UNIVERSITY OF TAMPERE

UNDERSTANDING TEACHER'S IDENTITY CONFLICTS:
NARRATIVE INQUIRY OF TEACHERS' EXPERIENCES

Faculty of Education

Master's thesis in education

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October 2018

Teacher identity and identity conflict has been a researched area in the educational field. Few studies, however, explicitly illustrate how the teachers experienced the conflicts and how they solved them. To fill in this gap, this study aims to provide insight into what identity conflicts the teachers have encountered during their teaching experiences and how they managed the situation. Identity is defined as narrative in the present study. Using biographic narrative interviews, the study captures identity conflicts through four Taiwanese teachers and two Finnish teachers' narratives.

Results show that the teachers encountered conflicts when their ideal disagrees with the reality, the environment, or other stakeholders' values. Sometimes conflicts may occur within the teaching domain or across different ones, such as work or private life. To solve the conflicts, some teachers chose to resort to their core identity or reconstruct one. They might also keep the conflicting identities or choose to go with the reality instead of their own ideal. Regardless of which strategy the teachers have taken, these conflicts could also be seen positively influencing the identity construction of the teachers. In spite of the conflicts, these teachers consider teaching as enjoyable and satisfying.

The study provides useful implications and suggestions for student teachers, teacher educators, and in-service teachers. One of the main implications is the importance of having an integrated higher identity that serves as a core value when conflicts occur. When teachers are more aware of the core identity, they will be more prepared and stable when facing conflicts. Learning from happy and successful teachers also helps future and current teachers evaluate and reflect on their identities. As a result, teachers can benefit from one another's narratives.

Key words: teacher identity, identity conflict, narrative inquiry, biographic narrative interview

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

Writing a master's thesis is an identity develop process. It was not linear. It was spiral and constantly constructed and reconstructed. Eventually, the thesis becomes not only the stories of many excellent teachers, but a story of my own academic development.

Thank you, Professor Eero Ropo for leading me into the world of identity and narratives. It was his introduction and passion for the subject that inspired me to embark on this exciting and insightful journey. Looking at education through the lens of identity, self, narrative as identity, and life stories is truly motivating.

I am grateful to all the teachers who generously shared their perspectives and experiences with me. Through their stories, each individual, beautiful and unique voice of teachers were heard. Their love for teaching and for their students is shown so profoundly in their narratives as I unveil layers and layers of stories. How blissful it is to have these wonderful and caring teachers around us!

Thank you, my best companion, Helen. Her knowledge and encouragement always helped me in the writing process. She is the most cheerful and one of the smartest people I know. Here is to all the good times we had in the library and canteens, and the regular visits to the gym.

My family's unconditional support and love has always been with me in this foreign country which now I could call my second home. For that, I am deeply appreciated and will always keep it in my heart.

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1 INTRODUCTION

I walk into my school. Everything seems so familiar. The uniform. The bells. The timetable. The people. Yet everything is rather different. I am back to my former junior high school as a student teacher. I start to look at things from a rather different point of view. When I see how teachers have to teach for students' good grades, high performance on exams, and competitions between classes, I felt a great sense of disgust. "This is not what I came for," I thought to myself. I crave for a creative teaching and learning environment. But when I look at all the teachers who have taught me and my current mentor teacher, I see devotion and passion: they love their work. They all have good relationship with their students. Don't they feel the same conflict as I do? Don't they feel the exam-oriented culture is devouring their ideal teacher identity? How can they still stay in this environment and strive for their students' well-being without feeling awkward? What is their secret to identity conflict?

1.1   Background and motivation

Identity has been recognized as one of the important and prevailing topics in education research (Gee, 2000; Sfard & Prusak, 2005). Teacher identity has been studied using various methods since the 1980s. Despite the importance of teacher identity in education research, a review of teacher identity research shows that the definition of teacher identity is sometimes not clearly defined (Beauchamp & Thomas, 2009). Taking into account the importance of definition, the current study views identity as a narrative. Identity is seen as "a set of reifying, significant, endorsable stories about a person" (Sfard & Prusak, 2005, p.14). Since it is useful to narrow down to significant moments while understanding teacher identity (Bullough & Baughman, 1997), this study focuses on the conflicts that teachers have faced during their career. A great amount of teacher identity research includes pre-service or beginning teachers as subjects to investigate their identity formation. Studies that focus on in-service teachers, on the other hand, deal mostly with identity development in innovative contexts or during educational policy changes. However, little is known about what identity conflicts experienced teachers may face and how they cope with the conflicts, and few studies have been conducted in Taiwan on this topic.

In Taiwan, the test-driven culture is still prevailing in the society regardless of the advocacy of student-centered teaching and learning. Teachers in the school often must teach for exam preparation. It would be difficult for the teachers to stay in the field if their identity is in conflict with the expectations of the context. Since multiple identities often coexist, whether or not one's coexisting identities remain in harmony could influence one's well-being. I felt a desperate need to negotiate my identity during my teaching practice in my previous junior high school, which is located in the city and is considered as a high performing school. I have met, however, some devoted and passionate teachers who have successfully integrated into the context. Their students perform well and they value highly their profession. On the other hand, studying in Finland gives me access to Finnish classrooms. The teaching environment in Finland provides great autonomy for Finnish teachers. The present study includes subjects from both Taiwan and Finland as the results might demonstrate different teacher identity conflict trajectories than those from Taiwan, providing a wider and richer perspective on the topic. My intention, however, is not to compare teachers from different countries, considering the varieties involved, but to see each teacher as an individual and to provide an insight into different teachers' identity conflict stories.

1.2 Purpose and significance of the study

Previous literature that investigated teacher identity with narrative inquiry targets different topics: positioning (Søreide, 2006; Watson, 2009), reasons for entering teacher profession (Olsen, 2008), transitional period in the work place (Berg, 2013; Bullough, 2015; Hamilton, 2010; Liu & Xu, 2011), and co-teaching experiences (Rytivaara, 2012). Using narrative as a method and a definition of identity helps understanding teacher identity as personal, negotiable and dynamic. Among the narrative studies, some illustrate conflicts and dissonance in teacher identity. The conflicts are manifested in different ways, including coexisting identities (Søreide, 2006), a mismatch between actual identity and designated identity (Liu & Xu, 2011), outer and inner expectations of the individual (Berg, 2013) and dissonance between one and institution (Hamilton, 2010).

Since teacher narratives show comprehensively one's beliefs and values, previous literature on identity conflicts portray in detail the difficulties that the teachers faced. Little attention, however, has been paid to how teachers overcome the conflicts and what strategies they might have used. The present study makes use of mechanisms of identity conflicts (Hirsh & Kang, 2016) from a social psychological viewpoint in understanding what strategies the teachers adopt. According to the mechanism, four different strategies could be used in terms of conflict confrontation: (1) suppressing

a conflicting identity, (2) enhancing a dominant identity, (3) avoidance and denial of identity conflict, and (4) integration of conflicting identities.

This study aims to investigate teacher identity of experienced teachers with a lens of narrative inquiry, especially with a focus on how they experience identity conflicts. By viewing identity as a narrative or a story told by the teachers, this study collected stories told by teachers from junior high schools (7th to 9th grade) in Taiwan and yläkoulu (7th to 9th grade) in Finland. Their stories were analyzed by identifying the identity conflicts they encountered and how they experienced them, along with strategies they employed.

1.3   Research questions

The main research questions guiding the current study are the following two:

1. What identity conflicts did the teachers experience?

2. How did the teachers experience their identity conflicts?

By answering these two questions, the study aims to shed light on what identity conflicts experienced teachers in Taiwan and Finland have. Their experiences and how they successfully dealt with the conflicts will hopefully provide student teachers, teacher educators, or in-service teachers some insight into dealing with identity conflicts, and to reach self-fulfillment in their teaching career.

2 LITERATURE REVIEW

The literature review starts with the theoretical framework of identity, particularly from the view of narrative. It then unfolds a more specific focus on teacher identity and its aspects, followed by the realization of teacher identity in narratives. This chapter closes with what identity conflicts teachers have as shown in the previous research and description of the identity conflict mechanism.

2.1   Identity as narrative

A key problem identified in a review of teacher identity studies is the ambiguity of definition of teacher identity (Beauchamp & Thomas, 2009). Since identity from different fields is approached differently, definition of identity varies from one to another. However, this section will be justifying the chosen definition for identity as a narrative.

One of the often-cited researchers in education is Gee (2000). He proposed identity as an analytic lens for educational research. For Gee, identity is "being recognized as a certain 'kind of person,' in a given context" (p.90). His idea of this kind of person is changeable in interaction and contexts, and can be unstable as well. He proposed four ways to view identity: from the nature perspective (N-Identities), the institutional perspective (I-Identities), the discursive perspective (D-Identities), and the affinity perspective (A-Identities). I would like to address especially I-Identities and D-Identities as they are more related to viewing identity as narrative. According to Gee, I-Identity is a position that is authorized by authorities within institutions. D-Identity is an individual trait that is recognized in discourse with others. Although there are different ways of seeing identity, Gee considered that a "core identity" exists to unify the person. While post-modernism considers identity as fluid and dynamic, Gee proposed the importance of also recognizing the modern aspect of identity, which is the "core identity" that comes within the individual.

Following Gee, Akkerman and Meijer (2011) argue that to conceptualize teacher identity, both modernism and post-modernism concepts should be considered, and hence they propose a dialogical approach to study identity. The current literature often focuses on the postmodern stance, including the multiplicity of identity, the discontinuity of identity, and the social nature of identity. The authors, however, suggest to consider the modern definition of identity, which is the opposite viewpoint,

including unity, continuity, and individual. Combining both multiplicity and unity, discontinuity and continuity, and social and individual, Akkerman and Meijer describe how a dialogical approach could provide a more comprehensive viewpoint on identity. First, they point out that the self is "composed of multiple I-positions in the landscape of the human mind" (p.311). Multiple I-positions exist and might conflict, and hence it is human nature to maintain the unity of identity, "the feeling of being one and the same person throughout various situations" (p.312). To do so, the self has to "create a dialogical space between different I-positions" (p.312). Second, identity is a dynamic and discontinuous process, where multiple I-positions change as the situation changes. Its continuity, however, exists through narrative, where "identity is 'held together' through time" (p.313). Conflicting I-positions, according to the authors, can be solved by re-interpreting past and current events. Third, the relation with others influences one's identity. Each individual has his/her unique multiple I-positions, which have impact on his/her environment in return. Of all the three points mentioned before, narrative is perhaps the most comprehensive concept that holds everything together. Different I-positions and how they interact can be shown and maintained in one's narrative, which resonates Gee's (2000) concept of a "core" identity.

Sfard and Prusak (2005) define identity as narrative. They define identity as "a set of reifying, significant, endorsable stories about a person" (p.14). According to the authors, while a narrative can be: (1) the identified person telling her own story to others (first-person identity), (2) an identified story told to the identified person (second-person identity), or (3) others told the story about the identified person to others (third-person identity), the self-told stories to oneself are perhaps the most influential to the individual. This narrative resembles D-identity from Gee's (2000) categories. Sfard and Prusak furthermore propose that narratives consist of actual identities and designated identities. The former are stories of facts, usually told in present tense. The latter are stories about expectations, usually told in future tense. The authors mentioned that designated identities also come from stories told by others, namely, the second-person and third-person identities also incorporate to one's designated identities. They made a comparison to Gee's (2000) concept of I-identity, saying that institutional "narratives" can also be part of one's designated identities. If a gap occurs between actual identity and designated identity, and the gap is associated with "critical stories" that "if changed, would make one feel as if one's whole identity had changed," it would likely lead to unhappiness (Sfard & Prusak, 2005, p.18). Individuals would have to develop different strategies to deal with the conflicting identities.

2.2   Teacher identity in narratives

Similar to the concept of identity, the definition of teacher identity varies among different studies. Since it is argued that both modern and postmodern points of view are important in understanding identities, one definition that grasps both individual and social aspects is provided by Akkerman and Meijer (2011): "an ongoing process of negotiating and interrelating multiple I-positions in such a way that a more or less coherent and consistent sense of self is maintained throughout various participations and self-investments in one's (working) life" (p.315). This process is manifested in one's narrative. Studies using narrative inquiry to investigate teacher identity are often with different focuses, for example: positioning (Søreide, 2006; Watson, 2009), reasons for entering teacher profession (Olsen, 2008), transitional period in the work place (Berg, 2013; Bullough, 2015; Hamilton, 2010; Liu & Xu, 2011), and co-teaching experiences (Rytivaara, 2012).

The narrative studies presented here can be categorized into two focuses, teacher's personal perspective, and the social aspect. On a personal level, some studies explore teacher's positioning (Søreide, 2006; Watson, 2009), and entry stories (Olsen, 2008; Watson, 2009). Søreide's (2006) aim was to illustrate how to construct teacher identities through narratives. She interviewed five female elementary school teachers in Norway. She rewrote the transcripts into stories. The stories were later analyzed with discourse theory and narrative identity theories. The results show different subject positions that the teachers distanced themselves from or identified with. In the study, four identity constructions were identified: "the caring and kind teacher," "the creative and innovative teacher," "the professional teacher," and "the typical teacher." She especially pointed out that teacher identity is flexible and negotiable. When different identities exist, it is not necessarily negative or should be seen as a conflict, but rather, it "opens up negotiation" (p.543).

Identity is also seen as subject positioning in Watson (2009). In addition to positioning, reasons for entering the profession seems to be one of the main themes in understanding teacher identity from a personal aspect (Olsen, 2008; Watson, 2009). By analyzing a teacher's profession entry story, the paper aims at exploring two key narratives of educational discourse, education as a tool for oppression and transformation. The author interviewed one teacher to gather data about institutional identity. He cut out some parts of the original transcript and rewrote them into stanzas, giving them a poetic feel. The purpose is not only to condense the content, but also to show the interviewee's voice. The narrative shows that the teacher's entry to the teaching profession relates to his own failure in the school system, which seems to be contradictory to the narratives of education as reproduction or

transformation. The author suggested to see the teacher's narratives as a reflection of other bigger narratives because "identification is always a political process" (p.481).

Another study about reasons for entry is Olsen (2008). Olsen investigated the reasons for entering teacher profession from six first year secondary school English teachers. The author interviewed the participants twice in their first year of teaching career. The interviews were semi-structured and aimed to probe into the following aspects: teachers' personal and professional histories, teacher education experiences, past and current work with children, perspectives on teaching and their school, and future career plans (p.26). Other data collected include: teaching artifacts, documents about the preparation program, and published reports about the teachers' schools/districts (p.26). Throughout the interviews, the researcher found that when asked about the expectations, the teachers often shared their biographical stories of how they entered the profession. After analysis, the author found that the reasons can be categorized to two main themes: gender related factors and perceived personal compatibility in teaching. It was the participants' told stories that provided valuable data of how their past experiences were related to their expectations of becoming what kind of teacher. The implication of the study in teacher education is that it is important to make preservice teachers be aware of their identity development, and its relation with prior experience and future image of themselves as teachers. As for the implication of research methods, the author proposed that:

> methodologies like teacher interview/analysis, ethnography, narrative analysis, and action research—along with critical, holistic modes of analysis that foreground identity studies—should continue to deepen our understanding of how teachers actually develop, and how who one is as a person has a lot to do with who one is as a teacher. (p. 38, 39)

Using narratives in investigating teacher identity and its related topics is in need and will enrich the existing knowledge in the field.

