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CENTRE FOR APPLIED LINGUISTICS

THE UNIVERSITY OF WARWICK

Thesis submitted in fulfillment of requirement for the degree of
PhD in English Language Teaching and Applied Linguistics

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Experience of and support for beginning English teachers:

A qualitative Hong Kong case study

Volume 2 of 2

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Declaration

I declare that this thesis is my own work and has not been submitted for a degree at another university.

Name: _____

Signature: _____

Date: _____

List of Abbreviation definitions

| | |
|-------|--|
| ACTEQ | Advisory Committee on Teacher Education and Qualifications |
| CPD | Continuing Professional Development |
| CUHK | Chinese University of Hong Kong |
| CV | Curriculum Vitae |
| HK | Hong Kong |
| HKALE | Hong Kong Advanced Level Examination |
| HKBU | Hong Kong Baptist University |
| HKCEE | Hong Kong Certificate of Education Examination |
| HKDSE | Hong Kong Diploma of Secondary Education |
| HKIEd | Hong Kong Institute of Education |
| HKU | Hong Kong University |
| ICR | Induction Completion Reference |
| ITT | Initial teacher training |
| LPAT | Language Proficiency Assessment for Teachers |
| LPR | Language proficiency requirement |
| MOI | Medium of instruction |
| NSS | New Senior Secondary |
| NQTs | Newly Qualified Teachers |
| PISA | Programme for International Student Assessment |
| PLC | Professional learning community |
| RD | Research Diary |
| TCF | Teacher Competencies Framework |
| TS | Transcript |

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Abstract

This thesis reports on qualitative case study research into the experience of six novice English teachers in Hong Kong (HK). It describes their perceived experience, particularly the problems and challenges they encountered, as well as the induction and mentoring support they received during the first year of teaching. While the benefits of different forms of induction support (mentoring in particular) have been established, few studies have focused on specific factors that affect the perceived effectiveness of mentoring, from the point of view of both the mentors and the mentees. The current study therefore breaks new ground in investigating the perspectives of different stakeholders in the mentoring process. What is more, the majority of research reports the nature of the first year of teaching in one snapshot, often not paying attention to the professional development and changes throughout the year. The study follows a group of novice language teachers for the whole of their first year in teaching.

The purpose of the case study is to give voice to the perspectives of individual novice teachers within the complex wider sociocultural context that these teachers have to negotiate. Consequently, the thesis begins by establishing key aspects of the HK context that impact on the experience of HK teachers and especially that of novice teachers in their first year. It then provides a literature review that details important contributions to

an international understanding of induction and mentoring, as well as relating these to the specific HK situation. After presenting the research methodology and the issues involved, the thesis provides a discussion that both details the needs and challenges of the six participating novices and investigates the provision and perception of school-based induction and mentoring, as well as the roles these mechanisms play in their professional development, support and socialisation.

As a subsidiary research question, the project also investigates whether and how the Induction Tool Kit (ACTEQ, 2009), the first official document supporting HK schools in providing support for beginning teachers, is used in schools the participants teach in. It also examines how challenges of first-year teachers, support for them, and professional development are understood by ACTEQ, the commission that advises the HK government on teacher education and development policies, manifested in the design and language of the tool kit. These are compared to the actual experience of the participating novices in the case study.

The thesis concludes by suggesting the implications of the findings, as well as providing recommendations on how ACTEQ, teacher-training universities and schools can better support novice English language teachers and their mentors. The limitations of the

project and ways of disseminating the findings will also be discussed after outlining these contributions.

Chapter 1

Introduction

Has there been anyone in your personal and professional life to whom you've regularly turned for advice and support? Someone who has had a significant and positive impact on your career as an educator? A caring co-worker you might even call your 'mentor'? Many veteran teachers were never actually assigned a mentor. If they were lucky, they found informal assistance from experienced co-workers. Many think back to their first year in the classroom and remember the confusions of a difficult and lonely time when no one came to their aid. Fortunately, times are changing. (Jonson, 2008: ix)

1.1 Introduction

Educational researchers and educators have always been asking how we can teach better and how the learners can learn better, and the quality of education much depends on the quality of the teaching profession (ACTEQ, 2008b). Before teachers begin teaching, they undergo their initial training, but new teachers are not finished products; they have 'legitimate learning needs that cannot be grasped in advance or outside the contexts of teaching' (Feiman-Nemser, 2003: 26). However, at the same time, in many parts of the world, they are faced with the same responsibilities as their experienced colleagues', right from the first day of work.

The early years of teaching are therefore a special as well as challenging time in a teacher's career. Successful experiences at this stage can 'enhance their commitment, enthusiasm and positive feelings about the profession and equip

them better to meet the increasing demands as their careers progress’, and also ‘help retain early-career teachers in the profession’ (ACTEQ, 2009: 1). In order to support beginning teachers to achieve success at the initial stage, schools have different arrangements for induction and mentoring support for beginning teachers, and these are getting more common. As Feiman-Nemser (2010: 15) contends, ‘[i]nterest in supporting and assisting beginning teachers is currently on the upswing, motivated by concerns about teacher retention and teacher quality. These systems vary in terms of duration, purposes and components, and the new teachers’ induction experiences depend on many factors, such as how educational leaders and policy makers understand the learning needs of the novices (Feiman-Nemser, *op. cit.*). In Hong Kong (HK) particularly, there is no centrally organized or mandated induction program for new teachers. Instead, individual schools may conduct their own programs (Stoel & Thant, 2002).

The current study focuses on the experience of and support for first-year English teachers in HK. This chapter presents the background and overview of the research project. It will start with the motivation behind carrying out the study. I will then briefly discuss the research focus and methods, and end with a description of how the thesis is going to be structured.

1.2 Motivation for the Study

My interest in researching support for novice teachers, particularly in the form of mentoring, began in my master's studies in the Centre for Applied Linguistics (then called Centre for English Language Teacher Education) in the University of Warwick in 2007. I explored different issues of mentoring in the Teacher Training module assignment, and realised how important mentoring (and also other forms of support) was in the socialisation and professional development of new teachers. At the same I was aware of the very many factors and even potential problems affecting its perceived effectiveness.

On a more personal level I was one of teachers who was left to 'sink or swim' when I first started teaching. As an English teacher who did not receive any pre-service training (I was trained after I had started teaching) and taught in a school with a lot of learning motivational and behavioural problems, I was struggling not only in my first but indeed the first few years of teaching; I always found myself secretly relieved when the most disruptive students were absent. I was also swamped by the amount of lesson planning and marking, let alone dealing with other subject and administrative matters. There was not a single day at the end of which I felt I had finished what I needed to. Even to this day I always wonder how my early career years would have

been different if there were an induction scheme and a mentor supporting me. I therefore continued pursuing this investigation into how different stakeholders (particularly that of experienced teachers who had been mentors) viewed the practice and usefulness of mentoring in pre-service teacher education in my master thesis.

Then, two important texts came out, coincidentally, when I was preparing for my PhD proposal (which was about teacher education and development anyway) in 2008. The first one was the long-awaited first official (yet voluntary) Induction Tool Kit (2008a) in HK. After three years' piloting, the tool kit, which included a package of integrated programmes designed for school-based support for beginning teachers was published and made available for all primary and secondary schools at the start of the school year 2008/09. It aims to support schools in setting up a 'system of teacher induction in order to provide their beginning teachers with a systematic, supportive and comprehensive environment conducive to their professional development' (ACTEQ, 2008a). I believed it would be an excellent time to find out what it actually comprised of and how it was received in schools, and of course its relationship with novice teachers' actual induction experience.

The other was the book 'Novice Language Teachers: Insights and Perspectives for the First Year' (2008), a collection of studies on novice teachers' experience, specifically that of language teachers, edited by Thomas Farrell. On the one hand, I was intrigued by how the experiences of the teachers, regardless of their contexts, echoed that of my own first year of teaching. On the other, I could not agree more when the editor says,

Although the first year of teaching has been well documented in general education research, few detailed studies outlining the experiences of language teachers in their first year of teaching have been documented in the language education literature. This is surprising because, as some scholars have suggested, to establish an effective knowledge base for second/foreign language teacher education, educators must have some understanding of schools, schooling and the social and cultural contexts in which learning how to teach takes place. (p. 4)

Being a novice language teacher teaching in an English-as-a-second-language classroom indeed has its own unique challenges, but this had not been examined nor addressed in the field of teacher development until recent years. I decided to embark on a project that attempted to gain insights into the experience of beginning in-service English teachers, in the HK context where the government and educators had just

begun to recognise the importance of induction support, reflected in the publication of the tool kit.

1.3 Research Focus and Methods

The current research project is a case study of six novice English teachers (4 Secondary and 2 Primary) in HK. As well as the specific needs and challenges they experienced in the first year, the study aims to examine the different forms of support available for them and the perceived effects they had on the teachers' experience and professional development. This is done from the perspectives of both the mentors and the mentees, and in relation to the unique English language teaching environment in HK. The purpose is to give voice to their perspectives within the complex wider sociocultural context that the new teachers have to negotiate. How the Induction Tool Kit designed by the Advisory Committee on Teacher Education and Qualification (ACTEQ) (2008a, 2009) aforementioned was used by the participants' schools is also investigated. Contents of the tool kit related to needs of beginning teachers, support for them and their professional development are analysed and compared to the findings of the case study.

In order to capture the complexity of their induction experience I adopt a qualitative

inquiry approach. This research method also allows deep understanding of both the underlying processes and different perspectives. The case study method is also able to track complex social phenomena in a way that ‘cannot be adequately researched in any of the other common research methods’ (van Lier, 2005:195). Through a rigorous thematic analysis, the study aims to provide an in-depth insight into complicated situated and social issues involved in providing support for a novice teacher. The main research methods include interviews with novices and some of their mentors, lesson observations and school visits, a focus group at the end of the school year, and content analysis of the induction tool kit and other school-based induction documents.

1.4 Structure of the thesis

This thesis outlines the details of the contextual and literature background, as well as the theoretical support and methodological procedures of the above research project. It also reports the findings and discusses their implications. Apart from the present Chapter (Chapter 1) which is an introduction, the thesis consists of eight other chapters. Chapter 2 describes the education system and the teacher training and development in HK. This aims to provide a general picture of what teaching and becoming a teacher in HK is like. Chapter 3 is a literature review of previous work on concepts related to my project, and details significant studies that have informed the

current study. It also points out niches in the literature the current project aims to fill. Chapter 4 outlines the theoretical and methodological underpinnings of my study, as well as the details and procedures of the methods of inquiry and analysis. The findings and discussion of the case study are presented in Chapters 5 and 6, with the former focusing on the participants' perceived needs and challenges and the latter on the support elements and their relationship with the novices' perceived development. How the two relate, that is, how effective different types of support, most of them school-based, respond to the needs and difficulties of the new teachers and in turn affect their professional development will also be explored. Chapter 7 is dedicated to the analysis of the Induction Tool Kit and how it compares to the actual experience of the case study participants. Chapter 8 is a summary of the main findings and their implications, based on which I will make recommendations related to mentoring and support. The chapter also discusses the limitations of the study as well as opportunities for further research and investigation in the area of early-career teacher development. Finally Chapter 9 is a conclusion of the whole study.

Chapter 2

Context

The Hong Kong society has been experiencing numerous challenges of a great transformation due to the fast changing and competitive economic environment in the Asia-Pacific Region as well as the political transition in July 1997 from being a British colony to a Special Administrative Region (SAR) of China. In such as context, policy-makers and the public had new and high expectations of the role and functions of school education. (Cheng, 2009: 66)

2.1 Education system in Hong Kong

In studying the life of novice teachers in HK, it is essential to begin with understanding the HK education system, as it has a strong relationship with teacher education and development. New teachers are faced with this context that they are about to teach in, and for most of them this is also the environment in which they are schooled and trained as teachers. The education system is thus closely linked to a teacher's life – their attitudes, beliefs, behaviours, emotions and identities.

Being a British ex-colony, HK has an education system similar to the British in terms of the academic structure and English was once used as the MOI in most schools. Yet, reforms have been put forward both before and after the transfer of sovereignty to the People's Republic of China in 1997 and changes in both the education structure and language policy have been seen since 2000. These reform initiatives have huge implications on every aspect of HK teachers' professional life. They might impact on

the way they see themselves as teachers as well as on their teaching and learning, especially for those who were themselves schooled in the traditional mode where teaching was only 'chalk and talk' and now need to step into classrooms where they are expected to teach differently. At the same they also mean challenges for the teachers as the changes require a teaching force with increasing sophistication in professional knowledge and skills. The impacts of the reforms on teaching will be discussed in detail below.

2.1.1 Academic structure

Under the past education system which resembled the British system, children were schooled 6 years in primary school and 7 years in secondary school. In secondary school they went through three phases including 3 years in junior secondary (Secondary 1-3), 2 years in senior secondary (S. 4-5, similar to GCSE) and 2 years matriculation (S. 6-7, similar to A-levels).

Primary and junior secondary education was made free by the government to all children attending public sector schools in 1978 (Education Bureau, 2009a; Chan and Leung, 1997). Senior secondary education, though not compulsory, has been made increasingly universal. For instance, the number of students sitting the HK Advanced

Level Examination (HKALE) (the examination at the end of senior secondary education) in 1996 was about 30,000, which is almost three times the figure for 1980, and the number further increased to about 38,200 in 2008 (HK Examinations and Assessment Authority, 2009). In fact, starting from the 2008/09 school year, both senior secondary education through public schools as well as full-time courses run by the Vocational Training Council for Secondary 3 leavers as an alternative avenue outside mainstream education are provided free. In other words, free and universal education now lasts from Primary One to Secondary Seven. In 2008-09, education actually accounted for 23.3% of the total public expenditure (Information Services Department, 2009a). There is no doubt that education is one of the government's priorities (Cheng, 2004), and trained English teachers are therefore of high demand.

2.1.2 Education Reform and its impacts on teachers

With efforts detailed above, by the beginning of the 21st century the HK government had achieved major quantitative targets, such as providing primary and secondary schooling for all children mentioned earlier. Since the 1990s, it has started to make a qualitative transition (Bray and Koo, 2004), focusing on the quality of education it provides. The most significant recent development has been the Education Bureau's endorsement of a major recommendation made by the Education Commission, who

advises the government on the overall development of education in the light of the community's need (Education Commission, 2009a), regarding reforming the education system in HK in 2000. The reform proposal, called 'Learning for Life, Learning Through Life – Reform Proposals for the Education System in HK', aims at enabling 'every person to attain all-round development' and 'to be capable of life-long learning' (Education Commission, 2001: 4). This proposal seeks to address issues in the system namely examinations-driven learning, monotonous school life and the lack of room for students to think, explore and create.

These problems have actually been confirmed by other scholars. For example, Ho's (2003) report on the HK education system based on the renowned international test, the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA), which compares the level of knowledge and skills the 15-year-olds in 40 countries/regions have acquired, suggests similar challenges for HK educators. The report finds that HK students, despite ranking among the first five in Mathematics, Reading and Problem-solving, are among the lowest in terms of sense of belonging to the school. Teachers' morale and teacher-student relationship are also far below the averages. It can therefore be said that HK has a high-quality education system in terms of student performance as reflected from international comparative data (McGaw, 2006), but schools fail to

engage and motivate students (Ho, op. cit.). Students have high attendance (as in being present in school days) but do not enjoy school (ibid). Ho (2003: 4) describes this as strong 'learning norms' and not 'caring norm' for the long-term well-being of the youngsters. This explains why the Education Commission hopes to develop a system that is student-focussed, providing a variety of curricula to cater for students' aptitude and abilities, offering all-round and balanced learning opportunities, and laying the foundation for lifelong learning (Education Commission, 2001).

The 2000 Reform document also examined the feasibility of implementing a 3-year structure for senior secondary education (Education Commission, 2001). After a lot of consultations, a New Senior Secondary (NSS) curriculum was finally proposed in 2004 and came into effect in September, 2009. Secondary education has moved away from the British model of five years' secondary schooling plus two years of university matriculation (i.e., a total of seven years) to the Chinese model of three years of junior secondary plus another three years of senior secondary (i.e., a total of six years).

Students will only be required to sit one new public examination called the HK Diploma of Secondary Education (HKDSE) Examination at Secondary 6, which will replace the two existing territory-wide exams, Hong Kong Certificate of Education Examination (HKCEE) and HKALE. It is believed that this will alleviate students'

exam pressure and provide a smooth transition between the NSS curriculum and programmes offered by post-secondary institutions and universities where they continue to receive academic and professional training (Kwan, 2009). In other words, students do not have to compete for matriculation places anymore, and almost all will be able to stay in their secondary schools for the whole six years. The one year of secondary education taken away is added to university education, which therefore increases from 3 years to 4 years, the length of tertiary education in most Asian, American and European countries (Ho, 2005; McGaw, 2006). The new system is therefore known as the '3-3-4 Scheme' (Education Bureau, 2009b) (3 years' junior high, 3 years' senior high and 4 years' university) (Please see Appendix 1 for a graphic representation of the changes, Education Bureau, 2009d).

In terms of assessment mechanisms, formative assessments that are designed to understand students' learning progress and needs, such as the Basic Competency Assessments in Chinese, English and Mathematics at different stages of learning, are encouraged. A school-based component has also been added to some subjects (e.g. English) at the public examination, HKDSE, examining abilities that are not easily assessed through one-off written tests.

The reform initiatives, including the NSS, affect the teaching profession in at least three ways. First, under the NSS teachers have to find new ways to motivate students with diverse abilities, since even the less academically inclined ones can stay through their secondary education. This challenge is coupled with the conversion of secondary school banding (determined by the ability of the school's secondary 1 intake) from five bands to three, resulting in a drastic increase in individual differences within the school (Cheng, 2009). The changes the reform seeks, such as a shift from a teacher-centered to a learner-centered approach, also challenge teachers to problematise their practices, and impact their identity construction.

Second, formative and school-based assessments mean more work for school teachers. Assessment is no longer solely the responsibility of examination bodies such as the HK Examination Authority. In fact rates of job dissatisfaction and morale among HK teachers are generally low (see Cheng, 2009) and issues of workload are a core factor (Chung, Pang & Chan, 2006; Choi & Tang, 2009). Teachers report serious issues of burnout, dissatisfaction and turnover (Wong & Li, 1995; Chan, 2009). In a study on the occupational stress and mental health among 89 secondary school teachers (Leung, Mak, Chui, Chiang and Lee, 2009), the majority report fair to very low satisfaction with their career and feel unaccountably tired or even exhausted. More alarmingly,

30% suffer severe anxiety and 12.3% from severe depression. Their stress is believed to be related to role overload, sense of insecurity and uncertainty about expectations and demands as a result of the education reforms (ibid).

