

An Investigation of the Perceptions of Foreign ESL Teachers in China Towards Teacher  
Accountability: A Comparison between Chinese ESL Teachers and Foreign ESL Teachers in China

**An Investigation of the Perceptions of Foreign ESL Teachers in China**  
**Towards Teacher Accountability:**  
**A Comparison between**  
**Chinese ESL Teachers and Foreign ESL Teachers in China**

**By**

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## **Abstract**

This study investigated external and internal accountability of foreign ESL teachers in China through a comparison with Chinese local ESL teachers. A cross-sectional survey design was used. Two research questions were developed from a literature review to examine foreign ESL teachers' perceptions towards external accountability and internal accountability

Questionnaires from forty-five foreign ESL teachers and eight-one Chinese local ESL teachers were collected through an on-line survey. Data of teachers' perceptions towards four constructs: external accountability (outside expectations), external accountability (school management), internal accountability (professional duty), and internal accountability (feelings about work), were analyzed. The findings showed that foreign teachers perceived that they were held externally accountable with regard to outside expectations, and they were not held externally accountable for school management. In terms of internal accountability, foreign teachers perceived that they held themselves highly accountable in both the construct of professional duty and the construct of feelings about work.

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## CHAPTER ONE

### BACKGROUND OF EDUCATIONAL ACCOUNTABILITY STUDY

#### Introduction

In recent years, accountability has been a popular topic in the educational domain, either in academic research or in educational policy making (Darling-Hammond, 2007; Miller & Smith, 2011). The Oxford English Dictionary defines accountability as “liability to give account of, and answer for, discharge of duties or conduct; responsibility, amenableness” (1995, p. 65), which highlights the points of responsibility and explanation.

In the educational domain, accountability involves the interrelationship between educators and other stakeholders, which should ultimately lead to an overall improvement in the whole system (Burstein, Oakes, & Guiton, 1992). Newmann, King and Rigdon (1997) consider “the historical concept of accountability as a relationship between a provider of a service and the agent who has the power to reward, punish or replace the provider” (as cited in Ahearn, 2000, p. 3). Current educational accountability systems are made up of wide-ranging standards for a certain theme and a series of measures and goals to test efficacy, thus leading to the center of a school accountability system “driven by quotas and sanctions” (Mintrop & Sunderman, 2009, p. 354). Jeffrey (2002) argues that “accountability in education is part of the ‘audit explosion’ in which trust has been replaced by audit accountability” (p. 542). A widely accepted method of measuring of educational accountability is the implementation of a series of high standards for teachers to follow, so as to spot and discard incompetent teachers.

Current studies show that for a better understanding of educational accountability, it is important to make clear who is being held accountable and for what is it that they are accountable for.

Leithwood (2005) stresses that the most fundamental element an educational system is to be accountable for is “the welfare of individual students” (p. 15).

Rosenblatt (2001) classifies educational accountability into three different levels: “an institutional level” (school accountability), “an office-holder’s level” (administrator accountability), and “a teacher-student level” (teacher accountability) (p.309).

Firestone and Shipps (2005) suggest a thorough understanding of different levels of accountability, and leaders’ accountability is central. However, as the most fundamental elements of a school and those with the most direct connection to the students, teachers have been playing an extremely important role in students’ welfare and school development, therefore, teacher accountability needs to go “hand in hand with system accountability” (Rosenblatt, 2013, p. 3). Ouchi (2003) argues that teacher accountability should even be considered as a “national topic” (p. 106). Demand is increasing for a system to better measure teacher accountability.

Rosenblatt (2013) categorizes teacher accountability into two dimensions — external accountability and internal accountability. The former reflects certain behaviour stipulated by the school bureaucracy, such as regulating one’s behaviour within an organizational boundary, then assessing and reporting; the latter reflects teachers’ professional perceptions and inner ethics.

Lana (2015) contends that teacher accountability is concerned with awareness of best conduct, proficient professional knowledge, knowing national policies, effective instruction skills, students as center of classroom, and student success

assessment. The description covers a qualified teacher's external and internal accountability, as well as the external elements that might influence teacher accountability.

## **Background of the Research Problem**

### **The context of English teaching at China's universities**

The past three decades have witnessed remarkable changes with China's economy and society. China's open policy has won it access to increased interaction with the international community. In order to keep pace with its economic growth and social transformation, and to foster professionals who are capable of partaking in international competitions, China has conducted educational reforms a number of times and strengthening English teaching was one of the key components of every reform. The huge increase in attention to English teaching in China is also related to "the dominance of English in commercial, technical, scientific, and political spheres" (Smith, 1983, p. 32), and this helps "connect China to a globalized and interconnected world" (Paine & Fang, 2006, p. 280).

The College English Curriculum Requirements - CECR (Ministry of Education of China, 2007) outlines the objectives of college English education which are to develop students' English proficiency in an all-round way, namely, the English skills in terms of vocabulary, reading, writing, listening and speaking. Meanwhile, for the college English teachers, CECR requests that college English education must be involved with modern information technology, and it must combine traditional methods of teachers lecturing with computer-based web technology, so that English teaching and learning is freely accessible, more practical and informative. The new requirements embody the concepts that students are the learning subjects and teachers

dominate the class teaching activities. To the college English teachers, CECR formulates the goal of college English teaching and clarifies the necessity that college English teachers should update their knowledge and teaching methods, and enhance their individual efficacy.

However, Zhou (2005) concludes in *A Survey on Chinese College English Teachers Development Need* that although individual needs for professional development are prevalent among college English teachers, their wishes could not be satisfied in most cases. Xia (2012) argues that college English teachers are confronting a huge pressure for “lack of academic identity, being tired of teaching, and being situated in the difficulties” (p. 8).

In 1980, the Chinese government launched a policy named Proposed Regulations on Foreign Experts in Culture and Education Working in China (Trial), which is the earliest document concerning foreign ESL teachers teaching in China. Ever since then, the number of foreign ESL teachers in China has been increasing. As early as 2003, about 3,000 Chinese local educational institutions and publication units had been granted the rights to employ foreign experts. Statistics show that the total number of foreign teachers legally working in China with a foreign expert certificate in 2014 was 27,339 (The China Foreign Teachers Union, 2014).

This group of teachers, as a whole, has made great contributions in Chinese college students' English learning, disciplinary construction, and cultural exchanges. At the same time, they bear huge pressure in a completely different background where they “may encounter moral, pedagogic dilemmas and conflicts in their efforts to work towards resolving the two conflicting forces: internationalism and national/cultural identity” (Hiep, 2006, p. 35).

### **The fever of English efficiency tests and teachers' dilemma**

The College English Test (CET) is a national English test administered by the National Commission for College English Test Band 4 and Band 6, on behalf of the Higher Education Department, Ministry of Education of China, with two bands, CET-4 and CET-6 testing lower and higher English proficiency respectively. The CET is designed to test the English proficiency of Chinese undergraduate students and postgraduate students, and ensure that they reach the required English levels specified in the Syllabus for College English Test, and at the same time, to provide data for Chinese college English teaching and reform (National Commission for College English Test Band 4 and Band 6, 2015).

However, from the year the CET was implemented, it was not simply an exam testing English proficiency, but rather a gatekeeper to career success and pay rise for the test-takers instead (Yu, 2008). For the college students, although the Ministry of Education never stipulated that a CET-4 certificate is a prerequisite that decides whether one can get his/her degree, a link-up between the CET-4 certificate and the degree is a popular practice at Chinese local universities (Liu, 2014); for the graduates, those who hold CET-6 certificates will usually have priority to better positions, good salaries, and even more opportunities for further study and career promotion. This might explain the fact that since the CET started in 1987, it has prospered year by year. Statistics show that nearly 100,000 college students attended the CET all over the country in 1987, and the number increased to 11,000,000 in 2004, with college students, senior high middle school students, and even the employees in different professions involved in (Xiao, 2010).

Due to China's economic growth and open policy, the early twenty first century has witnessed a great increase in the number of Chinese students who study abroad. In their Annual Report on the Development of Chinese Students Studying Abroad, Wang and Miao (2014) state that the total number of students studying outside of China in 2013 was 413, 900 — 3.58% more than that of 2012. Since 2000, the number has been increasing, and a sharp rise of over 10% occurred from 2007 to 2012.

The increased number of people who hope to study abroad has triggered a proliferation of different language training programs for the international English tests, such as Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL), International English Language Testing System (IELTS), and Graduate Record Examination (GRE). The training programs are administered either by universities or by private agencies. For example, New Oriental, established in Beijing in 1993, has grown to be the top training institute in China, with franchised branches in 66 Chinese cities. Since its establishment, New Oriental has helped millions of trainees to realize their dreams of studying abroad by providing TOEFL, IELTS, and GRE training (“New Oriental”, n.d.). Graddol (2006) indicates that Asian countries, especially China, have decided the future position of English as a global language.

However, a serious problem hiding behind the boom of English tests is the competition for English teachers, especially qualified and experienced teachers. Under such a condition, college English teachers, both local and foreign, are in great demand, and at the same time, they are trapped in a dilemma: On one hand, ESL teachers are highly expected to improve students' English skills by the outside society, and on the other hand, they have to confront difficulties resulted from school management, their own professional efficacy, and professional ethics.

## **Statement of Research Questions**

Teacher accountability is always understood in different ways, since the stakeholders hold different perceptions of the teaching profession (Whitty, Power, & Halpin, 1998). Current trends in school accountability are strongly influenced by nations' attempts in the global competition which shape their education systems as skills providers. Teachers' perceptions of accountability are usually influenced by the school administration (Diamond, Burch, Hallett, Jita, & Zoltmers, 2010; Fullan, Rincon-Gallardo, & Hargreaves, 2015), for example, during the past two decades, school test-based accountability has held teachers accountable for knowledge learning, oriented by tests (Jaafar & Anderson, 2007; Sahlberg, 2010). However, as far as being accountable for implementing professional teaching standards, teacher professional development needs to be given much attention, since teachers' professional development has a huge influence on teachers' career goals and their classroom behaviour (Kallestad & Olweus, 1998). And studies show that when teachers have higher level of professional development, students gain better class performance (National Commission on Teaching and America's Future, 1996).

As test-oriented English teaching is booming in China, research on English teachers' accountability has become fairly important. Despite a number of studies on evaluating Chinese College English teachers' accountability, very little research has been conducted to study accountability of the foreign ESL teachers at China's colleges and universities. The present study attempts to fill this vacuum through a comparison between these two groups of teachers using a quantitative methodological approach. The study addresses two questions:

1. What are foreign ESL teachers' perceptions towards external accountability?

How is it different from that of Chinese ESL teachers?

2. What are foreign ESL teachers' perceptions towards internal accountability?

How is it different from that of Chinese ESL teachers?



## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

#### **The Influence of Social Contexts on Teacher Accountability**

Over the past decades, the world's educational systems have been changed by a "global movement of education reform" (Verger, Altinyelken, & Koning, 2013, p. 1), and teachers' professional knowledge and behaviours in classrooms have been considered as determinants of how well the educational system is functioning by the governments and organizations throughout the world. Teacher professionalism is featured in the interaction of social politics, culture, and the economy (Day, Flores, & Viana, 2007), and therefore, it is influenced by social contexts. For the sake of a better understanding of the accountability of public schooling, Henig (1994), Adams and Kirst (1999), and Leithwood and Earl (2000) studied different accountability systems, which include political, professional, moral, and bureaucratic approaches to accountability.

