Hong Kong Institute of Education

EPA 4900

Honours Project

'Challenges faced by novice teachers in Hong Kong: Exploratory study about school culture, collegiality and teacher identity'

Supervisor: Dr Tang Hei Hang, Hayes

Student: Fung Sin Yi, Chloe

Student No:

Due Date: 11 May 2016

Content

Background of the Research Project:

Literature Review:

Data presentation and analysis:

INTRODUCTION

In Hong Kong, there are around 22,000 primary school teachers and among which an average number of 1,000 teachers are new teachers each year. Obviously, different sponsoring bodies will have different guiding principles, philosophy and sometimes religious purposes in running the schools. The school culture may not align with teacher's own beliefs and practices to a certain extent. Fitting in the new school culture becomes a prerequisite task for the beginning teachers. To beginning teachers, the early teaching years are regarded as "sink-or-swim" or "survival" mentality (Bartell, 2004) as they need to adapt and adopt the new working environment, and develop relations with colleagues and parents. Apart from fitting in culture, teachers with different philosophy, values and attitudes also need to cooperate in teaching and as well as administrations by certain level of conformity. Collegiality then is regarded as another salient factor affecting the development of teacher identity. This study is proposed to carry out a small-scale research examining the challenges faced by novice teachers under Hong Kong context.

The research questions:

1. *What are the major challenges first-year primary school teachers face in fitting in new school culture and building collegial relationships with colleagues?*

2. *How do these challenges shape their teacher identity?*

The design of the two research questions hence is based on the social phenomena that

novice teachers experience challenges in adapting their new role in schools.

THE PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

There are 4 major objectives of the study. It is to identify the challenges faced by beginning teachers in terms of school culture and collegiality. Then, it explores the reasons behind the problems. It further investigates the impact on the development of teacher identity. Lastly, it is to find out the solutions to problems identified.

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

The significance of the study is mainly two-fold. The first significance is about the influence on beginning teachers in the working field. It is hoped that the beginning teachers can have a better understanding and reviews on the challenges they faced through the study and reflect upon their own teacher identity. It is also essential for the student teachers or fresh graduated teachers to learn from the experience. Hence, they are capable to overcome and deal with the challenges they may face in the future, so as to enhance the development of teacher identity. Concerning with second significance, it is also hoped that other parties, for instance, experienced colleagues can give their helping hands to those beginning teachers by knowing their difficulties in adapting school culture and in collegiality. Day (2004) acknowledges that teachers work closely together and observe each other practices as collaborations. Thus, giving somebody a favour when he or she is in need is fundamentally important, especially in school, which is a place that needs various cooperation and collaborations.

LITERATURE REVIEW

In the following section, it is going to review the literatures that bring light to the study. Firstly, it reveals the development of teacher identity is a gradual process. It then pinpoints how school culture and good collegial relationship critically shape the teacher identity regarding to the job satisfaction and in relation to teaching life. Finally, it identifies how salient of impacts of school culture and collegiality on teacher identity.

The gradual development of teacher identity

According to Dunne (2011), a school is where teachers shape their values, attitudes and pedagogical philosophy with their personal and professional experiences. In a place with different social and cultural backgrounds, teacher identity is developed through the understandings of different emotional makeup, and diversified personal and professional aspirations. These understandings shape how teachers interpret, evaluate and continuously collaborate in the construction of their own early development (Dunne, 2011, p.39). Teacher identity then refers to "the relationship between our personal self and our professional self." (Dunne, 2011, pp.39-40). Teachers need to reflect from time to time on who they are and why. Hence, teacher identity is dynamic and flexible, supported by Lam & Yan (2011). The teaching career is regarded as a stage-like progression. Meanwhile, the development of teacher identity portrays the gradual establishment of teacher's commitment. It is the devotion of oneself into the teaching career with a strong sense of attachment to the schools

they are in (Raywid, 1993). The personal and organizational factors interact actively to influence the job satisfaction and thus the development of teacher identity, leading to a more competent and mature self (Lam & Yan, 2011).

