

Information for the April 1, 2016 TeachingWorks Journal Club Meeting

We will discuss the following two articles in this meeting:

1. Lai, C., Li, Z., and Y. Gong (2016). Teacher agency and professional learning in cross-cultural teaching contexts: Accounts of Chinese teachers from international schools in Hong Kong. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 54: 12-21.

2. Teng, L.S. (2016). Changes in teachers' beliefs after a professional development project for teaching writing: Two Chinese cases. *Journal of Education for Teaching*, 42(1): 106-109.

In addition, bibliographic information is below for other relevant articles published in the following journals between December 15, 2015 and February 15, 2016.¹

Action in Teacher Education
American Educational Research Journal
Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis
Elementary School Journal
Journal of Education for Teaching: International Research and Pedagogy
Journal of Teacher Education
Teachers College Record
Teaching and Teacher Education
Urban Review

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Akiba, M. and B. Wilkinson (2016). Adopting an international innovation for teacher professional development: State and district approaches to lesson study in Florida. *Journal of Teacher Education*, 67(1): 74-93.

The state of Florida has taken an unprecedented approach to teacher professional development in its Race to the Top (RTTT) Program application by proposing to promote an international innovation that originates in Japan, "lesson study," as a statewide teacher professional development model. Since winning the US\$700 million RTTT funding in 2010, the Florida

¹ For the April 1, 2016, TeachingWorks journal club we considered the following journals: *Action in Teacher Education* (no new issues since 2015, 37(4)); *American Educational Research Journal* (no new issues since December 2015, 52(6)); *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis* (March 2016, 38(1)); *Elementary School Journal* (no new issues since December 2015, 116(2)); *Journal of Education for Teaching: International Research and Pedagogy* (2016, 42(1)); *Journal of Teacher Education* (January/February 2016, 67(1); March/April 2016, 67(2)); *Teachers College Record* (117(13), 117(14), 118(1), 118(2)); *Teaching and Teacher Education* (February 2016, 54); *Urban Review* (no new issues since December 2015, 47(5)).



Department of Education and districts have been promoting lesson study as one of the statewide vehicles to implement the state standards aligned with the Common Core State Standards. This study analyzed the state and districts' approaches to promote lesson study using policy documents, statewide district survey data, and interviews. We found that a majority of districts mandated lesson study implementation without securing or spending sufficient funding. In addition, the existing organizational structures and routines for professional development pose a major challenge in capacity building of district leaders and teachers to engage in lesson study.

Baeten, M. and M. Simons (2016). Student teachers' team teaching: How do learners in the classroom experience team-taught lessons by student teachers? *Journal of Education for Teaching*, 42(1): 93-105.

This study focuses on student teachers' team teaching. Two team teaching models (sequential and parallel teaching) were applied by 14 student teachers in a quasi-experimental design. When implementing new teaching models, it is important to take into account the perspectives of all actors involved. Although learners are key actors in the teaching process, their perspective is often ignored. Therefore, the central research question is: How do learners experience sequential and parallel teaching? A questionnaire was administered to the 229 learners participating in the experiment. Exploratory factor analysis and multilevel analysis revealed that both models were evaluated positively. However, parallel teaching scored significantly higher on advantages whereas sequential teaching scored higher on disadvantages. Quantitative content analysis revealed additional information. Benefits of parallel teaching were high levels of concentration and involvement and a positive atmosphere. In sequential teaching, learners appreciated the additional support and variation. Disadvantages of sequential teaching referred to the fact that it was confusing and to differences between both teachers. Learners in parallel teaching disliked the splitting of the class group. They were concerned that both learner groups would not be treated equally. These findings reveal that from the learners' perspective, parallel teaching should be preferred above sequential teaching.

Burden, K., Aubusson, P., Brindley, S., and S. Schuck (2016). Changing knowledge, changing technology: implications for teacher education futures. *Journal of Education for Teaching*, 42(1): 4-16.

Recent research in teacher education futures has identified two themes that require further study: the changing nature of knowledge and the changing capabilities of technologies. This article examines the intersection of these two themes and their implications for teacher education. The research employed futures methodologies based on scenario creation. With a focus on the above themes or dimensions, a panel of experts was interviewed to draw on its collective wisdom to explore alternative teacher education futures. Data from these interviews were analysed to stimulate the construction of four future teacher education scenarios. Feedback on the scenarios was obtained from teacher educators in Europe and Australia. The scenarios were then revised based on this feedback. The final scenarios are presented here as a way of provoking discussion among teacher educators about teacher education futures.

Conklin, H.G. and H.E. Hughes (2016). Practices of compassionate, critical, justice-oriented teacher education. *Journal of Teacher Education*, 67(1): 47-60.

In this cross-institutional, qualitative case study, two teacher educators in urban teacher education programs identify and analyze the components of our teacher education practice in relation to a vision of compassionate, critical, justice-oriented teacher education. Using Grossman et al.'s concepts of preparation for professional practice as an analytic tool, we illuminate some of our teacher education practices that (a) facilitated the development of relationships and community within our classes, (b) honored preservice teachers' lived experiences and existing attitudes, (c) introduced preservice teachers to multiple perspectives of viewing the world, and (d)



provided a vision of equitable, intellectually challenging teaching and learning. Drawing on our data, we offer a pedagogical framework that identifies key features of compassionate, critical, justice-oriented teacher education to inform research and practice. We highlight the contributions of this framework for justice-oriented teacher education and the inherent complexity of attempts to parse such fundamentally messy relational practice.

Dobbs-Oates, J. and C. Wachter Morris (2016). The case for interprofessional education in teacher education and beyond. *Journal of Education for Teaching*, 42(1): 50-65.

