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A Case Study of the Influence of Cross-Cultural Learning and Teaching Experiences on Pre-Service Teachers' Perception of Teachers' Professional Standards

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Abstract

Under the aegis of a Canadian SSHRC project, *The Reciprocal Learning in Teacher Education and School Education between China and Canada (RLTESECC)*, a group of Chinese pre-service teachers joined a three-month exchange immersion program in Canada, and had opportunities to attend university teacher education courses, work with local secondary teachers, and participant in education-related activities and events. This cross-cultural learning and teaching experience not only enriched these Chinese pre-service teachers' cultural understanding, strengthen their English expression abilities, enrich their pedagogical knowledge and skills, but also changed their opinions on teachers between eastern and western more or less, leading to their new perspectives regarding teaching profession. This paper aims to explore the impact of this cross-cultural program on pre-service teachers' perception of teachers' qualities and teaching professional standards. Through surveys by questionnaire, interview, and participants' reflections, the study found that some changes happened in pre-service teachers' perception and understanding of elementary and secondary teachers' qualities before and after they went abroad. And the causes of these changes are also discussed in this study. Findings of this study have practical implications for construction and implementation of teacher professional standards and pre-service teacher education for both China and Canada.

Key words: SWU exchange pre-service teachers; Learning and teaching in Canada; Change; Perception and understanding; Teachers' professional standards

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INTRODUCTION

Building a high-quality teacher education system relevant to 21st Century social and economic realities has become a top priority for most governments and nations. Reforming teacher education systems within a context of ever-deepening globalization requires extensive collaboration, close teamwork and effective coordination among countries. China has also been engaged in international cooperation in teacher education recent years; a series of cross-cultural teacher education programs have been established by the joint efforts of China and other countries. A Sino-Canadian teacher education exchange program, *The Reciprocal Learning in Teacher Education and School Education between China and Canada (RLTESECC)*, was established in 2013, developed from the former 3-year cooperative program from 2011 to 2013 *UW-SWU Teacher Education Reciprocal Learning Program* between a Chinese normal university, *Southwest University (SWU)*, and a Canadian University, *University of Windsor (UW)*. The *RLTESECC* program involves two Canadian and five Chinese universities, two Canadian school boards and over forty Canadian and Chinese schools, and is advised by an International Advisory Committee from China, Singapore, Austria and the USA.

This Sino-Canadian cooperative program not only enhances knowledge and experience exchanges in teacher education between two countries, but also provides both counties' pre-service teachers opportunities of learning and teaching in foreign countries, especially for Chinese pre-service teachers in south China (where SWU locates), who have fewer chances to experience western

education culture in person. Although Chinese pre-service teachers without foreign leaning experience can also gain information about western education and teaching professions indirectly through reading books and watching films, there are also misunderstanding and stereotypes existing in Chinese educators and researchers mind.

For Chinese teachers, including pre-service teacher who has not entered into practical teaching field, their strong desire of acquiring advanced education knowledge and efficient teaching strategies is aroused by the misleading thought that “west is the best” (Ilieva, 2010), since most of theoretical knowledge about learning and teaching they learned is originated from western culture and philosophy. At the same time, their infrequent contact with western teachers along with the typical teacher images they gain from films and television works impressed them with the idea that western teachers have some positive qualities which Chinese teachers lack. This inclination can also be found in the process of developing Chinese national teacher education curriculum standards from 2011 to 2012, when a group of scholars and experts made investigation in teachers and students of several normal universities administrated by the Chinese Ministry of Education to learn their opinions on teacher education curriculum (Hu & Cui, 2012b). Like in the following research work of the same group aiming to establish national teacher professional standards, western countries’ established teacher professional standards have been regarded as an important reference (Hu & Cui, 2012a). And the current developing work of teacher professional standard system in China does follow suit with Western world. Influenced by the world trend of raising teachers’ quality and establishing teacher professional standards, Chinese government has published *National Professional Standards for K-12 Teachers (NPST)* in 2012 (Teacher Education Department of China, 2012). Like most education policies in China, NPST was issued to *all* levels of government, teacher education universities, primary and secondary schools. Education administration at different levels, teacher educators, school teachers were required to learn standards in NPST, update their practice to ensure the realization of standards, and finally promote professional development of school teachers. However, although most Chinese teachers, including pre-service teachers, found that they need to abide by some new standards to upgrade their professional levels, they are still hindered by their established belief of qualities teacher should have. In fact, this paradox always exists for the long conflicts of western and eastern educational philosophies about teaching profession (Feng & Li, 2012).

As prospective teachers, pre-service teachers need to make a very clear picture of teachers’ professional standards which combined advanced teaching and learning, Chinese traditional education philosophy, and

current professional level of teachers. Therefore, no matter what attitudes teachers have towards western and eastern culture, they should have scientific, accurate and objective reorganization on teachers’ professional standards in their mind which naturally bring benefit to their teaching practices and professional development. And it seems that only they get in-depth understanding of western and eastern cultures, can they develop these accurate and appropriate understanding of teachers’ professional standards.