School culture and its impacts on job satisfaction

With reference to Hargreaves (1995, p.25), "within the institution everyday reality is taken for granted: treated as largely unquestioned, it provides its members with inherited 'recipes' for understanding and acting" in response to them. By defining the reality, people i.e. staff members in schools make sense of their own roles, rights and responsibilities, and their working environment. Under the bureaucratic background of Hong Kong education system, rules and regulations are then used as a guidance approach for decision-making and the handling of problems. In other words, autonomy and individuality of teachers will be limited, as they are required to follow the suit so as to maintain the system. According to Lam and Yan (2011), job satisfaction is derived from positive working environment, to be exact, the job nature of teachers. The levels of satisfaction mainly depend on three aspects, volume of administrative work, fairness in division of labour and professional autonomy of teachers. These three factors affect teachers' devotion and passion of being a teacher i.e. the desire to work and to impart knowledge, which is intrinsic to the teaching job. Extrinsic school-based factors, for instances, school leadership, the transparency of school decision making and the availability of resources also play a significant role in affecting the job satisfaction of teachers (Lam & Yan, 2011).

The importance of fitting school culture in relation to teaching life

New teachers may face challenges that result from not understanding the school culture well (Gault, 2011). The establishment of teacher identity is a progress through the professional landscapes and climates of school contexts. With reference to Gault (2011), new teachers are required to adapt the group culture and tune into professional attributes, for instances, value, beliefs, language and special characteristics in schools i.e. the workplace. Day (2004, p.136) also states that school is a social and psychological setting in which teachers construct a sense of practice, of professional efficacy, and of professional community. Fitting in the school cultures like school philosophy and general teacher culture is fundamentally essential to new teachers. This totally affects the efficiency and effectiveness of the collaborations, hence the quality of teaching.

The importance of a good collegial relationship

It is no doubt that good collegial relationship supports beginning teachers becoming a part of a team, school and wider professional culture (Gault, 2011). The teacher culture is made up of the social and interpersonal relationships of teachers. Favorable collegial relationship may only be fostered under a strong and positive school culture (Jerald, 2006). Hargreaves (1995, p.32) suggested "collegiality invokes an institutional structure, where particular of both structure and culture exist". Day (2004, p.138) reveals collegiality as "the emotional understanding by all members, i.e. teachers, of their own motivations, purposes, commitments and identities, and those

of their colleagues". This aligns with Hargreaves (1994, p.186) that collaboration and collegiality take teacher to a point where they can learn from each other, sharing and developing expertise. To a larger extent, the collaboration among teachers is contrived and mandatory, owing to the teaching and administrative demands. Frequent panel meeting, lesson preparations and collaborations are inevitable due to the job nature. As different people have different opinions and voices, suffocations of own needs become vital for the overall sake. Maintaining good collegiality promotes better communication and problem solving (Jerald, 2006). Besides, spontaneous and informal collaborations also play a weighty role and contribute to the development of collegiality. They can be in forms of duty and burden sharing, praises and verbal supports (Hargreaves, 1994). A pleasant working environment is obviously important for new comers to fit in and be engaged. It aligns with Day (2004) that the perceptions and experiences of teachers' working conditions influence their attitudes and values on teaching. With accordance to Choi and Tang (2009), the sustainment of the teacher commitment is subjected to the collegial supports in mentoring the new teachers to fit in. Thus, the degree of engagement and involvement in the collegial relationships in mentorship strongly affects the commitment of the novice teacher and hence the development of teacher identity.

The influences of school culture and collegiality on teacher identity

In light of Dunne (2011), new contexts of school culture and collegiality help shape the teacher identity. It is a continuity of critical reflections on how one recognizes its

professional self. Beijaard (2008), stated by Dunne (2011, p.50), suggests that identity is not a fixed attribute of a person but a relational phenomenon. In other words, teachers respond to changes and contexts and reflect critically to evaluate their practices. Therefore, new teachers should be carefully and precisely introduced to their roles as professional self and into the working settings realizing the goals for themselves (Bartell, 2004). It is the hopes and aspirations for the teaching career determine the teacher identity. Dunne (2011) depicts that such identity can be enriched through ongoing reflections on the professional self in relation to personal self.