#### **Political approach to teacher accountability**

The political approach is perhaps the aspect that is most representative of the educational reform direction. The Obama administration presents a program entitled "*Our Future, Our Teachers*" (United States Department of Education, 2011), which depicts the blueprint for reforming and improving teacher education. In his speech *Remarks to the Hispanic Chamber of Commerce* (The White House, 2009), President Obama stressed that America's teachers decide the future of the country. To effectively execute the blueprint, "an evaluation of collegiate teacher preparation programs" and "a nationally accessible instrument for assessing beginning teaching

performance” have been conducted (Cochran-Smith, Piazza, & Power, 2012, p. 6). The No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (NCLB) supports standards-based education reform based on the premise that setting high standards and establishing measurable goals can improve individual outcomes in education. However, this system is generally achieved by imposing quotas, sanctions, and incentives as the driving force for school achievement.

Researchers have been involved in vigorous debates as to whether or not NCLB could positively impact schools and students as the designers had expected (Carnoy & Loeb, 2002; Hanushek & Raymond, 2004; Lee, 2008). The negative effects of NCLB have been extensively discussed by the educational researchers. Sahlberg (2010) argues that test-based accountability has driven schools and teachers to pay too much attention to “predetermined knowledge standards” to improve students’ academic performance (p. 45). To the teachers, the test-based accountability system has exerted pressure on them to such a large extent that they have to struggle to achieve the standard at a cost of sacrificing the original educational good (Valenzuela, 2005). Teachers are treated unfairly when they are penalized for their students’ low performances that may have resulted from unbalanced educational resources for different demographic communities (Sunderman, Tracey, Kim, & Orfield, 2004). Based on the defects of NCLB system, Mintrop and Sunderman (2009) assert that in terms of practical results, quotas-and-sanctions-based accountability, as a whole, leaves little chance for excellent school and student performance.

### **Professional approach to teacher accountability**

In the United States, the empirical study on teaching practice as a profession has long been carried out (Hextall, Cribb, Gewirtz, Mahony, & Troman, 2007). Dale

(1989) indicates that teaching has gradually gained professional standing similar to other well-established professions such as medicine and law. The reforms have required teachers to be held accountable for classroom curriculum and tests (Apple, 1986). In the United Kingdom, teachers' professional accountability is regulated through the establishment of a professional organization — the General Teaching Council for England (GTCE). In a GTCE commentary, Pollard (2010) defines teaching as “a professional activity underpinned by qualifications, standards and accountabilities” (p.4)

Levitt, Janta, and Wegrich (2008) define professional accountability as professionals' performance that conforms to “standards and codes of conduct checked by professional peers, through their institutions” (p. 7). In the process of professional accountability, professionals (teachers) are the actors, while the institutions offer the stages and performance rules. In reality, qualified teachers set the foundation of high-performance schools, and the improvement of teachers' professional knowledge and skills is one of the most rational and effective methods to achieve educational targets.

Sachs (2003) points out that teaching with high professional standards is widely accepted, and the public believes that teachers' professional expertise leads to excellence of students and schools. Therefore, teachers' professionalization cannot be measured without having a standard against which it can be measured. Hudson (2009) argues that there must be “reliable instruments and measures that can adequately determine the achievement of teaching standards” (p. 70). In the UK, a framework of teacher professional standards has been set for professional development and learning (United Kingdom Department for Education, 2011). In Australia, the *National Professional Standards for Teachers* was released in 2011. The purpose of this

document is to provide professional guidance to leaning and practice, promote teacher improvement, and enhance public recognition of the profession. Although the teacher professional standards framework has been widely accepted, “a fuller teacher involvement and ownership of these standards” are necessary (Tuinamuana, 2011, p. 76), which indicates that teachers’ overall understanding and full implementation of the preset standards help them to be qualified in terms of professionalization.

This professional approach belongs to internal accountability. Santoro (2011) categorizes it into two dimensions: an intellectual dimension which Leithwood (2005) calls “classroom instructional practices” (p. 24) dimension and a moral dimension.

#### ***Classroom instructional dimension***

Teachers’ professional development plays a key role in improving student academic achievement (Corcoran, Shields, & Zucker, 1998; Darling-Hammond & Youngs, 2002; Little, 1993; Tuinamuana, 2011), and “schools require teachers who are professionally trained” (Paine & Fang, 2006, p. 280). For the sake of better student success, in the 1990s, the Western countries started a research wave dealing with the connections between teacher professional development and student achievement. In spite of the long existing demands, quality programs for teacher professional development are still lacking (Yoon, Duncan, Lee, Scarloss, & Shapley, 2007).

As a part of teacher professional accountability, class instructional practice is generally measured by three elements: teachers’ professional knowledge, teaching performance, and student achievement. Yoon et al. (2007) came to a conclusion about how the above three elements develop and eventually achieve student success through the following steps: “First, professional development enhances teacher knowledge and

skills. Second, better knowledge and skills improve classroom teaching. Third, improved teaching raises student achievement” (p. 4).

With regard to enhancing knowledge and skills, teacher professional development should be constructed on the basis of a solid theory combining schedule and conduct details, and a practical theory of teacher knowledge enhancement (Richardson & Placier, 2001). And, at the same time, quality curricula and instructional methods must be developed (Cohen, Raudenbush, & Ball, 2002; Hiebert & Grouws, 2007).

In the past three decades, a myriad of studies have focused on effective classroom teaching. Edison (1990) emphasizes ways to improve new and inexperienced teachers’ classroom teaching effectiveness. He concludes that “a positive attitude, high level of motivation, and willingness to reflect on one’s teaching” will help new teachers with “both self-confidence and skill” (p. 24). Walls (1999) introduces the “Four Aces of Effective Teaching” which include outcomes, clarity, engagement, and enthusiasm. This system probes the inner connections between teachers teaching and students learning.

As the teaching approach changes “from a teacher-led mode of teaching and learning to more child-initiated approaches” (Mauigoa-Tekene, 2006, p. 12), difference has happened to the inner connections between teachers’ teaching and students’ learning. Mauigoa-Tekene indicates that in the changing classroom contexts, teachers’ questioning skills are more important than simply answering in view of the development of students’ cognitive abilities. The world now has entered an era of information technology, and information technology is concerned with every aspect of human life. A study conducted in 30 European countries looked at the value of

implementing information technology in education, with the result that information technology “increased teacher skills, increased educational quality” (Hansson, 2006, p. 553). The study has showed that in the technology-based society, teachers’ abilities to use modern technology, such as multi-media and the internet as teachers’ aids will enhance teachers’ teaching effectiveness.

### ***Moral dimension***

*On Learning (Xueji)* in the *Book of Rites (Liji)*<sup>1</sup>, the earliest literature about education in China that goes back to two thousand years ago, argues that teachers must cultivate their moral and professional development, so that they can achieve teaching success, and subsequently obtain social respect. When schools were first established in the United States, one of the goals was to “teach moral virtues”, and ensure that teachers would be “morally upright individuals who displayed good character, . . . , and to adhere to professional codes of conduct” (Lumpkin, 2008, p. 45). After studying a myriad of literature, Buzzelli and Johnston (2001) conclude that “Teachers are moral agents, and education as a whole, and thus classroom interaction in particular, is fundamentally and inevitably moral in nature” (p. 876). Day (1999) also describes teaching through a view of professional development as a process that teachers, by their own or together with their peers, perceive and conduct their mission for moral purposes.

The moral dimension of teacher accountability derives from teachers' beliefs in the good of their career and personal efforts. In addition to benefiting society, moral accountability also secures personal satisfaction for teachers as well as promotes

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1. The Book of Rites (Liji) is a collection of texts describing the social forms, administration, and ceremonial rites of the Zhou dynasty (1046-256 BC) of China.

development of the profession. Spiritual satisfaction supports teachers to do good (Freedman & Appleman, 2008; Margolis & Deuel, 2009; Ng & Peter, 2010). Hansen (2001, cited in Santoro, 2011) believes that the teaching practice of those who commit to moral accountability is a mission filled with responsibility to students and moral obligation to themselves. Other researchers conclude that teaching is a career combining the elements of morality, values, and professional practice (Carr, 2006; Jackson, 1992; Richardson & Fenstermacher, 2001). On the other hand, altruism and spiritual rewards have explained teachers' moral accountability (Crocco & Costigan, 2007). Santoro (2011) observes that quite a number of teachers in different countries have made great achievement in teaching regardless of comparatively low income and tough life and work conditions.

Nevertheless, a teacher's moral accountability does not always stay at the same level. Santoro indicates that when teachers' situations change in a negative direction, the teaching practice may experience a shift from tolerance to burnout. Recent studies have shown that NCLB has over extracted teachers' personal identity, professional creativity, and enthusiasm to professional development, thus leading to the reality that "many teachers are leaving the profession because the ideals that brought them to teaching are fast disappearing." (Nieto, 2009, p. 13)

In view of the professional ethical conflicts teachers have experienced, Fenstermacher and Richardson (2005) put forward the idea of "four axes of quality teaching" which includes "good teaching (significant teacher influence), opportunity to teach and learn (partial-to-limited teacher influence), supportive social surroundings (limited teacher influence), and willingness and effort of the learner (partial-to-limited teacher influence)" (p. 207). Good teaching may not always be

achieved when one or some of the four elements are absent. Therefore, good teaching is the result of the “interactions between the context for teaching and the practices of the teacher” (p. 207).

Although good teaching is a result of the interaction of many elements, the role of teachers’ professional ethics in good teaching cannot be neglected. How can teachers obtain and sustain professional ethics is a big question. Strike (1990) believes that professional ethics is “thought of as a product of training” (p. 47). By reviewing the literature, Bullough (2010) points out that teachers can learn a good deal about “the essential values internal to the practice of teaching” (p. 24). This knowledge can be acquired through some programs or “a set of moral concepts that are highly important to the practice of teaching and that are unlikely currently to be adequately represented in the curriculum of teachers” (Strike, p. 48).

### **Managerial approach to teacher accountability**

Since an educational system accounts for the welfare of students, teachers are in the right position to be held accountable for best classroom instructional practices for students. In most cases, the commonsense view ignores “the complexity of teachers’ work and the strongly contextualized situations” (Winter, 2000, p. 155) where moral, social and political factors interact in teachers’ daily work life. In view of this issue, Wise and Leibbrand (2003) formulate an accountability model which, in addition to the teacher’s professional approach, includes the subject of accountability, such as what is expected by governmental and educational organizations. In contrast to a professional approach to teacher accountability, the accountability system related to the governmental and educational organizations can be called a managerial approach to teacher accountability.



The Education Reform Act 1988 (ERA) made England a driving force in involving “managerialist forms of control in education” (Hextall, Cribb, Gewirtz, Mahony, & Troman, 2007, p. 38). The managerial approach in education focuses on “efficiency and effectiveness” (Tuinamuana, 2011, p. 77) of teachers’ work, through “introducing more rational procedures for doing business” (Leithwood, 2005, p. 26).

Vernaza (2012) shows that most teachers of the United States welcome accountability and acknowledge its importance for the students, teachers, and schools, but they oppose the high-stakes tests as they doubt the accuracy of measuring students’ academic performance. A myriad of controversy has been reported about the high-stakes tests. Many teachers complained that their teaching was framed by the so-called standards, such as standardized tests, thus resulting in the fact that the pre-decided rituals have taken over creative work (Comber & Nixon, 2009). Anderson (2004) hopes to appeal to the public that managerialism is “counterproductive, ineffective and uneconomic” (p. 198).