In many PreK-12 school environments, individuals with a variety of professional identities and roles provide services to students. Typically, these individuals are trained with minimal interaction with each other, yet they must work cooperatively with each other in the schools.

Interprofessional education (IPE) provides a model whereby students in different disciplines learn to collaborate. This article describes the origins and current status of IPE in the health professions; suggests strategies for applying IPE to educator training; describes a promising example IPE project involving two distinct school-based professionals, pre-service special educators and school counsellors in training, including outcomes documented through student reflections; and offers implications for implementing and sustaining IPE in schools of education.

Dodo Seriki, V.D., Brown, C.T., and K.J. Fasching-Varner (2015). The permanence of racism in teacher education. *Teachers College Record*, 117(14): 74-102.

Using the chronicles of three friends, this chapter presents a counterstory that sets the stage for the examination of racism in teacher education, within the United States of America, using critical race theory (CRT) as an analytical tool. The setting of these chronicles is during a time when postracial rhetoric in the United States was at its highest—just after the 2008 election of President Barack Obama. The three friends take the readers on a journey through their graduate experience in teacher education and into their first faculty position in teacher education. Their experiences, as students and junior faculty, are akin to what many faculty and students of color and their White allies experience daily in teacher education programs across the United States. The analysis of their chronicle, using CRT, reveals that postracial discourse has disguised racism and racial microaggression in teacher education. Racial microaggression is as pernicious as other forms of racism and, through its passiveaggressive orientation, validates institutional and individual lack of attention to issues of race.

Fives, H., Mills, T.M., and C.M. Dacey (2016). Cooperating teacher compensation and benefits: Comparing 1957-1958 and 2012-2013. *Journal of Teacher Education*, 67(2): 105-119.

We offer a comparative investigation of the compensation and benefits afforded to cooperating teachers (CTs) by teacher education programs (TEPs) in 1957-1958 and 2012-2013. This investigation replicates and extends a description of the compensation practices of 20 U.S. TEPs published by VanWinkle in 1959. Data for the present investigation came from 18 of those TEPs. Descriptive statistics and qualitative analyses were used to identify trends and make comparisons across the two time periods. Findings indicate that compensation for CTs continues to fall into five categories: (a) monetary compensation, (b) professional learning opportunities, (c) CT role-focused resources, (d) engaging CTs in the college/university community, and (e) professional recognition. Changes in the nature and quality of benefits indicate that in many instances, the programs in our sample offer less to their CTs than they did in 1957-1958 while expectations for CTs have historically increased.

Ho, D., Lee, M., and Y. Teng (2016). Exploring the relationship between school-level teacher qualifications and teachers' perceptions of school-based professional learning community practices. *Teaching and Teacher Education, 54*: 32-43.

This study explores the relationship between school-level teacher qualifications and school-based professional learning community (PLC) practices in Early Childhood Education in Hong Kong. A territory-wide survey examined how preschool teachers perceived shared responsibility, reflective dialogues, deprivatized practices and organizational learning. The findings suggest a significant relationship between school-level teacher qualifications and teachers' perceptions of school-based PLC practices. As the percentage of bachelor degree holders in preschools increases, teachers are more positive about PLC practices in their perceptions. This study establishes a platform for future studies focusing on structural relationships between teacher qualifications and school-based PLC practices.

Jiang, J., Vauras, M., Volet, S., and Y. Wang (2016). Teachers' emotions and emotion regulation strategies: Self- and students' perceptions. *Teaching and Teacher Education, 54*: 22-31.

Based on Gross's process model of emotion regulation, this study related 53 lower-secondary school students' perceptions of their teachers' emotions to four of their teachers' emotion regulation while teaching. A mixed method approach, combining students' surveys and teachers' interviews, revealed associations between teachers' positive or negative emotions as perceived by their students, and teachers' reflections on their emotion regulation. Antecedent-focused emotion regulation appeared more desirable than response-focused emotion regulation, and in particular, reappraisal more effective than suppression in increasing positive-emotion expression and reducing negative-emotion expression. Implications for teaching, teacher education and future research on teacher emotion regulation are proposed.

Kazemi, E., Ghouseini, H., Cunard, A., and A.C. Turrou (2016). Getting inside rehearsals: Insights from teacher educators to support work on complex practice. *Journal of Teacher Education, 67*(1): 18-31.

In recent years, work in practice-based teacher education has focused on identifying and elaborating how teacher educators (TEs) use pedagogies of enactment to learn in and from practice. However, research on these pedagogies is still in its early development. Building on prior analyses, this article elaborates a particular pedagogy of enactment, rehearsal, developed through a collaboration of elementary mathematics TEs across three institutions. Rehearsals are embedded within learning cycles that provide repeated opportunities for novice teachers (NTs) to investigate, reflect on, and enact teaching through coached feedback. This article shares a set of insights gained from 5 years of developing, studying, and learning how to support NTs' enactment in rehearsal. The insights we share in this article contribute to building a knowledge base for pedagogies of teacher education.

Kennedy, M. (2016). Parsing the practice of teaching. *Journal of Teacher Education, 67*(1): 6-17.

Teacher education programs typically teach novices about one part of teaching at a time. We might offer courses on different topics—cultural foundations, learning theory, or classroom management—or we may parse teaching practice itself into a set of discrete techniques, such as core teaching practices, that can be taught individually. Missing from our courses is attention to the ultimate purpose of these discrete parts—how specific concepts can help teachers achieve their goals, or how specific procedures can help them achieve their goals. Because we are now shifting from a focus on bodies of knowledge to a focus on depictions of practice, this article examines our efforts to parse teaching practice into lists of discrete procedures. It argues that we need to pay less attention to the visible behaviors of teaching and more attention to the purposes that are served by those behaviors. As a way to begin a conversation about parsing teachers'

purposes, I offer a proposal for conceptualizing teaching as a practice that entails five persistent problems, each of which presents a difficult challenge to teachers, and all of which compete for teachers' attention. Viewed in this way, the role of teacher education is not to offer solutions to these problems, but instead to help novices learn to analyze these problems and to evaluate alternative courses of action for how well they address these problems.