Third, the education reform has also spurred 'a quest for excellent performance' with stronger reliance on 'performance indicators, benchmarking, managerial and consumerist accountability, school self-evaluation and external school review' (Choi & Tang, 2011: 55). This happens in the context of declining student populations (Cheng, 2009) due to ever decreasing birth rates (e.g. birth rate was only 11.7 per 1000 people in 2009) (Information Services Department, 2011), resulting in very keen competition among schools. In order to attract more parents and students, or simply to survive, schools have come up with different tactics to boost intake (Choi and Tang, 2005), again increasing the non-teaching workload for teachers. Schools that underperform and fail to admit a certain number of students are forced to downsize or close, a process known as 'class shrinking and school killing' (Choi and Tang, 2009: 770). This obviously means unemployment among teachers, and there is sometimes a pressing need for teachers to comply with the current school in order to increase their chances of re-employment (Draper and Forrester, 2009). It is arguably even more challenging for new teachers as they compete in the open market with experienced

teachers; Their initial employment is often short term (e.g. one-year contracts) and much of their time in the first year of teaching is reported as being spent focusing on obtaining future employment (Draper and Forrester, 2009). The unstable work condition and school atmosphere also impede collegial support at the workplace when teachers come and leave the school frequently (Choi and Tang, 2009).

One thing to note here is that while local birth rate has remained low, in the last 15 years HK has experienced an influx of immigrants from Mainland China. The Education Bureau even needed to introduce in September 1997 the School-Based Support Scheme Grant for schools with intake of children newly arrived from the mainland, aiming to strength support for them (Education Bureau, 2007). The latest statistics show that a total of around 200 newly arrived children were first admitted to schools in HK in just three months from March to May, 2011 (Education Bureau, 2011). This changing student composition poses particular problems for teachers in terms of catering for diversity, as these newly arrived children are not only new to the living and culture in HK but they also more often than not have lower English proficiency than the home pupils.

2.1.3 Language policies and their impacts on English Language teaching

The mother tongue and the language medium for everyday communication for the majority of HK's population has always been Chinese (mainly Cantonese) (Education Department, 1997). English was the official language in HK since British colonisation from 1842 (Ho, 2006), being the language of administration, law and education (Cheng, 2004). Although at least 95% of the population are ethnically Chinese (ibid), Chinese (although undefined but generally believed to be written Chinese and spoken Cantonese) was only added as another official language since the declaration of the Official Language Ordinance in 1974 (Ho and Wong, 2004). Unlike other ex-colonies such as Singapore, HK Chinese do not use English among themselves unless some in the group do not speak Cantonese (ibid).

In the area of education, the medium of instruction (MOI) has been a long standing debate (Cheng, 2004). In the 19th century, schooling in English was strongly advocated by different earlier governors such as Sir John Hennessy (1833-1882) (Ho, 2006). The foundation of HK University, where English was used as the MOI in 1911 reinforced this emphasis in using English in education (ibid). Later, since the 1960s, as the colony grew out of a fishing village to a commercial, financial and trading centre, as well as a manufacturing base (Cheng, 2004), English has been considered

important. Many secondary schools that used Chinese as the MOI changed to using English instead. For example, in the 20 years from 1967 to 1988, the percentage of English-as-the-medium-of instruction schools (EMIs) (used to be called ‘Anglo-Chinese schools’, Cheng, 2004) increased from 73.32% to 91.72% (Ho, 2006).

In these EMIs, however, mixed-code (Chinese and English) teaching was very common (Crooke, 2000). While all textbooks and examinations were in English, classes were mostly conducted in Cantonese (Cheng, *op. cit.*). This was because not only the learners but also the teachers were unable to cope with using purely English (Crooke, 2000; Cheng, 2004). Leung and Lee (2006) attribute the fact that English (and Mandarin also, after 1997) has failed to take root in HK to HK people’s determination to maintain their cultural identity and choice of lingua franca.

Cantonese has therefore always overshadowed the coloniser’s language, English. It was also believed that the use of English as MOI imposed barriers when students expressed views and asked questions (Education Department, 1997). According to the department, only 33% of pupils were capable of learning effectively in both English and Cantonese, and many started to question whether using English as MOI is the best way forward for the cognitive and academic development of students.

The Education Commission first recommended active promotion of mother-tongue teaching in 1984. Their assertion was based on findings from educational research worldwide which indicated that most students learn more effectively through their mother tongues (Education Commission, 1984; Education Department, 1997). Finally the Legislative Council decided in May, 1997, right before the change of sovereignty, that Chinese is to be used as the MOI in all public sector secondary schools, starting from the Secondary 1 intake of the 1998/99 school year.

At the same time, there have been indicators showing the development of HK after 1997 towards a less plurilingual society and the declining importance of English (Leung and Lee, 2006). In order to maintain the city's position as an international financial centre, the government's language education policy has been for young people to be 'bi-literate (Chinese and English) and trilingual (Cantonese, Mandarin, and English)' (Education Department, 1997; Education Bureau, 2009a). The government has thus provided support measures and additional resources for schools (Ho and Wong, 2004) in order to prevent any possible lowering of students' English standard due to reduced exposure to the English language (Education Department, 1997). All in all, the status of English has remained important, even after the change of sovereignty and the MOI, mainly because of economic reasons (Lin, 2005)

The Education Commission affirmed in its latest review on MOI for secondary schools in 2005 that mother-tongue teaching should be upheld and English proficiency should be enhanced concurrently, although it is not hard to imagine that this is easier said than done. Normally the pressure is put on English language teachers to find ways to increase English levels. Gao (2011: 493) actually documents teachers' professional vulnerability in a perceived context of 'falling' English language standards in HK. Much of this pressure comes from parents, where despite various HK government policies to raise the status of Cantonese and Mandarin, English is often the chief educational concern; it being 'a habitus for the community, a way of life to the millions of westernised, cosmopolitan local residents' (Chan, 2002: 282).

2.2 The new teaching force

2.2.1 Teacher Training

Professional teacher training programmes are offered by four of higher education institutes, namely the Hong Kong University (HKU), the Chinese University of Hong Kong (CUHK), the Hong Kong Baptist University (HKBU) and the Hong Kong Institute of Education (HKIEd). During its earliest development, HKIEd, which was established in 1994 by amalgamating five colleges of education, focused on

non-graduate teacher education. Students could be trained as primary school teachers as early as they finished Secondary 5 (Li and Kwo, 2004). Now, all pre-service courses for both primary and secondary teachers-to-be are either at undergraduate or postgraduate level (The Faculty of Education, CUHK, 2004; The Faculty of Education, the HKU, 2008a; The Faculty of Social Sciences, HKBU, 2009; HKIEd, 2009). In other words, both primary and secondary school teachers are expected to be degree-holders and subject-trained. Both primarily teach their specialty subjects to different classes, as opposed to being class teachers who teach all subjects to one single class.

However, despite the government's requirement for all teachers to be professional trained and university graduates in 1997 (Tang and Choi, 2009), in fact there is no mechanism requiring teachers to be subject-trained in education faculties (Li and Kwo, op. cit.). This may be due to the fact that there has generally been a shortage of teachers in HK. Teaching has remained unappealing to new graduates because of the low morale as mentioned earlier. There are also limited prospects for advancement and the heavy workload, although teaching is actually attractive at the entry level, with entry salaries comparable to that of other professions such accountants and lawyers (Stoel & Thant, 2002). The fact that teaching generally 'gets a less-than-proportionate

share of the upper quartile of the relevant population group' (Crooke, 2000: 56) also results in a low status attached to it. At the same time better remuneration in the business sector is also enticing the brightest of students (Crooke, 2000; Cheng, 2004). All in all, in the year 2005/06, the percentages of both graduate and trained teachers in primary and secondary schools (including both local and international) were 71.4 and 88.39 respectively (Information Services Department, 2009a).

2.2.2 Language Requirement for English teachers

Perhaps because some English teachers are not subject-trained, and a majority of student teachers come from the academically average or below average senior (Education Bureau, 2009c), there has been a sharp decline in the English proficiency of teachers in the last twenty years (Cheng, 2004). In response to this, starting from the year 2000/01, the Education Bureau (then-called Education Department) has been requiring all English teachers in local primary and secondary schools to meet the language proficiency requirement (LPR) (Director of Education, 2000). The LPR can be met either by sitting a test called the Language Proficiency Assessment for Teachers (LPAT) or by possessing a degree with substantial components on the study and use of English, plus a teacher training qualification with specialism in English (Education Bureau, 2009c). Novice teachers who do not have relevant degrees and

therefore need to sit the LPAT may experience pressure from their school heads and suffer labelling if they fail. Since LPR was put in place, the attainment rates for individual papers in LPAT have been low in the two productive skills, Speaking and Writing. For example, in 2008 the rates were 81.8% for Reading, 42% for Writing, 71.8% for Listening, 62% for Speaking and 94.6% for Classroom Language Assessment (Education Bureau, 2008). This may be due to problems with the test validity and/or how the language is taught and used in HK. For example, although the textbooks, written work, and examinations were in English in many schools, oral and aural communication was conducted in Cantonese, and students only encountered English in its written form. Many are unable to communicate effectively in spoken English (Nunan, 2003). Although failure to meet the requirement will not affect a teacher's registration status it may affect their employability (Ming Pao, 2008)

2.2.3 Induction

The Education Commission first addressed induction of beginning teachers in its fifth report (1992). Since then the government has established funds to encourage schools to develop their own induction projects (Crooke, 2000). It was not until 2005 that the Teacher Induction Scheme, designed by the Advisory Committee on Teacher Education and Qualifications (ACTEQ, 2009), who advises the government on teacher

education and training policies, was proposed. After piloting for three years an Induction Tool Kit outlining tools useful for supporting novice teachers by schools they work in was officially recommended by ACTEQ in 2008. The proposed induction programme lasting for a year aims to ‘provide comprehensive workplace experience for beginning teachers, [...] integrated professional guidance and support to beginning teachers [...] and to lay a firm foundation for beginning teachers’ lifelong learning; and to help beginning teachers systematically reflect on and self-evaluate their own work’ (ACTEQ, 2009: 1-2). This induction scheme bridges initial training and employment and is the first stage of an ongoing professional support and development, ensuring that guidance, support and training are available to the novices, and securing the foundations upon which a successful teaching career can be built (ibid). A summary of the Tool Kit can be found in Appendix 2.

The main instrument used in the Induction Tool Kit is the Induction Completion Reference (ICR), which was built upon the Teacher Competencies Framework (TCF) released by ACTEQ (2003, 2006). This framework embraces the abilities, skills, knowledge and attitudes expected of teachers in different work areas at various stages of their professional growth. Schools’ participation in this induction scheme is voluntary; there is no prescribed pattern of support or non-contact time. They are advised to use the

tool kit at their own discretion, adapting the tools to suit their needs and to keep paperwork minimal (ACTEQ, 2009). There remain therefore considerable variations in the amount and type of support that novice teachers receive. Details of the Induction Tool Kit, particularly the ICR, and relevant documents such as TCF will be discussed in Chapter 7.

2.3 Conclusion – Teaching in HK

Teaching in 21st-century classrooms presents a number of challenges to teachers due to the pressures associated with increasing student achievement while balancing the complexities that arise out of a changing composition of students. Requirements associated with teaching have reached a point where even veteran teachers may begin to question their ability to engage students or implement the instructional strategies necessary to meet the needs of all the students within their classrooms. (Lau, 2009: 15)

Teaching in HK in the last two decades has become a lot more challenging because of the combined effect of reform initiatives, changing demographic features and shifts in the roles of the Chinese and English languages. Increased workload as a result of the change in curriculum and examination has created extra stress for teachers (Choi & Tang,

2009). Teachers are also faced with a more diverse student population because of the New Secondary Syllabus and significant number of immigrants from Mainland China. Lower birth rates and increased emphasis on evaluation and accountability result in school downsizing and closure, in turn leading to keener competition for fewer teaching posts and a less stable work environment for teachers. At the same time tactics used to boost intake increase their already-heavy workload. The use of Chinese instead of English as the MOI poses causes specific difficulties in English language teaching. English teachers are expected to help enhance students' proficiency when exposure to the language has become much less. Lau (2009) is right – being English teachers in HK is no easy task, and possibly even more difficult for beginning ones. In the next chapter I am going to outline the unique needs and challenges for novice (English) teachers, as well as provide a detailed review of the literature that informs the present study on their experience.

Chapter 3

Literature Review

Teachers' first year of experience is crucial to their career outlook. Induction helps beginning teachers settle in to teaching quickly and effectively. Successful experiences at this initial stage enhance new teachers' commitment, enthusiasm and positive feelings about the profession and equip them better to meet the increasing demands as their careers progress. Effective induction builds early-career teachers' capacity and confidence. Support for beginning teachers can best be done through on-site sharing and learning with experienced colleagues, and the provision of timely feedback and review in the workplace. (ACTEQ, 2008b)

This section consists of a review of the literature and discussion on previous studies on aspects of the first year of teaching. Three main strands of literature inform the current study on experience of novice teachers: first, studies related to the complexities in and significance of the first year of teaching, as well as the needs and challenges of beginning teachers, in particular for English language teachers; second, literature on induction, both its conceptualisation, implementation and policies; third, literature on knowledge, learning and novice teachers' development in the first year, which include self-reflection as well as learning in communities. I will end this chapter with a critical review of two key studies that this research is most closely related to.

3.1 Overview

These existing theories and previous research not only provide the literature context on which the present study is based, but the three areas and their inter-relationships are believed to help us understand the complexities in the first year of teaching and the significance of researching it. Because of the distinct challenges novice (language) teachers (as opposed to their experienced counterparts) face, and because new teachers are in general more prone to leaving the profession than more experienced teachers, induction support is being provided in many settings in order to make the novices stay and help them develop as reflective and effective teachers. Support is most commonly seen in the form of mentoring but other elements, such as collegial communities, can also have significant impacts on the beginning teachers. Their professional development and thus perceived efficacy, together with their interactions with the mentors and possibly other colleagues, in turn affect how they perceive their first-year experience and develop in subsequent years, as well as shape their identity as teachers. This chapter is a detailed discussion of each of these notions and their relationships, in the context of the first year of teaching.

3.2 Complexities in and significance of the first year of teaching

Beginning to teach is internationally recognised as a particular and complex stage of a

teacher's career (OECD, 2005). Teaching is generally a stressful and demanding job anyway, with practical demands of classroom teaching and school administration to be handled, not to mention the stress of reconciling personal ideals, meeting performance standards and being exposed to wider educational concerns. For novice teachers being faced with the complexities and challenges can be overwhelming (Bullough Jr et al., 2008; Pollard, 2008). Huberman (1992), in his classic life-cycle research on teaching, actually describes the phase of career entry (1-3 years of teaching) as 'survival'.

Indeed the first year of teaching can quickly become a battle for survival, as teachers become swamped by the complexity of the role and the demands and expectations of students, colleagues and parents. This might also explain why teaching continues to have higher rates of attrition and turnover compared to other professions (Ingersoll & Strong, 2011). Because of such circumstances that inexperienced teachers encounter, 'the initial year of employment or transition phase has been recognised as an important segment of a beginning teacher's career' (McCormack and Thomas, 2003: 125). It is a unique and significant period to research for various reasons.

First of all, first-year teachers undergo reality shock in confronting the complexity and simultaneity of instructional management (Huberman, 1992). In other fields, such as law and medicine, novices have many opportunities to observe and to work with more

experienced professionals, thus taking on responsibility gradually (Worthy, 1995).

Teaching is, however, very different in that first-year teachers are expected to perform and assume responsibilities similar to those experienced practitioners, right on the first day of the job (ibid). By definition, these teachers, though new, are employees rather than trainees, and are supposed to be competent (Bailey, 2006), but the fact is, they have limited experience and training. Induction programmes, if any, are theoretically not additional training but are designed for those who have already completed basic training (Ingersoll and Smith, 2004). However, no matter how good a preservice programme may be, there are some things that can only be learned on the job. In other words, novice teachers can only gain certain skills and abilities by beginning to do what they do not yet understand, such as communicating with parents and designing materials that best suit their students. As a result, first-year teachers always find themselves in a paradoxical situation – they are expected to demonstrate abilities that they do not necessarily yet have, and what is more, the work of teaching itself, being ‘complex, uncertain and full of dilemmas’, sharpens the paradox (Feiman-Nemser, 2001:16). The first year of teaching can be problematic (Wang, Odell and Schwille, 2008).

Secondly, novice teachers are faced with, for the first time, the discrepancy between

the expected and actual realities of teaching. The optimism of young teachers in some situations may be somewhat tarnished when confronted with the realities and complexities of the teaching task (Rushton, 2000). For example they may soon realise that their vision is incompatible with reality (Orland-Barak & Maskit, 2011). In Urmston and Pennington's (2008) study, instead of continuing with their communicative, process-oriented principles emphasised in the pre-service training and evidenced in their actual teaching practices, novice teachers (in their first and second years of teaching) conformed to the cultures in their settings which tended to discourage innovations, rather than infusing new ideas and practices into the education system. Indeed, it is very easy for new teachers to become swamped in their first year of teaching by the nuance and particularity of the sheer volume of what they have to do (Mahony, 1988). Facing the reality of the classroom, they may resort to and gradually form the habit of conforming to established norms and 'standards', rather than endeavour to be reflective practitioners.

Jones (2003) argues that novice teachers need to be provided with support and guidance in the process of reconciling their personal beliefs and values with the realities of teaching, as well as developing positive identities as teachers. It is important that novices are allowed to reappraise their personal beliefs and modify

their original assumptions in line with the values underpinning the professional practice. What is most challenging for both the new teachers and their mentors (or collaborating colleagues) is that such a process of modifying idealistic assumptions that contradicted with reality experienced in schools can be painful and in order to cope, one has to possess a great deal of physical, mental as well as emotional stamina (ibid). Battersby (1984: 17) even suggests that pre-service teacher training tends to foster in student teachers the development of ideal images of pupils. He calls this ‘beginners’ dreams and nightmares about pupils’ – new teachers’ having idealistic expectations on teaching and students before they teach, and overwhelmed and shocked by classroom realities once they start teaching. Needless to say, handling these in the first year can be challenging.