It is not only, however, the personal life that plays a role in teacher identity, but also the social aspect, including the different school systems (Hamilton, 2010), and the transition in teaching context (Berg, 2013; Bullough,2015; Liu & Xu, 2011; Rytivaara, 2012). Teachers working in different systems might have different teacher identity presentation. Hamilton (2010) did a case study on four Scottish schools about how teachers view the construct of ability and the conflicts that they experienced. The selected four schools were contrasting school systems, two of which were comprehensive and the others were independent schools. As the comprehensive schools followed the idea of students of all abilities and backgrounds should be given equal opportunities, and independent schools may select their students by interviews and abilities. Data collection lasted nine months,

including semi-structured interviews and classroom observations. The data was analyzed with an emphasis on narratives since the author views teacher identity evolution as narrative. Teacher identity in this study is based on the teachers' concepts of ability. Results show that independent schools seem to be more harmonious in the institutional identity, while dissonance appeared to be a theme in the narratives of the teachers in comprehensive schools, both at the institutional and individual level. The author mentioned that dissonance is an inevitable and even an important process in understanding an institution where identity development is constantly active and dynamic.

If different systems can show differences in teacher identity, transitional period in the same work place is another viewpoint to understand teacher identity. Berg (2013) used narrative approach to investigate a particular change in the teaching context. The aim was to explore how six secondary school experienced teachers in Norway construct their professional identity in the context of inclusive education. The stories were collected through semi-structured interviews. What Berg regards as professional narratives is in concordance with Gee (2000), and Akkerman and Meijer's (2011) idea of the co-existence of a constantly changing identity and a more stable, core identity. Through the interviews, as the teachers were telling stories about teaching in an inclusive context, they also told about their teacher identity. The professional identity constructions found in the study include: Being an ordinary teacher, Maintaining control, Categorization discourses, Expressing competence, and Teacher negotiation. The study showed that identity construct is a social interaction between outer and inner expectations for teachers. It pointed out "a connection but also a disjunction" (Berg, 2013, p.281).

Another study investigating teacher identity under the system transition is Liu and Xu (2011). At a higher education level, Liu and Xu investigated a Chinese EFL teacher's identity negotiation while she was experiencing a reform in her department in the university. Data was collected through interviews, reflection report and reflective journals. Using a narrative inquiry, the data went through four steps: (1) Making sense of the narratives, (2) Coding for themes, (3) Reconstructing the narratives for a storyline, (4) Telling and retelling, living and reliving the stories. The narrative provided by the teacher was analyzed and discussed with the teacher throughout the whole research process. Results show that there were constant conflicts between what the teacher wanted to do and what she was expected to do. Using Sfard and Prusak's (2005) terms, designated identity and actual identity, the authors found in the study that when a teacher's actual identity matches the designated identity, the teacher is more easily included in the community, while a mismatch would lead to exclusion. It is thus, important to understand the coherence or dissonance between one's actual identity and designated identity.

It is sometimes not the system that has influence on teachers, but how teachers change to another role in the educational context, either from one teaching method to another (Rytivaara, 2012), or from one position to another (Bullough, 2015). In Finland, Rytivaara (2012) conducted an identity study on two teachers who changed their teaching method from traditional teaching to co-teaching. The aim is to identify some factors related to why teachers change their identity from teaching alone to initiating co-teaching through their stories and identity negotiation. The narratives came from interviews and in the analysis, the author especially focused on the external and internal accounts and marked the conflicts. Results yield inductively five factors that lead to co-teaching from these two teachers, including attitude, conflicts in the classroom, taste of collaboration, idea and solution. The teachers in this study demonstrate more personal selves than professional identity as reasons for co-teaching. From this, however, the result suggests that it will later lead to professional identity and even a collective identity in the school.

Situated in an audit-driven society in England, Bullough (2015) did a close reading on the narrative of Mr. Kent, the head teacher at a secondary school. The story tells of an experienced teacher's identity and the conflicts he faced in his teaching life from a teacher to a head teacher. He felt discrepancies between being an educator and a head teacher, whose work left him more responsibilities yet less control. The aim of the study was to utilize narrative inquiry in the research of teacher identity and to investigate how narrative is connected to the surrounding context and culture. It is vital that we regard teachers' identity formation as an important cornerstone in students' well-being. The author concluded his paper with a thought-provoking question "What sort of people do we want teaching our children? To answer this question, requires answering a prior question: What sort of people do we want our children to become?" (p. 93).

In the literature of teacher identity, much focuses on student teachers and beginning teachers, and provides implication for teacher education. Through narrative, these studies reviewed previously could capture how experienced teachers negotiate their identity in different contexts. There was, however, little attention on their successful or unsuccessful process of solving identity conflicts. Investigating this area might provide a different insight to teacher education. The current study aims to contribute more on this topic.

2.3   Teacher identity conflict

Previous literature using narrative inquiry captured the possible background of teacher identity conflict. In this section, we look into some of the studies reviewed in the previous section 2.2,

focusing on the conflicting identities. Conflicts might happen when one has different coexisting identities (Søreide, 2006), a mismatch between actual identity and designated identity (Liu & Xu, 2011), outer and inner expectations of the individual (Berg, 2013) and dissonance between one and institution (Hamilton, 2010).

Norwegian teachers' narratives in Søreide's (2006) study show the negotiation of different identities. In one example, when talking about taking the job home, one of the subjects, Alice was switching between "The creative and innovative teacher" and "The professional teacher." She identified herself as "The creative and innovative teacher" when she has a good day. If not, she would choose to be "The professional teacher" who clearly separates work and private life. It seems that these two identities are contrasting but they both exist as part of Alice's identity positioning. According to the author, this should not be seen only as a negative conflict, but also a positive opportunity for negotiation. The study concluded that identity negotiation is important for teachers because it shows that the teachers have the freedom and flexibility to construct the most suitable identity for themselves under a certain context. Certain amount of identity conflicts, hence might be seen as part of the journey of identity negotiation and construction.

While Søreide did not address the issue of identity conflict further, the narrations of the Chinese EFL teacher in Liu and Xu (2011) elaborate her conflicts between her designated identity and actual identity. As a beginning traditional teacher, she was faced with a transitional stage where both traditional and new liberal views existed. Her designated identity is to become a liberal teacher, which is in contrast with her actual identity as a traditionalist. To close the gap, she reconceptualized her role as a teacher educator, so that she could identify more with the liberal method. She actively participated in the liberalization process, but only to find more doubts during the process. She struggled between her own identity and what she was expected to be, so she sought to express her concerns. However, her attitude and concerns were seen as a hindrance to the transition in the institution. At the end, she let go of becoming part of the community, and simply stayed as a passive follower. The result of her identity negotiation for closing the gap between what she wanted to be and what she was expected to be was not successful, although it seems that she was doing as told. The conflict was not resolved and it still existed.

Another study that addresses identity conflicts when it comes to implementing a new educational policy is Berg (2013). In the study, six Norwegian teachers were interviewed on the topic of inclusive education, including how they manage student diversity and their reflection on their teaching. Some teachers expressed a distinction between ordinary and special students. For example, one of the teachers, Svein has a dream of being just a subject teacher teaching his subjects without

any problematic students. It is his teacher identity to be a "pure" teacher. Another teacher, Bjarne expressed his relief that after one of his students was diagnosed with ADHD, he felt his class was "normal" again. For these two teachers, classroom diversity seems to be a hindrance to what they expect their teaching career would be. On the other hand, Hedvig is a teacher with special education background. She mentioned her frustration when it comes to teachers excluding special need students and asking special educators to take the students when they disturb the class. In her situation, she understands the difficulty in dealing with diversity, but she as a special educator also sees the need of inclusive education.

Similarly, the relationship and conflicts between the institution and individual is shown in Hamilton (2010). The author looked into teacher identity with a particular focus: the construction of ability. Individual beliefs and values are intertwined closely with the bigger community the individual belongs to. The individual narratives in this study reveal a theme of dissonance. When talking about ability construct, individuals' supposedly equal expectations for all pupils seem to be inconsistent with what they talk about a particular student's ability. Two teachers from comprehensive schools respectively mentioned that they believe that all students have the ability to develop and teachers should have highest expectations for all, but they also know that in reality, students with more ability have more chances to develop and they expect more from these students as well. The individual dissonance and conflicts also reflect a broader institutional dissonance. On the other hand, however, the occurrence of dissonance also means identity is negotiable, dynamic, and flexible.

The reviewed literature on teacher identity conflict depicts teacher identity conflicts from different perspectives and with multiple foci. All studies mentioned above utilize narratives to gather rich data on what conflicts the teachers have experienced. Among the four studies, Liu and Xu (2011) was the only one that describes how the teacher faced her identity conflict, although it was not a successful approach. None of the studies, however, have dealt with how teachers encountered and resolved the conflicts successfully. It is the aim of the present study to illustrate in-service teachers' journey from encountering conflicts, struggling with them, and finally tackling them successfully.

2.4   Identity conflict mechanism

The previous section consults literature within the education field. In this section, however, we turn to a social psychological viewpoint with Hirsh and Kang's (2016) mechanisms of identity conflicts to understand this concept.

Identity conflict is defined as "perceived incompatibilities between two or more of an individual's identity domains" (Hirsh & Kang, 2016, p.223). The keyword in identity conflict is "salient." When two or more conflicting identities with incompatible norms are equally salient, the individual will experience conflict. Hirsh and Kang propose a mechanism that combines social, psychological, and neural perspectives to understand identity conflict. When behavioral conflict happens, it triggers activities in Behavioral Inhibition System, causing stress, anxiety, or inhibition. To manage identity conflicts, the authors suggest four strategies that individuals might apply: (1) suppressing a conflicting identity, (2) enhancing a dominant identity, (3) avoidance and denial of identity conflict, and (4) integration of conflicting identities.

The first strategy, suppressing a conflicting identity, results from Fight-Flight-Freeze System. It devalues the problematic identity that seems to be a hindrance of a more valued one. Although this strategy solves the conflict, it has negative impact as the devalued identity domain becomes limited. Instead of decreasing the value of an identity, the second strategy enhances the value of a dominant identity. The Behavioral Approach System, usually higher in extraverts, increases positivity in the target identity. The third strategy, avoidance and denial of identity conflict, includes a segregation of one's identities. When the Behavioral Inhibition System assigns attentional resources to focus on one identity at a time, the conflict is reduced. It is, however, only effective when the identity domains do not overlap. The last strategy, and perhaps the best strategy, is the integration of conflicting identities. Higher level of Openness comes with more cognitive flexibility and intellectual capacity (DeYoung, Peterson, & Higgins, 2005, as cited in Hirsh & Kang, 2016). Individuals with such trait are more likely to develop integrative identities (Benet-Martínez & Haritatos, 2005, as cited in Hirsh & Kang, 2016). Although integration requires more effort, the outcome is the most positive. The individual develops a "superordinate integrated identity structure" and is flexible in adapting into different situations (Hirsh & Kang, 2016, p.236).

This framework would provide a lens for investigating teacher's identity conflict and what strategies they use to resolve the conflicts. By adopting this mechanism in an educational context, the present study aims to provide practical suggestions on how pre-service teachers can deal with their future conflicts, how in-service teachers can reflect on their current situations, and how teacher educators and institutions can better understand teachers' identity.

3 RESEARCH DESIGN

This chapter begins with the review of the two main research questions, followed by the justification and rationale of using a qualitative and narrative inquiry. The procedure of choosing participants, interviews, and analysis is presented in the same sequence as how I progressed with the research.

3.1   Research questions

The study aims to portray in-service teachers' teacher identity conflicts, how they experienced them, and what possible strategies they used during the process. With this purpose, two main research questions were formulated to guide the present study:

1.   What identity conflicts did the teachers experience?

2.   How did the teachers experience their identity conflicts?

To answer these two questions, a qualitative method is considered suitable, and the data was collected through biographic narrative interviews. The next section justifies the use of a qualitative and narrative inquiry.

3.2   Methodological background

As seen in the literature review, teacher identity is complex and dynamic. Negotiation and conflicts are common in identity construction. The focus of the present study, teacher's experience in identity conflict is a constantly changing and individual process to understand and investigate. Due to how unique and fluctuating human identity and experiences are, a qualitative research paradigm is deemed to be appropriate to capture different aspects of the topic.

To investigate teachers' identity conflict experiences, the present study utilizes qualitative method with narrative inquiry. The aim of this study is to look for stories of identity conflicts directly from the teachers. The reason of a narrative inquiry lies not only in the chosen definition of identity as narrative, but also it is deemed suitable as a research method for the current study. Since "many of the assumptions and purposes, feelings and knowledge, that have organized and organize a person's

or a society's life are difficult to access directly,' using narrative inquiry might help reveal these underlying aspects (Wengraf, 2001). To be more specific, in this study, biographic narrative inquiry will be used. According to Wengraf, it is argued that narratives are less manipulated by speakers consciously and unconsciously. "Stories of action and inaction," as the author puts it, both are of equal importance for researchers to reflect on. The focus is thus not how truthful the teachers' stories are, but rather how the teachers have experienced them and how they choose to narrate them.

3.3   Participants

The subjects of this study are four junior high school teachers in Taiwan, where I used to study, and two yläkoulu teachers from an international school in Finland. All of the teachers teach from seventh to ninth grade students who are about 13 to 15 years old. The selected teachers are teachers with over five years of experience.

The four Taiwanese teachers are teachers from my own study experience. Three of them were my former Chinese, mathematics, and science teachers, and the English teacher was my mentor teacher when I did my teaching practicum. From my personal experience, they were all quite successful teachers in the school. They were welcomed by the students and parents. All of them have teaching experience of over fifteen years. When invited to participate in the research, all of the teachers did not hesitate but were quite eager. A brief introduction to the research topic and purpose was explained along with the invitation as well as the concept of a biographic narrative interview. The teachers agreed to have the interview as it was also a good chance to meet again after I started to study in Finland. After the interview, most of the teachers shared their positive feedback on the process. They took this as a great opportunity to reflect on their teaching career after being teaching for such a long time.

The two Finnish teachers are from an international school in Finland. I wished to look for teachers who teach in the same grades, namely seventh to ninth grade, in Finland. It was more difficult to reach to local teachers because there was a lack of personal networking. Fortunately, my friend's daughter is studying in the international school. I wrote emails to all of her teachers as she was also in her eighth grade. Two teachers, a history teacher and a home economics teacher, replied the email with interest in participating the research. In the email, the research topic, purpose, and interview method were all explained. In addition, I included some positive feedback from the Taiwanese teachers who already did the interview, and the Finnish teachers were very much interested in this opportunity as well.

Table 3-1
Basic information of participants

Name	Subject	Years of experience	Country
Wang	Chinese	28	Taiwan
Zhang	Math	17	Taiwan
Cai	English	28	Taiwan
Li	Science	26	Taiwan
Virtanen	History	15	Finland
Mattila	Home Economics	6	Finland

3.4   Procedures

The present study conducted a particular type of interview, biographic narrative interview. I consulted mainly from Wengraf's (2001) clear and well-organized book, *Qualitative research interviewing: Biographic narrative and semi-structured methods.* It presents detailed illustration of biographic-narrative-integrative method. The following is the description of how the study was carried out based on Wengraf.

3.4.1 Interview one

According to Wengraf, the design of Biographic-Narrative Interview includes three subsessions, and usually two interviews. The first two subsessions could be on the same day, with a 15-minute break in between and the last subsession is conducted after a preliminary analysis of the first two sessions, which could be scheduled after a week or a month. All interviews were recorded upon the consent of the teachers.

The first subsession started with an initial question to get elaborate narratives from the informant. In the present study, the main leading question is: Please tell me your experience of being a teacher, how you started and how things have been up to now. The benefit of such a broad topic is to get a big picture of how the teacher identity is and how the teacher tells it in his/her own words.