Lai, C., Li, Z., and Y. Gong (2016). Teacher agency and professional learning in cross-cultural teaching contexts: Accounts of Chinese teachers from international schools in Hong Kong. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 54: 12-21.

This study examined how teacher agency shaped professional learning in cross-cultural teaching contexts. Interviews with 14 Chinese language teachers showed that teacher agency varied in different dimensions of professional learning. Social suggestions, power relations, teachers' professional and social positioning and the imposed identity and social roles in the school contexts interacted to shape teacher agency. The findings suggest both creating school cultures and structures that value and share diverse discursive and pedagogical practices and managing teachers' professional identity and self-positioning to enhance teachers' agency to engage in mutual learning and remaking of their work practices.

Ledwell, K. and C. Oyler (2016). Unstandardized responses to a "standardized" test: The edTPA as gatekeeper and curriculum change agent. *Journal of Teacher Education*, 67(2): 120-134.

We examine edTPA (a teacher performance assessment) implementation at one private university during the first year that our state required this exam for initial teaching certification. Using data from semi-structured interviews with 19 teacher educators from 12 programs as well as public information on edTPA pass rates, we explore whether the edTPA served its intended roles as a gatekeeper to the teaching profession and a catalyst for curriculum change. Although the edTPA did not serve as gatekeeper in our context, we did find a wide variety of consequential program-level gatekeeping practices. To explore the test's function as a curriculum improvement lever, we created weighted change scores to represent the range of edTPA-related curricular changes across 12 programs. We found a wide range of curricular responses to the edTPA, from marginalization of the assessment to deep edTPA integration in program coursework. Finally, we explore teacher educators' analyses of the edTPA as an instructional tool.

Maaranen, K., Pitkaniemi, H., Stenberg, K., and L. Karlsson (2016). An idealistic view of teaching: teacher students' personal practical theories. *Journal of Education for Teaching*, 42(1): 80-92.

Personal practical theories (PPTs) are built based on underlying beliefs, experiences, values and conceptions regarding "good teaching." Having a vision of teaching and valuing the work may have a strong effect on one's sense of identity, resilience and commitment. This study focused on Finnish teacher students' (N = 84) PPTs constructed during the middle or at the end of their studies, on average during their fourth year of a five-year MA programme. All of the PPTs, written as statements (N = 647), were combined, and a unified conception of the theories was formed using inductive content analysis. The three main categories found were the foundations of good teaching, the teacher and the teacher's daily work. The analysis of the statements shows that the notions of good teaching are very idealistic: they emphasise abstract ideologies and high standards for the teacher, but also everyday matters of teaching, although also here the ideology of the pupil's individuality is at the centre. The paper concludes by arguing that it is good to have high aims and values for teaching, although in reality some of them might be difficult to achieve.

Mansfield, C.F., Beltman, S., Broadley, T., and N. Weatherby-Fell (2016). Building resilience in teacher education: An evidenced informed framework. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 54: 77-87.



This paper proposes a framework for building resilience in teacher education. The framework is informed by a focused review of relevant literature to determine factors that may be addressed in teacher education to support teacher resilience and ways in which this may occur. Findings show that personal and contextual resources along with use of particular strategies all contribute to resilience outcomes and that many of these can be developed in teacher education. Using these findings, a comprehensive resilience framework is proposed with five overarching themes - understanding resilience, relationships, wellbeing, motivation and emotions. Implementation possibilities are discussed.

Martzog, P., Kuttner, S., and G. Pollak (2016). A comparison of Waldorf and non-Waldorf student-teachers' social-emotional competencies: Can arts engagement explain differences? *Journal of Education for Teaching*, 42(1): 66-79.

Teachers are confronted with complex and unexpected classroom situations that not only demand knowledge but also social-emotional competencies. Consequently, researchers have tried to identify conditions that support the development of relevant abilities in this domain. This study examined the frequently stated, but not yet empirically investigated, idea of immersion in the arts as a facilitator of aspects of empathy and tolerance of ambiguity (ToA). The paper compares Waldorf student-teachers who are strongly immersed in arts activities in their training with non-Waldorf student-teachers who do not participate in the arts on the constructs of empathy and ToA. Results indicated higher scores in the Waldorf group on both emotional and cognitive dimensions of the empathy construct and marginally higher scores on ToA. The results of this study and subsequent discussion suggest a new perspective on the relation between arts engagement and the specific domain of social-emotional competencies.

Matias, C.E. and T.J. Grosland (2016). Digital storytelling as racial justice: Digital hopes for deconstructing whiteness in teacher education. *Journal of Teacher Education*, 67(2): 152-164.

Teacher education is replete with an overwhelming presence of Whiteness, a presence that if not explicitly interrogated indefinitely recycles hegemonic Whiteness. Needed are pedagogical strategies that expose the hegemonic invisibility of Whiteness. This critical reflection examines the utilization of digital storytelling by teacher educators of color to pedagogically deconstruct Whiteness in a predominately White, urban-focused teacher education course—a necessary deconstruction if these teacher candidates are to effectively teach urban students of color. Particularly, this article deconstructs four academic years of digital stories produced in a mandatory diversity course in an urban teacher education program and illustrates how digital storytelling itself promotes a critical self-revelation that confront Whiteness in White teacher candidates. The preliminary analyses suggest that digital storytelling is a racially just way of having White teacher candidates self-reflect on their own Whiteness in a multitude of ways, by (a) ending emotional distancing, (b) debunking colorblindness, (c) engaging emotions, and (d) sharing the burden of race.