Thirdly, the reconciliation between personal ideals and school/classroom realities mentioned above has great impact on novices’ professional identity formation, which sometimes has implications on their personal identity, too. Indeed novices are not solely concerned with managerial, strategic aspects of doing teacher and becoming a teacher; There are also human concerns that surround the world of the teacher such as socialisation into the school culture and workplace (Orland-Barak & Maskit, 2011). They need assistance with achieving both personal and professional self-confidence

(Gorton and Schneider, in Gray and Smith, 2007). However, at the same time, there are expectations (of the novices themselves and other stakeholders) and standards of performance to be met (Earley, 1988). As a result they may struggle with the multiple voices that operate in the educational system, which creates a sense of impotence in their capacity to act (Orland-Barak & Maskit, 2011).

Some novices, for example those in Scherff's (2008) study, in turn come to realise that a lot of times the power rests not with the classroom teachers, but with students and their parents, who in turn influence how administrators operate. They even perceive that the students' and parents' desires take precedence over their respect and professionalism, seriously affecting their professional identity (ibid). Achinstein's (2006) study also highlights what he calls a 'politics of identity' (p. 136), when novices find ways to resolve the discrepancies between their own values and the dominant ones in a school. While some are pressured to forsake their ideals and accept the conditions and standards of the schools, some reject the school's approaches and continue to commit to their own teaching philosophies, seeking not to be institutionally compliant (ibid). Coping with this, what Orland-Barak and Maskit (2011: 435) call the 'hostile and adverse sides of teaching', can be exhausting and frustrating but is also part and parcel of the first year experience. Achinstein suggests

that mentors should therefore support new teachers to identify ‘a politics of their own identities, articulate their values, morals and commitments’ (p. 136). The roles of mentors will be further discussed in Section 3.5.2.

Lastly, the initial year of teaching, though short, has been found to have a huge influence on whether the teacher continues to stay in the profession, and if they do, their career development. First-year teachers tend to have a higher risk of quitting teaching than other teachers (Veenman, 1985), for a whole range of reasons such as having views about teaching that are incompatible with the reality or the school, as discussed above. It is claimed that almost one third of beginning teachers leave teaching in their first 5 years (Darling-Hammond, 2003), and in some cases even as many as half (e.g. Liu, 2007). It is well known that teacher attrition follows a U-shaped pattern with a high probability of leaving in the first few years and in the later years near retirement (Murnane, Singer, Willett, Kemple, & Olsen, 1991).

Attrition is costly to the school, the education system as well as the wider community, because of reasons such as being forced to lower standards to fill the increasing number of teaching openings (Bowman & Dowling, 2008). Many countries in the world have been trying very hard to retain their teachers by providing induction support for and helping increase job satisfaction of beginning teachers (Ingersoll &

Smith, 2004; Woods & Weasmer, 2002). Lam and Yan (2011) find that new teachers working in an environment that allows them to focus on the core business of teaching and a reasonable work-life balance are likely to become interested and engaged in teaching and stay in the profession, irrespective of their initial teaching orientation. In other words how novices experience their first year is an even more important factor affecting whether they stay in the profession than what motivates them to become teachers in the first place. The different types of support for beginning teachers will be discussed in details in Section 3.5.

The first-year experience is also believed to have significant implications on aspects of teaching, such as teaching effectiveness, in subsequent years (Hebert & Worthy, 2001). Particularly, Hoy and Spero (2005) argue that some of the most powerful influences on the development of teacher efficacy are mastery experiences during the induction year. Results of their study show that there are significant declines during the first year of teaching, and changes in efficacy during that year were related to the level of support received. At the same time, efficacy beliefs, which are shaped early, are found to be linked to burnout (Friedman, 2000), as well as stress and commitment to teaching (Hoy & Spero, *op. cit.*). A reduction in perceived efficacy during the induction year will very likely negatively affect how the new teachers view teaching

and themselves as teachers even if they go on teaching. With these complexities and significance of the first year of teaching in mind I move onto the unique needs first year teachers thus have as well as the challenges they face.

3.3 Needs and challenges of beginning English teachers

Teachers with no prior teaching experience are faced with a great number of challenges, such as getting the balance between intimacy and distance appropriate with their pupils, and the inadequacy of instructional materials given the diversity of pupil characteristics (Huberman, 1992). Veenman's (1984) international perspective establishes the main challenges to be classroom discipline, motivating students, assessing students' work, organising class work, dealing with individual student differences, coping with insufficient or inadequate teaching materials, and dealing with parents. Recent international studies (e.g. Bullough Jr et al., 2008; Totterdell et al., 2008) have confirmed that nearly all the same problems are still viewed by novice teachers as the most challenging.

It can be argued that teachers of English as a second language encounter additional challenges in terms of language teaching skills and, in some cases, issues with their actual or perceived linguistic competence (Tsui, 2007). However, while the first year of

teaching has been well documented in general education, not many studies have been done in the area of second language teaching (Richards and Pennington, 1998; Farrell, 2008). Borg (2010: 88) claims that ‘experientially we know a lot because we all work with these people [novice language teachers] but empirically in terms of research not much has been published’. This project thus aims to fill gaps in the literature by looking into the needs and challenges, as well as support and development, of first-year second-language English teachers.

Also, most studies on beginning teachers ‘address the transition from specific language teacher education courses to learning to teach on the practicum’ (Farrell, 2006: 212) and not the first year of actual teaching. Kanno and Stuart (2011), for example, offer an instructive account of two teachers and the reciprocal relationship between novice teachers' identity development and their changing classroom practice but this is part of their Master's programme. Of the studies that do feature novice language teachers in their actual first year of teaching, most are comparisons of experienced and novice teachers (see Akyel, 1997; Gatbonton; 2008; Tsui, 2009). The present study, a longitudinal one that features the experience of novices in their whole first year of teaching is therefore necessary in filling such a gap of presenting a fuller picture and giving voice to new entrants to the teaching profession.

Farrell's collection of articles (2008) is one of the very few that documents specifically the first year of actual teaching and focuses on second-language teachers. It provides valuable insights into the experience and support of novice language teachers, and contains studies undertaken in eleven different settings. In their paper on HK novice language teachers, Umston and Pennington (2008) report that it is difficult for such teachers to adopt interactive and innovative approaches that they have been exposed to on their teacher education courses due to constraints such as public examinations. In the same collection, Farrell's (2008) study on the experience of a first-year Singapore language teacher similarly reveals that it can be difficult for the novice to balance the delicate and even conflicting role between learning to teach (which involves mainly pedagogy) and learning to become a teacher (which entails many more issues such as identity, conformity) in an established school culture. Although the first year of teaching is the focus of the present study it cannot be studied in vacuum. I now discuss its relationship with initial teacher education.

3.4 Relationship between first year of teaching and pre-service teacher training

During the induction year, teachers move from being students of teaching to teachers of students, where the former largely takes place in higher education institutes and the

latter, obviously, in schools. Beginning teachers, even those trained in the same institute or the same country, and embark on teaching with similar philosophies as well as level of content knowledge and intent, teach in very diverse settings upon graduation. It is confirmed that enacting a beginning repertoire based on the pedagogies learned and modeled in their teacher education can be challenging (McCormack et al., 2006). Early career teachers have to ‘navigate their way through well-meaning but often unsound advice, dominant school culture, formal supervision for accreditation’ (p. 110), which are often coupled with curriculum demands and other contextual factors, to establish their own repertoire of teaching practice. This not only shows, again, the extreme challenges new teachers face, but also how important context is as a factor affecting novices’ learning and shaping their practice.

There is a tendency to consider all university-based courses as ‘theory’ and all school-based experience as ‘practice’. Beck and Kosnick (2001) claim that the two separate worlds of the school and university seem to exist side by side. Despite the recent movement toward professional development schools and field-based instruction, there is often a chasm between what teachers-to-be learn in teacher-preparation programmes and what faces novices when they enter the classroom (e.g. Evans, 1995).

Killeavy (2001: 131) suggests that the theory/practice dimension, which underpins both pre-service and practising teachers' academic attainment and professional interests, could actually be bridged from the early stage of the career. Beginning teachers, she claims, could be encouraged to 'develop the facility to contextualise theory and to conceptualise practice'. However, whether deeper reflection is possible during induction years has been called into question (Harrison, 2001). Again, the very nature of learning to teach – of needing time to adapt to different, often bewildering interactions and decisions, of coping with life and work transitions, may account for such little profound thinking (McNally and Oberski, 2003).

I have demonstrated in the above sections that even with pre-service training, teaching fulltime for the first time can be daunting and studies that particularly address the needs of language teachers are few. Support for novices is almost imperative in order for them to not only survive the first year but also to develop as teachers in subsequent years. The following sections thus explore induction as support for these teachers, which include different induction elements and how some induction programmes are actually implemented.

3.5 Induction

3.5.1 Conceptualising induction: definition and common induction elements

In this section I will first discuss how induction is understood and practiced in different parts of the world, and briefly introduce the components of the new induction scheme in HK in the end.

Induction is the process by which ‘beginning practising teachers adapt to and learn about their roles as teachers’ (Schwille, Dembele and Schubert, 2007: 89). How induction is done varies from country to country – from mandatory national programmes to informal on-the-job learning and support from colleagues that happen by chance. Even among formal programmes, the type and number of support elements, sometimes called components, can be quite different.

Ingersoll and Smith (2004) examine the relationship between induction and turnover, defined as teachers leaving the profession for reasons other than retirement (Ingersoll, 2001). Their study, based on a large sample of over 3000 new teachers in the USA from 4 school years, reveals that the induction support elements that are most associated with a reduced level of turnover include having a mentor from the same field, having common planning time with other teachers teaching the same subject and having regularly scheduled collaboration with other teachers. Although quite a few

researchers have argued for a reduced teaching load as an effective way of supporting teachers, Ingersoll and Smith (op. cit.) find that a reduced schedule, reduced preparations and extra classroom assistance are least associated with a lower likelihood of turnover.

Since it is unlikely that only one single induction element is present in a particular scheme, Ingersoll and Smith (op. cit.) also investigate the effects of multiple supports and discover that collectively, getting multiple induction components has a strong and statistically significant effect on reducing teacher turnover, and moreover, as the number of components in the packages increase, the probability of teachers' turnover decreases. For example, the probability of a departure from teaching at the end of their first year for those getting a package of 8 induction support components was 18%, as compared with 40% for those who do not receive induction at all. However, one limitation of their study is that it presupposes that some components, for example, collaborative efforts, are possible in all schools. Unfortunately, it is in those schools where teacher turnover is most prevalent that it would be most difficult to establish stable and effective teacher collaborations. In other words, high levels of turnover are both the cause and effect of ineffectiveness and low performance in an organisation (ibid).

Ingersoll and Smith's (op. cit.) study, although of much greater scale, points out that while mentoring is the most commonly seen form of induction element and hence often the focus of studies on new teachers' experience, the professional development and retention of novices are also impacted by other support components such as extra assistance in the classroom (perhaps by means of having a co-teaching partner or teaching assistant). Also, Ingeroll and Smith (op. cit.) highlight the importance of school conditions (e.g. turnover rate) in affecting the experience of beginning teachers. In other words, it is not the existence of induction per se that would bring about support, but how it is carried out in the unique school context.

Because of the large number of participants in their studies, the researchers are able to suggest the effectiveness of each element as well as their combined effect. My study instead focuses on *how* the different induction elements affect the novices' perceived experience. Because of such nature, rich data of a few participants is needed and the research is therefore a qualitative one. Details of the research design will be discussed in Chapter 4.

Employing the case study method, Moskowitz and Stephens's (1997) examine teacher

induction models in the Asia-Pacific Region, particularly Australia, Japan, and New Zealand. Results show that promising teacher induction models operate within a culture of shared responsibility and an environment where all professionals take active roles in the acculturation and transition of new teachers. The programs use a multi-pronged set of support strategies, including mentoring, modeling good practice, orientations, and in-service training. Again, this confirms the significance of school and collegial cultures in affecting the perceived effectiveness of induction measures. Therefore in the interviews of the current study, questions about the actual support the novices receive and those about their perception of the school culture are equally important.

No matter what form it takes, the consensus among many educators and researchers is that induction is important in the early career of beginning teachers. For example, in Kelley's (2004) study of ten cohorts of inductees in the USA, both new teachers and their mentors and/or principals report high levels of professional growth, in areas such as assessment and classroom management, during the induction year. The State Department of Education of Ireland (in Killeavy, 2001) also suggests that support given to new teachers in terms of induction and professional development is critical in helping them to develop and apply the skills and knowledge acquired during

preservice training and in forming positive attitudes to teaching as a career.

There has also been much emphasis on the value of induction in keeping teachers in the profession but findings on this are not conclusive. For example, as mentioned above, Ingersoll and Smith (2004) argue that beginning teachers provided with multiple support and participated in collective induction activities are less likely to leave the occupation after the first year of teaching. McCann, Johannessen and Ricca (2005) also call for further research into induction because they find the attrition of great number of teachers in the US distressful. However, in Fantilli and McDougall's study in Ontario, Canada, for example, those new teachers who report having formal mentors are actually those who leave the profession. Scherff (2007: 1318) concludes that 'despite what the field knows about induction, [...] the attrition rate is not being lowered'.

In fact, McLaughlin and Talbert (2007: 163) assert that 'turnover is not necessarily a bad thing'. In several of their case study schools in California, the USA, turnover actually provides the opportunity to build and sustain a stronger professional learning community (PLC) because it allows the school to hire people who support the schools' vision and are willing and able to collaborate. While attrition and thus high turnover

can be worrying, as they threaten school reform, which requires years of sustained staff effort (Worthy, 2005), induction is primarily to ‘provide a cohesive model linking preservice education and inservice support through a collaborative system and school-based approaches’ (McCormack and Thomas, 2003: 137). This is because even for teachers who remain in the classroom, difficulties in the formative professional years can have a continuing negative effect on the novices and therefore the learning of their pupils (Worthy, *op. cit.*).

In HK, the elements specified in the Induction Tool Kit are a mentoring system, self-reflection, a planned effort to provide new teachers with comprehensive learning experiences, as well as an instrument documenting the novices’ development (ACTEQ, 2009). In the case study I explore the actual form(s) of support participating novices received (both support within an induction scheme and that outside), how the support/induction elements manifest themselves in the actual processes, and what roles documentations such as the Induction Tool Kit play. Since the scheme is not mandatory and schools might already have their own systems in place (*ibid*), the above components are only baseline expectations for schools participating in the teacher induction scheme. ACTEQ encourages schools to exercise their own discretion in deciding what to include and what not (*ibid*). The experience of each new

teacher could therefore be quite different, which also means that part of the current research is inevitably a comparison and contrast of the experience among different teachers.

3.5.2 Mentoring

Among all the induction elements, mentoring may be the most commonly seen, and many studies have illustrated the importance of mentoring in effective school-based induction practices (e.g. Carter and Francis, 2001; Hall and Cajkler, 2008).

Arnold (2006: 117) defines mentoring as ‘a form of personal and professional partnership which usually involves a more experienced practitioner supporting a less experienced one’. In induction programmes, in particular, an experienced practitioner (an experienced teacher, induction tutor) supports the less experienced one (a new teacher) at both personal (overcoming feelings of insecurity) and professional (developing as a teacher) level (Halai, 2006). Mentoring is ‘interpersonal, ongoing, situated, supportive, and informative’ (Bailey, Curtis and Nunan, 2001: 207) and intentional (Shannon, 1988). Fairbanks, Freeman and Kahn (2000) also emphasise the role of not only the mentor but also the mentee in constructing and negotiating the interactions for a variety of professional purposes and in response to the contextual

factors they encounter.

One of the central and extensively recognised roles of mentors is that they make the links between the school and the higher-education institution for the novices (McNally and Martin, 1998), provided that they have received pre-service teacher training. The mentor role necessitates that they help new teachers explore and integrate the knowledge and research base of effective teaching explored in the institutions and apply it to actual teaching. At the same time, their practical craft knowledge developed in the school is tested against principles and beliefs of education they are exposed to in higher-education institutions (ibid).

Mentors are also widely documented as practitioners who help mentees learn to be reflective. Ideally the mentor's role is not a traditional one of transmitting teacher methods but of encouraging reflective linking between their teaching practice experience and personal constructed theories (Simpson, 2000). They help unpack issues of pedagogy with beginning teachers so that they can critically evaluate pupil's learning and design subsequent teaching (Braund, 2001). Elliot and Calderhead (1993) suggest that in order for a beginning professional to become a confident reflective practitioner, mentors have to provide both high support and high challenge. They need

to help mentees find limits about what they can realistically hope to achieve but should also encourage mentees to be brave enough to try out ideas and to believe in their own judgements (Dormer, 1994).

Whether a mentor is able to facilitate this reflection and collaboration much depends on the quality of their interactions (Rippon and Martin, 2003), which in turn relies on the mentor's personality and knowledge. Using Howe's (2006) metaphor, effective induction is like a chemical reaction that requires different ingredients, where time for reflection is the key element, and experienced, well-qualified, and specially trained mentors is the critical catalyst. However, Bleach (1997) questions whether some mentors' craft knowledge, which is very likely to have been gained through the trial and error of their own practical experience, can fully satisfy the new teachers' needs. Knowledge of the wider educational context and professional knowledge based on research, theory and scholarship are also very important but generally absent among mentors (ibid). This calls for a careful mentor selection process; Novices need to be exposed to positive professional roles models, who also have a predisposition to work as mentors (Carter and Francis, 2001)

Schwille (2008) argues that mentoring, just like teaching, is actually professional

practice with a repertoire of skill sets that must and can be learned. Being an effective teacher is a necessary but not sufficient condition for becoming an effective mentor (Bullough, Jr, 2012). Understanding the personal intelligences and skills involved should therefore not be left to chance (Rippon and Martin, op. cit.). As Gordon and Brobeck (2010) contend, mentors also need mentoring. Unfortunately, not only is mentoring undertheorised (Colley, 2003), such as not usually being recognized as a form of adult learning which presents unique challenges (Bullough Jr, op. cit.), but in most parts of the world mentor teachers also rarely have any special training or qualifications (Howe, 2006). In HK, as mentioned earlier, the only mentor training available is the one provided for those who support pre-service teachers during practicum. This study finds out exactly what training and support were available for them, and their relationship with the mentoring quality.