In a word, since this Sino-Canadian project offers Chinese pre-service teachers chances to experience genuine culture in Canada, it is assumed that their perception of teachers’ qualities will be affected or changed by this cross-cultural experience, as implied in previous researches (Sahin, 2008; Zhao, Meyers, & Meyers, 2009; Rodriguez, 2011; Van Reken, & Rushmore, 2012; Sharma, Rahatzad, & Phillion, 2013). That is the premise behind the study. However, there are more questions evolved from this hypothesis: Do these changes in pre-service teachers mind have any effect on their opinions of what qualifies professional teachers should have? If there is any change in their opinions, what are the causes? Are these changes positive or negative? Do they contribute to teachers’ professional development with professional standards? Given all these considerations, a study plan was developed.

1. LITERATURE REVIEW

There are many studies detailing the impact of cross-cultural learning experience on teachers’ professional development in western and eastern cultures, especially with the intensity of dynamic exchanges and cooperation in teacher education among countries. (eg. Colón - Muñiz et al., 2010; Jiang et al., 2011; Marx et al., 2011). They have made available a wide range of perspectives for conceptualizing the influences of different cultures on teachers’ thinking and behaving. And lots of this type of study were conducted by qualitative research, such as case study, biography, classroom observation, and interview. Some researches (Malewski & Phillion, 2009) shed lights on multi-cultural class teaching and integration of model technology and ICT into teaching; some researches (Yang & Cheung, 2011; White, 2012; Power, 2013) provides references on subject teaching profession development like Western mathematic teachers’ development and eastern ESL/EFL language teachers’ and music teachers’ growth.

In these studies, a lot of scholars, including some Chinese scholars, concentrated on the influences of cross-cultural communication on teachers’ thoughts and perspectives on education an their professions, such as their roles, professional learning, teaching philosophy, teaching methodology, and so on. Some scholars have

pre-service teachers' overseas field experience as research context, probing the positive and negative influence of international teaching experience on pre-service teachers, especially on their attitudes, thoughts, and practice. (Willard-Holt, 2001; Pence & Macgillivray, 2008; Chinnappan, McKenzie & Fitzsimmons, 2013) Most of researches find that pre-service teachers are positive about overseas field experiences for they could understand more about their future teaching and students, while there still are some researches on the challenges and difficulties in these international programs.

The final decades of 20th century and the beginning years of this century witnessed significant research efforts in making contributions to developing standards for the teaching profession based on the nature of teaching and teachers' work. Although a series of standards that define the knowledge and understanding, skills and abilities, values and personal commitments expected of teachers have been researched from the perspectives of policy makers, teacher educators, governmental administrators, and even students and parents, few studies focused on the teachers' understanding and expectations. Some researchers emphasized the benefit of standards, some criticized the efficiency of the established standards, which are not developed by teachers but generated from outsiders other than the profession itself, and some even strongly objected the authority adopting single criterion in evaluating teachers' performance. Pre-service teachers seem to have been ignored in the process of educational policy making.

Researches reflected the disempowered situation of pre-teachers and lack of voice in education decision-making processes. Although most pre-teachers were eager to communicate their perspectives on their own situation, education policy, and policy implementation, few of them felt that their views were welcomed and adopted. That is to say, pre-service teachers, as the part of future participants in education, have not got enough attentions in their opinions on teacher qualities they were studying

to meet. It does not mean there is an impassable gulf of understanding between pre-service teachers and other in-service teachers, but there does exist a gap in perception of teachers' qualification of their different professional development stages. If pre-service teachers did not have positive realization of teacher professional standards, they would not develop a right attitude toward their future profession and professional development.

2. RESEARCH CONTEXT

This exploratory study was mainly conducted on 20 SWU exchange pre-service teachers with different academic background, such as Chinese Language and Literature, Philosophy of Marxism, Education of Information Science and Technology, Education of Mathematics, Geography, Chemistry, Physics, Music and etc., who were selected from a pool of more than 500 applicants to join the 3-month teacher education program in University of Windsor, Canada, in 2014, as showing in the following table (Table 1). Most of them are from urban areas and would work in secondary schools in rural areas for a period of time according to their program plans, *SWU Free-Tuition Teacher Training Programs* sponsored by Chinese government, This national teacher training program was carried out in Normal Universities administrated directly by the Ministry of Education, and was expanded to other provincial and municipal universities. Although pre-service teachers involved in this program could enjoy the free education and monthly allowance, they had to work in rural areas for at least 5 years according to the contracts they signed with Universities, or they would pay back all the tuitions and other fees. That is to say, currently, from individuals to universities, even to governments at all levels in China all treat teacher education seriously. And the pre-service teachers participated in this cross-culture communication program were willing to cooperate with the researchers.