Maxwell, B., Tremblay-Laprise, A.A., Fillion, M., Boon, H., Daly, C., van den Hoven, M., Heilbronn, R., Lenselink, M., and S. Walters (2016). A five-country survey on ethics education in preservice teaching programs. *Journal of Teacher Education*, 67(2): 135-151.

Despite a broad consensus on the ethical dimensions of the teaching profession, and long-standing efforts to align teacher education with wider trends in professional education, little is known about how teacher candidates are being prepared to face the ethical challenges of contemporary teaching. This article presents the results of an international survey on ethics content and curriculum in initial teacher education (ITE). Involving five Organisation for Economic Co-Operation and Development (OECD) countries—the United States, England, Canada,



Australia, and the Netherlands—the study’s findings shed light on teacher educators’ perspectives on the contribution of ethics content to the education of future teachers and provide a snapshot of how well existing programs line up with their aspirations. The results showed that 24% of the ITE programs surveyed contain at least one mandatory stand-alone ethics course. The meaning of the results vis-à-vis opportunities for expanding ethics education in preservice teaching programs is also discussed.

Powers, B. and P.B. Duffy (2016). Making invisible intersectionality visible through theater of the oppressed in teacher education. *Journal of Teacher Education*, 67(1): 61-73.

The arts generally and theater specifically offer effective strategies to help educators recognize and make visible the multiple student and teacher identities within classrooms. Without student and teacher agency in schools, there cannot be equitable and liberatory learning environments. Noted Brazilian theater artist and activist Augusto Boal’s Theater of the Oppressed (TO) offers promising opportunities to embody Crenshaw’s notion of intersectional identities and Purdie-Vaughns and Eibach’s concept of Invisible Intersectionality. This article shares research conducted in a teacher education course on culturally relevant pedagogy where students engaged in TO activities to explore the multiplicity of their and their future students’ identities. The authors suggest that embodied and artistic approaches in preservice teacher education create so-called small openings where students may recognize their and their future students’ identities and move toward including varied identities in their future classroom communities.

Qiao, X. and S. Yu (2016). Enhancing professional learning communities through knowledge artefacts in mainland China. *Journal of Education for Teaching*, 42(1): 110-113.

This qualitative case study examines the perspectives and experiences of seven Chinese primary teachers on the integration of shared knowledge artefacts into teaching in professional learning communities. The analysis of the semi-structured interviews and observation data revealed that using knowledge artefacts, such as preview sheets, flowing charts and grouping rules, had dual effects in teacher development in professional learning communities in mainland China. Although the participating teachers acquired instrumental skills to meet the requirement of education reform, the ready-made paradigmatic model constrained critical thinking and resulted in conservatism in teachers’ mindsets. The findings highlight the lack of trial-and-error opportunities and teacher motivation in conducting professional dialogues in situated collective learning settings. The study suggests that stimulating teacher agency must be employed in the development of teaching practice under the scaffolds of knowledge artefacts.

Sanders-Smith, S.C., Smith-Bonahue, T.M., and O.R. Soutullo (2016). Practicing teachers’ responses to case method of instruction in an online graduate course. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 54: 1-11.

This is a study of two cohorts of practicing teachers enrolled in an online graduate course using Case Method of Instruction (a pedagogical technique based on realistic case studies) to facilitate students’ learning. Social presence indicators were analyzed to demonstrate the effects of case studies in the online course on student interactions. This analysis revealed changes in types of interactions used during discussions of case studies. Both cohort groups showed changes in communication to include more emotional (affective) discussions when engaging in Case Method of Instruction.

Santoro, N., Sosu, E., and G. Fassetta (2016). ‘You have to be a bit brave’: Barriers to Scottish student-teachers’ participation in study-abroad programmes. *Journal of Education for Teaching*, 42(1): 17-27.

This article reports on a study that examined Scottish student teachers’ attitudes to study-abroad and the reasons underpinning their reluctance to participate in these programmes. Data collection



comprised a mixed-methods approach consisting of a survey of 318 student-teachers in one Scottish university followed by semi-structured interviews with 12 volunteers. Descriptive and thematic data analyses revealed that the majority of student-teachers perceived international study experience as useful to their development as teachers. However, their lack of confidence and anxiety about travel were significant reasons about why they did not take up opportunities to study abroad. In particular, fear of not being understood and fear of different cultural norms and practices shaped their decision to remain in Scotland. In order to allay these fears and increase student-teacher participation, the authors suggest universities invest in intercultural competence training, language education and provide detailed briefings as part of the recruitment process into study-abroad programmes.

Teng, L.S. (2016). Changes in teachers' beliefs after a professional development project for teaching writing: Two Chinese cases. *Journal of Education for Teaching*, 42(1): 106-109.

A plethora of research has found that teachers' beliefs directly influence their classroom practices and teaching outcomes. While numerous studies in second/foreign language writing have examined the effectiveness of different innovative approaches on students' learning to write, there is a paucity of research on writing teachers' beliefs about these approaches and how their beliefs change in the process of their professional development. Such a lacuna becomes prominent in English as a Foreign Language contexts, especially in China, where there are numerous calls for changing the nature of classroom practices from product-focused to process- and student-centred instruction. In order to fill this gap, this brief article reports on a case study regarding changes in two Chinese English teachers' beliefs after attending a professional development project for teaching writing. A key research question guides this study: What changes, if any, did the two teachers experience in their teaching beliefs during the project? Two writing teachers were voluntarily recruited for a case study. Findings show that the professional development project for teaching writing broadened the teachers' understanding of different writing theories, provided a clear model of how to integrate these new approaches into regular writing courses, changed their instructional focus and shifted their perception of teachers' roles in teaching practice.