In terms of mentor roles, Feiman-Nemser and Parker (1993: 716) find striking differences in the way mentor teachers define and enact them. Some are 'local guides' who basically only provide emotional support and short-term technical assistance. Some are 'educational companions' who also help novices focus on student thinking and on developing sound reasons for their actions. Few see themselves as 'agents of change', working to reduce the traditional isolation among teachers by encouraging

collaboration and shared inquiry. The researchers also discover that those mentors with limited ideas about their role tend to have limited time to mentor, and as a result tend to lean toward fixing the new teachers' problems rather than treating them as co-inquirers into problems (ibid). Ambrosetti & Dekkers (2010) also suggest that mentors more often than not play multiple roles as their work is complex and multifaceted (Hall et al., 2008). Their roles can range from role model to facilitator, and from collaborator and assessor. Since mentoring is a dynamic process that 'evolves through time and in distinct phases' (Bouquillon et al., 2005: 239), mentoring roles also change as the relationship develops (Bullough Jr et al., 2003; Rajuan et al., 2007). In other words, the stage of the mentoring relationship will influence how the relationship functions.

While having one single mentor seems to be the prevailing practice, some researchers urge for a need to conceptualise induction as involving multiple individuals in the provision of support for beginning teachers. For example, studying the policies and induction practices in two urban districts in Connecticut, the USA, Youngs (2007) finds that multiple sources of support positively influence beginning teachers' experiences. New teachers in the district who did not have access to multiple sources of support are less likely to address instructional issues or even receive individual

support from their mentors, scorers or other educators. The researcher suggests that involving multiple individuals is important because there can be several obstacles to the formation of a strong one-to-one mentor-mentee relationship, such as differences in teaching assignments. Also, even when strong mentor-mentee relationships are established, beginning teachers are 'still likely to seek occasional assistance from other colleagues who have more expertise in a particular area and/or are more readily accessible than their mentors' (p. 824). The importance of other forms of support such as that from colleagues will be further discussed in Sections 3.8 and 3.9.

3.5.3 Induction policies

In most countries, induction arrangements are planned by governments or local authorities but the actual implementation is the job of individual schools and mentors. There may therefore be differences in the perceived purposes of induction, their translations into practice, and the perceptions of the nature of the induction tutors' (mentors') role among schools and among teachers, as found in Williams and Prestage's (2002) study. They suggest that while some of these may be a consequence of hasty introduction of the new arrangements and misunderstanding of their nature, others derive from some fundamental differences of opinion about how the induction of new entrants into the profession should be carried out, as well as variations in

school context. This implies not only the importance of establishing a consistency of view about the purposes of induction and ensuring that both induction tutors and new teachers have a shared understanding of the nature of the induction arrangements in that school, but also the need to address the training and support needs of the induction tutors. For example, the newly qualified teachers in their study who are most positive about the induction describe their contexts as pervaded by support and development opportunities rather than by managerial concerns. A ‘spontaneously collaborative’ school culture (Williams et al., 2001: 253), where there are a lot of informal, spontaneous and unplanned discussions, seems most likely to enhance the induction experience for them. It is concluded that awareness of the extent to which new teachers value the opportunity for a certain kind of learning, in this case informal unplanned exchanges among colleagues, and clarification about the meaning of induction at the level of the individual school are thus particularly salient.

This relationship between the gap between the institutional requirements and their translations into practice by mentors, and perceived effectiveness (by schools, mentors and mentees) of the induction arrangements is an area especially worth studying in the case of HK when the induction scheme is voluntary, and schools who opt to use it have total freedom of what to and what not to use from the Induction Tool Kit. There

might also be a difference in the mentoring practices by mentors who have received training (although most are intended for mentors who work with pre-service teachers) provided by the Education Bureau and universities (see e.g. The Faculty of Education, the University of Hong Kong, 2008b).

Apart from being subjected to different interpretations, induction policies and arrangements per se have their own limitations. Firstly, sometimes the arrangements have marginal impact on development of new teachers because of the school culture, as mentioned above. For example, Williams et al. (2001: 253) find that at the two extremes of a continuum of school cultures, namely 'individualistic' and 'spontaneous collaborative', induction arrangements are unable to make a significant difference in novices' professional development, in the first case because induction policies have little influence on established teachers working individualistically to collaborate and support new teachers in their development (Rippon & Martin, 2006), and in the second because statutory demands are largely redundant as much of what has already been practised is beyond the demands of the requirements. Between these two extremes are a range of cultures called 'structural collaborative' (Williams et al., 2001: 253), in which new requirements of formal induction do appear to have made a significant impact on the collaboration between the mentor and novice. Still, the

researchers conclude that

while centralised and statutory demands seem to have been successful in raising the standard of induction practice, the characteristics that take induction practice beyond the satisfactory and into the realms of excellence are, by their nature, not amenable to statute or external mandate (p. 265).

Secondly, some aspects of workplace learning may not be best accommodated within statutory induction arrangements. Williams (2003) discovers in her study that for many novices, much learning in their first year of teaching is implicit or reactive, collaborative within their own school and horizontal, whereas the types of learning most familiar to mentors, or most encouraged by induction policies, are deliberative and vertical. For example, OFSTED (in Williams, 2003) criticizes the tendency of novices to not engage in formal learning activities such as attending off-site courses, which are deliberative and vertical. Instead they often overuse non-contact time for activities that are less obviously developmental such as preparation and marking.

However, comments from the NQTs suggest that it may be mistaken to assume that this use of time is neither developmental nor learning-oriented. For example, unlike those who work in larger schools where team planning is possible, for those who work in small schools having extra time for planning is necessary at that particular stage of development. This illustrated that a top-down one-size-fits-all induction or

professional development system might not work for all new teachers.

Williams (2003) therefore suggests that while induction arrangements have the potential to create effective practice where previous practice was poor, and unambiguous technical descriptors of such practice can be effective if they are acknowledged as providing evidence of good practice, they may fail to give a balanced attention to the multi-faceted nature of the learning of new teachers and to provide individualised development programmes for novices. One of the objectives of the present study is precisely to find out whether new teachers in HK welcome a formal institutional scheme (no matter they experience one themselves or not), elements that they find particularly relevant and helpful and also those that could be improved to better suit their developmental needs.

Heaney's (2001) evaluation of the induction support provided by experienced teachers in one local authority in the UK raises issues about the model of teaching embodied within the framework for professional development enshrined within the standards for Qualified Teacher Status and Induction. She suggests that the arrangements for induction seems likely to encourage an instrumental, mechanistic or restricted model of teaching but at the same time also offer scope for the promotion of a deliberative and

reflective model that allows schools to become places for collaborative learning. This much depends on whether induction tutors are attentive to the individual needs of new colleagues and have a conceptual understanding of the way teachers think, make judgements and act. Heaney (op. cit.) also observes that induction tutors are most concerned with, for example, the mentees' meeting the pragmatic demand for classroom efficiency and the social demand of becoming an accepted member of staff in a particular school. She thus calls for a kind of induction support that values teacher enquiry and collaborative learning rather than hierarchical apprenticeship which serves only to replicate the past and reinforce conservatism, which is also strongly advocated by Carter and Francis (2001). This shows that in examining the first year of teaching, the way mentors perceive their roles and carry out their jobs during that period is important. How HK mentors enact their roles in their specific school context and its implication on the novices' first-year experience is one of the focuses of my study.

These sections on induction have provided a picture of the common forms of support.

These elements can be school-based or available outside the institutes, and nonetheless the key players are their mentors. While the programmes, which vary from being more structured to basically ad-hoc, all aim to help induct novices into the new environment and support their learning to teach, how mentors actually enact their roles and thus how

the mentoring and induction look like can be very different. Sometimes top-down programmes can overlook the needs of individual teachers and/or the unique school cultures. I now move onto what teacher knowledge is and how novices can benefit both from their own reflection as well as collaboration and learning in communities in the development of this knowledge and the use of it.

3.6 Teacher Knowledge and professional development in the first year of teaching

The attempt to understand how novices learn to teach, whether within a school environment with induction support or in one without, must be based on an adequate conceptualisation of teachers' professional knowledge and the way that knowledge is used in the process of teaching (Furlong and Maynard, 1995). It is therefore important to understand teacher knowledge, and its relationships with professional development both in terms of self reflection and learning in a community.

3.6.1 Conceptualisation of teacher knowledge

Borg's (2006) work has probably been the most cited in recent years in the study of teacher knowledge. This field is characterised by an overwhelming array of concepts, that a lot of different terms have been used to describe teacher knowledge, which Borg calls 'cognition' (p. 35). Woods (1996: 195) discovers from her study that it is indeed

difficult to distinguish between ‘beliefs’ and ‘knowledge’ when teachers discuss their decisions in the interviews, that ‘their use of ‘knowledge’ in their decision-making process [does] not seem to be qualitatively different from their use of “beliefs”’. For the purpose of this study, I have chosen to use the term ‘teacher knowledge’ to mean what Borg (2006: 35) refers to as ‘teacher cognition’, which he defines as ‘beliefs, knowledge, theories, attitudes, images, assumptions, metaphors, conceptions, perspectives about teaching, teachers, learning, students, subject matter, curricula, materials, instructional activities and self’. This definition is believed to be more inclusive. Also, it is not the aim of the present study to distinguish terms such as ‘knowledge’, ‘beliefs’ and ‘assumptions’ anyway. Using the term ‘knowledge’ is in fact a pragmatic decision when most work in the area has used the term ‘knowledge’ instead of Borg’s ‘cognition’.

As found in Borg’s (op. cit.) analysis of the concepts used in teacher knowledge research, many have understood teacher knowledge as largely tacit, that is, that their skills and knowledge seem to be the result of the accumulation of experience, and routines and procedures that are developed and refined over time. Schön (1987) calls this knowledge-in-action, which is crucial for teachers because they cannot constantly question every action or reaction while they teach. Indeed, teacher knowledge is

actually more extensive than can be articulated (Loughran, 2006). Uncovering and articulating teacher knowledge in such a way as to fully appreciate what it genuinely comprises can therefore be challenging. Teachers may display skills and knowledge that they do not readily recognise in practice. This is also why this kind of practitioners' unique knowledge based on well-tryed experience often cannot be subjected to assessment (Ahlstrand et al., 1996). Shulman (1987) argues that assessing teachers by tools such as basic-skills tests and examinations on competence of the subject matter thus trivialises teaching – its complexities ignored and demands diminished.

Others treat teachers' knowledge as a product, which can be packaged and taught in preservice teacher education (Freeman, 2001). For example, Ahlstrand et al. (1996), in their study of new professionals including teachers, suggest that there are two kinds of professional knowledge – knowledge that is gained during professional education, and knowledge that is tacit and deeply embedded in the community's culture that cannot be learned at a distance. For teachers the former might include knowledge of the subject, methods and learners, and an example of the latter is organisational knowledge (e.g. staffroom politics) which can only be 'learned' by experience.

Likewise, Wallace (1991) suggests that student teachers enter the profession with their

own existing conceptual schemata. They are then exposed to both received (e.g. teaching theories) and experiential (e.g. field experience) knowledge in their teacher training and fulltime teaching. By repeatedly involving in practice and reflection, ideally with the facilitation of more experienced practitioners such as their mentors, they work towards the goal of attaining professional competence.

While delivering teaching as a series of rules, facts and strategies is not impossible, such an approach can be detrimental to teaching for two reasons. First, the differentiation between formal knowledge of teaching (the knowledge created by educational researchers) and practical knowledge of teaching (the knowledge created by teachers) is often interpreted as suggesting a judgement about the value of each – that formal knowledge has a higher status than practical knowledge (Loughran, 2006). Second, it generates a stereotype that theory is taught in university, and that it is the teachers' (or student teachers') job to try their best to *apply* such knowledge (ibid).

Loughran (2006) suggests that teaching about teaching should instead be an understanding of the complex nature of teaching and learning, with due reference to both theory and practice, and the value of each in creating a wisdom of informed practice. Freeman (op. cit.) looks at teachers' knowledge as instrumental and as an

emerging loose group of tools, which are ideas and knowing that teachers develop through, but not limited to, their professional training. This set of tools changes when and as teachers use them. What they are taught in their pre-service education, such as ways to motivate students, are modified as they actually try them out on their specific groups of learners, to suit the situation and their needs then.

Similarly, Golombek (1998) also argues that research in teacher education tends to focus largely on developing an empirically grounded knowledge-base imposed on teachers rather than on examining what teachers' experiential knowledge is and how they use that knowledge. She therefore emphasises the relationship between experience inside and outside the classroom and teaching. This relationship is characterised by constructs such as practical knowledge (including knowledge of self, the milieu of teaching, subject matter, curriculum development and instruction) and personal practical knowledge, which is teachers' theory about teaching contextualised in experience.

3.6.2 Domains of teachers' knowledge

Some scholars conceptualise teachers' knowledge by categorising it into broad areas or domains. Maynard and Furlong (1993), for example, organise knowledge into

knowledge of pupils, knowledge of strategies, knowledge of content and knowledge of context. They stress that although these domains are arguably equally important, they are not experienced in the same way. For example, pupils and the context are somehow given or fixed while content and strategies are more open to choice. Also, teachers' practice does not depend on knowledge drawn from discrete domains but, rather, on the complex interaction and interplay between them. Teachers must integrate rather than compartmentalise the range of knowledge they possess as they negotiate the complex realities of their classrooms (Sharkey, 2004). The knowledge within each of the different domains also varies in terms of the levels of abstraction (e.g. concrete and specific knowledge of school policies on disciplines versus knowledge of the likelihood of certain students' reactions developed from experience) (Furlong and Maynard, 1995).

Shulman (1986: 4), among his long list of categories of knowledge base such as curriculum knowledge and knowledge of learners, introduces 'pedagogical content knowledge', which he believes should deserve special interest. It represents 'the blending of content and pedagogy into an understanding of how particular topics, problems, or issues are organised, represented, and adapted to the diverse interests and abilities of learners, and presented for instruction'. That is to say, teachers need to

understand what they teach, have the capacity to transform content knowledge, decide on the most appropriate teaching acts, think about testing and evaluation as an extension of instruction, and reflect on their own teaching. Each pedagogical decision is content-specific. These lists of categories of knowledge sometimes form parts of teacher competence frameworks, which are usually used for the purposes of facilitating and documenting the development and assessment of a new teacher, and I shall discuss issues related to competences later.

3.6.3 Knowledge and context

Knowledge does not exist in vacuum but is shaped by the context. In teaching, the relationship between knowledge and context is normally understood in two ways. First, context plays an important role in teachers' knowledge production. Second, teachers' knowledge of context affects their teaching and learning. Sharkey (2004) discovers that knowing the context also has special values in, for example, curriculum development. On the one hand, having knowledge about the context establishes a participant's credibility in the curriculum development process. Comments on and suggestions about a particular curriculum are only legitimate if they are made by teachers who know the context. On the other hand, teachers use their knowledge of context to define and articulate their needs and concerns regarding a curriculum.

There are multiple layers of context (Sharkey, 2004). Context can be the classroom and can as well go as far as an international professional organisation. Anyhow, teachers live and work in two fundamentally different places: one behind the classroom door with students and the other in professional, communal places with others. They cross the boundaries between these two places, in which knowledge might be understood very differently, many times a day. Teachers therefore also need knowledge of the world outside classroom, from which imposed prescriptions (i.e., other people's visions of what is right for the children) are funnelled into the school system, changing the teachers' and students' classroom lives (Clandinin and Connelly, 1996).

3.6.4 Knowledge, learning and communities

Learning has both individual and sociocultural features. Although knowledge appears to reside in individual teachers' separate work and experience, it is also socially embedded (Freeman, 2002). According to situative and sociocultural theorists, interactions between individuals are both the means for, and the result of, learning (Wertsch et al., 1995). The participants constantly negotiate meaning of their practice in the dynamic relation of living in the world (Wenger, 1998) and learning happens

when there are changes in the participation in socially organised activities (Lave & Wenger, 1991). Knowledge is shared in, and at the same time produced through the interactions.

Teachers' learning is thus a process of increasing participation in teaching, and through this participation, they become knowledgeable in and about teaching (Adler, 2000). This can occur in many different aspects of the practice, including their classrooms, school communities and professional development courses (Borko, 2004), where they are both individuals and participants of social systems. They learn and know in relation to people such as their students and colleagues, for example when they are counseling a pupil or having a conversation with another teacher. In and through these social interactions, professional knowledge emerges. In sum, learning is both a process of active individual construction and of enculturation into the practices of a wider society (Cobb, 1994). It is generated by inquiry of the learners and facilitated by learning communities (Sharkey, 2004).

A learning community is 'a group of autonomous, independent individuals who are drawn together by shared values, goals and interests, and committed to knowledge construction through intensive dialogues, interaction and collaboration' (Loving et al.,

2007: 179). The focus is not just on individual teachers' learning but the professional learning within a community – the notion of collective learning (Stoll, et al., 2006). A healthy PLC should be able to enhance teachers' continuing professional development, defined by Kelchtermans (2004: 200) as 'a learning process resulting from meaningful interaction with the context (both in time and space) and eventually leading to changes in teachers' professional practice (actions) and in their thinking about that practice'.

Various studies have linked support during the first year indirectly to PLCs. Johnson et al. (in Westheimer, 2008) discover that attrition rate in integrated professional cultures where novice and veteran teachers cohabit the professional community equally is significantly lower than schools where the professional community is either novice- or veteran-oriented. Smethem's (2007) study on modern languages teachers in England suggests that where new teachers on induction have the opportunity to join a PLC, the collaborative culture is likely to sustain their commitment, energy and intention to remain in the profession. These studies show that induction is effective when carried out in a supportive community, and that there is a positive relationship between being part of a learning community and professional development. What is missing from literature and thus the niche that I intend to fill is, firstly, the inquiry into *how* effective induction helps novice teachers become a contributing member of such supportive

learning community, and what strategies teachers not in an induction employ to attain this identity; and secondly, whether and how novices are expected to be members of learning communities by their significant others, expressed in texts such as the induction documents of their schools, and how such expectations affect the actual experience of new teachers and their perceived development.

3.7 Self-reflection on teaching and learning, and professional development

The notion of 'reflective practitioners' is perhaps most often associated with Schön (1983: 68)'s work. As discussed above, there is a type of knowledge that is inherent in professional action and is not easily amenable to rigorous analysis. Schön (op. cit.) calls it knowledge-in-action. It is 'spontaneous, intuitive, tacit and tangible', and most important of all, it works in practice (Pollard, 2008: 22). Schön argues that it is possible to 'reflect-in-action' (p.68). When a teacher does that, he becomes a researcher in the practice context, constructing a new theory of a unique case. His thinking and action are not separated, but in fact he inquires through experimenting and implementing (ibid). Reflective teaching is therefore active, cyclical (continuous monitoring, evaluating and revising) and evidence-based (Dewey, in Pollard, 2008). Reflective teachers draw on many sources of evidence and use them to inform their

teaching practice (Pollard, op. cit.). They relate experiences to their own knowledge and feelings, and are willing and able to integrate what is socially relevant into their images of themselves as teachers (Korthagen, 2001).