Table 1
Demographic Profile of Respondents in the Interview

Gender	Age	Grade	Academic background		Students origins	Internship experience	Planned future working school types	International experience
			Major	Minor				
Female (90%)	19-20 (85%)	Junior (90%)	Art education (10%)	English literature (45%)	Urban areas (95%)	3-6 months (10%)	Secondary schools (80%)	None (100%)
Male (10%)	20-21 (15%)	Senior (10%)	Biology education (5%)	Psychology (10%)	Rural areas (5%)	1-3 months (85%)	Elementary schools (20%)	
			Physics education (5%)	Law (5%)		Less than 1 month (5%)		
			Music education (10%)	Accountancy (5%)				
			English education (10%)	Chinese studies (5%)				

To be continued

Continued

Gender	Age	Grade	Academic background		Students origins	Internship experience	Planned future working school types	International experience
			Major	Minor				
			History education (10%)	None (30%)				
			Chemistry education (10%)					
			Geography education (5%)					
			Preprimary education (10%)					
			Marxism & political education (5%)					
			Chinese language and literature (10%)					
			Education of information science and technology (5%)					
			Mathematics education and applied mathematics (5%)					

These selected exchange pre-service teachers are all went through a lengthy and rigorous process to prove that they have competences and dispositions to study and teaching in Canada. And all of them show positive attitudes toward teachers and teaching, good expression and communication skills, and are extroverted, quick-minded, willing to give opinions and present ideas, which make them ideal study participants.

The 20 participants, including 18 females and 2 males, led by a mentor and boarded in an apartment building near campus, convenient for them to hold parties with their buddies of Windsor. In fact, when they were in UW, they met with friendly Canadian pre-service teachers 2 or 3 times a week, allowing them to interact closely with local teachers in a wide range of activities and promote deeper understanding of teacher culture of local communities.

All the participants were required to attend classes in teacher education college of UW and teach as interns at local primary and secondary schools. Apart from the university classes and field experience, they also need to take part in lectures, community activities, teaching workshops, volunteer service, and even local media interviews. At the first period of the program, exchange pre-service teachers with different academic background attended different classes, and all of them were provided teaching and learning strategy workshops with the intention to extend their understanding of teaching and learning in the context of Canada. They need to complete academic reading and writing assignments, make presentations, prepare demonstration class, take part in class discussion, and observe Canadian pre-service teachers' clinic teaching in university classroom. After this period of study, most exchange pre-service teachers gained school teaching strategies theoretically and were prepared for the next period of field experience. The

exchange pre-service teachers were assigned to 5 primary and secondary schools and 3 high schools in Windsor, working as intern teachers for 5 weeks. Not only can they observe Canadian education system in action, but also can put the pedagogical theories learnt into practice in local classrooms. This full immersion experience evoked genuine thoughts and real emotions of SWU exchange pre-service teachers. Their content-rich weekly reflections and idea sharing become dependable.

3. RESEARCH DESIGN

According to Yoshikawa et al. (2008), multiple methods are vital to understanding development as a dynamic, transactional process. The combined methods in education survey have complementary strengths and non-overlapping weaknesses. Therefore, this study used mainly qualitative research tools supplemented by quantitative research measures, interviews and questionnaires. Data from the questionnaires and interviews complemented one another in significant ways in enriching our understanding of the changes happened on these Chinese pre-service teachers' perception of qualified teacher standards during their visit to Canada.

Before SWU exchange pre-service teachers left for Canada, they were brought together to meet and discuss their future learning and teaching in Canada. Researchers took these chances to get familiar with all the exchange pre-service teachers and did some observation and analysis on their personality and disposition for further study. It was found that although most of the exchange pre-service teachers had short-period of internship teaching experience lasting from 1 month to 3 months, none of them had experience of living or studying in foreign countries. Most of their impressions on western teachers were

from reading books, watching movies, or occasionally contacting with foreign teachers and students. That is to say, most of their impressions on teachers were from their learning experiences, and these experiences were all based on China's education circumstance. To make sure their perception of teachers' professional standards has no difference with most Chinese pre-service teachers without foreign experiences, a questionnaire was constructed and presented to 20 participants. This questionnaire included multiple choice questions related to teachers' quality and open-ended questions for respondents provide more qualities of teachers according to their understanding. The design of the choice in the questionnaire was inspired by some classic theories in teacher professional development, such as teacher knowledge theories of Schulman's (1987),

Grossman's (1990), and Cochran's (1993), and also put into Chinese education circumstance. These choices were mainly about three aspects: attitude, knowledge, and competence, such as subject content knowledge, PCK and skills, attitudes and behavior towards students, and so on. Another purpose of this questionnaire is to investigate which qualities these exchange pre-service teachers value most---teachers' attitude, knowledge or competence, before they are impacted by another culture. Therefore, a list of teachers' professional attributes, skills, and qualities were described as standards of Chinese teaching professions and provided for respondents to choose from most important to least important (Table 2). This pre-questionnaire was also developed into a post-questionnaire for the purpose of comparison.