The first interviews were done face-to-face. At the beginning of the interview, to develop a casual and friendly atmosphere, I had small talks about life in Finland with the Taiwanese teachers, and life as a foreign student in Finland with the Finnish teachers. The interview started with the main leading question as a guideline, and the teachers could start wherever they like and however they like. I also explained that they were the storytellers, and I would not interrupt to ask questions but I would take notes for questions later. Since the main purpose of the method is to gather as much narratives from the interviewees as possible, the questions in the first subsession I asked were limited to questions for encouragement such as "Do you remember anything else?" and "Is there some other thing that comes to your mind?" At this point, the researcher's role was very minimum and the whole floor is given to the teacher. Different teachers have different styles and lengths of narration, and it all depended on how they told the story.

The first subsession ended when the teacher thought it had come to an end. To make sure that it really was an end, I asked again the same questions, "Do you remember anything else?" and "Is there some other thing that comes to your mind?" The second subsession took place after I had gone through my notes and marked down some topics that could retrieve more narratives. The formulation of the questions in the second subsession is still narrative, meaning that only the exact wording the teachers had used previously were included and the questions should be "You mentioned this and that, could you tell me more about it." The purpose was not to ask why or how but merely to gather more narratives.

3.4.2 Interview two

The third subsession is the second interview, usually takes place after a week or a month. In the present study, the second interview with the Taiwanese teachers was two months after the first one. Since I was not in Taiwan, the interview was conducted via online calls. The interviews were recorded on the computer. As for the Finnish teachers, it was more convenient that both the interviews (all the three subsessions) were conducted on the same day.

The third subsession allows the researcher to ask specific questions related to the research topic that he/she wants to know more about. In the current study, the questions for the second interview were designed to target on teacher identity and what conflicts the teacher experienced. There are six questions in total:

1. Please describe what kind of teacher you expect yourself to be before you started teaching.

2. Please describe what kind of teacher you are now.

3. Please describe what kind of teacher others think of you. For example, you students, students' parents, or your colleagues.

4. Please describe what a "good teacher" is in your opinion.

5. In your teaching career, have you ever encountered some occasions which are in conflict with your values or your idea of a good teacher? If so, please describe your experiences with the conflicts.

6. In your teaching career, have you ever encountered some occasions which are in match with your values or your idea of a good teacher? If so, please describe what they are.

3.4.3 Data analysis

The data analysis was conducted following the thematic analysis as suggested in King and Horrocks (2010). Thematic analysis includes three stages: descriptive coding, interpretive coding, and overarching themes. In the first stage, the first step is to read through the whole transcript without commenting, followed by highlighting and commenting on important texts. Using the comments, the next step is to label descriptive codes to those relevant texts with single words or short phrases. The descriptive codes can be merged or modified as more transcripts are coded. In the second stage, codes that share the same category can be grouped under an interpretive code. It is recommended not to apply any theoretical interpretation at this stage. In the last stage, higher level themes that are supported by theories are applied to the interpretive codes.

In the current study, first, as the data collection continued, the collected data was transcribed and coded. During stage one, descriptive coding, I worked with one transcription at a time and read through the whole transcript for the first time to get a grip of the whole picture. Meanwhile, I highlighted some meaningful events and briefly commented at the margins. I repeated the same procedure until all data was commented the same way. Later on, I picked one transcript and went through my comments and started to label the descriptive codes into shorter phrases or words. I did the same process to another transcript and found a certain flow and mode to work with the data. I did not continue to code.

I took one of the transcripts I first completed and moved on to stage two: interpretive coding. I listed all the labels I gathered from the first stage and started to find a pattern, relation or cluster them by marking the labels that belong to the same category in the same color. Afterwards, I drew a storyline that maps out the teacher's narrative with interpretive codes. It was at this stage that I could clearly identify where the identity conflicts lie. With the help of visually mapping out the story, the

hidden conflicts were revealed to me. I repeated the same analysis with the second transcript with the same interpretive codes developed from the first transcript but also kept some unique ones that applied to the particular narrative. After finding this rhythm, I finished coding the rest of the transcripts.

Finally, I arrived at stage three, which is called overarching themes. The topic of the study is to answer the two research questions: What identity conflicts did the teachers experience? How did the teachers experience their identity conflicts? At the final stage, the purpose is to link the derived codes to existing theory. I connected how the teachers encountered their identity conflicts to the four strategies to deal with identity conflicts from Hirsh and Kang's (2016) mechanisms of identity conflicts, as well as the previous literature about teacher identity.

4 TEACHERS' IDENTITY STORIES

Since each individual teacher has his/her own unique journey, in this chapter I will present the teachers' identity stories one by one. The title following the teacher's name is one important theme that sums up the teacher's teaching story. For each teacher, I started by describing the setting for the first interview, introducing the readers into the teacher's narrative. As the stories unfold, the readers will get to know the teacher's teaching life in general, followed by a more specific focus on what identity conflicts occurred and finally how the teachers experienced them. The chapter closes with the discussion and main themes found in the identity conflict stories.

4.1 Teachers in Taiwan

Since all of the four teachers from Taiwan involved in the study were my junior high school teachers, our conversation was quite casual. The atmosphere was welcoming and friendly. The presentation order is the same as the chronological order of the teachers' first interview: Wang, Zhang, Cai and Li.

4.1.1 Wang: Is it wrong to love students?

The bookstore basement is designed as a food court. My Chinese teacher, Wang suggested that we meet there and have the interview. It was almost noon time. I walked around the whole floor and did not find Wang so I decided to pick a table and waited there while checking my phone. When I looked up, I saw a woman walking towards me. She said to me "I thought it was you from afar. But how come you got so tanned? Didn't you go to Finland?" Wang smiled and I explained to her that I just got back from a trip to Belgium, which was pretty hot and sunny. She found us a better seat and ordered drinks for both of us. Later she told me that after the interview, she would have a tutoring class later with a student at this table. Wang has retired but sometimes she still goes back to the school to teach Chinese and occasionally she has private tutoring lessons. I also saw from social media that her hobbies after retirement have expanded to baking, jogging, traveling, music, and photography. She is a very active woman, engaging in various activities after retirement.

Reasons for entry

"Let's start with why I became a teacher. Actually, I did not want to become a teacher," Wang laughed after starting the sentence as such. Her first choice was never teaching, but her mother had always been encouraging her to become a teacher. Before junior high school graduation, there was an entrance exam to enter the teacher training college. Her mother told her to take the exam but Wang deliberately broke the rules for the writing section and did not get in. During high school, she thought of studying horticulture, and later on she switched to archeology. Her mother was not satisfied with either of the choices. She wanted Wang to study a major that leads to a stable and secure job, so she suggested her to become a teacher. After the university entrance exam, she got into a teacher training university just as her mom wished. "Anyways, people at that time were very miserable. You got into the school, so you have no choice but to study that" (Interview 1, Wang, 0724). Her major was counseling and she studied Chinese as her minor. Having a minor was an advice from her professor in university. He told all the students that there might not be so many offers for counseling teachers and they might need to teach other subjects.

After graduation, she started as a counseling teacher, and thanks to the principal from her first school, she got a chance to teach as a homeroom teacher. The principal believes that to be a good counseling teacher, you have to first be a homeroom teacher. She also realized that she preferred to be a homeroom teacher to a counseling teacher. Due to her Chinese minor, she got to be a homeroom teacher teaching Chinese later on. "I never thought I would make a living out of Chinese. People are so weird," she laughed, thinking about this unexpected destiny (Interview 1, Wang, 0724).

Teaching changes

The changes that Wang experienced in her 28 years of teaching career can be categorized into internal and external changes. I define internal changes as the changes that happen within the teacher, be it a change in teaching styles, values or mindset. External changes are changes that happen in the external environment. Perhaps the teacher is transferred from one school to another, gets a different position, etc. For Wang, external changes include from teaching counseling classes to Chinese classes, and from being a homeroom teacher to doing administrative work. As a counseling graduate, it was obvious for her to be a counseling teacher. She did not get any sense of achievement being a counseling teacher, however. Many junior high school students did not come to the counseling office voluntarily, and counseling teachers have only one session per week with their classes. "Your understanding of the students is actually very shallow, and you are trying to make a difference in them. I think this is too hard" (Interview 1, Wang, 0724).

I remember once my professor told me that if my student, after two or three years, or even ten years of graduation, remembers one sentence that I once said to him/her, and that sentence influenced him/her a lot, I should consider myself successful. So, I remember when I graduated, this was my expectation. I couldn't expect more. (Interview 2, Wang, 0930)

Helping a child is not as easy as she thought, so she did not have very high expectation that she would see immediate effect from her work. It was very frustrating that she did not understand the students that much and the whole supporting system from other teachers and parents did not exist. The students' homeroom teachers usually expect counseling teachers to solve the problem when they hand over those students. As frustrated as she was, she decided to just provide the students once a week a stress-free counseling class under their great study pressure.

Being a Chinese teacher or a homeroom teacher, on the other hand, was very rewarding. "If I am a homeroom teacher or a subject teacher, I think I could integrate counseling into students' daily life. Without being deliberate, I think students can actually accept more" (Interview 2, Wang, 0930). She was, however, very self-conscious about teaching Chinese at first. She thought that she was only a Chinese minor but not a major.

When other people asked me what my major was, I wouldn't tell them right away that I graduated from counseling. I might just beat around the bush. But now, I will tell them that my major was counseling and I also studied Chinese. Now I don't feel inferior because I am not a Chinese major anymore. Because…how should I put it…I think I really am putting effort in teaching Chinese. (Interview 1, Wang, 0724)

She felt a great sense of achievement teaching Chinese. She really wanted to tell others that "to teach a certain subject well, you don't have to be professional. As long as you have the will, you don't have to be university major for that subject" (Interview 1, Wang, 0724).

Another external change was after being a homeroom teacher for nine or ten years, she decided to do administrative work instead.

I was thinking, it doesn't matter what I do as long as I don't have to be a homeroom teacher. To be honest, I was really exhausted. If you have to look after your family and students, you will really get teaching fatigue. So, I decided to take the position of Chief of Curriculum. (Interview 1, Wang, 0724)

It was actually not a very good decision, either, because after she took the position, she had to prepare for the school evaluation report. It was after experiencing this evaluation that she decided to never do administrative work again. She did not think the evaluation really benefits the students. It was all about document and every teacher submitted similar teaching plan with the same template from somewhere.

Internally, Wang has changed from measuring her success and achievement based on students' academic performance and test scores to focusing more on the students' whole learning process. She shared one of her bad experiences. She once had a very bright class that she taught from first year till the last year. Everyone expected highly that they would get good grades in the high school entrance exam. When the results came out, it was a huge disappointment for everyone. For her, it was a great blow. She was not particularly prioritizing good scores, but the opinions from other people made her really frustrated. The class was very good in all aspects but the only thing they did not perform well was on the exams. "The only bad thing was poor performance on exams. Just because of this, all the other good things were compensated. That era was really horrible" (Interview 1, Wang, 0724).

> I think my change before and after was that I care less. I can't say that I don't care at all. But now I think no matter how much effort you put in a class, you just can't measure your hard work by their academic performance. I think I feel more relieved acknowledging this. And also, I think I've become happier in my teaching career. (Interview 1, Wang, 0724)

After acknowledging the fact that her effort is not in vain despite students' unsatisfactory academic performance, her mindset was changed and she felt much content in her work.

Teaching beliefs

Wang's core value in her teaching career is "heart." She mentioned this word several times throughout the interviews. In Chinese, "having heart" means putting effort and thoughts into something.

> I really think that when we put our heart into something, others will see. When I retired, I actually told myself that I did enjoy my teaching job. This probably means that at least it fulfilled some of my values. Otherwise, I think I probably would have escaped like a runaway soldier. (Interview 2, Wang, 0930)

As a teacher, she put a lot of effort and time in the students. She was also a student-centered teacher. She mentioned that "the subject of the school should be students" (Interview 1, Wang, 0724). This core value is manifested in several aspects. For instance, parents have a good impression of her

because she could see from the children's perspective and the positive aspect. She also questioned the necessity of school evaluation because of the lack of value in benefiting students.

Pedagogically, she believes that a good teacher has to have good classroom management to provide the students with a good learning environment. Subject knowledge-wise, it is important that the teacher is able to teach the students what she knows or what the students should know, help them with questions they have and enhance their learning motivation. It is not enough just to be a good professional in the school subject, however. "I truly think that teachers cannot treat teaching as a job. At first, I thought of it as my job but now I think it is my identity" (Interview 1, Wang, 0724).

As a life teacher, she hopes students will be willing to share with her their emotions. She often tells her students, "Maybe you won't think of me when you are happy. But if you think of me when you have something that you cannot solve or when you are upset, I will consider that my success" (Interview 2, Wang, 0930). She always has a close relationship with her students. One of her methods is the use of communication book. In schools in Taiwan, this book is used for students to write down what assignment they have on the day and to write down their diary. Parents will sign on the page and use it as a communication tool with the teacher. Teachers will read them every day and comment on the students' journal. For Wang, this is a great space for a heart-to-heart conversation. She did not treat it merely as a daily routine task. She took the students' journals seriously and put a lot of time in replying them. One graduate called her the month before our interview and told her excitedly that he found the old communication book while he was cleaning the room. Through these gestures, she was trying to convey a message that teachers are not so superior. In Chinese class, she might be the professional, but in daily lives, she hopes her students will see her as a friend.

Both positive and negative feedback resulted from the close relationship between Wang and her students. On a positive note, she becomes more influential to the students when their relationship is intimate enough. This also applies to the trustful relationship with parents when "you are standing in the shoes of the child and the parents to treat the students" (Interview 1, Wang, 0724). Nevertheless, Wang had some negative experiences although her intention was good. She mentioned several negative comments from other teachers because of her close relationship with the students. After the bad experience of the bright class doing poorly on the exam, she got a comment from her colleague, saying that she spoiled her students too much and that is why they did not get good grades. "It really hurts me. Is it wrong to love my students?" (Interview 1, Wang, 0724). Also, because she was a popular teacher, other people got jealous and even spread some false rumors of her. Sometimes when some students got really close to her, the students' homeroom teachers would think Wang was stealing their students. Finally, when juggling between family and work, she had a rather difficult

time balancing her life. She recalled once she was so caught up with her classes and students that she forgot to bring lunch to her own children. When her colleague heard this, she jokingly said that it is better to be her students than her children.

Identity conflict

"Generally speaking, my 28 years of teaching career is happy," Wang smiled as she shared her story:

> If you ask me now whether I like the teaching job or not. I honestly think it really suits me. Before I retired, I asked myself if I really like this job. Actually, I think I like it or I am really suitable for it. I think I have got a lot from my students and I also feel very fulfilled and gratified. It might seem that how I became a teacher was a very random act. But I am really grateful that I accidentally became a teacher. (Interview 1, Wang, 0724)

She did not think she had many conflicts in her teaching life. From her narratives, however, we could find some struggles, including her identity change as a counseling teacher to a Chinese teacher, other teachers' negative comment on her close relationship with her students, and balancing her time between family and work.

First, as a counseling teacher, it was difficult for Wang to get immediate feedback from the students who she was not familiar with. It was not easy to make an influence on the students. She decided to take it easy and simply made her classes something relaxing for the students in their already too stressful school life. After she became a Chinese teacher, she was too self-conscious about this new identity. She had low self-esteem because she thought she was only a Chinese minor. She was, however, happy that she could integrate her counseling skills in her own classes. She combined both her identities as a counseling teacher and a Chinese teacher and became more confident in her Chinese knowledge as she formed her new identity.

Second, other teachers were either jealous of her close relationship with her students or too exam-oriented that made Wang doubt herself. Others' opinions towards her were not friendly. She said that she was lucky that her supervisors were very nice and did see her efforts in her classes. Wang did not waver despite others' comments. Instead, she turned to what she values the most in teaching. It was a very important backbone in her teaching career to build a close and trustful relationship with her students.