Whether the teacher accountability management system is effective or not in improving teachers’ teaching performance and students’ academic achievement has not yet been proved (Elkins & Elliott, 2004), because external accountability has not been proven effective for long-term educational improvement (Louis, Febey, & Schroeder, 2005). In spite of denouncement from some educational researchers, the twisting economic and political forces still maintain the sanction-based accountability system. As Mintrop and Sunderman (2009) point out that different interest groups benefit politically or economically from the structure, thus leading to its long persistence.

## Teacher Accountability in China

China has the earliest exposition of teacher accountability in the world, which can be traced back two thousand years. *On Learning (Xueji)* in the *Book of Rites (Liji)* described the moral and professional cultivation of teachers.

In recent years, influenced by world-wide educational reform, and to keep pace with its economic growth and social transformation, China has conducted a few education reforms in the past three decades, which all touched upon the field of teacher accountability.

Chinese educational reforms have shown their characteristics in each different period. In their study, Zhou and Reed (2005) point out that the 1980s was a period of recovery of the Chinese education system. The Teacher Law, first launched in 1993, regulated qualifications of teachers at different levels. The period of the 1990s “targeted issues of quality assurance and improving teacher quality” (Zhou & Reed, 2005, p. 280). In 2004, the “2003-2007 New Action Plan to Revitalize Education” was issued, which drafted “standards for accreditation of teacher education institutions, curriculum of teacher education and quality of teacher education” (Zhu & Han, 2006, p. 70). The latest *Outline of the National Program for Long- and Medium-Term Educational Reform and Development 2010-2020* (Ministry of Education of China, 2010) highlights teacher qualifications and specified strict teacher entry qualifications in detail. Among a series of regulations, the Outline stresses that creating a highly qualified teaching staff, enhancing teachers’ professional capability, and improving teaching management are the measures of a quality education system. The Outline depicts the new requirement for the teachers: they are “formally, publicly

accountable for the quality of their teaching... and also accountable for their engagement in professional development” (Paine & Fang, 2006, p. 284).

However, things do not always happen as expected. “Societal and social changes put the teachers in a situation that makes certain responses unavoidable” (Carlgren & Klette, 2008, p. 131). The reality in China is that the education systems, from primary schools to universities, have long been strictly under the direction of the central government, requiring teachers to “satisfactorily meet regular inspection and evaluation” (Paine & Fang, p. 281). For the Chinese education system as a whole, accountability means a kind of control over schools, teachers, and students (Brown, Hui, Yu, & Kennedy, 2011).

As an example, senior middle school students who wish to study at college or university must take the National College Entrance Examination (NCEE, generally known as Gaokao), an academic examination held annually in China to select academically qualified students. The NCEE was created in 1952, but was canceled in 1966 because of the Cultural Revolution. It was restored in 1977 after the Cultural Revolution. Since 1978, the examination has been designed and conducted uniformly under the leadership of the Ministry of Education. During this period, several reforms happened, for example, a few regions, such as Guangdong and Shanghai, obtained access to independent enrollment, and until 2015, a total of 16 provinces and municipalities have been conferred the independent proposition. Even though the NCEE is no longer dominated by the Ministry of Education across the country, it is still uniformly directed by each province or the direct-controlled municipalities.

The disadvantages of the NCEE have been documented. As the only criterion for college or university admission, schools, teachers, and students themselves have to

move with the NCEE “baton”. Under such a situation, teachers’ accountability is only reflected as their effort and achievement improves students’ academic success.

Hurley and Lu (2015) conducted a comparative study of teacher accountability between teachers in China and Canada, and found that Chinese teachers hold themselves highly accountable for internal (professional) accountability. Regarding inner moral standards and professional ethics, Chinese teachers also hold themselves highly accountable. However, compared with Canadian teachers, Chinese teachers perceive themselves to be less accountable both for external or internal accountability.

Teacher accountability is reported to be practiced in a different way among different disciplines (Louis, Febey, & Schroeder, 2005). A marked example is the College English Test (CET) as mentioned in Part 1. The main concern of college English teachers is to help their students pass the CET. Xiao (2014) argues that CET is “a large-scale high stakes education test” (p. 1171). In order to promote students’ CET scores, the English teachers employ the wide-spread “test-taking strategy” which is “test-oriented rather than focusing on language learning and use” (Xiao, p. 1171). To a certain extent, Chinese college English teachers accountability can be measured through their students’ CET passing rate.

In terms of teachers’ professional development, Paine and Fang (2006) argue that “Two features of longstanding approaches to teacher learning in China stand out in this regard: the role of curriculum materials to frame teacher attention and hence their learning, and the importance of collegial interaction” (p. 285). Teaching materials such as textbooks and reference books are the main sources used by Chinese teachers for professional development (Ma, 1999).

Although foreign ESL teachers have made a great contribution to Chinese college students' English learning, disciplinary construction and cultural exchanges, very little research regarding their perceptions of teacher accountability was shown in the literature. Therefore, it is necessary to explore the perceptions of foreign ESL teachers towards accountability, and what is the difference of perceptions teacher accountability between foreign ESL teachers in China and Chinese local ESL teachers.

The following chapter introduced the methodology of the present study.

## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **METHODOLOGY**

#### **Research Design**

The present research investigated values and attitudes of foreign ESL teachers at Chinese schools towards teacher accountability through a comparison between Chinese ESL Teachers and foreign ESL teachers in China. A cross-sectional survey design was conducted.

Creswell (2012) indicates that a cross-sectional survey design has been generally accepted to be beneficial to investigate attitude assessments towards a current practice, and that it is suitable to compare “two or more educational groups in terms of attitudes, beliefs, opinions, or practice. (p. 378). On the other hand, McMillan and Schumacher (2010) contend that a cross-sectional design is associated with enhance reliability and validity in the collection of data. Therefore, a cross-sectional survey design fit this research.

#### **Data Collection**

After having received full ethics clearance from the Interdisciplinary Committee on Ethics in Human Research of Memorial University, an on-line survey (Appendix A) was conducted in June and July 2015. Participants were Chinese local English teachers and foreign ESL teachers in China. The Chinese local ESL teachers were from the schools of Hebei Province, Jiangsu Province, Shaanxi Province, Shandong Province, and Tianjin Municipality. The foreign ESL teachers were recruited through Chinese Cultural Exchange Program of Drake University, USA. The Drake Chinese

Cultural Exchange Program dispatches ESL teachers to China's universities, colleges, and high schools in different regions each year. Some of the foreign ESL teachers were recruited through China Foreign Teachers Union. The foreign ESL teachers were from different countries, and currently teaching in different provinces in China.

The Consortium for Cross Cultural Research in Education (CCCRE) is an organization which has been concentrating on studies of international education based on a social and cultural view in the past few decades. Recently, the CCCRE has started a study of teacher accountability across ten countries using the Rosenblatt Questionnaire to collect data. This on-line survey was extracted from one of the CCCRE's surveys whose validity and reliability has been examined worldwide (Rosenblatt, 2013). The present study was supervised by Dr. Noel Hurley, who is a member of the CCCRE.

Two hundred participants were expected, and eventually 126 valid questionnaires were retained for the final analysis, with 45 (36%) foreign ESL teachers and 81 (64%) Chinese ESL teachers. In order to investigate external and internal accountability of foreign ESL teachers, data from both groups were compared.

Among the foreign ESL teachers, 29 (64%) were male, and 16 (36%) were female; Forty three (96%) foreign ESL teachers were teaching in China's urban area, and two (4%) of them were teaching in a suburban area. Forty one (91%) of respondents had more than one year of teaching experience in China. All the foreign ESL teachers taught at universities/colleges. Thirty two (73%) were from humanity-oriented schools, seven (16%) were from science, mathematics, and technology schools, three were from arts and sport schools, two were from other type of schools,

and one missed this item. None of them held any leadership position. The school sizes ranged from 5,000 to 51,000 students.

Among the Chinese ESL teachers, 29 (36%) were male, 50 (62%) were female, one teacher was self-recognized as “other” in terms of gender, and one did not respond to this item. All the Chinese ESL teachers were from universities/colleges, and had teaching experience of more than one year. Sixty-six (81%) taught in urban areas, and 15 (19%) in suburban areas. Seventy-eight (96%) were from humanities oriented schools, and three (4%) recognized their schools as “other”. Three (4%) held a leadership position, and others were all teachers. All the participants taught at schools with more than 5,000 students.

## **Variables**

### **Independent variables**

For the demographic questions, eight independent variables: gender, age, year of teaching in China, teaching area, school location, school size, school leadership role, and school level were asked.

Leadership position was coded as vice-principal, headmaster, subject-area coordinator, in addition to teaching. Teaching areas was coded as humanities/languages/social studies, science/mathematics/technology, arts/sport, and other. Since the location of school may influence teachers’ life style and teaching behaviors, school location was coded as urban, suburban, and rural areas.

### **Dependent Variables**

The on-line survey was conducted using a 40-point questionnaire to acquire information of teacher accountability of foreign ESL teachers in China and Chinese local ESL teachers through examining four constructs: teachers’ perceptions of



external accountability with regard to outside expectations (11 questions), teachers' perceptions of external accountability with regard to school management (15 questions), teachers' perceptions of internal accountability with regard to professional duty (7 questions), and teachers' perceptions of feelings about work (7 questions). SPSS 22 was used to analyze the data.

Table 3.1 showed the overall Cronbach's alpha reliability coefficients. The coefficient of external accountability (bureaucratic) was .807; the coefficient of schools administrator behaviours and activities was .795; the coefficient of professional duty was .858; and the coefficient of feelings about work was .830. Nunnally (1978) indicates that when Cronbach's alpha reliability coefficient is higher than .70, a scale is reliable, and the higher the coefficient is, the higher the reliability is. The scales measured in the present study were acceptable for the coefficients were all greater than .70.

The first construct measured teachers' perceptions of external accountability with regard to outside expectations, which consisted of 11 questions as follow:

- 1) Make sure your students achieve high achievement scores
- 2) Meet expected standards
- 3) Be accountable for your students' achievements
- 4) Report to school leadership on the way you perform your work
- 5) Report to other teachers on the way you perform your work
- 6) Allow your work in class to be transparent to school leadership
- 7) Allow your work in class to be transparent to other teachers
- 8) Be evaluated on the basis of your work achievements
- 9) Change your work according to feedback you get

10) Be held accountable when your work in the classroom does not meet expectations

11) Be acknowledged for the success of your classes.

Teachers were asked to answer on a 5-point scale that ranged from low to high, which were *very little extent*, *little extent*, *neither little nor large*, *large extent*, and *very large extent*. In this section, the coefficient was .807, higher than .70, which meant that the scales of external accountability with regard to outside expectations were reliable.

The second construct measured teachers' perceptions of external accountability with regard to school management. This section was made up of 15 questions as follow:

1) The way I teach in my class is determined for the most part by myself

2) The contents taught in my class are those that I select myself

3) My teaching focuses on goals and objectives that I select myself

4) I select myself the teaching materials that I use with my students

5) I am free to be creative in my teaching approach

6) My job does not allow for much discretion on my part

7) In my class I have little control over how classroom space is used

8) My school administration strongly support my goals and values

9) My school administration values my contribution

10) My school administration takes pride in my accomplishments at work

11) My school administration really cares about me

12) If given the chance, my school administration would take unfair advantage of me

13) My school administration is willing to help me when I need a special favor

14) If I asked, my school administration would change my working conditions  
if at all possible

15) My school administration would ignore any complaint from me.