Table 2
Standards in Pre-Departure Questionnaire

In your opinions, What standards should be maintained for Qualified Teachers in China? Please selected 5 most important standards for qualified teachers, and rank them according to their importance, from most to least significant, and you can add other qualities you think important in the following list.

- A. have a comprehensive and solid academic knowledge basis related with the subject;
- B. have a broad range of general knowledge about culture and science;
- C. have knowledge of education, and can put them into practice;
- D. know how to do researches of education;
- E. have knowledge of children and youth;
- F. have good communication skills, can communicate with students well;
- G. can plan for and implement teaching and learning;
- H. are willing to devote to education;
- I. love teaching, willing to adopt flexibly variety teaching strategies;
- J. love students, are responsible and willing to help students;
- K. are strict to themselves, always reflect on teaching and try to improve teaching;
- L. are lifelong learners and will promote their own professional development constantly;
- M. others:

Rank your choice from the most to the least significant:

During the visit of SWU exchange pre-service teachers in Canada, their guided reflections on learning and teaching become the major research object. All the exchange pre-service teachers kept journals to record their daily experience in UW and local schools. And they were required to record something intentionally focusing on Canadian teachers, such as their teaching attitudes, methods, academic knowledge, and their interactions with students, colleagues and principals. The exchange pre-service teachers' thoughts about what they saw were naturally recorded in the journals. All the reflections based on these journals were suggested to write as the following stages: describing, feeling, evaluating, analyzing, concluding and action planning, which are regarded as a scientific strategy by many scholars, such as "reflective learning circle" proposed by Gibbs' (1988/2001). However, in this study, participants were not in-service teachers who could develop a well-organized

action plan based on their reflection journals, and the observing focuses were not on participants themselves but on teachers working with them, therefore, the "action planning" was put aside in their journals. The journals they provided were mainly four parts: describing, feeling, evaluating, and analyzing, respectively concentrating on what good practice they observed and how they thought of these practices.

Based on their reflections and the result of the pre-departure Questionnaire, a series of in-depth interview questions were constructed, aiming to investigate whether their impressions about Canadian teachers mentioned in their reflections are revealing their real thoughts or not. By internet communication tools, researchers mainly adopted individual interview to let the participants feel free to speak their experiences and their beliefs about Canadian teaching and teachers. The online chatting was recorded to keep flow of idea and prevent loss of information. At the

same time, online group chatting was also initiated; all the exchange pre-service teachers discussed questions guided by the researchers on line. Participants were encouraged to talk freely and to tell stories using their own words. These discussions are more or less like group interview, useful for revealing naturally the beliefs, attitudes, experiences and feelings of participants through interaction and debate with each other. And all the participants were told that they were be contacted to discuss the study findings and to make sure that the study findings reflect their own experiences. The process of interview survey is accompanying with participants' reflections; the two processes were conducted simultaneously in an integrated way.

The 20 reflection transcripts from these exchange pre-service teachers, the chatting record, and other collected interview data were analyzed under the Colaizzi's (1978) seven-step strategy. This content analysis approach was proved dependable by previous researches. The process of data analysis was demonstrated in the following graph (Figure 1). From it, we can see that the data collected and transformed were analyzed as following stages:

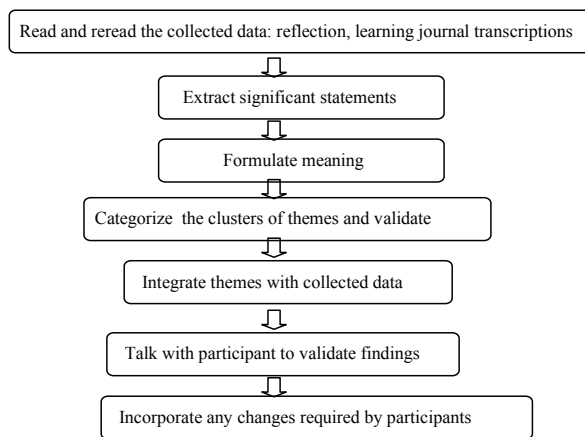


Figure 1
Data Analysis Process based on Colaizzi's (1978) strategy

a. Read and reread the collected data to acquiring a general feeling for participants' experience and make sense of their account. During this stage, any thoughts, feelings, and ideas that arose by the researcher with teacher professional standards were recorded;

b. Extract significant statements that pertain directly to changes in understanding of teaching professions. These statements were written in separate sheets and coded;

c. Formulate meanings for these significant statements;

d. Categorize the formulated meanings into clusters of themes and refer these clusters to original recorded data for validation and confirming consistency between the themes and the original statements;

e. Integrate the findings into exhaustive description of the "changes" being studied;

f. Validate the findings by talking with some participants to ask whether the findings consistent with their experiences or not;

g. Incorporate any changes offered by the participants into the final description of the essence of their experience. (Colaizzi, 1978, pp.48-71)

