# Exploring the challenges that novice primary English language teachers face and the effectiveness of the support they receive in Guangzhou

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**Abstract**

There are many challenges that novice teachers have encountered in the first several years of teaching and these difficulties affect their career retention. The support from pre- and in-service teacher education programmes helps tackle some challenges and improve teacher retention. However, teacher education programmes and school communities sometimes failed to provide sufficient guidance to novice teachers in their actual teaching. The aims of this study were to discover the problems that primary novice English teachers have faced in Guangzhou, and to examine the effectiveness of the support they receive in both pre- and in-service stages, and how the assistance improves their profession retention. The data collection method in this research was qualitative method. Three novice teachers with one, three, five years of teaching experience respectively, participated in the semi-structured interview. The interpreting of qualitative date was accomplished by thematic analysis. The findings showed that some challenges impeded novice teachers' career development in the initial years. The most two challenges for them were classroom management and class delivery. This can be ascribed to the insufficient support in both pre- and in-service education. For example, the pre-service programmes providers emphasized more on theoretical teaching knowledge; schools did not designate mentor teachers to help them at early stage of teaching. Class observation and peer colleagues' collaboration were identified by the novice teachers as useful ways to improve their professional competence in late stage. However, not all regional departments of education were supportive to schoolteachers. Regarding cultivating qualified teachers, the pre- and in-service teacher education system should make some improvements.

# Table of Contents

# List of Figures

# List of Tables

# List of Abbreviations

BERA        :   British Educational Research Association

CLT         :   Communicative Language Teaching

EFL         :   English as a Foreign Language

MOE         :   Ministry of Education

NMET        :   National Matriculation English Test

PLCs        :   Professional Learning Communities

QOE         :   Quality-oriented Education

WTC         :   Willingness to Communicate

# Chapter 1: Introduction

In this chapter, there are two parts. First, I discuss my research topic and my motivation to the research. Second, I give an outline of my dissertation.

## 1.1 Introduction of research topic and motivation

As a teacher myself for six years, I always think about the challenges that I came across in the first several years, such as lesson planning, student-teacher rapport, classroom management. When I discussed with my colleagues, I found we experienced some similar problems. As I gained more experience, I come encounter new problems. I am curious about how new teachers can better cope with some "age-old" problems and what we can learn from our peer colleagues.

Due to large number of population and insufficient qualified English teachers in mainland China (He, 2017; Zhu and Wang, 2019), English language teacher education is different from other countries, such as teacher education in the UK (Menter et al., 2010). In mainland China, students from English teacher education programmes or English-related majors can find teaching jobs after graduation (Mak, 2016). For the former, they study both English subject knowledge and educational knowledge, while the latter only study English subject knowledge. So, I wondered how these English-related major students become qualified teachers in China. Do they face the same problems?

In addition, I have also talked to several novice teachers, and I found that they were as just "desperate" as I was at the initial stage. So, I wondered how we can help novice teachers tackle these problems and how we can motivate ourselves being as a teacher in the long term.

## 1.2 Overview of this dissertation

In this dissertation, I focus on the challenges that novice teachers face in their daily teaching in primary schools in Guangzhou, and the support they receive in both pre- and in- service education, as well as the factors influencing the teacher retention. There are six chapters in this dissertation. In Chapter 1, I give information about my research motivation and the outline of the whole dissertation. In Chapter 2, I focus on the background and context of my study, discussing English language teaching and English teacher education policies in mainland China. In Chapter 3, I explore the relevant literature on challenges for novice teachers, policies of support for pre- and in-service teacher education in China, and factors influencing teacher retention.

In chapter 4, I discuss my research methodology, including my research questions and design, the data generation process, date decoding and analysis, and ethical considerations. In chapter 5, I reveal the findings according to the three research questions. In chapter 6, I discuss my findings with the previous literature review and my context. Chapter 7 is the conclusion of this thesis.

**Chapter 2: Background and context**

There are two parts in this chapter. First, I introduce the English language learning and teaching in mainland China, such as the importance of English for Chinese people and some teaching methods. Then, I discuss some polices related to the education quality in the country.

**2.1 English language learning and teaching in mainland China**

Since the Cultural Revolution (1976) and the Open-Door policy (1978), English has received its popularity in mainland China (He, 2017, Hu, 2002). Due to its huge population, China has the biggest proportion of EFL (English as a foreign language) learners in the world (Zhu and Wang, 2019). According to He (2017, p. 571), English is important in China for various reasons:

> at governmental level, it has been promoted for the nation's development, modernization, and internationalization. At a personal level, it has been promoted for increasing individuals' upward and outward mobility. At educational level, English ... is a required subject from primary three till Doctoral degree.

From He's view, English plays a pivotal role in many aspects of people's life in China, either for promotion opportunities or further studies (Liu et al., 2016).

Regarding the teaching methodology, the communicative language teaching (CLT) method has been proposed for many years in Chinese public schools, but teachers still favor the traditional teacher-centered teaching methods (e.g., grammar-translation) due to many difficulties, such as the traditional exam-oriented education system (Butler, 2011; Rao, 2013; Zhou, 2013). Nearly all English examinations in China, such as the National Matriculation English Test (NMET), assess students' listening, reading, and

writing skills, except the speaking skill (Cheng, 2008). Besides, tests scores are not only important for students to get into universities, but also are vital to exam teachers' teaching quality (Su, 2019; Zhou, 2013). In addition, almost all English teaching materials prioritize grammar learning, reading, and writing practice, paying little attention on listening and speaking skills (Rao, 2013). Consequently, the top priority of Chinese EFL students is to pass English tests rather than improve their communicative skills; and they are considered as passive recipients of knowledge with poor willingness to communicate (WTC) in the classroom (Liu and Jackson, 2009; Wei and Xu, 2022).

For years, this submissive, exhaustive, and examination-directed EFL context was examined by Chinese Ministry of education (MOE), and the "*English Curriculum Standards for Compulsory Education*" by MOE in 2011 proposed the "student-centered, task-based, and communicative instruction" (Liu et al., 2016, p. 139). This suggested student-centered approach has been further developed by the recent double reduction policy (discussed below) in mainland China (Xue and Li, 2023).

## 2.2 Educational policies in mainland China

There are various reasons why implementing this student-centered and task-based teaching method in Chinese public schools can be challenging, such as the examination system, adequate qualified teaching force, economic support, large class sizes, and reliable teaching resources (Butler, 2011; Liu et al., 2016; Rao, 2013; Rao and Yu, 2019). According to Ye et al. (2019), abundant governmental policies have been executed to tackle the above educational challenges in mainland China: improving the quality of teacher education programmes to cultivate more qualified teachers (Guan, 2009; MOE, 1999); setting professional standards for each level (i.e., kindergarten, primary, and secondary) of teachers (MOE, 2011a; 2011b; 2011c); national teacher certification system to guarantee the qualifications of teachers (Wen and Zhang, 2020); the assessment to value in-service teachers' teaching quality in a five-year period (MOE

et al., 2012); the tuition-free students project for nurturing qualified teachers in rural areas (Ye et al., 2019).

Of all these polices, the double-reduction policy, proposed by the General Offices of the CPC Central Committee and The State Council on July 24, 2021, is the most influential policy on the compulsory education system in China (Xue and Li, 2023; Yue et al., 2023). According to Xue and Li (2023, p.787), the principal values of this policy include:

> the core value of running schools: student-centered education; the leading value of running schools: quality-based education and the dominant value of running schools: home-school cooperative education.

The first value tackles the problem related to the exam-oriented system (Xue and Li, 2023). As mentioned earlier, high test grades are important for students, and high scores usually require more arduous exercises in their academic learning (Zhou, 2013). Therefore, many students must enroll in private institutions to use their extra time to obtain more subject knowledge after school (Xue and Li, 2023). Gradually, students face huge academic pressure, and they are trained just like examination-machine (Zhang, 2015). This situation contradicts with the "quality-oriented education (QOE)" target set by Chinese government, whose core value is to cultivate all-around citizens with innovation rather than test-robots through education (Zhou, 2013, p.156). Under the double reduction policy, after-school training institutions have been banned, and students have more free time after school; thus, public schools can provide plentiful after-class activities and guidance for their students, depending on personal needs of individual students, such as sports, arts (Xue and Li, 2023).

The second value resolves the issue concerning the distribution of educational resources, and according to Xue and Li (2023, p. 789), this can be achieved as follows:

> Through a series of systematic measures, it has re-established the leading position

of the state in the allocation of educational resources, weakened the restriction and interference of the market on educational activities, and highlighted the position of schools as the main field of subject teaching and quality education, with out-of-school education as a beneficial supplement.

As for distributing educational resources, one way to achieve this is to utilise public facilities, like children's palaces, to offer free after-school activities to students who live nearby; besides, primary and secondary school students can have equal access to be admitted to nearby schools without using examination scores like what they did before, and schools are not allowed to allocate all types of classes according to students' academic grades any more (Xue and Li, 2023). Regarding to emphasizing the central role of public schools to offer education with better quality, schools should "strengthen labor education, physical education ... and other educational content beneficial to students' physical and mental health" to encourage students' comprehensive development (Xue and Li, 2023, p.790).

The third value deals with educational cooperation among teachers, parents, and the society (Xue and Li, 2023; Yu et al., 2022). The implement of double reduction policy also requires the support from parents because the aim of this policy not only is to ease the academic learning pressure on students but also to reduce parents' nervousness of education (Xue and Li, 2023; Yue et al., 2023). Schools establish a tutoring network with families, which means parents can receive support from teachers and schools to encourage the beneficial development of students after school (Xue and Li, 2023). However, by doing so, teachers working time is extended, which increases teachers working pressure (Guo, 2022; Xie, 2023).

**2.3 Conclusion**

In this chapter, I discussed the most frequently used English language teaching method in mainland China and some polices that influenced education quality, especially the double reduction policy. I mainly focused on this policy because it is newly implemented and greatly affected the Chinese education system, teacher education, students' academic learning, and parents' perception of education.

**Chapter 3: Literature review**

In this chapter, I present the theoretical context of this research. I start from the definition of novice teachers in this study. Then, I address some challenges and difficulties faced by novice teachers. Later, I explore the pre- and in-service teacher education system in mainland China. Finally, I state the research gap referring to the primary school context in Guangzhou.

**3.1 Definition of novice teachers**

The definition of the novice teacher varies across different literature. A novice teacher is someone who has less than five years of teaching experience (Hasanah, 2020; Kim and Roth, 2011). However, some researchers believe that novice teachers are those who have graduated from a teacher Education program and gained the teaching experience within three years (Farrell, 2012; Widiati et al., 2018). In this study, I define a novice teacher as someone who has no more than five years of teaching experience from graduation.

**3.2 Challenges that novice teachers face**

Educational researchers have discovered many challenges that novice teachers encountered in their daily teaching practices (Ingersoll and Strong, 2011).The challenges that novice teachers face are numerous, such as planning lessons, class delivery, classroom management, little support from institutions, helping students with learning difficulties, interaction with parents, time management (Akcan, 2016; Burns, 2015; Fantilli and McDougall, 2009; Farrell, 2012). Novice teachers in China also have similar problems. Overall, the challenges that novice teachers face can be summarised in three major parts: (1) teaching issues such as, class preparation, allocating time in the lesson plan, scores on the exams; (2) students issues such as students' learning

motivation, students' behaviour management, students' low English language skills; (3) relationship with colleagues and parents, such as different perceptions of children education with parents (Alhamad, 2018; Hasanah, 2020; Veenman, 1984). The details of them are discussed below.

### 3.2.1    Challenges in daily teaching

There is a false conception for novice teachers that they must utilise all what they have learned from teacher education program in real education, which gives them a lot of pressure in teaching (Farrell, 2012). Also, Tarone and Allwright (2005) mentioned that the knowledge that a novice teacher obtained in language teacher preparation programmes is not perfectly matched with the real daily teaching context, which is also defined as a mode of "reality shock" by Veenman (1984, p.143). Senom et al. (2013, p.119) describes the "reality shock" as follows:

> The transition from the teacher education institution to life in a real classroom has been characterized as a type of reality shock in which beginning teachers realize that the ideals they formed while training may not be appropriate for the realism they are faced with during their first year of teaching.

This is because the ways about how to teach students in the real classroom are significantly different from what they have learned in the teacher training course, and the longer time they dedicate in teaching, the more discrepancies they can find in their daily life (Wildman et al., 1989).

Another challenge associated with teachers' daily teaching is high job demands, which involves a huge amount of teaching tasks, inadequate instruction time, classroom management issues, lack of support from institutions, and high-pitched expectations for students' academic achievement from institutions and parents (Ju et al., 2015; Jiang et al., 2016 ; Wang and Kokotsaki, 2018).

### 3.2.2  Challenges with students

One challenge related with students is to improve their scores in exams. The current education system in China is still exam-driven, despite the educational reform since past several decades (Liu and Onwuegbuzie, 2014). Good exam scores are significant to students, teachers, parents and even school; this is because taking NMET has been considered as the single way to be admitted by universities and change their life (Liu and Onwuegbuzie, 2014). For teachers, their performance is mainly evaluated by the test scores of students, which also puts a huge burden to them (Liu and Onwuegbuzie, 2014; Wang and Kokotsaki, 2018). Although, this contradicts with the double-reduction policy mentioned earlier, in which exam-oriented system is altered to an all-around development system (Xue and Li, 2023), the exam scores still matter in Chinese education system.

Moreover, under such policy, public schools should provide after-class service for students, and teachers should offer guidance to students, which can increase teachers working time (Guo, 2022; Xie, 2023). Another challenge that teachers (including novice teachers) can encounter in daily teaching is students' bad behavior, which can be attributed to China's One Child Policy, resulting in spoiled children by parents (Liu and Onwuegbuzie, 2014).

