Dr. Xu's suggestion of asking the participants to check and verify their transcripts, I sent Hailiang my field texts and a paper²⁸ describing an excellent geography teacher. I reminded him that the details of his teaching were valuable and meaningful to his growth. Hailiang responded and referred to Weiguo, another program participant at his school: "Yes, I need to collect the details of my teaching. They are very valuable. I need to learn from Weiguo, who is an excellent thinker. Compared to Weiguo, I lack planning and thinking skills" (Interview with Hailiang, November 1, 2014). I was happy to hear that Hailiang had begun to accumulate his experiences and had taken my advice to use sticky notes to organize his ideas.

²⁷ Both are renowned Chinese educators who adapted Western educational philosophy to the Chinese context in the 1930s.

²⁸ The dissertation is about a Chinese geography teachers' professional development in 5 years.

Stories Going Forward: Maintaining Connections With Windsor Schools

In this chapter, I retell Hailiang's narratives of connecting teaching to daily lives during his cross-cultural experience in Canada and his induction as a head teacher²⁹ during his first 3 years of teaching in China. Hailiang's Class 18 ranked the first in the Gaokao in Jilin School in 2015. Of 47 students in Hailiang's class, 11 students passed the minimum requirements of key universities³⁰. Hailiang felt "relief and a sense of great achievement." Many students were present at the farewell party, they toasted him for his efforts and expressed gratitude for taking care of them during the two to three years leading up to the test. Hailiang's great joy is that the students whom he criticized apologized in earnest. They told him that they understood him, and recognized that he had been working hard for their benefit.

Hailiang found another way to continue his tie to Canada and the Reciprocal Learning Program in 2014, when Dr. Xu set up the sister school network between Windsor and Chongqing schools. Hailiang and Weiguo's school was paired with Forest High School, of which the principal used to be the principal at the school where Hailiang and Weiguo were placed. Hailiang actively participated in the sister school activities and was excited to stay in touch with and learn from Mr. Gordon based on the Sister School Network.

²⁹ Head teacher is call Banzhuren 班主任 in China who is in charge of a class

³⁰ The national key universities are the tier 1 or tier 2 universities directly under the Ministry of Educations.

CHAPTER 7

“PURSUIT TO BE AN EXCELLENT TEACHER”: WEIGUO’S NARRATIVE

In 2009, Weiguo, was in my course *Comprehensive English I* in the Faculty of Foreign Languages at SWU. As a first-year English major, Weiguo was the class monitor and was a hardworking student. He grew up in a migrant-worker family in Sichuan, China. His father, who was a bee farmer, worked in a coastal province. His mother, who only finished junior high school, valued education and is a janitor at SWU. She hoped that he could “root himself in education and work for the betterment of the country”. This is reflected in the given name she chose for him, which roughly translates to “working for the country” (personal communication, May 19, 2011).

Weiguo was eager to recount his mother’s influence on his academic approach:

I did not do well on his first Gaokao test and entered a college to study management. After hearing about the *Free Teacher Education Policy* following the completion of his first semester at the college, his mother supported him to quit his college studies and took the Gaokao test again. Weiguo cited his mother’s words: “There is a popular saying that ‘it takes three generations to educate noble men’. As a teacher, I can read many books and become a knowledgeable and cultivated person” (Interview with Weiguo, November 11, 2013).

In the second year of the pre-service teacher education program, Weiguo was nominated by the Faculty of Foreign Languages to apply for the Reciprocal Learning Program and was successfully chosen as one of 16 teacher candidates in the program. He participated in the hosting activities for UW teacher candidates’ one-month visit to Southwest University and wrote weekly reflections. In his reflection, Weiguo recorded a

one-day visit to a local Chinese elementary school with the University of Windsor teacher candidates and Dr. Xu in English:

Facing a group of lively and cheerful kids, I felt so touched and moved to tears. It is the first time I feel that my career as a teacher is so great. “Being a teacher is the most brilliant career under the sun (Jiaoshi shi taiyang xia zui guanghui de zhiye 教师是太阳下最光辉的职业).” I have the impulse to be a primary school teacher: Students are like a piece of blank paper and the teacher can draw on them.

(Weiguo’s reflection, May 17, 2011)

Afterwards, Weiguo and other Chinese teacher candidates attended a one-month intensive pre-departure training at SWU in the summer. As one of the instructors, I used group work and discussion-based tasks in the class and assigned them to write daily reflections. Weiguo wrote in his reflection that he wanted me to use more traditional teacher-centred approach and to help them practice listening and speaking. I adopted his suggestion. In a meeting before departure, Dr. Shijian Chen, Vice President of SWU, who developed this program with Shijing Xu (2011a), encouraged students: “Although educational professors are from universities, great educators are usually front-line teachers. I expect all of you will be “future educators” (Field notes, September 10, 2010). Dr. Chen’s words motivated Weiguo to be an excellent teacher.

Cross-Cultural Experiences in Canada as a Teacher Candidate

“Each Day I Examine Myself in Three Ways”

In September 2011, Dr. Lu, the guide teacher, and the 16 teacher candidates went to Windsor, Canada, for 3-month stay. Since I successfully enrolled in the Joint PhD program in 2012, I worked with them as a graduate assistant for the program. All SWU

teacher candidates, Dr. Lu and I stayed in a residence building near campus and Weiguo often talked with Dr. Lu and me in the kitchen or recreation room. He just had cut off all his hair before going to Canada. When asked the reason, he said this action motivated him to work hard and showed his commitment to cherishing this opportunity. In a conversation with Weiguo, he expressed his love for writing reflections:

I believe the famous Chinese saying that “Each day you examine yourself in three ways (Mei ri san xing wu sheng 每日三省吾身).” I also believe that thinking, if not recorded, will be buried in daily life ... It would be difficult to make progress if we cannot reflect and summarize our experience. I think about teaching and how I have grown as a teacher. (Field notes, September 26, 2011)

Dr. Xu arranged a whole-day pre-practicum school visit for Chinese teacher candidates before their school placement in Windsor. In a reflection about teaching philosophy, Weiguo reflected on how his teaching philosophy and goals changed in English:

Teachers and principals here are gradually influencing me. I have a dream . . . cultivate one or two students who can change the world, ... do some dedications to the human beings. If I want to change the students, try to establish good relationships between students and me ... administrators [can] be more inclusive and open, because I have so many approaches [I am] waiting to apply into my classroom. I am not sure each way is effective, and this is [a] trial-and-error road, so in the process of my teaching, I may be wrong, but trust me, give me enough room, and I will truly make a difference eventually. (Weiguo’s reflection, October 1, 2011)

“Where Are Our Ways?”

During the first 2-week school placement at an elementary school, Weiguo worked with Mrs. Donaldson, a Grade 3 associate teacher at East gate Windsor Elementary School. When I visited the school with the Chinese teacher candidates, Weiguo showed me the “literacy forest” that Mrs. Donaldson, his associate teacher, had created, offering an explanation of the setting:

Word trees are the new words students encounter when reading fiction. The three pictures on the right are in the shape of a tree: The first says, “What do I know about narrative essays?” The second says, “What do I want to know about narrative essays?” and the third says, “What I have learned?” (Field notes, November 8, 2011)

Weiguo hoped he could bring the forest tree idea back to Chinese classrooms, and that it could be applied to any topic. He wrote, “Learning is not just limited to the classroom, but is also on the walls and along the corridor, where it can be explored any time the students want. Inspiring classroom settings are not static, they may change based on the students’ needs and social events” (Weiguo’s reflection, November 8, 2011).

That weekend, a field trip was organized to the Point Pelee National Park near Windsor. On the way back, other Chinese teacher candidates, Weiguo and I had a long conversation with Dr. Xu that inspired him to consider how people could learn from the West. He wrote in the reflection in English:

Dr. Xu asked us: “China is developing so fast now. Why do you think clear rivers are vanishing and natural resources declining? I told Dr. Xu: “Our large population is to blame ... neglect our environment.” Professor Xu is a critical

thinker and knowledgeable. What she told me is really from a new perspective. She replied, “Intellectuals should not be strictly concerned about learning something superficial from Western countries while neglecting the deep issues.” (Weiguo’s reflection, October 10, 2011)

In this conversation, Weiguo demonstrated great confidence in what his generation can accomplish: “Where are our ways? I believe mine is a great generation. All we have to do is to shoulder the responsibility” (Field notes, September 24, 2013).

“Every Drop Counts”

Weiguo was placed in Forest High School in his second school placement. During Chinese teacher candidates’ auditing activities in the pre-service program between the two school placements, Dr. Xu also invited some professors and principals to talk to SWU teacher candidates. Dr. Glassford gave one such talk about professional portfolio development, which Weiguo had never heard of until he went to Canada. Weiguo noted that the portfolio is “one of the most important and meaningful things [he] learned” (Field notes, September 29, 2011).

As part of the program requirements, Weiguo made a portfolio at the end of his three-month stay in Canada. In the prologue, he shared that “I hope my portfolio can set a good example for Chinese teacher candidates” (Weiguo’s portfolio, November 19, 2011). He also quoted a poem that expressed his newfound view on learning:

Every drop counts

If each grain of land were to say:

“One grain does not make a mountain”

There would be no land.

If each drop of water were to say:

“One drop does not make an ocean”

There would be no sea.

If each note of music were to say:

“A note does not make a symphony”

There would be no melody. (Weiguo’s portfolio, November 19, 2011)

When asked, “What have you learned in this period of time as an international student?”

Weiguo wrote in his portfolio in English:

Most of time, we may feel lost at sea, because this question seems to be a big idea.

In the short three months, we did not get systematic things, but every drop counts.

The drops taught us what Canadian lives look like; how to immerse ourselves and

experience a total, new English environment. My mind is like a time capsule that

includes areas of the brain where the memories of my cross-cultural experience in

Windsor live. These memories might lie dormant for years, only to pop

up—seemingly from nowhere—when the time is right. (Weiguo’s portfolio,

November 20, 2011, edited for style and grammar)

Induction Experiences in China as a Beginning Teacher

In the above narratives, I recount Weiguo’s cross-cultural experience in Canada.

As a graduate assistant for the program, I have followed Weiguo after he returned to

China through emails, reading his reflections, and doing fieldwork with him. In one of his

reflections, as Weiguo expected in the cross-cultural experience in Canada, the induction

experience is a “trial-and-error road.” He has tried many approaches to teaching and

managing students then reflected and adapted, tried again and he has grown

professionally and personally.

In his fourth year of the pre-service teacher education program at SWU after the cross-cultural experience in Canada, Weiguo was a student teacher in a key school in an affluent area of downtown Chongqing. Although Weiguo was busy with his school placement, he voluntarily offered help when the 2012 UW cohort visited SWU in spring 2012, he told me an anecdote: It was over 10 p.m. after he returned from the evening classes in the school; suddenly, he recalled he promised to lend Danielle (one of the UW teacher candidates) his camera for her school visits next day.

Although exhausted, he went to Danielle's residence and gave his camera to her. Danielle was surprised and happy to see him because she did not expect Weiguo would bring the camera so late at night. Weiguo told me that, as one of the members who participated in the Reciprocal Learning Program, he benefited from the UW alumni who demonstrated their passion and enthusiasm for the program and hosted Chinese teacher candidates in Windsor, Canada.

He wanted to repay the hospitality and compared the spirit of hospitality as the spirit of "a kind of a torch, which is imbued with a deep appeal and sentiment", involving "a lot of emotion—blood, toil, laugh, and joy" (Field notes, May 25, 2012). He also pointed out that this torch is "an icon of spirit, which extends to a kind international friendship, a kind of extensive love that every generation of this program needs to hold to account to pass it on." (Field notes, May 25, 2012)

Creating Innovative Activities in First Semester of Teaching

After completing his student teaching, Weiguo's mother encouraged him to send his résumé to Jialin High School, which "is close to the university and will allow him to

continue his studies” (Field notes, August 3, 2013). Weiguo was hired. In the first staff meeting, each beginning teacher was requested to make a one-minute self-introduction. Weiguo showed some images of Chinese and Western influential educators who are his role models and put his own picture in the last slide of the PPT. Then, he expressed his educational goal to “follow in their steps of the great educators to be a great teacher” (Interview with Shan, September 9, 2013). He applied for the position of head teacher (banzhuren 班主任), who is responsible for the whole class like a homeroom teacher in Canada. He offered compelling reasons for this career path in the reflection: “People's abilities are developed by a heavy workload and I would like to carry a heavy workload on my shoulders. Although I might not perform well at the beginning, it will help me grow into a mature head teacher” (Weiguo’s reflection, September 9, 2013).

“I just followed experienced teachers’ way of teaching.” Following Dr. Xu’s suggestion to follow the program participants and do the field work at their schools as a graduate assistant for the program, I asked Weiguo if I could observe his lesson right before he began to teach in Jialin High School in 2013. He eagerly agreed.

When visiting his classroom, I could see that Weiguo spent a significant amount of time and energy on classroom set-up. In the middle of the wall above the blackboard, there was a slogan in front of the class: “The Willingness of Honghu” (鸿鹄之志). Just below this slogan, there was a clock with another slogan: “Insisting on good habits every day and implementing your planning 天天坚持, 样样落实. On the wall on both sides, there are many posters that have mottos like “Civilize its spirit, savage its body and spirit文明吾精神, 野蛮吾体魄” (Field notes, September 3, 2013). This classroom set-up was inspired by the Canadian classrooms he visited, and he validated this observation, saying that he

“was inspired by how Canadian teachers made their learning outcomes visible and posted students’ writing on the wall” (Field notes, September 3, 2013). Other elements of the class echoed the Canadian classrooms as well: he posted the daily schedule and homework on one corner of blackboard; he set up a Reading Corner to develop students’ reading skills; he made a bulletin board at the doorway to remind students important information; and he had students labeled the objects in classroom in English.

After a lesson about consonants and vowels, Weiguo and I debriefed in the office, which was shared by five Grade 7 teachers. On his desk by the window were a pile of students’ notes of their expectations of the class and teachers. Weiguo was not satisfied with his teaching in Class 9: “Students in Class 9 are not as good as in the Honghu³¹ Class, of which I am the head teacher. I don't need to spend any time on discipline in the Honghu Class” (Field notes, September 3, 2013). He told me that to ensure the equal access to education, Grade 7 students entered Jialin High School by drawing lots, without an entrance exam. Jialin High School divides students into Level A classes (higher level) and Level B classes (lower level) according to a test at the beginning of the semester. I encouraged him to consider his under-performing Class 9 from another perspective: “It is a good opportunity to prove your teaching ability if you can teach Class 9, the Level B class,³² well” (Field notes, September 3, 2013). Weiguo agreed and reflected, “I dedicate more emotion to my own class than to Class 9; however, ‘A student will believe in

³¹ It is from a Chinese expression that loosely translates to “how can a sparrow know the will of a swan” 燕雀焉知鸿鹄之志

³² To ensure equality of education, the local school board reformed the recruitment system for junior high school. Students in this district drew lots to enter different schools without entrance exam. Jialin High School divided students into Level A classes (higher level class) and Level B classes (lower level class) according to a test at the beginning of the semester.

teaching only when he gets close to his teacher’ 亲其师，信其道” (Interview with Weiguo, September 3, 2013).