At the beginning, the researchers invited two pre-service teachers as research assistants to read the transcripts together, and asked them to record any thought, doubts, and feelings they have about the reflection transcripts. During their reading, some obvious and significant expressions and statements were underlined and explained in readers' words, due to their understanding of teachers' professional standards. Based on the work of the two research assistants, the researcher extracted relevant sentences from the transcripts, and categorized them into different themes. After a thematic map was constructed through integrating clusters of themes, the original transcripts were reviewed again for exhaustive description, and some redundant, misused or overestimated descriptions were eradicated from the overall structure. Then the research findings based on previous analysis were provided to some participants with the purpose of discussing the results with them to see whether the conclusions made by the thematic description reflected their feelings and experiences or not. The whole process includes understanding the data, identifying significant statements which in turn were converted into formulated meanings, and developing groups of theme clusters to establish the final thematic construct. Trustworthiness of the study findings was undertaken using different approaches and strategies to achieve each approach affectively.

All in all, this study used a mixed method design incorporating both qualitative and quantitative research methods through a transformative process in the data collection and analysis. Quantitative data in the form of a questionnaire were first undertaken which lead to the gathering of Qualitative data in the form of semi-structured interviews. A post-survey of questionnaire was also employed in this study. This design involves participants' perceptions and understandings being assessed from their own self-reflection and from double-checked by answering questions in questionnaires and interviews.

4. RESEARCH FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The study went through three stages: the pre-departure questionnaire survey, the reflection collection and online interview, and the returned questionnaire survey. The three stages were carried out in sequence, and the data collected at each stage were analyzed separately and used as reference for research design of the next stage until the whole research process was completed. In the third stage, all the data collected at the first two stages were taken into consideration for the final conclusion.

The pre-departure questionnaire survey was conducted both in the 20 exchange pre-service teachers and in 60 non-exchange pre-service teachers in SWU. Like most of exchange pre-service teachers, these non-exchange pre-service teachers not only had little foreign exchange experience, but also did not have too much classroom teaching experience. Therefore, it was assumed that these pre-service teachers shared the same understanding of qualified teachers with exchange pre-service teachers.

Data from 78 valid questionnaires from 20 exchange pre-service teachers and 58 non-exchange pre-service teachers show that primary and secondary school teachers in China are expected to be professional, like in most other countries in the world. In those pre-service teachers

mind, teachers should not only have enough knowledge of the subject matter and effective teaching skills, but also have appropriate attitudes towards students and teaching. As what the researchers considered in the questionnaire design, the choices provided could be divided into three categories: teachers' knowledge, competence, and attitude. It is found that most respondents chose some attributes categorized into "attitude"; and the second largest portion of respondents chose descriptions showing "knowledge". The "attitude" category accounted for 50% in the three aspects described in the choices and the "knowledge" category consists of 30%, like what demonstrated in the following table (Table 3). That is to say, to these future teachers, attitude and knowledge are most important.

Table 3
Top Five Standards Selected by the Pre-service Teachers in the Pre-questionnaire

Category	Choices	Percentage
Knowledge	Have a comprehensive and solid academic knowledge basis related to the subject;	100%
Attitude	Love students, are responsible and willing to help students;	100%
Knowledge	Have knowledge of education, and can put them into practice;	92%
Competence	Can plan for and implement teaching and learning;	88%
Attitude	Love teaching, willing to adopt flexibly variety teaching strategies;	85%
Attitude	Are willing to devote to education;	83%

Compare with those non-exchange pre-service teachers, the exchange pre-service teachers put more emphasis on teachers' attitudes (Table 4). 87.5% of statements related with Attitude were selected by the exchange pre-service teachers, while only 83.6% of choices related with attitude were selected by non-exchange pre-service teachers. This difference has not been found in the following knowledge and competence part. The reasons found in the following interview show that most of pre-service teachers prefer to express their ideas about teaching professions based on their learning experience as students, that is to say, they thought that a good teacher should know and understand students' needs and expectations, strengths and weaknesses, and have positive attitude towards their difficulties and problems. However, why did the exchange pre-service teachers have stronger feelings about this point? This could be explained from their short period of contact and communicate with exchange pre-service teachers from UW before they departed from China to Canada. During their interaction, SWU exchange pre-service teachers found that their counterparts are more confident in teaching, showing true affection toward students and classroom activities. When UW pre-service teachers introduced their training and education in front of SWU exchange pre-service teachers, they also emphasized the focus of training teachers' attitudes in Canadian teacher education. All these factors contributed to these perceptions of SWU exchange pre-service teachers.

