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# How New Chinese Immersion School Teachers Can Improve Their Teaching Skills And Have A Mindset Of Supporting And Inspiring Students?

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HOW NEW CHINESE IMMERSION SCHOOL TEACHERS CAN IMPROVE THEIR  
TEACHING SKILLS AND HAVE A MINDSET OF SUPPORTING  
AND INSPIRING STUDENTS

BY

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A capstone submitted in partial fulfillment of the  
requirements for the degree of Master of Arts in Teaching.

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## **CHAPTER ONE**

### **Introduction**

#### **Statement of Research Question**

Before teaching 4<sup>th</sup> graders in a Chinese immersion school in U.S., I had 2 years' experience teaching in an elementary school in China. Even though I was well educated in education psychology, theory and research based instructional practices, elementary subjects content, teaching strategies and classroom managements skills, I encountered various challenges and difficulties that I didn't think of prior to teaching in the Chinese immersion school. I felt that my knowledge and experience gained earlier could not help me deal with the problems in my classroom. I notice that oftentimes students in my classroom don't enjoy learning very much. My teaching can't inspire their curiosity and motivate them to seek deeper knowledge and ask why. Study gradually becomes a burden for students: a lot of homework to do and exams to prepare but learning itself has lost its fun and pleasure. Classroom is not very interactive and active. This makes it harder for both teacher and students to have a good performance in the classroom. Sometimes the healthy and close relationship between students and the teacher fails to grow and strengthen. Additionally, I realized that academic performance can't speak for a student's comprehensive ability in logic, art, imagination, creativity, critical thinking, empathy, etc. These experiences started to make me ponder on a question: what is wrong with my teaching and what is affecting student's performance in the classroom.

In addition to my personal experience, I also noticed that many fellow new Chinese immersion school teachers were having similar problems as I was. Having seen these struggles and heard those voices, it made me begin to think about this question in a broader scope and trying to figure out what teachers, including myself, can do to overcome these difficulties. In my

research, I want to diagnose the symptoms, investigate the causes of the issues and find effective ways to solve these problems.

The research question I want to discuss is: how new Chinese immersion school teachers can improve their teaching skills and have a mindset of supporting and inspiring students, which is critical to their success in classrooms.

### **Overview**

This chapter describes the issues facing many new Chinese immersion school teachers who have similar struggles transitioning to the new teaching environment under an education system that is significantly different from the system they grow up in. Starting from personal experience and real examples, I will explain why I think these issues are worth researching and how these issues affect the learning and teaching in the classroom. It will be expanded in several ways to illustrate how I developed a keen interest in this topic and how my research expects to help Chinese immersion school teachers adapt to the new teaching environment. Personal experiences and real life examples will help depict the issues and facilitate the illustration of importance to solve these issues. Lastly, I will conclude the chapter with a summary of the highlights in this introduction, which is followed by the next chapters including literature review and research methodology.

### **Background of the Research**

In the trend of globalization and cultural diversity, Chinese culture has drawn increasing popularity and interest from all over the globe. This phenomenon is also happening in U.S, which led to the rapid rise in the popularity of learning Chinese as well as an increasing number of Chinese immersion schools. The first Chinese immersion school was founded in San

Francisco in 1981, but it was 10 years later when the second Chinese immersion program appeared (Asia Society and the College Board 2008). Since then, more and more Chinese immersion schools opened nationwide. As of 2013, there were about 147 Chinese immersion programs across the country. The rapid growth of Chinese immersion programs in U.S in the past decades created more and more demand for Chinese teachers (Weise, 2013). However, the growth in the number of qualified Chinese teachers has not kept pace with the increasing demand. It has created a major challenge for Chinese immersion schools (Brecht & Walton, 1993). The gap between the increasing growth of Chinese immersion programs and the shortage of qualified and certified Chinese immersion teachers is so great that it results in many teachers being recruited from China or native Chinese speakers living in U.S who were formally educated in mainland China or Taiwan. However, they face many challenges teaching in the context that is very different from the culture and education system in their original country (Xu, 2012).

As a teacher who has gone through this painful transition among other fellow new Chinese teachers, I have experienced and observed many problems in the classrooms that hinder the teaching and learning processes, like what I'm about to discuss in the next section. I gradually realized that this issue needs to draw more awareness from the teachers to come up with effective solutions to improve their teaching skills and have the correct mindset that can help them make teaching more effective and efficient by understanding how to better support and inspire students in their classrooms.

### **Existing Issues and Significance of the Research**

In my observation, one issue in the classroom is that less focus is put on whether students truly understand the concept and can draw connection to prior knowledge learned or practical matter in real-life scenario. Student having a hard time relating the knowledge to common sense

makes it difficult to comprehend and grasp the point. They tend to lose interest in learning because they feel like the concept is only useful for solving the problems on the worksheet rather than helping them better understand the real-world phenomenon around them. On the other hand, teachers get frustrated because students are not active in the classroom. For example, I once observed a math class taught by a Chinese teacher, she was teaching students how to convert a fraction into its simplest form. She put a lot of emphasis on the problem-solving skills which is to divide the same number to both the numerator and denominator but barely mentioned why this conversion didn't change the value of the fraction, how this method converted the fraction to its simplest form and what's the point of finding the simplest form. Both the teacher and the students struggled in that class because the students didn't understand why they were learning this and the teacher was very discouraged by students' classroom performance.

Most teachers value high scores but lose sight of the importance of whether students grasp the topic or not. Sometimes, teacher's mindset like this suppresses the development of student's critical and creative thinking, deep content knowledge, analytical and problem-solving skills and effective communication in the learning process. Passive learning gradually develops under these circumstances because teacher doesn't particularly value student's proactive answers, ability to come up with new questions or desire to share ideas. Lack of curiosity from students, teaching quality is greatly undermined and teacher will experience disappointment due to little classroom interaction. I was in a team discussion with a small group of Chinese teachers who found teaching atmospheric pressure was challenging and they had to ask students to memorize the facts without further explaining the scientific theory behind it. This may cause inefficient learning because the lack of inner motivation from students. When student don't enjoy the learning process, the classroom atmosphere becomes down and stressful.



In many cases, teachers also experience ineffective classroom management, which increases teacher's pressure in their teaching. Teachers tend to be dictatorial to enforce their classroom management. However, this often leads to opposite result because students feel they have no control over their own learning and their perspectives are not respected. In one class I observed, a student raised a question about why they used red paper instead of other colors. The answers given to the question was "just use red paper if I give you red paper". The lack of options and opportunities to choose and ask why makes students feel unsafe. This hurts the long-term learning.

Another common issue is that teachers often fail to meet the expectation of cultivating student's social skills. Academic performance has the top priority and it causes the problem that little time is spent on training student's social skills. These skills are very important for students. Parents also hope that their kids can learn about these skills at school. If teachers don't put enough emphasis on this kind of education outside of academic study, students will not be able to grow in a comprehensive way. Even though some students can earn very high scores in exams, they might lack the ability to talk in front of a group of people, or they might not know how to build friendship with classmates or strengthen their family relationships. What concerns me is that the lack of social skills doesn't draw teacher's attention as it is deemed as something students should learn outside of classroom, which I strongly disagree.

Above are some examples of common issues I personally experienced or observed in my teaching career in Chinese immersion school. There are many more issues not pointed out here. Many new Chinese teachers encounter these issues and feel helpless to address them. More often, they are not even aware of what the issues are, not to mention how they could seek advice to improve their teaching ability and classroom performance by overcoming these difficulties. With

these existing issues, a barrier gradually builds up between teacher and students. Teacher may find their classroom inactive, lack interaction, inefficient and frustrating. On the other hand, students may lose interest in learning, feel less motivated to learn new things, not encouraged to be creative and proactive, etc. Ultimately, students are the victims of bad teaching practices and mindsets. It may take a new teacher many years to gradually figure out the issues and then work hard to solve them. I was in this struggle for a period of time, but fortunately I received great advices from my supervisors and experienced colleagues. They helped me find out the problems in my teaching and provided feedbacks that could help me improve it. I recognized that these issues are worth further researching to diagnose the symptoms and find the deep root of cause. Base on the findings, effective solutions could be proposed to help teachers adjust their teaching styles and skills to better fit into Chinese immersion classrooms. Teachers can understand student's needs and build a strong connection to students. This is the key to successful teaching and learning. Students will also benefit from this strengthened relationship with teacher.

This is a very exciting research topic to me because I see a great significance of the study not only to the teachers who have similar background like me but also to a healthy and harmonious classroom. If this research was available to me when I first started as a Chinese immersion school teacher, I could have gone through less struggles and adapt to the new teaching environment much sooner. This motivates me to spend my time and efforts to dive down to the problem and complete a high-quality research that can provide experience and advices to those who are facing these situations.