I mentioned that he said: “1, 2, 3, Look at me” in a singing song voice to get the students’ attention in class. Weiguo said that this strategy was from his observation at the elementary school in Canada. (Field notes, September 3, 2013) I reminded him of how teachers taught phonetics with physical movement to engage students at Westwood Elementary School in Windsor, and advised him to design activities using multiple-intelligence approaches. He liked this idea and told me that he initially recommended using flash cards in weekly lesson planning; however, no teachers adopted his suggestion. He was candid about the pedagogical approach: “To be honest, I was lazy in teaching and just followed veteran teachers' approaches instead of exploring methods by myself” (Interview with Weiguo, September 3, 2013). He lamented, “Experienced teachers still use the traditional way of teaching, and most of the instruction in their classroom is in Chinese” (Interview with Weiguo, September 3, 2013).

“It is ok if beginning teachers correct their behaviour.” After this visit, Weiguo tried to design more interactive activities and organized an English corner for students to practise English every Thursday after class. He wrote in his reflection, “I gained so much from the conversation with Mrs. Huang. ... Class 9 students love English, and their scores rank at the top of Level B classes” (Weiguo’s reflection, June 11, 2013). At the end of the first month, Weiguo was excited to share with me that Mrs. Chen, the Grade 7 administrator, walked into his classroom without notice and found his lesson was engaging. He said, “She praised me for my ‘great passion in teaching’ and for ‘creating a motivating and interactive classroom atmosphere.’ I will dedicate my progress to you,

Mrs. Huang. . . look forward to your observation after you return” (Interview with Weiguo, October 10, 2013).

During the rest of the first semester, Weiguo initiated many innovative activities and began cultivating his students’ reflective abilities. His students formed a special class committee that consisted of students who were in charge of cleaning the blackboard, the door of the classroom, the goldfish, the flowers, and the Chronicles of the Honghu Class. He assigned the students to write in reflective books (sheng ce□□) every day. In a public letter to his students, he wrote, “Proper reflection could affect people’s behaviour positively ... develop a habit of reflection, it would benefit them throughout their lives” (Weiguo’s reflection, September 9, 2013). He was proud that some activities were “practised and maintained effectively.” However, something happened soon after the new class committee was set up. He wrote about it in the reflection in Chinese:

Students in the class committee wanted to organize a party to celebrate the Mid-Autumn Festival. I approved this activity without reporting it to the Grade 7 administrators. My class was laughing and making so much noise while other classes were studying quietly on Friday afternoon. Mrs. Chen, who was responsible for Grade 7, criticized me in the staff meeting for holding an extra-curricular activity individually. I accepted this criticism. It is ok if beginning teachers correct their behaviour after making mistakes. We do not need to think too much on the administrator's words or add a heavy burden on ourselves.

(Weiguo’s reflection, September 14, 2013)

Home visits. After the mid-term exam in the first semester, Weiguo told me that he wanted to visit his students’ homes. I was surprised because it would be too time-

consuming for teachers of junior high. He said he wanted to know more about his students through home visits.

When I visited him during my fieldwork in spring 2014, he was happy to share different aspects about his students that he “was not able to see at school”. He said,

I found out why a student is a slow learner because she was a premature baby, and it affects her learning ability. Family background is so important in students’ development: Some students’ mothers quit their jobs to help them study at school. In contrast, some students’ parents love playing mahjong; how can they educate their children well? (Interview with Weiguo, May 19, 2014)

Weiguo visited his students' families by motorbike. Although half a day was easily spent visiting one family, Weiguo “did not feel tired at all” (Interview with Weiguo, May 19, 2014). Though the home visits are beneficial, they are not without issues. Weiguo told me about an incident:

I saw Ming, a disruptive student in class, argue with his mother during my visit to his home. Ming’s mother was about to call me and tell me about Ming’s misbehaviour. As soon as I walked in, I saw Ming jump up to pull the phone from his mother’s hand. I took the thumb-thick ruler in her hand right away and beat Ming’s palm. Ming was screaming, “I am sorry, Mr. Yang. Please stop. I won’t do it again.” (Interview with Weiguo, May 19, 2014)

I felt surprised by his description and asked, “Did Ming’s mother stop you from beating her son’s palm?” Weiguo said no and stated that Ming’s mother is so supportive that she left home to rent an apartment closer to Ming’s boarding school so that she could

care for him. Weiguo asked Ming “what he should do to repay his mother’s love ... [and] Since then, Ming changed dramatically” (Interview with Weiguo, May 19, 2014).

Reflecting and Growing Professionally in Second Semester of Teaching

In the second semester of Weiguo’s teaching, I went to his class again for fieldwork. I observed his teaching, participated in the parent-teacher meetings and meetings of his Teaching and Research Group, and I talked with him on the way to his office, canteen, and playground. One day, on the way to the canteen with Weiguo, some of his colleagues call him “expert.”

Weiguo explained to me modestly, “They call me ‘expert’ because I have written more than 100,000 words of reflections on education” (personal communication, June 25, 2014). Having found value of reflections since he was in Canada, Weiguo continued this practice, and praised the value of this process: “I write reflections almost every day and published some on academic journals. If I do not write, I will feel something is lost. (Personal communication, January 14, 2014)

The principal got to know about the home visits and praised him for the value of his efforts. At the staff meeting at the beginning of the second semester, Weiguo was invited to share his experience as an excellent beginning head teacher and said:

Through thorough communication with parents, they knew my views on education and I have a holistic understanding of my students. I also collect the stories I [learned] in the home visits to write an essay “Doing down-to-earth work in education and planning class meetings from the students' perspectives.” To live up to parents’ expectation, I have to work hard and teach students well. (Weiguo’s reflection, June 25, 2014)

To keep contact and update students' information with their families, Weiguo tried other approaches to keep contact with their families, such as writing emails to parents to discuss their children's development. He also gave parents some topics to write about their children. He had finished a 50,000-word booklet *About Habits*, because he believed that "students' study and life habits are unsatisfactory" (Interview with Weiguo, June 14, 2014). He distributed the booklet to the parents at no charge, hoping they would support the cultivation of students' good habits.

"We are on a platform and we are nothing without the platform." As soon as I began my fieldwork with Weiguo, he shared a piece of exciting news with me: he just won first prize in the "Basic Skills of Head Teachers" competition. Eager to explain why his approach garnered such prestige among his peers, Weiguo shared with me the class meetings about responsibility he had demonstrated in the competition:

I began the class meeting with one question: "Why do we need to study?" I shared my ultimate goal of being an excellent educator: I want my students' academic performances to be excellent so they gain good learning habits. ... I used the strategy of backwards-thinking to illustrate how I should work backwards to achieve the goal: I kept a habit of reflection and wrote 1,500 words each week ... students got the answer as to why they should study hard: responsibility.

(Interview with Weiguo, May 14th, 2014)

I recalled that this idea of backwards-thinking was similar to a suggestion I offered to Weiguo about considering his ultimate goal in a conversation with Mrs. Lu, the guide teacher and me when we were in Canada.

After Weiguo won first prize, he had some puzzlements: “I could not help recalling the joy. I am proud of my innovative class meeting and the eloquence of the speech. Every dog has its day will outperform other outstanding teachers; administrators will appreciate my talents” (Interview with Weiguo, May 16, 2014). He continued his contemplation on the matter:

When my days were occupied with trivial things, I did not read; I did write reflections, but sometimes I could not write a deep essay in 1 week; I really did think, but if my attention was diverted by trivia, I did not have any novel ideas. ... I am not as good as I seem. ... We all are on a platform, and we are nothing without the platform. ... Please evaluate what I did rather than what I said. (Interview with Weiguo, May 16, 2014)

“Is there only one Huashan road?” In June 2014, I visited one of Weiguo’s Class 9 English lessons at the Jialin High School. He talked about describing people’s appearance and encouraged students to describe us in English. As I left to observe another class with the UW teacher candidates, I did not have time to debrief with Weiguo immediately after his class. When I went to Weiguo’s office the next day, I told him that I enjoyed his class and advised him to increase the use of English when teaching. After a minute, Weiguo replied:

I would accept your suggestions without any hesitation if I were in Canada; however, I have to make sure that each student can absorb the knowledge. This is the environment in my school. I want to innovate from what I had learned from Dr. Xu and from my cross-cultural experiences in Canada; however, I realize that teachers’ jobs are to deal with trivial duties. After having endless meetings and

dealing with countless trivial duties each day, I realize that this is what the head teacher does. Will trivial duties change a person? How can we do something different and still make sure students fit the current assessment system in China? (Interview with Shan, June 5, 2014)

Weiguo concluded that he had learned many pedagogical concepts and found “all of them different.” He asked, “Is there only one Huashan road since ancient time?”³³, He believes that “All roads lead to Rome”: “Nobody would clearly explain how to teach and I would like to form my own style of teaching because master teachers always have their own unique styles. Teachers cannot teach as pedagogy prescribes in each class” (Interview with Weiguo, June 5, 2014).

Then, Weiguo spoke with me about a discussion with colleagues. Using the story of one of his favourite movies, *The Shawshank Redemption*, he said that the hero became institutionalized and could not live without a particular system any more. Weiguo stated, “It is very easy for teachers to be systemized. We need to survive in a particular system and we have to behave according to the system. The ability of adaptation is integral”(Interview with Weiguo, June 5, 2014). When asked whether he had adapted to the “system,” he replied,

Yes. Actually, I grew up in the educational system in China. As a matter of fact, I did not adapt to the way of teaching and learning in Canada. I cannot copy it without critical thinking. I have to be innovative and I always know it. It will work better if I use similar approach to my colleagues. I can be a pioneer in teaching the flip class; I can try my best to make an excellent public lesson. In this

³³ It is a metaphor that means there is only one-way to succeed.

way, some of my innovations will be based on their educational traditions. I understand your hope; however, I cannot re-arrange the desks into circles to teach. Maybe the input of my class is limited due to my limited capacity. (Interview with Weiguo, June 5, 2014)

“The education of vove.” On Friday morning next week, the Honghu class had an English lesson. At the start of the class, Weiguo asked whether there were any volunteers to recite a paragraph of the textbook that they had learned the day before. The first student recited two sentences and stopped. Weiguo raised his voice: “If you cannot recite this paragraph, please stand in the back of the classroom with your book.” He then asked another student, and she began the recitation:

Hello Erick, how was your day?

It was great. What did you do?

I visited my grandpa.

How was the weather there?

It was...

This girl could not remember the word “terrible.” Weiguo asked her what else she could do if she “could not remember ‘terrible.’” Then, he beat a ruler against the desk before instructing all the students: “Anyone else who cannot recite, stand at the back of the class! No lunch until you can recite it” (Field notes, June 19, 2014).

About one fourth of 50 students left their seats and crowded the back of the classroom. They pushed and shoved each other to find suitable spots and I moved my chair to the corner to make space for them. These students looked down at their books,

but it seemed that nobody opened books to review and listen to the rest of the class (Field notes, June 19, 2014).

I was concerned about how much students could learn from the back of the classroom. As Weiguo and I had a close relationship, I was candid in telling him that he was different than I had expected in that he is both a rigorous teacher and a teacher who loves his students. I recalled that he told his students that he was “the only teacher who would give students corporal punishment” during my first visit to his class (Field notes, September 6, 2013). Actually, in Mainland China, corporal punishment is prohibited in schools by the Compulsory Education Law 1986 states.

Weiguo replied:

You will understand me better if you observe more of my classes. ... When I had my school placement at one of the key schools in China after returning from Canada, I thought it was disrespectful to students when I saw teachers ask students to stand at the back of the class. I told myself that I would not deal with my students this way. (Interview with Weiguo, June 19, 2014)

He continued:

After reading more than 30 books in the summer before teaching, I have adopted this or that strategy and have gradually formed my own view on education. It is a kind of “spirit,” and nobody can change me. This is my style. In the past, teachers disciplined students too harshly. Then, with the change of the educational law, corporal punishment was forbidden, but it went to the other extreme because teachers did not dare to even touch students. If there is no punishment, there is no education. (Interview with Weiguo, June 19, 2014)

He went on to explain that his students would understand him because his criticism was gentle and it was for their benefit. Weiguo gave another name for corporal punishment: “the education of love”. He showed me a ruler made of a bamboo knitting needle that Mrs. Jing, the Class 9 head teacher, has given him. Sometimes, Weiguo pounded his ruler on the blackboard or on a dozing student’s desk. Weiguo’s narratives suggest that while teachers reject harsher forms of corporal punishment, some of them continue to view its moderate and symbolic use as a practical, acceptable tool for pupil control in China.

Weiguo’s dilemma of teaching. On his classroom’s board, Weiguo displayed photos of the students he deemed to be the best behaved, as well as those who had made the most progress. He also posted studying tips and teaching strategies on the walls. In one of Weiguo’s afternoon classes, the noisy recess time came to an end with the bell. Students went back to the classroom, pushing and shoving each other. One boy at the back of the class shouted: “Be quiet! How dare you be noisy in Brother Yang’s³⁴ class?” Gradually the students became increasingly quiet. When they were all quiet, Weiguo came into the classroom to distribute the test sheets, and said:

If you can’t answer these questions, you may not pass the entrance examination to senior high school; therefore, your parents will have to spend tens of thousands of yuan to enroll you in the school.³⁵

Did anybody get them all right? If you did, your parents need not pay. Please stand up and give them a round of applause.

If you got 50% right, please stand up. Your parents need to pay ten thousand.

³⁴ The students gave Weiguo this nickname to show their closeness and respect for him.

³⁵ High school is not free in China. If students fail in the entrance exam to a good high school, they need to pay school selection fees to that school.

If you have to pay over thirty thousand and more, please stand up.

(Field notes, June 17, 2014)

I was confused why Weiguo connected the number of mistakes in exercises with the amount of money that parents had to pay to get their children in senior high school. After the class, I said that English language teachers were afraid of missing any important concepts and grammar and asked if there were any ways to motivate students to find out language points by themselves. Weiguo replied,

I encouraged good students to teach their classmates as “little teachers;” however, it was a waste of time. ... Like Erwin's utopian socialism, I always think of the ideal thing, but if problems emerge, I must immediately deal with them. As a young head teacher and subject teacher, I worried about how long the innovative activities would last? I could not predict the results and efficiency if I did something different than other senior teachers. Beginning teachers' thinking is very subtle; I used to have a lot of new ideas and implemented them right away. However, some negative feedback made me panic. I have explored my own way by looking back on my own learning experiences and do not know what methods of teaching my teachers employed. . . . if the students like the teacher and are interested in the class, they will try their best to learn. Then, they will choose English as their major and continue to learn. In the first three years, I still want to follow the majority of teachers to experience the basic mode of teaching. Then, I reflect on my problems. (Interview with Weiguo, June 20, 2014)

Weiguo recalled that he had asked his students to re-arrange their desks into a big circle and play the role of customers and vendors in a unit about shopping in the first semester. He expressed his dilemma:

You can imagine how much the students liked these activities. ... I tried to use all the knowledge I learned in Canada and practise it in China. ... How to teach is up to the administrators' willingness. If they require students to read extensively and improve their spoken English, we must follow their instructions; however, their only concern is the students' scores. ... Mrs. Chen praised me for motivating students' interests, but she also pointed out that the Honghu class lost two points in the mid-term examination and hoped I could raise my students' grades. Mrs. Chen's words were an alert that I must change this situation. If the administrator emphasizes test scores, how can teachers not focus on that? This is the problem of the educational system, and teachers gradually become too tired to try anything new under this system. (Interview with Weiguo, June 17, 2014)

I also felt Weiguo's dilemma. Sitting beside him in the office, I experienced his puzzlement and struggles as I have with Shan, Siyuan and other teachers before him. As a teacher educator, I have witnessed the complexity of the tensions experienced by teachers between ways of teaching and practice. Now I sat there as Weiguo's former instructor and present researcher on research in his class and school and wondered how we might both reconcile the tension he felt.