Turner, E.E. and C. Drake (2016). A review of research on prospective teachers' learning about children's mathematical thinking and cultural funds of knowledge. *Journal of Teacher Education*, 67(1): 32-46.

Researchers have studied the preparation of elementary teachers to teach mathematics to students from diverse racial, ethnic, and linguistic backgrounds by focusing either on teachers' learning about children's mathematical thinking (CMT) or, less frequently, about children's cultural funds of knowledge (CFoK) related to mathematics. Despite this important work, elementary teachers continue to be underprepared to teach mathematics effectively in diverse communities. We suggest that one way to address this persistent challenge is to integrate these two lines of work. This review focuses on research related to how prospective teachers (PSTs) learn to connect to CMT and CFoK in mathematics instruction. We use the review to describe elements of a robust theoretical framework of PST learning about CMT and CFoK, and synthesize how the studies reviewed contribute to these different elements.

Ye, W. (2016). When rural meets urban: the transfer problem Chinese pre-service teachers face in teaching practice. *Journal of Education for Teaching*, 42(1): 28-49.

Traditional teacher education's supposed failure to prepare prospective teachers for classroom realities (the transfer problem) is a widely discussed topic in the teacher education literature. Previous studies have focused on causal relationships between teaching and such factors as pre-service teacher education programmes, contextual factors in the practicum school, and transition



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shock; however, most of these studies have been set in developed countries, and have paid little attention to the interactions among such factors. This study, involving 35 East China Normal University pre-service teachers, explores the transfer problem in a rural/urban divide context, discusses the possible impacts of pre-service teachers' previous educational experience (i.e. before teacher education) on their teaching, and examines the interactions among teachers' previous education experience, teacher education, and practicum schools.

Lai, C., Li, Z., and Y. Gong (2016). Teacher agency and professional learning in cross-cultural teaching contexts: Accounts of Chinese teachers from international schools in Hong Kong. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 54: 12-21.

Abstract:

This study examined how teacher agency shaped professional learning in cross-cultural teaching contexts. Interviews with 14 Chinese language teachers showed that teacher agency varied in different dimensions of professional learning. Social suggestions, power relations, teachers' professional and social positioning and the imposed identity and social roles in the school contexts interacted to shape teacher agency. The findings suggest both creating school cultures and structures that value and share diverse discursive and pedagogical practices and managing teachers' professional identity and self-positioning to enhance teachers' agency to engage in mutual learning and remaking of their work practices.

Summary prepared by Julie R. Freeman

Purpose of the Study

Research has shown the existence of unequal power relations and contributions from teachers with different cultural backgrounds in transnational educational settings (Djerasimovic, 2014; Pyvis, 2011). In this study of Chinese language teachers in international schools in Hong Kong, researchers examined “how a group of Chinese language teachers, the less-advantaged minority group, exercised professional agency in a cross-cultural teaching context,” (p. 14). The researchers argue agency is a necessary condition to support “mutual and reciprocal” learning for teachers across diverse cultural backgrounds. In the study, professional agency is defined as “the practices where ‘professional subjects and/or communities exert influence, make choices and take stances in ways that affect their work and/or their professional identities,’ (Etelapelto, et al., 2013, p. 61),” (p. 13). They also argue teachers exercising professional agency is influenced by school culture and school structures, as well as power relations (Allen, 2002; Etelapelto et al., 2014; Vahasantanen, 2015).

The researchers aimed to determine how professional agency interacts with personal as well as institutional circumstances to shape “self-transformation and development of work practices” (p. 14). Self-transformation, or “the construction and reconstruction of one’s professional knowledge,” (p. 13) and development of work practices are two complementary components of professional learning identified by Etelapelto et al., (2014). This study finds that activating teacher agency, particularly those of underprivileged teachers, is critical to mutual learning in transnational education.

Research Question

In an effort to understand the relationship between teachers’ professional agency and professional learning, the authors investigate the following two questions:

- 1) “How do Chinese language teachers exercise professional agency to shape their professional learning from Western colleagues?”
- 2) “How do Chinese language teachers exercise professional agency to remake work practices through exerting influences on Western colleagues?” (p. 14)

Research Participants

Participants were 13 female and 1 male full-time Chinese language teachers in international schools in Hong Kong. All 14 teachers were ethnic Chinese, and all had full teaching responsibilities within their primary or secondary schools. All taught either Chinese as a second language, or both Chinese as a

second language and as a first language. The participants had an average of 8 years of experience, with only 5 participants having less than 5 years of teaching experience.

The student populations at their schools varied in terms of the proportion of local students and expatriate students (although this variation was not more specified). Three of the participants taught at bilingual schools, with teaching staffs that were about half Western and half Chinese. The other eleven participants taught at schools with a majority Western teaching staff, and in which the language of instruction is English.

Research Context

The study took place in Hong Kong, which has “complex sociocultural and linguistic situations” due to its more than 100 year history as a British colony before China was handed control in 1997 (p. 14). Based on 2011 census data, the population of Hong Kong is 93.6% ethnic Chinese and 6.4% ethnic minorities. A majority of the population uses Cantonese as the dominant daily language. English is an official language of Hong Kong, “with great symbolic and instrumental value,” while Mandarin is given importance in schools (p. 14).

There is a dual school system in Hong Kong: the local schools, which prepare students for local examinations and operate with and without government funding, and the international schools, which use “non-local curricula” (such as International Baccalaureate (IB), or Australian, Canadian, or U.S. curricula) (p. 14). These schools are mostly self-funded. Mandarin is studied in most of these schools as a first language, or as a mandatory second language until secondary school.