### **Summary**

Overall, I think this research focuses on a very practical and important topic that will have a positive impact on many teachers' professional development. My real-life experience and

conversations with other teachers indicated that these issues are not uncommon among teachers coming from similar background like me. A few most common issues, which also happened to me, may lead to serious outcomes if not solved. They were briefly explained in earlier paragraphs. It is very convincing that a thorough research on this topic will be particularly helpful for teachers to avoid similar struggles described earlier and this is the motivation drives me to go right into it and do some meaningful work.

The meaningful work needs to be built on the wisdom and hard work of other researchers. Review of a large amount of literature will help me establish my point of view and support the rationale for doing this project. It will also lay down a firm ground for this research project to go deeper and more impactful. Next chapter reviews the literature related to this project. The following chapter provides a detailed description of the project. Last chapter talks about reflection and conclusion of this research.

## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **Literature Review**

#### **Introduction**

In this research, I want to discuss how new Chinese immersion school teachers can improve their teaching skills and have a mindset of supporting and inspiring students, which is critical to their success in classrooms.

To be able to elaborate on this research topic and provide review of the conceptual issues related to the question, a large amount of literature is reviewed and reflected on. The literature provides theoretical foundation for the research. Some of them support the topic being discussed while some of them provide new perspectives and viewpoints that can enlarge the scope of the research and enhance the understanding of the fundamental issues hiding behind the question: how new Chinese immersion school teachers can improve their teaching skills and have a mindset of supporting and inspiring students, which is critical to their success in classrooms.

#### **Overview of the Chapter**

In the next section, I will talk about my review on the work that theorists and practitioners have researched and published in related topics. Listening to what the experts have to say is very helpful and eye-opening. A lot of these discussions provide very important theoretical support or insightful perspectives that explain the reasons why the issues exist and how they may affect the teaching and learning processes. I combined the sources that present specific findings and viewpoints are pertinent to my research question. First viewpoint starts from the social ideology differences between American and Chinese cultures. Second viewpoint is about expected patterns of teacher-student interaction. Third viewpoint focuses social positions of teachers and students in the two different cultural environments. Fourth viewpoints talk about learning and

teaching under the two education philosophies, respectively. Starting from the above four viewpoints, we will have a clearer picture of what creates the disconnection between eastern and western education and how this divergence causes new Chinese immersion school teachers to struggle in their transition to American classroom. We will also see the experts' in-depth analysis of these issues from the perspective of how it affects student's learning and teacher's teaching.

In the end of this chapter, I will summarize the viewpoints I concluded from reviewing the literature and how all of them help shape my research to have sound theoretical foundation and support, as well as analyzing the question from different angles and perspectives. An introduction and preview of how I will use the findings from this chapter in the next chapter will also be given to the reader at the end of this chapter.

### **Literature Review and Reflection**

The sources with similar information and viewpoints are combined and categorized into four topics pertinent to my research question. They will be elaborated in greater level of details in the following review section.

#### **Social Ideologies**

From my personal experience as well as what I learned from the literature, social ideologies have strong influences in teacher's mindsets and perception of teaching and learning processes. They are deeply rooted in the development of teacher's teaching philosophy which therefore influences all aspects of teacher's behavior in the classroom. The gap between eastern and western social ideologies plays an important role in developing two dramatically different types of education philosophies. Scholars also believe that social ideologies shape the beliefs and values of the individuals within a society in all aspects, and education is directly influenced by a society's social ideology. (Ma, 2014)

Researchers often point to Confucianism thoughts as a crucial force that shapes Chinese minds and determines the Chinese culture. In “East meet West in teacher preparation”, the authors believe Confucianism determined the collectivist nature of the Chinese society which is a complex system of moral, social, and political thought that has influenced China for centuries. Confucian thoughts centered on achieving harmony and emphasized the proper ritual of the society (Ames & Rosemont, 1998). According to Confucius, it is important to educate the young to make following rituals a tradition of their own and not to challenge the authority, which usually refers to the elders, teachers, and the rulers. Confucius put the greatest emphasis on education and emphasized unification and the idea of the whole; hence, individuality was not appreciated (Ma, 2014, 302-306; Yang, 2008).

The Confucian thoughts explain the collectivist nature of the Chinese society. Collectivism refers to “a perception of self that is embedded within social roles and social relationships; separate selves are de-emphasized with an orientation toward others and the welfare of the group or community” (Le & Stockdale, 2005, p. 682). When collectivism is highly appreciated in a society, individuals take on a particular location within the society. Individual equality, rights, and freedom become subordinate to moral conduct, public benefit, and social duty and responsibility (Zhang, 1988). Effort and diligence are highly valued in a collectivist society and human beings achieve the goal of self-perfection through self-criticism and self-cultivation (Chen & Uttal, 1988; Ma, 306-212). In 2011, the authors of *Learning and Teaching in the Chinese classroom*, Phillipson and Lam, also claim that the context of Chinese education is broadly reverberated by the Confucian philosophy. The main content is based on collectivist values, an emphasis on education, and will, power and a reliance on memorization.

Contrary to the collectivist nature of the Chinese society, Individualism is central to the American character (Chen & Uttal, 1988; Spence, 1985). Spence (1985) defined individualism as “the belief that each of us is an entity separate from every other and from the group and as such is endowed with natural rights” (p.1288). According to Traindis (1994), individuals are the basic units of perception in individualist cultures, and personal achievement, freedom, competition, and autonomy are highly valued. Behavior is more likely to be guided by attitudes and personality traits. Hence, members in an individualist society are more likely to pursue personal goals over group goals, and the construct of self is centered on self-reliance and self-confidence (Elkins, 1994). Zhao (2009) has also described the culture of American education as one that values individual differences and that includes an ingrained desire to protect individuality and creativity. This culture of education stands in contrast to others, including the cultures of education in China and in many Arabic-speaking countries that place a higher value on the collective than on the individual (Richardson, 2004; Zhao, 2009). Collectivism vs Individualism provides the cultural background between eastern and western education that help explain why many new Chinese teachers struggle with adjusting to American classroom. It is this mindset difference drives their teaching methods to focus on the collective of students instead of each individual.

While Gu (2006) also states in the research “An analysis of the impact of traditional Chinese culture on Chinese education” that, in traditional Chinese culture, the Confucian culture was the center, the author expanded on the viewpoint to further analyze the influence of it, saying that this was even more the case with the traditional education, ranging from its educational values to what and how it taught, with everything immersed in the spirit of Confucianism. Historically, the importance of education has been well stressed in China.

Education has been considered basic to the survival and stability of a nation. Therefore, education began to be operated as a national undertaking since the early history of China and it was highly prioritized in the founding of a nation. Given the importance of education in Chinese society, it leads to an education system that emphasizes exam score which is considered the best and only way to measure a student's academic performance. ZIKLOVÁ (2014) describes in his doctoral dissertation "Primary and Secondary Education in USA and China: Comparison of Approach and Purpose" the structure of the examination and school admission of Chinese education system. Start from "Zhong kao" (Senior High School Admission Exam) to "Gao Kao" (National College Entrance Exam). An outcome of this exam based assessment system is that memorization becomes the most efficient study approach as oppose to understanding and creative thinking. According to Lu (2010), who comments on the structure of the examination that the exams are similar to memory tests. They are composed to evaluate how well a pupil memorized the textbook contents and the key words. The regulation in format, range of literature, structure of the article and occasionally a title of the article are placed on the writing essay part.

From the literature reviewed, we can draw a conclusion that many experts believe education is directly influenced by a society's social ideology, which shapes the beliefs and values of the individuals within a society in all aspects. Different education philosophies are developed under the fairly different cultures between China and U.S. Chinese culture, with a deep influence from Confucius, emphasizes collectivism while U.S. culture, or western culture in general, emphasizes a great deal in individualism. This leads to a fundamentally different mindset in the teaching of Chinese immersion school teachers who grow up in this cultural background. Additionally, some researchers also think that the education system differences contribute to the formation of teacher's perspective toward education. This major difference permeates many aspects of the



teaching philosophy and is reflected in teacher's behaviors, including what is discussed in the following sections.

### **Patterns of Teacher-Student Interaction**

Teacher-student interaction is the key to successful teaching. So, is there any difference in the patterns of teacher-student interaction between Chinese and American teaching philosophy? If the answer is yes, what might have caused it? These are some questions I want to find out in this section. Many researchers had similar questions that inspired their in-depth analysis of this issue. In my review of related literature, I learned from other researchers' discoveries, which can help me answer these questions.