### 3.2.3  Challenges with colleagues, parents, and administrators

According to Liu and Onwuegbuzie (2014), some parents' attitudes towards teachers is really ruthless; for some parents, they even doubt teachers' teaching principles because of different teaching concepts. Also, schools are becoming increasingly commercialized, and they are controlled by economic growth in current Chinese societies, which causes some great changes to the relationships among teachers, students, and parents, for example, parents and students are becoming "customers",

while teachers provide education services to satisfy their needs (Cameron and Quinn, 2011; Guo and Kilderry, 2018).

Gradually, for novice teachers, they can find that teaching is an arduous and demanding task, and their teaching life becomes hectic and exhausted because of all the roles they need to play and the expectations that students, parents and peer colleagues have on them in their career development (Guo and Kilderry, 2018; Mann and Tang, 2012).

### 3.3 Teacher Retention and Attrition

Teacher attrition means that teachers leave their teaching jobs (Fantilli and McDougall, 2009). Recently, the number of novice teachers who quit their jobs in the first three years has been increasing in many parts of the world (Fantilli and McDougall, 2009). According to Farrell (2012, p. 435), "one reason for teacher attrition is that a gap exists between pre-service preparation and in-service teacher development"; this is because when novice teachers finish their teacher training programs, they do not have any chance to contact their trainers and they must overcome the same kind of difficulties (e.g., lesson planning, classroom management ) in daily teaching, without any guidance from more experienced teachers (Farrell, 2012). These challenges can raise teacher attrition in the education system (Papay et al., 2017).

Moreover, job satisfaction is important to improve teacher retention (Papay et al., 2017). However, in China, teacher job dissatisfaction is caused by "high stress, salary, holidays and vacations, social status, students' bad behaviour and parents' poor attitudes, unfair teacher evaluation system, and unimplemented educational reforms" (Liu and Onwuegbuzie, 2014, p. 88-89). Besides, the comfortable relationship with colleagues, the supporting atmosphere in the workplace can also influence novice teachers' first year journey and their retention (Dickson et al., 2014). As Tschannen-Moran and Hoy (2007) suggested that novice teachers in their first several years may hold the faith to

become proficient teachers or choose to leave their career. Therefore, support for novice teachers not only important for their career development and but also their retention.

## 3.4 Support for novice teachers

Induction refers to "the process by which beginning practising teachers adapt to and learn about their roles as teachers", together with the help of teacher training programs or mentor teachers (Schwille et al., 2007, p. 89). The ultimate target of teacher education programmes is to promote novice teachers' performance and encourage their retention (Ingersoll and Strong, 2011). Devos (2010) states that one of the primary reasons for providing new teachers training programs is to improve teacher retention. Also, many studies show that support and assistance from teacher support programs and mentor teachers can achieve three types of positive outcomes for beginning teachers: "teacher commitment and retention, teacher classroom instructional practices, and student achievement" (Ingersoll and Strong, 2011, p. 201).

For the teacher commitment and retention, studies show that teacher induction can improve novice teachers' job satisfaction and promote their retention; as for classroom instructional practices, mentoring programs can help novice teachers do better jobs in teaching (e.g., maintaining a positive classroom atmosphere, using effective students questioning practices); and for students achievement, novice teachers who received teacher training can help their students obtain higher academic achievements (e.g., higher scores) (Ingersoll and Strong, 2011).

In mainland China, there are many educational policies to improve the teacher education quality and offer guidance for both pre-and in-service teachers (Ye et al., 2019). Among these policies, two major themes were generated: "the enhancement of teacher quality and the pursuit of educational equality" (Ye et al., 2019, p.770). The details are discussed below.

### 3.4.1 The policies to enhance teacher education quality in mainland China

Two categories of policies guarantee the quality of teacher education programmes for pre- and in-service teachers (Ye et al., 2019). First, the original three-level teacher education integrating into a two-level education system; second, the national teacher certification examination system (Wen and Zhang, 2020; Ye et al., 2019).

The original teacher education system was called the three-tiered or three-level teacher education programme, which lasted from 1949 to 1998, and the three types of institutions (i.e., two-year normal schools, three-year normal colleges, and four-year normal universities) were responsible for training pre-service teachers respectively (Liao and Zhou, 2018; Wen and Zhang, 2020). This system had several benefits of supporting the national educational reconstruction (Liao and Zhou, 2018). For example, it cultivated adequate teachers since the compulsory education law requested that every child must receive the nine-year compulsory education from 1986; therefore, a large number of qualified teachers were needed (MOE, 1986). However, this model of teacher education prioritized subject knowledge, paying little attention to professional knowledge, where teachers were regarded as the transmitter of knowledge, and students were passive recipients of education (Zhou, 2014). Besides, its usefulness to nurture teachers was considered as deficient (Guan, 2009; MOE, 1999).

To increase competition and improve teacher education quality among education institutions, the second policy (i.e., the flexible system) was enacted in 1999 (Liao and Zhou, 2018; Wen and Zhang, 2020). There were two alterations in this policy: first, the three-level system changed to a two-level system, with the two-year programme combining into the three-year education programme and diminishing the quantity of secondary normal schools; second, the original normal-school-dominated education system expanded to allow comprehensive academies and non-normal colleges to provide teacher education courses (Liao and Zhou, 2018; MOE, 1999; Zhou, 2014).

Compared to the three-level system, which emphasised the quantity of teachers, this two-level system nurtured teachers with higher quality (Liao and Zhou, 2018). Usually, an English teacher education programme involves the subject (English), professional, and educational knowledge, and an example of English teacher education programme curriculum was shown in figure 1 below (Mak, 2016). In addition, students are required to take internship at local primary or secondary schools to experience actual teaching for 18 weeks (a term) under the observation of tutors at the last year of the programme (MOE, 2011d). Therefore, those students from teacher education programmes can "register as qualified teachers at the Ministry of education upon graduation" (Mak, 2016, p. 24).

| Course Type | Course modules | Credits |
|---|---|---|
| General education courses (19.4%) | - Ideological and political theory | 14 |
| | - Information technology | 5 |
| | - Sports and health | 4 |
| | - Military training and military theory | 2 |
| | - University aesthetic education | 2 |
| | - Public elective | 7 |
| | Sub-total | 34 |
| Professional education curriculum (62.2%) | - English related disciplines | 8 |
| | - Disciplinary foundation | 48 |
| | - Professional direction | 34-35 |
| | Sub-total | 88-89 |
| Teacher education curriculum (18.4%) | - Teacher Education Foundation | |
| | Teacher education compulsory course | 10 |
| | Education research and development | 4 |
| | Education and teaching practice | 11 |
| | - Professional Belief and Cultivation Education | 2 |
| | - Research Training and Innovation Activities | 0-1 |
| | - Graduation thesis | 4 |
| | Sub-total | 31-32 |
| | Total (100%) | 156 |

Figure 1 "The Course Curriculum of the Education Programme for English Major at the School of Foreign Languages and Literature, Beijing Normal University in 2016" (Mak, 2016, p. 25).


Yet, from the flexible policy, students who study English-related subjects other than English teacher education, like translation, English literature, can become English teachers in mainland China as long as they obtain English Teacher Qualifications by taking the national examination set by the MOE (Mak, 2016; Wen and Zhang, 2020).

The national teacher certification system helps to guarantee the teacher quality in this case (Ye et al., 2019). The test consists of three written subjects (i.e., teacher education knowledge, pedagogical knowledge, and English subject knowledge) and an oral assessment (i.e., presenting a demo lesson to the examiner) (Mak, 2016; Ye et al., 2019). An English-related major students must obtain teachers' qualification before applying for a job in public schools; both students from English teacher education or English-related majors should take extra examinations set by the individual schools or regional department of education to be admitted as registered teachers in public schools (Mak, 2016).

For in-service teachers, the examination system requires them to re-register to evaluate their performance every five years (Ye et al., 2019). During the assessment, every in-service teacher should receive more than 360 hours of instruction for career development, hoping to help teachers change their ingrained attitude in the profession and keep up with the latest teaching concepts (MOE et al., 2012).

### 3.4.2 The polices to enhance the equality of teacher education in mainland China

There are three projects launched in China to ensure the equality of teacher education (Ye et al., 2019). Firstly, the tuition-free students project, which was executed in 2007, provides free teacher education (e.g., free tuition, free accommodation) for students from the rural areas of the country (Ye et al., 2019). The reason behind this policy was because students from top universities usually would choose to work in bigger and developed cities, leaving insufficient teachers in some economically-deprived places in China, such as the western part of China (Wen and Zhang, 2020).

To solve the imbalance distribution of teachers caused by the flexible system, this free teacher education policy was proposed to guarantee the enough supply of teachers in those under-developed areas (Wen and Zhang, 2020). Six national normal universities,

which are led directly by the MOE, support the students from those rural areas economically, e.g., exemption of tuition fees, free accommodation, and free coverage of living expenses, and these students are obligated to teach in their hometown for no less than 10 years after graduation (MOE et al., 2007; Wen and Zhang, 2020). Later, the normal universities at the provincial level also implemented this project, sharing the obligation of cultivating teachers for schools in the countryside (MOE et al., 2007). By doing so, the government hopes to narrow the gap of recruiting teachers between the urban and rural areas in this country (Liao and Yuan, 2017; Wen and Zhang, 2020). Also, the quality and quantity of competent teachers can be guaranteed both in the rural and urban areas (Ye et al., 2019).

The second scheme named "National Training Project for secondary and Primary Teachers" executed in 2010 (Ye et al., 2019, p.769), and the government provides subsidy for it. It can be divided into two parts: one for coaching teacher trainers, and the other for teachers in the countryside (Ye et al., 2019). In this project, 18 qualified training academies offer instruction courses for 27,000 teachers across the country in 10 to 15 days; technological tools, e.g., computers, are used to enable those to participate from rural areas (MOE et al., 2012).

The third one is the support from teachers in the same professional learning communities (PLCs). To improve the equality of in-service teacher education that best suit local schools, new types of teacher education have emerged in the recent decade (Ye et al., 2019). For example, teachers from different schools work together to form a learning organization for their unremitting teacher training; also, teachers from different subjects can share some knowledge together, for example, classroom management skills (Qiao and Lu, 2017); experienced teachers establish their own teacher training workshops to impart pedagogical knowledge and skills to amateurish teachers in the same school or region (Zeng, 2017). A similar study in American has indicated that PLCs help develop teachers' practical teaching and boot student'

academic achievement (Vescio et al., 2008). This is because such learning community forms a positive relationship among teachers and students' learning (Vescio et al., 2008).

### 3.4.3 Other forms of support in-service teacher education

Although the above policies help to improve the quality and equality of teacher education in mainland China, the objectives and effectiveness of teacher education programmes were still perceived as weak due to some shortcomings, such as inefficient teaching practicum, and college teachers' scarce teaching experience in primary and secondary schools (Ye et al., 2019). As a result, those student-teachers still face some challenges discussed earlier (e.g., Alhamad, 2018; Hasanah, 2020; Liu and Onwuegbuzie, 2014). There are other forms of support as supplements to the above policies.

In the pre-service stage, MOE (2011a; 2011b; 2011c) published the professional standards for each level of teachers (e.g., kindergarten, primary, secondary school teachers) to safeguard the quality of teachers. The standards for teachers are "professional conception and teacher morality", "professional knowledge", and "professional competence" (Lo et al., 2013, p. 246).

The professional morality of teachers, also named "*shide*" in Chinese, is the basic ethical guideline for teachers' professional property (Lijia et al., 2016). Professional knowledge consists of subject knowledge, pedagogical knowledge, and classroom management knowledge, while the professional competence refers to the ability to use them (Mak, 2016; Wen and Zhang, 2020). Also, the MOE required teachers to be self-reflective in daily teaching and notified that teacher education programmes should prioritise student-teachers' practical knowledge and reflect on real teaching problems (Ye et al., 2019). In addition, as Lortie (1985) suggested that the apprenticeship of

observation help novice teachers improve their teaching skills. This is congruent with the goal of 18-week mandatory internship in primary and secondary schools, hoping that student-teachers gain some practical knowledge in their teacher education programmes (MOE, 2011d).

In in-service stage, there are several ways to assist novice teachers. First, guidance from mentor teachers is importance to novice teachers (Anthony et al., 2019; Beltman et al., 2011; Malderez and Wedell, 2007). According to Malderez and Wedell (2007, pp. 86-87), a mentor is an " acculturator" who helps new teachers understand the culture of their workplace; a "model" who influences new teachers' passion and attitudes for teaching; a "supporter" who offer advice and suggestions to those novice teachers; a "sponsor" who do whatever they can to help mentees to get materials needed for teaching; and an "educator" who helps mentees to integrate and expand all knowledge they have to support their teaching in the classroom.

This is supported by Anthony et al.'s idea that teacher leaders could help novice teachers with their professional development and fostering their cooperation by "referring novice teachers to experienced teachers, requesting principal support, and recommending induction program improvements" (Anthony et al., 2019, p.54). Besides, Rao and Yu (2019) suggests that contents in in-service teacher programs should be personalized according to local English language teaching situations and satisfy the necessities of individual teachers of that region.

Second, collaboration with colleagues and students can be an effective method (Burns, 2015). There are three types of partnership with peer teachers: (1) teachers within the same school or working context can work together, either in pairs or groups, to discuss a similar issue and share their insights together; (2) teachers can collaborate with their learners to find out the problems in their daily teaching; (3) primary and secondary teachers can work with university teachers, which combines research knowledge with

practical knowledge (Burns, 2015; Hanks, 2017). In this case, peer colleagues can observe each other's classes and exchange feedback in a reflective process, which promotes professional growth of novice teachers (Farrell, 2015). Moreover, observing experienced teachers' classes and receiving feedback from them can help novice teachers better implement teaching techniques in their daily teaching (Chien, 2015). In addition, institutions can help novice teachers through organizing different activities, such as Classroom Management Courses, where they could learn some comprehensive strategies to tackle classroom management problems successfully (Çakmak et al., 2019).