In 2011, about 76% of students in international schools were non-local students. Expatriate families appreciate the schools for their ability to bridge better to other educational systems. Local families value these schools for the opportunity it provides to improve their students’ English proficiency. The authors argue all families value the international school setting for its interactive learning approaches. When thinking about professional learning between the participants and their Western colleagues, it is important to keep in mind that the families at the school value these interactive learning approaches, which differ from the traditional practice of the local schools.

Data Collection

The researchers conducted open-ended interviews in the participants’ native language, Mandarin. Interviews lasted 40 minutes to 1 hour, and topics that were addressed included:

- “teaching experiences”
- “current school culture and the status of Chinese language teachers in the school”
- “perceived changes in their teaching practices and beliefs under the influence of their Western colleagues”
- “aspects of their teaching practices and beliefs that remained unchanged and the reasons behind the changes or non-changes”
- “their perceived relationships with their Western colleagues; and their perceived influence on their Western colleagues’ teaching practices and beliefs and the reasons behind the influence or lack thereof,” (p. 15).

These topics served as a frame for the interviews, allowing “the interviewees to talk freely about their own experiences and views and the interviewer to delve deeper into each interviewer’s account,” (p. 15).

Interviews were conducted at places suggested by the interviewees, outside of their schools, to maintain privacy. Two days prior to the interview, participants received the interview guide via email. At the beginning of the interview, participants were asked to write some notes in response to their perceptions of changes in their teaching practice made due to Western colleagues, practices that remained unchanged, and their own perceived influence on their Western colleagues. These notes were then used as prompts

for the interview, and participants were asked to elaborate on these notes in any chosen order. The interviews were audio recorded, and the interviewers took field notes during the interview. Researchers discussed each interview afterwards and recorded these discussions in field notes. They then used field notes to help generate coding categories for analysis.

Data Analysis

The investigators transcribed audio recordings of the interviews verbatim in Mandarin and then hand-coded the data using thematic analysis. They adopted four themes with respect to the two dimensions of professional learning, “self-transformation and the development of work practices and the impact force,” (p. 15):

- “professional learning (changes and non-changes) under the influence of Western colleagues”
- “reasons for transformed and untransformed beliefs and practices”
- “their influence over their Western colleagues”
- “the reasons for the influence or lack thereof,” (p. 15).

The authors coded and re-coded excerpts under each category in order to refine and clarify categorizations. They focused on interview transcripts first, and then grouped those that were similar into analytic categories. They also used interview field notes, memos, and annotations to generate analytic categories. Initial coding was compared across interviews for saturation and cross validation. For this article, the first author translated all interview quotes verbatim from Mandarin to English; other researchers who have both English and Mandarin expertise checked the accuracy of the translation. The researchers acknowledged the subjectivity brought to the project through the act of transcribing and translating the participants’ words.

Findings

Table 1 presents a brief overview of the findings, as related to each of the research question. Findings are elaborated in the passages following the table.

Table 1: Findings as related to research questions in Lai, Li, & Gong (2016)

Research Question	Findings
1) “How do Chinese language teachers exercise professional agency to shape their professional learning from Western colleagues?” (p. 14)	Professional learning was influenced by the Chinese teachers’ Western colleagues. The authors argue the Chinese teachers’ agency was shaped by social suggestions and personal participation. This agency varied depending on what the teachers were learning about: pedagogy (“critical and balancing agency”), interacting with students (“unreserved adaptation agency”), or interacting with colleagues (“varied agency”) (pp. 15-17).
2) “How do Chinese language teachers exercise professional agency to remake work practices through exerting influences on Western colleagues?” (p. 14)	The authors assert individual teacher factors and institutional factors limited the Chinese teachers’ agency to influence their Western colleagues.

Professional agency dependent upon learning. The authors found professional agency varied dependent upon what the teachers were learning about. In the case of teaching pedagogy, Chinese teachers reported approaching new pedagogical strategies with a “critical eye,” selecting only certain

practices from their Western colleagues to integrate with their traditional approaches. All participants reported a change in their teaching from teacher-directed planning and teaching to greater consideration of students' needs and preferences, which the participants reported also applies to the use of textbooks in their teaching. Participants discussed using traditional practices with Western approaches, in order to get what they felt were both the best learning outcomes and the most buy-in from students, many of whom were used to the Western pedagogical approaches.

Beliefs about teacher roles (such as responsibility for student outcomes) and teaching goals (such as raising student subject-area interest) also shaped to what extent, and in what combination, participants used traditional and Western pedagogical approaches. For example, teachers in the study described "taking students' exam results personally," as a reflection of teacher ability. The authors argue this belief contributed to these teachers' use of more traditional pedagogical practices. In another example, a teacher with the goal of "raising students' long-term interest in Chinese culture and learning," chose not to use a traditional "drill and practice" technique in his classroom in order to increase student enjoyment of the class.

Participants were critical of their Western colleagues' pedagogical practices, and integrated them into their own practices as they made sense with their beliefs. Participants were not as critical towards Western styles of interaction with students and classroom management techniques. In fact, as opposed to critically examining their Western colleagues' interaction styles, the Chinese teachers were critical when examining their past traditional practice, in light of what they had learned from their Western colleagues. This examination led to the adoption of the practices of their Western colleagues, including treating students equally and praising students more often.