Lastly, her dilemma in balancing work and family life also posed a problem, causing her fatigue and frustration. After a long day at school, she was often too tired to be patient with her children when she got home, let alone taking care of their homework. She thinks she really pulled it through that

time. Her work life continued to influence her private life as her fatigue from teaching sometimes caused her to be quite impatient with her children. She did not mention any solutions but only that she managed through the process with time.

In general, Wang enjoyed her teaching career. There have been challenges along the journey, whether it was the conflicts within herself or conflicts inflicted on her from external context, she was able to overcome them by resorting to her core identity and values and sometimes even by not solving at all.

4.1.2 Zhang: As long as the starting point is for the students

I walked into the Office of Academic Affairs during summer vacation. It was silent. No students shouting "Baogao!" a phrase in Chinese, usually used for students before entering the office. There were only a few administrative staff members working. It was almost time for my appointment with Zhang, but there was no one to be seen at his desk. Zhang is a math teacher and also the current director of the academic affairs office. Since the new semester was approaching, he had many tasks piling up and he was still occupied by the previous meeting. I found myself a chair next to his desk. I glanced through his rather tidy desk. No folders or documents scattering around. A couple of personal memorable items. Finally, Zhang walked in. He saw me and told me to wait for a while until he eventually finished some more tasks and sat down. The phone rang a few times during the interview. He was actually quite hesitated about the interview at the beginning. He said he wouldn't know what to say. I reassured him that he could say anything he wanted, no matter how much. In the end, he agreed to start the interview and shared his story of being a teacher.

Reasons for entry

"It seems to be during childhood that I really wanted to become a teacher. Probably during elementary school" (Interview 1, Zhang, 0807). Looking back to the initial motivation to be a teacher, Zhang could trace back to elementary school. He took some teacher education courses during his junior year because it was the first time that all the universities were allowed to have teacher education programs. He thought to himself: if he could make it then he would work as a teacher; if not, then he wouldn't. He completed the teacher practicum, served in the army and successfully got a job in a school. And so, he became a teacher.

But why did he want to become a teacher? "I think, with my personality, I can basically do any job. But I thought that in our traditional society, teaching is a stable job. As long as I work hard, I can

do many other things that I want to do" (Interview 1, Zhang, 0807). On one hand, he wanted a stable job. On the other hand, he wanted something challenging. Being a teacher seems to fulfill his seemingly contradictory wish. Although the job is very stable, there is possibility to meet different students every year and different things happen all the time. It was still too boring for Zhang, for example to be a homeroom teacher for a long time. He wanted "some changes in his teaching life" (Interview 1, Zhang, 0807). This was how he ended up working on the administrative side. He accidentally got a chance to be one of the office heads and since then, he has been doing administrative work.

Zhang confessed, however, that he still wanted to retire sooner. He wanted to travel around, see different parts of the world and experience different cultures. As a teacher, the only break he could get is winter and summer vacations, which unfortunately, happen to be the most popular traveling seasons. He will, therefore, retire once he is qualified in order to travel and enjoy life.

The changing of time and teaching

The changes that Zhang has experienced in his teaching career can be put into two categories, internal and external changes. First of all, externally, Zhang has been through a private school setting to a public school, where he personally described as "a bigger turning point" for him. The external change for Zhang includes the school settings and the workload difference. Teaching in a private school was his first job. He said he was just like many other private school teachers. Teaching at a private school is only a springboard to get into a public school. He planned to stay for one year, prepare for the exam for public school teaching position, and leave. The first class he got was a class of first-year students in junior high school. Many of them just left home to live in the dorm and were crying because of homesick. After a few months being with the class, Zhang felt weird to leave the students. He had developed some connection with the students and he thought it would not be so nice for the students to have to get used to a new teacher. In the end, he gave himself three years to stay at the private school, and graduated with his class.

Zhang got into a public school as he wished and it was a very big change for him. In a private school, a teacher has to be with the students from as early as 7am till 10pm when the students finish their evening studies. He took care of their everyday life. In a public school, he was not used to the fact that students go home at 4pm and teachers can also go home at around 5pm or 6pm. "At the beginning, I was not used to seeing sunset when I got off from work" (Interview 1, Zhunag, 0807). The workload in the public school was less not only because of the shorter working hours, but also in a private school, one teacher often has to work two teachers' tasks, while in a public school, the

distribution of work is different and more people are working on the same tasks. He was, therefore, quite unaccustomed to the change at first. Gradually, he got used to the difference. "It also depends on how willing you are to spend time on the students. Although they are not at school, there are many things that you can plan ahead for them" (Interview 1, Zhunag, 0807). More than a decade has passed since he started teaching.

Secondly, he has witnessed the changes of era and the changes of students as he proceeds his teaching journey. He mentioned that sometimes it is not about how the changes make students difficult to teach, but it is about how the teachers should evolve with time. The internal change of Zhang included the change of pedagogical practice and mindset.

> Maybe you were very zealous when you first graduated, you had so many things you wanted to do, and you wanted to give students as much as possible. But I came to realized that I gave less and less to the students. It doesn't mean I am out of passion, but it's because what I could offer had become less. Students have more resources, and they don't need teachers to provide them. So, I think what we can offer becomes less and less and we should focus on what students really need rather than offering them what we imagine they will need. (Interview 1, Zhang, 0807)

Zhang adjusted his teaching to the changing of time and developed accordingly. He has switched from teacher-centered to student-centered, from pouring all he could to the students to narrowing down to the core, his pedagogy.

He expected himself to be a role model for his students, as someone who can influence them in many ways. All these years as an educator, Zhang tried hard to live up to his expectation. The students now are living in different times from his own time as a student, so there are many differences in behaviors. One example is that the students seem to be too casual when they greet teachers.

> In the past when I saw a teacher, I would greet them, so now as a teacher, I expect the students to greet me. They still greet me, but the way is quite different. So, I thought to myself, this doesn't differ from my values. The students still meet my expectations, but in a different way. So I adjust myself only in trivial parts. The way I do things and my values do not change that much. (Interview 2, Zhang, 1014)

Zhang understands and acknowledges the generation differences and he is able to take a new perspective on his students' culture while maintaining his principles.

Teaching beliefs

The core value that leads Zhang in his teaching career is "student-centeredness." This is clearly shown in his narratives, which are about how he sees the educational system in Taiwan, how he sees the school culture, and what his pedagogical methods are.

Looking at the educational policy and system in Taiwan, he described it as an "assembled car." He mentioned that Taiwan wants to learn from the world, picking up whatever is good about education in US, Germany, Finland, and Japan. There is no consideration of Taiwanese culture and values, however. For example, the "Comprehensive Assessment Program for Junior High School Students" was meant for diagnosing if students have reached the goal, but it is often used as a criterion for entering senior high schools. The goal was to ease the students' pressure but now it seems to increase the stress. He believes that "we have to have our own thinking and structure, something that the parents can cooperate, the society can accept and the school teachers can implement" (Interview 1, Zhang, 0807).

Zhang believes the most important thing in teaching is to "pass down the tradition and mentor the new comers" (Interview 1, Zhang, 0807). He has always thought mentoring student teachers and new teachers is very important and he always welcomes the position as a mentor.

> A school cannot operate by just one person, or a few people. Everyone has to take up his/her responsibility. The school will be more stable and secure. That's why sometimes I cannot understand why some teachers are not willing to do this (mentoring). Since we were treated the same way before, we should also pass this down. Otherwise, the school will be more and more difficult to continue. (Interview 1, Zhang, 0807)

Another thing he reflects often is teaching schedule adjustment. He often thinks about his own reasons for adjusting the timetable. Is it because of personal convenience or for the need of students? Eventually, his core value of student first always helps him to make the right decision.

In terms of pedagogical aspect, Zhang values fairness, making math fun, and correct behavioral values. For Zhang, it is important to be fair to all his students. Sometimes, however, he might face some parents' demands that are not in line with his class management values. For example, generally every student has the equal chance to sit wherever they want in the classroom. Some parent, however, came to him and wished to have special seat arrangement for his child. He would of course consider the individual student's need and make the arrangement, but he felt that he could not be fair to everyone by doing so.

As for math teaching, he said "in Taiwan we are kidnapped by exams, so we have no choice but to teach or have students practice what will be tested. If we don't have this kind of exam, I think teaching will be more fun. Students will benefit more and will be more interested" (Interview 1, Zhang, 0807). Math is fun, but teachers have to finish teaching a certain content within the schedule and they need to prepare their students enough practice for the speed they should be equipped to take the exams. Without the pressure of exams, Zhang thinks he could still teach the students the same skills. "It doesn't matter if the students make some mistakes. They don't have to do drilling practice. We can make them interested first and then they will want to learn eventually" (Interview 1, Zhang, 0807). It might compensate the speed but he thinks methods are more important than speed nowadays when the machine can do all the calculation.

As a person with strong and strict principles, Zhang holds high standards for himself. Students and colleagues consider him a very strict person. He thinks "this is my personality. I do what I think I should do. If I am in other careers, I think I will still be the same" (Interview 1, Zhang, 0807). Compared to other teachers who might take time to talk to the students when they make mistakes again and again without immediate effect, he believes when the rules are set, and if punishment is needed, he will punish the students. His method might be different but as long as the starting point is for the good of the students, he thinks the students will gradually understand his motivation.

Identity conflicts

While trying to identify some of the identity conflicts Zhang experienced, I came to understand that his conflicts occurred when there is a divergence between his core value of student-centeredness and the situation. Four narrative examples could be found in his story. First, he talked about the special seat arrangement request from the parent, and confessed that he was not very comfortable in accepting that because it diverted him from his value of fairness for all students. It was a conflict between considering one individual student and the whole group's interest. On a second thought, however, he turned to his ultimate core value of student-centeredness and accepted the request after estimating the necessity by himself. He took the parents' thought into consideration and evaluates by himself according to his own values.

Second, he reflected on the times when he was considering adjusting his teaching timetable, perhaps switching a few classes so he could get one free afternoon. He would ask himself if it is personal need or students' need. The conflict between personal need and other's need can be seen here, although he said that it did not occur to be a conflict for him but he often asks himself this question. His core value stood up against all and he always prioritizes his students' need.

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Third, he believes that teaching math can be more interesting when there is no pressure coming from the exams. He gave examples of how he could do differently such as doing magic tricks and engaging students in fun activities. In reality, however, the classes are made up of practice for exams. The conflict lies in the discrepancy between what he considers is better and what he is actually doing. Ideally, he believes that math learning and teaching could be intriguing and motivating, while in reality, he puts aside making math fun and instead sticks to drilling and practice.

The last identity conflict is when he realized that the students of this generation have different behavioral values than his. How the students behave seems to be in contradictory to what his expectation is. To solve this conflict, he was able to take the generation differences into consideration and rebuilt his previous identity of good behaviors.

To sum up, Zhang's strategies for successfully solving his identity conflicts were mostly resorting to his core values or being flexible enough to modify them. Although at times, there would be a compromise between ideal and reality, where he would just follow what the situation brings him.

4.1.3 Cai: But we are not profit-making business. Children are humans.

I was lost. I walked in the opposite direction and was running out of time. It was a hot summer day in Taiwan when I was on my way to meet Cai at a café she recommended. When I got into the café, I saw Cai already sitting with a bottle of drink she just ordered. She waved at me and handed me the menu when I sat down. It was a lovely café, deliberately decorated for a cozy atmosphere. Cai had a different haircut from the last time we met. It was a modern short bob with one side longer than the other. It was quite different from her previous style. Cai was my mentor teacher for both homeroom and English teaching practice. I followed and learned from her for one semester. She would soon retire and she was both teaching English and doing administrative work in the Office of Academic Affairs.

Reasons for entry

"Before becoming a teacher, being one was never my wish," this was Cai's opening words of her narrative. Because of her personal experience, her image of a teacher was very strict and the teacher-student relationship was not close. She studied in private schools and from her experiences it seemed that only strict teachers can produce high-performing students. This was why she thought she would not want to be a teacher because she was not a person as such. "I thought to myself, am I able to change myself and become a teacher like that?" (Interview 1, Cai, 0726).

After graduating as an English major, she started her first job as a secretary. The pay was not high. Meanwhile, she saw an English language school recruitment poster with better salary and she passed the interview. She taught preschoolers at the beginning. When she got her first salary, holding the cash in her hands, she thought that "actually teaching is quite good" (Interview 1, Cai, 0726). As the expansion of the English school, she was promoted and got a pay raise. "Money for me at that time, in 1988, was a very big moral support" (Interview 1, Cai, 0726). Subsequently, she changed from the first English school to another one, because the other provided even better salary.

It was not only because of the realistic matters, but also the professional training and experiences in the school that empowered her in the teaching career. "There I found I have actually two characteristics, one is that I have strong affinity and the other is I have good English pronunciation" (Interview 1, Cai, 0726). She also thought that perhaps she has always had these abilities, but she was just suppressing herself.

> I think I am pretty lucky. When I was choosing my career, I made the right decision. Maybe I had the ability, but I didn't want to face it. I have a sister who is 13 years old younger than me, so I was the one who taught her phonetics. There was a group of people in our living room. All of them were children of our neighbors. And I taught them all. Maybe at that time, it was already like some trial and I've also developed some teaching skills. (Interview 1, Cai, 0726).

From her informal teaching experiences, she had started to develop and cultivate her teaching skills and these early practices became helpful in her later teaching.

Teaching changes

Cai has experienced both changes externally and internally. Externally, she has changed her teaching environment quite often. In her teaching career, she first experienced two private, out-of-school language institutions and later became a formal teacher in six different junior high schools. At the peak of her English language school career, she was getting married. Her mom told her to quit because the working hour (from 2pm to 10pm) could not match with the marriage and life with children. She listened to her mom's suggestion, searched for substituting teaching positions and studied teacher education. Due to her husband's job, before the last school, Cai was mostly changing schools from city to city. Finally, her mother told her to stop moving with her husband. She started teaching in the current school when she was pregnant with her daughter. Today, her daughter is 20 years old and soon Mr. Cai has just retired.

Teaching in different cities, from countryside to the capital, was not easy. The socioeconomic status of students' families gets higher and higher. "I was not used to it at first. Because I also come from an average family" (Interview 1, Cai, 0726). Students from central and southern Taiwan are more thoughtful and their parents respect the teachers, while in Taipei, parents have their own values on how to educate their children.

> It probably took me two or three years to get used to it. Yea, and gradually I came to understand how to interact with the parents and children here. I then felt I belonged. Otherwise, I felt like a square peg in a round hole. (Interview 1, Cai, 0726)

She has taught in one of the poorest towns, schools with different minority groups, and classes for low achievers; hence, the change from the less fortunate to a rather privilege school was enormous.

Internally, Cai has changed in two main aspects. First, she reflected on her past experiences when she lost temper in front of the whole class. "I think my biggest change is that when I am mad, I wouldn't scold a child in front of the whole class anymore" (Interview 2, Cai, 1029). Sometimes her own children would come home and shared with her what happened in the school and what their teachers did, she realized that she might have also done something bad without noticing. She has learned that when she noticed herself on the binge of losing temper, she had to calm down first and talk with the student later in private. She has learned that she had to respect the student more.

> Perhaps we said something to the child without further thoughts, and we thought that he really did something wrong. But that moment cut into the child's heart like a sharp knife. After that cut, I realized no matter how hard you try to make it up, there will always be a gap in the teacher-student relationship. (Interview 2, Cai, 1029)

It also applies to her putting too much emotion in dealing with students' conflicts. She was often too hasty in trying to solve or even got more emotional than the students in conflict. She has learned to remain calm.