## 3.5 Summary of previous research

Previous studies emphasized on different aspects of challenges that novice teachers faced and the support they received. For example, the challenges they face in their first year of teaching (Dickson et al., 2014; Mann and Tang, 2012); the effectiveness of their teacher education programmes (Akcan, 2016; Çakmak et al., 2019); the support from their mentors and teacher leaders in the first year of teaching (Anthony et al., 2019; Mann and Tang, 2012; Rao and Yu, 2019) or the challenges that hinder teachers' creativity in primary school classrooms (Wang and Kokotsaki, 2018). All these studies investigated teachers who received teacher education in colleges/universities; however, little attention was paid to those teachers from English-related majors in China (Mak, 2016; Wen and Zhang, 2020). Besides, many studies in China which investigated the challenges that novice teachers faced mainly focused on junior and senior high school teachers (Ju et al., 2015; Yuan, 2017; Zang et al., 2022). To fill in the gap, the scope of this study focuses on the primary school novice teachers in Guangzhou, and some of them are English-related major who did not receive teacher education in colleges/universities.

In the next section, I present the methodology of this study.

# Chapter 4: Methodology

In this chapter, I discuss my research design of this study. I start with introducing my research questions. Then, I describe the research process, including the participants, the process of data generation, the research adjustments, and analysis of the data. Finally, I exam ethical issues, and the validity and reliability of this research.

## 4.1 Research questions

Based on the literature review, the Chinese teacher education and my context, there are three questions guiding this research:

1. What concerns and difficulties do novice English language teachers have in their initial years of teaching at public primary schools in Guangzhou?
2. What support do those teachers receive from pre- and in-service teacher education?
3. Where do they see themselves in 5 or 10 years in relation to the teaching career?

## 4.2 Research design

This study employs qualitative methods (interviews) with an interpretive approach to conduct the research (Cohen et al., 2018), because it prioritizes the personal experience of individual novice teachers who participate in this study. This is congruent with what Draper (2004, p.642) suggests that qualitative analysis values "the quality or nature of human experiences and what these phenomena mean to individuals". By analysing real-life teaching experience of primary novice teachers and their stories behind teaching, other pre-service teachers can introspect their own teaching and help them better prepare for the first several years of teaching as novice teachers (Farrell, 2012). Also, interview data can represent respondents' beliefs and values being as a novice teacher (Mann, 2016).

The data was generated using non-probability, purposive methods (Cohen et al., 2018). First, non-probability sampling is a specific group of participants (i.e., novice teachers in Guangzhou); second, purposive sampling aims to help researchers to select the sample based on the needs, purposes, and characteristics of participants in the study (e.g., novice teachers with 1-5 years of teaching experience after graduation) (Cohen et al., 2018).

**4.3 Participants**

I invited five out of seven English teachers who are currently working in different primary schools in Guangzhou, and five of them responded and approved to participate in this study. I divided them into two groups, detailed below on Table 1:

| | Participants (pseudonym) | Teaching experience | Education background |
|---|---|---|---|
| Group 1 pilot study | Lisa | Four and a half years | BA English teacher education at a normal university |
| | David | Two and a half years | BA General English and BA computer science at a comprehensive university |
| Group 2 Formal interview | Lucy | Nearly 1 year | BA English teacher education at a normal university and MA TESOL at a UK university |
| | Janet | Three years | BA English teacher education at a comprehensive university and MA Second language acquisition |
| | Annie | Nearly five years | BA General English at a compressive university |

Table 1: participants' profile

Both two groups received the consent forms and participant information sheets separately (see appendix 3, 4, 5, 6). The consent forms and information sheets explained the all the details of participation, including the way how their data was used, the protection of their personal information without any harmful effects, and the freedom to withdraw at any time without giving any reason (BERA, 2018; Cohen et al. 2018).

## 4.4 Data generation

The data generation consisted of two parts: the pilot study and semi-structured interview, and the facts of both are detailed below.

## 4.4.1 Pilot study

To certify the validity and the reliability of the research instruments, I conducted a pilot study before generating the data from formal interviews (Cohen et al., 2018). According to Yin (2014, p. 240), a pilot study is defined as:

> a preliminary case study aimed at developing, testing, or refining the planned research questions and procedures that will later be used in the formal case study; the data from the pilot case study should not be reused in the formal case study.

On June 13 and June 14, 2023, I conducted two pilot interviews online based on the original interview questions (see appendix E) using the TenCent app. Two teachers participated in this pilot study (see group 1 in Table 1 above), and each pilot interview lasted roughly 1 hour. After interviews, I listened to each interview twice and I transcribed them through TenCent app. I sent the transcripts to the two participants respectively and they agreed on the scripts, without further corrections.

Through the pilot study, I assessed my original interview questions and my research skills. I observed the appropriateness of the questions and altered some questions. Since the participants have different years of teaching experience, I designed some individual questions to them. Therefore, I adjusted my interview questions (see Appendix E) and presented some examples in table 2 as follows:

| Original interview questions | Adjusted questions |
| --- | --- |
| Part 1--Basic questions:<br><br>1. How many years have you been teaching since you have graduated from your teacher education program?<br><br>2. What are the biggest challenges that you have met in your daily teaching? | Part 1- Basic questions<br><br>1. How long have you been teaching?<br><br>2. Have you received teacher education in your university studies?<br><br>3. What are the biggest challenges that you face in your daily teaching? (Prompts: 1. Teaching practice, 2. classroom management, 3. Handling issues with students, parents, colleagues, administrators) |

Table 2: adjusted interview prompts

**4.4.2 Interview**

Interviews are the primary source of data generation for this research. Three teachers participated in the formal interview through TenCent App (see group 2 in table 1). All interviews were semi-structured, because "it is defined as an interview with the purpose of obtaining descriptions of the life world of the interviewee in order to interpret the meaning of the described phenomena" (Brinkmann and Kvale, 2015, p. 6). In semi-structured interviews, both the interviewer and the interviewee can make knowledge-producing dialogues together, by giving more freedom for "following up on whatever angles are deemed important by the interviewee" (Brinkmann, 2018, p. 579), and the interviewer has more opportunities to engage in the knowledge-producing process instead of as an outside controller in an interview so that the interviewer "has greater

say in focusing the conversation on issues that he or she deems important in relation to the research project" (Brinkmann, 2018, p. 579). In this way, both my participants and I actively engaged in each interview, and they illustrated thoroughly about their ideas.

Regarding the language choice, all interviewees chose our shared L1, Chinese Mandarin. This is congruent with what Mann (2016, p. 218) suggested that the interview can be processed in the interview's L1 when "interviewer and interviewees share the same L1".

For the translation, I first transcribed the interviews into Chinese, and then translated them in English. Here, I followed the back-translation approach to confirm the correctness of interview data (Cohen et al., 2018; Brislin, 1970). The back-translation, which is proposed by Brislin (1970), describes how two languages are used together in transcribing interviews: first, the text in the interview (source version 1, here is Chinese) will be translated into English (the target language in this study); second, another person who is bilingual in two languages translates the English version into Chinese (source version 2). Then the researcher compares the two original versions, if "they are identical, suggest that the target version from the middle of process is equivalent to the source language form" (Brislin, 1970, p. 186). Therefore, I invited a friend, who studied English-Chinese translation at the University of Leeds, to confirm the validity of the translation.

Moreover, data were collected in two rounds: Round 1: interviews with each participant (see Appendix 8); Round 2: interviews with the purpose of member checking (Harvey, 2015; Mann, 2016). Member checking refers to the process of confirming the accuracy of data the researcher has interpreted by engaging in a conversation with the participants (Brinkmann and Kvale, 2015). Instead of giving participants the final version of interpretation to member-check, researchers can conduct several rounds of interviews with participants to ensure the accurateness of their data (Harvey, 2015). So, after the

first round, I conducted the second round with three participants (roughly 30 minutes for each interview) to get confirmation and further explanation about some statements they made at the first round (see appendix 9).

**4.4.3 Research adjustments**

After my date generation, I made some adjustments to my research questions and the title. Revising research questions is common in the research process (Cohen et al., 2018). After the data generation, I realised that the support for novice teachers was not just in in-service teacher stage, the guidance they receive in pre-service teacher education also matters. However, in my second research question, I used the words "mentors, colleagues, or institutions", which prioritized the support in in-service stage. Therefore, I changed my second research question as: what support do those teachers receive from pre- and in-service teacher education? Besides, the original title only showed the ways how novice teachers get through difficulties in teaching, the effectiveness of them has not been indicated. So, I added the "effectiveness of the support" in my dissertation title.

**4.5  Data analysis**

In terms of data analysis, it involves presenting and reporting the results (Cohen et al., 2018).

**4.5.1  Transcription**

According to Mann (2016, p. 201), when deciding on the format of transcription, there are three levels of decisions to make:
- Which level of detail to choose;
- Whether to use standard orthography or more "speech-like" versions;

● Whether to use punctuation to make the transcription more "readable".

Following the above suggestions, I chose not to incorporate the non-verbal communication in my transcripts because what they were saying is more important than how they expressed their ideas in this research. I used a speech-like version in my transcript, such as the repetition in the interview. For readability, I transcribed all the texts, including the pauses, which used "(.)" to indicate them. When I transcribed the interviews and I listened to each recording twice to make sure I did not miss any details in the conversation. However, in my analysis and discussion parts, I chose to obliterate the repetition (see appendix 10) due to readability reasons (Brinkmann and Kvale, 2015).

### 4.5.2   Coding and thematic analysis

After I transcribed the interviews, I decoded the data (e.g., the similarities and distinctions in the interviews). A thematic analysis approach is used to interpret the data in qualitative research (Braun and Clarke, 2019; Mann, 2016). According to Mann's (2016) model for thematic analysis: first, I listened to the interviews to explore the data; then, I decoded the date to identify the similarities and differences (see appendix 8) among the participants; finally, I correlated the data in a systematic and coherent way with the context and the research question.

### 4.6 Trustworthiness

Validity and reliability are the two key terms to refer to the trustworthiness in qualitative research (Cohen et al., 2018). According to Creswell (2012, p. 630), validity refers to "the development of sound evidence to demonstrate that the intended test interpretation matches the proposed purpose of the test". To ensure high validity, first, a pilot study was conducted to improve my interview skills and check the

appropriateness of interview questions. Besides, the data were generated through two rounds of interview, as the second round as as the member checking. This is supported by Harvey (2015), who suggests that member checking can also help to certify the validity of research. Also, Onwuegbuzie and Leech (2007, p.239) suggest to leave "an audit trail" which means to keep documentation and records related to the study. In this case, I listened to each interview recording at least twice to make sure I did not miss information or mis-interpret data during the process of analysis.

Reliability refers to "individual scores from an instrument should be nearly the same or stable on repeated administrations of the instrument and that they should be free from sources of measurement error and consistent" (Creswell, 2012, p. 627). Being reliable means that the study is applicable to different contexts. In this study, this is achieved by giving detailed explanation of my context, instruments of sampling, and research methods, which can be applied to similar situations.

## 4.7  Ethics

The ethical integrity of this research was guaranteed by the BERA's (2018) ethical guidelines. Following the guidelines, there were five principles being considered: autonomy, benevolence, non-maleficence, integrity and anonymity (BERA, 2018).

First, all participants were adults, and they were well-informed about the study. They could withdraw any time without giving reasons. Second, this study hoped to help participants with their future career development and get them well-prepared for the challenges they may encounter as novice teachers. Besides, the findings give implications to the teacher education programmes and in-service teacher support in China, which can also help them in the future career advancement. Third, all participants were in good conditions when participating in the study. For example, the interviews were conducted online since all participants were in China; and they chose

the time that best suited their schedules due to the time lag between China and the UK. Fourth, all participants were treated equally. They kept informed about how their data would be used. Last, all their personal information (e.g., names, schools) were kept anonymously. The interview recordings and transcripts were kept under password protected files and only the researcher can access them.

## 4.8  Summary

This chapter discussed the methodology of this research. I began with presenting the research questions. I then introduced the data generation procedures, giving detailed explanation about participant engagement, data generation process. I summarised with ethical issues and validity and reliability of this research. In the next chapter, I present the findings of this research.

# Chapter 5: Findings

In this chapter, I present my main finding from the interviews with Lucy (1 year), Janet (3 years), and Annie (5 years) by answering the research questions individually.

## 5.1 Research question 1

What concerns and difficulties do novice English language teachers have in their initial years of teaching at public primary schools in Guangzhou?

All teachers described the challenges they have faced, which can be summarized in three categories: (1) problems in daily teaching; (2) interacting with parents, colleagues, and administrators; (3) challenges from double-reduction policy. Due to their different years of teaching experience, some challenges are identical, while some are distinct to the individual teacher. Analysis about the three types of challenges detailed blow.