In the discussion from Hassan and Jamaludin (2010) about "Approaches & values in two gigantic educational philosophies: East and West", an overview of teacher-student relationship and interaction has been very well elaborated. In their perspective, the teacher-student relationship is a position of trust in which the teacher is in a position of authority and the student is in the position of being obligated to comply with the legal directives of the adult. Teachers are meant to be respected and sometimes students even have to bear with teachers' bad temper. In fact, teachers do act as a big boss who does not talk with the workers (students) directly most of the time. This is contrast with several research and attitude that should be demonstrated by teacher as some researchers such Chory & McCroskey(1999) suggest that teachers need to have more initiative to communicate with children, to increase the delegation of decisions to children and to be in the class more frequent.

Hassan & Jamaludin (2010) expanded on the topic to further compare western and eastern education philosophies and how it affects classroom interaction. In their opinion, western education philosophy emphasizes on active learning that involves students' active participation

in class and group discussions. Such education builds up students' confidence to speak in front of the class, which results in creating outspoken and confident individuals who do not fear to voice their thoughts. Besides, it also train students to tolerate and accept other's opinions, as well as developing their interpersonal skills as they exchange ideas with each other. In this way, students listen to other's ideas, and at the same time learn from their peers. However, active learning is a time-consuming process and may cause inability to complete teaching the syllabus but it can be encouraged by giving different kinds of exercise to the children (Mackenzie, 2007). As for the Eastern education, the teachers are fully responsible in performing the effective lessons, and this makes this philosophy implements passive learning in the class. The teachers do not encourage the students to voice out in giving their opinion while the teaching and learning process happen. Thus, students become demotivated and lose interest to the lesson. Since students have limited opportunity to voice their thoughts, it is no wonder that self-conscious and fear often get in their way when they speak in public. Some even prefer to keep their silence and refuse to speak. Thus, a good education philosophy should be an active process, but always accompanied with a good time management.

In Ma (2014) 's book "East meet West in teacher preparation: Crossing Chinese and American borders", the same topic is discussed from different angles. A comparison between eastern and western classroom interaction they draw in their book is: in collectivist societies, teachers usually form a more personal relationship with students and are expected to give preferential treatment to some students. They demand respect from students both inside and outside class and interpret intellectual disagreement as personal disloyalty. Students, alternatively, value the wisdom from teachers and do not contradict or criticize teachers in public. They believe that a formal harmony in learning situations should be maintained at all times.

Students also behave modestly, expect teachers to initiate communication, and speak up only when teachers invite them to do so. The students interpret silence in the classroom as being respectful and willingness to listen (Holmes, 2005). They prefer the structured question-answer format, think highly about unity, and expect teachers to outline the rules for them to follow. They consider failure in school a severe blow to their self-esteem. However, in U.S., teachers are expected to suppress emotion to be strictly impartial. They respect the independence of students, interpret intellectual disagreement as a stimulating exercise, openly praise students, and expect students to initiate communication and find their own ways of learning. Students, on the other hand, believe that knowledge and truth can be obtained from any competent person (it does not necessarily have to be the teacher). Students speak up spontaneously in large groups and are sometimes allowed to contradict or criticize teachers. They regard failure in school as a minor accident, and the effectiveness of learning is related to the amount of two-way communication in class.

Xu in 2012 emphasizes the importance of communication in the research of “Challenges native Chinese teachers face in teaching Chinese as a foreign language to non-native Chinese students in US classrooms”, stating that teaching a language is not only about teaching the language itself (Valdes, 1986). Efficient cross-cultural communication is also a significant component in foreign language education. In a multicultural classroom, in which teachers and students come from varied backgrounds, both may approach the situation with different cultural values and expectations about their roles (McKay, 1993). Thus, the complexity of teaching and learning increases when teaching is put into a context of cross-cultural practices. In order for native Chinese teachers to be effective with culturally diverse students, it is crucial that they first recognize and understand their own worldviews; only then will they be able to understand the

worldviews of their American students (M. J. Bennett, 1993). Researchers assert that in order for eastern teachers to interact effectively with their students they must confront their own biases (Banks, 1994; Gillette & Boyle-Baise, 1995; Nieto & Rolon, 1995), learn about their students' cultures, different learning styles and perceive the world through diverse cultural lenses (Banks, 1994; Gillette & Boyle-Baise, 1995; Nieto & Rolon, 1995; Sleeter, 1992). Chinese-language teachers who lack proper training tend to lack knowledge and strategies of effective teaching pedagogy, classroom management, and communication capacity with students, parents and other colleagues, etc. that align with the needs of American schools and usually create learners with low motivation and even chaotic classrooms (Stella, 2007).

In the research “Primary and Secondary Education in USA and China” (2014), ZIKLOVÁ, gives some examples of typical teacher-student interaction in traditional Chinese classroom, which more or less represent what I have observed in some Chinese immersion school classroom. Regulations have always been presented not only in the field of education. Rules have been created to help maintain discipline and focus on a particular task. In relation to education some of the regulations are similar in most cultures. For instance, raising a hand before one is allowed to talk or speaking after one is selected by the teacher. Other principles might be distinguished with a connection to the education policy. For example, the rules mentioned above are in China even more intensified by the fact that pupils have to stand up while speaking. As Echo Lu (2010), a Chinese student studying at Indiana University, pointed out in her online article *3 Big Differences Between Chinese and American Classroom Culture* that students in China are trained to obey their teacher 100%. Chinese students are also required to nod or bow every time they meet their teacher. This behavior is a symbol of propriety. As this career is the most respectful, students can never argue the opinion a teacher holds about the topics cover by book. There might

be a short time for discussing the issue but after the debate students will still be required to answer a question in a test the way the teacher explained the subject matter. With a connection to this issue, Chinese students are also trained not to present their opinions and raise any discussion that argues a different point of view to that presented by a teacher

In the research quoted above, researchers observed the existence of teacher-student interaction patterns don't fit in an American classroom. Also from my personal experience, these issues with teacher-student interaction cause difficulties for new teachers to adapt to American classroom and build strong relationship with their American students. These discoveries and conclusions from other researchers help diagnose the symptoms of less interactive classroom. The comparisons between eastern and western teacher-student interaction provide good solutions to teachers to quickly adjust their mindsets and accommodate to more interactive teaching skills.

The interaction between teacher and students sometimes is influenced by the perception of roles teacher and student should play in the classroom. Beyond interaction, the perception of roles has a greater significance in affecting effective teaching and learning.

### **Roles of Teacher and Student**

As illustrated above, the roles of teacher and student in the classroom is a great deal in terms of creating healthy and organic classroom environment and strengthening teacher-student relationship. If teacher's perception of role contradicts student's expectation, a barrier is likely to emerge and it becomes a hurdle to the communication and connection between teacher and students. This has also drawn researchers' attention to look into potential issues that bother the teachers.

First, I'd like to quote Xu (2012)'s opinion in the research, which brings up an interesting and convincing perspective. Chinese teachers who are familiar with teacher-centered learning or

teaching in China or Taiwan should adjust their teaching pedagogies and strategies to acclimate to U.S. classrooms. The great emphasis Chinese teachers place on “what to teach?” in a teacher-centered classroom should shift to “how my students learn?” in a U.S. student-centered classroom. It is interesting to note that the cultural perceptions Chinese teachers hold about the roles of the teacher, students, and parents greatly determine their expectations for the students and parents. Many new Chinese teachers expect their students to respect them at the beginning of the class because they perceive themselves as the “authority” of the classroom and expect students to be more disciplined and work harder completing their homework (Chen, 1988). However, teachers in the U.S. work harder to earn respect and do not simply take it for granted. American students see attending college as a personal choice rather than a privilege. Chinese teachers appear not to be satisfied with some unmotivated American students and their indifferent parents who are sometimes biased towards their child. The educational and cultural difference between China/Taiwan and the U.S. can cause native Chinese teachers to have unrealistic expectations for students and their parents (Marjorie & Melissa, 2011). Informing future native Chinese teachers of the differences in education can help them to mentally prepare in facing these challenges and adjust their expectations.