METHODOLODY

Participants

The participants of the study are purposefully selected to enable the validity of study. 8 novice teachers were selected as participants, who work as teachers for no more than 2 years. Participants are from different schools, which are in different districts in Hong Kong, and are sponsored and run by different bodies. All participants teach across different subjects. This can ensure the data collected is information-rich to the study. The data is contemporary and relevant to the prevailing situation.

Data collection

The data will be mainly collected through interviews with teachers and data collection from school websites or pamphlets. Participants take part in the research voluntarily

without reward.

Through interviews, qualitative data collected is the richest as the participants were purposefully selected. All participants are my seniors graduated from Hong Kong Institute of Education. Since I have good relationship with them, they are willing to share their views deeply without retentions. Furthermore, interviews were conducted in a semi-structured format with open-ended questions (See Appendix 1) to allow rooms for expressing opinions and make data richer and informative. As the interviews were semi-structured, the flow could be controlled and questions could be asked without specific orders i.e. follow-up questions according the real situation, making the interviews natural. Individual interview lasted for around 30 minutes and were conducted face to face during the research period from 21st August to 18th December 2015. Three major domains were covered in the interview: (a) the background information of the teachers and their schools, (b) importance of fitting in school culture in relation to teaching life, and (c) importance of collegial relationship in relation to teaching effectiveness and identity.

Besides, additional data collection of the information of school philosophy provided another dimension to the study. The study is not just solely relying on what teachers experienced or said, but also from my authentication. A cross check of interview data against the school mission and vision will be done to verify the data. It makes the study more valid and objective. Hence, data collection was carried out for

investigating the education mission and vision of schools and goals, polices or practices that the staff members i.e. teachers have to follow.

RESULTS

Bureaucratic school culture is commonly found in all participants' schools. Participants uniformly claimed that they faced difficulties in fitting in new school culture, while some of them had conflicts with school in terms of their own beliefs and value. All of them have good collegial relationships in schools with the good support from colleagues.

Most participants think that collegial relationship affects their development of teacher identity to a larger extent. However, three teachers have a different viewpoint. They do not see much relationship in between and reveal that collegial relationship is an extrinsic factor in influencing the identity.

The bureaucratic school culture in Hong Kong

In light of Hargreaves (1995, p.33), *the daily routines of the traditional school are conducted according to bureaucratic principles and the procedures that provide the maintenance structures*. It is noticed that the bureaucratic system are difficult to challenge and disrupt them. In other words, changes are not easily found as it is alarming or even threatening to the overall sake. Thus, clear rules and regulations are used to guide problem handling and decision making.

All participants in the study have experienced the collaborative planning in implementing the school curriculum. During planning, teachers work collaboratively to design learning materials, lesson objectives and activities. However, it is found that there are small rooms for changes and fine-adjustment in the classroom. It is especially identified in the case of participant 2. In her school, the school implements its own school-based curriculum of constructive learning. Teachers are required to design learning materials for students but teach with textbook simultaneously. Participant 2 disagrees with such mode of learning and expresses her frustration of contrived curriculum:

Swapping between textbook and the designated materials make the input not organized. How can students learn well when input is not comprehensible? It's okay for comments in the co-planning. But fine-adjustments are limited as the panel already has her own ideas.

The above illustrates the power and privileges of teachers in different positions. Teachers are asked to follow the suit and avoid arrogating the authority of the panel. The situation aligns with Hargreaves (1995) that consultations in meetings, either explicit or implicit, are a kind of speech act to check others' acceptances without risk of rebellion. In other words, a seeking of views is only to show politeness before the decision making by the panel.

Hargreaves (1995) further suggests that the school system is maintained by the hierarchical basis on which teachers are assigned with designated sphere of authority.

The school, where participant 8 works, exhibits the bureaucratic culture typically.