Second, in the beginning of teaching in Taipei, she was very competitive in terms of class academic performance. She would be unhappy and have no sense of achievement when her class performed worse than others.

> So, at the beginning, I think I couldn't really step out from comparing the scores. I was wondering how to position myself as a teacher. I think it is somehow incompatible with my personality. But due to self-esteem, I still want to compare. (Interview 2, Cai, 1029)

In previous schools, she easily gained confidence from her English performance and trust from parents. Teaching in the school in Taipei, however, was a huge blow for her at first. The students had higher English proficiency and the parents had higher expectations. She could not help but interfere every preparation for class contests, from talent show to classroom decoration. Gradually, she understood that she needed to let go and let the students learn from doing. In addition, she realized that she should just be the kind of teacher she wanted to be instead of following others. She slowly learned that she had to let go the evaluative and competitive values so that she could truly be fair to all students.

Teaching beliefs

Cai's teaching beliefs can be categorized into four parts: professional development, administrative work, pedagogy, and influence on students. The first three aspects are included in her view of what a good teacher is. First, she believes that a good teacher never stops learning. In these 30 years as a teacher, she has noticed differences in generations. She thinks a teacher should always develop him/herself. Especially new teachers are coming in all the time and they have received new teacher education different from hers. One example is the use of computer and technology. "I think I really have to learn hard and keep up the pace with the new teachers" (Interview 2, Cai, 1029). Second, depending on personal interest, she thinks especially in the final years, perhaps trying to work in administrative offices is a good choice. Oftentimes no one wants to work for administrative sections, but if some teachers are suitable and have good communicative skills, they can give it a try. It is usually PE or arts teachers who are doing these tasks, but if other subject teachers are willing to contribute, different ideas might be triggered. Third, in terms of English teaching, she thinks it is important to be professional and to be able to recognize children's differences and provide teaching accordingly.

> Don't just look at the grades. Even though the child does not have good grades, you can try to improve his/her grades and at least maintain his/her interest in English. Encourage them to listen to English songs or involve them in some easy activities. (Interview 2, Cai, 1029)

Having an influence on students is an important theme in Cai's teaching. The influence can be further categorized into three types: English, learning, and life. For English, Cai gave an example of how the English songs and videos had made an impact in students' lives. She recalled that one student told her that he was walking on the street during Christmas and heard the song "Last Christmas," he thought of his happy memories in English classes in junior high school.

Perhaps that one thing in their future, maybe in high school, maybe in university, in some context, they hear that song again and they will link that to many things in English class. It might have some subtle influences. They might think English is very fun. (Interview 1, Cai, 0726)

Because English was a fun subject in junior high school, some students also ended up studying English in the university.

In terms of learning, she believes to perform well in studies, the students need to have expectations and motivation for themselves. The passion for learning is especially important. She believes students' self-confidence and teachers' encouragement are the key to success.

Cai's influence on students' life can be seen in her care for her students, which shows in her students' feedback after graduation. Inspired by her supervisor when she left her job in the second private language school, she has decided to bring positivity to students no matter what. Her supervisor told her when she decided to resign, "Although I don't want to lose you, I know you will be successful in whatever job you do" (Interview 1, Cai, 0726). She remembers one student who was studying in the university and took a course which required the students to write a thank you letter to the two most important people in their lives. One of the people the student chose to thank was her. She also feels proud of herself when helping children at risk. There have been several cases which were really difficult even for counseling office and social workers. She was glad that her care and help were strong enough to bring the children back on track.

Even after they enter high school, the parents or children will let me know what is happening in their life. I think it's very good that I might have helped fix some family issues and also given the child some positivity. (Interview 2, Cai, 1029)

She considers herself as the "mother of the students" and she treats her students as her "children" (Interview 1, Cai, 0726). This is especially important in her relationship with the students. Although she teaches English, she also cares for students' life in general.

At least the children trust me. Maybe you told them something and they did internalize it in their learning process. So, I think, in the children's eyes, I am the one they can trust, like their mom in the school. (Interview 2, Cai, 1029)

Cai's teaching beliefs of having an influence on students' English learning, learning in general, and life are not only the basis of her teaching career, but also form her close relationship with her students.

Competitiveness

Cai's narrative emphasizes a lot on the exam-oriented culture and the competitiveness in school. I assume this is one of the main reasons for the conflicts she had encountered, so here I will provide some background for her experiences. Externally, the school culture and environment are very competitive for both teachers and students. Students are expected to perform well in exams, and the teachers also compare their students' scores with one another's. Internally, it was not easy for Cai to escape from the competitiveness either. She also was influenced by it before she found her own identity.

As I mentioned earlier, Cai felt a lack of sense of belonging after she started working in Taipei. Her class was always the best class in the first school she taught in Taipei, and so when she came to the second school, which is also the school she will soon retire from, people had high expectations for her. "I've never thought that my class had to be number one or two to show that I am an excellent teacher. This is why I cannot fit in" (Interview 1, Cai, 0726). From her experiences in schools in other cities, she noticed that parents and students had more respect for the teacher. When she got to Taipei, she realized that "teachers have to be like meat in the butcher's shop to be measured" (Interview 1, Cai, 0726). The school culture of comparing teachers and competing against one another was something she did not enjoy.

> I don't like this kind of environment. I think everyone has their own characteristics. I am good and you are good, too. It doesn't mean that if you're good, I have to be bad. But I think here they (teachers) always check the scores right away to see the ranking of the classes. And they will say something like, that popular teacher's class did not perform so well after all. I have heard so many of this kind of comments during my work in the Office of Academic Affairs. (Interview 1, Cai, 0726)

Once she had a class which was very difficult to teach and always caused trouble. However, in the last year of junior high school, the class started to study and at the end many of the students got very good scores in the high school entrance exam. It took everyone by surprise. She told the students "when you want to prove something, you don't even have to say anything. You just need to prove it with good scores" (Interview 1, Cai, 0726). She thought that the result will let all the others reflect

on themselves. "Don't judge a child based on temporary scores. Once you have put a label on them, telling them that they are losers, they might not have any chances anymore" (Interview 1, Cai, 0726). On the other hand, she also worried if this was just a consequentialist way of viewing the results.

> What if this class did not perform well in the exam? Does it mean everyone, including the children, will tell you that you have taught them in a wrong way? Or the principal and the colleagues will say: see, the class had always behaved poorly, no wonder they didn't get good scores. (Interview 1, Cai, 0726)

She did not understand if the test results really matter so much or if teachers' success and sense of achievement are merely defined by the scores. "If I have to be defined by this, it will be really pathetic" (Interview 1, Cai, 0726).

> It was not, however, easy for Cai to prevent from being competitive at the beginning of her teaching career.

> At first, in the beginning years, I really wanted to compare with others. I would compare the scores. And then when the scores were worse than others', I would be unhappy in the class. I didn't have sense of achievement or maybe it's because I wanted to get something. (Interview 2, Cai, 1029)

It was not only externally in the environment that competitiveness existed, but also internally in Cai's values. At first, she felt she had the "superiority" in leading her class. Her classes always got prizes in different contests and she was always the decision maker when it came to what kind of performance the class would do. She knew very well how her classes could win the contest. "I was the main leader. Perhaps it's because I wanted to win. That kind of hypocritical mentality" (Interview 1, Cai, 0726). She has changed this mindset during the process. It took her some time, but her change could be seen from a couple of students' graduation feedback. The students commented that they had heard many teachers saying they would not judge a student based on his/her scores, but they thought that she was one of the few that truly realized it. "I think, this is something I really succeeded in" (Interview 1, Cai, 0726).

Identity conflicts

Cai's identity conflicts happened in three aspects: the teaching changes in her career from low to high socioeconomic status, many public affair tasks that took too much time from her class, and the lack of sense of belonging in the competitive environment.

First, moving from a relatively countryside region to the metropolitan city, she could not help but thought of how much more considerate the students were and how much more respectful the parents were to the teachers in the central and southern cities. The parents in the capital city have their own educational values. They have a reason for everything. "I could only try to persuade them. If I couldn't, I could only accept it. Yea, accept it, accept that different parents have different ways of raising their children" (Interview 1, Cai, 0726). Here Cai has a conflict between her own educational values and the parents'. She tried to decrease the gap by persuasion, but she would not force the parents to accept her method. By accepting that different people have different values, Cai's strategy for solving the identity conflict is perhaps being open-minded and understanding. In fact, her relationship with the students' parents is very good and trustful. Although not all of them agreed with her teaching beliefs, Cai thinks that they have nevertheless seen her hard work and effort in the children during the three years in junior high school.

Second, Cai was often elected as the head of homeroom teachers or the teacher's association. Ever since her career in private English schools, she has always been a good communicator. She thought that in her colleagues' opinion, perhaps she was trustworthy in terms of negotiating with other staff in the school as a representative. There was, however, a dilemma of working for the benefits for all the teachers and the time for her own class. She had to spend a lot of time on meetings and had less time to be with her own class. She did not seem to solve this struggle, however. Her conflict results from the responsibility to serve the public and also her students within her own limited time. She did not deny the conflicts but continued to keep both.

The last conflict was probably the most important one as it has been a major theme in Cai's narrative: her lack of sense of belonging in the competitive teaching environment. She used to struggle between the competitive context and what kind of teacher she wanted to be. After she managed to find a comfortable stance where she can be the teacher she wanted to be, she learned to let go of the exam and score-oriented teaching style. She reflected at the end of the final part of the first interview,

> I don't know what you mean by identity. I become a teacher because I like it. And in this field, just like in any other fields, there are always some pros and cons. And some you identify yourself with. For example, we compare scores, like others comparing performance. But we are not profit-making business. Children are humans. So, sometimes I am a bit sad when I see everyone comparing the scores and using the scores as an evaluation of that person. I don't like it. I think the affirmation of a teacher should be more than this." (Interview 1, Cai, 0726)

She still sees the scenarios of comparing scores all the time, especially now she is working in the Office of Academic Affairs. Her colleagues, even those who are closer with her might also compare the scores. Because she had solved her inner conflict and found her own stance, now when her colleagues are comparing the scores, she could just ignore it.

4.1.4 Li: Education is a human-building career

When I entered the counseling office, there were only two people. It was a little after noon time, as I saw Li putting away her lunch when she greeted me. Li was my homeroom teacher and science teacher for eighth and ninth grades. When our seventh-grade teacher had to leave, Li was the one who took over our class. I remember at first how hesitated and unwilling we were to accept her. Our previous homeroom teacher was a very easygoing, fun and young male teacher. Li was young too but she was very strict. She came to our class, set all the rules and told us her previous classes won a lot of contests. Later, she turned out to be one of the most amazing and creative teachers I have ever met. She was very special in her own charisma. In recent years, she has been giving presentations and workshops in different cities in Taiwan. She is also doing administrative work. She is currently the Director of Counseling. She was desperate to learn what I have been doing abroad. Due to our special relationship, during her narratives, she constantly brought up memories and examples from our class.

Reasons for entry

"Being a teacher is my mom's expectation" (Interview 1, Li, 0802). Before becoming a teacher, Li worked in the media circle, which in her parents' mind was not a very stable job. Her previous stereotype of a teacher is someone who is always picking faults in others. She was doing this all the time in her early stage of teaching, and she did not like it.

> Before entering the career, I expected that this would be a stable job. And because this is an educational context, if my friends have kids, I can teach better with the knowledge and skills about education. As for the students I had at that time, I really did not think that much. Oops. Some thoughts really came with reflection after entering teaching career. (Interview 2, Li, 1015)

For Li, teaching was just a job. It was not something she wanted to do, though it did come to her mind at one point. When she was in eighth grade, she wanted to become a science teacher because she thought science was really interesting and she felt very satisfied to teach her classmates.

In her first years as a substitute teacher, Li missed her time in the media field. She was still writing scripts for radio programs while doing her substitute teaching. She had done voice dubbing as well. "Media and communication is limitless. That is really satisfying and addictive" (Interview 1, Li, 0802). Due to her special job experience, her science classes were very different from others'. She integrated her experience into her science classes and this combination became very popular among the students. Having worked in public relations company, she knew how to package her lessons in an attractive way. She was also in the drama club in university, so she knew what stage effects worked the best. "Still I was very against teaching. I was thinking to return to media work, whether it is radio or television. But after three years, I went back to script writing and the students who graduated came back and we had interaction, and that kind of touched me" (Interview 1, Li, 0802). It did not feel the same going back to media work, so she decided to take a gap and travel to plan her next step.

Li came back from the holiday and got a phone call from the school asking her to take one class. It was a high risk, all-boy's class which no one dared to take over. It was so tough that she submitted resignation only after two weeks. She thought to herself "I don't have to waste my time on these kids" (Interview 1, Li, 0802). But that class did not want her to leave. "It was like a movie scene. Those kids stood around my car and did not let me drive away. So I walked to the field, but the whole class followed behind me like a marching army," she recalled (Interview 1, Li, 0802). However, she still did not want to be a teacher. After this class, she got another phone call asking her to take a similar all-boy's class again. It was then that she reflected, "I am actually accompanying these kids in one of their most important one or two years" (Interview 1, Li, 0802). She took her colleagues' advice and finally after seven years of teaching, at the age of 30, she got her formal teaching certificate.

Teaching changes

From Li's narratives, we could see a lot of changes, including both external and internal aspects. Externally, Li has changed from being a teacher to taking bigger responsibility in the administrative work, and from teaching students to educating teachers.

The first external change was her position from a subject teacher to administrative work. "Actually, teaching is very enjoyable," Li told me (Interview 1, Li, 0802). She was very depressed during the year as the Director of Student Affairs. She did not have any classes and she had to supervise the students' dress code and everything that "parents did not take good care of" (Interview 1, Li, 0802). She was very happy when she could teach again. "I was so happy that every time I entered the classroom, I told the class I am here to relax. The kids said, 'What? You're here to relax?' I said, 'Yea.'" (Interview 1, Li, 0802).

The second external change was from teaching students to teaching teachers. "During these twenty years, I have slowly worked towards becoming a teacher educator" (Interview 2, Li, 1015). Li's colleagues think she is "hyperactive" (Interview 2, Li, 1015). They think that she is doing so much extra work. She keeps improving herself not only in teaching skills but also in subject knowledge. "Hence, I started leading some workshops, because I think one person can walk far but a group of people is more powerful" (Interview 2, Li, 1015). I remembered once when I visited my junior high school to meet some of my former teachers, she told me that she was thinking if she should start sharing with more teachers by teaching some teacher education courses in the university. Now, she has certainly become a popular teacher educator.

Internally, Li has changed in three different ways. First of all, she did not like the idea of picking students' faults, which she thought was what most teachers do. To deal with this, she tried instead to see the good in students. She would ask the misbehaving students to tell her some of the good things they did. Second, when she was a novice teacher, she did not think it was fair that the more experienced teachers got higher salary. She did not think they worked as hard as she did. After a few years, she realized that experienced teachers had accumulated their experiences throughout the years and they were for example, very capable in communicating with the students, their parents and peers as well. She thus was willing to learn from them. Later in her teaching career, she founded a teaching assistance group for novice and experienced teachers to help and share with one another. Third, Li has developed from a level 2 teacher to a level 3 teacher, according to Biggs' (2011) description. At first, she noticed that due to her previous experience in the drama club, she could easily catch the students' attention in the class once she stood in front of the students. This could be seen as level 2, which focuses more on what teachers do. A level 2 teacher concentrates on his/her own teaching and tries to be fun and welcoming to the students. "But later, I even prefer students to have the ability to work by themselves" (Interview 1, Li, 0802). Level 3 emphasizes on what students do. A level 3 teacher concerns more on ensuring that the students are learning, which is also what Li has become more aware of.