Teachers were asked to answer on a 5-point scale that ranged from *very little extent, little extent, neither little nor much, much extent, to very much extent*. The coefficient of an overall reliability was .795, which indicated that the scales were reliable.

The third construct measured teachers' perceptions of internal accountability with regard to professional duty, which consisted of 7 questions as follow:

- 1) Achieve professional goals
- 2) Develop professionally (training sessions, workshops, conferences, etc.)
- 3) Learn from the work of outstanding colleagues
- 4) Be responsible for teaching in the best possible way
- 5) Be responsible for using professional knowledge in your work
- 6) Be accountable to your own inner moral standards
- 7) Be accountable to professional ethics

Teachers were asked to answer on a 5-point scale that ranged from low to high, which were *very little extent, little extent, neither little nor large, large extent, and very large extent*. In this section, the coefficient was .858, which was higher than .70, and this meant that the scales of teachers' duty on their work were highly reliable.

The fourth construct measured teachers' perceptions of internal accountability with regard to feeling about work. This construct was made up of 7 questions as follow:

- 1) Strive to achieve set goals
- 2) Report on your performance regarding students' academic achievements
- 3) Report on performance regarding curriculum coverage
- 4) Report on performance regarding social climate (e.g., student behaviour, discipline) in class
- 5) Show transparency in your work
- 6) Get formal evaluations on the results of your work
- 7) Get feedback on your teaching

Teachers were asked to answer on a 5-point scale that ranged from *strongly disagree*, *disagree*, *neither agree nor disagree*, *agree*, to *strongly agree*. The coefficient of an overall reliability was .830, which indicated that the scales were highly reliable.

**Table 3.1**  
**Reliability Coefficients: ESL Teacher's Accountability Variables**

Constructs	Number of Items	Cronbach's Alpha
External Accountability with Regard to Outside Expectations	11	0.807
External Accountability with Regard to School Management	15	0.830
Internal Accountability with Regard to Professional Duty	7	0.858
Internal Accountability with Regard to Feelings about Work	7	0.795

Table 3.2 demonstrates statistics of the dependent variables. The skewness of the constructs ranges between -1 and 1, which indicates that the constructs are normal, and the data are reliable.

**Table 3.2**  
**Statistics of Variables of ESL Teachers' Accountability**

Constructs	Mean	Std. Deviation	Min-Max	Skewness
External Accountability with Regard to Outside Expectations	3.38	0.60	1-5	-0.23
External Accountability with Regard to School Management	3.10	0.49	1-5	0.33
Internal Accountability with Regard to Professional Duty	4.15	0.67	1-5	-0.72
Internal Accountability with Regard to Feelings about Work	3.70	0.65	1-5	0.63

In the following chapter, data were presented using a comparison of the means. Those findings that produced significant differences ( $p$ ) of the scales measuring the perceptions towards external accountability and internal accountability between foreign ESL teachers and Chinese local ESL teachers were presented.

### **Limitations**

Among the total 126 participants, 96% of the foreign teachers and 81% of the Chinese teachers were from the urban areas. All the foreign teachers and Chinese teachers were university/college teachers. No foreign teacher held a leadership position, and only three Chinese teachers had school leadership titles.

The present study investigated an overall understanding of foreign ESL teachers' perceptions of external accountability and internal accountability. Differences of teacher accountability influenced by the independent variables, such as gender, age, teaching area, school location, school size, school leadership role, the years of teaching in China, and school level were less important in this study than they would be in a study of teachers at the primary and secondary school levels.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### PRESENTATION OF DATA

#### **Introduction**

In this section, data were presented. An analysis was made by using four constructs, which covered teachers' perceptions towards (1) external accountability (outside expectations); (2) external accountability (school management); (3) internal accountability (professional duty) and; (4) internal accountability (feelings about work). A comparison of the data between foreign ESL teachers and Chinese ESL teachers was made. The two research questions were addressed:

1. What are foreign ESL teachers' perceptions towards external accountability?  
How is it different from that of Chinese ESL teachers?
2. What are foreign ESL teachers' perceptions towards internal accountability?  
How is it different from that of Chinese ESL teachers?

Data were presented with tables which contained the means, standard deviations, confidence interval, and significant difference ( $p$ ) of foreign ESL teachers and Chinese local ESL teachers. These items were examined to measure the different perceptions of the two groups towards external accountability and internal accountability.

The means suggested the collective extent of accountability to which each group perceived it was held. For the three constructs: external accountability (outside expectations), internal accountability (professional duty), and internal accountability (feelings about work), when the mean was greater than 3, the teachers were considered to be accountable for the given construct; when the mean was less than 3,

the teachers perceived low accountability. For the construct of external accountability (school management), when the mean was less than 3, the teachers were considered to be accountable for the construct.

The  $p$  value was examined at a level of 0.05. When the value was greater than 0.05, there was no significant difference towards the given construct between foreign ESL teachers and Chinese local ESL teachers; when the value was less than 0.05, there was significant difference between the two groups.

Table 4.1 showed the overall statistics of the four constructs and comparison between foreign ESL teachers and Chinese local ESL teachers in terms of perceptions of external accountability and internal accountability. The means, the standard deviation, the confidence interval, and the  $p$  values were presented.

**Table 4.1**  
**Overall Statistics of the Constructs and Comparison between Foreign ESL Teachers and Chinese Local ESL Teachers**

Construt	Group	Mean	Std. Deviation	C. I.	$P$
External Accountability (O.E.)	Foreign	3.65	0.66	95%: 0.20 - 0.63	0.000
	Chinese	3.24	0.52	95%: 0.19 - 0.65	
External Accountability (S. M.)	Foreign	3.45	0.44	95%: 0.41 - 0.72	0.000
	Chinese	2.88	0.38	95%: 0.41 - 0.73	
Internal Accountability (P. D.)	Foreign	4.28	0.66	95%: -0.50 - 0.45	0.116
	Chinese	4.08	0.66	95%: -0.50 - 0.45	
Internal Accountability (F. W.)	Foreign	4.00	0.61	95%: 0.23 - 0.69	0.000
	Chinese	3.54	0.61	95%: 0.23 - 0.69	



The overall statistics showed that foreign ESL teachers perceived that they held themselves highly accountable for internal accountability with regard to both professional duty and feelings about work, since the overall means of the two constructs were equal to or greater than 4. Foreign ESL teachers perceived that they were held accountable for external accountability with regard to outside expectations too, but they were not held accountable for external accountability with regard to school management.

Chinese ESL teachers perceived that they held themselves highly accountable for internal accountability in the professional duty and feelings of work constructs, at a comparatively lower level than foreign ESL teachers. They were held accountable for external accountability with regard to outside expectations and school management too.

The  $p$  value of professional duty was 0.116 ( $> .05$ ), which indicated that foreign ESL teachers and Chinese ESL teachers had no significant difference in this construct, that is, both foreign ESL teachers and Chinese ESL teachers were highly accountable for professional duty. The  $p$  values of the other three scales were all 0.000 ( $< .05$ ), which indicated that there existed different perceptions of external accountability, feelings about work, and attitude towards school administration between the two groups of teachers.

The data about the individual questions in each construct of foreign ESL teachers and Chinese ESL teachers were analyzed in the following sections. A comparison of the data between the two groups of teachers was conducted.

## **Data Presentation and Interpretation of Research Question One**

Research Question One is: What are foreign ESL teachers' perceptions towards external accountability? How are they different from those of Chinese teachers?

The question was addressed through presenting and analyzing the data in two groups of questionnaires: 11 questions about teachers' perceptions of external accountability with regard to outside expectations and 15 questions about teachers' perceptions of external accountability with regard to school management.

### **Teachers' perceptions towards external accountability with regard to outside expectations**

Teacher accountability consists of two dimensions — external accountability and internal accountability (Rosenblatt, 2013). Fullan, Callardo, & Hargreaves (2015) indicate “External accountability is when system leaders reassure the public through transparency, monitoring and selective intervention that their system is performing in line with societal expectations and requirements” (p. 4). In the climate of schools, external accountability reflects certain behaviours stipulated by the school bureaucracy, such as regulating one's behaviours within an organizational boundary, then assessing and reporting. In this study, eleven questions were designed and conducted to examine teachers' perceptions of external accountability.

Table 4.2 showed statistics of teachers' perceptions of external accountability with regard to outside expectations. In the foreign ESL teacher group, among the eleven questions, the mean of Question 9 (Change your work according to feedback you receive) was greater than 4, and the means of Question 2 (Meet expected standards) and Question 6 (Allow your work in class to be transparent to school leadership) were both fairly close to 4. The high means indicated that foreign ESL

teachers held themselves highly accountable for meeting expected standards, changing their work according to feedback, and work transparency to school leadership.

In this section, the means of ten questions were greater than 3 respectively. This meant that foreign ESL teachers held themselves highly accountable for students' scores and academic achievement; they would like their work to be transparent to school leadership, and would be comfortable to report their work performance to school leadership. The teachers acknowledged that their work should be evaluated on the basis of their work and the success of their classes. However, the mean of Question 5 (report to other teachers on the way you perform your work) was lower than 3, which indicated that foreign ESL teachers did not feel comfortable or necessary to report their ways of teaching to their peer teachers.

**Table 4.2****Foreign ESL Teachers and Chinese Local ESL Teachers' Perceptions towards External Accountability with Regard to Outside Expectations (N=126)****Question: In your work as a teacher, to what extent do you feel that it is your responsibility to?**

Question	Group	Mean	S.D.	C.I.	P
1. Make sure your students achieve high achievement scores	Foreign	3.71	1.01	95%: 3.15 - 4.00	0.133
	Chinese	3.42	1.04	95%: 3.19 - 3.64	
2. Meet expected standards	Foreign	3.97	0.91	95%: 3.71 - 4.24	0.207
	Chinese	3.78	0.80	95%: 3.60 - 3.95	
3. Be accountable for your students achievements	Foreign	3.53	1.07	95%: 3.21 - 3.84	0.840
	Chinese	3.56	0.82	95%: 3.38 - 3.74	
4. Report to school leadership on the way you perform your work	Foreign	3.44	1.11	95%: 3.11 - 3.77	0.000*
	Chinese	2.54	1.01	95%: 2.32 - 2.76	
5. Report to other teachers on the way you perform your work	Foreign	2.66	1.02	95%: 2.36 - 2.96	0.045*
	Chinese	2.28	0.99	95%: 2.06 - 2.50	
6. Allow your work in class to be transparent to school leadership	Foreign	3.90	0.96	95%: 3.62 - 4.19	0.000*
	Chinese	2.86	0.99	95%: 2.64 - 3.08	
7. Allow your work in class to be transparent to other teachers	Foreign	3.66	1.08	95%: 3.34 - 3.98	0.003*
	Chinese	3.06	1.04	95%: 2.83 - 3.28	
8. Be evaluated on the basis of your work achievement	Foreign	3.71	1.25	95%: 3.34 - 4.07	0.149
	Chinese	3.40	1.04	95%: 3.18 - 3.63	
9. Change your work according to feedback you get	Foreign	4.17	0.71	95%: 3.96 - 4.38	0.003*
	Chinese	3.67	0.98	95%: 3.46 - 3.89	
10. Be held accountable when your work in the classroom does not meet expectations	Foreign	3.88	0.93	95%: 3.61 - 4.16	0.006*
	Chinese	3.40	0.93	95%: 3.20 - 3.61	
11. Be acknowledged for the success of your classes	Foreign	3.61	1.26	95%: 3.24 - 3.98	0.935
	Chinese	3.63	0.90	95%: 3.43 - 3.82	

Note: *p* values less than .05 are marked with \*.