Kwo (1996a) believes that on top of personal qualities of the teacher such as being open-minded, a culture and social context nurtured by significant others is also a necessary condition for reflective teaching. In other words, although self-reflection is essentially done on one's own, individual teachers construct reflective practice with other people in their school settings. Schools can build in structures (e.g. spaces in timetables) that provide the necessary conditions for reflective teaching, but of course these structures by themselves cannot sustain continued development of teachers.

Regarding the relationship between self-reflection and competency, Bleach (1997) notices that critical self-reflection is often absent from those lists of basic competences of teaching because it is difficult to produce suitable performance indicators. While this might be true, a more fundamental issue is involved; Teaching is actually 'vocationised' when it is taken as a mechanical task involving the abilities to perform a range of compartmentalized skills. Such view focuses on the 'how' (in particular 'how' to repeat things that seem to work) only. Instead, to maintain a more

holistic view of teaching, one should constantly be examining the ‘whys’ behind certain practices, taking into consideration factors such as context, thereby changing situations from where they were lacking to more desirable states. A repertoire of experiences would then evolved (ibid). Having said this, possible ways to ‘measure’ reflection have been documented. For example, Kwo (1996a) finds in his study a consistency between the student teachers’ perceived learning and their actual development through action research. They demonstrate self-directed initiatives in their practicum, although sometimes they ‘[tend] to come up with more problems than coping strategies’ (Kwo, 1996b: 295). This contrasts with the commonly-named constraints in teaching practice, such as the shortage of opportunities to reflect due to limited time. This comparison between perceived self-reflection and actual learning as a teacher from the point of view of a teacher educator (by means of video-lessons and observations) is a good indicator of the effectiveness of reflection.

3.8 Collegial support and professional learning communities

Apart from reflecting on their own, teachers also learn and develop professionally when and by being in communities. The sociocultural perspective to learning and the notion of professional learning communities were discussed in Section 2.4.4. However, when studying the interactions between new teachers and their colleagues, it is

important to also look closer at terms such as ‘collaboration’ and ‘collegial’.

Interactions with and support from colleagues can be important for novices who lack support from specifically-assigned mentors, and might even be an alternative for those in school contexts where the a top-down institutional induction system does not work (such as the ‘individualistic’ type of school culture as mentioned in Section 3.5.3).

Johnson and Johnson (1989) coin three kinds of interaction patterns in a community: negative interdependence (competition), no interdependence (individualistic) and positive interdependence (cooperation). Although some shared goals may be achieved in all three types of interaction, only positive interdependence leads to high productivity and achievements, more positive relationships among individuals, greater psychological health and wellbeing, as they interact in ways that promote each other’s success (ibid). This kind of interdependence is characterised by, for example, having shared identity and striving for mutual benefit.

Building upon their work, Vojtek and Vojtek (2009) suggests that positive interdependence can actually be structured into group activity in school by the leadership. Of course, they appreciate the fact that while it is easy to assign teachers to collaborative groups, it is difficult to structure them so that people work together

cooperatively. There are many factors affecting whether people actually work together, but the ideal picture is to move from congeniality (being cordial to those you work with), to forced collaboration (having to do work defined by others together), to collaboration (working together to get a job done but not necessarily truly caring about each other), and finally to a collegial learning community, which is ‘a group of professional educators within a department, school, or district, hold themselves and each other accountable for working together to achieve their shared goals, purpose, or school’s mission through positive interdependence, reciprocal relationships, shared decision making, professional learning and mutual responsibility’ (p.231). Similarly, Westheimer (2008: 757) term this ‘teacher professional community’, a group of teachers engaged in professional endeavours together [...] oriented specifically around teacher work’. I am going to discuss below what forms these collegialities could take and their impacts on a new teacher’s development.

Howe (2006) finds in his analysis of the most exemplary teacher induction programmes from eight countries a common attribute of successful programmes, which is the provision of opportunities for experts and neophytes to learn together in a supportive environment promoting time for collaboration, reflection and a gradual acculturation into the profession of teaching. In other words, opportunities for teachers,

novice and experienced, to reflect together, share, compare, support and advise in reciprocal ways are important as values and self of individuals are gradually weaved into the culture and mission of the school, which can be both personally fulfilling and educationally effective (Pollard, 2008). This type of collaboration and reflective discussion capitalises on the social nature of learning (Vygotsky, in Pollard, op. cit.). Engagement in and learning from reflective activity is almost always enhanced if it can be carried out in association with other colleagues. The extent of perceived support provided from informal advice by colleagues can be striking (Cains & Brown, 1998). Also, teachers require attachments in order to live out satisfying professional lives in schools and create conditions of community for students likewise (Westheimer, op. cit.). Peer support is, according to Kwo (1996), especially significant for inexperienced teachers. The sense of membership and belonging in turn strengthens the profession as a whole (Westheimer, op. cit.). In fact, in Scherff's (2008) study for example, two keys to retaining teachers are a positive sense of professional community and administrator's support. Teachers want to and need to belong to a group.

Within the scope of induction, collegial relationship is especially important in three aspects: First, mentoring, when practiced within a strong professional community,

strengthens both teacher learning and teacher retention (Ingersoll and Smith, 2004).

Indeed, the place of mentors and mentees in professional learning communities needs exploration, since ‘mentoring in community contexts is not like mentoring in a insulated dyad’ (Bullough Jr, 2012: 70) Second, novices need to form visions of good teaching by watching colleagues and learning from them, as well as identify with the teaching profession (Shulman and Shulman, 2004). Lastly, learning from colleagues is especially important for new teachers who have not gone through professional preparation (Westheimer, 2008) since this is literally their first ‘teacher training’.

Unfortunately, the consensus seems to be that, as Westheimer (2008) summarises, still too few teachers are adequately prepared to learn from one another, and too few schools are creating the conditions where learning from colleagues might be possible (e.g. Scherff, 2008). The lack of collaboration among colleagues can be detrimental to the continual development of new teachers. For one thing, if fellow teachers work in isolation, this would create for the novices a gap between the pre-service training context (where novices are at least guided and supported by their university tutors) and the school reality (Kwo, 1996), which can be both shocking and frightening. Moreover, as mentioned, isolation from colleagues further exacerbates the difficult first year of teaching (Westheimer, op. cit.). I therefore hope, through the current study,

to find out what interaction patterns my participating novices have with their colleagues, the reasons for this and the mechanisms involved, as well as the implications this has on their experiences and identity.

3.9 Other forms of learning in communities

While initial teacher training has always been a partnership between schools and higher education (Thorogood, 1993), this is less so during the induction year – at least the partnership is not as explicit or as close. It is still the prevailing practice in induction that the assigned mentor is solely responsible for mentoring responsibilities (Kajs, 2002). While mentors are very likely to be the teachers who can give the novices the most amount of undivided time for professional dialogues and help, they may experience limitations in some areas of knowledge and skills, which creates frustration for them and the novices (ibid). Kajs (2002: 65) suggests that this issue can be addressed by forming a ‘support team’, which comprises professionals such as district and university educators. Benefits of having such teams include reducing mentors’ stress level and time commitment, addressing the novices’ wide range of needs, and even mediating the conflicts between a mentor and a novice when there is, for instance, a personality clash. This also solves one of the biggest problems in one-to-one mentoring – the lack of accountability, especially when the programme

structure and evaluation are immature (ibid). For example, competing priorities such as demanding teaching load can be barriers to the mentors' success in carrying out their responsibilities. Having said these, forming a support team is not without its obstacles, the greatest of which being demanding administrative coordination (Kajs, op. cit.) and the lack of budget (Howe, 2006).

Schuck (2003), along a similar line, advocates supporting new teachers by a network comprising teacher educators, beginning teachers and experienced teachers. In particular, she suggests that since support provided in each school varies, an external network of support would be valuable in assisting them to develop and grow in confidence. Interactions in the network in her project include face-to-face workshops where mentors and mentees, and/or peers, can mingle, engage in conversation and establish contacts; online interactions through a computer-mediated discussion board where participants can address a particular topic such as classroom management; and one-to-one interactions through emails, fax, telephone or meetings. Despite some limitations and difficulties such as lack of time to access online tools, a number of values of such network are reported. For example, beginning teachers feel more able to discuss issues in the network than they do in some instances in their schools because participants do not know each other prior to the project. There are thus some

honest questions and frank discussions. Also, sometimes it is the beginning teachers who offer advice to the more experienced teachers, which is much less likely to occur in schools due to the positions of novices and mentors in the hierarchy (ibid).

3.10 Critical review of two key studies that inform the current research project

The two following studies are closely related to the current one because of their motivation for study, focus and research methods. They are believed to provide insights into my research process such as ways to represent data. The present study also aims to fill the niches identified in the critical review.

Study 1: Fantilli, R. D. and McDougall, D. E. (2009) A study of novice teachers: Challenges and supports in the first year. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 25 (6), 814-825.

Fantilli and McDougall adopted a mixed method approach, first surveying 54 graduates from a two-year pre-service teacher education programme in Ontario, Canada, and then selecting 5 respondents for case studies. The participants were in their first to third year of teaching. The motivation of their study was similar to mine in that they investigated the experiences of the novices also because of a recent change in induction policy, in their case a launching of a mandatory induction programme.

On the quantitative side, the survey questions probed a number of challenges for novice teachers based on 15 challenges identified in the literature such as amount of classroom resources and communication with parents. The data (i.e. participants' responses to whether each aspect was considered challenging rated on a 5-point likert scale) were correlated to determine any parallels among the challenges and to form themes, which were used to inform interview questions for the case studies. The qualitative data included interviews with the 5 new teachers, and were organised into case studies.

Their study discussed a few important issues regarding mentoring that could be explored in the in my case study, such as mentor selection, and mentor training and qualification. Contextual factors such as school culture in affecting the novices' experiences and support are also worth examining. Moreover the study provides an example of what could be achieved in terms of representation of data; the authors manage to capture the complexities and uniqueness of each novice's experience, and at the same time present the common challenges and support needed among all cases. Clear outcomes – practical suggestions for their context based on the findings – were also listed in the end.

Study 2: Hall, B. and Cajkler, W. (2008). Preparing newly qualified teachers in England to teach pupils who have English as an additional language. *Journal of In-service Education*, 34(3), 343-360.

This study is about NQTs in England who taught pupils with English as an additional language (EAL) and entering the profession in 2005 and 2006. It explores their perspectives on their training and induction. It was carried out in an urban local authority with a high percentage of pupils with EAL, with over 100 first languages spoken. The novices' satisfaction and confidence with regard to the training and the quality of support offered to them in their first year of teaching were investigated. A total of 85 questionnaires were collected from the survey, and among the respondents, six from each year were interviewed.

The study reveals the special needs of teachers of students with EAL and the support they thus need. This is particularly relevant to my study as it highlights the fact that there are indeed aspects of teaching that new English teachers particularly need support with, for example, those regarding the language and subject-specific pedagogy, as opposed to supports that are generically needed for all novice teachers. The difference between their context and mine is, however, that most of the teachers in

their area did not share the same first languages with their students.

Very similar to the HK context, a tool kit (training pack about EAL) was disseminated to schools in the area as a kind of focussed support, although details about how this was used was not provided. This niche will be filled in my study; how official documents are used (or why they are not used) will be investigated.

The biggest limitation of the study, in my opinion, is that while it manages to identify factors that supported the novices' successful development, such as collaborative dialogues with colleagues, it has failed to describe *how*. This may imply that the qualitative data gathered from the interviews are relatively thin, perhaps because the participants were not probed enough to describe the strategies and processes involved in details. This is something I am cautious of when conducting my own interviews.

3.11 Conclusion

The first year of teaching is a unique period for a teachers' career. Novice teachers' development during that year is also an important area of research as it has huge implications on the retention, attrition and quality of the teaching force. Their perceived experience and development are in turn largely affected by whether and

what learning opportunities and support are available. I have also demonstrated in various sections above the importance of context, the cultural and situational features of the setting in which the interactions and development happen. These processes are influenced by the context(s) the teacher is in, be it their classroom or the wider education setting.

While studies in the area of the first year of teaching are abundant, majority of them do not focus on the first year solely. Neither do they examine the entire year, tracing the changes and development both in terms of their needs and support. The experience of beginning teachers of English as a second/foreign language is even less represented in the literature. The present study aims to fill all these niches, and precisely how this is done will be detailed in the next chapter of Methodology.

Chapter 4

Methodology

In qualitative case study, we seek greater understanding of the case. We want to appreciate the uniqueness and complexity of the case, its embeddedness and interaction with its contexts. (Stake, 1995: 16)

In this section I am going to, first, present and explain the research questions that drive the present research project. Secondly, I will discuss the theoretical underpinnings of my research, that is, the paradigm in which the current study is positioned and the qualitative approach it adopts. Then I will lay out the practical steps that I took in access negotiation and detail the different types of data collection methods. Details of the different data types generated will be presented. The main analytic tradition adopted was Qualitative Content Analysis. There will be actual examples showing how data was handled, particularly in terms of how codes and categories were developed. The categories developed have in turn become the main findings of the study and will be discussed in the next two chapters on Findings and Discussion.

4.1 Research Questions

The research project aims to answer the following two research questions (labeled A and B), the first one being the experience of the novices and the second regarding the

use of the Induction Tool Kit in participants' schools and how it compares to the novices' actual experience. These have been labeled as 'core' and 'subsidiary' as well, as the first question (A) became more prominent through the research process. It also has a number of elements, and each was used as guides in forming interview questions in the data collection, as well as to provide the overall direction for coding in the data analysis. Key themes such as needs and challenges are pre-determined, although specific codes and categories (such as 'relationship with students', using the example of 'needs and challenges' again) emerge inductively from the data. This will be discussed in much greater detail in Section 4.5.3.1. Table 1 is a graphic representation of the research questions.

(A) Core question (Primary contribution): What is the relationship between the needs and challenges the six participating novice English teachers in HK experienced, and the support they received?

This question will be approached by answering the following questions:

1. What are their perceived needs and challenges in the first year of teaching, and do these shift from one term to another?
2. Is there support available for them and what forms does it take?
3. How are the different forms of support perceived by different stakeholders?

4. Is there professional development (change in perception, attitude, knowledge and practice) and does it change during the year?
5. What is the relationship between professional development and the school-based support available for them?

(B) Subsidiary question (Secondary contribution): How does the notion of support for novices as suggested by the official induction scheme, realised in ACTEQ's documents compare to the actual experience of the six participating teachers?

1. Does the scheme identify the needs and challenges as found in the actual experience of the participating novices (i.e. as found in A1)?
2. How are support and its relationship with professional development understood in the scheme, as compared to the actual experience of the novices?

Table 1 A graphic representation of the research questions:

| | Details of analysis |
|------------|--|
| (A) | <p>Experience of first-year teachers</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Needs and challenges 2. school-based support and tools available (or the lack of) 3. Professional development (as perceived by stakeholders, i.e. novices and their mentors) |
| (B) | <div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-around; align-items: center;"> <div style="border: 1px solid black; border-radius: 15px; padding: 10px; width: 40%;"> <p>Actual experience of the novices:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Needs and challenges 2. Support 3. Professional development </div> <div style="font-size: 2em;">⇔</div> <div style="border: 1px solid black; border-radius: 15px; padding: 10px; width: 40%;"> <p>Same notions as manifested in documents by ACTEQ e.g. Induction Tool Kit</p> </div> </div> |

The needs and development of new English teachers in HK in their first year of teaching, and their changes through the year (i.e. (A) 1) are investigated first and foremost. Their perceived needs and challenges are mapped longitudinally. This is possible as the participants are interviewed four times (details to be discussed below in Section 4.2.6.1) at four significant times of the year, following the school calendar. In most HK schools there are three terms, the first one being September to December

(before Christmas), the second January (after Christmas) to April (before Easter), and the third May (after Easter) to July. The first interview is therefore conducted within their first month of teaching (mid September to mid October), the second right before the end of the first term (i.e. end of December), the third by the end of the second term (i.e. mid to end of March) and the last one by the end of the third term (i.e. end of June/ early July).

The relationship between the novices' perceived needs and development, the support they received, and their professional development is then addressed through (A) 2, 3, 4, and 5. Firstly I describe whether any forms of induction support are available to these teachers. Where specific school-based induction systems were in place, I find out what forms they took, what functions they serve and what their perceived effects are on the participating teachers' first year of teaching. In other words, how different induction elements (e.g. mentoring) shape the novices' experiences and development is examined. Also, I explore the role of the tools used, which are mostly school-based induction documents. Where there are no formal induction systems, I instead look at whether other less formal support mechanisms are available, and, again, what forms they take and what their effects are on the novices' perceived experiences and professional development.

It should be noted that while the experience of first-year teachers is studied and represented using a case study of all the six participants, the fact that the project is a case study allows for comparisons and contrasts among them. Looking at how their experience, support and development are similar or different to one another helps us make better sense of an English teacher's early career.

The second and subsidiary research question is an evaluative one. The official induction scheme in HK proposed by ACTEQ is scrutinised in relation to the actual experiences of the novices. A comparison between the Induction Tool Kit contents and the actual experiences is done in terms of, again, novices teachers' needs and challenges, support and professional development.

4.2 Methodology

In this section I am going to explain, first, the theoretical structure of my study and second, steps that I took in negotiating access and data collection. I will then end with the analytic methodology that I have adopted, explained with actual data samples.

As an overview, my project is a qualitative multiple case study (Yin, 2003) of beginning English teachers. Six first-year English teachers in HK primary and

secondary schools were invited to participate in this project by convenience sampling (details to be discussed in the 'Participant' session). The current case study is also instrumental (Stake, 2005) in nature because it is used to understand a broader issue, namely the first year of teaching and support available for new English teachers in HK. In other words, what drives the current study is not an intrinsic interest in any of the individual cases, but their potential in throwing light on the understanding of the relationship between support and development of novice English teachers. In the following sections, I am going to first discuss the research paradigm and the nature of qualitative research, and then move onto a discussion on working with the case study tradition.

4.2.1 Research paradigm and choice of approach

My project aims to develop an understanding of teaching and becoming-a-teacher experiences, which are socially-situated, from the point of view of novice English teachers (and in some cases, of their mentors). In particular I look at the relationship between their needs and challenges, the types of support available, and their professional development. Obviously, the picture is complex. For example, not only can the kinds of support for new teachers vary from one school to another in numerous ways, but teachers also perceive and describe their experiences differently.