> *When students lost their stationary or were injured, I need to report to the senior and write report for the incident. Sometimes things might be minor. But all you need to do is to report because the school needs to keep records in order to deal with the parents.*

The duties of teachers are positional. There are clear-cut line of the responsibilities of each teacher. Whenever teachers encountered difficulties, it is a must to seek helps from senior teachers but not colleagues from the same position. Declaration or report to the seniors of students' misbehaviours is mandatory.

Difficulties in fitting in the school and solutions to the problems

Basically, all participants experienced difficulties in fitting in the school. In general, they encountered problems of not able to follow all common practices of school. For examples, Participant 4 was not sure how he should mark students' assignments and where he could find useful information to finish some administrative work. Participant 6 found difficulties of being a class teacher, especially in collecting students' homework on time.

Apart from that, all participants except participant 6 need to teach subjects other than his or her learning subject. It becomes great challenge to them, as they are new to the subjects. The new attempt in teaching completely new subjects makes them feel anxious and insecure.

To tackle the challenges, it is good to hear that each school has assigned one mentor to every novice teacher. With the mentorship, all participants were guided and explained everything they should know. Most importantly, all participants affirm the importance of initiating to ask. Initiation for asking clarifications avoids mistakes and frustrations of which participants experience trial and error frequently on their own. Collaboration can be further more effective and efficient.

The collegial relationship and possible factors

The development of a shared vision among teachers in curriculum implementation is undoubtedly contributed by a good collegial relationship. All participants have established a relationship with colleagues. Their colleagues are helpful, and willing to guide and teach novice teachers.

Regarding the possible factors of maintaining the collegiality, it is suggested that collegiality is the same as building good relationships with friends or classmates. One cannot be too shy to go out to have a lunch or gathering with colleagues. Stepping out from own comfort zone is a key to build a good relationship. In addition, it is essential that teachers take the initiative to share responsibilities and consult others' opinions. Mutual respect and responsibility sharing favour the communication and collaboration among teachers.

The impact of collegiality on teaching effectiveness and professional identity

Most participants acknowledge that poor collegial relationship will directly impede

teaching effectiveness. School is a place where requires teamwork and collaboration

is then inevitable. Teachers need to plan lessons and activities collaboratively with

each other. If the relationship is poorly built, everything will be negatively affected.

Since bad mood affects patience, choice of words and decision making, the worst

scenario would be that teachers are not cooperating in projects or willing to

compromise. Poor communication discourages consents in planning and leads to poor

teaching quality. Participant 1 addresses one of the rationales behind collegiality:

> *Teachers need to co-plan tightly with each other. The teaching and learning*
> *contents should be similar in different classes in the same level, in order to*
> *maintain fairness and standard.*

Moreover, collegiality as a kind of human relationship can be emotional. Three

participants reveal poor relationship with colleagues will cause psychological pressure

in teaching since they regard that the working environment is not supportive.

Participant 7 perceives the importance of a well built collegiality:

> *We have heavy workloads, both teaching and administrative work. It's easy to*
> *forget some important dates or overlook some duties. My colleagues are nice and*
> *remind me of those dates.*

Teachers nowadays have to deal with a lot of administrative work. Friendly reminders

from colleagues are supportive and appreciative. On the other hand, participant 3

shows her retention that teachers should not bring too much personal emotion into work if they are professional enough. Teachers should respect different working styles and differences.

Though participant 5 has different views on teaching effectiveness. According to interview, he claimed that the quality of teaching is mainly assessed by homework or teacher's observation. Different teachers have different teaching styles. Through collegiality, teachers can get suggestions from colleagues or share each other's teaching methods. However, participant 5 reveals the effect of such collegiality on quality of teaching is minimal:

> *One's teaching style does not always match with other's teaching method. Only by constantly assess student's performances by assessment tools and observation can a teacher knows how to provide quality teaching.*

Besides, he also suggests that a new teacher can always look up to how the colleagues deal with their problems and learn from it. Seeking answers by observation or asking colleagues are intrinsic of which novice teachers should take the initiative to learn from trial and error. Teaching, to a greater extent, solely depends on individuals in classroom.