Lai, et al. (2016) report participants had changing styles of interactions with their Western colleagues, which the authors believe indicates "an intense exercise of agency," (p. 17). Participants reported pressure within their work environments to be more assertive, at odds with their self-described tendencies to be introverted or humble, characteristics they felt were not valued in the international school context. How these teachers responded to this tension differed based on their perception of their role, power position, and cultural norms. Some teachers responded by expressing their opinions to their colleagues in meetings. Another participant who felt her priority was her students did not respond to this pressure to be more outspoken, saying "However, I don't care whether people like me or not. As long as I am a responsible teacher in my students' eyes, that's enough," (pp. 17-18). Yet another teacher described sharing her opinion with management in private, and usually indirectly, in order to both have her voice heard and stay true to cultural norms.

Power relations also played a role in how the participants interacted with their Western colleagues. One teacher described how her principal required every department to collaborate with the Chinese department, and how that increased visibility of their department resulted in members of the Chinese department being more outspoken. The authors argue this is one example of how school structures and culture could shape social engagement between "underprivileged" and higher status groups of teachers.

Social structures that reshape agency. Participants felt that they had limited influence on their Western colleagues, attributing this lack of influence to individual teacher factors and institutional factors. Individual teacher factors affecting Chinese influence on Western colleagues include: individual teacher professional identity, a lack of confidence and abilities to exert influence, and social positioning. Participants reported Chinese teachers positioning themselves as passive receivers of decisions as opposed to decision-makers, limiting their influence.

Additionally, the authors argued many of the Chinese teachers viewed their professional identity “as subject teachers whose primary responsibility was to teach the subject matter rather than as school teachers who were actively involved in all kinds of school affairs,” (p. 18). Not only did they not view their roles as including outside of the classroom activities, but participants described Chinese teachers as not feeling confident in their abilities to perform these duties or interact with their Western colleagues in informal and formal ways, particularly due to language and cultural differences. These informal interactions could help build trust between colleagues. One teacher described trust as “the basis for exerting Chinese influence,” suggesting without trust-building interactions, Chinese teachers’ influence on their Western colleagues may remain weak.

Institutional factors limiting agency include limited opportunities to collaborate with Western colleagues and imposed social roles. These social roles include a view of Chinese teachers as specialist teachers who are not as valued as other teachers, as well as Chinese teachers as “cultural agents rather than as pedagogical or curricular experts,” (p. 19). Some participants did have the opportunity to interact with their Western colleagues in cross-disciplinary groups, and felt that this was one way Chinese teachers could exert influence over their Western colleagues. In these cross-disciplinary groups, Chinese teachers were able to share their pedagogical knowledge, which the authors argue help position these teachers as more than cultural experts in the school.

Conclusion

This study finds that activating teacher agency, particularly those of underprivileged teachers, is critical to mutual learning in transnational education. It supports findings by Etelapelto et al. (2014) and Vahasantanen (2015) “that teacher professional agency is multifaceted and varied in different situations and across individuals,” (p. 20). The authors suggest these schools may need to not only build school structures that “elicit, respect, and value Chinese teachers’ contributions,” (p. 20), but also work to manage these teachers’ professional identity and social roles. Lastly, this study demonstrates “the value of an agency-oriented approach to professional learning,” (p. 20).

Implications

While this study examined Chinese teachers in international schools in Hong Kong, the authors write that it has implications for teachers in other contexts. “How to activate the agencies of the underprivileged parties to share their funds of knowledge and to learn from others is an issue of concern in any professional development endeavors,” (p. 20). Power relations exist in all contexts, and this study lays groundwork for how to activate agency to support mutual learning between “underprivileged” or “undervalued” groups and groups with higher status.

Directions for further research suggested by the researchers include incorporating the dominant voice (in this case, Western teachers), resulting in a broader picture and understanding of what is happening in these contexts. They also suggest exploring the experiences of Chinese teachers of other subject matters, to parse out the effect of subject matter versus cultural influences. Lastly, the researchers wonder if their findings would apply to novice teachers in these schools, as well as exploring teachers’ collective agency.

Teng, L.S. (2016). Changes in teachers' beliefs after a professional development project for teaching writing: Two Chinese cases. *Journal of Education for Teaching*, 42(1): 106-109.

Abstract:

A plethora of research has found that teachers' beliefs directly influence their classroom practices and teaching outcomes. While numerous studies in second/foreign language writing have examined the effectiveness of different innovative approaches on students' learning to write, there is a paucity of research on writing teachers' beliefs about these approaches and how their beliefs change in the process of their professional development. Such a lacuna becomes prominent in English as a Foreign Language contexts, especially in China, where there are numerous calls for changing the nature of classroom practices from product-focused to process- and student-centred instruction. In order to fill this gap, this brief article reports on a case study regarding changes in two Chinese English teachers' beliefs after attending a professional development project for teaching writing. A key research question guides this study: What changes, if any, did the two teachers experience in their teaching beliefs during the project? Two writing teachers were voluntarily recruited for a case study. Findings show that the professional development project for teaching writing broadened the teachers' understanding of different writing theories, provided a clear model of how to integrate these new approaches into regular writing courses, changed their instructional focus and shifted their perception of teachers' roles in teaching practice.

Summary Prepared by Julie R. Freeman

Purpose of the Study

The author argues that there is a great amount of research supporting the idea of teacher classroom practices and outcomes being influenced by their own beliefs. However, Teng writes that there is a lack of this research in the context of second/foreign language writing. In China, where the study takes place, educators are being asked to move their practice from product-focused to more student-centered and process-focused, studying teachers' beliefs about these changes may give some insight into how and if these practices will be implemented in their classrooms. The purpose of the study is to fill the gap of knowledge regarding how writing teachers' beliefs about innovative approaches to learning to write in second/foreign language classes change during a professional development program. During the workshop, teachers were introduced to several writing theories and strategies for teaching their second language students.