In order to make sense of the complexities, a research paradigm that values multiple perspectives is essential. Also, detailed description of this social situation (i.e. new teachers in their first year of teaching) is of utmost importance in capturing the complexities. The research is therefore inevitably one developed within the constructivist paradigm and I have chosen to adopt a qualitative inquiry approach, both of which I am going to detail below.

4.2.2 Constructivist paradigm

A paradigm is an overarching belief system denoting particular ontologies (what is reality), epistemologies (how we know things) and methodologies (ways to understand the world) (Denzin and Lincoln, 2005). Users of different paradigms have different belief systems and worldviews. In particular, constructivists believe that reality is socially constructed and pluralistic (Richards, 2003), and that knowledge and truth are created (rather than discovered as viewed by the positivists) (ibid). They adopt a transactional epistemology, believing that meaning and knowledge are constructed through transactions (Guba and Lincoln, 2008) such as events, documents and interactions (Richards, 2003). Researchers within this paradigm are thus oriented to the richness of a world that is socially determined. They try to understand the construction of reality and the multiple realities it implies. Methods such as interviews,

focus groups, observation and recording – those that yield rich data and allow greater understanding of both the context and the experience – are normally used (ibid).

Researching and representing the complexities of the first year of teaching naturally take place within this constructivist paradigm. Teachers' professional knowledge and development emerge through a series of social and professional interactions with others. This professional knowledge is constructed through constant negotiations of meaning and the dialogues between received knowledge and experiential knowledge (Wallace, 1991; see also Mann, 2005), as discussed in Chapter 2. The essence is the multiple realities that are, for example, constructed by different sources of information, through different forms of interactions and in different physical and educational contexts.

4.2.3 Qualitative research approach

Because of the nature of the constructivist paradigm as outlined above, research developed in it more often than not adopts a qualitative inquiry approach. This approach is the 'home' for a wide variety of social researchers who value 'fidelity to phenomena, respect for the life world, and attention to the fine-grained details of daily life' (Schwandt, 2003: 293-294). In the field of English Language Teaching, this

approach is uniquely capable of documenting and analysing the situated, contextual influences on teaching and learning, as well as the ‘subtle variations in learner and teacher identities that emerge during the language learning/ teaching process’ (Dörnyei, 2007: 154).

According to Denzin and Lincoln (2005), qualitative research is

a situated activity that locates the observer in the world. It consists of a set of interpretive, material practices that make the world visible. These practices transform the world. They turn the world into a series of representations, including field notes, interviews, conversations, photographs, recordings, and memos to the self. [...] [q]ualitative research involves an interpretive, naturalistic approach to the world. [...] [q]ualitative researchers study things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of, or interpret, phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them. (p.3)

Aspects of qualitative research mentioned in this definition, namely the research setting, the nature of the data, the interpretative nature of analysis and the notion of insiders’ meaning will now be further explored.

Research setting

As far as possible, the current research has taken place in the natural setting of the

participants. It is situated in the communities where my participants, beginning teachers in their first year of teaching, are. These communities include their local school environments, where they interact with other teachers, staff and students, and also a larger community namely the English teaching profession (comprising of practitioners, pre-service teachers and teacher educators) in HK. It is anticipated that sometimes there are contrasts in terms of the types of interactions between their lived local worlds (e.g. the classrooms and staffrooms), their physical institutional setting (the school) and the wider 'community of practice' (see Section 3.8). The main social interactions studied are nevertheless those between the participants and their colleagues, in particular their mentors, and those between the participants and their students, other new teachers as well as myself as the researcher and a practitioner. These investigations are achieved through an intense and prolonged contact with the teachers and a reasonable immersion in their settings (Dörnyei, 2007), for a whole academic year (i.e., three terms). In addition to interviews, there was a school visit including a lesson observation with most participants, which allowed first hand observations of their contexts as I 'located myself in their worlds'.

The nature of the data

A variety of empirical data is collected and used in qualitative research as representations of the world. These can include recorded interviews, various types of texts (e.g. field notes, documents) as well as images (Dörnyei, 2007). The bottom line is that the data should capture rich and complex details so almost any relevant information can be admitted as qualitative data (ibid). For example, different accounts of the same set of experiences may be collected, each reflecting a different perspective on the incident. There is no ‘correct’ telling of the event; each represents the perspective of an individual (Denzin and Lincoln, 2005). In my study, in particular, this multiple perspective is achieved by interviewing both the participants and their mentors, and by understanding and organising the data as a case study of several new teachers. With the former, the resulting account is the same experience examined based on the perspectives of different stakeholders, for example, their respective views on the usefulness of the induction programme in their school; The latter is a comparison and contrast of different new teachers’ experiences, such as their encounters with parents. The data types generated from the collection process, such as interviews with mentors and school-based documents, will be described in detail in Section 4.3 and Table 8 below.

Interpretive analysis

Qualitative research is fundamentally interpretive. Interpretivists view human action as meaningful and emphasise the contribution of human subjectivity to knowledge.

The meaning that the interpreter reproduces or reconstructs is considered the original meaning of the action, and this is done by employing methods that allow them to both participate in the life worlds of others and to step outside their own historical frames of reference (Schwandt, 2003). Research of this type is therefore shaped by the researcher's personal history, race, gender etc, as well as by those of the people in the setting (Denzin and Lincoln, op. cit.), and the outcome is ultimately the product of the researcher's subjective interpretation of the data (Dörnyei, op. cit.). This kind of research is thus essentially value-laden. Silverman's (2005) says it more succinctly: 'value freedom in social science is either undesirable or impossible' (p.2). Claims are subjective yet based on evidence. Interpretative research is not about proving or rejecting causality or about seeking generalisability (I will come back to this issue of generalisability shortly), but about deeply examining an aspect of humans engaged in social life in order to uncover what exists there (Olsen, 2006).

Insider meaning

Qualitative research is concerned with 'subjective opinions, experience and feelings of

individuals' (Dörnyei, 2007). It is essentially interested in human behaviours and meanings they bring to the situations (ibid). The goal of exploring the participants' views of the situation being studied is therefore explicit and desirable. The aim is to reconstruct the self-understandings of the participants (actors) engaged in particular actions (Schwandt, 2003). In fact, their ways of making sense of their actions are constitutive of that action (ibid). My role in this particular study is thus that of finding ways to listen to and represent the new teachers' voices in ways that both convey their thinking as it is lived and make this thinking available for discussion (Atkinson and Rosiek, 2009). In other words, I attempt to make their worlds 'visible' (Denzin and Lincoln, 2005) so that the accounts are persuasive (Eisner 1985).

4.2.4 Case study

What is a case study?

A case study is the study of 'the particularity and complexity of a single case' (Stake, 1995: xi) in its natural setting (Duff, 2008). It 'advances the concept that complex settings cannot be reduced to single cause and effect relationships' (van Wylsberghe and Khan, 2007: 84). The researcher does not have control over the events in the setting but the interactions among the participants unfold naturally (ibid). It concentrates on experiential knowledge of the case, and how its social, political, and

other contexts influence it (Stake, 2005). Experiential knowledge includes both the participants' and the researcher's facilitating the conveying of experience of the actors (i.e. beginning teachers) and stakeholders (e.g. mentors), as well as the experience of studying the case (i.e. my research experience) (Stake, op. cit.). The reader's experience with the case can be enhanced by the researcher's, for example, through situational description of the case activity, while the readers themselves also bring to the case their preexisting knowledge and conceptual structures in understanding (ibid). In order to optimise the understanding of the case, we pay meticulous attention to its activities (ibid). The primary interest of the researcher is in the case and how things get done (Stake, 2005). Therefore, in the current study, each beginning teacher and the group collectively are my prime referent. Since this case study is qualitative in nature, I orient to the complexities of the practices in the teachers' natural settings.

A variety of data collection methods and multiple sources of data, such as interviews and observations, can be used in a case study (Van Wynsberghe and Khan, 2007). It is therefore not a technique or research method itself (ibid) but rather a method of collecting and organising data so as to maximise our understanding of the characters of the studied (Dörnyei, 2007). Case studies are also often at least partially longitudinal (as is this study) so as to allow the researcher to spend an extended period

of time examining the case and to gather detailed information about it (ibid).

Case boundary

While the primary research setting is the individual schools and other professional activities the teachers were involved in (such as professional development programmes outside the school), I also paid attention to the wider HK education context in examining the cases. Furthermore, teachers' worlds consist also of, for example, their friends and families, which inevitably affect their lives as teachers. The scope of what to and what not to study can sometimes be problematic, as 'boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident' (Yin, 2003: 13). In other words, it is not always clear whether a phenomenon should be considered context or features within the case. For the purpose of this project, I am primarily interested in the new teachers' professional world. Still, I am open to the possibility that their personal relationships (e.g. families) may help understand and explain some aspects of their professional development and challenges. This can be seen in one of the cases, Mary, whose family members were main actors in her account of a sleeping problem due to high expectations for herself and the students (See Section 5.3.2 d).

Sampling

Dörnyei (2007) suggests that in case studies a purposive sampling, a careful selection of the particular case, is key, especially when the case is to help gain insights into a more general matter. However, because of the issue of access (which will be discussed in 4.2.6.2), the new teachers in my study have not been chosen following any pre-determined criteria. Nonetheless, the gist of purposive sampling is that we think critically about the parameters of the population and process we are interested in (Silverman, 2005). In this sense the new teachers are ‘strategically’ invited to participate out of an instrumental reason (Stake, 2005) as they shed light on understanding the first year of teaching, development of beginning teachers, as well as English language teaching and teacher development in HK in general. Each teacher is studied in depth, both their contexts and their activities, with the ultimate pursuit of understanding beginning English teachers in mind. The case study is, however, not a collective one as the participants were invited without the knowledge of whether they were going to be similar or different in nature. Having said that, as suggested in Section 4.1 when presenting the research questions, because multiple cases are involved, there are inevitably comparisons and contrasts among them.

Richards (2011) suggests that while a particular case study must be configured within

what he terms an ‘axial context’, which is ‘the extent to which a single case can throw light on features of the larger class of cases to which it belongs’ (p. 209), the relationship between a particular case and its larger family need not depend on notions of typicality or representativeness (ibid). It is simply because no single case can satisfy the criteria of an adequate representative sample (Small, 2009). The value of each case is therefore, as established above, its potential contribution in understanding a broader issue. However, it should be noted that this potential explanatory power of the relevant case does not equal generalisation. Stake (op. cit.) actually warns researchers against strong commitment to generalisation which may draw attention away from the case itself.

Generalisability is actually not considered to be a feasible demand of a case study (Richards, 2011; see also Gomm et al., 2000 and Khan & Wynsberghe, 2008). Therefore rather than working within an inappropriate trajectory from ‘representative sample’ to ‘generalisable findings’, I provide a collection of cases that might generate ‘illustrative outcomes’ (Richards, 2011: 216). Such outcomes draw strength from ‘the rich particularity of individual cases’ and the impact of which can be judged by readers in terms of:

- the strength of their resonance with other researchers or professionals;

- the success of the practical recommendations they make;
- the nature of their contribution to the development of theory.

These will be illustrated in Chapters 4, 5 and 6, where findings are discussed in detail in relation to specific features of the HK context and referred back to the wider literature, as well as Chapter 8 where I discuss the implication of the findings and make relevant recommendations.

4.2.5 Participants

Recruitment

The primary participants of my study are novice English teachers in HK who had no prior full-time teaching experience, and started teaching for the first time in September 2009. They are all ethnic Chinese with Cantonese as their mother tongue. They needed to be teaching at least one class of English to be eligible for this study. Both primary and secondary teachers were invited, and the grades they were teaching are sometimes taken into account in the analysis.

Participants were invited through three means:

- 1) personal connection (e.g. friends of mine who were going to become teachers,

colleagues of friends of mine). Three of the six participants, Ray, Tim and Mary, were invited in this way. Mary was a personal acquaintance while Ray and Tim were new colleagues of a friend of mine.

2) sending invitation letters to university department or faculty administration and asking them to forward the letters to students of theirs who would be graduating in the summer of 2009. (Please refer to Appendix 3 for the message to university department administration and the invitation letter to completing students.) Because English teachers were the target participants, I sent the letter by email to all university faculties/departments in HK which were related to English, Language Teaching and Education, which included Bachelor's Degree in Education, Social Studies and Arts, Double-degree in Education and Arts, Postgraduate Diploma of Education, and Master's Degree in Education and Arts. Examples of faculties/departments approached are the Education Faculty of the University of Hong Kong, and the Department of English of the Chinese University of Hong Kong. Two of the participants, Linda and Ben, were recruited by this method.

3) asking teachers who had agreed to participate in the study to invite their friends and ex-classmates who were going to be English teachers to participate, and to contact me

if any one was interested. One of the participants, Sarah, was recruited through this. She was an ex-classmate of one of the participants, Ray.

The participants, apart from the official invitation letter, were contacted, and briefed about the aims of the study as well as the commitments involved after an initial exchange. Some showed concerns (e.g. time commitment) and these have been responded to. A total of 6 participants eventually committed to participating in the study. Duff (2008) argues that it is usual to select four to six focal participants for study in one or more sites, thereby providing interesting contrasts and corroboration across the cases.

One thing to note is the relationship between the researcher and the researched, as '[w]e cannot ignore our relationship with the interviewee and the effect this might have on the way the talk develops' (Richards, 2003: 117). My experience on the field has helped me reflect on this. For example, the fact that some participants and I have common friends might have affected the way we presented ourselves, as well as the people and things we talked about. This was especially true for Ray and Tim since they worked in the same school as one of my good friends (the person who introduced them to me) does. For example, they might have presented their colleagues more

positively. At the same time I acknowledge that it is impossible for me to understand their school contexts solely based on what I have gathered from them, as my friend had also told me her experience in this same school. I am conscious of this and will acknowledge it in the analysis and discussion wherever appropriate. Having said this, how the relationships affect the study per se is not the main focus of the present study.

Table 2 below is a general introduction of the participants.

Table 2 Basic demographic information of the six participants

| Participants | Ben | Linda | Mary | Sarah | Ray | Tim |
|--------------------------------------|-----------|-----------|---------------------------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|
| Gender | Male | Female | Female | Female | Male | Male |
| Pre-service teacher education | BA/BEEd | BA | BEEd in LE , Master's in ELT | BA/BEEd | BA/BEEd | BA/BEEd |
| Type of School worked in | Secondary | Primary | Primary | Secondary | Secondary | Secondary |
| Grades taught (English classes only) | S2 and S4 | P3 and P4 | P2 and P4 | S1 and S2 | S2 and S3 | S2 and S3 |

N.B.

BA/BEEd = Bachelor of Arts and Bachelor of Education in Language Education – English

BA= Bachelor's degree in Arts

BEEd in LE= Bachelor's degree in Language Education

ELT = English Language Teaching

4.2.6 Methods

This section outlines the different methods I have used to gain understanding of the new teachers' world. Interviews and the focus group with the novices are my primary sources of data. Other methods/procedures were taken either 1) as triangulation, to clarify meaning and to verify the validity of an observation or interpretation (Stake, 2005), such as field notes; or 2) as multiple perspectives on the first year of teaching, such as interviews with the novices' mentors and school-based induction documents in

order to better understand their experiences and contexts.

4.2.6.1 Interviews

A. Interviews with the six novice teachers

Drawing up questions and piloting

Gillham (2005) suggests that it is most important to develop interview questions that are relatively distinct from one another, avoiding overlapping redundancy. With this in mind a preliminary list of questions which would be used in the first round of interviews, drafted based on issues and concepts in the literature review and the research questions were piloted with 2 teachers, with 2 and 8 years of teaching experience respectively. They were to answer the questions based on the retrospection of their first year of teaching and were asked to make comments on the questions and to see if any questions were redundant. Both participants in the pilot study commented that the questions were fine and generally easy to answer. Although they mostly made up answers since they could not remember details in their first year of teaching especially with the participant who had taught for more than 8 years, the questions were able to allow them to develop ‘narratives’ instead of single-line answers. One participant in the piloting commented that asking about the finest details (the exact classes she taught in the first year, the exact time she needed to arrive at school every

day) actually helped her to recall more other details, such as her feelings about the students then. This skill of requesting details and not general information was used as probing in the actual interviews.

In the actual interviews the novices I also deliberately allowed space for the participants to talk about their experiences, support, difficulties and challenges, and development as ‘narratives’ (Gillham, op cit) since these elements were woven together and it was therefore difficult to talk about them one by one.

Type of interview

A total of 4 interviews took place with each of the 6 participating novice teachers in the three school terms, one conducted between late September and mid October 2009, one in December, one in March 2010 and one in June. All interview dates are listed below in Table 3.

Table 3 Interview dates

| | 1st interview | 2nd interview | 3rd interview | 4th interview |
|-------|---------------------------------|---------------------------------|---------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| Ben | 19 th Sep 2009 | 20 th Dec 2009 | 28 th Mar 2010 | 26 th Jun 2010 |
| Linda | 26 th Sep 2009 | 21 st Dec 2009 | 13 th Mar 2010 | 11 th Jun 2010 |
| Mary | 20 th Sep 2009 | 23 rd Dec 2009 | 18 th Mar 2010 | 14 th Jun 2010 |
| Sarah | 11 th Oct 2009 | 19 th Dec 2009 | 19 th Mar 2010 | 22 nd Jun 2010 |
| Ray | 30 th Sep 2009 | 21 st Dec 2009 | 27 th Mar 2010 | 18 th Jun 2010 |
| Tim | 17 th Oct 2009 | 12 th Dec 2009 | 26 th Mar 2010 | 26 th Jun 2010 |

All interviews were face-to-face and semi-structured (Gillham, 2005). The structured elements allow me to cover the same ground with all the participating teachers in the case study, and these elements ensure equivalent coverage if the interviewees have not dealt spontaneously with one/some of the areas of interest. This is important as the case study is multiple and instrumental, as discussed in Section 4.2.4; the group as a whole is examined to enhance our understanding of first-year English teachers, and each participant should make similar contributions to the case. Interviews that are totally open-ended would make it difficult to summarise the results in a meaningful way (Johnson and Weller, 2001) and to make comparisons. Each participant was therefore interviewed for an approximately similar length of time and as mentioned, a

few common topics and areas were covered in all interviews at each stage. A summary of some of the common topics and sample questions can be found in Table 4 below.