Ma (2014) view this topic from a cultural perspective and provide a glance at the context of how traditional teacher’s role is developed in China. The differences in mutual role expectations between teachers and students affect the learning process. According to Hofstede (1986), the roles teachers and students play under different cultures are guided by the values rooted in these cultures, and “lead to feelings of good and evil, right and wrong, rational and irrational, proper and improper” (p. 305; Ma, 2014, p.353-356). Historically, teachers in China have enjoyed a long-honored social status. They were one of the five categories of being who were more adored

by society: the God of Heave, the God of the Earth, the emperor, parents and teacher (Zhou, 1988). Teachers were expected to be the authority, the expert, the role model-the one that both students and parents looked up to (Pratt, 1992). Yang, Zheng, and Li (2006) explain the importance of achieving harmony in Chinese society: “It places social harmony as one of the key priorities and emphasizes social hierarchy and stability in order to achieve such harmony” (p. 349). In order to achieve harmony, younger and less experienced people are expected to respect seniors or more experienced people by obeying them and acting in a socially appropriate way in front of them. Challenging or acting inappropriately in front of seniors or more experienced people is seen as disrespectful. With respect to the relationship between teachers and students, teachers are seen as knowledge providers and experts. Therefore, students are expected to respect teachers and to avoid challenging them (Chan, 1999). Students who challenge or do not act appropriately in front of their teachers in Chinese society are seen as destroying harmony with, and being disrespectful to, their teachers. Students are expected to respect their teachers as authorities and accept the classroom rules and what is taught without question (Xu, 2012). The level of respect toward teachers is evident with the common Chinese idiom means “a teacher for a day is to be respected like a father for a lifetime.” (Ma, 2014, 1360-1382).

However, Teachers are classified as professionals in the U.S. Like a physician who treats patients and a lawyer who serves clients, a teacher serves students (Robb, 2006). Students in the United States can challenge their teacher’s views and speak their own minds (Xu, 2012)

In Hassan and Jamaludin’s (2010) research, some major differences between western and eastern education philosophy of roles have been discussed. From the view of Western education philosophy, the roles of students are recognized, by giving them the rights and respects within the teaching and learning process itself. They have the freedom and rights to take charge of their

own learning, as they are given the opportunity and freedom to manage their own learning process. Therefore, the teachers play their role as a facilitator than the knowledge producer to their students. Teachers are responsible to help and guide the students in their learning process rather than teaching them what to do. In this way, students are given the opportunity to take control of their own learning process. Furthermore, schools of the Western education also support and encourage students in self-management and in controlling their own learning process. This is where teachers come in to lead and guide the students by giving them guidelines in managing their learning process. In the classroom, children share more responsibility in their learning process and evaluation and assessment is conducted to see their capability and also how they will apply into it (Teel et al., 2001). Teachers of the Western education do play a role in guiding students to discover and develop their abilities and potentials. Compared to the Western education, Eastern education philosophy holds on to the concept of teaching. Students receive fully knowledge from the teachers inside the classroom. Students in a way receive knowledge in a rigid way as they only seem to learn and study straightly from the teachers. Thus, it is no doubt that a good teacher need to be very hardworking in delivering ideas, teaching and maintaining good relationship with their children (Gurney 2007).

Hofstede's (1986) work on the cross-cultural differences between teacher and student, as well as between the social positions that teachers and students hold in various cultures, recognized the potential difficulties in the implementation of educational models from one culture to another.

In China, the power and authority of the teacher extends beyond the classroom, as it is a profession that yields a high social status. Hu found that expecting teachers to relinquish power in the class- room contradicts cultural beliefs that are deeply held by teachers, students, their



parents, and the larger community. The transition into U.S. schools by language teachers who have been educated outside the United States is complex. There have been several studies that have investigated the effects and outcomes of student- teaching-abroad experiences of pre-service teachers from the United States (Barkhuizen & Feryok, 2006; Clement & Outlaw, 2002; Cushner & Mahon, 2002; Lee, 2009; Willard-Holt, 2001). Although these studies have indicated that U.S. pre-service student teachers who participated in short- term overseas student teaching programs were able to compare and contrast different educational systems, the participants returned to the United States to apply what they learned in a culture of education with which they were already familiar.

Additionally, Hassan and Jamaludin (2010) have some very informative and profound discussion about teacher's and student's roles in the teaching and learning process. They made sound comparison between eastern and western teaching philosophies and talked about different roles teacher and students play in the classroom. Their research indicated that teachers are fully responsible on the class effectiveness, by preparing and planning all the activities for their students. For instance, the students are not trained or required to do anything, but every materials are given by the teachers. Usually, they are not required to carry out any research on the topics that are going to be discussed in the next lesson, but only responsible to receive input from their teachers. Besides, students are not trained or encouraged to voice out their own views and perspectives. In certain cases, students are not allowed to even respond to the questions posed by the teacher as the questions are in a way meant only for teachers to answer rhetorical questions (Joyce Lin, 2008). According to Rohaty (1999), one of the reasons why the teachers are hardly implementing various innovative teaching strategies is due to the excessive attention on theory rather than in practical sense (Rohaty, 1999).

Eastern education philosophy holds on to the concept of teaching. Students receive fully knowledge from the teachers inside the classroom. Students in a way receive knowledge in a rigid way as they only seem to learn and study straightly from the teachers. Thus, it is no doubt that a good teacher need to be very hardworking in delivering ideas, teaching and maintaining good relationship with their children (Gurney 2007). Furthermore, in Western most students are given the right to manage and take charge of their own learning. Such education focuses on development on individual soft skill, by encouraging the students to be initiative, independent and responsible for their own learning process.

On the other hand, teachers in Eastern education are seen as “knowledge providers” and students act as “knowledge receiver”, instead of practicing students centered learning, which is self-discovery. This situation creates challenge on teachers in the formal system to increase children participation in learning Suffean Hussin. (1996). As a result, students depend on teachers, less initiative, refuse to think and generate new idea. Nonetheless, the teachers are more responsible, as they make sure their students are well-equipped with sufficient knowledge and skills to prepare them for the future. In addition, Eastern education is more systematic with standardized syllabus and timetable. Apparently, to avoid abuse and spoon-feeding, either education cannot be fully implemented, but wisely used by the institutions and teachers based on the suitability of a situation. Apart from that, the students are also has been given an opportunity to express their ability and talent by analyzing and solve problems on their own. This is through the effort by the teachers in assigning them beforehand, to do research on their own, regarding certain topics that will be discussed in the following lesson. By doing this, every student is given a chance to learn to search for relevant information. In fact, according to Thornton (1995), the problem solving process becomes one of the basis on children for their critical mental

development. Thus, it can be said that education development in the West including thinking skill, problem solving and communication skill which has been integrated well in the western philosophy itself. (Hassan & Jamaludin, 2010)

Xu (2012) holds different perspective in the research about “Challenges native Chinese teachers face in teaching Chinese as a foreign language to non-native Chinese students in US classrooms”. The paper starts from an angle focusing on the challenges some Chinese teachers encounter in their transition to U.S. classroom. The author states that Chinese teachers transitioning into U.S. classroom may feel offended when challenged if they position themselves as the “power” and “authority” of the classroom in which no student is supposed to confront them (Guo, 2002; Wang, 2005). Chinese teachers need to drop their false expectations that they may have held about teachers as the authority of the classroom. They need to reconsider their roles as a teacher to align more with U.S. teaching practices. How those teachers position themselves as a teacher in Chinese immersion school in U.S. setting seems to be the key that will affect their future teaching style and how they interact with students. Chinese teachers need to perceive their role as shifting from being “a professional authority” to becoming more of a “facilitator” assisting students to accomplish tasks cooperatively with their peers. They are the one who helps students construct their own understanding and students are the real “protagonists” in the student-oriented American classroom environment. (Xu, H., 2012)

Researchers, from different perspectives, express their viewpoints about the roles of teacher and students in the classroom and how the definition of roles in the classroom can dramatically affect teaching and learning process. If the teacher stresses his or her power and authority in the classroom, passive learning is likely to be developed and the interaction between teacher and students can hardly proceed due to students’ negative feelings about participation in learning.

The importance of well-defined roles of teacher is highly stressed by the researchers and it is considered a necessity to successful classroom. As we have discussed cultures, roles and classroom interaction, it is also very important to look closer at how the teaching and learning are influenced by the mindsets, techniques, methodologies and perspectives of teacher and students.

### **Teaching and Learning**

Teaching and learning is a heavily focused and discussed area where many experts and professionals made a lot of efforts to improve and develop. Many insightful solutions are also proposed to ensure high quality teaching and learning occurring in the classroom.

Most of the perceptions of teaching and learning held by the Chinese teachers were greatly influenced by their past learning and teaching experiences as well as the culture of education in China (Xu, 2012). Traditional Chinese education prefers passive learning in students. Teachers believe that students learn by memorizing the facts in the textbooks (Joyce Lin, 2008). In China, the system of education is exam oriented, and teachers have to rush through the textbooks to prepare students to sit for the tests. As a result, students tend to memorize the facts in the textbooks rather than understanding it due to time constraint. Students are trained to take notes directly when the teachers are teaching. In class, they have lots of school rules to follow and such rules main aim is to produce perfect students. In addition, students are not encouraged to voice out their own views and perspective, and receive fully knowledge from the teachers inside the classroom.