“It is easier said than done” (Zhi yi xing nan 知易行难). When I entered the teachers' office one afternoon, Weiguo furiously told me of his latest experience: “It was pouring cats and dogs and my motorbike skidded into a ditch. All my things got scattered

in the mud, including my new cell phone! I just felt like weeping!” (Interview with Weiguo, June 19, 2014). The background of the incident was that Bo, one of Weiguo’s students, had slipped into the teachers’ office to look for his test sheet after the self-study class the evening before. On leaving, he had locked the door by mistake and Mrs. Zhang, Weiguo’s officemate, could not get in. Therefore, Weiguo had to return to the school to open the door at 10 p.m. Weiguo told me about Bo:

Bo is a smart, thoughtful student. Once, I warned a student that I would give him a suspension if he made mistakes again. Bo came to my office and told me how a senior monk forgave mistakes made by a junior monk. However, he seldom comes to my office now because I scold him every time: His desk is always messy, and nobody wants to be his deskmate. His writing is illegible on tests. I am not sure how to handle him without “killing” a talent. (Interview with Weiguo, June 25, 2014)

Weiguo asked whether I would like to talk with Bo, commenting that he liked my observation because I “offer constructive suggestions rather than judging” (Interview with Weiguo, June 25, 2014). I talked with Bo in the reading corner of the hallway because I knew he likes to read. I found Bo had a distinct plan for his studies and wanted to change his “bad habits.” Then, I reminded Weiguo about his writing on the teaching philosophy in Canada: “I will encourage the special students and try to make a difference in their thinking. Making students special is tough because a teacher needs to foster every student in light of their individual aptitude” (Weiguo’s reflection, September 30, 2011). Weiguo replied that he would “keep seeking the students’ potential and recommend Bo’s essays to contribute to some journals” (Interview with Weiguo, June 25, 2014).

At the staff meeting at the end of the first year, Weiguo was chosen by the Grade 7 administrator to share his expertise of being an excellent beginning head teacher. He recalled this experience of landing in the ditch late at night and reflected his personal beliefs:

I really want to cry at that time when I fell into the ditch. I realized that education is not a utopia. Just like physicians develop professionally by curing many serious illnesses. Teachers have to experience things. As soon as I set up my utopia of education, I found that the practice of education is easier said than done (Zhi yi xing nan 知易行难). (Field notes, July 7, 2014)

Weiguo's words resonated with me. Having witnessed his daily teaching practices, I understood the number of trivial things that a teacher needs to attend to in the class of more than 50 students. Beginning teachers, such as Weiguo, Hailiang, Shan and Siyuan, are dedicating most of their time and effort to their students and career, which can be difficult when having to constantly address trivial matters.

“It is important to provide continual support.” Two weeks before the final exam, Weiguo walked furiously into the teachers' office after the weekly lesson planning, and expressed his frustration in relation to the timing of lessons:

The leader of the Teaching and Research Group told me that the final term exam would cover 14 units of the textbook. Am I moving too slowly? What am I going to do? Fly through three units in three weeks? Who controls the pace of teaching, anyway? No matter how tight time is, I teach the dialogue exercises and have students practise oral English. I also spend time expanding the cultural information whenever I can. It is the influence of my own cross-cultural experience. When

teaching on Christmas or Thanksgiving, for instance, I share my observations from Canada with my students. (Interview with Weiguo, June 19, 2014)

Weiguo was curious about my research and asked me to describe how I conducted my research. When I described to him how I used a narrative inquiry research method, which is qualitative in nature, not using numbers or quantifiable measures, but using stories of people and myself, he proclaimed,

Oh, what would happen if you could not find anything significant due to the limited number of participants? ... It is possible that the experience does not influence them. Although I gained something from my cross-cultural experience, I might have used it up already. (Interview with Weiguo, June 19, 2014)

To clarify his position on this, Weiguo compared his time in Canada with the home visits he conducted: “If I only visited the students’ homes once, the effect would be very limited. It is important to provide continual support” (Interview with Weiguo, June 19, 2014). Weiguo iterated the importance of ongoing support to participants:

Participating in the program enriched our cross-cultural experience for a specific period of time; however, I had no teaching experience then. Now, after a year of teaching, I can see things from different perspective. It would be different if we had an opportunity to go back to visit schools in Windsor and we notice some of the trivial things we didn’t notice before. (Interview with Weiguo, June 19, 2014)

At the end of the conversation, I expressed that his job was tiring. Weiguo agreed without hesitation:

As a beginning teacher, the administrators of my grade assigned many tasks to me.

I have always longed to be an excellent teacher and regarded teaching as my life-long career. Otherwise, it is hard for me to continue to be a teacher in the face of so many trivial duties every day. (Interview with Weiguo, June 19, 2014)

Being a Teacher With Wisdom and Love in Third Semester of Teaching

After the first year of teaching, Weiguo and his colleagues attended a school-based teachers' professional development seminar for one week in the summer, which offered a lecture by a psychologist titled "Moral education with caring hearts." I audited Weiguo in the one-week training. When Weiguo and I debriefed on how important doing moral education is for a head teacher, he reflected on his "love of education" and realized that he would not discipline students too hard.

According to the policy of the Free Teacher Education Program, graduates from the program can continue to pursue their graduate studies without having to write an entrance exam (Xu et al., 2015). When I asked Weiguo, he told me that he had chosen to take psychology as his major of graduate study because he was interested in classroom management. Weiguo shared his plan with me: he wanted to "combine pedagogy and psychology and to be an excellent educator" (Interview with Weiguo, June 10, 2014).

Being an organized and reflective teacher. At the beginning of teaching Grade 8, there was an incident that demonstrated the learning curve to which Weiguo had to adapt. A student was not assigned a dorm room. He realized the importance of being organized in classroom management. He gave me an example of "the notebook of incorrectly-completed exercises," and said,

No matter how much time I spend on emphasizing the importance of reviewing the notebook, the effect of my rules will be barely satisfactory if I ignore their

implementation. As an old saying goes, “What is learned from books is only useful if it can be practised.” 纸上得来终觉浅，绝知此事要躬行. ... Beginning teachers should carry out innovative activities in moderation. Instead, they should do the routine tasks well, then try a few innovative activities and make them features of the class. (Interview with Weiguo, September 4, 2014)

Weiguo told me he would find a room for the student to stay this semester. He reflected on other teachers’ teaching experiences shared in the summer training:

The principal praised some teachers whose students did an excellent job in the Gaokao. Some of those teachers are, in my eyes, of ordinary ability and I even arrogantly categorize them as old-fashioned. I wondered, “How could they make their students get such good grades?” (Interview with Weiguo, September 4, 2014)

He recalled that he implemented many innovations; however, he was puzzled at the failure of some innovative activities such as “little teachers”: “In executing these plans, there was something always altered or interrupted my original idea. Basically, I overestimated the students’ self-discipline and capability to compete tasks. In the end, I didn’t know whether to keep or abolish my plans” (Interview with Weiguo, September 4, 2014). Following my suggestion, he prepared a ‘reflection notebook,’ which summarizes what he should do and finish, and posted some sticky notes beside his desk to remind himself. He felt that “work became much more organized and efficient” (Interview with Weiguo, September 9, 2014).

To teach students how to make plans, Weiguo posted his “head teacher’s schedule” on the classroom wall and encouraged the students who excelled at writing

reflections to send him photographs of their daily reflections through QQ or WeChat. Then, Weiguo made a PowerPoint about the importance of doing reflection with these photos and shared a presentation with the class. Other students realized how the academic performances of these students' had improved in such a short time, and more students became engaged in class and with their reflections.

I attended one of Weiguo's class meetings (banhui 班会) on reflection and planning. He invited an outstanding student from Grade 9 to talk about study strategies. This student shared her secret to success of making study plans and she was surprised to know many students in Weiguo's class were such good planners (Weiguo's reflection, September 24, 2014). Then Weiguo made a survey at the end of the semester about the practice of making daily reflection. The result showed that 93% of students were writing reflective books as part of their a daily routine. Weiguo said:

I just enjoy being with my students. I treat them as my family members and I do not want them to get hurt. For example, we had field trips to ride bicycles at the riverside, climb mountain, have picnic together on weekends and celebrate their birthdays. We are the family.

Being a good head teacher requires two qualities: one is wisdom, and the second is love. I just read a book called "Love of Education", which claims that love is like the water of a pond. No matter the shape of the pond is round or square, the most important thing is the water. If there is no water, education cannot be called education. (Personal communication, June 18, 2014)

"If I were the head teacher of Honghu class." It was time to read the students' weekly reflections. Weiguo and I quietly retreated to the office. Weiguo regarded reading

and commenting on the students' reflections as a way of "communicating" with them every week. He often asked students for feedback about his teaching and approach to managing them; however, they just gave him some vague answers or said, "You did good job." Weiguo applied a psychological principle, the "projection effect," and asked students to write a reflection entitled, "If I were the head teacher of the Honghu class." When we read the students' reflections, we considered their observations and ideas:

Student A wrote, "We know you are a very responsible teacher and we can feel your love. But it would be better if you didn't solve problems by getting angry with us." Student B wrote: "If I were the head teacher, I would try my best to understand students' minds...never judge them according to their test scores since each student is a flower that will blossom in spring." Student C wrote, "I wish you could play more basketball with us. (Field notes, September 9, 2014)

These writings were thought provoking. Weiguo was frustrated with the fact that the students appreciated his efforts but did not understand him. He reflected:

It has been a year and a half since I became a head teacher. On the one hand, my image as a responsible and good teacher is deeply rooted in students' hearts. On the other hand, I become irritable, and this must hurt many students. (Interview with Weiguo, September 9, 2014)

"Whether the medicine is the bitterer the better?" One day, in Weiguo's English class, he scolded Chen, one of his students, in front of the whole class for failing to deliver a good oral report. Then, he switched the target of his criticism to Hanhan, the class monitor, insisting that Hanhan was responsible for this. Then, Weiguo said, "Hanhan, you also need to be responsible for recruiting students for the sports meeting. Is

this clear?” (Field notes, March 13, 2015). To our surprise, Hanhan did not reply. Weiguo noticed she was unhappy.

In a conversation in his office afterwards, Hanhan conceded that she was upset and informed Weiguo that other students did not approve of the way he criticized people. She said that Weiguo and the students of the Honghu class needed “to adapt to each other, not just in a one-sided way”(Field notes, March 13, 2015). Weiguo defended himself, asking Hanhan whether she thought Chen was actually upset with him:

Do you know how many times I went to his home to explain exercises to him at night? Do you know that when he made progress, I brought ice cream to his home to praise him? Do you know that I used to wait for him in front of his home with a carton of milk in my hand? I have done much for my students and I know where their baseline is. It is like when you are angry with your parents because you know, no matter what you do, they will not leave you. Similarly, I know my students; I know I can lose my temper to a certain extent. If you don't know the situation, you shouldn't criticize your teacher! (Field notes, March 13, 2015)

Afterwards, Weiguo told me that he initially believed that as long as his original purpose was good for the students, it did not matter what kind of means he took. After reflection, he realized the reason why there was a barrier between him and the students of the Honghu class:

People always say, “Bitter medicine cures sickness; unpalatable advice benefits conduct 良药苦口利于病，忠言逆耳利于行。” However, I do not agree with the notion that the more bitter the medicine, the better it is. Mr. Wei Shusheng³⁶ said, “Many

³⁶ A Chinese educator who has excellent classroom management.

medicines with good curative effect are coated with yellow sugar; or honey and spice are added to bitter traditional Chinese medicines.” If we ‘coat’ our ‘unpalatable advice’ with sugar, it may be more acceptable for our children and students. (Interview with Weiguo, March 13, 2015)

“The cross-cultural experiences had a profound influence on me.” In the end of the semester, Weiguo attended a seminar called *Excellence for Head Teachers* in the city of Lanzhou. As one of the four teachers represented his school, he was eager to share his thoughts about how theory and practice interacted with each other and while there engaged in a heated debate with a teacher who boasted about changing his practices to fit theory. Weiguo felt that altering classroom activities to adhere to theory was akin “cutting the foot to fit the shoe” 削足适履, a Chinese expression that alludes to instances where people are so eager to make an innovation work, that they forget and undermine its intended purpose:

One head teacher talked about his theory and practices in classroom management. In the Question & Answer session, I shared my questions: “Did you learn the theory first and then apply it? Or did you have a successful practice first and then find the theory that fit?” I remembered discussing design of public lessons with you and whether I design according to a certain theoretic framework or design activities first and then “cut the feet so they fit the shoe.” (Interview with Weiguo, March 2015)

Weiguo went on to note his students’ performance: “Their English scores ranked at the top among the Level A classes. I am good at discussing study approached with them and I stuck to the practice of making portfolios and booklets to collect incorrectly

completed exercises” (Interview with Weiguo, March 2015). Given that he had experienced both cultures, I asked him what he thought of learning from the West. He maintained the observations he had shared in the past:

I have been always clear that we cannot just “copy” the practice of the West, especially some of the basic value systems. However, we can learn some strategies. That is why I wrote, “Every drop counts,” which means each tiny thing is meaningful to me. I was not mature then and I felt it was hard for me to learn something systematically; however, many small things were inspiring. I have always thought this way. (Interview with Weiguo, March 2015)

I commented that his answer reminded me of a Chinese adage that says “Chinese learning should be followed as the essence; Western learning as the practical application (Zhong xue wei ti, xi xue wei yong 中学为体, 西学为用).” Weiguo agreed.

I then asked him if he had changed in the past 2 years and he replied, “I have changed in some respects, but I have remained steadfast in others. I always teach more slowly than other teachers because I spend more time on teaching about cultural differences and practising dialogue with students” (Interview with Weiguo, March 2015). When asked the reason why his students liked his class, Weiguo thought it was because his lessons were interesting, which he owed to what he learned in Canada. He thanked me for asking the question that allowed him to link his pedagogical approach to his experience in Canada: “It indeed makes me think. I used to think that I taught and educated students in my own way; however, the cross-cultural experiences had a profound influence on me, which I did not realize sometimes” (Interview with Weiguo, March 2015).