Regarding problems of teaching, they all mentioned that they did not know how to deliver classes in their first year of teaching. They had difficulty in deciding on the key and difficult points of a lesson, introducing different lesson topics effectively, designing appropriate activities suitable for students' interest, and time allocation. Besides, classroom management was another challenge that all teachers stated in the interviews. Usually, the number of students in their classrooms was over 40, and they were all primary school students, whose attention span is shorter than adults (Newman, 2010). Therefore, when students misbehaved, they had to stop to get them focused on the lesson. As novice teachers lacking sufficient skills, they usually raised their voice levels or used exaggerated body language and facial expressions to manage the naughty students. However, these skills always ended up being futile and they would feel exhausted after class. Besides, the insufficient instruction time also puts huge stress to those teachers. For example, Lucy states the following:

*At first, I felt depressed. (…), nobody told me what to teach, and how to teach, what goals to reach in the end. Besides, there were 43 students in my class. Many of them were naughty. (…) I didn't how to manage them, and they did not listen to me.*

However, some challenges in teaching were distinct to the individual teacher. Compared with Lucy who still struggles with class delivery, Annie cares more about her class efficiency. After teaching for five years, she knows how to deliver classes, but she wants to better allocate instruction time and conduct more age-appropriate activities to raise students' interest in class. Here is what she states:

*After I learned how to give a lesson from actual teaching practices these years, now I want to improve my class efficiency. (..) I want to make my class more interesting with suitable activities, and students can learn with ease.*

For the second type, surprisingly, they all mentioned that they got along well with their colleagues and administrators, saying they were friendly and were willing to help them. However, Lucy found that the interaction with parents can sometimes be difficult. Some parents really care about their children's academic studies because the double-reduction policy is not seriously implemented in her district. Here is what Lucy sates:

*My colleagues and leaders were quite helpful and easy to get along with. What astonished me was parents 'anxiety about their children's academic achievement (…). Influenced by the traditional examination system, they regard students' grades as the top priority, which contradicts with the double-reduction policy (…). It was hard for me to persuade them to change their concepts.*

As for the third type, the double-reduction policy indeed increases their working time since they must follow the value of this policy to offer guidance and support for students after school (Xue and Li, 2023), which breaks the work-family balance. However, this policy changed the exam-oriented system to student-centered system, which means

students' academic achievement and teacher quality would not be assessed only by students' grades anymore. This, in turn, releases the academic burden for both teachers and students. For example, Janet states the following:

*Before the implementation of double reduction policy, students' grades in the exams are the most important criteria for assessing teachers' teaching quality. (…) I faced a lot of pressure in my first year. However, since this policy is forced by the government, I can focus more on inspiring students to learn English, not just train them to take exams, which creates a relaxing atmosphere.*

In conclusion, novice teachers at different years encounter different issues. Some common problems related to teaching are class delivery, class management, students' academic achievement, and insufficient instruction time. However, some problems, like class efficiency and interaction with parents, are distinguishable to the individual teacher. Novice teachers with more years of teaching experience can provide some guidance for those with fewer years of teaching.

## 5.2 Research question 2

What support do those teachers receive from pre- and in-service teacher education?

### 5.2.1 Support in pre-service teacher education stage

Both Lucy and Janet received English teacher education in their universities. Admittedly, they approved that their teacher education programmes offered them with basic knowledge in English language teaching (e.g., teaching methods and strategies). However, they thought the programme emphasized more on theory instead of practical knowledge. Pre-service teachers were supposed to gain actual teaching experience in the fourth year of their programme for 18 weeks. Participating in the internship is mandatory for each pre-service teacher, but the quality of their internship cannot be

assured, since, in some schools, there were no strict rules and obligations or no mentor teachers to supervise them.

Lucy did her internship in a local primary school for three months, and she gained some practical experiences from observing experienced teachers' classes. However, Janet did not participate in her internship because no supervisors guided her. Despite the national professional standards (MOE, 2011a; 2011b; 2011c) for each level of pre-service teacher after graduation, there were no exact way, such as exams, to value their professional knowledge. In addition, they also mentioned that their university teachers had little teaching experience at primary schools. However, in Lucy's education programme, experienced primary or secondary teachers were invited to give lectures for them in college, which supplement the programme with font-line teachers' experience. For example, here is what Lucy states:

> *Although the programme focused more on theoretical knowledge, many experienced primary or secondary teachers were invited to give lectures for us, I learned a lot from them (…). Besides, I had done my internship at a primary school for 3 months at the fourth year of this programme (…). I observed how primary teachers delivered classes, and how they interacted with students. I also delivered classes during my internship, which inspired me a lot.*

In contrast, for Annie, she did not receive teacher education at college, she just attended the Teacher Certification Exam and obtained her Teaching Certificate. Here is what she states:

> *I didn't receive any training about English language teaching in college. (…)I only attended the Teacher Certification Test for language teaching; however, it didn't support me with hands-on experience(…), which made me feel desperate in real classrooms.*

In conclusion, the quality of teacher education programs offered by different universities/colleges cannot be guaranteed due to various factors, such as more emphasis on the theory teaching, college teachers' lack of actual teaching experience in primary/secondary schools, and no tests for the evaluation of pre-service teachers' professional standards.

### 5.2.1 Support in in-service teacher education stage

The support for novice in-service teachers can vary from different sources, including institutional support, assistance from mentor teachers, experienced colleagues, and from municipal or regional ministry of education. All teachers mentioned that the schools where they were working did not provide any forms of training and no designated mentor teachers guided them when they started their teaching career. The institutions where they work do not realize the importance of providing training for the new teachers. However, they could form study communities with peer colleagues, and they can observe each other' classes and provide feedback together. Also, they could get the permission to observe some experienced teachers' classes and, they would occasionally invite those experienced teachers to observe their classes and offer some feedback. In this way, they can improve their teaching skills and techniques through collegiality with peer colleagues. Besides, novice teachers will get a chance to present classes (*gongkaike*) in front of their peer colleagues, and they can get some feedback from them. Novice teachers will teach in their own classes, with some experienced colleagues watching and providing feedback afterwards. In addition, they can also acquire some teaching skills, such as classroom management, from teachers of other subjects.

Annie states the following:

> *My school did not provide me with any training (...), and no mentor teachers helped me at the beginning. Luckily, after getting my colleagues' permission, I learned some practical skills through classroom observation (...). schools can*

*always organize some activities, like gongkake, to help improve new teachers teaching skills. This can happen once a month.*

Janet states:

*When I started to teach, I did not receive any form of training. No mentor teachers help me. (…) Fortunately, an experienced teacher said I could observe her class in my free time. (…) I feel grateful for her help, and sometimes I invited her to watch my class and gave me some suggestions. (…) Besides, I also benefited a lot from the colleagues teaching other subjects, I learned some classroom management skills from a Chinese teacher.*

Regarding support from regional departments of education. Lucy, Janet, and Annie work in different districts in Guangzhou, and the support they receive varies from each other. For Janet and Annie, they both think the support from their regional department of education is systematical, and they can learn a lot from the training. There are some experienced teachers or education experts, who have rich teaching experience in primary or secondary schools, conducting training for teachers in their regions. At the beginning of each semester, these experts will collect the questionnaires from school teachers, and identify the common teaching issues. Then, they organize the meetings, usually in the Friday afternoon because most teachers do not have classes at that time. Novice teachers can attend the meeting every week, and the topics range from teaching a certain grammar to sharing an effective teaching method. The schedule of training will usually be arranged at the beginning of each semester.

Janet states the following:

*I think the guidance from our regional department of education is supportive. (…) We will be informed about the training plan at the start of each semester. Experienced teachers and educators will discuss a teaching issue each week, such as a certain grammar teaching (e.g., has/ have), or how to interact with*

*students effectively (...), I can get inspired by these suggestions. Every time, when*
*my problems are solved, I feel the motivation to move on being as a teacher.*

However, not all regional departments of education will be supportive. Lucy mentioned
that there should be more support in her district. Here is what she says:

*I have always wanted to get support from outside (referring the support from*
*schools and the ministry of education). The regional department of education*
*indeed would arrange some activities, but this happens only once or twice in a*
*semester, and they were not systematical. (...) I mean, there should be more forms*
*of support. Besides, the quality of these activities is not as good as I expected.*

In conclusion, the three novice teachers did not receive any formal support from their
institutions, no training, no mentor teachers. However, they can improve their teaching
skills through support from peer colleagues, and class observations. Besides, some
support from regional department of education was inspiring, while some were not. The
support and guidance from colleagues and regional department of education somehow
give them confidence in teaching.

## 5.3 Research question 3

Where do they see themselves in 5 or 10 years in relation to the teaching career?

Regarding the future career prospects, both Annie and Janet hold positive attitudes
towards being a teacher, the reasons behind can be summarized in: (1) benefits of
teachers; (2) double-reduction policy; (3) job satisfaction.

First, stable income and summer/winter holidays were the top two benefits of being a
teacher. The salary for permanent-contract teachers at public schools is appealing to
pre-service teachers in Guangzhou. In China, K-12 teachers have three-month paid
leave in a year, which is a great factor influencing people's choice to be a teacher.

Second, both Annie and Janet mentioned that they feel less pressure in teaching because the traditional exam-oriented system has been demolished due to the double-reduction policy in China, and they can inspire students' learning rather than emphasize on exam techniques, which improve their retention as they claim. Third, their job satisfaction consists of support from colleagues, regional departments of education, relaxing working atmosphere and students' learning outcomes. For example, according to Annie's description:

> *At first, I chose this job just because of summer/winter holiday. However, when I started to teach after graduation, I felt stressful. (...) As I've gone in depth of teaching, I realize that I love this job very much, (...). Due to the double-reduction policy, my work pressure has been minimized. (...)I will attend more Teachers' Teaching Competitions in the future to polish my teaching skills in the future. (....)*

However, for Lucy, she was not confident being a teacher in the long term. She is now in her first year of teaching, and she still struggles with the basic teaching techniques, such as class delivery. Even though she could receive some support from her colleagues, she always wanted to receive other forms of support, such as mentor teachers, regional department of education. Also, the double-reduction policy was not fully implemented in her school, which was really frustrating for her. Here is what she states:

> *For me, it is just a job. It provides me with stable income. However, I usually feel stressed at work (...), such as class management, no support from outside, naughty students, etc... This is just my first year of teaching, I am worried about what my life would be like in the future. Even though the double-reduction policy has been proposed for two years. My school still matters students' grades a lot, which puts a huge stress on me. Maybe I would try something different in the future, such as doing business.*

In conclusion, the first several years are crucial for novice teachers because their career retention is easily affected by the stress from work. Some teachers can become skillful

at coping with some problems over time, which gives them confidence at work, such as Janet and Annie. Besides, the educational policy is also an important factor that affect teachers' retention. Some schools seriously implemented the double-reduction policy, while some did not, which means teachers still could be bothered by the traditional exam-oriented teaching system. The support they receive at work and relaxing working atmosphere also influence their retention.

## 5.4 Summing up

In this chapter, I presented the findings to the three research questions. First, I discussed three types of challenges that novice teachers faced in Guangzhou, including teaching issues, interaction with education stakeholders, and policy change. Then, I concluded the forms of support for novice teachers from pre- and in-service education stages. Finally, I discovered the reasons that influenced their teacher retention. In the next chapter, I discuss the relationship between what I have found with the previous studies.

# Chapter 6: Discussion

In this chapter, first I discuss the results of research questions concerning the literature, and my context. I then summarise lessons to be learned, limitations of this study, and the suggestions for further work.

## 6.1 Implications

The results to the research questions interweave and affect each other. The challenges that novice teachers faced can influence their teacher retention, and different forms of support in their workplaces help tackle those challenges. By discovering the reasons behind their attrition can help improve the quality of guidance and support for novice teachers in return. According to the findings and the earlier theoretical context, I summarized two major themes from them: (1) the effectiveness of support for pre- and in-service teachers in Guangzhou; (2) challenges and support influencing teacher retention in Guangzhou. I discuss these two aspects below.

## 6.2 The effectiveness of support for pre- and in-service teachers in Guangzhou

### 6.2.1 The improvements of education programmes for pre-service teachers

The English teaching force in mainland China consists of two parts: students from English teacher education programme and English-related majors graduates, e.g., General English or English translation (Mak, 2016; Wen and Zhang, 2020).

On the one hand, English teacher education progammmes in China take the flexible system, with both normal and comprehensive universities offering courses for student-teachers (Liao and Zhou, 2018; Wen and Zhang, 2020). Two teachers illustrated the

effectiveness of their programmes from course contents, policies, and practical internship.

In terms of the contents in the programmes, the programme indeed offered novice teachers fundamental knowledge about teaching, but they emphasized on theoretical knowledge rather than practical skills, which opposes the policy that teacher education programmes should prioritise pre-service teachers' practical skills (Ye et al., 2019). Also, their college teachers did not have any teaching experience at primary schools which means they cannot get practical knowledge from them. Admittedly, there is a huge gap between teacher training programmes at tertiary level and teacher education in primary and secondary schools. These results resonate with the findings of some former studies (e.g., Akcan, 2016; Mak, 2016).

Second, there are professional standards for each level of novice teachers required by MOE (2011a; 2011b; 2011c), but there is no exact censorship to exam whether they meet the standard after graduation as they claimed. Although these policies require that teacher education programmes should focus on real teaching issues (MOE, 2011), the findings in this study did not indicate that current institutions that offer teacher education programmes implemented this policy seriously. In this case, it fails to meet the results in Mak (2016)'s study, indicating that the teacher education programmes could help teacher-students become qualified teachers after graduation.

Regarding the internship, one teacher, Lucy, illustrated how she learned practical skills through class observation from experienced teachers and her attempts to deliver classes, which supported the apprenticeship of observation by Lortie (1985) that taking internship is necessary for pre-service teachers to improve their teaching skills. However, for Janet, she did not attend her internship because there were no supervisors or mentor teachers help her in the whole process. It is unjust for her because she did not get the chance to obtain some practical knowledge through internship at local primary

or secondary schools. In this case, it contradicted with the compulsory internship required by MOE (2011 d). Therefore, the universities offering the teacher education programmes should seriously implement the internship policy required by the government as a gatekeeper for cultivating eligible teachers.

On the other hand, for English-related major graduates like Annie, who did not study teacher knowledge and professional knowledge at college, the only measure to guarantee their teaching qualifications was through the national teacher examination system (Wen and Zhang, 2020). Surprisingly, by Lucy's narration, taking the Certification exam alone is insufficient to prepare an English-related major student to become a proficient teacher and help him/her cope with challenges in the real classroom teaching. In this sense, it showed that the national teacher exam system cannot warrant the quality of English language teachers in mainland China, especially for those teachers from non-teacher education track. In other words, it is unfair for those teachers from four-year teacher education programmes because these English-related major students can get teacher qualifications by just taking the exam rather than four-year study. Unfortunately, there were few studies indicated this situation because most of them focused on the effectiveness of teacher education programmes (e.g., Akcan, 2016; Liao and Zhou, 2018; Mak, 2016). Therefore, the MOE in mainland China should really take more measures to guarantee the teacher qualification for those teachers graduating from English-related majors.