At the same time, the less structured elements are also valuable; Some questions were open and I could judge whether to probe for more details at my discretion (Gillham, op. cit.). This is especially important as qualitative interviews are for deepening understanding instead of accumulating information (Richards, 2003). A ‘narrative’ type of interview rather than a ‘question-and-answer’ format is preferred. The less structured elements allow me to respond freely to opportunity as the interview progress (ibid). It also allows space for the participants to foreground what they think is important and to articulate the complexities of their situated understandings. In sum, semi-structured interview was chosen because it ‘facilitates a strong element of discovery, while its structured focus allows an analysis in terms of commonalities’ (Gillham, 2005: 72).

It should also be noted that, firstly, some topics were actually covered at all stages of interviews, such as their interactions with mentors. Secondly, the interviews naturally developed from being more structured in the first round, in order to gain a better understanding of their backgrounds, to being less structured in the later rounds. This is

because each participant's experience was more and more affected by their unique contexts and encounters, and it was therefore most natural to follow the flow and probe into what was most salient from the participants' perspectives. Having said this, the topics in the later interviews were actually more relevant to the research questions than those in the first. This is both because of my development as a more proficient researcher as well as the trust and prior knowledge that had been established between the researcher and the participants. This allowed both me and the participants to get to the specific details rather than spend time on the general and peripheral information.

Table 4 Sample interview questions

| Interviews | Common topics | Sample questions |
|---------------------------|---|---|
| 1 st interview | 1. reasons for becoming a teacher | Why and how have you entered this profession? |
| | 2. pre-service teacher training | Can you tell me something about your teaching practices? |
| | 3. first encounter with the mentor(s) | How did you get to know your mentor? |
| | 4. daily routines at school | Can you take me through a typical day at school? |
| | 5. experience of the first few weeks/ first month of teaching | How would you describe your first month of teaching? |
| 2 nd interview | 1. changes in the first term | How have things got on since the last time we met? |
| | 2. interactions with principal, colleagues and mentors | Think of a significant recent interaction with your mentor. What happened and how did you feel? |
| | 3. lesson observations | Has anyone observed any of |

| | | |
|---------------------------|--|---|
| | | your lessons? If yes, what happened? |
| | 4. main source of support | Who do you think has been most helpful to you as a new teacher? |
| | 5. biggest concern as a new teacher, in the first term of teaching | What advice would you give someone who's going to become a teacher soon, especially during his first term of teaching? |
| 3 rd interview | 1. development since first term | Have you noticed any differences between your time management this term and that of the last? |
| | 2. school culture | How would you describe the culture of your school and that among your colleagues? |
| | 3. support on different job aspects | Did you get any help when you set the exam papers? |
| | 4. other forms of support and professional development | What have you done in terms of your continuing professional development? |
| | 5. Plans for the next year | Have you talked to your school about the renewal of contract? |
| 4 th interview | 1. Relationship between the induction and challenges in the first year | What do you think has been the biggest challenge in your first year of teaching? Do you think your school/mentors have helped you/ could have helped you on this? |
| | 2. development as a fulltime teacher | What have you learned/developed as a teacher, which you didn't when you were a student teacher? |
| | 3. idea of an effective induction | What do you like about the induction scheme of your |

| | | |
|--|---|--|
| | | school? What could have been done/ cancelled? |
| | 4. being member of a PLC | Do you think you have mostly learned as a group or learned on your own this past year? |
| | 5. relationship between induction and continuing professional development | How do you think this first year, including the induction, may affect your teaching next year? |

Since the study was longitudinal with the aim of finding out if there were any changes for example in terms of their perceptions and practices over the whole first year, some of the questions for each interview were actually designed based on answers given in previous ones. The following transcript extracts show two examples of this:

0021 Linda: not really (.) during exams there are a lot of
0022 professional (.) what (.) staff development for you
0023 Researcher: so I see, so it falls on that period.
0024 Linda: yes there's one almost every day (.) if it's not (.) I
0025 mean if it's not staff development there will be
0026 co-planning meetings=
0027 Researcher: =mm=
0028 Linda: =preparing materials for next term (.) argh
0029 Researcher: do you know what kind of professional
0030 development there will be (.) last time you
0031 mentioned about (.) some courses on computer
0032 didn't you (.) are they related (.)

(TS 2b)

3643 Researcher: mm (.) last time you mentioned about a higher
3644 grade class (.) and the students (.) is it the
3645 primary 4 class
Linda: mm=

been ideal, with surrounding distractions and noise in the recordings (which was actually not too bad after testing). Nevertheless, this matter was carefully considered and I believe that on balance this was the best solution to fit in with the teachers in the midst of their already very heavy workloads.

All interviews were audio-recorded and most will be transcribed and the rest taken notes on. Issues regarding transcriptions will be discussed in Section 4.5.1.

Interview language

Since both myself and all interviewees had access to at least two languages, Cantonese and English, decisions needed to be made in terms of the language(s) for interviewing, which in turn would affect the resulting data (see Mann, 2010). Cortazzi et al. (2011), in their study on Chinese interviewees, find numerous differences in the quality of the data obtained depending upon the language choices. They also argue that the language choice issue is complex, and the differences are not simply due whether the interviewer displays certain ethnicity. For example, although their participants were much more expressive and added additional information when interviewed in their first language (Mandarin Chinese), other issues related to ‘face’, such as whether it is perceived to be appropriate to self disclose in a first-language context, are key (ibid).

For my interviews I let the interviewees make their own choice of interview language for two main reasons. Firstly, it built rapport and established trust by moving the locus of control towards the participants. I considered it unethical to specify a particular language they had to use. It would also be unfair to assume that they were more at ease using Cantonese as some might actually be more comfortable discussing certain topics in English, especially also as languages teachers they were relatively proficient. Secondly, by allowing the participants freedom to choose it was also assumed that I could use either or both languages myself when explaining the questions. This was important as there were indeed topics I would find hard to explain in Cantonese since I studied them in English, most of which were terms and phrases used in ELT such as ‘authentic materials’, ‘strategies of motivating students’. All interviews were eventually conducted mainly in Cantonese and there were considerable number of codeswitching/ codemixing instances, which will be discussed in Section 4.5.1.2.

The issue with this choice, however, is that there would be translation issues when the interviewees used Cantonese, or a mixture of Cantonese and English. This will be also be discussed in detail in Section 4.5.1 on transcription and translation issues.

B. Other interviews

1. Interviews with some of the novices' mentors

Three novices' mentors were successfully interviewed in May and June, 2010. They were invited through the participating novices. Each was given an invitation letter to help pass to their mentor(s). I decided to conduct the interviews with mentors later in the year for two reasons. First, I anticipated that it would be easier to negotiate access when I had known the participants for more than half a year. Secondly, the mentors would have had mentored the novices long enough to talk about their experiences. These interviews serve as a good source of multiple perspectives on the first year of teaching and support.

2. Interviews with ACTEQ

My initial plan was to interview ACTEQ, the committee who formulated the new induction system and designed the Induction Tool Kit. I wanted to gain a deeper understanding of the rationales behind the system and their expectations for both the scheme and novices. An email with an attached invitation letter was sent to the Chairperson of ACTEQ in February, but the invitation was unfortunately turned down. The reply from ACTEQ can be found in Appendix 4.

Silverman (2005: 153) suggests that ‘the beauty of qualitative research is that it offers the potential for us to topicalise [difficulties in the field] rather than just treat them as methodological constraints’. ACTEQ’s claims on induction, the tool kit and development of novice teachers found on the reply will therefore be analysed instead.

4.2.6.2 Recordings of interactions/meetings between novices and their mentors/colleagues

Participating novices were encouraged both verbally and in written form to record any interactions they might have with their colleagues and other practitioners. These include pre- and post-lesson observation conferences, meetings with mentors, induction sessions, staff development seminars/workshops, staffroom interactions, and even informal chats, with the consent of parties involved. Consent forms and letters explaining the study were to be readily provided to participants whenever they needed them, although participants who actually did record something did not express such need.

Table 5 Information of recordings by participants

| Participant | Date of recording | Type of interaction |
|-------------|---------------------------------|---|
| Ben | 29 th November, 2009 | Exchanges with colleagues and students while patrolling around the school |
| | Unknown | |
| | 3 rd January, 2010 | |
| Sarah | Unknown | Retrospection of an interaction with a co-teaching partner |
| | Unknown | |
| | Unknown | |
| Tim | Unknown | Grade level meeting with colleagues |
| | Unknown | |
| | Unknown | |
| Ray | 17 th March, 2010 | Grade level meeting with colleagues |
| Tim and Ray | Unknown | Grade level meeting with colleagues |
| | Unknown | |
| | Unknown | |

It can be quite easily seen from the above table that none of the exchanges recorded are related to mentoring and thus not particularly useful for my project, although from the interviews I got to know that interactions with their mentors actually took place.

Apparently, the interactions recorded are all less threatening to the other parties concerned, and Sarah's are actually not even interactions with her colleagues, but just a 'thinking-aloud' in retrospection.

Although I appreciate the usefulness of data showing the participants' actual interactions with their colleagues, especially their mentors, access is an issue at the

same time. Despite efforts to encourage and remind the participants, eventually this form of data collection method was controlled by the participants, no matter consciously (e.g. not wanting to record something that might be sensitive) or unconsciously (e.g. forgetting to record, even in situations where it was possible). It would have been awkward, even if the permission was gained, for me to, for example, attend their meetings and tape the interactions. One participant, Linda, also expressed an unexpected difficulty; Her mentor had given consent to have their mostly weekly interactions over lunch recorded, but it was when Linda wanted to start doing it that a new colleague (who joined the school in the middle of the year) joined the lunch, and unfortunately the new colleague did not agree to be recorded.

Having detailed the caveats above, the recordings have not been dismissed as without value. For instance, on hearing Ray's recording, a feature noticed in the meeting actually informed some of my later interview questions.

4.2.6.3 School visits and lesson observations of new teachers, and corresponding

field notes

To feel and to get a better picture of the lived worlds the participants inhabited, and to design interview questions that would probe and establish the richest data, I requested

to pay at least one visit to each participant’s school and observe at least one of their classes. It was explained to the participants that this would help me gain a better understanding of their physical school environments and teaching contexts they were in, which would help me make better sense of our interviews. Eventually four participants accepted the request. One lesson was observed with each, and a tour around the school was done either before or after each observation. Details of each visit are as summarise in Table 6 here:

Table 6 Details of all school visits and lesson observations

| Participant | Date | Class observed | Other school areas observed |
|-------------|---|---|---|
| Ray | 4 December, 2009 (School’s Open House) | Secondary 3 | The library, the school hall (with a book fair) |
| Tim | 4 December, 2009 (School’s Open House) | Secondary 2 | |
| Linda | 17 December, 2009 | Lunchtime + Reading Session + Primary 3 | Common area on 4 th floor |
| Mary | 12 March, 2010 | Primary 2 + Lunchtime | Entrance to the staffroom and general office, the playground |

I deliberately include the other areas observed as well, as firstly, they actually helped me in formulating questions for the next interviews and secondly, like the recorded interactions with colleagues, they serve as a kind of triangulation of the interview data.

For example, Mary’s mentor suggested that one of her jobs as a mentor was to

familiarise the novice with the school's physical environment, as it was big and newcomers could get lost in it. This would have been hard to imagine if I had not been to the school and toured around it, as most HK schools are relatively small. In other words, the school visit helped me make better sense of what was said in the interview.

4.2.6.4 Induction Tool Kit and related documents (e.g. the ACTEQ webpage), as well as school-based induction documents from the participants

The Induction Tool Kit formulated by ACTEQ tool kit and school-based induction documents the participants were able to get hold of and willing to share with me were collected. As mentioned, a summary of the Induction Tool Kit can be found in Appendix 2. A full list of the school-based documents collected can be found in Section 4.3 and the followings are some examples:

- Lesson observation forms
- Staff appraisal forms
- Evaluation forms for induction

As discussed in the research questions, these documents are analysed and compared to the actual experiences of the novices in terms of notions such as teacher professional development.

4.2.6.5 Focus group at the end of the school year

There was one focus group at the end of the school year. The participants were engaged in an informal group discussion focused around a particular topic and set of issues (Wilkinson, 2004) emerged in the whole first year. Dörnyei (2007: 144) suggests that this 'collective experience of group brainstorming' can 'yield high-quality data as it can create a synergistic environment that results in a deep and insightful discussion'. This is desirable as the focus group served three functions: first, it provided an opportunity for member validation (ibid). It is reasonable to assume that things that the participants chose to reiterate were those that really concerned or impressed them. Second, the interaction among the new teachers, looking back on their first year of teaching, was another source of very rich data to help us better understand and put together bits and pieces of what had been gathered at different times of the year; Third, the focus group serves as a means of triangulation especially when the cases are compared. This focus group, like the other interviews, was semi-structured. Questions come from the data collected and themes from the initial analysis, organised around the three topics shown in Table 7 below:

Table 7 Topics for discussion in the Focus Group

| Topics | Details |
|---------------------------------|--|
| 1. Challenges in the first year | 15 most salient issues that new teachers face, mentioned in interviews throughout the year, were picked out and written on separate cards. Participants were to pick 1-2 that they felt most strongly about and talk about them. Others were encouraged to respond as they wished. |
| 2. Effective induction | Participants were asked to design an induction plan for new teachers, using their own schools as the context. Each had the chance to present some of their ideas, followed by responses from others. |
| 3. Helpful mentoring | Participants were asked how they would play the role if they were a mentor to a novice English teacher. They were encouraged to give concrete details such as how often they planned to meet their mentees and how they would prepare before the school year actually began. They were encouraged to respond to one another's ideas. |

The group interview took place in a quiet private room in a café, and was video-recorded. Video-recording was used instead of audio-recording (which was used in all individual interviews) for pragmatic reasons; If only the voices were recorded it would have been difficult to differentiate a speaker from another especially when more than one person was talking. The image, for example facial expressions and nods, will be included in the transcripts although emphasis is still primarily on the speech contents.

4.2.6.6 An online group on Ning

This is the only explicit form of intervention from the part of the researcher on the

participants' first year of teaching. An online group was set up using an Internet-based social networking software called Ning (for more information, please see www.ning.com). It was anticipated that the group would allow the participants to share teaching resources, as well as thoughts and feelings about teaching and being a new teacher. The interactions between the researcher and the participants and among the participants might enrich the data but would in itself be a form of support to the participants. I aimed to find out, from the interactions, interviews and focus groups, to what extent this is helpful to the novices.

However, after a few personal and email invitations to join the group, only 1 participant eventually did. Participation was found to be more difficult than expected.

I will come back to the implication of this issue in Section 8.1.4 c.

4.2.6.7 Research diary

I kept a diary (Silverman, 2005) throughout the whole study, making an entry after most interviews, during each school visit and lesson observation, and basically when any feelings or thoughts came up in between the encounters. In fact, a research diary (called 'journal' by e.g. Dörnyei, 2007) can include field-notes, real-time comments, memos and annotations of the researcher (Dörnyei, 2007). Some of the entries were

written in English and some in Chinese, since as a bilingual I think in both languages.

On reviewing the diary no special patterns were found with regard to when each language was used.

There are a number of advantages of keeping a diary. Silverman (op. cit.), for example, suggests that it shows the readers how the researcher develops his thinking, helps the researcher to be more reflective, improves the researcher's time management and provides ideas for future directions of the work. Duff (2008) suggests that diary-keeping should also be part of the analysis and interpretation process itself, as the researcher starts to think carefully about new data and themes.

Again, notes on the research diary are referred to all through the process of analysis.

While they were not analysed in themselves as core source of data, for example using content analysis, they served as a form of support to the interview data. For example, they help in filling in information gaps and in suggesting interesting paths to go down in the coding and analysis processes. In fact, the diary went on till the completion of this project, as the analysis and interpretation in turn involved a lot of reflections and other mental processes.

Three research diary entries which took different forms and served different functions were chosen as examples and can be found in Appendix 5. The first is a memo for myself, the second is comments and notes while listening to an interview recording and the third is thoughts and feelings after an interview. I have also added brief annotations of what they were about.

4.2.7 Ethics

On top of basic requirements such as seeking ethical approval from the Centre for Applied Linguistics and the Graduate Progress Committee of the University of Warwick, and asking participants for written consent, as well as some precautions detailed in the previous section, a few other practices have been taken into consideration and actions taken to ensure an ethical research environment for all parties involved. I have also followed some of the guidelines provided in the Recommendation for Good Practice in Applied Linguistics Student Projects (British Association for Applied Linguistics, 2000) such as avoiding stress and intrusion as much as possible.

4.2.7.1 Reciprocity and being unobtrusive

Participants have all been given book vouchers as a form of incentive, and as a token

of gratitude for their participation and time. It was also anticipated that my presence as a more experienced practitioner and our interactions would in themselves have been an element of support for their development. For example, interviews were great times and spaces for reflection; I asked questions that prompted them to examine their decisions and practices (RD_27092009). Metaphorically, as a researcher and in relating to the participants, I aim to be 'symbiotic' rather than 'parasitic'; I not only aim to not be obtrusive or add burdens to their already stressful first year and heavy teaching load, but I was also determined to be helpful and supportive, by engaging them in interviews and friendly relationships which are mutually beneficial.

4.2.7.2 Teachers-researcher relationship

Participants were contacted regularly but briefly through email and by phone throughout the whole academic year, to build rapport and continuous links, and to make sure that they were comfortable in carrying on with the study. Contacts are still being maintained even now, beyond the year of data collection, so that the whole process is not only research but also a co-constructed and natural experience, and so as to maintain relationships that are equal. All participants have my contact details and are encouraged to let me know if there is anything at all that I can help with.

4.2.7.3 Participants' access to data and involvement in its interpretation

The interviewees all have access to the transcripts and the final report, and their rights to delete anything on the transcripts that they do not wish to remain have been respected. Although rare, in a few instances they were also consulted in terms of the translation (from Cantonese to English) in the transcribing process. There was one focus group at the end of the school year when the novices also had a chance to validate what they had said.