Stories Going Forward: Being a Model Teacher

In March 2015, 16 UW teacher candidates visited SWU under the support of the Mitacs Global Link Scholarship and the Reciprocal Learning Program. Two UW teacher candidates were placed in Weiguo's class for a 5-week school placement. They established a rapport with Weiguo and his students. One of the Canadian student teachers said, she loved "the students in the Honghu class" and Weiguo was "such a hard-working teacher who values the teacher-student relationship and cares about students so much." (Interview with Weiguo, May 15, 2015) When I visited Weiguo, he proudly gave me a copy of his new 100,000-words reflective booklet, *Days We Spent Together*. He used some psychological theories in his writing as a theoretic framework and stated, "Learning psychology gave my writing 'spiritual bones' so it could be more than just a 'collection of loose facts'" (Interview with Weiguo, March 13, 2015). Weiguo offered a presentation on sharing his experience of being a head teacher:

My relationship with my students has been as harmonious as "a gentle breeze and a mild rain" (和风细雨) for a relatively long time. I feel we have grown together; we encourage each other. I am a teacher who is always willing to be with my students and never feel tired. Education keeps changing to fit something, pedagogically and systematically; however, it seems that we neglect the real lives of education—people. It is like when we dig a pool, some people say a square pool is good, and others prefer a round one. We keep changing. However, very few of them notice the most important thing: the water. What is the water in education? It is the love. Without love, education is like a pool without water. (Field notes, May 2015)

Weiguo's words illustrate his pursuit of ideal education, which involves love and caring to students. In a later presentation he made for the beginning teachers in his school, he quoted a famous saying from a great Chinese philosopher: "The unity of Inner knowledge and action" (Zhi xing he yi 知行合一). He reiterated that it is his lifelong pursuit.

CHAPTER 8

DISCUSSION OF THE CROSS-CULTURAL EXPERIENCES AND CHINESE TEACHERS' INDUCTION

The narratives in this study profile four participants' experiences with cross-cultural education and their induction as teachers in Chinese schools. However, simply offering narratives is not enough, as their professional and personal development in the shifting Eastern and Western landscapes warrants thorough analysis and discussion. While each participant's experience is unique, it is possible to draw connections between the influences of the cross-cultural experience on their early career. Thus, in this chapter, I discuss the themes that emerged from my participants' narratives in two capacities: their experience in Canada as teacher candidates who participated in the Reciprocal Learning Program and in China as beginning teachers. I further enhance my interpretation by exploring the convergence and divergence of some features of the narratives offered by Shan, Siyuan, Weiguo, and Hailiang.

Participating in the Reciprocal Learning Program in Canada

While in Canada, Shan, Siyuan, Hailiang and Weiguo expressed that their cross-cultural experience was valuable, and that they would like to apply the pedagogies and strategies of classroom management as practised in Canada to their Chinese classrooms. They learned about novel and different models of teaching and learning, kept reflective journals, recorded field notes, and maximized opportunities for dialogue with others going through the same experience. They developed their pedagogical knowledge and engaged with an unfamiliar international sociocultural environment. Some sub-themes emerged from their participation in the Reciprocal Learning Program in

Canada: transformational pedagogical understanding; teacher-student relationships; sense of community and classroom settings; reconsideration of the local situation; opportunities for reflection.

Transformational Pedagogical Understanding

The predominant theme emerging from their cross-cultural education was the transformation of their pedagogical understanding. In the Reciprocal Learning Program in Canada, Chinese teacher candidates were exposed to teaching strategies through university classes, school visits, and classroom observations in the school placements. The newly-acquired knowledge and Canadian/Western educational practices inspired them regarding their current knowledge, practices, and beliefs.

All the participants saw how the teaching strategies they learned in the professional development workshop applied to their own learning in the university classes. For example, engaging the experience of curriculum in the biography classes in the pre-service program in Windsor showed Shan that effective teaching should be interesting, engage students' curiosity, and improve students' long-term development. This observation expanded his thinking and, back in China, encouraged him to try innovative teaching methods from foreign cultures of schooling. Hailiang learned from Mr. Veek's democratic style of interaction with his students. This was different from the traditional Chinese class interaction, in which teachers are authoritarian rather than supporters and guides.

The participants were placed in elementary and secondary schools in Canada for a total of 4 weeks, and worked with their associate teachers to learn what teaching in Canadian classroom was like. Some of them followed one associate teacher all day, and

some observed different teachers teach their subject. This mentoring allowed participants to form close interaction with their associate teacher, from whom they learned a lot of effective classroom strategies on how to manage the class, give clear instructions, scaffold questions, respond to students, and assess their learning.

Chinese student teachers' expectations tended to centre on being exposed to methods that were different from those typically used in China and that could be transferred to Chinese classrooms. During the school experience, they noticed that the teachers used a variety of student-centred teaching approaches to fit different students' needs and interests, and did not stick to only one method. Some participants contrasted this with the more traditional, teacher-centred, exam-oriented instruction with which they had been familiar in China. For example, Shan described his amazement at Canadian students' imagination and creativity, commenting that his associate teacher developed students' independent thinking rather than limiting them to certain answers. He focused on how to motivate students to think independently and to interest them in the subject they were learning. He also noted that the group discussions encourage students to think and speak, and he considered how the Canadian teachers were able to conduct differentiated instruction to deal with different or unexpected answers.

Canadian teachers were constructed as active and dynamic, engaging in purposeful decision-making about what is best for their own students. Likewise, Hailiang commented that the strategy of connecting teaching to real-life situations inspired him with a new direction for teaching geography in China. The narratives also reveal that many participants indicated that they would try out assessment strategies in Chinese classrooms. For example, Hailiang was impressed by the formative assessment in

geography teaching, such as designing a geographical project as a form of assessment, which was open-ended and let students demonstrate their creativity.

Teacher–Student Relationships

In addition to pedagogical understanding, teacher-student relationships received a great deal of attention. The participants also related classroom interaction to cultural differences between Canada and China, to teacher patience and the use of a variety of methods. They recognized that while Canadian teachers appeared to prioritize teacher-student interaction, delicate boundaries existed between teachers and students. Small class size in the elementary school was conducive to teachers taking responsibility for a community of caring. Chinese teacher candidates were especially drawn to the personal rapport between the teachers and the students. For example, both Siyuan and Hailiang marvelled at the encouraging words that the university instructors and schoolteachers offered to students. They noticed the respect paid to the students, as demonstrated by the teachers' class greeting and the opportunities given to students to freely express their independent views. Siyuan learned from her associate teacher that education is a slow art, and that instructions are more effective if they cater to the psychological needs of young learners who like the attention of teachers.

Depending on where the participants were placed, there were some differences in their narratives on teacher-student relationships. Siyuan was placed in a low socio-economic urban school, and he felt welcomed and invited into the elementary school upon his arrival. He appreciated the positive response that teachers offered to students who fell asleep in class. Hailiang, for instance, also noticed the caring paid to the students, which was evident in the teachers' classroom greetings and birthday greetings

to the students. Also, Hailiang and Shan experienced and felt the boundary between teachers and students because of the different cultural norms between Canada and China.

Sense of Community and Classroom Settings

During their cross-cultural experience in Canada, the participants were placed in a combination of low socio-economic schools and schools in affluent districts. The sense of community was pervasive, regardless of location. The participants observed that the school was an essential part of the community culture, and the sense of community among teachers, students, principals, and community members permeated all aspect of their practicum. The principal had students offer their best wishes to a student who was celebrating his birthday in an assembly. Parents and the other community members volunteered for field trips and sports, and the community used parts of the school facility, such as the playing fields, for community athletics. Siyuan expressed his appreciation of the different model that teachers and administrators at Canadian schools employed, where educators “work with” each other. This notion of community influenced Siyuan’s conception of teacher-student and collegial communication.

Another aspect that interested them was the décor and physical environment of the classroom in Canadian schools. They were impressed by the resource-rich and print-rich learning environment. Due to the large class size in Chinese classroom, they did not consider a direct imitation of the Canadian classroom layout in China. All four participants expressed their wish to adapt this idea and apply it in the Chinese setting. For example, Weiguo marvelled at the idea of posting students’ works on walls to create a resource-rich environment that recognized students’ contribution while making learning outcomes visible to students, teachers, parents, or anybody who might visit the classroom.

Consequently, he wanted to set up language trees and a library corner in his classroom to motivate students to read.

Reconsidering the Local Situation

Cross-cultural experience provided an opportunity for Chinese teacher candidates to compare and contrast the Chinese education system with the Canadian system. They observed pedagogical disparities or other differences between the two education systems. It made them critically reflect on their own practice. As their guide teacher, I had the privilege of observing the participants' development and reflections on our own culture on daily basis.

In Shan's narrative, at the beginning of his stay in Canada, he wanted to learn "different approaches to teaching" because he believed the Canadian education to be advanced. These pedagogical disparities or other differences between the two education systems encouraged him to critically reflect on his own practices in China. He reconsidered his previous focus of achieving the goals of one lesson, and focused on achieving the ultimate goals of education instead. When he reflected that Chinese teachers should encourage students' independent thinking and develop their creativity, he pondered that the reason for the unsatisfactory effect of class discussion in China might be the different approach to assessment. Under the encouragement of the school teachers and university instructors, he considered similarities between the two systems. Shan also noted that the curriculum should put more emphasis on class teaching in Canada. The students need to learn more, and teachers to teach more.

Although the participant teachers seemed to admire some of the teaching practices they saw, they realized the boundaries between Canadian and Chinese environments,

such as the lack of time and large class size in the Chinese teaching context. When Hailiang reflected on the contrast between summative assessment in China and formative assessment in Canada, he commented that there should be a balance between the two. In Weiguo's narrative of "Where are our ways?" he constructed an understanding of his experiences in Canadian schools, and pondered what educators could learn from the West in an insightful way in a group conversation with fellow students and Dr. Xu.

Opportunities for Reflection

The practice of reflecting on their observations and learning during the Reciprocal Learning Program also had a positive impact on some participants. All teacher candidates were required to engage in personal reflection as part of their commitments to the program and used a variety of methods for their reflections, including journal entries, online blogs, and debriefing with other participants.

Dr. Xu and the guide teacher were essential to maximize the benefits of this process and ensure effective communication and collaboration among the participants. Before the cross-cultural experience, the guide teachers held pre-departure meetings to verify that they clearly understood the purpose of the program and the kind of support they could give to the participants. In the weekly debrief meeting, participants recollected the events of the day or week, considered their own feelings and reactions to these events, and examined the how and why of specific incidents. They also shared reflections with respect to the goals of transferring the pedagogical knowledge gained from observing Canadian classrooms to their own classrooms in China. Weiguo made it clear that, although the reciprocal program required that he kept a journal and weekly reflection, writing was something that he enjoyed and would have pursued regardless. Participants

declared that reflections eventually become a habit, and that writing enabled them to review what they had done and learned. Weiguo also noted that being able to talk with other program participants, Dr. Xu, the guide teacher, and me as a graduate assistant at the weekly debriefing sessions was an essential aspects of the reflection.

In addition to their reflections on Canadian classroom practices, students also reflected on their own culture, which contributed to their reciprocal learning experiences. This will be discussed in Chapter 9.

During the Teacher Induction in China

All the Chinese teacher candidates underwent what Schlein (2007) refers to as re-entry transitions as they returned to the Chinese education system. This transition includes survival, coping, and innovative methods in the process of becoming socialized to the teaching profession in a new school culture. After returning to China, Siyuan now teaches at an elite school that has “the best students in the province,” and concentrates on improving their academic achievement. Shan works at a key school, which endeavours to improve students’ Gaokao scores while advocating the notion that “life is education.” Weiguo and Hailiang teach at Jialin School, which emphasizes beginning teachers’ professional development.

Changes in Teachers’ Pedagogical Practices

After the cross-cultural experience in Canada, Chinese teacher candidates returned to SWU to finish their pre-service program. When they became beginning teachers in China after finishing their teacher education program, they situated their pedagogical choices and classroom management within a broader range of experience.

The changes in their philosophy of, and attitudes towards, teaching and learning represented deep changes. As a research assistant of the program, I paid visits to Chinese beginning teachers' classroom and observed evidence of practical techniques, skills, and strategies introduced in the university and school classroom in Canada now being used in Chinese beginning teachers' classrooms in China. For example, these include mind maps, "think-pair-share" activities, language trees, environmental project, stories, singing and chants, jeopardy games, as well as different approaches to lesson planning and classroom management.

Weiguo was inspired by hands-on activities to teach the alphabet, of which I reminded him when observing his first lesson. He decided to deploy activities that involved the concept of multiple-intelligence, commenting that, if students are simply asked to repeat things in order to memorize them, they are likely to forget; whereas, if they are encouraged to learn through doing, their learning will be more real and sustained. In his teaching practice, Weiguo gradually developed cooperative group-work to teach English and incorporate cultural component whenever he can relate to the textbook. These methods are different than focusing on grammar and vocabulary in a traditional English language class. He considered this one of the central ways in which the cross-cultural experience impacted his perspective on pedagogy. His teaching methods engaged students and were praised by his administrators.

Both Weiguo and Hailiang mentioned the use of mind maps to help students memorize vocabulary or make logic connections of geographical concepts. When he was a supply teacher in the junior high school, Hailiang created real-life scenarios and incorporated cultural components that made geography accessible and fun to his students.

His class was popular among students, and this experience became his most cherished memory of teaching. From my interview and observation, the teachers offered many examples of successful changes in their pedagogical practices.

Dissonance in Pedagogy

Although the new curriculum advocates scientific inquiry, the assessment system has not changed to reflect this. The participants expressed their dissatisfaction with the current test-oriented paradigm in Chinese education, and desired change. Narratives reveal that feelings of frustration or dissatisfaction in some participants grew from making comparisons on their return to China. The disconnect between their existing competence and the induction arose because they considered the Chinese and Canadian education systems to be very different. They experienced challenges and dissonances of pedagogies.

Shan's question about why there are so many differences in education between China and the West illustrates his dilemma between the restrictive reality and his observations in the Canadian school. Neither the idea of preparing students for tests nor assigning significant homework to students sat well with him. Likewise, Siyuan claimed that the teaching philosophies in Canadian and Chinese education collided. In his school, lecturing, which includes drills and practice, would be the most efficient way of covering large amounts of information and preparing students for tests. When I examined the different types of interactions that Siyuan experienced as a student teacher in Canada, I assumed that his current beliefs about teaching and learning were influenced by interactions with Canadian associate teachers. However, the large class size makes it

difficult for him to have the one-on-one communication that he felt was vital to effective teaching. He struggled because he felt “disconnected to the students.”

The participants had different responses to the dissonance of pedagogies. As Shan said, he and Siyuan “are looking for a way to provide excellent education. [They] are approaching zero [on the scale] from opposite ends” (Interview with Siyuan, January, 2015). Siyuan initially wanted to apply inquiry-based instruction, and then responded the administrators’ expectations of increasing teaching efficiency to make sure students wrote enough exercises to improve their test scores. Although Shan shifted his focus on preparing students for the Gaokao when teaching Grade 12, he kept exploring ways to engage them in critical thinking and the use of inquiry-based instruction. He was able to develop biology public lessons that helped students discover biological ideas and make sense of their relationships to life. His way of teaching was influenced directly and indirectly by both his observation in Canadian classrooms and the school as a teaching organization in the context of his work. In pursuit of his students’ academic excellence, Weiguo combined a teacher-centred approach and student-centred activities, such as role-play, scenario learning, story-retelling, and group activities to improve their oral competence in English. He also participated in new trends in educational technology, such as flip-classrooms, MOOCs (Massive open online course), et cetera.

Considering Reciprocal Learning

Rather than being judgmental, the participants attempted to conceive of a reality that could work for their own situation in their induction in China. Many modifications mentioned by the participants suggest that they learned what and how a different education system worked through the cross-cultural experience, and also to appreciate the

differences and to reflect on how to adapt it to their own context. Most importantly, some of them got the opportunity to practise reciprocal learning by interacting with Canadian student teachers.