Five participants admit that collegiality has great impact on the development on teacher identity. They treat collegiality as an important social bonding in their

working life. A good collegiality enables them to adapt the school culture faster and effectively. It also leaves rooms for novice teachers to learn handling duties independently with the support from colleagues. Since novice teachers are new comer in schools, these participants all show their worries about judging other experienced teachers and tends to doubt themselves if not getting along well with others. Yet, the other three participants view collegial relationship is an extrinsic factor and they critically point out that professional identity of teacher should depends on how a person define themselves as a teacher and what kinds of teacher they want to be.

DISCUSSION

The results of study reveal that the school culture – how school implements curriculum and provides support to novice teachers interacts with the self-efficacy, individuality of teachers and hence job satisfaction, whereas the collegial relationship influences the teaching effectiveness and critically affects the development of teaching identity. No matter how passionate a teacher is, he or she will finally drop out if the school environment is not no longer favourable for teaching.

Importance of mentorship and support

While all participants underwent difficulties in picking up new duties and roles, Worthy (2005) notices the norm of expecting and assuming the novice teachers to perform effectively with full teaching responsibilities from their first day of job in Hong Kong. Mann and Tang (2012) further illustrates that the complex roles and high

demands and expectations from different stakeholders, namely students, colleagues and parents may swamp the novice teachers. Thus, fitting in as a new comer can be stressful and overwhelming. Therefore, mentorship plays a fundamental role in helping novice teachers to fit in the school and their own roles.

Mentorship can be in terms of providing short-term technical support, as well as long-term reflective companions (Mann & Tang, 2012). Short-term assistances can take form as giving advice and suggestions for handling administrative work, for paper making and setting. Reflective companions can range from giving feedback for lesson observations, providing emotional support and discussing effective ways of teaching.

Conflicts between personal beliefs and school-based factors

School-based factors including curriculum design and implementation, and administrative workloads are the major concerns identified in the study, which are sometimes contradictory to teachers' personal beliefs leading to lower job satisfaction. Lam and Yan (2011) argues that passionate teachers will gradually be disillusioned with teaching as job when they are working under an environment, which is not conducive for implementing and actualizing their pedagogical beliefs.

The rigorous and tight curriculum always contradicts with teachers who believe to provide students with a happy and fun learning environment. Several participants

disclose that their schools have heavy academic demands on students. They are eager

to try to ask for changes, for example, reducing the tests and examinations.

Nevertheless, their efforts are futile attempts. The bureaucratic school culture has

demotivated participant 8:

> *I want to be a teacher who can give students a happy childhood. But, there are too*
> *many assessments for students in this school. 2 dictations in a weeks, 4 tests and 4*
> *exams in an academic year, it not only adds burdens to teachers, but also creates*
> *pressures for students in learning. This is totally not I wanted for. I tried to fight*
> *for change but I was asked to follow the suit.*

Provided that even if they still enjoy the core nature of teaching, those heavy

workloads and administrative duties demanded can be a drag that discontents teachers

to continue working in the school. Participant 2 shows her disappointment in the

demanding working environment:

> *I still love teaching but too much administrative work detracts me from teaching.*
> *No mentorship support also makes me sick for those admin work. I feel frustrated*
> *that new teacher with no experience needs to take up the responsibility of a subject*
> *coordinator of a form.*

Overwhelming and tedious administrative workloads indeed will cause teachers to be

overburdened. They are dissatisfied, as they cannot focus on teaching because of the

non-manageable workloads. Negative emotions such as frustration and

discontentment, will eventually demotivate teachers to enjoy teaching as a life long

career. In the worst case, teachers may choose to leave the school or even the

profession once they are overwhelmed by the teaching and administrative work. Therefore, job satisfaction created from favourable working environment significantly influences the motivation of teachers to stay in the school or continuously work as a teacher.