### 6.2.2 The quality and equality of support for in-service teachers

Regarding to the support for in-service teachers, the forms of support can be classified in two categories from the findings and earlier literature: (1) support from the institutions, colleagues, administrators; (2) support regional department of education.

For the first type, three teachers all reported that their institutions did not offer any training to help them when they started to teach, which they all think should be improved in the future. Their opinions reinforced the findings of Rao and Yu (2019) and Çakmak et al. (2019) , indicating that support from institutions is pivotal for developing teachers' professional knowledge and skills when they start their teaching career. Besides, three teachers stated that there were no mentors responsible for instructing them, and they really needed a mentor teacher to guide them when they encountered the real teaching issues at the initial stage of teaching. The importance of mentor teachers to helping the professional development for novice teachers has been emphasized by previous studies (e.g., Anthony et al., 2019; Beltman et al., 2011; Malderez and Wedell, 2007). Therefore, primary schools in Guangzhou should seriously consider to designate mentor teachers for novice teachers to better help them initiate their careers.

Regarding the support from colleagues, class observation from experienced teachers and forming a partnership with peer colleagues are the two ways to tackle the teaching issues. First, from their description, they benefited from working in groups with other colleague who taught the same grades, and they observe each other's classes once a week. After the class observation, they exchanged feedback. Former studies showed the similar results that class observation with peer teachers can better help novice teachers develop professional skills (e.g., Burns, 2015; Hanks, 2017). Also, this group learning strengthened the significance of PLCs by the study of Vescio et al. (2008). Second, they improved their professional skills from the experienced teachers by observing their classes. Also, novice teachers would deliver classes (*gongkaike*), with other experienced colleagues and principals watching. After the observation, novice teachers would receive practical feedback from them, which help promote the professional growth of novice teachers. This is in line with the studies by Farrell (2015) and Chien (2015), showing the importance of feedback from experienced teachers. This result also reinforced the finding in Alhamad's (2018) study, who stated that support

from experienced teachers could help novice teachers alleviate the difficulties in the first several years.

For the second type, two teachers reported that the support from their regional departments of education was inspiring. As summarised from the findings, some teacher experts lead teachers in the same regional schools to form the PLCs to help solve the problems in teaching. This is one form of partnership in Burns 's (2015) study, which indicates the guidance from expert teachers is a valuable asset for teachers' career development. These experts organized activities according to different topics collected from teachers' daily teaching every week, which benefited them a lot. This result resonates the findings of Rao and Yu (2019), who suggested tailored training courses for in-service teachers according to local teaching reality. In addition, the regional departments of education also invited teachers from other disciplines (e.g., Chinese teachers ) to give lectures and share problem-solving skills, such as lesson planning, classroom management. This cross-disciplinary collaboration in teacher education is supported by Qiao and Lu (2017) in the preceding literature.

However, not all regional department of education is supportive for in-service teacher education. In Lucy's case, she did not receive much support from the department of education in her region. The regional department of education should take the responsibility of organizing activities for teachers in that region (Wen and Zhang, 2020).

In conclusion, the support for novice teachers in Guangzhou, either in the pre-service or in-service stage can be improved significantly in the future.

**6.3 Challenges and support influencing teachers' retention in Guangzhou**

**6.3.1 Challenges that influence novice teachers' career development in Guangzhou**

This study discovers many challenges that impede novice primary school teachers' development in their first years of teaching. The most conspicuous challenges in this study are classroom management and class delivery. These findings confirm the results of the early studies in this field (Akcan, 2016; Alhamad, 2018; Fantilli and McDougall, 2009; Hasanah, 2020). Classroom management is the problem that all three novice teachers have reported in their teaching practice, which is highlighted by previous studies (Veenman, 1984; Fantilli and McDougall, 2009). One reason related to classroom management is the number of students in a classroom, and this is congruent with what Rao and Yu (2019) states that large classes is one major challenge for primary school teachers in Asia.

Moreover, there are some problems reported by individual teacher, such as improving teaching efficiency and interacting with parents. When facing the problem, Annie in this study stated that she used some strategies obtained from their early years of teaching to deal with the problems, which was suggested by Veenman (1984, p. 167) that "the effect is that own experience, in the form of learning while doing, is seen as the most important source of the acquisition of knowledge and skills". This resonates with the finding of Çakmak et al. ( 2019), which indicated that novice teachers in Turkey and Norway can cope with the challenges by using the strategies and knowledge gained from their own day-after-day teaching experience. Other challenges like insufficient instruction time and students' academic achievement pressure also mentioned from the findings. Yet, with the implementation of double-reduction policy (Xue and Li, 2023), schools are banned to rank students' grades in final exams, which reduced teachers' teaching pressure. The influence of this new policy to both primary

school teachers and students opposes the findings of Liu and Onwuegbuzie (2014) that students' academic achievement is usually linked with exam scores because of the exam-oriented teaching system in China.

## 6.3.2 The factors improving teacher retention in Guangzhou

Factors in this study showed that influencing primary novice teachers' retention are salary, holiday, support from institutions, work-life balance, and education policy, which supported the results of previous findings (e.g., Farrell, 2012; Ingersoll and Strong, 2011; Liu and Onwuegbuzie, 2014). Indeed, the first years of teaching are vital for teachers' career development (Farrell, 2012). Two teachers mentioned they wanted to quit their jobs in the first year because of the stress and insufficient support at work. This is congruent with what Tschannen-Moran and Hoy (2007) stated that novice teachers attrition is easily affected by the challenges in the first several years. Also, this result reinforced the findings by Ingersoll and Strong (2011) and Devos (2010), who suggested that the teacher training sessions help to improve novice teachers' retention.

Two teachers stated that the support from their regional department of education gave them motivation in their teaching career. This finding supports the results of previous studies that the support and guidance from colleagues, administrators, or the regional department of education could encourage teachers' retention (Alhamad, 2018; Senom et al., 2013). Also, they reported that their colleagues were very nice and helpful, and there was a relaxing working atmosphere in their workplace, which reinforces what Dickson et al. (2014) suggested that building a rapport with colleagues is an important factor for teachers' retention.

## 6.4 Limitations and directions for further study

There are some limitations in this study despite its detailed analysis and design. First, the sample size can be bigger, because of the large group of primary school teachers in Guangzhou. In this study, the quality of teacher education in normal university and comprehensive university should be compared; and the difference between teachers from education track and teachers from English-related majors should also be discovered. In this case, the possible sampling limitation might influence the assessment to the effectiveness of teacher education programmes (Cohen et al., 2018). Second, due to the limitation of this study, some other challenges and forms of support that influence teacher retention have not been explored. Third, all participants in formal study were female teachers, the one-single gender might influence factors to teacher retention (Cohen et al., 2018；Fantilli and McDougall, 2009).

Directions for further study, first, more studies can explore on how English-related teachers become qualified teachers in mainland China since most of previous studies focus on teachers from English education programmes (e.g., Akcan, 2016; Mak, 2016). Second, novice teachers in secondary schools can also be investigated, especially senior high school teachers (Grade 10 to 12). This is because the target of double-reduction policy is to primary and junior high school teachers and students (Xue and Li, 2023).

In conclusion, in this chapter, I have discussed the effectiveness of support for both pre- and in-service teacher education integrating with my teaching context and previous studies. Also, how the support influenced teacher retention was also discovered. Finally, I pointed out the limitations and suggested direction for further studies. In the following chapter, I recap the whole research.

# Chapter 7 Conclusion

This study investigated the challenges that primary novice English teachers faced in Guangzhou and how different forms of support helped them in pre- and in-service stage, as well as factors influencing their retention. This study employed a qualitative research method to discover the teaching and learning experience of three novice teachers in public schools in Guangzhou. From their in-depth description, some common and individual challenges that they encountered were discovered, which provide guidance for both pre- and in-service teachers. In this case, student-teachers are informed with the challenges in advance and attempt to avoid some difficulties in their learning to teach. Also, those in-service teachers can learn how to deal with their problems according to the experienced teachers' teaching stories.

Regarding the pre- and in-service teacher education, the teacher-cultivation intuitions should consider improving practical skills for pre-service teachers, and schools should realise the importance of providing various forms of support for in-service teachers. Peer colleagues, class observation, reflective feedback can help improve novice teachers' professional competence. In addition, the government should supervise the regional departments of education to engage in supporting schools.

About the teacher retention, novice teachers are easily susceptible to challenges and choose to leave the profession. Stable income, paid holidays and other benefits can contribute teacher retention. Relaxing working atmosphere and supportive colleagues also help to improve teacher retention. Heavy workloads and academic pressure would undermine teacher retention.

However, three aspects in teacher education should be improved. First, in pre-service teacher education: (1) all teacher education programme institutions in mainland China should increase the proportion of curriculum on developing student teacher's practical

skills; (2) the quality of internship should be strengthened by allocating mentors or supervisors teachers to support them; (3) for those teachers graduating from English-related majors, the government should make extra measures, such as training sessions, to guarantee the teaching qualifications of them. Second, in in-service teacher education: (1) primary schools should allocate mentor teachers for all new teachers to better help them start their career; (2) all regional department of education should take the responsibility to offer sufficient support for schoolteachers. Third, tailor support for individual teachers, because some problems are distinguishable for the individual teacher and the specific context.

To sum up, by discovering the challenges that primary novice teachers meet can inspire teacher-education providers, the primary schools, the regional departments of education and the MOE to consider the advantages and disadvantages of current teacher education programmes, to provide sufficient support in pre- and in-service stage, to better improve teacher retention.

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## Appendix 1. Sample transcription

| FEI | 你目前教书多久了？ |
|---|---|
| Janet | 我从 2020 年 3 月开始教书，目前是 3 年了。 |
| FEI | 请问你本科和研究生分别是什么专业？ |
| Janet | 本科是在一所综合院校学习英语师范，然后研究生是在另一个综合大学学习二语习得。 |
| FEI | 你在这个目前的教学当中有遇到过一些什么样的困难，然后我们可以就是按照不同的这个维度来分析，比如说教学方面？ |
| Janet | 我就从先最开始就是刚第一年的时候，第一年我是从学校毕业，然后第一个困惑的地方就是，45 个人一个班，我要怎么教。因为学校他们就是很佛系，就直接把人招上来啦，然后直接就把你丢到实战场合，你就去上吧，新老师没有得到任何的培训，所以当时的一个困惑点就是，课不知道怎么上。然后第二点就是学生不知道怎么管理，45 个人就感觉比较难 handle，但是到到后边经过几年的实战，我就知道怎么去上课了。之后就我觉得挑战的比较大的还是就是学生的管理问题，在小学阶段，因为小学阶段的话，他们就是课堂的纪律方面是必须要先把控严抓下来的，他们就是静下来之后才能够去听你实际教学的内容，所以就是，最大的难点、以及比较有挑战的就是学生管理在小学阶段。 |

## Appendix 2. Sample translation

| FEI | How long have you been teaching English? |
|---|---|
| Janet | I stated my teaching from March 2020, and it has been three years now? |
| FEI | What was your major for your undergraduate and your post-graduate program? |
| Janet | I studied English Teacher education programme in a comprehensive university for my BA, and MA Second language acquisition (SLA) at another comprehensive university. |
| FEI | What are the challenges you have faced in your daily teaching? We can discuss it from different aspects, for example, challenges in your English class. |
| Janet | I think the first challenge in the first year was how to teach English to a class of 45 students. I did not receive any training about my work in my workplace. They (administrators) just recruited teachers and let the novice teachers teach English in the real classroom without any support. At that time, I did not know how to teach and did not know how to manage a large group of people. It was difficult to teach 45 students at the same time, but after a few years of teaching practice, I knew how to deliver classes in the class. Another the big challenge for me is the classroom management. They are just primary school students, and they are naughty. They can only fully listen to you until they can calm down. Till now, I think the biggest difficult and challenging thing for me is student management at the elementary school stage. |

# Appendix 3.　Consent form for pilot study

**UNIVERSITY OF LEEDS**

**Consent to take part in "Exploring Ways How Primary School Novice English Language Teachers Get Through Their "reality shock" in Guangzhou" for pilot interview.**

| | Add your initials next to the statements you agree with |
|---|---|
| I confirm that I have read and understand the information sheet dated 15th June 2023, explaining the above research project and I have had the opportunity to ask questions about the project. | |
| I agree for the data collected from me to be used only for a pilot study in an anonymised form. I agree for the data I provide to be archived under password protected files on the University of Leeds One-Drive storage. | |
| I understand that relevant sections of the data collected during the study, may be looked at by individuals from the University of Leeds or from regulatory authorities where it is relevant to my taking part in this research. I give permission for these individuals to have access to my records. | |
| I agree to take part in the above research project and will inform the lead researcher should my contact details change. | |

| | |
|---|---|
| Name of participant | |
| Participant's signature | |
| Date | |
| Name of lead researcher | |
| Signature | |
| Date* | |

*To be signed and dated in the presence of the participant.

Once this has been signed by all parties the participant should receive a copy of the signed and dated participant consent form, the letter/ pre-written script/ information sheet and any other written information provided to the participants. A copy of the signed and dated consent form should be kept with the project's main documents which must be kept in a secure location.

| Project title | Document type | Version # | Date |
|---|---|---|---|
| Exploring Ways How Primary School Novice English Language Teachers Get Through Their "reality shock" in Guangzhou | Participant information sheet | | |

# Appendix 4.    Participant information sheet for pilot study

UNIVERSITY OF LEEDS

**Participant Information Sheet for pilot interviews**

**The title of the research project**

Exploring ways how primary school novice English language teachers get through their "reality shock" in Guangzhou.