Table 4
The Different Focus of Exchange and Non-Exchange Pre-Service Teachers

	Exchange pre-service teachers	Non-exchange pre-service teachers
Attitude	87.5%	83.6%
Knowledge	56.2%	58.6%
Competence	55%	57.8%

In fact, the main data gained from this case study are the analysis result of 20 SWU exchange pre-service teachers' reflections. There are 240 collected reflections, which were recorded by 20 pre-service teachers in 3 months as agreed in their visiting plan, demanding a reflection for a week. Most of these reflections were written in Chinese, for the efficacy and accuracy of expressing their ideas. Most of reflections have more than 5,000 hundred Chinese characters, that is, more than 1,000 English words for each reflection. Altogether, the reflections provided over-240-thousand-word descriptions of what they saw and felt about Canadian education and teachers. Apart from these reflections, there were 60 pieces of learning journals about primary school teaching experience, the countless online chatting record and face-to-face interview records which were also took into consideration. Using qualitative thematic analysis, all these collected data were transcribed and numbered, and finally were compiled into 334 files. Researchers, with the assistance of two graduate pre-service teachers, detected 500 significant statements about their opinions on teaching

profession standards, which then were reinterpreted and coded by different themes. Table 5 provides examples from the significant statements which were extracted, formulated meanings and coded into different theme clusters.

Table 5
Examples of Statements Extracted from the Collected Data

Statements	Transcript No.	Page No.	Formulated meanings	Theme clusters
<p>“It’s the second day of my teaching in Grade 2,...students and the teacher, Mrs. A¹, sat on the carpet, draw pictures...the boy who refused to sit on the carpet and draw with others was still not willing to participate in others... Mrs. A. bent down to talk to him patiently and gently...through asking and answering with other kids, Mrs. A successfully persuaded the disobedient student to learn with others...Her attitude was admirable...”</p>	4	2	Teachers are sympathetic, encouraging students and treating them with courtesy and respect.	Attitudes towards students
<p>“This class was a writing quiz to test students’ knowledge as required by the government; students were all a little bit nervous...Mrs. B did not hand out the papers to students directly as I expected, but invited two students, a boy and a girl, to the stage to answer questions in a live game...it’s interesting, all other students were invited to the stage by turns to represent boys and girls as competitors...this process made students relaxed...students did very well in this exam, which was, in my opinion, due to Mrs. B’s successful lead-in...it’s the first time for me to go through this kind of exam which would never be possible in China!”</p>	7	1	Teachers have flexible and diverse teaching methods.	Competence in teaching
<p>“Mrs. C is the head teacher of Grade 5. she assigned a reading task with a question to students every week, and students need to write their answers and stick their answers on the wall to demonstrate their reading result...the interesting part was the evaluation methods used by Mrs. C, a rubric, which consists of detailed evaluation criteria for each level...students can recognized which level they belong to...this is an efficient evaluation approach...just like I observed in another school, where students were divided into four levels, although the evaluation standards were settled down by the school and government, the evaluation parts were composed by teachers, students, and peers.”</p>	16	3	Teachers’ effective evaluation could promote students development; teachers often use different approaches to evaluate students.	Competence in teaching
<p>“Could you believe today I learned education evaluation theory and methods in a PE class?!... Mr. D’s PE class combined so many activities, such as role play, debating, theory explanation, and so on...I never expected to meet a so “theoretical” PE teacher...he aimed to tell us how to evaluate students in a PE class, that is to say, in Canadian pre-service teacher education, the pedagogical knowledge were immersed everywhere...I would never agree with the joking saying in Chinese “Your Chinese or math were taught by a PE teacher?”... they (the Canadian PE teachers) are so knowledgeable.</p>	121	4	Teachers have well-developed pedagogical knowledge and strategies for planning their class, and teaching them lessons in effective and creative way.	Knowledge of PCK
<p>“Today, I was invited to Mrs. E’s home, we had supper together and talked a lot about Canadian education...as the second generation of a Mexican immigration family, Mrs. E said her mother did not pay too much attention to her education, but she was greatly influenced by one of her teachers and become a teacher...Mrs. E told me that her class was designed to last from 100 minutes to 30 minutes, it is not like fixed time schedule in China...but 100 minutes is too long for little kids?...how much they can learn from this course?”</p>	153	1	Teachers are free to arrange their class, but to design an efficient lesson needs teachers to have highly skilled competence.	Knowledge of class design
<p>“I worked with another UW pre-service teacher today to assist in a Math Class today...I can’t believe that some of students even did not know number rounding to 10 to 100!...I helped Kessley and asked him to give me 5 numbers rounding 80...he did not grasp this even I used all the methods I had in my mind...I felt so worried and ashamed...however, the UW pre-service teacher felt very relaxed, he just repeated “ok, think it again, take it easy...”, no suggestion at all! Ok, it could explain why Canadian students had bad math... maybe Canadian teachers themselves did not have adequate math knowledge or Math PCK...”</p>	186	4	Teachers not only need to have positive attitude toward their teaching and be patient to their students but also have content knowledge of a subject.	Knowledge of content