Relative significance of collegial relationship

The commitment of teacher is a key and crucial element in understanding teacher identity. With accordance to Chan (2005), how teachers perceive the quality of their working environment directly influences their commitments towards their jobs, as well as the teaching quality.

Formation of community of trust is vital to build up collegiality. As mentioned by participants, they suggested that gatherings on regular basis help enhance the bonding among teachers. This not only strengthens the ties between colleagues, but also their own teacher identity. Engaging in gatherings or activities, suggested by Chan (2005, p. 103), *lead teachers to rediscover their own sense of calling, find rest and renewal, share their guidance about their work and lives*. In other words, teachers can critically reflect upon their roles and identity through these colleagues' activities.

Some insignificant collaboration in the forms of informal encounters i.e. sharing duties and burden (Hargreaves, 1994) offers certain flexibility in teaching. Swapping duties or offering class exchanges in tough times, which only limit to good collegial

relationship, can avoid teachers being overburdened.

It is argued that collegiality does not pose a direct impact on the performance of the students as Hargreaves (1994) states that teachers have the right to control over their own practices within the classroom. In spite of the classroom practices, collaborative planning among teachers for lesson implementing and design of leaning materials still have a significant influence on the teaching quality.

Self-efficacy and individuality

Self-efficacy refers to the how teachers judge their own capabilities to work as a successful and professional teacher (Hong, 2010). This may be regarded as one of the intrinsic factors in affecting the development of teaching identity. It explains why three participants claim that collegial relationship is not a salient factor. What participant 5 says is significant and representative of how teachers critically reflect upon his competency as a teacher:

> *It depends on how I want myself to be and how I am going to do with it based on my personal beliefs, values and philosophy.*

By constantly reshaping and constructing through trial and error, it is believed that perhaps one day teachers can construct their own 'identity' intrinsically. Besides, teachers with high efficacy belief also address that collegiality is not an individual problem and may involves many parties. For example, as Participant 4 expresses:

Being not able to get along well with some teachers doesn't mean I am not professional. It is because that that may not only be my problem(s). Those teachers (if any) should be responsible too.

It is recognized that the impact of collegiality on the professionalism of a teacher, which is the teaching identity, is not that relevant to teachers who are highly confident in their teaching competency.

Experiencing individuality in classroom enables teachers to take charge of their own teaching. It is favourable that teachers are free to innovate within their own classroom as they are on an individualist basis (Hargreaves, 1995). Meanwhile, teachers should make sure that no rules and regulation is broken and any changes should be made within the system boundaries. Participant 6 feels energetic about the individuality given by and claims that it is the major reason of his stay in the school:

I have been given quite a lot of freedom in my teaching. I can conduct various teaching methods when teaching, if I decide to cater for students' learning and development. I love to work with this school. What I have experienced in the classroom, which is teaching, is the only and major concern of my stay in this school.

Innovation allows teachers to have a taste of own autonomy in teaching and develop their own teaching styles and philosophy, thus establish teacher identity. *Professional autonomy is likely to results in the enjoyment of teaching and job satisfaction* (Lam & Yan, 2011, p.343). Chan (2005 p. 94) also reveals that *efficacy transforms beliefs into*

actions and is believed to be critical in maintaining an identity. Therefore, it argues that self-efficacy may override the effectiveness of collegial relationship on the teacher identity to certain extent.

CONCLUSION

The present study found that the school environment and collegial relationship critically affect the establishment of teacher identity of novice teachers. The study examines the importance and significance of fitting school culture and building up collegial relationship. A favourable working environment obviously stimulates teachers to derive job satisfaction whereas supportive colleagues promote effective collaboration and hence a harmonious working atmosphere is created.

As identified in the research, the extrinsic factors, school culture and collegiality, have directly impacts on the professional growth of teachers. However, it is notable that the self-efficacy of teachers that is intrinsic may also have influence to development of teacher identity. Thus, it is conspicuous to recognize that both extrinsic and intrinsic factors interact with each other and continuously shape one's teacher identity through time.