**Invitation paragraph**

You are being invited to take part in this research project. Before you decide it is important for you to understand why the research is being done and what it will involve. Please take time to read the following information carefully and discuss it with others if you wish. Ask me if there is anything that is not clear or if you would like more information. Take time to decide whether or not you wish to take part.

**What is the purpose of the project?**

The aim of this study is to explore the challenges and difficulties that novice teachers have faced within the first five years of their teaching career. Besides, the solutions, assistance, and other forms of support they receive in handling these challenges will also be discovered. This research employs qualitative research using the interview approach to generating data. At the current stage, a pilot study is used to better provide interview guidance and measure the appropriateness of interview questions in formal interviews. So, the pilot interviews are the fundamental basis of a formal research data generation.

**Why have I been chosen?**

In this research, based on the literature review, a novice teacher is defined as someone who has one to five years of teaching experience after graduation. Also, the scope of this research focuses on primary English language teachers in Guangzhou. Therefore, a convenience sampling and the purposeful sampling are used when deciding on the participants. To meet goal of this research, you as a primary novice English teacher at public schools in Guangzhou can absolutely help to achieve the purpose of this research.

**Do I have to take part?**

It is up to you to decide whether or not to take part. If you do decide to take part, you will be given this information sheet to keep (and you will need to sign a consent form) and you can still withdraw at any time without it affecting any benefits that you are entitled to in any way. You do not have to give a reason.

**What do I have to do?/ What will happen to me if I take part?**

To conduct this pilot study, you will be interviewed for nearly one hour to answer my questions. You will only take this interview once, and we will conduct the interviews online, so, no travelling cost will incur. This is a semi-structure interview, which means I will ask some prepared questions as well as some follow-up questions based on your answers and some prompts. All the interview questions will focus on your personal teaching experience at school. Therefore, your true feelings about the challenges and solutions during novice years are extremely important.

Since this is a pilot interview, your responses (data) will not be used and interpreted in my dissertation discussion and findings. However, your responses are vital because they can help to modify the interview questions and check the appropriateness of them in the formal interviews.

57

- **Will I be recorded, and how will the recorded media be used?**

With your permission, I shall record the video of our interviews. The video recordings of our interviews conducted during this pilot study will be used to analyse my interview questions. Nobody apart from me will watch the recording. You may opt to have your video camera off should you prefer to. No other use will be made of them without your written permission, and no one outside the project will be allowed access to the recordings.

- **What are the possible disadvantages and risks of taking part?**

Some questions may evoke unpleasant experience in novice years, or you may refer to the name of the places you are working, a certain group of students when talking about some challenges. If you feel uncomfortable about any question, you can stop the interview. With your permission and willingness, I will start the interview again.

- **What are the possible benefits of taking part?**

Whilst there are no immediate benefits for those people participating in the project, it is hoped that this work will help you in the future career development and give you an opportunity to reflect, and hopefully, feel well-prepared for the challenges you may encounter in the future.

**Use, dissemination and storage of research data**

All the data from the interview will be kept in my university one-drive under password protected files, and I am the only person who has the access to it. After I finish my MA, all the date will be deleted.

- **What will happen to my personal information?**

At the pilot interview stage, your date will only be used to modify the interview questions and your responses will not be analysed and presented in the dissertation discussion and fundings part. Therefore, all your personal information will be well-protected, and it will be kept confidentially.

- **What will happen to the results of the research project?**

All the contact information that we collect about you during the course of the research will be kept strictly confidential and will be stored separately from the research data. I will take steps wherever possible to anonymise the research data so that your personal information will not be identified in my MA dissertation.

Once again, this is a pilot interview, and you will take part in this research individually, without another person recognising you during the research. Your data will not be published or shared.

- **What type of information will be sought from me and why is the collection of this information relevant for achieving the research project's objectives?**

This research focuses on the novice teachers' personal experiences in their career, especially the challenges and difficulties in their workplaces. Besides, certain solutions and different forms of support are discovered to those problems, which may offer some suggestions for new or pre-service teachers and may help yourself to better prepare for the challenges in your future teaching practices. Therefore, your experiences with students,

colleagues, administrators, your mentor teachers, and the teacher training education you have received, will be explored in the interviews.

- **Who is organising/ funding the research?**

As a MA student, at this stage, this research is conducted by myself with the help my dissertation supervisor Dr Loreto Aliaga Salas. With her patient guidance and practical suggestions, I believe I can finish this research successfully and achieve fruitful results.

- **Contact for further information**

MA student name: FEI XU
Email address: ed22fx@leeds.ac.uk

Supervisor: Dr Loreto Aliaga Salas
Email address: L.A.Aliaga-Salas@leeds.ac.uk

You will be given a copy of the information sheet and an electronic signed consent form to keep. Thank you very much for taking the time to read through the information.

59

# Appendix 5.    Consent form for formal interview

UNIVERSITY OF LEEDS

**Consent to take part in "Exploring Ways How Primary School Novice English Language Teachers Get Through Their "reality shock" in Guangzhou" for formal interview.**

| | Add your initials next to the statements you agree with |
|---|---|
| I confirm that I have read and understand the information sheet dated 25th June 2023, explaining the above research project and I have had the opportunity to ask questions about the project. | |
| I agree for the data collected from me to be used for formal study in an anonymised form. I agree for the data I provide to be archived under password protected files on the University of Leeds One-Drive storage. | |
| I understand that relevant sections of the data collected during the study, may be looked at by individuals from the University of Leeds or from regulatory authorities where it is relevant to my taking part in this research. I give permission for these individuals to have access to my records. | |
| I agree to take part in the above research project and will inform the lead researcher should my contact details change. | |

| | |
|---|---|
| Name of participant | |
| Participant's signature | |
| Date | |
| Name of lead researcher | |
| Signature | |
| Date* | |

*To be signed and dated in the presence of the participant.

Once this has been signed by all parties the participant should receive a copy of the signed and dated participant consent form, the letter/ pre-written script/ information sheet and any other written information provided to the participants. A copy of the signed and dated consent form should be kept with the project's main documents which must be kept in a secure location.

| Project title | Document type | Version № | Date |
|---|---|---|---|
| Exploring Ways How Primary School Novice English Language Teachers Get Through Their "reality shock" in Guangzhou | Participant information sheet | | |

# Appendix 6.  Participant information sheet for formal interview

UNIVERSITY OF LEEDS

**Participant Information Sheet for formal interviews**

**The title of the research project**

Exploring ways how primary school novice English language teachers get through their "reality shock" in Guangzhou.

**Invitation paragraph**

You are being invited to take part in this research project. Before you decide it is important for you to understand why the research is being done and what it will involve. Please take time to read the following information carefully and discuss it with others if you wish. Ask me if there is anything that is not clear or if you would like more information. Take time to decide whether or not you wish to take part.

**What is the purpose of the project?**

The aim of this study is to explore the challenges and difficulties that novice teachers have faced within the first five years of their teaching career. Besides, the solutions, assistance, and other forms of support they receive in handling these challenges will also be discovered. This research employs qualitative research using the interview approach to generating data. As the participants, your responses are the major source of data, which support the whole study

**Why have I been chosen?**

In this research, based on the literature review, a novice teacher is defined as someone who has one to five years of teaching experience after graduation. Also, the scope of this research focuses on primary English language teachers in Guangzhou. Therefore, a convenience sampling and the purposeful sampling are used when deciding on the participants. To meet goal of this research, you as a primary novice English teacher at public schools in Guangzhou can absolutely help to achieve the purpose of this research.

**Do I have to take part?**

It is up to you to decide whether or not to take part. If you do decide to take part, you will be given this information sheet to keep (and you will need to sign a consent form) and you can still withdraw at any time without it affecting any benefits that you are entitled to in any way. You do not have to give a reason.

**What do I have to do? / What will happen to me if I take part?**

To conduct the formal interview, you will be interviewed twice for nearly one and a half hour to answer my questions. The first round takes nearly one hour and you will answer my questions. The second round, which will take roughly half an hour, is the member checking. We will conduct the interviews online, so, no travelling cost will incur. This is a semi-structure interview, which means I will ask some prepared questions as well as some follow-up questions based on your answers and some prompts. All the interview questions will focus on your personal teaching experience at school. Therefore, your true feelings about the challenges and solutions during novice years are extremely important.

Since this is the formal interview, your responses (data) will be used and interpreted in my dissertation discussion and findings. Therefore, your responses are vital for the whole study.

61

- **Will I be recorded, and how will the recorded media be used?**

With your permission, I shall record the video of our interviews. The video recordings of our interviews conducted during this interview will be used to answer my research questions. Nobody apart from me will watch the recording. You may opt to have your video camera off should you prefer to. No other use will be made of them without your written permission, and no one outside the project will be allowed access to the recordings.

- **What are the possible disadvantages and risks of taking part?**

Some questions may evoke unpleasant experience in novice years, or you may refer to the name of the places you are working, a certain group of students when talking about some challenges. If you feel uncomfortable about any question, you can stop the interview. With your permission and willingness, I will start the interview again.

- **What are the possible benefits of taking part?**

Whilst there are no immediate benefits for those people participating in the project, it is hoped that this work will help you in the future career development and give you an opportunity to reflect, and hopefully, feel well-prepared for the challenges you may encounter in the future.

**Use, dissemination and storage of research data**

All the data from the interview will be kept in my university one-drive under password protected files, and I am the only person who has the access to it. After I finish my MA, all the date will be deleted.

- **What will happen to my personal information?**

At the formal interview stage, your date will be used to answer my research questions, and be presented in the dissertation discussion and fundings part. However, all your personal information will be well-protected and appear with anonymised form, and it will be kept confidentially.

- **What will happen to the results of the research project?**

All the contact information that we collect about you during the research will be kept strictly confidential and will be stored separately from the research data. I will take steps wherever possible to anonymise the research data so that your personal information will not be identified in my MA dissertation.

- **What type of information will be sought from me and why is the collection of this information relevant for achieving the research project's objectives?**

This research focuses on the novice teachers' personal experiences in their career, especially the challenges and difficulties in their workplaces. Besides, certain solutions and different forms of support are discovered to those problems, which may offer some suggestions for new or pre-service teachers and may help yourself to better prepare for the challenges in your future teaching practices. Therefore, your experiences with students, colleagues, administrators, your mentor teachers, and the teacher training education you have received, will be explored in the interviews.

62

- **Who is organising/ funding the research?**

As a MA student, at this stage, this research is conducted by myself with the help my dissertation supervisor Dr Loreto Aliaga Salas. With her patient guidance and practical suggestions, I believe I can finish this research successfully and achieve fruitful results.

- **Contact for further information**

MA student name: FEI XU
Email address: ed22fx@leeds.ac.uk

Supervisor: Dr Loreto Aliaga Salas
Email address: L.A.Aliaga-Salas@leeds.ac.uk

You will be given a copy of the information sheet and an electronic signed consent form to keep. Thank you very much for taking the time to read through the information.

63

# Appendix 7.  Data generation prompts for interviews

(Original interview questions for pilot study and adjusted questions for formal interview)

| Original interview questions | Adjusted questions |
|---|---|
| Part 1--Basic questions:<br><br>1 How many years have you been teaching since you have graduated from your teacher education program?<br><br>2. Which grade are you currently teaching? | Part 1- Basic questions<br><br>1 How long have you been teaching?<br><br>2 Have you received teacher education in your university studies? |
| Part 2—Challenges and difficulties<br><br>3. Have you experienced "reality shock" in you daily teaching?<br><br>4. What are the biggest challenges that you have met in your daily teaching?<br><br>5. How can you handle solve these challenges? (Help from others: mentor teachers, experienced colleagues, or other forms of support) | Part 2—Challenges and difficulties<br>Common questions in part 2<br><br>3 What are the biggest challenges that you face in your daily teaching? (Prompts: 1. Teaching practice, 2. classroom management, 3. Handling issues with students, parents, colleagues, administrators)<br><br>4 What are the "reality shocks" you have experienced in your work? (Question 3 prompts)<br><br>5 What did you do or what kind of support you have received to solve these problems (Prompts: help from others: mentor teachers, experienced colleagues, or other forms of support) to solve these problems?<br><br>Individual questions in part two: |

| | One year of teaching experience |
|---|---|
| | a. What are the difficulties that you are facing right now? |
| | b. What do you want to learn from your experienced colanguages, mentor teachers? |
| | Three years of teaching experience |
| | a. What are different challenges you have faced in the first, and the third year of teaching? |
| | b. What have you done in the first and third years to solve your problems? |
| | Four to five years of teaching experience |
| | a. What are different challenges have you faced in your first, third, and the fifth years of teaching? |
| | b. What have you done to solve those problems? |
| Part 3---How teacher training programs help novice teachers<br><br>6. Did you receive any teacher training before you start your teaching career?<br>7. Do you think what you've learned from your teaching training help you solve the problems in your novice years?<br>8. How does the teacher training program help you go through your "reality shock"? | Part 3--- Teacher education programs<br>For those teachers whose major is<br>English language teacher education<br>6 What do you think of the teacher education program in your pre-service teacher stage?<br>7 How do you feel about it?<br>For those teachers whose major is not<br>English language teacher education.<br>6. If you did not receive teacher training education in your university, what |

| | others forms of teacher training have you received? |
| | 7. How do you feel about it? |
| Part 4—teacher retention 9. why did you choose to be a teacher? 10. What are the contributing factors that may affect your choice to be an English teacher in Guangzhou? | Part 4—Teacher retention 8 How do you like your teaching job? 9 What factors have influenced your choice to be a teacher through the years? 10 Where do you see yourself in 5 or 10 years in relation to your career? |

# Appendix 8.    Data analysis sample

Some notes from my interview with Lucy

Lucy (1 year)

Challenges
- A: teaching (class delivery, classroom management)
- B: support
  - pre-service: Some help (but still theoretical)
    - College teachers didn't have practical teaching experience at primary or secondary schools
  - in-service: ① schools ⟶ no training at the beginning
    - ② mentor teachers → no (X) _(against "mentors" support)_
    - ③ experienced colleagues → listen to their classes when she got their permission
      - or experienced teacher's observation of her class and give offer feedback
    - ④ support from regional department of education
      - ✓ Some help but not systematical (X)
      - ✓ frequency: once or twice a term ~~two~~
      - (schools should really ~~to~~ realize the importance of teacher training)
- C: relationship: get along well with colleagues, administrators.
  - (They are warm-hearted)
  - parents: grades of their children
    - (eg. Parents care more about their pr children's academic safety issues issues & safety problems

teach retention: first year (not sure) → may be do something else
(double-reduction policy didn't help her)  (doing business) → stress from teaching

suggestions or desired teaching support    Her schools did not implement double-reduction policy seriously

∴ ① gain as ~~many~~ much teaching experience as possible (
  - ( class observation → any subject )
  - time: at least one month

② reduce the physicalogical burden of teaching
  - ( find a way to relax after class )

③ focus more on (students) rather than knowledge itself.
  - ( every student is unique )                (X)

④ learn ~~from~~ from (online resources). experienced teachers.