Teaching beliefs

In her narratives, Li expressed her ideas in several dimensions. Her teaching beliefs can be seen from three aspects: the teachers, the educational system, and the students. The first aspect is related to teachers' professional development. Li believes that she is "organic" (Interview 2, Li, 1015). By being organic, she means that the teacher is continuously developing and the metabolism disposes of the

deficiencies to renew oneself. She thinks it is because of this characteristic that she got her peer's recognition and she had the chance to share her experience with everyone.

> If there are any opportunities in the future, I don't mind invitations for giving presentations. Because I can then encourage other teachers and let them know that even teachers with long-term experiences like me are still developing, improving and willing to share. Also, I have always thought my teaching experience is not private asset, it is public goods. I had improved because of my students' feedback and it is from the students, not myself." (Interview 1, Li, 0802)

When I was having the second interview with her, she was actually in another city waiting to lead a workshop. It was a Sunday morning. In the following weeks, she would have several workshops around Taiwan. She is not only self-developing but also encouraging other teachers to do the same as well.

Secondly, when Li looks at the current educational system, she said she had never seen any country reforming its education system as fast as Taiwan. "But I think teachers in Taiwan are great. No matter what kind of system it is, we remain the teaching method we are most confident with" (Interview 1, Li, 0802). She thinks if teachers change as fast as the reform, they would not be able to educate the next generation steadily.

Third, regarding to students, Li had three different pedagogical related values, including science education, holistic education and citizen education. Although she used different terms when describing the various aspects, a pattern could be found in the three different educations. She wished to make an impact on students in terms of their attitude, behavior, positivity, and autonomy. "Education is a human-building career" (Interview 1, Li, 0802). The purpose of science education is to equip students with science literacy, which in her definition is the "basic scientific knowledge which you use in daily life, including decision making and evaluation" (Interview 1, Li, 0802). Science literacy also includes the attitude of "I don't agree with you affectively, but sensibly I agree that what you said is reasonable and logical" (Interview 1, Li, 0802). She expects the students will become citizens with such attitudes. In addition, she wishes her students to get a holistic education, meaning the students should have knowledge and skills, and they should always be like a sponge absorbing and learning (Interview 2, Li, 1015). Her teaching beliefs in citizen education can be seen in a couple of examples where she talked about her sense of achievement and biggest wishes. First, when she talked about her expectations as a teacher, she mentioned that "I expect myself…for students, it is not only about exams and scores, but what I wish for them is to change their attitude"

(Interview 1, Li, 0802). Second, when she thought about the biggest achievement as a teacher, she said

> the greatest achievement comes after the kids graduate. It is not just about their test scores when I teach them at school. No one remembers those scores! What would you do now if I show you all the transcripts from that time? That really isn't the point, you know. It is all about how you behave and treat others when you are in the society. Caring about others, willing to give compliments and blessings generously. I think these make me very gratified. (Interview 1, Li, 0802)

While Li's belief of influencing students to be a more cultured citizen motivates her to continue her teaching career, her close relationship with the students also keeps her teaching interesting. As a homeroom teacher, she could influence the students directly and she loved the fact that "actually everyone is so unique. Education really is an interesting thing" (Interview 1, Li, 0802).

Identity conflicts

Three identity conflicts were found in Li's narrative, including being a teacher, doing administrative work, and her impatience with some parents and students. First, her stereotypical idea of what a teacher should be is in conflict with her own concept. This was also what prevented her from being a teacher since she thought that being a teacher means picking faults in others all the time. There was the conflict between what she wanted to do and what she thought she had to do. After some time in her teaching career, she had changed from picking faults in students to seeing the good in them. She had successfully resolved the conflict by doing what is suitable for her. The strategy she used was to maintain the identity that serves her well.

The second conflict is about doing administrative work which limits her time for teaching. She prefers teaching to administrative work, and for her, that year without teaching almost caused her depression. However, it was not always in her own power to decide. "Sometimes it depends on the principal. If the principal wants to put me in this position, I will then continue the work" (Interview 1, Li, 0802). She was not able to remove administrative work completely out of her teaching career, but she got one class to teach and that was enough for her. The strategy she used was to keep both teaching and administrative work at the same time as she had no control over what was assigned to her.

The last conflict Li encountered was related to her impatience. Sometimes she was testified by some parents whose educational values are very incompatible with her own, or some smart students

who are impolite and rude. "There were perhaps one or two students like this. I can't believe I didn't have the patience to let go of myself and be able to teach them again" (Interview 2, Li, 1015). It did not seem that Li had changed herself to cope with these conflicts. She wanted to be the teacher she would like to be.

4.2   Teachers in Finland

Before this research, I did not have any personal contact with the two teachers in Finland who participated in the study. Both Virtanen and Mattila replied to my email and agreed to the interview. We met once for the interview, and they were very welcoming and kind to squeeze some of their precious time to share their teaching narratives with me.

4.2.1 Virtanen: I'm not my type of ideal teacher; I'm only human

As I walked closer to the campus, I saw students in groups coming to my direction, speaking English. I wondered what it is like to study in an international school in Finland. I heard from my classmate's children that the majority of the students are still Finnish. It was the first time I entered the international school. It was certainly not my first visit to a Finnish school. Every time, however, I am still struck by the fact that there is rarely an obvious main entrance with a security guard that tells you "This is it. This is the school that you're looking for." I passed the playground and walked to the teacher's office. I asked for meeting Virtanen and soon I was greeted by a short-haired lady who was very friendly and warm. She led me to her classroom, which was already empty at that time. Although it was the first time we met, she was very helpful and willing to share with me her teaching stories. I felt very much grateful for this opportunity not only to listen to another wonderful story from a different culture and context, but also to look around the campus.

Reasons for entry

"I didn't think that I would become a history teacher. I was just interested in history and that's why I studied it," Virtanen began her narrative with this statement. Later she realized that she needed to work, and teaching came to her as an option. Being a teacher was not a novel idea for Virtanen.

> Somehow teaching wasn't such a scary thing to me. I have been kind of thinking about teaching
> but somehow you, when you are in your twenties, you kind of think that it's somehow too much

work or, I don't know, kind of too hard somehow, or boring or something like that. (Interview 1, Virtanen, 1002)

Virtanen's aunt is a Finnish teacher and sometimes she would substitute for her. She also had experience as an assistant teacher in a primary school. What really put her into the teaching career, however, was when she had to decide what to do as a job. "So, it wasn't kind of totally strange to me. It was, I guess, it was some kind of option all the time" (Interview 1, Virtanen, 1002).

Teaching changes

Teaching changes can be seen from both external and internal dimensions for Virtanen. Externally, she had gone through a phase where she had to teach as a class teacher, even though her training was for subject teachers; and she experienced some teaching differences during and after the school renovation. The following paragraphs describe the two external changes in more details.

First, Virtanen completed her teaching practice in the UK and her training was to be a history teacher. After graduation, she was looking for a history teacher position but there were very few chances. Eventually, she found an opportunity as a substitute teacher in her daughter's primary school, where she taught fifth and sixth grade English-speaking classes. "It was quite demanding for me of course. I was trained to be a subject teacher and not the kind of a class teacher, teaching all the subjects" (Interview 1, Virtanen, 1002). Later in the second year, she got to teach history classes in the upper school as well. Her classes were in both English and Finnish. It was rather natural for her to work in an English-speaking school as her daughter started school in English in the UK and she had the teacher training in an English-speaking country as well. Second, during her teaching career, she had gone through the development of technology and the changes in the facilities. The school just finished its renovation recently and the facilities have improved.

That is actually one thing that has changed, kind of during my career of course, using that kind of electronic devices and that kind of facilities. When I studied, I still had that kind of, yes, the overhead projector, and the transparencies. But now little by little, I've taken them out of my files and put them into the bin. (Interview 1, Virtanen, 1002)

Internally, Virtanen has two major changes, including from focusing on subject matter to focusing on students, and from being stressed to relaxed. First, Virtanen had changed from focusing more on transmitting the subject knowledge to focusing on the connection with the students.

At the beginning of my career, I was probably more concerned about the subject knowledge. And on the other hand, when I didn't know the students so well, it was probably harder to be realized enough to be kind of close to the students. (Interview 2, Virtanen, 1002)

"As a subject teacher, you basically teach the same things every year," Virtanen described how she let go of the stress on subject knowledge (Interview 2, Virtanen, 1002). She gave an example of a seventh-grader commenting on her use of video clips in the class, "You must be looking for a lot of materials in your free time so that you have these anecdotes for so many things" (Interview 2, Virtanen, 1002). She understood that after years of teaching, she has "just kind of picked things from different kind of places" (Interview 2, Virtanen, 1002). Second, she has become more relaxed compared to her earlier stages of teaching. The experience releases her stress on the concern about subject knowledge, which results in a more relaxed attitude. "Because now I have the experience, I don't have to stress about all the things I stressed when I was kind of a new teacher" (Interview 2, Virtanen, 1002). With experience comes composure and ease in teaching.

Teaching beliefs

Virtanen's teaching beliefs can be categorized in four different areas: pedagogical beliefs, building positive atmosphere, team work, and teacher personality. The first area about pedagogical beliefs is related to what she thinks a good teacher should be. In classes, the teachers should have clear aims and certain routines so that the lessons are well-organized and structured, which are easier for the students to follow as well. Flexibility is another important characteristic. Sometimes the reality might not be in concordance with the plans and "there might be kind of other good things coming if you don't kind of follow your plans so kind of strictly" (Interview 1, Virtanen, 1002). "A good teacher is also flexible, so that the students are the things that he or she focuses on and the students' learning and how they kind of feel at school" (Interview 2, Virtanen, 1002).

Secondly, Virtanen believes that good connection with the students brings positive atmosphere. Before becoming a teacher, she expected herself to be "a friendlier and warmer teacher than a special kind of teacher of expert of history" (Interview 2, Virtanen, 1002). She thinks that most of her students like her, and consider her as "easy to talk to," and not so strict (Interview 2, Virtanen, 1002). In addition, she thinks that the school has a nice atmosphere because most of the students have been studying there since primary school. There is less chance of behavioral problems "when you know at least the names and you have some kind of connection with the students" (Interview 2, Virtanen, 1002) and "when you know them, kind of in everyday contact" (Interview 1, Virtanen, 1002). She

thinks it is also important that she gets response from the students, as she mentioned it would be difficult for her to give lectures to a very big class without knowing everyone. Not knowing the students is stressful for her.

Third, Virtanen described the importance of team work for subject teachers in the same field, with special education teachers, and with parents. She noticed that there was not enough discussion between her and the other social studies teacher. "We kind of both take care of our own lessons, but we should have more cooperation" (Interview 1, Virtanen, 1002). They did share materials online but Virtanen believes that the students will benefit if the teachers have more cooperation where they exchange ideas and share information. With the special education teacher, on the other hand, the cooperation was much more frequent. Parents along with their children are also involved in the discussion of the yearly planning.

Fourth, Virtanen sees teachers as sharing some similar personality. "To become a teacher, you probably, or I think it's quite common that it's more kind of outgoing people that choose this profession" (Interview 1, Virtanen, 1002). In her opinion, teachers are often more talkative and extrovert. However, she also believes that

> that kind of more observing characters, you know, the people who like to listen to other people, they would probably sometimes make better teachers. Because they have the patience to kind of think and see what is going on rather than taking charge of the situation immediately. (Interview 1, Virtanen, 1002).

This narrative shows that Virtanen's teaching belief is also concerned about listening to the students and it resonates with her idea of a good teacher who is "reacting and responding to students" (Interview 2, Virtanen, 1002).

Identity conflicts

When asked if she had encountered any situation that is in conflict with her idea of a good teacher, Virtanen immediately answered "Yes, every day!" In Virtanen's teaching narrative, three conflicts can be identified. First, she reflected that she was not her "type of ideal teacher" and that she was "only a human" (Interview 2, Virtanen, 1002). Sometimes she might not be able to follow her teaching beliefs. There is a conflict between what she believes and what she actually does. She might not be in a good mood and thus the atmosphere was not good, or her lessons were not as well-planned as she would like them to be. However, she solved the conflict by accepting herself as merely a human being and seeing things from a more positive side. "If you would think about all the disappointments

or your will start to evaluate all your lessons, kind of too strictly, it would be too overwhelming somehow" (Interview 2, Virtanen, 1002). Her bottom line is to never "hurt the student's feeling" no matter how irritated she is and to "try to get the majority of the lessons" (Interview 2, Virtanen, 1002). She accepts her flaws and tries to do the best within her power.

Second, Virtanen finds disciplinary matters the most demanding for her: "I often take it too personally and then you start to mix your own feelings into the situation. And then if you get too angry, you don't think logically anymore" (Interview 2, Virtanen, 1002). It was sometimes difficult for her to be strict to her students; "in some cases, when there are things you need the discipline, I find those things hard" (Interview 2, Virtanen, 1002). During some rare frustrating encounters with the students, she felt that she needed to be more persistent and stricter to the class. The conflict in this scenario is that she wanted to be caring and not so strict, but at times when disciplines are needed, she would find it hard to carry them out. Her solution to this was to leave the classroom first, as she tried to keep herself calm but at the same time return to the class to manage the situation.

Finally, the last conflict is related to team work with other teachers. She understands the importance of collaboration between teachers to discuss lesson planning and she believes that there should be more discussion. However, she felt it was too much to bother the other person to dedicate his/her time to more meetings when she herself also wonder whether she has the energy after the school day. Virtanen's solution was to stick to the meetings that are already allocated for teacher collaboration. It would be easier for the teachers to plan their time and it is "more natural to say that 'hey, ok, let's take care of this thing together'" (Interview 1, Virtanen, 1002).

It seems that Virtanen's conflicts come mostly from her personal side other than the external context. She explained that teachers work very independently and the "structure is quite good" for their work (Interview 2, Virtanen, 1002). There is good support for both students and teachers, and hence Virtanen said, "I don't usually get frustrated with my colleagues or the school administration or things like that" (Interview 2, Virtanen, 1002).

4.2.2 Mattila: It's lovely to be an important adult in somebody's life

A week later, I came back to the international school for the second time to meet Mattila, the other teacher who had agreed to participate in the interview. I waited at the hallway and as I was waiting, I saw Virtanen and she told me that she just spotted Mattila and she would come soon. Mattila is the only home economics teacher in this school. She came to me smiling and led me to her home economics classroom. Mattila was wearing a ponytail, neat and slick, just like her newly renovated

classroom. The home economics classroom was nothing I have seen before. There was not only kitchen equipment but also washing machines and cloths all in the same space, separated by a wall. Mattila seemed quite content with her classroom. I could immediately imagine all the happiness in this classroom, with some music and the smell of freshly baked cinnamon buns. She invited me to have a cup of coffee and we sat down at one of the tables where students usually enjoy the food they make in the class. Soon, Mattila's story unfolded amidst the warm aroma of coffee.

Reasons for entry

"Teaching was not my first, like favorite job when I started to, you know, um study and think about my future career" (Interview 1, Mattila, 1012). She was thirty years old when she started taking pedagogical studies in the university. Now being forty-five, she had accumulated six years of teaching experiences, which is rather short compared to other teachers in this research. Mattila was first working at a television channel, working with photographers and making contents for various topics such as outdoor activities. Her interest later shifted to food and education. She started to work in a restaurant for three or four years but she was tired of the late working hours. As she was contemplating on how to combine restaurant business with educational knowledge, it was her teacher in the restaurant school who suggested her to become a home economics teacher. It is "a place where you could, you know, connect the knowledge you have in food and restaurant and then the educational side where you wanna influence on somebody" (Interview 1, Mattila, 1012).