Shan emphasized that we “cannot just copy the West” (Field notes, May 2, 2012). He was initially met with silent students during class activities in his Chinese classroom because many of his questions employed Western notions, such as open-ended inquiry, personal responses, and debating concepts. Then, he gradually recognized the need to modify his inquiry lessons to make them applicable to Chinese classrooms. He came to realize the advantages and disadvantages of the inquiry-based learning in China and Canada, and called for a balance between the two. To Shan, while it was important to promote student learning in a relaxing learning environment, it was equally important to ensure that students could manage pressure. In his public lesson, the school motto “life is education” inspired Shan to create a real-life scenario for the biology lesson and use the Western problem solving approach. This combination was successful. Shan’s narrative revealed that he thought of the teaching and learning styles in Canada when teaching in China. He wondered whether Canadian teachers also faced pressure to raise students’ test scores, and whether there are any exam guidelines in the U.S.

In Weiguo’s narrative, he believed in an eclectic approach to education. He said he could not apply Western-style approaches directly in his classroom. He adapted them a bit, and combined them with Chinese traditions. He displayed more confidence in using culture as a medium to teach foreign languages. Also, he resorted to Chinese philosophies of education, such as a strong bond between teachers and students, to cultivate students in his way. When he returned to China as a teacher candidate, he participated in hosting the

UW participants when they visited Southwest University to repay the hospitality that he and other Chinese teacher candidates had received in Canada. Interestingly, when Weiguo became a beginning teacher in China, he was assigned as a mentor of two UW teacher candidates, who were placed in his class for a 5-week school placement during their visit to China based on the Reciprocal Learning Program and co-sponsored by Mitacs Global Link. Through interacting with Weiguo and the classroom observation, both UW teacher candidates were amazed by how close Weiguo was to his students and how much caring he gave them. Reciprocally, Weiguo appreciated the “creativity, open minds, and tolerance” that the two Canadian teacher candidates demonstrated during the school placements.

Acculturation and School Culture

Overall, the findings of the inquiry display how the participants’ cross-cultural experience provides them with an embodied and shifting cultural understanding of teachers and students. All the participants mentioned that they needed to comprehend specific behavioural and curricular expectations for teachers in their schools in China to become successful teachers, and to gain recognition from administrators and colleagues. As teachers in Southwest China, they struggled to see their roles in preparing students for a very competitive system or interesting them in learning. Also, their practices are reinforced by expectations to conform to the teacher practices of their senior teachers.

Since the participants needed to understand how to work within a standardized curriculum to teach in the Chinese public school system, both the content and pace of their lessons had to follow specific teaching guidelines. This meant designing lesson plans with other teachers in their Lesson Planning Group to ensure that all students were

learning the same material. In the context of preparing students for a high-stakes test, Shan's proposal on the order of the teaching contents was not adopted. Weiguo expressed his frustration when his suggestion of using hands-on activities, such as flash cards to teach vowels and consonants, were ignored in the lesson-planning meeting. Also, Weiguo's attitude towards innovation in classroom management changed. Similarly, in Siyuan's narrative, after he began teaching in China, he experienced very different types of school culture in his school. Even though he believed in the goals and effectiveness of inquiry-based instruction,³⁷ his school and district did not encourage its use because the priority was still high-stakes testing. Siyuan was frustrated because his ability was not "recognized" by his school in the Chinese teaching context. Also, he was pushed to observe his assigned new mentor's classes and follow the lecture model of teaching, which required him to impart large amounts of knowledge efficiently while making students write a large amount of repeated exercises. These tensions led Siyuan to conclude, "There is no platform for beginning teachers" (Interview with Siyuan, July 30, 2013). He reminisced about the harmonious relationship in the elementary school in Canada when he experienced issues with respect to the hierarchy of teachers in his school in China. Siyuan's talk about his long-term plan of professional development with the vice principal illustrates the apex of the tension between his professional development and the school's requirements. He decided to leave the school.

Like Siyuan, Shan faced pressure to conform to notions of being a good teacher via the social interactions in his school in China at the beginning. Since Shan redefined the role of teacher from his Canadian experience, he disagreed with the teachers in his

³⁷ In the inquiry-based instruction, the teacher's role is to support students investigating natural phenomena in the same way that scientists construct knowledge within various scientific communities.

school who acted more like students' parents. He did "not like to push and cram students with a large amount of exercises and occupying their time" (Interview with Shan, January 3, 2012). Instead, he motivated students to learn by talking about the different learning styles he observed in Canadian classrooms and how their Canadian counterparts learned. Like Siyuan, Shan also faced isolation from his colleagues who did not understand or approve of his way of teaching because it did not conform to the scripted lessons that teachers at his school accepted.

Mentor and Mentorship

Shan's, Siyuan's, Weiguo's, and Haiiang's induction in China evolved in various forms: Shan received a 2-month school-based training in the summer before teaching, and attended the competition of public lessons for beginning teachers; Siyuan had extensive top-down training at the provincial, district, and school-based levels; both Weiguo and Haiiang attended 1-week beginning teacher orientation sessions, and went through various district and school-based professional development programs in Jialin High School. Both Haiiang and Siyuan taught in their schools in China as student teachers in their 4th year of the pre-service programs. In their first 3 years of teaching, all the participants were paired with mentors who were senior colleagues and experts.

Haiiang and Siyuan followed their mentors' classes and observed almost all lessons, as well as lessons from other teachers who taught the same subject. In many respects, mentorship helped the participants to improve their teaching strategies and professional development. Haiiang, for instance, felt comfortable asking questions and observing other teachers in his Teaching and Research Group. While struggling with assessment, communication with parents, and planning, he often called upon his mentors

and other colleagues to provide the necessary practical information he needed. While Hailiang's colleagues in the Teaching and Research group of geography were "supportive" and "generous," he noted, "some head teachers [were] too reserved" (personal communication, December 2014) and did not want to share their strategies to push students to learn.

In Shan's narratives, he endured discouragement from some senior teachers with respect to his innovative approaches. In his fourth year of teaching, he acted as a formal mentor for a beginning teacher. Siyuan absorbed and was able to apply so much of his mentor's insights. Shan's experience motivated him to be an open-minded mentor and supportive leader of the Lesson Preparation Group of Biology, which favoured equal participation. A collegial culture existed in the participants' schools. In the teachers' office, I observed extra stools and chairs beside the teachers' desks, which were provided to facilitate communication with, and lesson observation by, colleagues, student teachers, and visitors.

These experiences offer insight into the divergence and convergence of Canadian and Chinese pedagogies, which in turn provide an understanding of how cross-cultural teaching experiences function contextually and temporally. This experience also underscores key elements of divergence that mark differences in the participants' daily teaching experiences in China as beginning teachers. Ultimately, there are some significant distinctions between the Chinese and Canadian contexts in terms of geography, language, culture, and educational history.

CHAPTER 9

EDUCATIONAL AND SOCIETAL IMPLICATIONS OF THE CROSS-CULTURAL AND INDUCTION EXPERIENCE

The emerging themes that arise from the personal and professional lived experiences of the participants illustrate the fact that, when Chinese beginning teachers go back to practice their profession in the Chinese educational system, they do not simply replicate their cross-cultural experiences. Instead, they work toward creating a curriculum and teacher-student, collegial relationship that cater to their students' and schools' needs. In order to understand the educational and societal implications of the cross-cultural experience and induction within this study, three aspects need to be considered: the influence of the cross-cultural experiences that draw on global and local perspectives; teacher induction in Chinese context; and how the cross-cultural experience shapes the reciprocal learning, resonance, and reflective practice.

Implications of Cross-cultural Teacher Development

This study confirms the general literature on the value of pre-service teachers' study abroad experience (Cushner & Mahon, 2002; Mahan & Stachowski, 1989; Willard-Holt, 2001). As stated in the literature review, studies show that cross-cultural experience may result in benefits and problems for teacher candidates (Cook, 2009; Gleeson & Tait, 2012). This study offers findings that differ from Tang and Choi's (2004) exploration of pre-service student teachers' professional learning experiences after an international field experience in Australia, Canada, and China. They posit that some students believe there is a discord between what they learned abroad and the professional learning experience that occurs in their native education system. Weaving these

narratives together with the experiential lessons learned in my journey of discovery clarifies the meaning of cross-cultural teacher development as an approach to teacher development. In the process of retelling my participants' experiences and analyzing the emerging themes, I sought to identify the influence that cross-cultural experiences have on Chinese teacher candidates' professional development in a globalized world and in local contexts.

Changes of Teachers' Personal Practical Knowledge

According to Connelly and Clandinin (1988), teachers' personal practical knowledge is based on their past experience and can be found in both a teacher's current pedagogical approaches, and in their future plans. During their stay in Canada, the impression pressed upon the candidates by the Canadian education system motivated them to reflect on their prior knowledge. Their narratives further reveal how they processed the newly acquired knowledge of Canadian education internally. The related changes in the personal practical knowledge with respect to creating the curriculum and the teacher-student relationship are central to their development as teachers with cross-cultural awareness and the ability to adapt to environments in a changing landscape. As Chinese teacher candidates talked about their participation, observation, and learning experiences, they invoked and reflected on their personal practical knowledge as represented by rules, images, metaphors, practice, and principles.

Shan, Siyuan, Hailiang, and Weiguo merged their personal practical knowledge as teacher candidates with their understanding of school education in both Canada and China. In Shan's narrative, one of his rules is to encourage "students to be independent thinkers," a rule that was formed in his cross-cultural experience in Canada. He could

easily have taught the same way as many of the other teachers at his school, and ignored the possible solutions to the question besides certain answers. He also could have achieved the prescribed student expectations by cramming them with exercises and exams. Behind this rule, though, appeared to be some general principles. Shan wanted education to be meaningful for his students. He engaged them in conversations, wanted them to think and understand, and was staunchly opposed to rote learning. In Siyuan's narrative, he thought of himself as a teacher living with tensions: tensions between his Western educational beliefs and everyday teaching practice in China; tensions between his sense of gratitude to education in China and his contemplation of leaving his school; and tensions between his pedagogical beliefs and how the authorities and administrators believed the curriculum should be taught. In particular, he felt tensions between the hierarchical relationship in his school and the intention of establishing harmonious relationships among teachers and administrators.

The participants used images in their reflections to explain the differences between Chinese and Canadian education. Siyuan observed the fair and harmonious relationship between Canadian students and teachers and was inspired by the meaningful rapport built between teachers and the principal. These observations indicated the image of the "harmonious" school life of Canadian teachers and students. After he began teaching, Siyuan initially struggled to conform to the school-wide management plans that left little flexibility for individual teachers, and offered limited behavioural autonomy to students. He encountered an image of "conflicted" school life in which administrators acted as authority figures over teachers and teachers acted as disciplinarians who pushed

students to study and achieve. This image was also reflected in his pedagogy as he planned lessons that essentially aligned with curriculum policy.

Shan's narrative suggests he was not satisfied with being a "skilled performer" because preaching the prescribed exercises to students throughout his career would not be fulfilling for him. Nor did he want to be a "shepherd," leaving students to inquire without effective guidance in the class. Neither did he want to be a parental substitute who spoon-fed students like an authoritative knowledge imparter. These images evolved through his teaching practice and eventually grew into the more encompassing image of a "balanced scale." All these images expand his concept of what it means to be a teacher.

Metaphors formed in the process of teacher induction are culturally rooted. As Xu and Stevens (2005) state, "Chinese speak about life metaphorically and acknowledge imagery as a way of conveying ideas that adds to depth of meaning" (p. 315). In Weiguo's narrative of becoming a reflective teacher, he said that there was more than one way to teach students. This challenged the metaphor of the "Huashan Road," which alludes to an ancient Chinese belief that there is only one true path. Rather than accept this, Weiguo embraced the notion that there are multiple paths and consequently established a democratic relationship with his class by implementing the strategies he witnessed in Canadian schools. However, he did not anticipate the number of trivial things he needed to attend to in daily classroom management, such as making sure students remembered language points or dealing with students who were not self-disciplined. Then he reflected that his authoritative teaching style was efficient. He gradually transitioned to an authoritative-style head teacher; however, he expressed his frustration with the distant teacher-student relationship. Then, he used the metaphors of

“Love is a pond” to illustrate his reflection of the teacher-student relationship, which should root in love, caring, and mutual respect. His relationship with his students has been as “harmonious as a gentle breeze and a mild rain” (和风细雨). These metaphors demonstrate how Weiguo’s social and personal interactions as a beginning teacher at his school reinforced the basis of his personal practical knowledge in the Chinese context.

Based on these discussions, it is evident that the Chinese teacher participants in this study reflected on their practical principles based on their new observations of Canadian education. Some Chinese teacher candidates, however, were concerned that subscribing to Canadian pedagogies might impede them from fitting into the Chinese education system. For example, all participants noted an unwritten rule that Chinese teachers have to follow. The rule is to prepare students for the examination and ensure their academic success in school. The practical principles that Chinese teachers invoked can be understood against the current situation and environment of Chinese education.

Providing Global Perspective When Teaching in China

In deliberating over my participants’ personal and social interactions in China, I learned that they share a unique narrative of mixed Chinese and Western teaching experiences. I continue to puzzle over whether their experiences are indicative of public schools in China or whether they point toward interconnected Chinese and Western educational values in China.

As I discussed in the literature, many scholars note that teacher education has been called upon to respond to the pressures of globalization (Apple, 2011; Zhao, 2010). Huang and Xu (2015) claim that cross-cultural experiences expand Chinese beginning teachers’ curriculum approach from global perspectives. In this study, the participants

seemed to have strong awareness that this cross-cultural experience marked an intersection between their world of learning to teach in China and the world they perceived in Canada. Although none of the Chinese teacher candidates claimed to fully or clearly understand the nuances of Canadian society, they did feel that their experiences in Canada made them more worldly as teachers. Observing the different teaching models in Canada, Chinese beginning teachers were able to position their classroom management, pedagogies and curriculum within a broader range of experiences and pedagogical choices.

Differences in the school curriculum, particularly the all-subject-teacher in the elementary school in Canada, led to important written reflections and retrospections. In China, specialist teachers are responsible for teaching each subcategory of science exclusively from the seventh grade on. When Chinese teacher candidates observed the homeroom teachers in Canadian schools teaching art, music, and physical education, the emphasis on teaching the “whole person” inspired new meanings in the participants. Hailiang reflected that teaching across the curriculum would allow for the potential integration of the arts and sciences in the classroom. In his teaching practice, he integrated geography teaching with the environmental protection of a local river. He noted that subject teachers were teachers first and foremost, regardless of their area of expertise, and that teachers must know how to teach (Field notes, December 15, 2014). Similar observations were noted by Weiguo. As a head teacher, he attended art class with his students and took it as an opportunity to conduct appreciation education. Weiguo liked to spend time discussing cultural aspects in his English lessons, even when under pressure and lacking the time required to catch up with other teachers. He also made lesson plans that included more group activities and cultural components in teaching. In a

sense, participants returned to teach in China as cultural ambassadors, spreading their belief in the value of being cross-cultural teachers and of becoming proficient in Chinese and Western teaching methods and practices.