To be continued

Continued

Statements	Transcript No.	Page No.	Formulated meanings	Theme clusters
"Mrs. F asked students to clean the classroom during the class!...doing classroom cleaning is a request even from the first grade in China, but it seems not very common in Canada...it is why Mrs. F was a little bit angry and asked students do clean during the class...I just wondered whether there is any requirement for accomplishing teaching plans?...how about waste of students' time?... Is it too casual for Canadian teachers in arranging and planning their teaching?"	233	3	Teachers should arrange their class in a reasonable way, although they still need to adopt their teaching plan according to different situation.	Competence of class arrangement
"I found a phenomenon that students could interrupt teacher during a class, if they have questions, and teachers always stop lectures and answered the students directly....I thought this is unacceptable in Chinese class...although teachers have this freedom, but how could they use their class time wisely?..."	290	6	It is important for teachers to provide timely feedback to students problems, but still need to pay attentions to most students	Competence in class management

The above examples are chosen for each specific theme; in real expressions we could find there is more than one theme in one statement. Therefore, the researchers only concentrated on major connotation implied in each statement and categorized them into one type. From the above table, it could be found that when speaking highly of Canadian teachers' teaching strategies, SWU exchange pre-service teacher would do some comparison with circumstances and phenomena of China. And they also find what they saw in Canada was not as they expected sometimes, which made them think more deeply about current education and teachers' quality. Trough this process of analysis, several most frequently mentioned themes were listed, and the listed themes were further discussed with several SWU exchange pre-service teachers in an interview to confirm whether these themes expressed their opinions accurately or not. The respondents were selected at random to make sure the validity of the research. After this, several typical qualities referred in quoted statements about different themes were found out and listed according to their mentioned frequency. The top five typical qualities were presented (Table 6). And the personage of statements supporting these qualities will also calculate to show what qualifications these pre-service teachers thought important during their visit in Canada.

Table 6
Rank of Typical Qualities in Different Theme Clusters

Typical qualities	Theme clusters	Percentages of all statements
Teaching methodology and skills	Competence	134 (26.8%)
Attitudes and behaviors toward students	Attitude	112 (22.4%)
Broader knowledge	Knowledge	98 (19.6%)
Subject knowledge	Knowledge	72 (14.4%)
Broader teaching skills	Competence	50 (10%)
Personal characters and personality	Attitude	34 (6.8%)
Total		500 (100%)

From the table above, we can see that the oversea learning experience more or less influenced those pre-service teachers' opinions on teachers' qualities. They were impressed by the teaching skills and classroom management approaches of Canadian teachers; they found that most Canadian teachers insisted on choosing the appropriate methods of knowledge delivering, and all the methods they adopted in the class were student-oriented. In the following interview, respondents talked a lot about this point, and provided some explanations for this trend. Before they came to the local schools, they attended teacher training courses in University of Windsor, and find that most courses are "practical" than Chinese pre-service teaching training. Students in University classroom were required to demonstrate their teaching skills constantly other than learn some theories about student. And almost every subject, even PE, has overt or covert intentions to pass skills dealing with students. Influence by this education philosophy, most Canadian pre-service teachers have chances to teach in class, and are always keep the idea in their mind that teaching competence is not gained from listening or observing others class, but also from teaching by oneself in the real situation. Apart from that, they also find that most teachers in Canada choose this profession based on their personal interest first, not for survival or better living standards, therefore, most teachers have strong interest in teaching and are devoted in teaching. Some response also mentioned that the teaching environment in Canada is different in China, so, we should not simply require our Chinese teacher performance like that, but we Chinese teachers do need to improve our teaching skills.

At the same time, some respondents also pointed out that there is something Canadian teachers need to pay attentions to. According to their observations, some Canadian teachers are too tolerant to their students, and leave them to drift their own way; it, in fact, does no good to children's development. In Chinese education philosophy, Children need to be trained to follow the rules and disciplines of the society. While, it is not easy for teachers to respect every child's need and meet every requirement of them. If teachers always stopped by one or

two student in a class, other students will feel boring and lose their patience, and the atmosphere in the classroom would be not like a class should have. In such classes, knowledge input is limited. Therefore, Apart from asking other professional experts to handle students who always need help, which is very common in Canadian, Chinese teachers need to learn more skills to meet most students need, while satisfy some group of special students, and it is a big challenge for Chinese teachers because they have to face a huge number of students, comparing with their Canadian counterparts.

When it comes to teachers' attitude, the pre-service still expressed their admiring thoughts about Canadian teachers' attitudes. Most respondents applied words like "nice", "kind", "patient", "warm", "humorous", "imaginative", "creative" to describe teachers they met in Canada in their reflections. No negative words were used to talk about teachers, even some typical descriptions, such as "strict", "serious", which they would like to apply on Chinese teachers, could not find in their reflections. One respondent in interview told us that he found teachers in Canada seldom criticized or punished students in any forms, let alone yelled or screamed at students. It seems that Canadian teachers have great vigor and enthusiasm for teaching, and are devoted to their students and professions. He also found that Canadian teachers, like some Chinese teachers, are well-paid and respect, but more importantly, they could get more assistance from school and community, which will reduce their professional stress and burnout. According to him, this is why teachers in Canada have more positive attitudes towards their students and profession.