Hassan and Jamaludin (2010) also thinks students of the Western education philosophy appear as active learners in the classroom, as the teaching and learning process not focusing on teacher-centered, but more on are active learners in the classroom. It encourages the students to

be active in giving and sharing the ideas, which is maximizing their role as a students than the teacher in creating the effective learning and teaching activity (Joyce Lin, 2008). For instance, they are very much encouraged to think and voice their views whenever they are involved in group discussion or carried out the given assignment. The students are then required to present it to the entire class. This enables them to participate not only during class time, but also to help them to be actively involved in the learning process even out of the classroom.

People in U.S. believe that the best education is mean to form the society to become a cultural nation in regard of their education and education aim, where the children will be open minded and tend to give ideas (Kruger, et. al, 1990). They will critically evaluate rather than just memorizing. Most American teachers stress on activating learning on students. They believe students learn by understanding. When students do not need to memorize what they have learnt but rather understand what they are learning, it gives the students opportunities to understand the topic that they are learning in a deeper way (Hassan and Jamaludin 2010). In addition, they also have more time to have group discussions with their fellow classmates and also to do some research on the topic assigned. In U.S., good learners are characterized as active learners who interact socially with others (Ma, 2015). During the class, students are encouraged to express and share their creativity and own perspectives. Teachers encourage them to express their ability and talent by analyzing and solving problems on their own. Students who are taught in such environment are not afraid to be different or make mistakes, as their teachers look at student's mistakes positively and the way to learn (Hassan & Jamaludin, 2010).

Many Chinese teacher reported that they all experienced great difficulty in transferring their way of teaching using “the way they were taught” into the “American way of teaching” (Xu, H., 2012). “The Chinese way of teaching” focused on delivering facts and knowledge in order to

score high on standardized tests (Julian, 2001). According to the Ministry of Education in China (2001), teachers were encouraged to be the facilitator, guiders, and task participants. However, the Confucian values of following rituals keep putting teachers at center stage in classrooms as the authority and the expert (Xie, 2009). Many teachers in China still prefer passive learning in students, and play the role as knowledge producer to the students. Other reason is exams in Chinese education system hold most substantial weight. This pressure comes from both home as well as the country. Exams scores are taken very seriously by the Chinese people, they believe that scores and certificates represent the ability. The expectation for high grades has become ingrained in the Chinese culture, as well in Chinese teachers. American teachers help and guide the students in their own learning process rather than teach them what to do. They play the role as facilitator in class, support and encourage students in self-management and in controlling their own learning process. Through giving student guidelines in managing their learning process, teachers help them discover and develop their abilities and potentials.

In addition, American teachers' pay more attention on support everyone's learning individually, as U.S. is usually characterized as being individualistic in nature, placing more emphasis on the individual rather than the group (Ginsberg 1992) however Chinese teachers are more focus on improving the learning a whole class. In America, the arts and sports are highly encouraged from a young age. In China, there is usually no time for the creative arts or sports, leaving a system that continues to focus on memorization and test scores. This teacher-oriented approach seemed not to work with American students. Chinese teachers face the formidable task of shifting their teacher-oriented approaches.

### **Summary**

In Chapter 2, a review summary of a large amount of literature is presented to the reader to listen to what experts and professional say about related topics. Ideas and perspectives are developed in the process of reviewing the work from other researchers. These materials are therefore being reflected on by the writer to help shape a strong discussion around the research question: how new Chinese immersion school teachers can improve their teaching skills and have a mindset of supporting and inspiring students, which is critical to their success in classrooms. Quotes from a number of books and papers are presented as supporting ideas surround this topic to provide solid theoretical foundation to further build upon. From the four representative viewpoints: social ideologies, patterns of teacher-student interaction, roles of teacher and students in the classroom, teaching and learning, the sources are combined and categorized to give the writer and reader a picture of prevailing views and perspectives many experts embrace.

Now we can draw a conclusion that education is directly influenced by a society's social ideology, which shapes the beliefs and values of the individuals within a society in all aspects. Different education philosophies are developed under the fairly different cultures between China and U.S. Chinese culture, with a deep influence from Confucius, emphasizes collectivism while U.S. culture, or western culture in general, emphasizes a great deal in individualism. Western education philosophy emphasizes on active learning that involves students' active participation in class and group discussions. As for the Eastern education, the teachers are fully responsible in performing the effective lessons, which tend to make this philosophy implement passive learning in the class. Additionally, great emphasis Chinese teachers place on "what to teach?" in a teacher-centered classroom should shift to "how my students learn?" in a U.S. student-centered classroom. This is one of the key viewpoints pertaining to the role of teacher and students in

teaching and learning process. Last but not least, good teaching and learning practices and skills are keys to successful classrooms with active learning, proactive classroom interaction, effective learning, creative thinking, so on and so forth.

Base on the literature reviewed in this chapter, it reaffirms that this research question has its practical meaning as well as great significance among new Chinese immersion school teachers. An in-depth investigation of these issues can help diagnose many symptoms new teacher experience in their transition to U.S. classroom and also propose effective solutions to improve their teaching skills and classroom performance.



## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **Project Description**

#### **Introduction**

Over the course of a year teaching in a Chinese immersion school, I have developed a very strong interest to research how new Chinese immersion school teachers can improve their teaching skills and have a mindset of supporting and inspiring students, which I think is critical to their success in classrooms. My aspiration for diving into this topic was spurred by my own experience of struggling with adapting to American classroom and transforming my teaching skills and mindset I got from my teaching career in China. For my Capstone project, I hope to design a website where teachers can find useful information like real classroom case studies, analysis of the root cause of the problems and useful suggestions that can assist teachers like me to overcome these difficulties and have a successful beginning of their teacher career in U.S. With the impetus of reaching the research goal, I put a lot of thoughts into the project which I will illustrate in detail in the following sections.

#### **Overview of the Chapter**

In the next sections, I will describe and explain the research methods. Beginning with an overview of the project, I will elaborate on the game plan on how to progress with the project and design a feasible, efficient and effective research. A good research framework with strong theoretical supports is the key to successful implementation of the research plan. The framework and theories applied during the research will be described in details. They work as guidelines to ensure the soundness and meaningfulness of the research. Next, I will describe the settings of the study and who the audiences are. This can help the reader better understand the context of the research. Then the project plan will be described and explained in details. Lastly, implementation

timeframe and personal deadlines to complete project will be estimated and provided. The timeline is important to keep the research progress on track and make sure it can be completed before deadline.

### **Overview of the Project**

The project focuses on creating a website that is informative and providing resources to help new Chinese immersion school teachers who are having a hard time adjusting to U.S. classrooms and hope to help improve their teaching skills and have a mindset of supporting and inspiring students. A research method that emphasizes the importance of collecting real life examples and information will be implemented. The choice of a practical research method can ensure the project always concerns teachers and students in their everyday teaching and learning process.

The entire research method is built on solid education theories. With the support and foundation of education theories learn through curriculum or literature review, various research methods were considered and discussed. Among all the methods, more practical and efficient method was preferred because I expect the research to be able to solve real classroom problems and help teachers in their daily work. Through the discussion of this topic, I hope these issues could draw more attention and steer new teachers to seek useful advices. Therefore, I put an emphasis on real classroom situations and connect those situations to my research question. By analyzing real classroom situation, it can draw a clearer picture of teachers' perception and understanding of teaching or learning.

Ultimately, effective solutions will be advised to teachers who face these issues. Derived from solid theoretical supports and comprehensive research, these solutions can help teachers improve their teachings skills and have a mindset that suits student's needs for effective and inspiring teaching environment.

One effective way of doing this is to create a website that describe real life cases teacher may encounter in their daily work and start from there analyze the different teaching philosophy between U.S. classroom and Chinese classroom. The comparison will help teachers to have a clearer understanding of what the differences are. They may start to find this is similar to their own struggles and difficulties. Having teachers resonate with these situations in the cases is an important element to help them break down the problems and solve them with education theories and teaching experience, which will be provided following the case studies. Base on this design, the website will have four pages besides the home page. Each of the four pages is dedicated to focus on one major topic discussed in my research. The page starts with real classroom situations developed from my own experience or what I heard about from my colleagues. Following the cases, there will be deep analysis of the cases about why this is happening, what causes the different behaviors of teacher or students, what is the theoretical support behind these situations and, last but not least, suggestions on how to create a better learning experience for students as well as help Chinese teachers to adjust to this new teaching philosophy. References will be attached to the end of the webpage so teachers can easily find articles that can help them, just like how they had helped me.

After building up the website, I plan to present my project to a group of new Chinese immersion teachers in my school, who will also be invited to visit the website. They are encouraged to leave comments about what they learned as well as share their own stories and experiences. There is a bulletin board on the website for teachers to make such comments as well as share with fellow teachers about their struggles, experiences, advice or real life stories.