Both Shan and Siyuan expressed feelings that the cross-cultural experiences allowed them to view issues in education from a global perspective. They began their careers as beginning teachers by creating a pedagogical approach predicated on the Canadian model of teaching and China's latest curriculum reform. Shan, for example, endorsed a learning-centred approach, inquiry pedagogy, and welcomed open-ended inquiry questions. He deliberated over some issues from a global perspective; and this was the main reason for his endeavour to make changes. He noted that had he not gone to Canada, he might not be as passionate or feel as strongly about his goal of teaching students to be independent and critical thinkers. Siyuan described how he felt when he attempted to discuss the inquiry-based, intercultural way of teaching with a Chinese teacher consultant in a seminar. For his part, while Siyuan followed the teacher-centred approach to make the class efficient, he tried to expand the students' horizons under pressure of a test. For example, he insisted on the practice of reporting on technology advances at the beginning of his lesson. When he talked with the vice principal about teaching biology bilingually to expand the students' horizons, the vice principal commented that he should give up his idea. They reacted to Siyuan's embodied intercultural knowledge with narrow visions of how to live and teach, and an unwillingness to be open to multiple cultural models.

These examples illustrate the nature of the participants' encounters with their friends, family members, and teaching colleagues upon their return to China.

Nevertheless, rather than bending to an implicit pressure to conform to a model of teaching for tests, they held on to their new beliefs and ways of thinking in curricular situations.

Reconsidering Local and Educational Traditions in China

In the previous sub-section, I find that the cross-cultural experiences enabled participants to cultivate perspectives on teaching that incorporate different cultural models, and to develop cross-cultural teaching methods and practices. Upon returning to China, all participants expressed their intention to implement teaching approaches and strategies they learned in Canada, but also noted that they needed to adapt to the local situation. Paine and Fang (2006) highlight the notion of “hybrid models” that entail Chinese teachers constructing new pedagogical and curriculum approaches based on new ideas from the “outside” with those developed locally. Robertson (1994) coins the concept of “glocal” practices, which are the combination of global and local practices that arise as new discourses and interact with the Confucian traditions that are so pervasive in China’s education system.

According to Robertson (1994), new discourses include students-centred pedagogies, curriculum reforms, and innovative ways of assessing learning, while Confucian traditions are defined by a teacher-centred approach and an emphasis on academic success in the form of test scores. This study demonstrates how Chinese beginning teachers practise the hybrid model and glocal practices, as well as the dilemma and struggles they experienced in Chinese context. Tan and Chua (2014) propose to integrate foreign and indigenous sources of knowledge, teaching and learning. They point out that some schools have experimented with an East–West syntheses in teaching and

learning, such as the “student-centred and teacher-dominated approach.” This approach employs learner-centred activities like small-group discussions, oral presentations, experimentation, debates, and application of learning to real life, each of which are “characteristics of Western teaching and learning” that retain “the Chinese emphasis on teacher-directed teaching, textual transmission and memorization” (p. 14). Li and Edwards (2013) also find Chinese returnees innovate in classroom practice and reinvent the innovation to fit local needs. In their study, participants localize ideas and techniques that they learned in Britain and integrate international developments with practices traditionally valued in China. In my study, I see a strong requirement on all of these beginning teachers to develop their own philosophy of education rooted in China’s own social and cultural realities, and reflect Chinese patterns of thinking.

In Shan’s narratives, the performance review from the senior teachers, which undermined Shan’s self-confidence and challenged his professional practice, put him on a sharp edge of change. He connected Xinhua High School’s motto of “life is education” to his experiences in Canada. When he planned the public lessons, he recalled the science lessons he observed in the Center School, in which teachers guided students to experience the process. Shan looked for a demonstration lesson that effectively served as a model of inquiry-based learning in the Chinese context. Although he has not found a perfect model, Shan has gradually formed a balanced view on inquiry-based learning. Shan’s preferred way was neither to “Westernize” China, nor to “copy the Western concepts” (Interview with Shan, June 15, 2013). He endeavoured to “find the balance” and said that he “will not judge which way is better or worse,” but he noted that teachers could focus on “what skills or ability to cultivate” (Interview with Shan, August 6, 2014).

Wu (2016) asks for interpretation of the education phenomenon in China in a Chinese way, and advocated using language through which we “see” the teacher, student, classroom, and education. Weiguo’s narrative of home visits exhibits a cultural approach to an expectation for teaching and learning that may be novel for educators from the North American context. In China, teachers are expected to be familiar with their students’ family situation. His narrative further exemplifies some cultural differences between North American schooling and the Chinese educational landscape. Hayhoe (2008) points out that Asian culture emphasizes high expectations of students’ high academic achievement. Stevenson and Stigler also argued that Asian parents regard academic excellence in school as the single most important task facing their children (as cited in Hayhoe, 2008). Huang (2016) states that there is a close relationship between Chinese teachers and parents. In traditional Chinese educational philosophy, teachers are ranked after parents in the order of 天 Heaven, 地 Earth, 国 State, 亲 Parent, 师 Teacher (Wu, 2016).

Weiguo named spanking “the love of education,” which indicates a Chinese indigenous concept of a strong bond between the teacher and the student. Weiguo’s version of corporal punishment is not the corporal punishment that some Western readers would imagine. Weiguo follows the law in principle; however, the Chinese traditions and some traditional practices in his school lent Weiguo to apply a unique way of symbolic corporal punishment that maintained both the teacher’s authority and the effectiveness of corporal punishment but eliminated physical and psychological harm to students. Given Weiguo’s close relationship with students and his “democratic” way of applying these symbolic corporal punishments (such as asking students’ permission before applying “the

love of education” and one-on-one talks with the students afterwards), harm to students was minimized. Weiguo’s narratives suggest that while he rejects harsher forms of corporal punishment, he continues to view its moderate and symbolic use as a practical, acceptable tool for pupil control in China.

As the literature discusses, the debate on how to create balance and harmony between imported Western ideas and Chinese cultural knowledge strengths continues (Liu & Fang, 2009; Xu & Connelly, 2009b). During the reform process, conflicts between the new and old concepts are inevitable. Discussing the narratives demonstrate Chinese beginning teachers’ attempts to experiment with new curriculum development approaches.

Implications for Teachers’ Induction

As Craig (2014) notes, the induction of beginning teachers and their retention in the teaching profession is a global issue. Howe (2006) and Paine, Fang, and Wilson (2003) use the metaphor of “sink or swim” to describe the isolation of teacher induction in Western countries, but the induction process described by the participants in the study does not adopt this Western approach. Although, as Lee and Feng (2007) note, “China has a long tradition of experienced teachers helping beginning teachers and some schools have established appropriate formal systems” (p. 244), there are a number of gaps in Chinese teacher education. Pre-service education is not effectively connected to the first year of teaching. As discussed in the literature review, Chinese scholars in favour of curriculum reform have called for research into more effective teacher development programs.

Cultural Assumptions in Teacher Induction

As Briton et al. (2003) note, induction reflects cultural assumptions with regard to

teacher education and duties required for teachers. They also find that culture influences Chinese teachers' induction, as teachers enter a public culture and are socialized as beginning teachers who share the language, habits, and norms of the teaching community. It is a process of learning how to work within a new cultural setting that consists of colleagues, curriculum, and the organization. Paine et al. (2003) state that the focus of the guidance for Chinese beginning teachers draws on "traditional didactic assumptions about learning" (p. 49). Similarly, Yin (2013) notes that aspects of Chinese culture, which are rooted in Confucian ethics, influence teachers' response to the curriculum reform. Hayhoe (2008) points out that one of the most striking differences in the attitudes of Asian and American parents and children towards education is that of the importance of efforts versus ability. Teachers, mothers, and children in East Asia believe that each child can learn successfully if they expend enough effort. Influenced by this aspect of culture, beginning teachers make students do drill exercises, revision, and review. Therefore, the four participants had pressure from parents and administrators to push students to work hard.

Cultural assumptions are often reinforced by curricular and organizational contexts. The four participants' induction experiences reflect how curriculum, teacher-support groups, and mentoring influence academic culture. These factors reflect a robust system that is articulated across administrative levels, complex, and deeply grounded in the philosophical roots of schooling in China. For example, the focus on subject matter and the relationship between different subjects, teaching, and students in the narratives are aligned with Wang, Strong, and Odelle's (2004) idea of a context where teachers are subject-matter specialists.

These narratives indicate that Chinese beginning teachers' induction is culturally bounded. This finding is aligned with Yang's (2014) study on experienced Chinese math teachers that the qualities of teachers expected in China "go beyond teaching and are bounded by the Chinese social and cultural context" (p. 275). They take on more responsibilities than their counterparts in other countries and regions, in particular, Banzhuren (the head teachers). Hence, narratives of this study further suggest that the teacher induction is essentially a sociocultural product. Context has been described as a very important factor in influencing the development of beginning teachers. The four teachers developed their teaching ability through their own efforts despite working in an unfavourable context such as big classes, test pressure and time constraints. Even though the beginning teachers were able to plan and implement teaching flexibly, the degree of flexibility was less than beginning teachers in Western cultures have.

In Shan and Siyuan's narratives, the attention to the criticism and suggestions offered by the experienced teachers or the Teaching and Research Group is consistent with the constructed curriculum, teacher-support groups, and mentoring (Wang et al., 2004) in China. The standardized curriculum provides Chinese teachers with the same goals, content topics, contents, and requirements for teaching. This forms a foundation upon which mentors and administrators can critique the beginning teachers' work. Teaching and Research groups in Chinese schools schedule and organize beginning teachers to teach public lessons for colleagues to critique. These contexts open teachers up to reasonable criticisms and suggestions from other educators, which is essential to their development.

As Paine et al. (2003) advise, it is necessary to leave “considerable room for creativity and responsiveness” (p. 49) in teacher induction. The challenge is the difficulty of helping beginning teachers, in particular the ones with cross-cultural experiences in the West, to develop reform-minded and student-centred practices during induction. The teaching culture found within the Teaching and Research Group stunted teachers’ individualism and creativity. Take Shan’s and Weiguo’s different pedagogical approaches in their Teaching and Research Groups. Siyuan wanted to work in an environment that cared for colleagues and their work-life balance. He noted that his school embraced the culture of pushing students and teachers to work hard, which contradicted his pedagogical philosophy and the ideal vision of the profession. In a school culture that is predicated on hierarchy, teachers who did not fit were excluded. Siyuan empathized that teachers who had their own progressive pedagogical philosophies left or were marginalized because “there was no room for them at schools like Furen High School” (Interview, July 30, 2013). These factors contributed to Siyuan’s constant contemplations about leaving his school and even the profession of teaching. This was not the teaching experience he had envisioned.

Teacher Relationships and Mentorship

The portrait of a beginning teachers' world in Southwest China includes a landscape of the schools. This gives prominence to exploring the web of relations one can share with colleagues. Chinese beginning teachers were not "adapted" to their schools in China in the beginning years of their teaching because of the different model of collegial and teacher-student relationships they experienced in Canadian schools.

They shared with each other their feeling of being "isolated" from their colleagues. Feiman-Nemser (2010) emphasizes induction as a process of socialization through which new teachers develop norms that allow them to adapt to the pressures of various communities. Howe (2005) points out that Japan's teacher acculturation is defined by important teacher relationships, and depends on trust and understanding. In this way, he frames teacher acculturation, and by extension teacher development, as a kind of apprenticeship that uses collaboration to cultivate leadership and professional development. Chinese beginning teachers in the study undergo this process of acculturation, as Japanese teacher did.

Relationships with colleagues, students, and parents are critical to the socialization of Chinese teachers. Since teachers work as a team in China, their practices are reinforced by other colleagues, especially in hierarchically-organized Chinese society, where junior teachers are expected to conform to the practices of senior teachers. In China, groups of beginning teachers, facilitators, and experienced teachers from different schools meet on a regular basis for discussion and reflection, such as the school-based, district, and provincial level professional development days. Successful teacher induction programs should include opportunities for experienced and beginning teachers to learn

together in a supportive environment, promoting time for collaboration, reflection, and a gradual acculturation into the profession of teaching.

Chinese mentor-novice interactions provided several opportunities for beginning teachers to learn how to articulate ideas using examples. First-year teachers receive substantial assistance and guidance under the tutelage of senior teachers. According to Wang (2002), teacher mentoring reduces novice teachers' attrition and help them develop effective teaching strategies; however, as Wang et al. (2007) point out, the popular assumption that mentor-novice relationship can help beginning teachers acclimatize to existing school cultures has become problematic. Despite its benefits, mentorship can interfere with and discourage beginning teachers' innovation. This casts doubt on the role of mentorship and how the Teaching and Research Group promotes teachers' individualism and creativity. This aligned with Siyuan's experience as he witnessed his mentor gradually lose interest in maintaining teaching excellence. In Siyuan's narrative, he learned useful teaching strategies to teach important concepts in observing Mr. Wang's (his mentor) classes at the beginning. Mr. Wang's marginalization in the school might affect Siyuan. Witnessing that Mr. Wang gradually lost interest in maintaining teaching excellence, Siyuan felt discouraged regarding his own professional development. In his second year, Siyuan felt "a sense of suffocation" when the new leader of the Teaching and Research Group pushed him to improve students' test scores. She also pressured him to observe the lessons of a new mentor, with whose way of teaching he did not agree. I saw how his sense of security was challenged and how his professional voice as a beginning teacher was stifled. The experience highlighted the problematic aspects of mentorship.

In Lee and Feng's (2007) study of Chinese beginning teachers' professional development under mentors' support in China, they note that there may be conflicts and competition between the mentor and the mentee, possibly because of dissonance in educational ideology and conflict of interest. Based on Shan and Siyuan's narratives, it seemed doubtful that lesson-based mentor-novice conversations facilitated the reform-minded teachers' quest to bring innovative pedagogies into China's classrooms. The critical catalyst is to provide beginning teachers with experienced, well-qualified mentors who help them. The mentors in this study did not support and advise mentees in handling students' individual differences in learning, classroom management, and individual differences. These are common areas where beginning teachers need assistance. Wang et al. (2004) note that Chinese teachers had access to criticisms, compliments, and suggestions, irrespective of the unequal participation in the dialogue with mentors. However, there are still contentious issues, such as the effectiveness of mentors, and whether the relationship is a hierarchical one that is defined by a one-way, top-down pedagogical exchange. In examining the participants' experiences, it is clear that these factors will hamper teacher education reforms. The mentors in the study, for instance, reflected Wang's concerns, as they had the authority to comment on and correct the lesson plans and pace of teaching prepared by their mentee. Such one-way pedagogical exchanges can enforce the *status quo* and impede progress.

With regard to development in the students' knowledge comprehension, educators should not only focus on novices' developing their own voices, but also on what they talk about and how they approach the issues of teaching, as educators develop teacher mentoring relationships and collaboration. Firstly, it is important for educators to help

both mentors and novices identify how the broader contexts of curriculum and teaching influence their relationships and interactions. Moreover, teacher mentoring alone may not be fully effective in supporting novices who employ a reform-minded teaching practice, especially when it is not an integral part of the larger effects that transform the broader contexts of teaching and schooling.

Various Induction Assistance Programs

Despite these variations in induction assistance offered to beginning teachers, they all shared clear and common goals aimed at improving their teaching skills and familiarizing themselves with the curriculum. The support for teaching subject activity through work with mentors, the Teaching and Research Group, the Lesson Preparation Group, and the public lesson activities clearly reflect the emphasis on a long-held approach to teaching that stresses the importance of textual knowledge.