Data analysis: Similarities and differences among different themes

Similarities & difference between the three teachers.
  Lucy (1 year)        Janet (3 years)        Annie: (4 years)

Similarities                                    Differences
                                                knowledge gap between
1. class delivery (practical knowledge)   Janet: textbook (Grade 4 & 5)
Challenges A: {
2. lesson planning
3. classroom mangement (large class size) (Communication skills  Annie: class efficiency (more efficient
4. pedagogical theory    students attention          class delivery)
                                , pan
      (what kind of teaching method to use)
  contradiction between  Rote learning & student centered
B: Communication with  teacher-centred  Annie: parents' educational value

    colleagues/administrators (V)           colon't think extra academic
                        positive            achievement is important for kids

C: policy: (double-reduction)             Lucy: policy was not seriously implemented
                                            at her school (still forced by students
      (A normal university)                 adem academic achievement
Support Pre { Lucy: English language education    Annie: English related major
                (OK, but still theoretical)
       Janet English language education         (X) not receive teacher education
                (not helpful)                (the teaching teacher education in China)
          (A comprehesive university)
* Overall, the quality (X) teachers at colleage didn't have practical knowledge at primary schools
In { support from school: (X) at public school (not traing for teacher at the beginning)

    mentor teachers : (X) (not designated teachers help them)..
          (They three from different districts in Guangzhou  Lucy: not helpful
    regional department of education               (not systematical)
                                                  (half twice a term)
         Janet  : L helpful

         Annie
    (every teach week)                * Overall, schools (insituations should seriously consider
                                        the importance of providing support and guidence for
    themes                              novice teachers.

teacher retention: Annine                 Lucy: (not sure)
                        dedicated to       (N
         Janet  (teaching)
    * Novice teachers at initial years of teaching may hold the faith to become a proficient
         teacher or chose to leave the profession

68

# Appendix 9.   Sample member checking

The member checking with teacher Janet. I underlined the parts I was not certain in the first round and put the questions in the second round.

| | First round | Second round |
|---|---|---|
| Fei | What about mentor teachers? do you have any mentor teachers to support you when you start your career? | Member-check ideas |
| Janet | We don't particularly have a teacher who is designated to help us when we started our teaching career. Our school didn't realize the importance of a mentor teacher. Everyone is busying with their own work. In this case, no teachers will be especially designated to help you, and listen to your class, and give you feedback. | |
| Fei | Well, then, was there any teacher who was willing to help you? | |
| Janet | Yes, I remember there's a young teacher who had two or three years of experience, and he said we could observe his class. After several observations, I knew how a class should be presented. | What did you do when you observed his class? What other things did you learn from class observation? Can you elaborate more? |
| Fei | Do you think it was helpful? | |
| Janet | Yes, it was helpful because I exchanged my ideas with him after the class observation. I expressed my doubts, and then we could discuss them together. | What are the doubts? Can you always solve your problems through discussion? |
| Fei | What about experienced teachers? Did you get a change to observe their classes? | |
| Janet | Yes, after getting their permission, I can observe their classes. They are more mature at class delivery and classroom management. I could how they raise questions, how to manage those misbehaved students, how to organize class activities etc. | |

# Appendix 10.   Sample transcription

The original and edited version of conservation with Lucy (sample)

|  | Original | | Edited version | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
|  | 中文：那你觉得就是在你当老师之前跟你当老师之后，有哪些是你意想不到的偏差呢。额，就是，就是比如说可能觉得刚开始在当老师之前觉得学生应应该是（停顿）美好的或则其他，但是真正的当老师之后，又发现并不是这样子的，就有这样的一些反差吗？ | English version:<br><br>What are the "reality shocks" you have encountered after…you have been a teacher? Emm, for example, eh, well, before you became a teacher, you might well, think that all students are…. nice or.. .in class, but they're not, do you have similar reality shocks in your daily teaching? | English version:<br><br>What are the "reality shocks" you have encountered after you have been a teacher? For example, before you became a teacher, you might think that all students are nice in class, but they're not. Do you have similar reality shocks in your daily teaching? | FEI<br><br>XU |
|  | 中文：好。我觉得主要还是我首先遇到的第一个。感觉就是…家长和我想象的已经不一样了，可能现在就是跟我们年纪差不多大。可能他们早的时候经受过的教育，就像我们那那一辈，就是基本上是诶什么（停顿）棍棒底下出孝子，可能他们到了他们长大的时候，就希 | English version:<br>Well, I think the first problem I have faced is, I feel that …some parents are different from what I though they should be. I mean, their educational concepts are different from …parents of our generation. Most of those parents are, I mean have, the similar age with me, when it comes to the study of their children, instead of pushing their | English version:<br>Well, I think the first problem I have faced is, some parents are different from what I thought they should be. Their educational concepts are different from (…) parents of our generation. Most of those parents have the similar age with me. When it comes to the study of their children, instead of pushing their children too hard, like our parents, | Lucy |

| | 望孩子们健康快乐。就可能。 | children too hard, like our parents, they just want their children to be happy. | they just want their children to be happy. | |
|---|---|---|---|---|

DISSERTATION PROPOSAL AND BLOCK ETHICAL REVIEW FORM 2022/2023

| STUDENT NAME | FEI XU |
|---|---|
| STUDENT NUMBER | 201421104 |
| PROGRAMME (incl. Full time/Part time) | MA Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (FULL TIME) |
| DATE FIRST SUBMITTED | 1ST March 2023 |

TO STUDENTS AND SUPERVISORS:

*This is the dissertation proposal and block ethical review form each student needs to complete and have approved before they can begin to collect their data. Students and supervisors are advised to consider the completion of this form as a cyclical, recursive process of drafting, submission to the supervisor for feedback, revision, and re-submission. There are four sections, and before students can start collecting data they will need to have completed all four to the satisfaction of their supervisor. Typically students will complete one-three drafts of each section before their project is fully worked out. This may seem laborious but the intention is to ensure that the research each student carries out is robust, valid, reliable and fully compliant with the ethical requirements of the university.  On the form, you can delete text in blue but please do not change any other parts of the form.*

TO THE STUDENT:

Step 1:  Complete *Section 1, Your Topic. At this stage of your project, we merely wish to know what topic area you wish to work on in order to allocate an appropriate supervisor, so Section 1 is sufficient.*

*After you have done that, read through Sections, 2, 3 and 4, and if you can, fill in any details. Most people do not complete sections 2,3 and 4 until they have had their first meeting with their supervisor.*

Step 2:  *Once you have completed the form as far as you can, **please upload it onto Minerva** by **1st March 2023**.   Your programme manager will then use this form to decide who should be your supervisor.  If you have not heard from your programme manager by **28th March 2023**, please contact them.*

Step 3:  *Once you have been allocated your supervisor, you will work with them, over the months, meeting regularly and sending samples of work for*

feedback. In the early stages you will still be working out and refining your project. You and your supervisor may choose to use this form as an aid to planning, in which case you will be asked to work through each of the sections iteratively, reworking each one in response to feedback. Alternatively, you and your supervisor may wish to work in a different way. Whatever way you and your supervisor choose to work, when you have finalised the design of your project, you will need to present a completed version of this form for your supervisor to sign.

Step 4:  When your form has been signed and countersigned you should upload it to Minerva using the link in the Dissertation module page, details of which will be given in due course. Your form should be uploaded by 15 June 2023 at the latest. Keep a pdf copy of the signed form because you will need to include it in the appendices of your dissertation.

| 1. | Your Topic |
|---|---|
| Topic | *What is the research about?*<br><br>Novice teachers' concerns and challenges and how they get through their difficulties.<br><br>This research is intended to discuss the problems that novice English teachers face during their first several years (1-5 years) of teaching in China (Primary teachers at public schools in Guangzhou city, Guangdong province). Also, by analysing their stories about how they deal with these obstacles (e.g., support from their mentors, their own knowledge). |
| Motivation | *Please explain briefly your motivation for choosing this topic.*<br><br>As a teacher myself for 6 years, I always think about the challenges and problems I came across in the first or two years, such as lesson planning, student-teacher rapport, classroom management. I have also talked to several novice teachers recently and I found that they were as just "desperate" as I was at the initial stage. So, I was wondering how we can help novice teachers deal with these problems and how we can motivate ourselves being as a teacher in the long term. |
| Working title | *This may well change over the course of the research.*<br>Exploring ways how primary school novice English language teachers get through their "reality shock" in Guangzhou |

| 2. | Your Project |
|---|---|
| Theoretical context | *How does your research relate to previous work in the area? What literature will you be looking at to help address your research aim?*<br><br>**1. Definition of novice teachers:** |

The definition of the novice teacher varies across different literature. A novice teacher is someone who has less than five years of teaching experience (Hasanah, 2020; Kim and Roth, 2011). However, some researchers believe that novice teachers are those who has graduated from a teacher Education program and gains the teaching experience within three years (Farrell, 2012; Widiati et al., 2018).

In this study, I define a novice teacher as someone who has less than five years of teaching experience from graduation.

**2. Introduction to Chinese Current Educational Context**

The Chinese educational system is extremely competitive, and teachers dedicate their energy and time in the workplace enormously, such as teaching practice, class management, and student interaction (Ye and Zhao, 2019). Also, schools are becoming increasingly commercialized, and they are controlled by economic growth in current Chinese societies, which results in some great changes on the relationships among teachers, students, and parents: parents and teachers are becoming "customers", while teachers provide education services to satisfy their needs (Cameron and Quinn, 2011; Guo and Kilderry, 2018). As a result, teachers' job becomes stressful and demanding in China, which leads to their job satisfaction and exhaustion (Guo and Kilderry, 2018). So, novice teachers who are just on the entry level in this filed will face enormous challenges in their teaching career.

**3. Challenges that novice teachers face**

The challenges that novice teachers face can be classified as three major parts: (1) teaching issues such as, class preparation, allocating

time in the lesson plan, scores on the exams; (2) students issues such as students' learning motivation, students' behavouir mangament, studnents' low English language skills; (3) relationship with colleagues and parents , such as different perceptions of children education with parents (Hasanah, 2020; Veenman, 1984).

## 3.1 Challenges in Teaching

There is a false conception for novice teachers that they must apply all what they have learned from teacher education program in real education, which gives them a lot of pressure in teaching (Farrell, 2012). Also, Tarone and Allwright (2005) mentioned that the academic course content that a novice teacher obtained in language teacher preperation programmes is not perfectly matched with the real daily teaching context, which is also defined as a type of "reality shock" by Veenman (1984). Senom et al. (2013, p.119) describes the "reality shock" as follows:

> The transition from the teacher education institution to life in a real classroom has been characterized as a type of reality shock in which beginning teachers realize that the ideals they formed while training may not be appropriate for the realism they are faced with during their first year of teaching.

This is because the ways about how to teach students in the real classroom are significantly different from what they have learned in the teacher training course, and the longer time they dedicate in teaching, the more discrepancies they can find in their daily life (Wildman et al., 1989).

**3.2 Challenges with Students**

One challenge related with students is to improve their scores in exams. The current education system is still exam-driven, despite the educational reform since past several decades (Liu and Onwuegbuzie, 2014). Good exam scores matter significantly to students, teachers, parents and even school; as for teachers, their performance is mainly evaluated by the test scores of students, which also put a huge burden to teachers (Liu and Onwuegbuzie, 2014).

Another challenge that teachers (including novice teachers) can encounter in daily teaching is students' bad behavior, which can be attributed to China's One Child Policy, resulting in spoiled children by parents (Liu and Onwuegbuzie, 2014).

**3.3 Challenges with Colleagues, Parents, and Administrators**

Study by Liu and Onwuegbuzie (2014) found that some parents' attitudes towards teachers is really bad, and they pay little attention to the education of their children; also, for some parents, they even doubt teachers' teaching principles because of their different understanding about teaching.

Gradually, for novice teachers, they can find that teaching is an arduous task, and their teaching life becomes hectic because all the roles they need to play and the expectations students, parents, teaching fellows have on them in their career development (Mann and Tang,

2012).

## 3.4 Teacher Retention and Attrition

Teacher attrition refers to teachers' leaving the profession and the number of novice teachers who quit his or her job in the first three years has been increasing in many parts of the world in recent years (Fantilli and McDougall, 2009). According to Farrell (2012, p. 435), "one reason for teacher attrition is that a gap exists between pre-service preparation and in-service teacher development"; this is because when novice teachers finishing their teacher training programs, they do not have any chance to contact their trainers and they must overcome the same kind of difficulties (e.g., lesson planning, classroom management ) as their colleagues in daily teaching practices, without any guidance from a more experienced teachers. These challenges can pose a huge negative impact to the teacher retention in the education system (Papay et al., 2017).