For Chinese local ESL teacher group, the mean of eight questions (Question 1, 2, 3, 7, 8, 9, 10, and 11) were greater than 3, which indicated that Chinese teachers held themselves accountable for the students' high achievement scores, meeting expected standards, changing their work according to feedback, work transparency to other teachers, being evaluated on a basis of work achievement, and being acknowledged for the success of their classes.

However, the means of three Questions (Question 4, 5 and 6) were lower than 3. The result indicated that Chinese ESL teachers did not feel comfortable or felt that it was necessary to report their ways of teaching either to school leadership or to other teachers. Similarly, Chinese ESL teachers did not feel comfortable to have their work in class to be transparent to school leadership either.

According to the data, the *p* values of Question 1, 2, 3, 8, and 11 were greater than .05, which indicated that there were no significant differences for the two groups of teachers in helping students achieve high scores, meeting expected standards, being accountable for students achievements, being evaluated on the basis of work achievement, and being acknowledged for the success of classes.

However, the *p* values of Question 4, 5, 6, 7, 9, and 10 were less than .05, which showed that there were significant differences between foreign ESL teachers and Chinese local ESL teachers in the aspects of reporting work performance to school leadership, reporting work performance to other teachers, allowing work in class to be transparent to school leadership, allowing work in class to be transparent to other teachers, changing work according to feedback, and being held accountable for not meeting work expectations.

### **Comparison of perceptions towards external accountability with regard to outside expectations between foreign ESL teachers and Chinese ESL teachers**

As shown in Table 4.2, a comparison of means of perceptions towards external accountability with regard to outside expectations between foreign ESL teachers and Chinese ESL teachers was made. The means of foreign ESL teachers of all the questions except Question 11 (Be acknowledged for the success of your classes) were greater than the means of Chinese ESL teachers. That meant foreign ESL teachers held themselves more highly accountable towards their responsibility, as a whole, than Chinese ESL teachers. The biggest gaps existed in Question 4 (Report to school leadership on the way you perform your work) and Question 6 (Allow your work in class to be transparent to school leadership), and this showed that foreign ESL teachers felt much more comfortable working with the school administrators than Chinese teachers, and they held more positive attitudes towards school leadership.

Table 4.3 showed the percentage distribution of the two groups of teachers who chose “large extent” and “very large extent” regarding external accountability (outside expectations). The most obvious difference between foreign ESL teachers and Chinese ESL teachers was in Question 6 (Allow your work in class to be transparent to school leadership). Foreign ESL teachers who chose large extent and very large extent accounted for 80%, much higher than 31% of Chinese ESL teachers. The least difference (1%) happened to Question 1 (Make sure your students achieve high achievement scores.), with 56% of foreign ESL teachers and 57% of Chinese local ESL teachers selecting large extent or very large extent. Foreign ESL teachers and Chinese ESL teachers both shared low attitudes towards Question 5 (Report to other

teachers on the way you perform your work), for 20% and 13% selected large extent or very large extent respectively.

**Table 4.3**  
**Percentage Distribution of Foreign ESL Teachers and Chinese Local ESL Teachers’ Perceptions towards External Accountability with Regard to Outside Expectations**

Question	Group	Percentage of Teachers Who Chose Large extent & Very Large extent
1. Make sure your students achieve high achievement scores	Foreign	56
	Chinese	57
2. Meet expected standards	Foreign	82
	Chinese	69
3. Be accountable for your students achievements	Foreign	56
	Chinese	60
4. Report to school leadership on the way you perform your work	Foreign	47
	Chinese	21
5. Report to other teachers on the way you perform your work	Foreign	20
	Chinese	13
6. Allow your work in class to be transparent to school leadership	Foreign	80
	Chinese	31
7. Allow your work in class to be transparent to other teachers	Foreign	64
	Chinese	44
8. Be evaluated on the basis of your work achievement	Foreign	73
	Chinese	60
9. Change your work according to feedback you get	Foreign	86
	Chinese	73
10. Be held accountable when your work in the classroom does not meet expectations	Foreign	78
	Chinese	55
11. Be acknowledged for the success of your classes	Foreign	63
	Chinese	72

## **Teachers' perceptions towards external accountability with regard to school management**

As the management unit and service provider, school administration has a remarkable influence on teachers' class performance (Robertson-Kraft, 2012), and therefore, it is necessary to examine teachers' perceptions towards external accountability with regard to school management.

Table 4.4 showed the statistics for foreign ESL teacher and Chinese local ESL teachers' perceptions towards external accountability with regard to school management. For foreign ESL teachers, of all the 15 questions, the means of three questions were less than 3, which were Question 6 (My job does not allow for much discretion on my part), Question 12 (If given the chance, my school administration would take unfair advantage of me), and Question 15 (My school administration would ignore any complaint from me). The results indicated that foreign ESL teachers perceived that they were given much discretion on their job, and the school administration treated them in a fair way, and would consider their complaints about work.

The means of the other 12 questions were greater than 3, among which, the means of Question 1, 2, 3, 4, and 5 were equal to or greater than 4. The results indicated that foreign ESL teachers had too much freedom in teaching. In other words, foreign ESL teachers were not held externally accountable for their way of teaching, their teaching materials, class contents, and teaching approach.



**Table 4.4**  
**Foreign ESL Teachers and Chinese Local ESL Teachers' Perceptions towards External Accountability with Regard to School Management (N=126)**  
**Question: To what extent do you believe your work should include the following behaviours and activities?**

Question	Group	Mean	S. D.	C. I.	P
1. The way I teach in my class is determined for the most part by myself	Foreign Chinese	4.25 3.50	0.89 1.09	95%: 3.98-4.51 95%: 3.26-3.73	0.000*
2. The contents taught in my class are those that I select myself	Foreign Chinese	4.06 3.00	0.93 1.09	95%: 3.79 - 4.34 95%: 2.75 - 3.24	0.000*
3. My teaching focuses on goals and objectives that I select myself	Foreign Chinese	4.00 3.03	1.00 1.10	95%: 1.99 - 2.62 95%: 2.79 - 3.28	0.000*
4. I myself select the teaching materials that I use with my students	Foreign Chinese	4.00 2.96	1.04 1.18	95%: 3.69 - 4.30 95%: 2.70 - 3.22	0.000*
5. I am free to be creative in my teaching approach	Foreign Chinese	4.57 3.82	0.65 0.99	95%: 4.38 - 4.77 95%: 3.60 - 4.04	0.000*
6. My job does not allow for much discretion on my part	Foreign Chinese	2.35 2.97	1.35 0.96	95%: 1.96 - 2.75 95%: 2.76 - 3.18	0.004*
7. In my class I have little control over how classroom space is used	Foreign Chinese	3.24 2.97	1.36 1.26	95%: 2.84 - 3.64 95%: 2.69 - 3.25	0.272
8. My school administration strongly support my goals and values	Foreign Chinese	3.57 3.00	1.01 0.80	95%: 3.28 - 3.87 95%: 2.82 - 3.17	0.001*
9. My school administration values my contribution	Foreign Chinese	3.63 3.03	1.03 0.98	95%: 3.33 - 3.94 95%: 2.82 - 3.25	0.002*
10 My school administration takes pride in my accomplishments at work	Foreign Chinese	3.53 3.00	1.07 1.03	95%: 3.21 - 3.84 95%: 2.77 - 3.22	0.007*
11. My school administration really cares about me	Foreign Chinese	3.60 2.53	1.05 0.91	95%: 3.29 - 3.90 95%: 2.33 - 2.73	0.000*
12. If given the chance, my school administration would take unfair advantage of me	Foreign Chinese	2.37 3.01	1.15 0.89	95%: 2.04 - 2.71 95%: 2.81 - 3.20	0.001*

13. My school administration is willing to help me when I need a special favor	Foreign	3.73	0.98	95%: 3.48 - 4.06	0.000*
	Chinese	2.80	0.92	95%: 2.59 - 3.00	
14. Upon my request, my school administration would change my working conditions if at all possible	Foreign	3.66	0.90	95%: 3.40 - 3.93	0.000*
	Chinese	2.94	1.06	95%: 2.71 - 3.18	
15. My school administration would ignore any complaint from me	Foreign	2.31	1.08	95%: 1.99 - 2.62	0.003*
	Chinese	2.92	1.06	95%: 2.69 - 3.15	

Note: *p* values less than .05 are marked with \*.

Based on the data, Chinese ESL teachers felt that they had much freedom to choose teaching methods, class content, and teaching goals, since the means of the related questions were greater than 3. They felt that they were free to be creative in their teaching approach (Question 5, Mean = 3.82). In addition, most of Chinese ESL teachers believed that the school administration supported their goals and values (Question 8, Mean = 3), valued their contribution (Question 9, Mean = 3.03), and took pride in their accomplishments at work (Question 10, Mean = 3).

However, the means of Question 11, Question 13, and Question 14 were less than 3, which indicated that Chinese ESL teachers perceived that they did not get much care, help, and request responses from the school administration.

**Table 4.5**  
**Percentage Distribution of Foreign ESL Teachers and Chinese Local ESL Teachers'**  
**Perceptions towards External Accountability with Regard to School Management**

<b>Question</b>	<b>Group</b>	<b>Percentage of Teachers Who Chose Agree &amp; Strongly Agree</b>
1. The way I teach in my class is determined for the most part by myself	Foreign Chinese	80 63
2. The contents taught in my class are those that I select myself	Foreign Chinese	73 44
3. My teaching focuses on goals and objectives that I select myself	Foreign Chinese	76 41
4. I myself select the teaching materials that I use with my students	Foreign Chinese	71 46
5. I am free to be creative in my teaching approach	Foreign Chinese	95 76
6. My job does not allow for much discretion on my part	Foreign Chinese	17 32
7. In my class I have little control over how classroom space is used	Foreign Chinese	48 45
8. My school administration strongly support my goals and values	Foreign Chinese	53 19
9. My school administration values my contribution	Foreign Chinese	63 42
10. My school administration takes pride in my accomplishments at work	Foreign Chinese	55 31
11. My school administration really cares about me	Foreign Chinese	58 10
12. If given the chance, my school administration would take unfair advantage of me	Foreign Chinese	20 27
13. My school administration is willing to help me when I need a special favor	Foreign Chinese	68 20
14. Upon my request, my school administration would change my working conditions if at all possible	Foreign Chinese	56 38
15. My school administration would ignore any complaint from me	Foreign Chinese	15 27

### **Comparison of perceptions towards external accountability with regard to school management between foreign ESL teachers and Chinese ESL teachers**

As shown in Table 4.4, the  $p$  values of all the 15 questions but Question 7 were less than .05, which indicated the significant differences between foreign ESL teachers and Chinese ESL teachers in the perceptions towards external accountability with regard to school management in most of the scales.

It is clear that foreign ESL teachers had much more freedom in teaching related activities, such as class contents, teaching goals, and teaching material selection. Chinese ESL teachers were allowed less discretion in the above activities. Foreign ESL teachers showed more positive attitudes towards the treatment of the school administration since they felt that they got much care, help, and contribution recognition from the school administration. In contrast, Chinese ESL teachers perceived that they did not have too much discretion in teaching. On the other hand, Chinese ESL teachers held comparatively negative attitudes towards the school administration in terms of the supports, care, and contribution recognition.