The most influential role in Mattila's entry narrative, however, was her mother-in-law. "She's a person I look up to. So her opinions are important to me, because she's an important woman and manages to do everything" (Interview 1, Mattila, 1012). Mattila's mother-in-law is an artist and a teacher. "She's always talking about how great it is to be a teacher. Like she's enjoying being a teacher and an artist as well, where she can you know, combine those two things" (Interview 1, Mattila, 1012). It was also her who told Mattila that she "would be a great teacher" and she "should go for that" (Interview 1, Mattila, 1012).

While Mattila was inspired to be a teacher, however, being a teacher in an international school was never her plan. An unexpected phone call came one day and she was asked if she would like to teach in the international school. She recalled that day:

> And I was like, ok fine, I can try that, cause nothing else is coming up and I need the money, so let's go in and let's see what they say. And surprisingly they called me back and said yea they want me here. And I was panicking. (Interview 1, Mattila, 1012).

She was definitely interested in languages but she knew nothing about the English used in the kitchen. The first year was tough when she had to create all the materials in English and study the vocabulary. But she reflected and said "it's been a great experience for me to learn so many new things, so I think I've also been developing a lot" (Interview 1, Mattila, 1012).

Teaching changes

Mattila has experienced changes during her teaching externally, from Finnish speaking schools to the international school and internally, from being stressed and rigid to more flexible.

First, in the external change, as mentioned earlier, it was not Mattila's plan to teach in an international school. From a regular Finnish-speaking school to an English-speaking school was at first not easy to adapt to. After she got admitted, she was panicking because she had no knowledge about the language used in a kitchen. "I didn't know what the whisk is, or spatula or, I just knew fork and knife. And I was like, how am I able to teach in English" (Interview 1, Mattila, 1012). She stayed up late to write the home economics materials in English from scratch; she watched Jamie Oliver's cooking videos; she self-studied the vocabulary used in cooking and kitchen. She passed the language exam required for teaching in English and she was really surprised that she made it. Teaching in an international school is not only about the teachers' English proficiency in their subjects, but also the fact that teachers are both subject and language teachers to the students. "It's a good thing that they require the test so you know as a teacher you have to speak certain level of English to the kids cause they are also here to learn the language" (Interview 1, Mattila, 1012). Although teaching in English was not expected in Mattila's original plan, she was glad that the road had brought her to this school. "It's fun how things can, you know, end up. And now I wouldn't change this, cause every day I think I also learn new things" (Interview 1, Mattila, 1012).

Secondly, Mattila's internal changes were related to her stress and how she had learned to adjust her teaching to different students. When asked if she had any changes compared to the beginning, she replied "I don't stress that much" (Interview 2, Mattila, 1012).

> I've learned to see that there are different individuals in the classroom. There is no one method to all. So I have to adjust my teaching to whoever is here to learn. So I didn't realize that then when I was studying. I probably thought first that the kids were like, a group of people, always the same. (Interview 2, Mattila, 1012).

During the teacher training, she was taught to make lesson plans and carry out the lessons accordingly. In the real classroom setting, however, she found that it never went the exact same way as planned.

She was stressed at first because she thought she had to "follow a certain kind of plan" (Interview 2, Mattila, 1012), but now she can be flexible and "just show up here and see how it goes, which way it goes. It's up to the kids" (Interview 2, Mattila, 1012). Mattila has become an artist and is able to follow the light.

Teaching beliefs

Mattila's teaching beliefs include three main aspects: professional development, team work, and influence on students. First, in Mattila's narrative, she never stopped talking about learning, whether it is about acquiring more professional knowledge in home economics, English ability, or even self-knowledge. A good teacher in her opinion, "knows her business" and "knows the subject" (Interview 1, Mattila, 1012). Home economics is "a subject that's developing all the time" and the teachers need to react to what is happening in different topics. Teaching in an international school also allows her to apply her knowledge and interest in languages. "There are always people who speak English better than me and I also learn from them. So I feel I'm developing also here in that sense" (Interview 1, Mattila, 1012). Mattila gave a very good description about her learning and developing as a teacher all the time:

> Uh, because I see so many different people during a week, I have about 200 students in a week, going through my fingers. So just what they bring in, with everything that they tell me, topics that we discuss with them. There are so many different kinds of aspects to these different kinds of topics. So in that sense, and as I mentioned earlier, how I also learn to be more me in front of these youth. Or these young people who are really like, you now, observing really closely to you. And also of course when I um, well the cooking things, I'm not a master chef, no. It's always my husband who cooks at home (laugh), yea. And also when we make the food here and prepare the foods and everything. I also learn in those processes. I can see things go wrong in so many different ways in here and also from the mistakes, we learn with the students. And also of course the language. Still I feel that I learn English more and more. (Interview 1, Mattila, 1012)

Second, team work is important in teacher development as well. As the only home economics teacher in the school, Mattila mentioned it would be nice to have a colleague in the same field. "Sometimes I feel a bit lonely that I have to do all the decisions about this subject on my own" (Interview 1, Mattila, 1012). Fortunately, there is a community for home economics teachers in the city and she also has a teacher friend in another nearby school to share and discuss. For Mattila, it

seems important to be able to collaborate and share new ideas with one another, since the topic is usually wide and new information develops constantly.

Third, one of the reasons that she wanted to become a teacher is related to making an impact in students' lives. She was enthusiastic about healthy diet and living in her adulthood and she wished that she had already learned about this during her school years. Therefore, she wanted to become influential to her students in healthy lifestyle by being a teacher. Not only so, she believed that students can get successful experiences in her home economics class. "I think that is the kind of power of the subject that even though you do bad in history or bad in math, here, it's really easy to get the, you know, good experiences and succeed in something" (Interview 1, Mattila, 1012). She also understands that her students are going through their puberty and a good teacher should "try to be understandable towards the youth" (Interview 1, Mattila, 1012), and be "empathic" (Interview 2, Mattila, 1012). From the students' feedback, Mattila could feel that the students enjoy her classes and are willing to open up to her. "I think that it's lovely to be an important adult in somebody's life, if I can" (Interview 1, Mattila, 1012). Her good relationship with the students is built easily right from the beginning when the subject itself is already interesting. Mattila also likes to have freedom in her classroom.

> They can move. They can dance. They can talk. Sometimes we even listen to music with the older kids. And it's lovely to have that kind of atmosphere that they can also feel that they can you know, open up to me. (Interview 1, Mattila, 1012)

The relationship with the students is not unidirectional. While her students enjoy freedom from her class, Mattila also has gained a lot from her students. For example, she has received positive energy from her students.

> Um well the children are, the students are so kind of...not sarcastic or not tired of life, or you know, sometimes adults are that they kind of see only the negative sides of things. 97% of the students are, you know, open up to life. And I just love being around with that kind of people who think the best, think that they can do it. (Interview 1, Mattila, 1012)

Her students also taught her how to be more genuine.

> And also it's lovely that you know, kids notice when you're not being yourself, when you're not being real. When you start to act like, now I'm this teacher or you know, you have that kind of role. If you put a role, they see immediately. So you can't be nothing else than yourself here.

And at first. I think I've also like, evolved in that, like I dare to be me, with all my flaws and all my good things and bad things. So it's not a problem to me to say to the kids that "Yea I blew it" or "I forgot it" or "I don't know." So yea. So yea, you can't put up a role here. I think that's lovely. It kind of pressures me to be genuine. (Interview 1, Mattila, 1012)

Teaching has been a wonderful experience for Mattila and she said it multiple times in her narrative that she really loves the job.

Identity conflicts

Identity conflicts happened when Mattila had to perform differently than what she wanted to be as a teacher. She recalled the only time when a student accused her of being "unfair" and "too strict to him" (Interview 2, Mattila, 1012). It was certainly in contrast with what she sees herself, "honest and fair," "layback," and "empathic" (Interview 2, Mattila, 1012). However, seeing the student also having similar conflicts with other teachers, she concluded that he might just be having a hard time in his puberty. She did not linger on the feedback for long.

Sometimes Mattila faced the struggles when some students interrupted the class too much and she had to punish them. This is when the identity conflict occurs.

I would not like to be in that position where I have to be so super strict. But of course, I have to be strict in that sense so that everybody has the opportunity to be heard and be able to hear. (Interview 2, Mattila, 1012)

When the disciplinary punishment is needed, although it is against her personality and belief, she still gives the necessary punishment to maintain the fairness to the whole class. She stays fair to the general public and imposes reasonable punishment.

4.3   Discussion

4.3.1 Identity as a narrative and identity conflict revisit

The current study adopts the definition of identity as a narrative. It is "a set of reifying, significant, endorsable stories about a person" (Sfard & Prusak, 2005, p.14). In addition, identity is also "an ongoing process of negotiating and interrelating multiple I-positions in such a way that a more or less coherent and consistent sense of self is maintained throughout various participations and self-investments in one's (working) life" (Akkerman & Meijer, 2011, p.315). In this study, the six teachers

talked about their teacher narratives and these stories are seen as their identities of being teachers. They have developed their teaching believes, and encountered changes in the career, both internally or externally. They also expressed their sense of achievement in teaching. The narratives of these teachers provide multifaceted pictures of what teachers experience during their teaching.

The aim of the study is to understand what identity conflicts in-service teachers have. Identity conflict, according to Hirsh and Kang (2016), is "perceived incompatibilities between two or more of an individual's identity domains" (p.223). In the current study, the identity conflicts were identified from the teachers' narratives where they expressed their struggles in two or more different positions. When they discussed some difficulties they faced, they often talked about the situation, what they thought about it, and what they did in the situation. Hirsh and Kang's identity conflict mechanism was used to understand how these teachers managed identity conflicts. The four strategies that individuals might apply include: (1) suppressing a conflicting identity, (2) enhancing a dominant identity, (3) avoidance and denial of identity conflict, and (4) integration of conflicting identities.

The following two sections provide answers to the two research questions. First, based on the six teachers' narratives, identity conflicts that were identified will be discussed. Second, the teachers' solutions and responses to those conflicts will be presented.

4.3.2 What identity conflicts did the teachers experience?

The identity conflicts the teachers in the current study have experienced can be divided into two types. The first type is related to teachers' personal core value or the ideal teacher they expect themselves to be. The second is related to whether it is within the same domain or different domains.

The first type is the majority type of identity conflicts these teachers encountered. The teachers' ideal is in conflict with three entities, including their actual behaviors, the environment and context, and the other stakeholders' values. In the first category, these teachers had an idea of what kind of teacher they want to be but in reality, they are doing differently from what they thought they would have done (Table 4-1). Mattila and Virtanen thought of themselves as teachers who are not too strict and caring, but in the classroom settings, sometimes they have to be strict and discipline the students when necessary. Virtanen also mentioned that she expected all her lessons to be well-designed, but occasionally she could not carry out the same quality of lessons as she expected. Li mentioned her struggle of having to pick out the students' faults all the time while she did not want to do it as a teacher.

Table 4-1
Ideal vs. reality

Ideal	Reality	Teacher
Not too strict	Had to discipline students	Mattila
Caring	Had to discipline students	Virtanen
Always have good lesson plan	Sometimes there are bad days	Virtanen
Good teacher	Always picking out students' faults	Li

The second category of conflict arises when the teachers' ideal and values are in dissonance with the environment and context culture (Table 4-2). As summarized in the table, Cai's own value does not celebrate the exam-oriented and competitive culture but she had to face this while working in the school environment. Zhang, similarly believes that math would be very much interesting and enjoyable when there is no pressure of exams. It is self-evident that this category is only seen in Taiwanese teachers' experiences, where they have to ensure they finish teaching certain chapters before the term exams.

Table 4-2
Ideal vs. environment and context

Ideal	Environment and context	Teacher
Own value	Exam and competitive culture	Cai
Math should be fun	Drills and exams	Zhang

The third category of conflict occurs when other's value is in conflict with the teachers' own values about a certain area (Table 4-3). For example, Cai and Li both encountered parents who have very different educational beliefs from theirs. Wang received negative opinions from other teachers who had different teaching values from hers. Zhang's value of how students should behave is in conflict with how they are behaving. He also experienced discordance when parents made special request for their children, while he wanted to maintain fairness to the whole class. This category is also unique to Taiwanese teachers. Neither of the two Finnish teachers mentioned others' opinions. While it is not the current study's interest and aim to compare teachers from the two countries. The results still reflect moderately the cultural and contextual differences in these two countries.

Table 4-3
Own value vs. other stakeholders' value

Own value	Other stakeholders' value	Teacher
Own educational value	Parents' educational value	Cai
Own educational value	Other teachers' opinions and jealousy	Wang
Own educational value	Parents and students' value	Li
Own value of how students should behave	Students' behavioral value	Zhang
Own educational value of treating every student equally	Parents' request for their own children	Zhang

The second type of identity conflicts is related to whether the conflict happens within the same domain or different ones. The within-domain category of conflicts are those that happen in the teaching profession, while the different-domain category is the one that involves more than one domain, for instance, work and private domains. The teachers encountered conflicts in their professional domain especially when it comes to balancing between teaching and administrative work. Cai, as a representative of all the other teachers often struggles between the limited time she had for her own class and the work she had to put into public affairs. Li, likewise, is often appointed as head of administrative sectors, although she would prefer teaching to administrative work. This type of conflict is also unique to Taiwanese teachers since it is very common that teachers in Taiwan also have to take part in administrative work such as working in the Office of Student Affairs, Office of Academic Affairs, Office of General Affairs or Counselor's Office.

In addition to conflicts resulted from administrative work, a special case of identity conflict of this type comes from Wang's narrative. She is both a counselling and Chinese teacher and initially, she had difficulty in accepting herself as a Chinese teacher whose major was actually counselling. This is a very individual case but worth mentioning because it is very often that humans have versatile aptitudes and teachers can be working in multiple fields in their teaching career.

Table 4-4
Within-domain conflicts

Teaching	Administration work	Teacher

Spend time with own class	Work for public affairs	Cai
Teaching	Administrative duty	Li

One subject	Another subject	Teacher
Counseling teacher	Chinese teacher	Wang

The second category of conflicts are those that happen when different domains are involved, especially between work life and private life (Table 4-5). Virtanen acknowledged the importance of more collaboration between teachers, but since personal time is equally important, she found it difficult to make extra time for discussion with other teachers. Zhang, while considering his teaching timetable, he thought of whether the arrangement was for the students' benefits or for his personal convenience. For Wang, it has happened that her effort was mostly dedicated to her students and the school and she could not have the same time and energy for her own children.

Table 4-5
Conflicts occurred from different domains

Work	Private	Teacher
Team work is important	Personal time is precious	Virtanen
Students' benefits	Personal convenience	Zhang
Work life	Family	Wang

The identity conflicts found in the present study share many similarities as the reviewed literature. The teachers have coexisting identities that they switch at times as seen in Søreide (2006). They sometimes struggle between their actual identity and designated identity as in Liu and Xu (2011), or between the outer and inner expectations as in Berg (2013). Sometimes the expectations come from parents, other teachers, or the school. Some teachers have different values from the schools' culture and thus results in dissonance between one and institution as in Hamilton (2010). While conflicts are very personal and unique to each teacher, there are some areas where conflicts are likely to happen, such as between one's ideal and how the students, their parents, other teachers or the school environment interact with the teacher in the reality. Conflicts come from other domains as well, such as the teachers' private and personal life.

4.3.3 How did the teachers experience their identity conflicts?

The second research question is the main purpose of the study, to understand how teachers experience their identity conflicts and if they have successfully solved them, what actions were taken. The results can be seen from a spectrum (Figure 4-1), where one end is the teacher's core value and belief, and the other end is putting down their ideal and to go with the flow. Each solution will be further discussed in this section.