For Hailiang, induction included relationships, opportunities, and activities such as working with a mentor and district subject-specific seminars. His particular collection of relationships and learning opportunities were determined by his choices, but also significantly influenced by his school, his district, and his teacher preparation background.

The practice of opening teachers' classrooms to observation and criticisms by other teachers and administrators is "rarely found in Western contexts" (Ryan, Kang, Mitchell, & Erickson, 2009, p. 436); they argue that the reason why Chinese teachers are open to critique is that discussion or debriefing after the observation is central to the teaching process" (p. 436). Public lessons and teaching competitions, according to Liang (2011), are regarded as the "Chinese way of training beginning teachers," and this

method “provides beginning teachers with opportunities to stand out and advance their teaching careers” (p. 4). This is explicitly illustrated in Shan and Weiguo’s public lesson in the teaching competition. In the public lesson, Shan embedded learning in meaningful inquiry into real-world problems, and made his public lesson successful. Based on the concept of “backwards-thinking,” which he formed since studying in Canada, Weiguo’s public lesson on responsibility won the first prize of the school-wide teaching competition. However, it is explicit from Shan’s case that there is a chasm between public lessons and teaching practice. Although student-centred and inquiry-based teaching are welcomed in the public lesson, he could not teach in the same way in his teaching practice due to the limited teaching time to guide his students to inquire.

Furthermore, new induction programs, like the Young Teacher Study Group, added a great deal to the burden of beginning teachers, who need reduced responsibility to fully absorb their training and understand issues at the beginning of their teaching careers. While many beginning teachers do have reduced responsibilities, and consequently may only teach subjects rather than being subject teachers and head teachers at the same time, this is left up to each school’s principal to decide, and may not be the case for all beginning teachers.

Most of the Chinese beginning teachers initially spend considerable time as part-time assistant teachers before receiving the professional development training in their first-year of full time employment. Some of the induction, such as the classroom management, should be learned before training. In summary, pre-service teacher education programs should fill the gap between theory and practice. Extended practice and an enhanced pre-service teacher education program could prepare teacher candidates

effectively. The continuity must be achieved between the pre-service and in-service components of teacher induction.

Reciprocal Learning From the Cross-cultural Teacher Development Perspective

In the introduction, I reviewed how Xu's (2006, 2011a) concept of reciprocity and "reciprocal learning" between Canada and China in education develops. She expands the practical application of these concepts to Chinese and Canadian teacher education programs (Xu, 2011a). Xu and Connelly (2008) illustrate how Egyptian educators successfully integrate indigenous teachers' knowledge with Western educational theories in local communities in their investigation of teacher development in the context of globalization. By examining how beginning teachers reconcile tensions via narratives through the cross-cultural teacher development, this unique analysis can help bridge Eastern and Western notions of schooling by drawing on teacher candidates' personal experiences in the West and the continuum of the program. It is a long-term process to change from one-way thinking to reciprocal learning. According to Xu and Connelly (2015), we should understand reciprocal learning as Chinese and Canadian education intersect and interact with each other. They explored the concept of "reciprocal learning" and proposed four models of comparative research to understand reciprocal learning: Thinking of reciprocal learning as comparative education/comparative achievement/comparative pedagogy/collaborative partnership.

Shan's narratives illustrate well his evolving thinking of reciprocal learning about "knowing that" and "knowing how" in "reciprocal learning as comparative education" (Xu & Connelly, 2015, p. 4), which thought of reciprocal learning in terms of national comparisons. Rather than imitating the experienced teacher's way of teaching in China,

Shan appreciated that teachers in Canada conducted real inquiry-based learning by exploring the scientific phenomenon without definite answers. Then, he noted that while it is important to promote students' learning in a relaxed atmosphere as Canadian teachers do, it is equally important to ensure that the learning is well organized, which is one of the strengths of the Chinese teaching approach. In Canada, for example, Shan suggested that teachers act like a "shepherd," giving students direction but allowing them space to explore the path on their own. This gives them the ability to formulate questions and think independently. However, the students may be distracted by trivial interests; consequently, some students will not learn as much from the experience as others. Alternatively, Chinese teachers design the lesson delicately to guide students to learn. They are often more rigid and lay out a specific path for students, making sure they follow specific instructions. This ensures that all students come away with the same knowledge, and instills a degree of equity in the learning experience. However, the students may be less likely to think independently or succeed in situations where problem-solving is required.

When Jane, a UW student teacher, and Shan observed each other's classes, this created an opportunity to understand and learn from each other. This activity indicates the possibility of Xu and Connelly's (2015) "reciprocal learning as collaborative partnership" (p. 6). Would a Chinese teacher and a Windsor student teacher, who both adopted inquiry-based learning, differ and comment when exchanging their ideas about teaching and learning? What could they learn from one another as they collaborated and interacted? Shan learned that Canadian teachers have considerable freedom to decide the specific goal, content, and teaching approaches based on the curriculum. Jane felt students recited

memorized answers to an inquiry question. She was glad to know Chinese teachers teach fewer classes per day than their Canadian counterparts; therefore, they have more time to do lesson planning and other cooperative works with their colleagues. Thus, both Shan and Jane enjoyed a kind of freedom, one being curriculum and the other being preparatory time. The difference between them might relate to the different school structure, such as how the mandated curriculum and teaching organization is structured in China and the fundamental ideas behind the curriculum. For example, teachers in Canada teach based on the Ontario curriculum, and have autonomy in deciding the pedagogy and content.

This visit and exchange between Shan and Jane revealed that it is possible to create an effective reciprocal learning space involving school educators between two educationally, culturally, and historically different places. Despite the disparities between Chongqing, China and Ontario, Canada, these participating educators face the same increasingly interconnected world. When they need opportunities to meet and talk, they have to handle these differences in order to learn. This debriefing between Shan and Jane also extends the reciprocal learning research that could be conducted to investigate participants' direct collaboration and mutual learning in international settings.

The participants' narratives reflect teacher authority in Chinese tradition. An old Chinese saying compares the teacher to a father: being a teacher for one day, a father for a lifetime (Yi ri wei shi, zhong shen wei fu 一日为师,终身为父). Hayhoe (2008) states that teaching in China is more than teaching the subject. She points out that Chinese teachers have the responsibility to educate students to be whole persons, which is known as "imparting the knowledge and educating people" (jiaoshuyuren, 教书育人). Besides the

responsibility, Chinese teachers' authority is inherent, indisputable, unchallenged, and teacher-centred (Hu, 2005). In Weiguo's narrative of "The education of love," a tension arose between traditional and modern Chinese education related to classroom management techniques and moral training in China, although his action goes directly against Ontario's professional and ethical standards of practice. People need to have a deeper understanding of Weiguo's thinking. He believed that as long he acted for his students' benefit, corporal punishment, to some extent, was acceptable.

Looking back, Weiguo's experiences at the key school may have caused him to be a more authoritarian disciplinarian. While he scolded some students during my initial visits, one of his rules of practice was to offset a negative comment with a positive interaction soon thereafter. This rule was designed to ensure that the students knew that Weiguo was criticizing a specific behaviour while respecting them as individuals. The most obvious example of this tendency was the frequency with which he asked students to move seats, often without warning, when they did not behave appropriately. The reprimanding (asking students to stand at the back of the classroom, and moving students) might not appear to demonstrate respect as a principle in the classroom, but it needs to be understood in the context of Weiguo's experience at Jialin High School where he used his authority to ensure that the classroom was safe for students to learn. Weiguo believed that it was crucial to create an environment conducive to learning.

Teachers' authority also applied to Hailiang's narrative of "Being hurt by a student's message." As Schlein (2009) notes, preserving one's authority in the classroom is "a tacit feature of teaching and learning" in China. We needed to learn through classroom interactions how to acknowledge the cultural concept of teachers' authority

within classroom management. Over time, Weiguo and Hailiang became more aware of the significant impact of this cultural feature; they attempted to discover how to be mindful of the personality they projected to the students and to maintain the students' conceptualization of their authority by modifying their teaching methods and practices. As Xu et al. (2015) claim, both Chinese and Canadian participants of the Reciprocal Learning Program identified the similarity and positive aspects of both Canadian and Chinese education. They developed a balanced view to appreciate and learn the strengths of other educational systems with their knowledge and understanding of various educational and cultural narrative histories in different settings.

Resonance in Cross-Cultural Teacher Development

According to Olson (1995), individuals are the authoritative source of experience; therefore, teachers develop narrative authority through their lived experiences. Olson and Craig (2005) state teachers' knowledge communities have become safe places in which each teacher's "narrative authority is recognized and developed" (p. 178). They point out that these communities of knowing form around common experiences.

In this study, the development of sustained relationships of my participants made it possible for individuals' narrative authority to be "articulated, examined, confirmed, expanded, or revised in light of others' experiences and others' reflections and responses to experiences" (Olson & Craig, 2005, p. 178). The shared experiences of Chinese teachers candidates, Chinese beginning teachers and their students interact to shape the curriculum, teaching, and learning in the increasingly diverse but interdependent communities locally and globally.

The cross-cultural teacher development provided Chinese beginning teachers with an excellent chance to share with each other in the Reciprocal Learning Program. In Conle's (1996) view, resonance is a useful tool in the context of her practice with her four pre-service teachers. She points out, "Resonance is a process of dynamic, complex, metaphorical relations. It is a complex relationship among many aspects of a story. The metaphoric connections or correspondences come holistically as a field, a scene, a narrative image" (p. 313).

Ciuffetelli Parker's (2010) research investigates teacher knowledge formation and reflective practice through writing and storied practices. Her research "move[s] beginning teachers beyond the limitations of 'just stories' or 'another reflective journal' and toward a resonance (Conle, 1996) of experience with peers" (p. 1258). As Zhao, Meyers, and Meyers (2009) state, cross-cultural experiences itself does not promote a better understanding of the "other" cultures. I presented in these narratives as a researcher, telling my participants' narratives, and as a character on my own journey as a teacher researcher. What brought us together in the first place? Where did our lives and personal views connect for us to share our teaching stories? This dissertation and the experiential stories within this thesis can lead to "resonance" (Conle, 1996), reflective practice, and teacher professional development.

Resonance in the Cross-Cultural Experience in Canada

As Gleeson and Tait (2012) express in their study of the impact of cross-cultural experiences of a group of Hong Kong teachers, “a strong transitory community” is desirable because their shared culture can “support the learning at the intersection of two cultures” (p. 1150). Unlike the students represented in other studies, these Chinese teacher candidates lived and learned together for 3 months in Canada, during which we held regular weekly debriefing meetings, shared good reflections, and had the opportunity to discuss and process with the group any difficulties they experienced. They could share anything of significance from their reflections, including a successful story, a hurdle, something funny, or a question. In this way, program participants developed a strong sense of community and discovered resonances through sharing their narratives and staying close to their experiential stories.

When SWU teacher candidates visited Windsor schools, they were encouraged to develop their reflective practices. Students were encouraged to do weekly debriefings, in which they discussed their classroom observations, school visits, and cultural experiences in Canada. They were also expected to write weekly reflective journals as their commitment to the program. I also wrote my field notes as a graduate assistant for the program. In Shan’s narrative of “Do we have anything in common,” his deep thoughts on similarities and differences between Chinese and Canadian education were inspired by the debriefing discussion hosted by Dr. Xu with his fellow student teachers. In Weiguo’s narrative of “Where are our ways?” he and other program participants had long conversations with Dr. Xu that inspired him to give thorough consideration to how people could learn from the West. Participants’ narratives in Canada indicated that the group

members were intrinsically motivated to grow personally. All the participants were engaged in broadening their horizon and improving their pedagogy so they could strengthen their ability in their future teaching careers in a competitive job market.

Resonance in the Induction in China

After they returned to China, program participants kept in touch. When Dr. Xu visited SWU, Chinese program participants came to SWU to visit her and had debriefing meetings with her. When some of them came back to SWU for graduate studies after one year of their teaching, they also had several gatherings.

During these interactions, program participants and I shared our experiences, shared a strong sense of professional expertise, and learned from each other. Hailiang and Shan exchanged their different opinions about making changes in their daily teaching practices. Hailiang sought suggestions and was inspired by conversations on how to employ moral education as a head teacher. Shan and Siyuan's narratives also illustrate the development of the sense of isolation during their induction. They resonated with each other's struggles and isolation at school. As Shan tried to reconcile his original aspiration of education to the rigorous testing expectations, Siyuan felt conflicted about remaining in the teaching profession. At the beginning of their teaching careers, both reported that they felt the pressure of examinations, and advocated to raise the status of biology. When Siyuan expressed his frustration and dissatisfaction with his school, Shan sympathized with him but offered some sobering words: "we overestimate ourselves and believe we are exceptional when we are not" (Field notes, May 3, 2012). Shan's own sense of isolation and of being "lost" culminated after one semester of entering his school. He observed that his thinking contrasted with the focus of his school, which was to improve

students' scores in the Gaokao. This difference illustrated the tension of his teaching philosophy with the school environment. Shan and Siyuan's sense of isolation helped them establish a bond, but it was not understood by others who did not share the cross-cultural experiences.

As Weiguo told me about the struggles he had teaching with student-centred or teacher-dominant methods, I knew that I, too, was caught between holding true to my own notion and beliefs on foreign language teaching and traditional grammar-and-translation way of teaching. Weiguo and I were developing a professional relationship. I tried to combine my new role as researcher and Weiguo's former instructor of language education. In the narrative of "Spring rain moistens things silently," both Shan and Hailiang found it difficult to transfer the pedagogical approaches they learned in Canadian classrooms to their own classrooms in China. They mentioned that their pedagogy was constrained by "the large size of classroom" and "lack of time;" however, they still wanted to make changes starting in their classroom. Similarly, Siyuan and Shan referred to their observation in Canada and lectures on teachers' leadership to debrief Shan's embarrassment in dealing with students.

Having stated my inquiry into four Chinese pre-service teachers' cross-cultural experiences and induction processes, the resonance we developed, and my growth as a cross-cultural teacher developer and teacher educator, I can say that this study enabled us to support each other's professional and personal developments. The concept of reciprocal learning also applies to my relationship with the participants. I was honoured by the participants' expression of gratitude to education yet humbled as I benefited enormously from their generosity of spirit and commitment to our relationship. I firmly

believe that Chinese education will continue to improve because we are fortunate to have such wonderful teachers.

Reflective Practice in Cross-Cultural Teacher Development

The narrative inquiry in the previous section is important for the participants as it allows them to be reflective practitioners. This in turn allows them to uncover the meaning of the experiential cross-cultural stories as a means of gaining insight into their “personal practical knowledge” (Connelly & Clandinin, 1988, p. 25), on which the knowledge that teachers use for curricular thoughts, decisions, and actions are based, or a combination of teachers’ past personal and professional experiences in interaction with students’ present needs and interests. Cushner and Mahon (2002) argue that increasing one’s cultural sensitivity requires educating oneself about one’s culture. They claim that cross-cultural learners would re-examine their native country from a different perspective. Trilokekar and Kukar (2011) posit that a study abroad program is essential for all students to “enable critical self-reflection” and “perspective transformation” (p. 1149).

Exposure to a culture different from their own offered the participants a new perspective on their own culture. This is consistent with my findings as the themes of increased awareness and reflection on their own culture stand out in the participants’ shared personal views and perspectives. Of the topics discussed by the participants, these seemed to be spoken of most passionately and the most insightful aspect of their experiences.