According to Table 4.5, the most obvious difference between the two groups of teachers existed in Question 11 and Question 13. In terms of the care from the school administration, 58% of foreign ESL teachers held positive attitudes, in contrast to 10% of Chinese ESL teachers. Similarly, 68% of foreign ESL teachers believed that the school administration was willing to help them when they needed a special favor, however, as low as 20% of Chinese ESL teachers held the same attitudes.

### **Conclusion for Research Question One**

Based on analysis of the data, foreign ESL teachers were partly held accountable for external accountability. In term of teaching expectations, they felt that

they were held highly accountable by the outside society for helping students achieve high scores, meeting expected standards, being accountable for students' achievements, allowing work transparency to school leadership and other teachers, being evaluated according to work achievement, changing work according to feedback, being held accountable when their work did not meet expectations, and being acknowledged for the class success. Chinese ESL teachers perceived that they were held accountable for these aspects too. However, the data showed that foreign ESL teachers were held accountable at a higher level.

On the other hand, foreign ESL teachers perceived that they were not highly held accountable for class teaching activities with regard to school management, since they were allowed too much discretion to decide class contents, teaching goals, and teaching materials by the school administrators. In contrast, Chinese ESL teachers were held highly accountable for these aspects.

### **Data Presentation and Interpretation of Research Question Two**

Research Question 2 is: What are foreign ESL teachers' perceptions towards internal accountability? How is it different from that of Chinese teachers?

The question was addressed through presenting and analyzing the data in two groups of questions: 7 questions of teachers' perceptions towards internal accountability with regard to professional duty and 7 questions of teachers' perceptions of feelings about their work.

#### **Teachers' perceptions towards internal accountability with regard to professional duty**

Fullan et al. (2015) indicate that internal accountability happens when teachers and schools are willing to constantly increase students' achievements on a basis of

professional efforts, and they assert that “ the main feature of successful schools was that they built a collaborative culture that combined individual responsibility, collective expectations, and corrective action—that is, internal accountability” (p. 5). It is clear that teachers’ internal accountability is playing a fairly important role in education.

In this section, seven questions were concerned about achieving professional goals, professional development, learning from peer colleagues, teaching in the best way, using professional knowledge in work, being accountable to inner moral standards, and being accountable to professional ethics.

As shown in Table 4.6, for foreign ESL teachers, the means of all the questions but Question 2 were greater than 4. The means of Question 4, Question 6, and Question 7 were fairly high (4.57, 4.60, and 4.53). The lowest mean happened to Question 2 (Develop professionally), which was 3.84.

**Table 4.6**  
**Foreign ESL Teachers and Chinese Local ESL Teachers' Perceptions towards Internal Accountability with Regard to Professional Duty (N=126)**  
**Question: In your work as a teacher, to what extent do you feel that it is your duty to?**

Question	Group	Mean	S.D.	C.I.	P
1. Achieve professional goals	Foreign	4.04	1.06	95%: 3.73 - 4.35	0.491
	Chinese	3.96	0.83	95%: 3.74 - 4.10	
2. Develop professionally (training sessions, workshops, conferences, etc)	Foreign	3.84	1.26	95%: 3.47 - 4.21	0.615
	Chinese	3.74	1.01	95%: 3.52 - 3.96	
3. Learn from the work of outstanding colleagues	Foreign	4.08	1.06	95%: 3.77 - 4.39	0.434
	Chinese	3.93	1.01	95%: 3.71 - 4.16	
4. Be responsible for teaching in the best possible way	Foreign	4.57	0.54	95%: 4.41 - 4.73	0.008*
	Chinese	4.16	0.95	95%: 3.95 - 4.36	
5. Be responsible for using professional knowledge in your work	Foreign	4.28	0.78	95%: 4.41 - 4.73	0.246
	Chinese	4.12	0.73	95%: 3.95 - 4.36	
6. Be accountable to your own inner moral standards	Foreign	4.60	0.61	95%: 4.41 - 4.78	0.015*
	Chinese	4.21	0.95	95%: 4.00 - 4.41	
7. Be accountable to professional ethics	Foreign	4.53	0.70	95%: 4.32 - 4.74	0.524
	Chinese	4.44	0.77	95%: 4.27 - 4.61	

Note: *p* values less than .05 are marked with \*.

The results reflected that foreign ESL teachers held themselves highly accountable for teacher internal accountability with regard to professional duty, especially in the aspects of teaching in the best possible way, being accountable to inner moral standards and being accountable for professional ethics.

For the group of Chinese ESL teachers, the means of four questions (Question 4, Question 5, Question 6, and Question 7) out of the total seven were greater than 4. The means of Question 1 and Question 3 are close to 4 (3.92 and 3.93).

The results indicated that Chinese ESL teachers held themselves highly accountable for internal accountability with regard to professional duty too, especially in the aspects of teaching in the best possible way, using professional knowledge in work, being accountable to inner moral standards, and being accountable for professional ethics.

#### **Comparison of foreign ESL teachers' and Chinese ESL teachers' perceptions towards internal accountability with regard to professional duty**

According to Table 4.6, the *p* values of Question 4 (Be responsible for teaching in the best possible way) and Question 6 (Be accountable for their inner moral standards) were less than .05, which demonstrated that although both foreign ESL teachers and Chinese ESL teachers were highly accountable for internal accountability with regard to professional duty, they demonstrated different levels in these two aspects.

As shown in Table 4.7, ninety-eight percent of foreign ESL teachers chose large extent and very large extent agreement in term of being responsible for teaching in the best possible way, with 87% of Chinese ESL teachers' choosing large extent and very large extent agreement. For Chinese ESL teachers, the largest percentage (95%) of large extent and very large extent agreement happens in Question 7 (Be accountable to professional ethics), with foreign ESL teachers' 88% in the same question. For the two groups, the lowest of percentage of large extent and very large extent agreement happened both to Question 2 (Develop professionally), which was 69%, which



indicated that both foreign ESL teachers and Chinese ESL teachers perceived that they were less responsible for professional development than for any other activities.

**Table 4.7**  
**Percentage Distribution of Foreign ESL Teachers and Chinese Local ESL Teachers' Perceptions towards Internal Accountability with Regard to Professional Duty**

Question	Group	Percentage of Teachers Who Chose Large extent & Very Large extent
1. Achieve professional goals	Foreign Chinese	84 81
2. Develop professionally (training sessions, workshops, conferences, etc)	Foreign Chinese	69 69
3. Learn from the work of outstanding colleagues	Foreign Chinese	77 80
4. Be responsible for teaching in the best possible way	Foreign Chinese	98 87
5. Be responsible for using professional knowledge in your work	Foreign Chinese	84 87
6. Be accountable to your own inner moral standards	Foreign Chinese	93 83
7. Be accountable to professional ethics	Foreign Chinese	88 95

**Teachers' perceptions towards internal accountability with regard to feelings about work**

In order to examine foreign ESL teachers and Chinese local ESL teachers' perceptions towards internal accountability, their feelings about work were compared

too. The questions were concerned with teachers' attitudes towards goal achieving, performance reporting, work transparency, work evaluation, and teaching feedback.

Table 4.8 presented the data of foreign ESL teachers and Chinese local ESL teachers' perceptions towards internal accountability with regard to feelings about work. For foreign ESL teachers, the means of all the questions were greater than 3, and the means of Question 1, Question 5, and Question 7 were greater than 4.

Conclusion can be made that foreign ESL teachers held totally positive attitudes towards the behaviors and activities to promote improve teaching.

**Table 4.8**  
**Foreign ESL Teachers and Chinese Local ESL Teachers' Perceptions towards Internal Accountability with regard to Feelings about Work (N=126)**  
**Question: To what extent do you believe your work should include the following behaviours and activities?**

Question	Group	Mean	S.D.	C.I.	P
1. Strive to achieve set goals	Foreign	4.15	0.70	95%: 3.94 - 4.36	0.033*
	Chinese	3.79	1.00	95%: 3.57 - 4.01	
2. Report on your performance regarding students' academic achievements	Foreign	3.93	0.80	95%: 3.69 - 4.17	0.002*
	Chinese	3.40	0.93	95%: 3.20 - 3.61	
3. Report on performance regarding curriculum coverage	Foreign	3.82	0.83	95%: 3.57 - 4.06	0.011*
	Chinese	3.38	0.96	95%: 3.16 - 3.59	
4. Report on performance regarding social climate (e.g., student behaviour, discipline) in class	Foreign	3.86	0.94	95%: 3.59 - 4.14	0.000*
	Chinese	3.08	1.15	95%: 2.83 - 3.33	
5. Show transparency in your work	Foreign	4.17	0.77	95%: 3.95 - 4.40	0.000*
	Chinese	3.44	0.82	95%: 3.26 - 3.62	
6. Get formal evaluations on the results of your work	Foreign	3.81	0.99	95%: 3.52 - 4.11	0.563
	Chinese	3.71	0.95	95%: 3.50 - 3.92	
7. Get feedback on your teaching	Foreign	4.20	0.85	95%: 3.95 - 4.45	0.185
	Chinese	3.96	1.02	95%: 3.73 - 4.18	

Note: *p* values less than .05 are marked with \*.

For Chinese ESL teachers, the means of all the seven questions were greater than 3, which indicated that Chinese ESL teachers also held totally positive feelings of the behaviors and activities to promote improve teaching. However, the mean of Question 4 was slightly greater than 3, which implied that Chinese ESL teachers were less inclined towards reporting performance regarding social climate in class.

The  $p$  values of Question 1, 2, 3, 4, and 5 were less than .05, which indicated that the two groups of teachers held the feelings of their work at different levels, but foreign ESL teachers expressed a higher level.

**Table 4.9**  
**Percentage Distribution of Foreign ESL Teachers and Chinese Local ESL Teachers' Perceptions towards Internal Accountability with regard to Feelings about Work**

Question	Group	Much extent & Very Much extent (%)
1. Strive to achieve set goals	Foreign	87
	Chinese	71
2. Report on your performance regarding students' academic achievements	Foreign	73
	Chinese	55
3. Report on performance regarding curriculum coverage	Foreign	71
	Chinese	51
4. Report on performance regarding social climate (e.g., student behaviour, discipline) in class	Foreign	69
	Chinese	43
5. Show transparency in your work	Foreign	87
	Chinese	50
6. Get formal evaluations on the results of your work	Foreign	66
	Chinese	64
7. Get feedback on your teaching	Foreign	83
	Chinese	74

### **Comparison of foreign ESL teachers and Chinese ESL teachers'**

#### **perceptions towards internal accountability with regard to feelings about work**

Both of the two groups of teachers held positive feelings about the behaviors and activities to improve their work, but all the means of the seven questions of foreign ESL teachers were greater than those of Chinese ESL teachers, which indicated a higher level of foreign ESL teachers in term of internal accountability with regard to feelings about work.

The greatest difference between foreign ESL teachers and Chinese ESL teachers happened to the attitude towards showing transparency in their work, with 87 % of foreign ESL teachers and 50% of Chinese ESL teachers choosing much extent or very much extent of agreement as shown in Table 4.9.

The two groups of teachers had a close match in the percentage of teachers who chose much extent and very much extent in Question 6 (Get formal evaluations on the results of your work), with foreign ESL teachers' 66% to Chinese ESL teachers' 64%. This indicated that the two groups of teachers were held accountable for getting formal evaluations on the results of the work at the same level. For Chinese ESL teachers, only 43% (lowest percentage) of them chose much extent and very much extent in Question 4, which showed that Chinese ESL teachers had a comparatively low chance to report on performance regarding social climate (e.g., student behaviour, discipline) in class.