Core value, ideal   Understanding, acceptance   Keep both   Go with the flow

Figure 4-1 *Responses to identity conflicts*

The most common solution or response to identity conflict is to resort to one's core value as a teacher. Some teachers call on the existing core values to solve the conflict (Table 4-6). For them, it is the highest principle to solve the conflicts. Having a superordinate belief that helps centralize one's identity when having conflicts seems to be a common strategy for these teachers. When the teachers did not have a core value that they could resort to, they may as well reconstruct and create something new (Table 4-7).

Table 4-6
Resort to existing core values

Conflict	Solution	Teacher
Other teachers' negative opinion and jealousy vs. her own belief	Keeps her own value	Wang
Parents' individual request vs. fairness to the whole class	Students are the priority	Zhang
His own personal convenience in teaching timetable vs students' benefits	Students are the priority	Zhang
Be strict and discipline students vs. not too strict	Maintain the fairness to all the students	Mattila
Other parents' value vs. her own belief	Keeps her own value	Li

Table 4-7
Find out the core values

Conflict	Solution	Teacher
Her own value vs. exam-oriented, competitive school environment	Finding out what kind of teacher she wants to be	Cai
Her own value vs. a stereotypical image of teacher picking out students' faults	Seeing the positive side of the students instead	Li
Counseling teacher vs. inferior Chinese teacher	Being a Chinese teacher with counseling skills	Wang
Ideal teacher with good lessons vs. some bad teaching days	Accepting oneself to be human and have ups and downs	Virtanen

Through a core identity (Gee, 2000), the teachers were able to overcome the conflicts. The importance of a core identity can be seen in the narratives of these teachers. Identity is fluid, however, when conflicts occur, it is helpful to have a stable identity to hold on to. Sometimes the core identity had been established before they encountered a conflict, the teachers could then utilize the core identity as a guideline to negotiate in the conflicting situation. Sometimes, however, the core value was not ready when the conflict arouses, the teachers had to create a new identity that they can resort to. For example, by redefining oneself as a teacher, by changing a perspective, or accepting one's weakness. This finding is close to the strategy of integration of conflicting identities defined by Hirsh and Kang (2016), that is, a "superordinate integrated identity structure" (p.236). Resorting to a core identity, however, is not having a complete integration of the conflicting identities. Hence, in this paper, this strategy will be named as "semi-integration of conflicting identities." By evaluating the conflict, the teachers did not deny or avoid the conflict but were able to make the decisions that were the best for them at that time based on the higher level of identity.

The second solution resonates with the strategy of "integration of conflicting identities." In this paper, the teachers who used this strategy demonstrated a sense of "understanding" and "acceptance" (Table 4-8). When facing a conflict, the teachers not only resorted to their core identity, but also took the conflicting scenario into account, and adjusted their original identity for a better outcome. The teachers who used this strategy are willing to look at the conflict with an open mind and they are more flexible to negotiate in different situations. As mentioned earlier, the strategy of integration of conflicting identities requires more effort but often yields a better result. Individuals with higher level of Openness are more likely to develop integrated identities (Benet-Martínez & Haritatos, 2005, as cited in Hirsh & Kang, 2016).

Table 4-8
Understanding and acceptance

Conflict	Solution	Teacher
Students' behaviors vs. what he believes to be good behaviors	Understand the generation difference, and revise his previous expectation	Zhang
Parents' educational values vs. her own values	Accept the difference, try to convince the parents with actions	Cai

The third action that teachers in this study took was to keep the conflicting identities without further action (Table 4-9). It seems that the conflict still exists but the teachers just accepted the fact and kept moving forward in life. In Hirsh and Kang's terminology, this strategy might be similar to avoidance or denial of identity conflict, where the individuals separate the conflicting identities and deal with one at a time. Although it may not sound positive, this strategy reflects the reality that sometimes teachers do not have the power to control everything. Instead of putting oneself in negativity all the time, what they can do is to accept the fact and do their best. As Søreide (2006) and Hamilton (2010) suggested, the occurrence of different identities and dissonance is not always negative. It also shows the opportunity and flexibility of teachers' journey of identity construction and negotiation.

Table 4-9
Keep the conflicting identities

Conflict	Solution	Teacher
Work vs. family	It was difficult to balance both but she somehow managed it	Wang
Public affairs vs. spend time with the class	Accept it and hope the situation will change	Cai
No too strict vs. discipline students	Walk out of the classroom to calm herself first	Virtanen
Administrative work vs. teaching	Accept that the principal wants her to be in the administrative position and enjoy teaching a few classes	Li

The last reaction towards identity conflicts the teachers have shown is the strategy of "go with the flow" (Table 4-10). The teachers have their ideals but in fact, instead of following their ideal values, they are conforming to the reality. They believe there is a better way to do something but in

reality, they are doing differently. This strategy coincides with what Hirsh and Kang has termed, either enhancing a conflicting identity or suppressing a conflicting identity, because one identity is given higher value than the other. In the two cases found in this study, the strategies involved are closer to suppressing the teachers' ideal and go with the acceptable values in the reality.

Table 4-10
Go with the flow

Conflict	Solution	Teacher
Math is fun vs. drills and practice for exams	Teach in order to match with the exams	Zhang
Should allocate more time for teamwork with other teachers vs. little energy and inconvenience for others	Stay with the time for teamwork allocated by school	Virtanen

By collecting teachers' narratives, their identity conflicts and how they experienced and reacted to them could be found. The answers to both research questions are presented in Figure 4-2. The conflicts these teachers have encountered include those against their ideal self, such as the reality, the environment, and other stakeholders' values. Their conflicts also came from within the teaching domain, such as the balance between teaching job and administrative work or struggles between one and the other subject. Conflicts might occur in different domains as well, especially between work life and private life. To manage these conflicts, the teachers applied various solutions. The most common one is to resort to their core values. Some took a further step and integrate others' values into their own identity with understanding and acceptance. It is possible that sometimes teachers chose to retain the conflicting identities and only dealt with one identity at a time. Finally, sometimes teachers would follow the given situation instead of fulfilling their own ideals. Regardless of what strategy the teachers in this research chose to use when facing conflicts, they have managed to stay in their profession with passion and high sense of achievement.
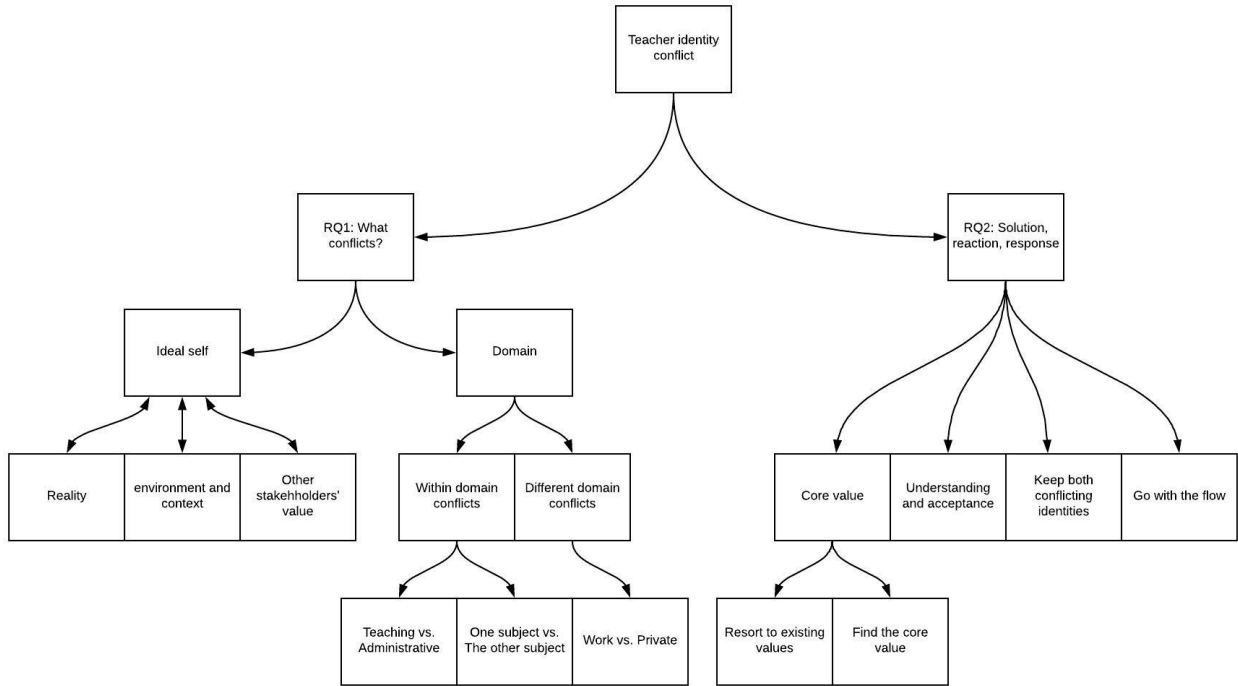
Figure 4-2 *Teacher identity conflicts and the reactions*

5 IMPLICATIONS AND CONCLUSION

5.1 Summary of the study

The motivation of the present study comes from my personal experience. Due to the identity conflict I encountered during my teaching practice, I have developed interest in the topic of teacher identity and teacher identity conflict. During the studies in Finland, I have learned more about identity and identity as a narrative. The birth of this study is thus a reunion of personal experience in identity conflict, and academic interest in identity as a narrative. This study set off in search of a possible answer to my own problem and the results will further be useful for others who are going through similar process or are willing to understand more.

The two research questions that guided this study are:

1.   What identity conflicts did the teachers experience?

2.   How did the teachers experience their identity conflicts?

To answer these research questions, the first step was to define teacher identity and identity conflict. Since identity is such a fuzzy term, a clarification is given right from the beginning. This study adopts identity as a narrative for this topic. Identity is understood as unified by a "core identity" (Gee, 2000) in spite of its fluidity and dynamics. Through narrative, not only are multiple identities held together (Akkerman & Meijer, 2011), and vice versa, these stories are the manifestation of one's identity. Previous literature has investigated teacher identity using narrative inquiry (Berg, 2013; Bullough, 2015; Hamilton, 2010; Liu & Xu, 2011; Olsen, 2008; Rytivaara, 2012; Søreide, 2006; Watson, 2009). However, few of them discussed how teachers manage their identity conflicts.

The six teachers who participated in the research have six different narratives, which shows the uniqueness of each identity. Wang told a story of the love she has for her students; Zhang's narrative demonstrates his core value of student-centeredness; Cai presented her struggle to position herself in a rather exam-oriented environment; Li illustrated her hopes for a better human education; Virtanen's narrative shows her acceptance of herself as a human being; and Mattila shared how teaching is also learning. None of them had a direct and certain goal to become a teacher, but all of them ended up in the field, feeling passionate and satisfied.

The whole picture of teaching as a profession is positive for all of them. In their narratives, however, they have encountered some difficulties that are in conflict with their identities. These findings are the answers to the first research question. They have experienced conflicts that do not match their core values or their ideal. They might have to cope with the reality, adjust to the environment, and take other stakeholders into consideration. Sometimes these conflicts are within the same teaching domain; sometimes they occur beyond the field and clash with the private and personal domain. The teachers developed various strategies when managing these conflicts. These are the answers to the second research question. The strategies are analyzed and compared with the categories proposed by Hirsh and Kang (2016). In the current study, four types of strategies are identified. The teachers might resort to their core value, either by utilizing their existing ones or developing a new one. This type is close to but not entirely the same as "integration of conflicting identities." They also solved the conflict by understanding and acceptance, which is similar to "integration of conflicting identities." Sometimes the teachers might choose to retain the conflicting identities and segregate them to avoid conflict. This is similar to "avoidance or denial of conflicting identities." Finally, teacher sometimes chose to go with the flow instead of holding to their ideal identity, which is similar to "suppressing a conflicting identity."

5.2   Implications

The study aims at presenting teachers' identity conflict stories, especially with the intention to show how they overcame the difficulties and continued to thrive in their teaching career. One of the most important findings is the benefit of having a core identity to support oneself when one is facing identity conflicts. For student teachers who are taking courses and doing teaching practice, it is beneficial for them at this time to observe, discuss and develop their own beliefs as a teacher. They can talk with their fellow classmates, their teachers, and their mentors in the practice schools. Through reflections, discussion and dialogues, it helps to build and construct a suitable identity for them. For teacher educators, it is important to recognize that their students might face certain conflicts later in the teaching. Building a core identity, and having openness and flexibility are important skills that they could help their students to develop. For in-service teachers who might be facing some identity conflicts now, this suggestion can serve as a reminder for them to reflect on what their core value is in terms of their profession.

Another implication is that although an integration of conflicting identities is seen as the best solution, it does not mean successful and happy teachers are always able to do so. Sometimes they might stay in the conflict and let time lessen the burden, or they might even choose the easier way

instead of having to achieve their ideal. As what Virtanen said in the narrative, she faces conflicts every day, but if she only evaluates herself by the things she did not achieve, it would be too overwhelming. She accepts herself as simply a human and she becomes less stressful. Identity conflicts are not merely evil, they also play a role in assisting the teachers to find a more suitable and comfortable stance in their teaching life. Although most of us do not want to encounter situations that causes stress and conflicts, understanding the positive sides of these challenges might help us manage the conflicts in a more efficient way.

Lastly, conducting a narrative study on teacher identity adds values to both the researcher and the interviewees, in addition to the contribution to the literature. As mentioned in Horsdal (2017), researchers gain from every narrative a new perspective. They realize the pitfall and ignorance of simple generalization. By narrating and constructing their own stories, the interviewees also "benefit from the possibility of reflection" (p.269). This statement resonates with some of the teachers in the current study who expressed their appreciation in having the opportunity to reflect on their teaching lives.

5.3   Limitations and suggestions for future research

Limitations of this study are mostly due to the scope and nature of the research. Qualitative research and narrative data alike are usually faced with criticism of failing to reach generalization or validity. This section lists the limitations and the recognition of them while adapting a narrative inquiry to study teacher identity conflicts.

First, the present study includes six participants to elicit rich data by conducting biographic narrative interviews. The depth and richness of the narrative data depend on each participant. The participants were the storytellers who decided what to say and what not to. In addition, it is often difficult to include many interviewees due to the complexity and thick data elicited from narrative data (Kalekin-Fishman, 2017). In the current study, the subject size is limited and cannot represent all the conflicts and strategies teachers might encounter in their teaching career. A larger participant number or a prolonged research timeframe can provide more informative and richer results. However, whether or not by doing so could capture *every* identity conflict and strategy is questionable, and thus this is not the focus of the current study.

Secondly, the data collection relies simply on the biographic narrative interviews. A design that combines more data collection sources, such as journals may be better to improve the triangulation of the data and provide multiple facets to the teacher identity narratives. The purpose of the study is

not to collect objective narratives of the teachers, however, but to include the voice of the narrators and their selection of narratives. This is mentioned in Munro (1998) as she reflected:

> I know that I cannot 'collect' a life. Narrative does not provide a better way to locate truth, but in fact reminds us that all good stories are predicated on the quality of the fiction. We live many lives…we need to attend to the silences as well as what is said, that we need to attend to how the story is told as well as what is told or not told, and to attend to the tensions and contradictions rather than succumb to the temptations to gloss over these in our desire for 'the' story. (p. 12-13)

Narratives and life stories are never objective. They are interpreted by their narrators (Goodson, 2017). They are subjective and deliberate production of the narrators' lived experiences.

The third limitation comes from the researcher's own limited experience. As a novice researcher who used biographic narrative method in the research for the first time, it would have been more reliable if I have conducted a pilot interview with teachers who I would not have included in my study.

Future research could include a larger participant number, a prolonged research timeframe, and add more data collection sources. The present study has provided some preliminary insight into what teachers do when it comes to overcoming identity conflicts and more research could be done on this topic to benefit future teachers in achieving a happy and gratifying teaching career.

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