I will evaluate the effectiveness of the website by getting feedbacks from my colleagues who are invited to use the website. After other Chinese immersion teachers in my school and I

use the website and gather more ideas, we will be able to assess the relevance of the information, the usefulness of the tools, and the ease of navigating the website. Base on the feedbacks along with any new ideas or thoughts developed in this process, I will make further improvements to the website and make it a better place to serve others.

### **Research Method and Supporting Theories**

The research method selected focuses on connecting theories with real classroom situations. Identifying the problems in real life context and providing theoretical supports are two important aspects of this method. I chose this project because it is a very practical question in my daily work of teaching students. More than my personal experience, I also noticed I was not alone from my conversation with my peers and classroom observation.

From the research I've done so far and the literature I've reviewed, I found some fundamental theories can be utilized to complete the project. Student-centered learning is to put students' interests first and acknowledging student's voice as central to the learning experience. This is a method of teaching that shifts the focus of instruction from teacher to students and focuses on skills and practices that enable lifelong learning and independent problem-solving.

Base on the constructivist learning theory, which is learned in Teaching Science class, it stresses on the learners' critical role in constructing meaning from new information and prior experience. Constructivism is a philosophical viewpoint about the nature of knowledge. Constructivism generally rejects the view that a learner acquires knowledge passively by merely receiving it from an objective world and external reality (Lowenthal and Muth 2008). Instead, it holds that knowledge is gained when the learner takes the lead in knowledge-constructing activities (Phillips 1995; Fosnot 1996; Prawat 1996; Hausfather 2001). The teacher functions more as a facilitator who coaches, mediates, prompts, and helps students develop and assess their

understanding, and thereby their learning. One of the teacher's biggest jobs becomes asking good questions.

Positive teacher-student relationship learned in Theory to Practice class tells us that students who have positive relationships with their teachers use them as a secure base from which they can explore the classroom and school setting both academically and socially, to take on academic challenges and work on social-emotional development (Hamre & Pianta, 2001)

These education theories provide strong support for my research and are also sources of proposed advice to teachers. Understand and comprehend these theories and apply them in practical teaching is crucial to build positive teacher-student relationships, inspire student's interest and curiosity, suffice student's reasonable needs in the classroom.

### **Settings and Audience of the Study**

The project takes place in YY School, which was founded in 2006. It is a Chinese immersion charter public school in the United States. YY School serves students in grades K-4 with a full immersion curriculum. Introduction of English language teaching is delayed until grade 2. In grades 5 through 8, instruction switches to a 50 percent Chinese, 50 percent English model. The school's curriculum team creates cutting-edge curriculum recognized nationally and internationally for its effectiveness, leading to bi-literacy in Mandarin Chinese and English for all students. It covers all State Standards and the Core Knowledge Sequence, building both subject area knowledge and Mandarin fluency from year to year.

The website will target new Chinese immersion school teachers who are having a hard time adjusting to U.S. classrooms because of different teaching philosophy, different mindset, inadequate teaching skills, or lack of knowledge about western classroom. Not only limited to new teachers who teach in Chinese immersion school, the audience may also include readers

who are interested in knowing the different teaching philosophy between western and eastern education system and how the difference may affect teaching and learning process.

### **Project Timeline**

The project starts at the beginning of 2019 spring semester. From January to March, the focus is on gathering materials for the website and learning how to develop a website. In the meanwhile, I will put some thoughts into how to structure the website and how the information will be effectively presented to the audience.

In March to April timeframe, I will focus on talking to professors and experts in the area to seek their assistance and designing the website. In mid-April when the website prototype is in a good shape, it will be presented to my Chinese immersion colleagues for feedback. By end of April, the website will be finalized by making further improvements to the prototype base on feedbacks.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### Conclusion

### Introduction

Over the course of teaching in Chinese immersion school in the past year, I faced many challenges teaching in such a completely new environment that is very different from the culture and education system of the country I grew up in. I really struggled at the beginning and experienced a lot of difficulties in the classrooms. These problems affected the teaching and learning processes, which made me realize that it needs to draw more attention from new teachers to find effective solutions to adapt to the new environment and develop the mindset that suits American education. It is the key to success in their early teaching career for new Chinese immersion school teachers who are or will go through the transition just as I went through. In order to help teacher adjust to the new environment and develop more effective and efficient teaching skills by understanding how to better support and inspire students in their classrooms, I decided to research about the question: *How new Chinese immersion school teachers can improve their teaching skills and have a mindset of supporting and inspiring students?* After a large amount of research and literature review, I created a website that focuses on issues facing many new Chinese immersion school teachers who have similar struggles transitioning to the new teaching environment under an education system that is significantly different from the system they grow up in. Starting from classroom experiences and real examples, the discussion includes thorough analysis of what's causing the issues and then go deeper to discuss the supporting education theories that can help new Chinese immersion school teachers with their transition.

A core project of the research is designing a website to provide resources to help new Chinese immersion school teachers who are having a hard time adjusting to U.S. classrooms. The purpose is to help improve their teaching skills and develop a mindset of supporting and inspiring students. Through the website, I hope new Chinese immersion teachers can find on the website useful information like real classroom case studies, analysis of the root cause of the problems and useful suggestions based on theoretical supports. These resources can assist new teachers to better understand the problems, overcome these difficulties and have a successful beginning of their teacher career in U.S. It is also a place for teachers to share their stories, experiences, ideas, opinions, questions, struggles, frustrations, or anything else they'd like to share with fellow Chinese immersion school teachers.

### **Project Description**

After reviewing the work that theorists and practitioners have researched and published on related topics, I combined the sources that present specific findings and viewpoints are pertinent to my research question. The website is laid on the foundation of several key findings through researching and reviewing large amount of literature. In order to communicate these key findings to readers, the website is designed to include the following pages:

First Home Page: “Power Your Potential In Teaching”. It illustrates the purpose and goal of my website with an introduction of the content and structure of the website: every page starts from classroom experiences and real examples and goes on to discussions include deep analysis of what's causing the issues and lastly, drill down to the education theories that can help the readers with solving their problems and accelerating transitions. The home page is entitled “Power Your Potential In Teaching” because I think every teacher has their unrealized potential to bring their teaching to the next level. However, sometimes they lack the skills and knowledge



to fulfill their potential. How to deal with the things that hinder their growth and uncover their true abilities and talents? This is the goal of my research and I hope it can help the teachers who visit the website power their potential by developing good teaching skills and mindset. It is the key to their success in Chinese immersion teaching.

The next four pages illustrate the core reasons that new teachers are having difficulties in their transitions and propose potential solutions to the problems with the help of profound theoretical supports. The page starts with a real classroom situation developed from my own experience or what I heard about from my colleagues. Following the cases, there will be a deep analysis of the cases about why this is happening, what causes the different behaviors of teacher or students, what is the theoretical support behind these situations and, last but not least, suggestions on how to create a better learning experience for students as well as help Chinese teachers to adjust to this new teaching philosophy.

The first reason is Social Ideologies. From the literature reviewed, many experts believe education is directly influenced by a society's social ideology, which shapes the beliefs and values of the individuals within a society in all aspects. Different education philosophies are developed under the fairly different cultures between China and U.S. Chinese culture, with a deep influence from Confucius, emphasizes collectivism while U.S. culture, or western culture in general, emphasizes a great deal in individualism. This leads to a fundamentally different mindset in the teaching of Chinese immersion school teachers who grow up in this cultural background. Additionally, some researchers also think that the education system differences contribute to the formation of teacher's perspective toward education. This major difference permeates many aspects of the teaching philosophy and is reflected in teacher's behaviors.

Second reason is Teacher-Student Interaction. Teacher-student interaction is the key to successful teaching. The difference in the patterns of teacher-student interaction between Chinese and American teaching philosophy cause difficulties for new Chinese teachers to adapt to American classroom and build strong relationship with their American students. The comparisons between eastern and western teacher-student interaction provide good solutions to new Chinese teachers to quickly adjust their mindsets and accommodate to more interactive teaching skills. Influenced by Confucian teaching, past and present Chinese teachers enjoy their prestigious status as transmitters of knowledge and cultivators for the young generation (Leng, 2005). In collectivist societies, teachers usually form a more personal relationship with students and are expected to give preferential treatment to some students. The teachers are fully responsible in performing the effective lessons. Students are not encouraged to voice out in giving their opinion while the teaching and learning process happen. However, U.S. education philosophy emphasizes on active learning that involves students' active participation in class and group discussions. Teachers are expected to suppress emotion to be strictly impartial. They respect the independence of students, interpret intellectual disagreement as a stimulating exercise, openly praise students, and expect students to initiate communication and find their own ways of learning.