#### **Conclusion for research question two**

The data showed that foreign ESL teachers held themselves highly accountable for internal accountability with regard to professional duty, especially in the aspects of teaching in the best possible way, being accountable for inner moral standards, and

being accountable for professional ethics. They had three highest means for the question “Be accountable to your own inner moral standards”, “Be responsible for using professional knowledge in your work”, and “Be accountable to professional ethics”, while the lowest mean happened to the question “Develop professionally (training sessions, workshops, conferences, etc)”.

Chinese ESL teachers also held themselves highly accountable for internal accountability (professional duty). Chinese ESL teachers had the highest means for the questions where foreign ESL teachers had the highest means too. However, foreign ESL teachers expressed a higher level of internal accountability (professional duty) than Chinese ESL teachers.

In terms of teachers’ attitudes towards behaviours and activities to improve their work, both foreign ESL teachers and Chinese ESL teachers held themselves highly accountable, but foreign ESL teachers expressed a higher level in this construct.

### **Summary**

Through an analysis of the data regarding the four constructs: external accountability with regard to outside expectations, external accountability with regard to school management, internal accountability with regard to professional duty, and internal accountability with regard to feelings about work, findings were obtained that foreign teachers perceived that they were held highly accountable for external accountability with regard to outside expectations, but were not held highly accountable for external accountability with regard to school management; Foreign teachers perceived that they held themselves highly accountable for internal accountability with regard to both professional duty and feelings about work.

Compared with foreign ESL teachers, Chinese ESL teachers were held highly accountable for external accountability with regard to both outside expectations and school management; Chinese ESL teachers held themselves highly accountable for internal accountability with regard to both professional aspects and feelings about work.

However, in terms of external accountability (outside expectations), internal accountability (professional), and internal accountability (feelings about work), foreign teachers expressed comparatively higher levels.

## **CHAPTER FIVE**

### **DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS**

#### **Introduction**

In order for a better understanding of the way foreign ESL teachers in China perceived external and internal accountability, a discussion was made with regard to the foreign ESL teacher recruiting policy, the foreign ESL teacher managerial system, the professional advantages and professional development opportunities of foreign ESL teachers in Chinese schools, and as well as foreign ESL teachers' career motivation.

#### **Understanding of Foreign ESL Teachers' Perceptions towards External Accountability**

Hawkins (1983) points out that administrative power has been dominating China's educational system. Chen Jianjun, an official of the Ministry of Education asserted the importance of English language:

If a nation's foreign language proficiency is raised, it will be able to obtain information of science and technology from abroad and translate it into the native language. Ultimately this will be turned into production force. (Cen, 1998, cited in Guo, 2012, p. 29)

This discourse demonstrates the Chinese government's attitude towards English language learning, which is "paramount to the nation's economic competitiveness in the global market" (Guo, p. 29). As the top level of the Chinese educational administrative system, the Ministry of Education exercises absolute authority over the lower levels — provincial and district education departments — in terms of educational development.



Reacting to the direction of the Ministry of Education, the district educational authorities and educational units have worked out their own regulations. For example, in Beijing, primary school students should start studying English in Grade three, and the schools partaking in the English teaching reform may open English class for the year-one students (Beijing Commission of Education, 2001). At Chinese universities, the College English Test Band 4 (CET-4) certificate is usually required as the prerequisite for a student to obtain his/her bachelor's degree (Liu, 2014).

The English requirement is by no means limited to the campuses. The government departments, large state-owned enterprises, academic institutes, and even small companies all have a high regard for graduates who are proficient in English as determined by English test (scores) certificates. Those who are already working also join with the English trainee team to increase their future career choices. In China, English has been considered a step to future success (Johnson, 2009).

### **Demand of Foreign ESL Teachers and the Related Problems**

In China, native English teachers are in high demand on the grounds of a fever of English learning. By the year of 2006, around 200,000 person-times of foreign teachers were recruited to Chinese schools (Jin, 2006). All the Chinese universities or colleges that set English course have employed foreign ESL teachers (Wu & Li, 2009).

In their research, Wu and Li (2009) find that foreign teachers are expected to speak standard target language, be serious with class teaching, be able to correct the mistakes in students' pronunciation and grammar, be good at reaction with students, be humorous, and deliver rich contents in class. Therefore, quality foreign teachers are always popular.

Due to the imperfect intermediate link of the recruiting system and huge demand of native English teachers, a number of illegal or unqualified English speakers have poured into this profession (Jin, 2006). On the other hand, the imbalance of demand and supply of foreign ESL teachers has resulted in ignorance of foreign ESL teachers' professional capabilities when universities recruit foreign teachers (Dui, 2008).

A prevailing saying that "anyone whose native language is English can find a position as an English teacher in China" is a real practice in the foreign teacher employment market (Jin, 2006, p. 115). Employing illegal or unqualified English speakers as ESL teachers has, to a certain extent, thrown English teaching into disorder (Jin, 2006), as a result, when talking about the cases of unqualified ESL teachers in China, students believe that they may just have practised some simple listening, or may have learned nothing (Wolff, 2003).

### **Foreign ESL teacher managerial systems in China**

#### ***Managerial system at government level***

China's current foreign ESL teacher management is under the leadership of the State Administration of Foreign Experts Affairs and the State Ministry of Education.

In order to standardize recruitment and teaching of foreign teachers, the above two departments have released different regulations or policies. For example, the State Ministry of Education issued *The Guidelines of Recruiting Foreign Culture and Education Experts and Foreign Language Teachers at Institutions of Higher Learning* in 1991, and the State Administration of Foreign Experts Affairs of China released *The Regulations on Foreign Experts Working Permit Application* in 2008. Both the

documents specify the required credentials for the foreign ESL applicants and the employment regulations.

Jin and Ding (2011) indicate that the overlap of management and the complicated entry visa procedure have hampered the efficiency of foreign teacher recruitment procedures.

### ***Managerial system at school level***

The foreign ESL teacher managerial system in Chinese schools is interwoven with two sub-systems: the teaching management system which is assumed by the Department of Educational Administration, and the administrative service system which is provided by the International Department (Ministry of Education, 1991).

The Ministry of Education of China stipulates that Foreign ESL teachers refer to the Department of Educational Administration for assistance when they have teaching-related problems. The responsibilities of the International Department range from selecting foreign teachers according to recruiting standards and handling the foreign teachers' position-entry procedures, to daily service. In real practice, at schools with no International Department, the administrative service for foreign teachers is usually assumed by other departments, such as human resources, and specific staff members are generally allocated to fulfill the same tasks as stipulated.

Considering that foreign teachers are in a completely different situation in terms of language, culture, social customs, and the education system, the administrative staff in the Department of Educational Administration and the International Department tends to provide much assistance to them (Diao, 2011). At schools with many foreign teachers, individual Chinese English teachers provide person-to-person assistance to the individual foreign teacher.

Nevertheless, the administrative assistance cannot make up the deficiency in teaching management. In their research, Wu and Li (2009) found that quite a number of foreign ESL teachers did not have a textbook from their employers, and they did not have a clear teaching plan either. Foreign ESL teachers were allowed too much discretion in teaching.

The current situations of foreign ESL teacher management explains why foreign ESL teachers in the present study perceived that they were highly held accountable for external accountability with regard to outside expectations, but were less held accountable for external accountability with regard to school management.

### **Understanding of Foreign ESL Teachers' Perceptions towards Internal Accountability**

To understand foreign ESL teachers' perceptions towards internal accountability, the following topics about foreign ESL teachers in China were discussed in this section:

1. Professional advantages
2. Professional development opportunities
3. Career motivation

#### **Professional advantages of foreign ESL teachers**

Language is basically a communicative tool. When communication happens between people from different cultural backgrounds, "the most important overriding skill is understanding the context within which the communication takes place. This context is to a large extent culturally determined" (Seelye, 1993, p.1).

English, as a language, is communication-based, and involves culture, values, and social beliefs that are shared by the English communities.

For a long time, Chinese ESL teachers' classes were taught with didactic and force-feeding methods. The teachers focused on "linguistic perspective (including components such as phonetics, phonology, syntax, semantics, and morphology" (Zhou, 2011, p.2). The students were usually forced to memorize new words, grammatical points, and sentence structures, which helped them to form grammatically correct sentences. Important as the linguistic perspective is, it does not help the students with effective communication. The direct influence is that the students have comparatively good reading skills, but their writing is not acceptable, because the randomly selected words and rigid sentences do not convey proper meanings (Bao, 2009).

Bao (2009) also indicates that due to the grammar-based concept and the lack of opportunities to speak the language, students treat English learning as acquisition of knowledge rather than communicating in English, resulting in "mute English" among Chinese students. Unfortunately, young teachers still teach the same way they learned from their teachers. For the past decades, the traditional English teaching method has remained unchanged. An authoritarian classroom environment and outdated teaching methods are likely to cause "resistance to communicating in English" (p. 176).

In the present study, 85% of the foreign participants agreed (large extent or very large extent) that teachers were responsible for using professional knowledge in teaching. Wang (2006) indicates that foreign ESL teachers' own a competitive edge in the English language and culture makes their classes more appealing, and the combination of native English language and culture helps the students better understand the in-depth connotation of vocabulary, idioms, and the whole context of

the given material. Foreign teachers are better positioned to teach students “appropriate English” rather than “grammatically correct English”.

In terms of classroom control, foreign ESL teachers have a better command of class interaction between students and teacher, and between individual students than Chinese ESL teachers. In foreign ESL teachers’ classes, students are more involved in communications and discussions, and have more opportunities to practise what they have learned. Therefore, the students are active, and their potential is much easier to demonstrate (Wang, 2006).

Pearl and Knight (1999) find that effective teachers value students’ classroom achievements, treat students equally, recognize students’ creativity, and free students from humiliation. Hu and Liu (2009) find that foreign ESL teachers generally meet the Pearl and Knight standards. In the present study, as many as 98% of the foreign participants agreed to teach in the best possible way.

Foreign ESL teachers are also found to conduct different assessments on the students from Chinese local ESL teachers.

Butt (2010) argues that assessment is an indispensable part of educational activities and is used to provide evidence of educational achievements for students. Assessment is a process in which teachers collect information about how students learn. Through student assessment, teachers can modify their teaching activities, as well as improve students’ learning.

China’s test-based teaching system has decided that a higher test score is the main goal teachers and students pursue. As a result, summative assessment which takes the exam score as the only assessment criterion to assess students’ achievement is mostly conducted by Chinese teachers. The summative assessment system usually:

... Involves tests that are infrequent, isolated from normal teaching and learning, carried out on special occasions with formal rituals, and often conducted by methods over which individual teachers have little or no control. (Black, Harrison, Lee, Marshall, & William. 2003, p. 2)

However, students' class performance during English learning is usually neglected. The system with summative assessment as the only method destroys students' initiatives, and finally spoils the teachers' activeness (Chen, 2011).

In my 10-year experience as foreign teacher coordinator at a Chinese university, foreign teachers' assessments of their Chinese students were overall positive. The assessments included the following headings: hard working, eager to learn, active with the class duty, and serious with exams. The assessments involved the students' attitudes towards English learning, class performance, and learning results, which could only be obtained when teachers' concerns about students' studies continued through a whole semester, or even longer. Such assessment is formative assessment.

Formative assessment is a range of assessment procedures involving information gathering, judging, and goal deciding in teaching and learning activities (Harlen, 2008). Butt (2010) finds formative assessment an efficient and constructive educational conduct, because it "fosters innovation, helps learners to know how to improve, and recognizes all educational achievement" (p. 51). In the Chinese social context, Chen (2011) argues that the students' initiative for English learning rises when teachers conduct formative assessments.