What's more, job satisfaction is important to improve teacher retention. However, in China, the contributing factors to teacher job dissatisfaction are "high stress, salary, holidays and vacations, social status, students' bad behaviour and parents' poor attitudes, unfair teacher evaluation system, and unimplemented educational reforms" (Liu and Onwuegbuzie, 2014, p. 88-89). Besides, the comfortable relationship with colleagues, the supporting atmosphere in the workplace can also influence novice teachers' first year journey and their retention (Dickson et al., 2014).

Therefore, support for novice teachers not only important for their career development and but also their retention.

## 4. Support for novice teachers

### 4.1 What is a mentor?

Induction is the process by which novice teachers "adapt to and learn about their roles as teachers" with the help of teacher training programs or mentor teachers (Schwille et al., 2007, p. 89). The ultimate objective of teacher training programs is to promote novice teachers' performance and encourage their retention (Ingersoll and Strong, 2011). According to Malderez and Wedell (2007, pp. 86-87), a mentor is an " acculturator" who helps new teachers understand the culture of their workplace; a "model" who influences new teachers' passion and attitudes for teaching; a "supporter" who offer advice and suggestions to those novice teachers; a "sponsor" who do whatever they can to help mentees to get materials needed for teaching; and an "educator" who helps mentees to integrate and expand all knowledge they have to support their teaching in the classroom.

### 4.2 Why is it important?

Devos (2010) states that one of the primary reasons for providing new teachers training programs is to improve teacher retention. Also, many studies show that support and assistance from mentor teachers can achieve three types of positive outcomes for beginning teachers: "teacher commitment and retention, teacher classroom instructional practices, and student achievement" (Ingersoll and Strong, 2011 p. 201). For the teacher commitment and retention, studies show that teacher induction can improve novice teachers' job satisfaction and

promote their retention; as for classroom instructional practices, mentoring programs can help novice teacher do better in teaching (e.g., maintaining a positive classroom atmosphere, using effective students questioning practices); and for students achievement, novice teachers who received teacher training can help their students obtain higher academic achievements (e.g., higher scores) (Ingersoll and Strong, 2011).

Nevertheless, according to Mann and Tang (2012, p. 476), there are many types of support other than mentoring, such as "orientation sessions, subject-related collaboration, developmental workshops, reduced workloads, and extra classroom assistance".

## 4.3 The research purpose

The purpose of this research is to have an in-depth understanding of how novice teachers at primary schools go through their difficulties in their first year of teaching in Guangzhou. By analysing different stories of novice teachers' teaching and learning to teach experience, other pre-service teachers can introspect their own teaching and help them better prepare for the first several years of teaching as novice teachers (Farrell, 2012).

| Research questions | *What questions does the research address? Again, these may change over the course of your research but it is important that you set down now, as clearly as possible, what questions you aim to answer. Remember that your research questions should come out of your literature review so you should not write research questions until you have carried out your first review of the literature.* |
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| | **Research questions:** |

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| | 1. What concerns and difficulties do novice English language teachers have in their first year at public primary schools in Guangzhou?<br><br>2. What support do those teachers receive from mentors and colleagues?<br><br>3. How does the nature of this support help them get through their teaching "reality shock"? |

| 3. | Your Research design |
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| Overview | *Briefly characterise your research **approach** and list your **methods** of data-generation and analysis. Your research design should be informed by previous research in your area.*<br><br>This study employs qualitative methods (interviews) with an interpretive approach to conduct the research (Cohen et al., 2018). This is because it focuses on the personal experience of individual novice teacher who is participant of this study. This is congruent with what Draper (2004) suggests that qualitative analysis values the quality or essence of human experience and what these processes mean to individuals. Also, interview date can represent respondents' beliefs and values being as a novice teacher (Mann, 2016).<br><br>Data will be collected in two rounds of interview: Round 1: an interview with each participant to the research questions; Round 2: an interview with the purpose of member checking to ensure some blur ideas of participants in the first round (Harvey, 2015; Mann, 2016). |

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| | All the sample will be collected using non-probability, purposive methods (Cohen et al., 2018). First, the target of non-probability is to a specific group of participants (e.g., the novice teachers in a particular area); second, the purposive sampling aims to help researchers to select the sample based on the needs, purposes, and characteristics of participants in the study (e.g., novice teachers with 1-5 years of teaching experience after graduation) (Cohen et al., 2018).<br><br>From the description mentioned above, to go in depth understanding of a specific group of teachers (novice teachers at primary schools in Guangzhou), use the non-probability, purposive sampling can satisfy the needs. |
| Quality | *In this section please indicate how you will ensure the* **quality** *of your research project. We need to know how you plan to make sure that your study will be robust, valid and reliable.*<br><br>**Validity and reliability**<br>According to Agar (1993, cited in Cohen et al., 2018), the validity and reliability in qualitative data collection can be sustained via thorough involvement and sufficient description of individual participants. Also, Onwuegbuzie and Leech (2007, p.239) offer some suggestions to help researhers to ensure validity in research qualitative research, such as "leaving an audit trail" which menas to keep documentation and records related to the study. In addition, Harvey (2015) proposed that member checking, in which researchers ensure and get feedback about participants' date   through several rounds of interview, can help to certify the valilidy of this study. |

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| | The robustness, validity and reliability of research will be ensured by: <br><br> - Full preparation and planning of all data collection tools and research design. <br> - 3 novice teachers to provide rich descriptions with in-depth analysis. <br> - Purposive sampling (Cohen et al., 2018). <br> - interview will be piloted to check the appropriateness of interview questions before formal interview data is collected. <br> - Interviews will follow a pre-defined structure which will be check by supervisor. <br> - Member checking with participants (Harvey, 2015). <br> - All information and interviews data will be preserved until results are given and a clear paper trail and evidence will be provided in final dissertation. <br> - all participants' date will be anonymized and kept under password protected files. |
| Data-generation: | *In this section, please provide as much detail as you can about the way in which you will generate your data. We need to know:* <br> • *where the data will be generated;* <br> • *how the data will be generated using the methods you have listed above;* <br> • *how long you will need for data-generation;* <br> • *who will participate in the process.* <br><br> **Where:** three public primary schools in Guangzhou <br> **How:** Written pre-interview task, online interviews |

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| | **How long:** 1 week, in the first round of interview, each interview will last 1 hour, and in the second round (member checking), 30 minutes will be needed for each interview. The whole interview will be done within a week.<br>**Who:** three volunteer teachers (the first teacher has one year of teaching experience, and the second teacher has three years of teaching experience, and the third one has 5 years of teaching experience.) |
| Data-analysis | *You may not be able to be very precise about this at this stage but we need to have some idea how you propose to analyse the data you generate.*<br><br>After I transcribe the interviews, I will decode the data (e.g., the similarities and distinctions in the interviews). A thematic analysis can be used to interpret the data in qualitative research (Braun and Clarke, 2019; Mann, 2016). According to Mann's (2016) model for thematic analysis, first, I will listen to the interviews to explore the data for several times, and then decode the date to identify the similarities and differences among the partcipants, finally, correlate the data in a sytematic and coherent way with the context and the research question.<br><br>Translation issue in analysis<br>All the interviews will be conducted in Chinese since we all share the same L1, but the transcripts will be done in both Chinese and English. I will first transcribe the interviews in Chinese, and then will transcribe them into English. Here, I will follow the back-translation approach to confirm the correctness of translation and interpretation of interview data (Cohen et al., 2018; Brislin, 1970). The back-translation, which is proposed by Brislin (1970), describes how two |

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| | languages are used together in transcribing interviews, and there are two processes: first, the text in the interview (the original source version 1, here is Chinese) will be translated into English (the target language in this study);  second, another person who is bilingual in two languages translate the English version into Chinese (original source version 2). Then the researcher compares the two original versions, if "they are identical, suggest that the target version from the middle of process is equivalent to the source language form" (Brislin, 1970, p. 186). |
| | I will ask a friend for help, who is studying English-Chinese translation at the University of Leeds, to ensure the validity of the translation. |
| Time-frame | *In this section you need to set down a realistic schedule for getting your research done. You will need to think about getting your theoretical framework completed, securing access to your research site, negotiating participation, piloting your methodology, carrying out the data-generation, analysing your data.*<br><br>25 August – Submit.<br><br>15- 25 August – Editing and abstract.<br><br>1– 15 August - Revising and editing.<br><br>15 July -26 July – Discussion, conclusion, and finish plus some editing.<br><br>1 July – 15 July – Write discussion and conclusion.<br><br>23 June -30 June – Analyse data and write findings.<br><br>18 – 23 June – Collect and transcribe data.<br><br>3- 28 June – Methodology.<br><br>15-18 June – Pilot data collection.<br><br>14-28 May- Draft literature review. |

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| **4.** | **Ethical Considerations** |
| Training | *What training have you received related to ethics in research? This may include your reading and/or sessions in modules you have taken or audited.*<br><br>The course EUDC 5928M Research methods, which I attended in semester 1 and 2, provided me with some basic knowledge of conducting research in my study.<br><br>I can also read the book *Research methods in Education* by Cohen et al (2018) and followed the BERA (2018) Ethical guidelines. | |
| Ethical concerns | *Please indicate what you consider to be the main ethical considerations raised by this project.*<br>Obtaining the informed consent | |

| Research not requiring ethical review | If your research involves no data-generation involving human or animal participants, and no other ethical considerations arise, please type 'X' in the box to the right. You may proceed immediately to the end of the form. If your research does involve human or animal participants please continue. | |
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| Research participants | Will the participants be from any of the following groups? Answer 'Yes' or 'No'. | |
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| | *A) Children under 16.* | no |
| | *B) Persons with a particularly dependent relationship with the investigator.* | no |
| | *C) Other vulnerable groups.* | no |
| | If you have answered 'Yes' to any of the above, please explain why the research has to be conducted with such participants, in the box below. | |
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| | Supervisors should also consider whether an individual application to FREC might be appropriate. Before suggesting this supervisors should contact Head of Area. | |

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| Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) | A Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) check will be needed for researchers working with children or vulnerable adults in the UK (see www.crb.gov.uk ). So if you have answered 'Yes' to A) or C) above you will need to complete the boxes below. |
| | Do you currently have a DBS enhanced disclosure? Answer 'Yes' or 'No'. |
| | If 'Yes', how recently was it conducted? *no* |
| Participant involvement | What will the participants be asked to do in this study (e.g. number of visits, time, travel required, interviews etc.)? |
| | Each of them will take part in two rounds of interviews. The first will last around 1 hour, the second round will last around 30 minutes. No travel required, because all the interviews will be conducted online. |
| | How will the potential participants be recruited? |
| | *You need to tell us how you will identify them and what you will do to recruit them* Volunteers of my novice teacher friends in Guangzhou |
| | How will you gain informed consent from the participants? |
| | *What information will you provide the participants about the project and how will you do it? Remember: participants need to understand what the project is about and for, what you will do with their data, what their rights are and how you will protect them.* <br><br> Personal contact with the participants with verbal and signed consent form. |
| | How will you make sure that participants understand the information you provide about the project? *If you are working with children or vulnerable adults or with participants whose L1 is not English, how will you make sure they understand the information?* |
| | Make and provide them with a participant information sheet before signing a consent form and let them to ask questions to make clarification about their doubts. |
| | Will interviews/ questionnaires discuss any topics or issues that might be sensitive, embarrassing or upsetting? In the main you are advised to avoid such topics. If |

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| | questions on such topics are unavoidable, what strategies will you adopt to prevent your questions causing distress and how will you deal with distress if it is caused? |
| | When they talk about the challenges they have faced, the name of their workplace will probably be mentioned. I will keep the participants anonymous in the whole process. If any embarrassing negative experiences may affect their moods, I will stop the interview, and aim to resume it later, or at a different time should the participant agree. |
| | What are the potential benefits and risks for participants? |
| | Benefits: the experiences they evoke can help them in the future career development and help them better prepared for the challenges as a teacher.<br><br>Risks: teachers may refer something related to a group of students, or colleagues in their working place, which may have negative impact at their workplace. Therefore, well-informed consent and member checking will be needed in the interviews. |
| | Does the research involve any risk to you as a researcher? If yes, what is the risk? |
| | No |
| | How will you ensure confidentiality and anonymity of the participants? |
| | All participants' date will be anonymized and kept under password protected files. |
| | What will you do to keep the personal information you collect as secure as possible? Please note: you are required to keep data on your M-Drive or university Cloud space or under lock and key if hard copy. |
| | Save the data on university one drive under password protected files and delete them after I finish my MA. |

DECLARATION

TO STUDENTS AND SUPERVISORS:

This declaration is to be completed by the student, signed by the supervisor and counter-signed by another academic, before data collection can begin. Supervisors who are unclear about whether to give the project ethical clearance may consult the School of Education Ethical representatives or the Head of Taught Postgraduate Area.

| I agree to adhere to the procedures outlined in this plan.<br><br>Student signature:  FEI XU | Date: 12th June, 2023 |
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| I give permission for the research outlined in this plan to go ahead.<br><br><br>Supervisor signature: *[signature]* | Date:<br>12.06.2023 |
| I give permission for the research outlined in this plan to go ahead.<br><br><br>Counter-signature of programme academic: *[signature]* | Date: 12.06.2023 |

TO THE SUPERVISOR:

*Once completed, signed and countersigned, you should return the form to the student for uploading, as per Step 4 above.*

TO THE STUDENT:

*You should upload this form to Minerva by 15th June at the latest as per Step 4 above.  A signed copy of this form must be included as an appendix to your dissertation.*