Third reason is Classroom Roles. The importance of well-defined roles of teacher is a necessity to successful classroom. If teacher's perception of role contradicts student's expectation, a barrier is likely to emerge and it becomes a hurdle to the communication and connection between teacher and students. Historically, teachers in China have enjoyed a long-honored social status. Teachers were expected to be the authority, the expert, the role model-the one that both students and parents looked up to (Pratt, 1992). Students are expected to respect

their teachers as authorities and accept the classroom rules and what is taught without question (Xu, 2012). Students who challenge or do not act appropriately in front of their teachers in Chinese society are seen as destroying harmony with, and being disrespectful to, their teachers. However, In U.S, teachers are classified as professionals, like a physician who treats patients and a lawyer who serves clients, a teacher serves students (Robb, 2006). Students in the United States can challenge their teacher's views and speak their own minds (Xu, 2012). Teachers play their role in guiding students to discover and develop their abilities and potentials, and act as a facilitator than the knowledge producer to their students. Chinese teachers transitioning into U.S. classroom may feel offended when challenged if they position themselves as the "power" and "authority" of the classroom in which no student is supposed to confront them (Guo, 2002; Wang, 2005). Chinese teachers need to drop their false expectations that they may have held about teachers as the authority of the classroom. They need to reconsider their roles as a teacher to align more with U.S. teaching practices. The great emphasis Chinese teachers place on "what to teach?" in a teacher-centered classroom should shift to "how my students learn?" in a U.S. student-centered classroom. New Chinese immersion school teaches should see themselves as practicing student-centered learning, which is self-discovery, instead of "knowledge providers" and students act as "knowledge receiver".

Fourth reason, which is also the last of the four webpages, is Teaching and Learning. Many Chinese teacher reported that they all experienced great difficulty in transferring their way of teaching using "the way they were taught" into the "American way of teaching" (Xu, H., 2012). "The Chinese way of teaching" focused on delivering facts and knowledge in order to score high on standardized tests (Julian, 2001). Because exams in Chinese education system hold most substantial weight. This pressure comes from both home as well as the country. Exams

scores are taken very seriously by the Chinese people, they believe that scores and certificates represent the ability. The expectation for high grades has become ingrained in the Chinese culture, as well in Chinese teachers. However, People in U.S. believe that the best education is mean to form the society to become a cultural nation in regard of their education and education aim, where the children will be open minded and tend to give ideas (Kruger, et. al, 1990). In U.S., good learners are characterized as active learners who interact socially with others (Ma, 2015). American teachers help and guide the students in their own learning process rather than teach them what to do. They play the role as facilitator in class, support and encourage students in self-management and in controlling their own learning process. New Chinese teachers' teacher-oriented approach will not work with their American students. New Chinese teachers face the formidable task of shifting their teacher-oriented approaches.

Besides pages introduced earlier, there's a Bulletin Board page which is created for teachers to make comments as well as share with fellow teachers about their struggles, experiences, advice or real life stories. References are attached at the end of the webpage so teachers can easily find articles that can help them, just like how they had helped me.

### **Limitations of the Project**

In this section, I will discuss the limitations of my website and hopefully will improve them in the future. I'm new to website design and it was a great learning opportunity as well as great challenges. Due to my lack of background in website design, I did some research and chose a website that provides services to beginners who don't have enough knowledge and skills. I took advantage of the templates provided and start building my website on it. But it did limit my ability to change the layout of the pages to better present the contents to readers. When it comes to the contents of the website, I struggled with condensing the research and summarizing it in a

concise and clear language. I had to review my research again and again to extract the more important contents. The website includes as much information as it can without overwhelming the reader but there's still a lot of grounds not covered. I came up with a way to use cases as a introduction to the issues but the readers may not echo with it if they don't have similar experiences. And the theoretical supports may be too academic for certain readers. If they are not familiar with these education theories, they will have a hard time understanding it and may lose interest in the discussion. A better explained suggestions in layman's terms may be a better approach to present the website. And more than one case could do a better job when illustrating and analyzing the problems. It makes it less academic and more fun to read.

Additionally, due to time constraint, the website only has words and pictures but it lacks other factors such as graphs, diagrams, symbols, audios, videos, etc. A multimedia presentation of the content will be more effective and can help readers to digest.

Lastly, the website is now only available in English but not in Chinese. Offering another language option may make it better accepted by a larger audience.

### **Implications of the Project**

In this section, I will discuss the implications of the project. First, I will address how the website helps expand the research and puts up good discussions about the research question in a real life context. Second, I will then predict how the website will impact fellow new Chinese immersion school teachers. Lastly, I will explore future research topics and talk about improvements.

My research question is, *How new Chinese immersion school teachers can improve their teaching skills and have a mindset of supporting and inspiring students?* The website I created answers this question by providing practical classroom cases followed by in-depth analysis from

objective and professional perspectives that aim to find out the issues. The classroom cases are based on my own experiences, my observation when auditing classes or learned from colleagues in meetings and conversations. These situations are what's actually happening in some new teachers' classrooms that affect learning and teaching. I collected these cases and reflected on them when I'm doing my research. I created these cases to represent the real issues we find in the school. I would expect other teachers to resonate with them since it's likely that similar situations are happening in their classrooms too. These cases expand the research question as it goes beyond academic realm but reaches to the practical everyday teaching. It provides a real life context for teachers to understand the problems and attract them to go deeper to the root causes. When they read the attached analysis, they'll be able to see what really is hindering the teaching and learning in these classroom situations. Why the students are not interacting with teachers? Why the teachers seemingly did a good job but students cannot fully understand the knowledge? What slows down the development of the trust and close relationship between students and teacher? With all the question marks the teachers have, they'll find the answers when they follow along. With the deep analysis, major issues are identified and explained to the readers. And it doesn't just stop here, the recommendation given at the end is also the key to help teacher with the research findings. It is the goal to use the findings and conclusions from the research to ultimately help teachers with their struggles and overcome them. The website definitely undertakes this important task and works as an intermediary to accomplish the goal of communicate the message clearly and effectively.

One implication of my website is that it may raise awareness of the fact that the cultural differences between U.S. and China may have been the real reason behind the different education philosophies and mindsets. It also leads to different teaching skills and classroom interactions

between students and teachers. If new teachers are very well educated on this, it will help them a lot in the transitions. They can avoid some typical difficulties new teachers have because they have the knowledge of the underlying root cause of them so they can pay attention to them in their classrooms and develop the mindset suits American education. Not just teachers, but students will benefit from it. I hope the website offers the information teachers needed to make their transition easier and their teaching more effective.

This website is an experiment to build an online communication platform for teachers to learn and communicate with each other. Instead of traditional ways of reading books and articles, attending meetings and conferences, the website could be a alternative way for teachers to learn and share with easy immediate access to the resources. And there are also academic research papers recommended on the website when they are interested in specific topic and would like to know more. I believe this is a new efficient way for teachers to grow in the professional career together and help each other for the well-being of our students and schools. To continue expanding the research and improve the website, I will invite more fellow colleagues to use the website and provide valuable feedbacks to make it a better website. Given their feedbacks and suggestions, I will improve the website's content, layout, user interaction and information sharing capabilities. I'm very excited about the future continuing development of the website and hope it'll benefit more teachers.

### **Author's Reflection**

In this section, I will tell how I grew and what I learned about myself during the Capstone process and how my graduate studies have influenced my future plans.

First of all, the researching process has helped me grow a lot. During the research, I reviewed a large amount of literature that gave me systematic knowledge about this topic from

different perspectives through various research methods. They have helped me form a wholistic view of the questions and get to know how to address my research. With the knowledge learned from literature review, talking to experienced teachers and professors, I gradually realized that the question is not as simple as I thought. What I knew previously only touches on the appearances of the problems but definitely not profound enough to thoroughly address the question. I learned that I needed to find the root causes behind the scene to analyze why these issues exist. This new mindset brought me to investigate what actually caused the transition to be so difficult. As I did more and more research, I gradually drew the conclusion that the issues are not limited to adjusting to new environment, learning new teaching skills, knowing how to communicate and interact with students. The root causes are lying on the fundamental differences between the two education systems or even the differences between western and eastern cultures to a deeper level. When I discovered these fundamental reasons behind the phenomenon, the scope and view of my research opened up to answer the questions to a deeper level. I found myself grow in this process of learning. It helps my future teaching as well as researching.