Research Question

The author seeks to understand the relationship between professional learning and beliefs by asking the question: "What changes, if any, did the two teachers experience in their teaching beliefs during the [professional development] project?" (p. 106).

Research Participants

This study is a comparative case study of two writing teachers, known as Sue and Lily in the paper. These teachers were "voluntarily recruited" for the study through their participation in the professional development program (p. 107). The author tells us that Sue has a Masters Degree in English Literature, and Lily has a Masters Degree in Applied Linguistics. Sue has 15 years' experience as a university teacher, while Lily has been teaching English for 5 years.

Research Context

The research context was a teacher professional development program for the teaching of writing at a university in Northeast China. Twenty English-language teachers were invited to participate in weekly 3-hour workshops over the course of a month. The workshops introduced teachers to theories and strategies for second/foreign language writing. Instructors also modeled techniques and provided guidance to teachers on activating student interest and instructing in collaborating with peers. Teachers collectively and critically reflected after each professional development meeting about their teaching practices, how they may apply what they had learned in their classroom, and what limitations there may be to implementation.

Data Collection

The author conducted semi-structured interviews in Chinese with the participants. One of these interviews occurred before they participated in the professional development program, and the other occurred at the end of the program. During both interviews, participants were asked “to describe their regular teaching practices, the challenges or constraints they encountered in the writing classroom, their attitudes towards the training [program] and any changes they made during the process,” (p. 107). These are reported in the findings, below.

Data Analysis

The researcher transcribed the interview data and translated it into English. She used member checking with participants to corroborate the accuracy of the data. No information was provided in the article about coding or other analytic strategies.

Findings

During the course of the project, the participants developed better understandings of writing theories, as well as how to apply them in their teaching practice. At the beginning of the program, both participants stated their knowledge was limited about a process approach to teaching writing, genre knowledge, and strategies, and they did not know how to integrate these approaches into their teaching. Their understandings grew during the month of the program.

At the beginning of the study, Sue admitted to having learned about the strategies in postgraduate coursework, but not understanding how they could be integrated into her teaching practice. By the end, “Sue reflected, ‘I realise that writing is not a single action but a recursive and progressive process. Students can use different strategies, such as peer discussion to have more ideas to write or using a self-evaluating list to monitor their progress,’” (pp. 107-108). While Sue added to her knowledge of the strategies, it appears after the professional development program that she had a better understanding of how to integrate these strategies into her teaching practice, changing the way her students are being asked to learn in her classroom.

Likewise, Lily demonstrated limited knowledge prior to the professional development program, revealing limited knowledge in implementing the theories and strategies. She also was doubtful “whether these theories and approaches were effective in teaching writing or just a showcase of a new teaching method,” (p. 107). At the end of the program, Lily “found that ‘the strategy-focused teaching model is very flexible and effective after receiving the researcher’s scaffolding and direct guidance on how to instruct the new approach step by step,’” (p. 108). Lily’s understanding of the strategies increased thanks to scaffolding and guidance, and her beliefs about how effective the new strategies are changed as well. Participants also changed their beliefs regarding their role in the teaching process and “the central focus of the writing classroom,” (p. 108). Sue was encouraged to become more creative with her teaching approaches, and expressed a strong interest to integrate new strategies that she had learned into her

teaching practice, such as “peer discussion and resourcing strategies in an argumentation genre,” (p. 108). Lily also expressed a strong interest in integrating new strategies into her practice, naming “peer review or brainstorming activities” as ones that she would like to use when teaching “how to write a narrative story in my own class,” (p. 108). At the beginning, these teachers had limited knowledge of how to integrate these strategies into their teaching, and were skeptical of the effectiveness of the strategies. By the end, their knowledge had increased, but more importantly to the research question, their beliefs about these strategies and their effectiveness and usefulness to their teaching practice had changed. As the participants reflected on their experience in the professional development program, where they had practiced facilitating these strategies, it shaped their beliefs in sharing responsibility with students and giving students autonomy in the classroom to choose strategies that best fit the students’ writing styles.

Conclusion

The professional development program increased teachers’ understanding of different writing strategies, and motivated them to make changes to their classroom practice. The program also explicitly modeled how these changes could be made in a classroom, which the author argues increased the teachers’ willingness to actually make the changes in practice. The modeling “relieved the teachers’ practical constraints and doubts,” around integrating these practices into their classroom, and allowed the participants to see the strategies at work in a learning environment.

Teachers changed the focus of their teaching from product to process, and also changed their view of their role as a teacher to one of a facilitator. Participants were more aware of the importance of giving more autonomy to students and sharing responsibility with students after the professional development program. The author believes this may indicate a change in their practice to an increased attention to students’ needs, citing Borg and Al-Busaidi (2012) as support.

Additionally, the author argues “the findings also indicate that teachers’ teaching practices and their interpretation of teaching roles in classrooms mediate with their professional knowledge and vicarious experience (Lee 2013),” (p. 109). As participants increased their professional knowledge about the writing theories and strategies, and increased their experience with the theories and strategies, they expressed a greater willingness and eagerness to add the strategies to their teaching practice.

Implications

Though small-scale, this study contributes to research on language-teacher education generally, in addition to providing “suggestions for promoting teachers’ professional development,” (p. 109). The author suggests more research should be conducted, increasing the number of participants and perhaps conducting longitudinal studies, both of which could provide an even better understanding of the beliefs and practices of teachers in writing classrooms, in particular in the context of professional development programs. Understanding this relationship can give us better ideas of how to effectively implement new strategies in more classrooms.

Questions for discussion across the two articles:

How do these two pieces extend the field’s understanding of the relationship between teaching beliefs and teaching practice?

How can the lessons learned be integrated into pre-service instruction?