In studying participants’ evolving personal practical knowledge throughout the narratives of cross-cultural experiences from the landscapes of Canada and China, this study uncovers the changes to their teaching practice and beliefs about teaching. The field texts of this study would not be possible without participants’ engagement and reflections

on their curricular experiences and interactions with Dr. Xu and other alumni in the program. Alternatively, the act of reflecting on their experiences throughout this study further highlights the various themes and tensions that occur within the cross-cultural situations and that influenced their current teaching practices and pedagogical approaches.

Many scholars note that cross-cultural experiences compel teacher candidates to reflect on their own culture and education (Anderson-Levitt, 2008; Tang & Choi, 2004; Wang, 2015). This is clearly illustrated through the participants' narratives through their personal and professional development as reflective teachers. The participants expressed how the program allowed them to reflect on the daily practice of teaching. For example, they considered how and why they teach in certain ways in relation to the complex and intricate issues among different cultures and school cultures. Weiguo, for instance, developed a reflective practice since participating in the program and has become a role model for being a reflective teacher who accumulated more than 150,000 words of reflective journals in his 2 years of teaching. He attributed his success as an effective head teacher to his reflective practices since participating the program. In addition, Hailiang took each of our personal interviews during recess as a chance to examine the pros and cons of his lesson. He liked learning from Weiguo to become a reflective teacher. Furthermore, Shan was grateful for the ongoing support he received from the program. This study stimulated Shan to recall his Canadian experiences and review his initial educational goals, which motivated him to maintain these goals in the face of the tensions often associated with teaching in China. Siyuan paid special attention to his professional development, and wanted to research the cultural influence that the Teaching and Research Group has on beginning teachers. Considering each insight offered through

the process of this study brings clarity to the participants' future professional development.

Hamel et al. (2010) note that intercultural development is an “ongoing and recursive cycle” (p. 613). Part of the purpose of this dissertation is to establish the early features of the cycle in order to support the productive dimensions of early cross-cultural experiences in relation to long-term growth. It contributes to the justification of incorporating cross-cultural elements into teacher education programs, which extends the practical application of cross-cultural teacher development. As a result, beginning teachers may be more inclined to explore and incorporate a framework within their respective teaching and learning environments. Beginning teachers need experiences and contexts that allow them to engage differences, regardless of their own preconceptions and expectations of teaching and learning. This allows them to begin the process of working through the reciprocal learning program and the sister school network in the SSHRC Partnership Project. In addition to the sense of community and resonance formed by the cohort of the program, it is beneficial to maintain the community and provide sustainable support in instances where the beginning teachers' professional communities are also conscious of the value of teachers' shared experiences. This study demonstrates that the experience provides the program participants with potentially valuable new perspectives on their own education system. The four beginning teachers' narratives indicate that they share a relationship of common roles as teachers with cross-cultural experience that resonate with each other via their common experience. Deep-level reflection of the initiatives and the individuals responsible for them could do much to

revitalize Chinese classrooms today as well as make clear interpretations of Chinese educational achievements possible.

In summary, this discussion illustrates that the cross-cultural experiences in Canada offer influences such as curricular models of Western-style, students-centred, and inquiry-based pedagogies that are based on school cultures in Canada. This study is about the unique local situation in China in the context of a globalized world, particularly how embedded Chinese cultural traditions, norms, and tacit values interplay with Western values and discourses in ongoing education reforms that have influenced teachers' practices tremendously during their early years of teaching. As they travelled between East and West, they underwent personal and professional changes that stemmed from their immersion in cultural and educational landscapes that were foreign to them. When they returned to China, they realized they had different perspectives on teaching and learning than many of their Chinese colleagues who did not have cross-cultural experiences. Eventually, they learned to balance their expectations against practice and to incorporate Eastern and Western approaches to education into their pedagogical practices.

CHAPTER 10

CONCLUSION

Unlike other research that explores the short-term impact of cross-cultural experiences for teacher candidates, this study contributes to a holistic longitudinal inquiry of changes fostered by the participants' cross-cultural experiences in Canada and induction experiences in China based on the SSHRC Partnership Project. This research confirmed that cross-cultural teacher development has the benefit of providing the participants with potentially valuable new perspectives on their own education system and influencing their teaching practice. It is concluded that long-term influences can be realized in relation to teachers' curriculum views, global and local perspectives, resonance and self-reflection from the cross-cultural experience in Canada. It is validated that, for Chinese beginning teachers, the newly-learned or verified knowledge of Western education created real challenges related to their current knowledge, beliefs, and practices. These observed pedagogical disparities or other differences between the two education systems prompted them to reflect critically on their own practice and previous beliefs. This study also confirms the importance for educators to recognize the value of each individual teacher's experience and cultural root as the basis for their learning, engage them building their own personal practical knowledge, and take on the challenge of confronting different pedagogies on positioning themselves.

This study illustrates an effective approach to teacher education that fuses with cross-cultural experience. Both the benefits and challenges of this method of teacher education imply that utilizing and studying this practice has significant potential in this interconnected world. It reaffirms the importance of cross-cultural experience, whether in

Canada or other countries, including critical reflection, and a range of assignments such as portfolio, journals, collaborative endeavours, videos, and debriefings. Further, even if students cannot afford to go abroad, there is a need to develop more courses that deal explicitly with issues of cross-cultural pedagogies and diversity.

Contributions to the Global Dialogue

In this study, the participants demonstrated that education is part of our global consciousness. Researchers increasingly talk about the importance of social justice and diversity as a theme for and in teacher education. Therefore, teachers' induction and professional learning and relevant educational policies and practice should be examined both outwards and inwards. Thus, this is an ideal time for this research. In this period of what some describe as an increasingly "global village," we note the growing circulation of key ideas about what constitutes good teaching and good teacher education. The OECD (2011) recommendations suggest teacher education needs to provide teachers with courses on dealing with diversity in the classroom and professional development related to teaching in a multicultural setting, which can help them "become more aware of diverse student needs and to develop didactic skills to support second language learners" (p. 57). As discussed in the literature, in a globalized world of interconnected and cross-national communication of ideas and people, local schools are responsible for educating students to be global citizens and embody the global-local debates of educational reforms both in the East and the West (Apple, 2011; Howe & Xu, 2013). The Ontario curriculum articulates that students should understand the diversity of beliefs and values of other individuals and groups in Canadian society. Likewise, Ministry of Education of the People's Republic of China (2010) announced a 10-year commitment of

school education in a document often referred to “China’s education policy,” which advocates cultivating students with global understanding. Education is no longer an exclusive business within nation states.

The global community in which ideas and people flow between countries and cultures has made comparative education an international priority. As scholars (Xu & Connelly, 2013a; Yang, 2014) point out, the outstanding performance of Chinese students in international student achievement studies has resulted in public discussion on the differences between Chinese and other educational systems. As China developed fast economically, both it and the international community seek to deepen their mutual understanding. Chinese President Xi Jinping urged Chinese to tell China’s stories well to the world. We recognize that in these narratives, the notions of Chinese and Westerner, good teaching, and good school have more than one level of meaning. In this period of intensifying links between China and other countries and organizations, new approaches to teaching and teacher development draw on the experience of the Chinese as insiders and Westerners as outsiders. Which voice is more important, and how this process works out over time is not something I can answer here. Yet it is important to consider how China’s teachers will continue to change as well as how their practices are now, already, influencing reforms of teaching.

I think about how this dissertation might touch audiences outside education and beyond the campus. Chinese people are Canada’s and Ontario’s largest immigrant group, and the China-Canada relationship is often discussed in terms of economics, trade relations, and civil rights (Xu, 2006). My research is in the context of Xu and Connelly’s (2013) SSHRC Partnership Project, which features “educational reciprocity and

reciprocal learning” in educational discourse. Tracing a transformative understanding and fluid global dialogue in terms of teacher development and school life, this research can reveal the educational, social, cultural, and economic benefits that reciprocity is bringing to China. China is in the early stages of a massive education policy initiative, however, political and economic interests on both sides rest on finding out what others are doing right, which may then be borrowed and seeded in their own system. I hope this narrative inquiry can facilitate the multi-directional flow of knowledge in the globalized world. I believe that reciprocal learning will help transform both Canada and China educationally, socially, and culturally for the well being of the global community.

Recommendations for Future Research

I now shift the focus to the future, to the possible contributions of this inquiry to teacher induction, teacher development, and the Canada-China Teacher Education and School Education of Reciprocal Learning Program. As I explore these possibilities, I consider both my future research and directions that others might pursue if they are interested in cross-cultural teacher development as an approach to improving teaching and learning that is respectful of teachers as curriculum makers (Clandinin & Connelly, 1992). For narrative researchers, this study demonstrates the robustness of narratives and a holistic approach for studying the multifaceted and layered teachers’ experience. As Trent (2011) and Glesson and Tait (2012) posit, support for teacher candidates upon their return to their home country is crucial. Brindley et al (2009), and Willard-Holt (2001) point out that the design and implementation of any kind of re-entry “debriefing” process is necessary. Although the Reciprocal Learning Program only offers participants three

months of experience in Canada, it provides them with longitudinal and sustainable support in a variety of ways to promote their personal and professional development.

There are many possibilities for future research. As Connelly, Clandinin, and He (1997) state, the rhythms experienced by a beginning teacher entering the teaching profession are “vastly different” than the rhythms experienced by a teacher teaching the end of her or his teaching career. What challenges and changes will Chinese teachers experience in the middle of their career? Will Siyuan leave teaching? Will Weiguo be an excellent educator as he wishes? How can we facilitate and support Chinese beginning teachers to develop professionally and form a positive professional learning community based on the Reciprocal Learning Program? During the process of analyzing the participants’ narratives and sharing some preliminary research findings with them, several other ideas occurred to me that could be of interest and worth further investigation. It would be interesting to compare the transitional experiences of Chinese teachers who participated in the Reciprocal Learning Program to those of teachers who did not have cross-cultural experience, and to profile the experiences of Chinese teachers from ethnic minority groups³⁸. How can these teachers retain their teaching philosophy in the top-down educational reform system?

How can a beginning teacher come to know his or her students as persons? How can the teacher avoid teaching only for tests in the context of curriculum reform in China? It is found that the Chinese beginning teachers in the study can reflect systematically on their teaching and propose modifications and improvements. They can adopt the

³⁸ There are 56 ethnic groups are identified in China, among which the Han is the majority and 55 minority groups represent approximately 9% of the total population.

student-centred and inquiry-based instruction to teach with flexibility and balance, and can promote students' higher-order thinking, such as creativity and problem-solving skills. Their teaching practice is consistent with the beliefs they have held and formed since their cross-cultural experiences in Canada.

As we mentioned in the earlier chapter, returning Chinese program participants debrief their early years of teaching when they visited Dr. Xu in SWU each year, and they maintain a connection with program participants in the QQ and WeChat groups. Based on the Free Teacher Education program, some participants come back to SWU to take graduate courses and a cohort of program alumni is gradually formed. As Weiguo wrote, "The torch will be passed on" (Weiguo's reflection, May 26, 2012). Based on the Reciprocal learning program, Chinese teacher candidates initiated involvement in hosting the new cohort of teacher candidates from the University of Windsor when they visit SWU each year. Thanks to the sister school project, Weiguo, Hailiang, and some other Chinese beginning teachers participated in sister school activities between their schools and Windsor schools. Shan established sister school connections between Xinhua School and Max High School in Windsor. This connections and continual support encourage Chinese program participants to consider education from a cross-cultural perspective, and reinforces the influence of their cross-cultural experiences after they return to China.

During the time of this research, some Chinese beginning teachers expressed their intention to participate in Dr. Xu and Dr. Connelly's sister school network and revisit schools in Canada. With the expanding of the Canada-China sister school network, there is a potential and a emerging plan to link the sister school network with the Teacher Education Reciprocal Learning Program in a way that these Chinese beginning teachers

cooperate and interact with Canadian teachers of the sister schools. The future work can develop teacher education from global perspectives, and move the growing scholarly interest in teacher development through collaborative practice based on the sister school network.

A Life-Long Journey Forward

I captured the participants' personal and social experience as they crossed cultural borders and boundaries. At the intersection of different cultural heritages and dynamic places, they develop new global values. I learned all this through interaction with the participants in a remarkably rich experience. I got to know them well as a regular visitor to their classrooms: to see how they worked, the "spirit" in which they worked, which is as important as what they actually said and did. The individual conversations and group meetings opened up a meaningful dialogue about the relationship between being and becoming a teacher, and the process of education. It has been over 5 years since I began to participate in the Reciprocal Learning Program and the program was, and it continues to be, a major influence in my life.

Regarding my future study, I will keep following my participants and the other Chinese beginning teachers who participated in the Teacher Education Reciprocal Learning Program, and support their teacher development in the future. I will pay special attention to these program participants who are minority teachers, and are working in the less developed areas in China. I realized that learning from the cross-cultural experience in Canada means learning a variety of different cultures, because Canada is a multicultural society. Before I came to Canada, the Canadian culture in our mind was predominantly Anglo-Saxon. As a teacher educator in Southwest China, I did not realize

that I would also encounter many other cultural groups. Particular attention will be paid to minority teachers' cross-cultural experience and the changing identity after they participate in the Reciprocal Learning Program. There will be urgent needs to provide continual support for beginning minority teachers in West China, and help them develop cross-cultural competence and global awareness so that they are better prepared to work for the quality education in the ethnic minorities-inhabited regions of China.

On the basis of the Canada-China Reciprocal Learning Program, some of the program participants began to be involved in the sister school network. As a result of the findings of this study, I recommend adding various forms of cross-cultural teacher development to the curricula of teacher education programs to potentially enhance education in Chinese schools. Additionally, I suggest globalization efforts through cross-cultural teacher development as a potentially beneficial means of educating Chinese students about other cultures, and to meet the growing needs of a globalized, interconnected world.

In bringing this dissertation to a close, I suggest that the life stories of these four Chinese beginning teachers might well be understood as East meets West. Their lives are a living book that reveals the rich humanity and diverse contributions to society and nation of a group of individuals who are all deeply rooted in China's cultural soil. While teaching in mainland China might superficially look content-oriented or teacher-dominated, Chinese teachers have started to utilize the hybrid of Western and Chinese pedagogies, and students have the chance to engage and become intellectually involved in inquiry-based learning. I also anticipate that this study may encourage educators to embrace a world of possible opportunities by pursuing cross-cultural

teaching experiences, and I hope that these teachers may find a home and a voice among Shan's, Siyuan's, Hailiang's and Weiguo's stories within this dissertation. As a consequence of this narrative inquiry, I have come to know that Chinese beginning teachers endeavoured to find a way of excellent education: Shan's "approaching zero [on the scale] from opposite ends," and Weiguo's quotation of "Chinese learning should be followed as the essence ... as the practical application" reflect the reciprocal learning between the East and West and the harmonious and delicate balance needed between teachers and students, teachers and administrators and the school and parents.

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VITA AUCTORIS

NAME: Ju Huang

PLACE OF BIRTH: Chongqing, China

YEAR OF BIRTH: 1981

EDUCATION: Southwest University, Chongqing, China
1999-2003 B.A.

, Strathclyde University, Glasgow, Scotland, U.K.
2004-2005 M.Ed.