Additionally, through this research, I opened up my mind to embrace more critical and broader thinking. I started to ask myself questions that are not limited to the exact questions I'm trying to solve but also to why this is happening and what causes this to exist. I learned how to critically review the literatures and form a comprehensive view of my own by reading a large amount of literature. For example, I started my research by asking how to quickly adjust to the new environment and make the transition easier. Then I focused on looking for the research that answers this immediate questions. However, as I read more and more, I realized that it's not as simple as "how to change myself to adapt to this new environment" but instead to think about how to bring the advantages of different education philosophies together and form a philosophy



that's even better than any of the two. Instead of thinking about which is better but to think about ultimately what is the best for students and what can help students grow comprehensively. The mindset of switching to focus on teaching skills and philosophies to focus on student's needs is an important point during my research.

There are a lot more research and exploration to do to answer the question what is the best for students. It is very exciting for me to find there are much more I can do on this research topic. I'd like to continue my research in the future to answer this question. Look to combine the advantages of both education system and provide new teachers advice not only on how to make it a easier transition but also on how to be a better educator with the advantage from both education philosophies and different cultures. I deeply believe this will expand the scope of my research and make a greater contribution in the future.

I will also spend more time on researching how to give valuable advice to new Chinese immersion school teachers. Built on the academic foundation and education theories, I want to provide more practical advice to teachers with more details. Not just high level recommendations but an easier to follow instructions focusing on details about how to interact with students, how to put student at the center of the classroom, how to form healthy classroom roles, etc.

I will also put more efforts into attracting more teachers to share their knowledge and ideas. Help each other and learn from each other. The online community should be a home for fellow Chinese immersion school teachers to begin and grow as an educator, with the goal to power their potential in Chinese immersion education.

### **Conclusion**

My research question is *How new Chinese immersion school teachers can improve their teaching skills and have a mindset of supporting and inspiring students?* After intensive and

extensive research on this question, I come up with conclusions that answer the questions as well as set me up for future research to further expand the topic. To accomplish the goal of putting my research findings to actually help new Chinese immersion school teachers, I designed a website that presents the research in a comprehensive way. With conclusions built on a large amount of literature review and profound thinking, the website can help teachers improve their teaching skills and develop a mindset that aims to support and inspire students in American classroom. The website is a very good experiment to use internet as a new way to help teachers learn and grow, to provide a platform for them to share and communicate. The website provides teachers convenient access to valuable information about teaching. During the course of the research and project, I also grew a lot as a teacher and a researcher. My view and knowledge have been expanded. This research will continue to be further built on and the website will be improved to better help teachers.

## Appendix A

### Screen Shots of My Website

[Home](#) [Social Ideologies](#) [Teacher-Student Interaction](#) [Classroom Roles](#) [Teaching and Learning](#) [Bulletin Board](#) [Resources](#) [Contact Us](#)

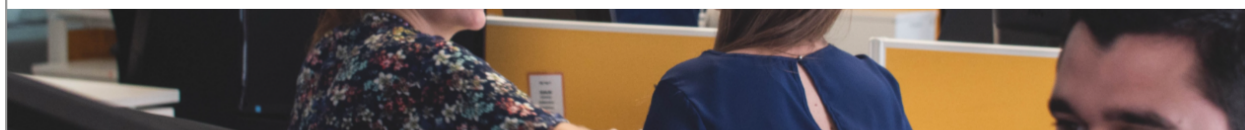


## WELCOME



This site focuses on issues facing many new Chinese immersion school teachers who have similar struggles transitioning to the new teaching environment under an education system that is significantly different from the system they grow up in.

[Home](#) [Social Ideologies](#) [Teacher-Student Interaction](#) [Classroom Roles](#) [Teaching and Learning](#) [Bulletin Board](#) [Resources](#) [Contact Us](#)

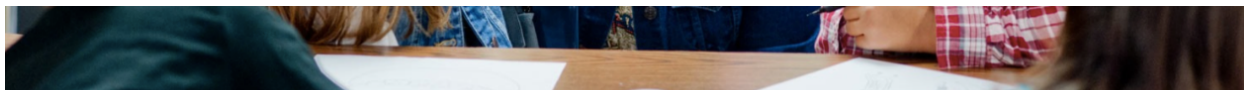


**Social ideologies** have strong influences in teacher's mindsets and perception of teaching and learning processes. They are deeply rooted in the development of teacher's teaching philosophy which therefore influences all aspects of teacher's behavior in the classroom. The gap between eastern and western social ideologies plays an important role in developing two dramatically different types of education philosophies. (Ma, 2014)

In "East meet West in teacher preparation", the authors believe Confucianism determined the collectivist nature of the Chinese society which is a complex system of moral, social, and political thought that has influenced China for centuries. Confucian thoughts centered on achieving harmony and emphasized the prosperity of the society (Amar & Rosemont, 1999). According to Confucius, it is important to

#### Key words:

*Confucianism*  
*Collectivist*  
*Unification*  
*Self-perfection*  
*Self-criticism*  
*Individualism*



Teacher-student interaction is the key to successful teaching. So, is there any difference in the patterns of teacher-student interaction between Chinese and American teaching philosophy? If the answer is yes, what might have caused it? Let's take a look at Yang Laoshi's case and see how we can help her.

#### Case Study:

Yang Laoshi teaches a math class and her topic today is multiplication. She gives an example of multiplying a number by 10, 100 and 1000. Yang Laoshi puts down the examples on the black board and writes down the answers. She explains to students that this is very easy to do because you can simply add a "0" after the number when it multiplies by 10, add two "0"s when multiply by 100 and three "0"s when multiply by 1000. Yang Laoshi expects students to memorize the trick for the practices she will give later on. To help students memorize it, she asks students to do some whole group exercises to solve some questions. After she feels students know how to do

#### Key words:

*Confucianism*  
*Collectivist*  
*Respect*  
*Interaction*



The roles of teacher and student in the classroom is a great deal, in terms of creating healthy and organic classroom environment and strengthening teacher-student relationship. If teacher's perception of role contradicts student's expectation, a barrier is likely to emerge and it becomes a hurdle to the communication and connection between teacher and students. This has also drawn our attention to look into potential issues that bother the teachers. Let's see what struggles Wang Laoshi has.

#### Case Study:

Wang Laoshi is teaching students how to write Chinese characters in a Chinese class. Every time he teaches a new Chinese word, he would give students some sample sentences for them to imitate and come up with similar sentences using the same key word. This time he teaches the word "travel" ("Lv You" in Chinese). After he writes the Chinese characters on the whiteboard, he writes down a sample sentence for students to complete: I used to travel to \_\_\_\_\_. Then students start to working on their own sentences. However, Aidan seems to not like to

#### Key words:

*Confucianism*  
*Collectivist*  
*Teacher's social status*



Teaching and learning is a heavily focused and discussed area where many experts and professionals made a lot of efforts to improve and develop the teaching and learning process. In the same time, this is something bothers teachers a lot. The importance of it cannot be stressed enough. Let's take a look at what happens in Zhang Laoshi's classroom and see if we can come up with insightful solutions for her.

*Case Study:*

In a math class, Zhang Laoshi is teaching students how to convert a fraction into its simplest form. Zhang Laoshi introduced the concept and definition of simplest form to the students. She also teaches students that the simplest form still equates to the original fraction which is saying that the conversion does not change the value of a

Key words:

*Teacher's social status*

*Confucianism*



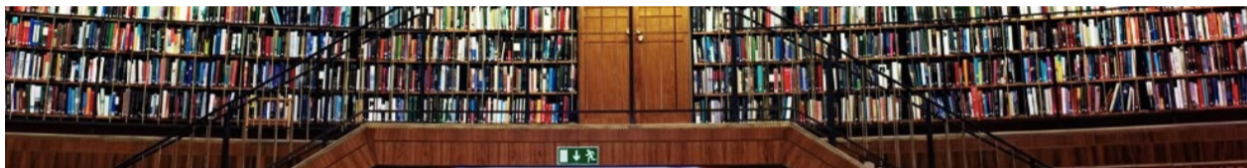
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Here you can find what the experts' and researchers' work on these topics. The references provide theoretical foundation for our discussion. Some of them support the opinions being discussed while some of them provide new perspectives and viewpoints that can enlarge the scope of the discussion and enhance the understanding of the fundamental issues hiding behind the question: how new Chinese immersion school teachers can improve their teaching skills and have a mindset of supporting and inspiring students, which is critical to their success in classrooms.

*Lowenthal, P., & Muth, R. (2008). Constructivism. Encyclopedia of the social and cultural foundations of education, 177-179.*

*Phillips, A. L. (1995). 1995 Derivatives practices and instruments survey. Financial Management, 24(2), 115-125.*

## CONTACT US

Hamline University  
St. Paul  
Minnesota

Your Name

Email

How did you know us?

Messages

I'd like to receive emails from you

I agree to the terms and agreements

Submit

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