REFERENCES

Bartell, C. A. (2004). *Cultivating High-Quality Teaching through Induction and Mentoring*. Corwin Press.

Lam, B., & Yan, H. (2011). Beginning teachers' job satisfaction: the impact of school-based factors. *Teacher Development*, *15*(3), 333-348. doi:10.1080/13664530.2011.608516

Chan, K. A. (2005). *Hong Kong teacher identity: Perceived and intended*.

Choi, P. L., & Tang, S. Y. F. (2009). Teacher commitment trends: Cases of Hong Kong teachers from 1997 to 2007. *Teaching and Teacher Education, 25*(5), pp.767-777.

Day, C. (2004). Passionate learning communities. In C. Day, *A passion for teaching* (pp.134-157). London; New York: RoutledgeFalmer

Dunne, M. (2011). Who do you think you are….and who do you think you will be as a teacher? In D. McGregor & L. Cartwright (Eds.), *Developing reflective practice: A guide for beginning teachers* (pp. 39-54). Berkshire: Open University Press.

Gault, A. (2011). How does your teacher identity fit in with the culture of teaching and the organization? In D. McGregor & L. Cartwright (Eds.), *Developing reflective practice: A guide for beginning teachers* (pp. 69-89). Berkshire: Open University Press.

Hargreaves, A. (1994). *Collaboration and contrived collegiality: Cup of comfort or poisened chalice?* In A. Hargreaves, Changing teachers, changing times:

Teachers' work and culture in the postmodern age (pp. 186-211). London: Cassell.

Hargreaves, A (1995). School Culture, School Effectiveness and School Improvement, *School Effectiveness and School Improvement, 6*(1), 23-46. doi: 10.1080/0924345950060102

Hong, J. Y. (2010). Pre-Service and Beginning Teachers' Professional Identity and Its Relation to Dropping Out of the Profession. *Teaching And Teacher Education: An International Journal Of Research And Studies*, *26*(8), 1530-1543.

Jerald, C. D. (2006). School culture: "The hidden curriculum." *Issue Brief, December,* 1-8.

Mann, S., & Tang, E. H. (2012). The Role of Mentoring in Supporting Novice English Language Teachers in Hong Kong. *TESOL Quarterly: A Journal For Teachers Of English To Speakers Of Other Languages And Of Standard English As A Second Dialect*, *46*(3), 472-495.

Raywid, M. A. (1993). Community: An Alternative School Accomplishment. In G.A. Smith (Ed.), *Public schools that work: Creating community* (pp.32-39). New York: Routledge.

Stone, Lawrence (1979). The revival of narrative: Reflections on a new old history. *Past and Present*, *85*, 3-24.

Worthy, J. (2005). "It didn't have to be so hard": The first years of teaching in an urban school. *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education, 18,* 379-398. doi:10.1080/09518390500082699

Appendix 1 – Interview schedule

Background information of the teachers and their schools

1. How long have you been working at this school?

2. What subjects and classes are you teaching?

3. Can you tell me more about the school culture? What are the key characteristics in your views? If you are to use 2-3 adjectives to describe it, what do you say?

4. Is there anything special about this school, which makes you stay? E.g. religious belief

The importance of fitting in school culture in relation to teaching life

1. Have you ever faced any difficulties in fitting in school culture when you entered a new as a beginner? If yes, what are they? How did you over them? Were there any particular colleagues who helped the adaptation during the process?

2. Do you find any conflicts between the school culture and you own values, teaching beliefs and aspirations? Do you have chance to experience your own individuality?

The importance of collegial relationship in relation to teaching effectiveness

1. Have you ever faced any difficulties in fitting in school culture when you entered a new as a beginner? If yes, what are they?

2. What are the possible factors that can help building good relationship between colleagues?

3. If the relationship between your colleagues was poorly built up, what do you think the consequences will be?

4. Do you think that cooperation between colleagues is important to your quality of teaching? Why?

5. To what extent, does collegial relationship affect your teaching effectiveness and the development of your teacher's professional identity?