### **ESL teachers' professional development in China**

The ultimate goal of educational initiatives is to improve student achievement. However, improvement of teachers must be the most important prerequisite (Ferguson, 1991; Harwell, 2003). Richards and Farrell (2005) indicate that

“opportunities for in-service training are crucial to the long-term development of teachers as well as for the long-term success of the programs in which they work” (p. 1). The importance of teachers’ professional development has been recognized.

English learning has been booming for three decades in China, and the number of English learners in China was estimated to be as high as 300 million by 2010 (Liu, 2010). However, the number of the ESL teachers has not increased to keep pace with the increased number of English learners. The college/university ESL teacher to student ratio was 1:130 in 2015 (Li, 2015). Huang and Shao (2001) find that in order to solve the problem, “most universities have to increase the class size” and “nearly 1/3 of the universities have added 1-2 hours per week to the regulated work load” (p. 21).

Although facing a huge pressure of teaching tasks, Chinese ESL teachers have a strong identity with their profession, which has been testified from their strong wish for professional development (Zhou, 2005). Zhou also finds that individual needs for professional development are prevalent among college English teachers in China. However, Zheng (2014) indicates that the current professional development opportunities are far beyond from teachers’ expectations (p. 185).

The Chinese government departments at all levels — from the State Ministry of Education to the local educational departments — have launched various teachers’ professional development programs. Individual schools have organized training programs too. But an unavoidable problem is that no official professional development programs for foreign ESL teachers can be found in the current literatures, which means that foreign teachers have been excluded from the professional development opportunities.



### **Foreign ESL teachers' career motivations**

Harmer (2001) defines motivation as "some kind of internal drive which pushes someone to do things in order to achieve something" (p. 51). Motivation explains the reason why people pursue a goal, and how much time and energy they must put in to achieve the goal (Dörnyei, 2001).

Motivation includes two dimensions: extrinsic motivation and intrinsic motivation. Extrinsic motivation is related to income and some practical benefits (Latham, 1998); intrinsic motivation could be understood as self-reverence of achievement and better personal development (Ellis, 1984).

In recent years, the Chinese government has invested more money to increase native teacher's income. However, salaries for foreign teachers were not increased to the same extent. The China Foreign Teachers Union reported that foreign teachers' income in China is 40 % less than foreign teachers' average income worldwide: "only 17 countries pay foreign teachers lower wages in the world than China." (CFTU, 2014). On the other hand, most foreign ESL teachers "work in insecure and uncertain contexts" (Falout, 2010, p.27), since their employment is generally based on short-term contracts.

Day et al. (2007) point out that teachers' performances reveal their inner morality towards contribution to the society and their positive attitudes to enhance their professionalism. As discussed in Chapter Four, foreign ESL teachers perceived that they held themselves highly accountable for internal accountability. Since comparatively low income, fewer chances of professional training, and huge pressure have never diminished foreign ESL teachers' internal accountability, a conclusion can be made that foreign ESL teachers' intrinsic motivation have more supported them

with teaching tasks in China. Foreign ESL teachers' intrinsic motivation can be their inner morality, work ethics, or future professional development.

### **Conclusion**

The present research was conducted to determine foreign ESL teachers' perceptions of external accountability and internal accountability. Through analyzing the data from four constructs: outside expectations, school management, professional duty, and feelings about work, findings were obtained that foreign teachers perceived that they were held externally accountable with regard to outside expectations, and they were not held externally accountable for school management. In terms of internal accountability, foreign teachers perceived that they held themselves highly accountable in both the construct of professional duty and the construct of feelings about work.

A comparison of the data was made between foreign ESL teachers and Chinese foreign teachers, and the differences were detected that foreign ESL teachers had different perceptions from Chinese ESL teachers towards external accountability with regard to school management. Foreign ESL teachers had similar perceptions as Chinese ESL teachers towards external accountability with regard to outside expectations and toward internal accountability with regard to both professional duty and feelings of work. But foreign ESL teachers expressed a higher level in the above three constructs.

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## APPENDICES

### Appendix A. Questionnaire

#### **An International Study on Teachers' Cultural Values and Accountability**

Dear teacher,

I am Hailiang Zhao, a master student at the Faculty of Education, Memorial University of Newfoundland, Canada. I am currently doing my master thesis research on teacher accountability of Foreign ESL teachers teaching in China. This study is under the umbrella of Dr. Noel Hurley, who is a member of the Consortium for Cross-cultural Research in Education (CCCRE).

CCCRE is devoted to the study of teachers' perceptions of their work, and to comparisons between teachers from different cultures.

I would appreciate it very much if you can spend a little time and answer the questions in the following pages. Please be assured that research strictly follow ethical restrictions – the questionnaire is anonymous, and respondents will in no way be identified.

Thank you for your help.

Sincerely,

Hailiang Zhao

Members of Consortium for Cross-cultural Research in Education

Professor John Williamson (Australia)

Professor Noel Hurley (Canada and China)

Dr. Nora Arato (Hungary and US)

Professor Zehava Rosenblatt (Israel)

Professor Theo Wubbles and Professor Perry Den Brok (The Netherlands)

Professor Johan Booyse (South Africa)

Dr. Mila Sainz Ibanez (Spain)

Professor Al Menlo (US)

Professor Zolt Laviscka (UK)

**Part A. Demographic background**

- a. Gender: 1. Male 2. Female 3. Other
- b. Age: \_\_\_\_ (yrs)
- c. Experience as a teacher: \_\_\_\_ (yrs)
- d. Experience as a teacher in China: \_\_\_\_ (yrs)
- e. If applicable, please specify which leadership position you hold in addition to teaching (e.g. vice-principal, headmaster, subject-area coordinator): \_\_\_\_\_
- f. Teaching area:
  1. \_\_\_\_ Humanities, languages and social studies
  2. \_\_\_\_ Science, mathematics and technology
  3. \_\_\_\_ Arts, sport
  4. \_\_\_\_ Other
- g. Size of school in number of students: \_\_\_\_\_
- h. School location: 1. Urban 2. Suburban, 3. Rural 4. Other \_\_\_\_\_
- i. School level:
  1. \_\_\_\_ Elementary/primary
  2. \_\_\_\_ Middle
  3. \_\_\_\_ High/secondary
  4. \_\_\_\_ College/university

**Part B. In your work as a teacher, to what extent do you feel that it is your responsibility to?**

<b>Question</b>	<b>Very little</b>	<b>Little extent</b>	<b>Neither little nor large</b>	<b>Large extent</b>	<b>Very large extent</b>
1. Make sure your students achieve high achievement scores					
2. Meet expected standards					
3. Be accountable for your students achievements					
4. Report to school leadership on the way on perform your work					
5. Report to other teachers on the way you perform your work					
6. Allow your work in class to be transparent to school leadership					
7. Allow your work in class to be transparent to other teachers					
8. Be evaluated on the basis of your work achievements					
9. Change your work according to feedback you get					
10. Be held accountable when your work in the classroom does not meet expectations					
11. Be acknowledged for the success of your classes					



**Part C. To what extent do you believe your work should include the following behaviours and activities?**

<b>Question</b>	<b>Very little</b>	<b>Little extent</b>	<b>Neither little nor much</b>	<b>Much extent</b>	<b>Very much extent</b>
1. Strive to achieve set goals					
2. Report on your performance regarding students' academic achievements					
3. Report on performance regarding curriculum coverage					
4. Report on performance regarding social climate (e.g., student behaviour, discipline) in class					
5. Show transparency in your work					
6. Get formal evaluations on the results of your work					
7. Get feedback on your teaching					

**Part D. In your work as a teacher, to what extent do you feel that it is your duty to?**

<b>Question</b>	<b>Very little extent</b>	<b>Little extent</b>	<b>Neither little nor large</b>	<b>Large extent</b>	<b>Very large extent</b>
1. Achieve professional goals					
2. Develop professionally (training sessions, workshops, conferences, etc)					
3. Learn from the work of outstanding colleagues					
4. Be responsible for teaching in the best possible way					
5. Be responsible for using professional knowledge in your work					
6. Be accountable to your own inner moral standards					
7. Be accountable to professional ethics					

**Part E. To what extent do you believe your work should include the following behaviours and activities?**

Question	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
1. The way I teach in my class is determined for the most part by myself					
2. The contents taught in my class are those that I select myself					
3. My teaching focuses on goals and objectives that I select myself					
4. I myself select the teaching materials that I use with my students					
5. I am free to be creative in my teaching approach					
6. My job does not allow for much discretion on my part					
7. In my class I have little control over how classroom space is used					
8. My school administration strongly support my goals and values					
9. My school administration values my contribution					
10 My school administration takes pride in my accomplishments at work					
11. My school administration really cares about me					
12. If given the chance, my school administration would take unfair advantage of me					

13. My school administration is willing to help me when I need a special favor					
14. Upon my request, my school administration would change my working conditions if at all possible					
15. My school administration would ignore any complaint from me					

## Appendix B. Approval of Ethics Review



Interdisciplinary Committee on  
Ethics in Human Research (ICEHR)

St. John's, NL, Canada A1C5S7  
Tel: 709 864-2561 [icehr@mun.ca](mailto:icehr@mun.ca)  
[www.mun.ca/research/ethics/humans/icehr](http://www.mun.ca/research/ethics/humans/icehr)

ICEHR Number:	20160131-ED
Approval Period:	June 18, 2015 – June 30, 2016
Funding Source:	N/A
Responsible Faculty:	Dr. Noel Hurley Faculty of Education
Title of Project:	<i>An Investigation of Foreign ESL Teachers in China toward Teacher Accountability: A Comparison between Chinese ESL Teachers and Foreign ESL Teachers in China</i>

June 18, 2015

Mr. Hailiang Zhao  
Faculty of Education  
Memorial University of Newfoundland

Dear Mr. Zhao:

Thank you for your email correspondence of June 11 and 18, 2015 addressing the issues raised by the Interdisciplinary Committee on Ethics in Human Research (ICEHR) concerning the above-named research project.

The ICEHR has re-examined the proposal with the clarification and revisions submitted, and is satisfied that the concerns raised by the Committee have been adequately addressed. In accordance with the *Tri-Council Policy Statement on Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans (TCPS2)*, the project has been granted *full ethics clearance to June 30, 2016*. ICEHR approval applies to the ethical acceptability of the research, as per Article 6.3 of the *TCPS2*. Researchers are responsible for adherence to any other relevant University policies and/or funded or non-funded agreements that may be associated with the project.

If you need to make changes during the course of the project, which may raise ethical concerns, please forward an amendment request form with a description of these changes to [icehr@mun.ca](mailto:icehr@mun.ca) for the Committee's consideration.

The *TCPS2* requires that you submit an annual update form to the ICEHR before June 30, 2016. If you plan to continue the project, you need to request renewal of your ethics clearance, and include a brief summary on the progress of your research. When the project no longer requires contact with human participants, is completed and/or terminated, you need to provide the annual update form with a final brief summary, and your file will be closed.

The annual update form and amendment request form are on the ICEHR website at <http://www.mun.ca/research/ethics/humans/icehr/applications/>.

We wish you success with your research.

Yours sincerely,

Gail Wideman, Ph.D.  
Vice-Chair, Interdisciplinary Committee on  
Ethics in Human Research

GW/lw

copy: Supervisor – Dr. Noel Hurley, Faculty of Education  
Associate Dean, Graduate Programs, Faculty of Education