SWU exchange pre-service teachers are very interested in general teachers in Canadian primary schools, and it is not like in China, where in primary schools are subject teachers who teach from 1st grade. From their statements in reflections, SWU exchange pre-service teachers felt that it has some benefits that generally teachers teach young kids, making them feelings like staying with families. However, this brings big challenges for teachers, who need to teach all the subjects to kids from literary to science. That is to say, teachers need to prepare themselves with broad general knowledge before they enter into teaching professions. Some respondents also found some drawbacks of this approach; if some teachers who are not good at one subject, they will reduce the amount of lecturing time on this subject or even make some mistakes when talking about this subject, which, of course, brings no good to all-round development of students.

In a word, from SWU exchange pre-service teachers' retrospection, researcher could draw a conclusion that pre-services' assessment of Canadian teachers reflects some potential changes in their reorganizations of teachers' qualities. Therefore, to make sure these changes have happened, a post-questionnaire based on the pre-

questionnaire was provided to the 20 SWU exchange pre-service teachers to find their ideas about changes. The results of the post-questionnaire show that some positive descriptions of teachers' quality emphasized in their pre-questionnaire have not been stressed so much in this post-questionnaire. The first five statements chosen by pre-service teacher show that competence of teachers has replaced attitude and has been put at the first place; the knowledge is also emphasized but the content and sphere of the knowledge is broadened; the attitude of teachers has also been explained in a broader notion. The comparison of pre-and-post questionnaires' result is presented in the following figure (Figure 2).

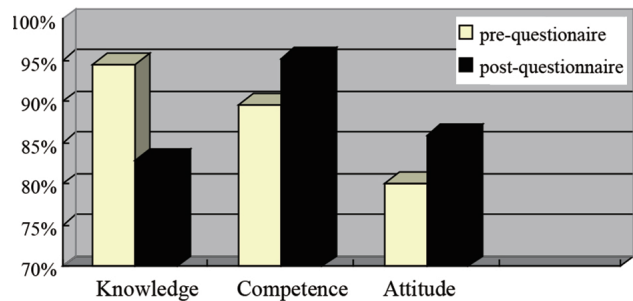


Figure 2
The Comparison of Pre-and-Post Questionnaire

The third part of the post-questionnaire is also an open-ending question about whether SWU exchange pre-service think their understanding of teachers' qualification has been changed. 98% of respondents provided affirmative answers, and 75% of them explained why they thought the changes happened. Before they went to Canada, their thoughts on teachers were greatly influenced by Chinese traditional philosophy. And teachers' images were stereotypes coined by Confucian Heritage, although they learned plenty of education western theories and philosophies. They gained more embodied experiences from their interactions with their own teachers, who once went through Chinese new curriculum reform in the late 20th centuries and were impact of confliction and immersion of western and eastern teaching thoughts and methodologies, but still held on Chinese principles and rules more or less. Under such background, former teachers of these respondents had not changed their traditional teacher-centered models completely; teachers at that time were knowledgeable, rigorous, and precise, while not so altruistic or devoted as they used to be, in the tide of educational reform that day. Some people contribute reasons for these changes to the influence of western liberalism. Therefore, these respondents found that their teachers' paradoxical images influenced them greatly until they had chances to communicate with western teachers in a real situation. Their perceptions of teachers' qualifications and professional standards for teachers have changed naturally.

CONCLUSION

This case study suggests that the benefit of an international learning and teaching experience is not only professional and personal growth of pre-service teachers, but also reflection and reconsideration of their professional qualities and standards. The international experience help pre-service teachers appreciate and respect teachers of other culture, and more importantly, help them have better awareness and better choices in their future professional development. Pre-service teachers involved in this study have more comprehensive evaluation toward qualified teachers, and easily accept and adopt teachers' professional standards promoted by governments or teacher professional organizations.

China has the world's largest education system, with the total number of 16 million educational practitioners, among whom 12 million are teachers in primary and secondary schools. (Zhou, 2009). One of the main challenges facing the Chinese education system is to ensure the quality of the Chinese teaching force, which has not been satisfied since the foundation of the People's Republic of China, due to shortness of qualified teachers and weakness in teacher training. As a result, teachers in primary and secondary schools are not qualified. To meet these challenges, Chinese government has taken measures from two aspects, one is increasing investment in teacher education to attract more excellent working in this field, and another is to set professional standards to regulate teachers' practice and lead their professional development. With the fund sponsored by government, teacher education institutions and normal universities could establish more cross-cultural training programs and carry out more international cooperation and communication in teacher education to enhance their professional competence. While more importantly, these opportunities also bring influences on teachers' personal understanding of teachers' professional standards, which could result in good or bad impact on their future professional development. How could pre-service teachers participating in cross-cultural learning or teaching be guided in their perception and understanding of teachers and teaching professions in China became more fatal than usual. Therefore, this is an area worthy of future research, if it is expected that all the government-invested teacher education programs could lead teachers meet teachers' professional standards in China.

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