4.3 Data Types

As a result of the above data collection methods, the following data types have been generated:

Table 8 Data Types

| | | |
|------------------|------------|---|
| Core data | Interviews | Audio-recordings of interviews with participants (novice English teachers) (N = 24) |
| | | Audio-recordings of interviews with participants' mentors (N= 3) |
| | | End-of-year focus group with all participants (N=1) |
| | Documents | Induction Tool Kit (ACTEQ, 2009) |
| | | School-based induction documents <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Guidelines on appraisal (N=1)2. Guidelines on lesson observations (N=1)3. Lesson observation forms (one filled and one blank) (N=2) |

| | | |
|-------------------|--|--|
| | | 4. Teacher appraisal form (filled) (N=1) 5. School bulletin (N=1) 6. Induction Programme – Timetable (N=1) 7. Induction Programme – Year Plan (N=1) 8. Induction Programme – Daily Responsibilities: Interim and Final Reviews (filled) (N=1) 9. Induction Programme – Individual Domains: Interim and Final Reviews (filled) (N=1) |
| Other data | Research diaries | |
| | Transcriptions / Notes on Recordings | |
| | School visit (N=4) Lesson observation field-notes (N=4) | |

4.4 Evaluating quality of this qualitative study

The purpose of this section is making explicit how I have employed different means in assuring the research quality in terms of trustworthiness and persuasiveness. ‘Validity’ and ‘reliability’ are words used to describe the quality of not only quantitative inquiry but also qualitative ones, where validity is ‘the extent to which an account accurately represents the social phenomena to which it refers’ (Hammersley, 1990: 57) and reliability refers to ‘the degree of consistency with which instances are assigned to the same category by different observers or by the same observer on different occasions’ (Hammersley, 1990: 67). In terms of actual practice, the following actions have been taken to ensure that the methods are reliable and the findings to be discussed in

Chapter 4 are valid. Some of these steps have their own limitations, and will too be explained below.

1. *Longitudinal design involving more than one case*

Case studies vary in the extent to which they are longitudinal but an important contribution of this study is that it tracks novice teachers' experience and support over a whole year. Firstly, it overcomes the limitation of majority of research that reports the nature of the first year of teaching in one snapshot. Each participant's accounts could be followed up in later interviews and were compared to what was said in their other interviews. Second, the multiple-case design allows useful comparisons among the teachers. Both of these lower the possibility of letting a few accounts over-represent the phenomenon.

2. *Triangulation*

The longitudinal design also draws on data collected from multiple sources, achieving triangulation. Triangulation refers to 'the attempt to get a 'true' fix on a situation by combining different ways of looking at it or different findings' (Silverman, 2010: 277). It is a process of 'balancing one account with others, measuring the accuracy of accounts by comparing various versions, testing the

limits of consensus (Kushner, 1996: 196). Triangulation is achieved in this study in two ways: multiple perspectives and multiple data sources. The experience of the novices, particularly their support, is understood through the lenses of not only the new teachers themselves but their mentors. There is also triangulation from various data sources, including field-notes and school-based documents.

3. *Respondent/ Member validation*

Respondent validation involves going back to the subjects with tentative results and refines them in the light of the subjects' reactions (Reason & Rowan, 1981).

This was done throughout the course of data collection as well as in a specific follow-up interview conducted 8 months after the completion of data collection.

The former involves checking with the participants what they had said in previous interviews or my observations during the school visit. An example of this was discussing features I had noticed when observing Tim's lesson in one of our interviews. One of them was what I saw as being taken advantage of by his students, especially the girls. I put down on my field notes what one of them did:

1. Insisting that Tim switched on the fan (claiming that it was too warm)
2. Putting up her hands instead of using the paper fan which Tim gave out to

each student during the class activity (students were supposed to use the two sides of the paper fan to indicate whether the sentences Tim was showing them were correct or incorrect)

I also put ‘allowing freedom or encouraging misbehaviours? →check with Tim his feelings and philosophy’ (Fieldnotes, 04/12/2009_2). I did ask Tim in our next interview whether he thought the students were taking advantage of him, knowing that he was a new teacher, and the followings are notes taken on that interview recording regarding his response:

| | |
|-------|---|
| 07:56 | Not used to telling students off |
| 08:10 | When students in other sets (classes) failed to complete class work, he threatened to detain them, and students would be scared |
| 08:16 | This set were not scared of anything – a lot of marks had been deducted from them |
| 08:24 | Parents did not care, were spoiling them; it was difficult to handle |
| 08:44 | Would add rather than deduct marks (reward rather than punish) |
| 08:51 | Kept tallies of students’ misbehaviours and those who reached a ‘red’ would be detained (first warning – green; second, yellow; third, red) |
| 09:22 | The Principal did not like teachers telling students off to their face |
| 09:27 | The Principal kept stressing ‘kind but firm’ |
| 09:35 | Important to show students that things were negotiable |
| 09:49 | Many students in this school were like that – spoiled; always got what they wanted |
| 10:03 | Colleagues agreed that there was no discipline – they expressed how they felt whenever they felt like it |
| 10:21 | Owing to low English proficiency of this set they could not do so (expressing themselves) in English lessons |
| 10:35 | Other teachers actually liked them being so expressive |

There were two main themes in how Tim accounted for the students' behaviours: that the Principal did not like teachers telling students off even when they misbehaved and that students were spoiled by their parents and therefore difficult to manage. These reasons were obviously different from how I interpreted the students' behaviours (that students were treating Tim differently because he was new). While there probably were not any other ways of finding out 'the truth' (apart from asking the students directly, and even then their versions could be different), Tim's response was understandable, since being perceived as taken disadvantage by one's students was potentially face-threatening. Silverman (2010) and Fielding and Fielding (1986) actually argue that it is problematic to attribute a privileged status to the respondents' accounts of the context of their actions. Admittedly this is a limitation of member validation since it is wrong to assume, especially within a constructivist paradigm, that there was only one 'reality' and that the actors own it. Still, I hold that respondent validation is sometimes valuable, as will be shown in an example from the follow-up interviews.

The follow-up interviews were conducted in the participants' second year of teaching. All six participants were contacted and three of them agreed to be interviewed again. The participants were shown some preliminary findings,

comprising mostly of codes and categories that had been developed in the first stage of the data analysis. They were invited to comment on to what extent the analysis (involving my interpretation) was a fair representation of their experiences. Parts of the transcripts or notes on recordings were also referred to when the participants were unsure due to having forgotten what they had said in the interviews in their first year of teaching.

There was only one event where the participant doubted the accuracy of the categories. It was about codes emerging from one of Mary's interviews and her mentor's, which suggested that her mentor was reinforcing existing practices rather than involving the novice as co-inquirer into problems and enabling them to try out solutions for themselves, which I perceived as a problem. Mary however expressed a preference for such mentoring style. Whether mentoring that encourages conformism is beneficial to the novice's development will be further explored in detail in Chapter 6 (Section 6.1.1 on mentoring support), but Mary's comments and her reasons for the preference have definitely helped me understand novices' needs better and more faithfully represent their voices.

4. *Showing of analytic procedures*

Seale (1999: x) suggests that '[m]ethodological awareness involves a commitment to showing as much as possible to the audience of research studies [...] the procedures and evidence that have led to particular conclusion, always open to the possibility that conclusion may need to be revised in the light of new evidence'. Obviously it is impossible for me to show all the analytic procedures and evidence for all the findings and conclusions I am going to discuss and make; however four detailed examples can be found in Section 4.5.4 regarding how data were dealt with and themes generated.

In terms of representation of the data, some original transcripts that are relevant will also be included in the discussion of findings. Longer extracts that include the interactions (i.e. my speeches as well) will be shown where appropriate to demonstrate the importance of interviewer contributions and interactional context (see Mann, 2010). At the same time this allows readers to analyse the data by themselves (thereby establishing internal reliability) and to replicate the study (thereby establishing external reliability) (Nunan, 1992).

4.5 Data Processing and Analysis

This section will begin with discussion on the decisions made when transcribing the

interview data, followed by the traditions upon which different data sources are analysed, namely Qualitative Content Analysis. The steps taken in the handling and analysis of at least one sample of each core data type will then be shown.

4.5.1 Transcription features, procedures and issues

4.5.1.1 Transcription and translation

‘The first step to any adequate analysis of interview data must be transcriptions’, as it ‘allows the sort of focused attention on the minutiae of talk that promotes insights into technique and content’ (Richards, 2003: 112). While full transcriptions are helpful in capturing features of the interactions and how meanings are co-constructed, as well as in allowing the researcher to study the discourse closely, my primary interest is not on the interactions per se. Therefore, my decision has been to transcribe the majority of the interviews and take notes on the rest. All first and last interviews in full, as they were conducted in the most special times of the year (which are after one month of teaching and right before the first year ended) and would thus be the most representative of the particular challenges and feelings the novices had then, as well as of the changes during the year.

The transcripts or notes were then coded them to form categories which are either from priori established ideas from the research questions, literature and documents

(such as the Induction Tool Kit), or emerge from the data. (Details of the coding procedures will be discussed in Sections 4.2 and 4.3.)

Since all interviews were mostly conducted in Cantonese, as explained in Section 4.2.6.1, they were not only transcribed but also translated. I have decided to translate the interviews into English as I transcribe, rather than transcribing them using Cantonese first and then translate into English. The reason for doing this is simply because there is no written norm for Cantonese (Bruche-Schulz, 1997). This is not surprising as Cantonese is a spoken dialect rather than a written (or writable) language. At school, Chinese is taught and pronounced in Cantonese, but Mandarin (also known as Putonghua) is taught as the norm of the written code (known as Modern Standard Chinese) (ibid). ‘Cantonese is not taught at any level of linguistic sophistication (Bruche-Schulz, 1997: 308), and is not encouraged to be written.

An alternative way of transcribing is to put the conversations in Modern Standard Chinese, which was dismissed as the original meanings would be changed anyway. In fact, various scholars (in Bruche-Schulz, op. cit.) suggest a lexical difference rate between Cantonese and Mandarin of around 40%, with some even providing an estimate of above 70%. On top of this, there are a substantial amount of slangs and sayings in Cantonese which do not have equivalents in Mandarin. As a result, the most

pragmatic way of approaching the transcription is to translate the interviews into English as I transcribe them.

I recognise the issues with translating all speeches to English early in the analysis process when actually the interviews were conducted in another language/dialect, Cantonese, one of them being that the tie between language and identity/culture might be cut to the speakers' disadvantage (Temple and Young, 2004). As Barrett (1992: 203) pointed out, researchers 'have accepted to varying degrees the view that meaning is constructed in rather than expressed by language'. Language constitutes our sense of self, and the differences in how speakers talk and thus present themselves can sometimes be lost in the translation, and in my case early in the research process.

There are also pros and cons of myself being both the interviewer and the transcriber/ translator (as well as the researcher). Obviously, the advantage is that there is no need for using translators. Some methodological issues were avoided for it is almost impossible for both the researcher and the transcriber/ translator to have the same understanding of all the ontological and epistemological issues involved, such as recognising and representing the co-construction nature of interviews. Translation is never neutral. In research where the researchers do not speak the participants'

language it is impossible for them to find out to what extent the translator have brought to the translation their own experiences and understanding of events and people, to name but just one potential problem. The disadvantage of my dual role, however, is that my intense involvement in the research and continuous exposure to the participants and data mean that some interaction features or even contents might be overlooked.

In terms of transcription convention, despite the inevitable changes in sentence structure and lexical nuance during this shift from Cantonese to English, I have included some interactional features in the transcripts so that the translation is as close as possible to the original meaning and delivery. Nevertheless, since the study follows the Qualitative Content Analysis tradition (whose details will be discussed below) and not, for example, the Conversation Analysis framework, contents is still the main focus. Interactional features are only referred to when they suggest an attitude, such as a long pause that signals an obvious hesitation. A transcription key can be found in Appendix 6. See Appendix 7 for an example of transcript.

4.5.1.2 Codeswitching

I mentioned that all interviews were *mostly* conducted in Cantonese because all

respondents had access to at least two languages, Cantonese and English, so code-switching was present in all. Code-switching, ‘a phenomenon of switching from one language to another in the same discourse’ (Nunan and Carter, 2001: 275), is common among HK people. Studying the transcripts, I have discovered two main categories of code-switching. (To be more precise, what is found is code-mixing, the term used by Kamwangamalu [1992] to describe alternations of language produced within a sentence.) One of them comprised of ideas/things commonly expressed in English or even normally expressed more in English than in Cantonese among HK people. The words in the other category are academic terms that the speakers probably have no access to their Cantonese equivalents. They are illustrated in the following examples. The underlined bits are English and the rest are originally in Cantonese.

Category 1

In these cases, the speaker had access to the Cantonese equivalents but ended up codemixing, probably unconsciously.

| | | |
|------|-----|---|
| 0106 | Ben | Particularly enjoyable, that would be, |
| 0107 | | sometimes when I saw that after |
| 0108 | | teaching them the students really |
| 0109 | | learned something, I mean from not |
| 0110 | | knowing to knowing, that change was |
| 0111 | | rather, rather interesting, And I think |
| 0112 | | because when I was in Year 4 I went to |
| 0113 | | a <u>Band 3</u> school, |

(TS 1a)

- In this extract, the phrase ‘Band 3’ is pronounced in English, and many HK Cantonese-English bilinguals will do the same when referring to the banding of secondary schools.

0150 Ben and of course on a part-time basis I had
0151 also tutored those kids (.) those small
0152 kids in kindergarten whose families
0153 were very rich and who could
0154 communicate in fluent English

(TS 1a)

- In this extract, the word ‘part-time’ is said in English in the original speech. Again, this is a very common term used by HK bilinguals in referring to the nature of jobs.

Category 2

Unlike the first one, ideas and things in this category are uncommon, mostly because they are specialised, and can hardly be expressed in Cantonese.

0428 Ben and if you pre-teach 10 words all at
0429 once they won’t get them (.) so maybe
0430 3 to 5 (.) and if they can follow the
0431 listening they will have a sense of
0432 achievement and they will keep on
0433 trying

(TS 1a)

0399 Ben I don't know if this was because we
 0400 were brainwashed (.) we thought
 0401 textbooks weren't authentic
 0402
 0403 Elaine ((laughter))
 0404
 0405 Ben nor communicative (.) so we designed
 0406 our own materials but the materials we
 0407 designed were very difficult

(TS 1a)

In these two examples, the speaker very likely had acquired the terms in English.

These underlined words are believed to be revealing in terms of the participants' professional training and pedagogical beliefs.

4.5.2 Participants and their corresponding transcripts/ notes on recordings

Table 9 here shows how the transcripts/ notes on recordings are numbered:

Table 9 Keys for transcripts and recording notes

| Participants | Ben (a) | Linda (b) | Mary (c) | Sarah (d) | Ray (e) | Tim (f) |
|----------------------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|
| Interview transcripts (TS) | 1a, 2a, 3a, 4a | 1b, 2b, 3b, 4b | 1c, 2c, 3c, 4c | 1d, 2d, 3d, 4d | 1e, 2e, 3e, 4e | 1f, 2f, 3f, 4f |

| Mentors of participants | | Linda's | Mary's | | Ray's | |
|----------------------------|--|---------|--------|--|-------|--|
| Interview transcripts (TS) | | bb | cc | | ee | |

N. B.

➤ TS = Transcript

- With the participants, the letter represents the participant and the number represents the four interviews (e.g. 1a – first interview with Ben; 2f – second interview with Tim); With the mentors, bb refers to the mentor of b, i.e., Linda's.
- For full transcripts (i.e. all first and last interviews), the lines are numbered (e.g. TS 1c, 0309). For notes on recordings, the notes are timed (e.g. TS 4e, 20:30).

4.5.3 Analytic traditions

The main analytic tradition I work with in analysing the three types of core data, namely the interviews, focus group and documents, is Qualitative Content Analysis.

The following section details its nature and the procedures adopted. I am also going to discuss how I draw on features of narrative research in both the analysis and representation of data. In terms of analysis, stories that participants told in the interviews are analysed especially in terms of their identities and how they position others in relation to themselves. As a form of representation, I employ vignettes in narrating the novices' experience as a way of 'setting the scene' before discussing prominent themes emerging from the data.

4.5.3.1 Qualitative Content Analysis

Content analysis has been known to be primarily concerned with the analysis of texts, and to adopt a positivist approach (e.g. Hardy, Harley and Philips, 2004). The underlying belief is that the meaning of text is constant (ibid), can be known precisely and consistently by different researchers as long as they utilise rigorous and correct

analytical procedures (Silverman, 2001), and that the analysis is basically quantitative, that the results are amenable to statistical analysis (Hardy et al., 2004). It is also sometimes compared to discourse analysis, which focuses not on the text itself only but also on its relation to the context and intentions of the producer etc (ibid).

Content analysis can in fact also be epistemologically and methodologically qualitative, as well as constructivist depending on how the researcher interprets the content. Hsieh and Shannon (2005: 1278) define 'Qualitative Content Analysis' (QCA), as 'a research method for the subjective interpretation of the content of text data through the systematic classification process of coding and identifying themes or patterns'. As opposed to its quantitative counterpart, QCA emphasises an integrated view of speech/texts and their specific contexts. It goes beyond merely counting words or extracting objective content from texts and instead examines 'the meanings, themes, patterns that may be manifest or latent in a particular text' (Zhang and Wildermuth, 2009:1). It focuses on the unique themes that illustrate the range of the meanings of the phenomenon (ibid). The goal is to provide knowledge and understand the phenomenon under study (Hsieh and Shannon, op. cit.). In the current study, it is the first year of teaching and the related notions, such as challenges new teachers face, that I intend to foreground.

4.5.3.2 Directed Content Analysis

Because of its qualitative nature, QCA is mainly inductive, grounding the examination of topics and themes in the data (Zhang and Wildermuth, 2009). Having said that, there are also slight differences in terms of the coding schemes and origins of codes among different approaches. Hsieh and Shannon (2005) for example outline three approaches to QCA, namely the conventional, directive and summative. While in the conventional approach the coding categories are derived directly from the text data, and with the summative approach there involves counting and comparisons using keywords, the directive approach starts with a theory or relevant research findings as guidance for initial codes, which I have adopted in coding my data. The actual coding procedures and resulting codes will be discussed in detail in Section 4.5.4 below.

The goal of directive content analysis is to validate or extend a theoretical framework or theory conceptually (ibid). Existing theory and research not only help focus the research questions but also ‘provide predictions about the variables of interest or about the relationships among variables, thus helping to determine the initial coding scheme or relationships between codes’ (Hsieh and Shannon, 2005: 1281). This approach to content analysis fits the nature of my methodology in that most questions in my semi-structured interviews were designed with predetermined categories which were

informed by the research questions (such as challenges as a first-year teacher, support from colleagues). Also, definitions of terms such as ‘professional development’ are available in existing literature, which have been used in coding the particular phenomenon. However, in order to guard against possible biases in identifying what counts as a relevant text, I have chosen to, first of all, highlight identified texts without coding. They are then coded using preliminary codes. By doing so I can capture all possible occurrences of a phenomenon and thus increase trustworthiness (ibid).

Nevertheless, because the analysis is after all qualitative in nature, codes are also defined and refined during the data analysis, rather than entirely predetermined or ‘carved in stone’.

Figure 1 below shows the steps taken in approaching the core data sources.

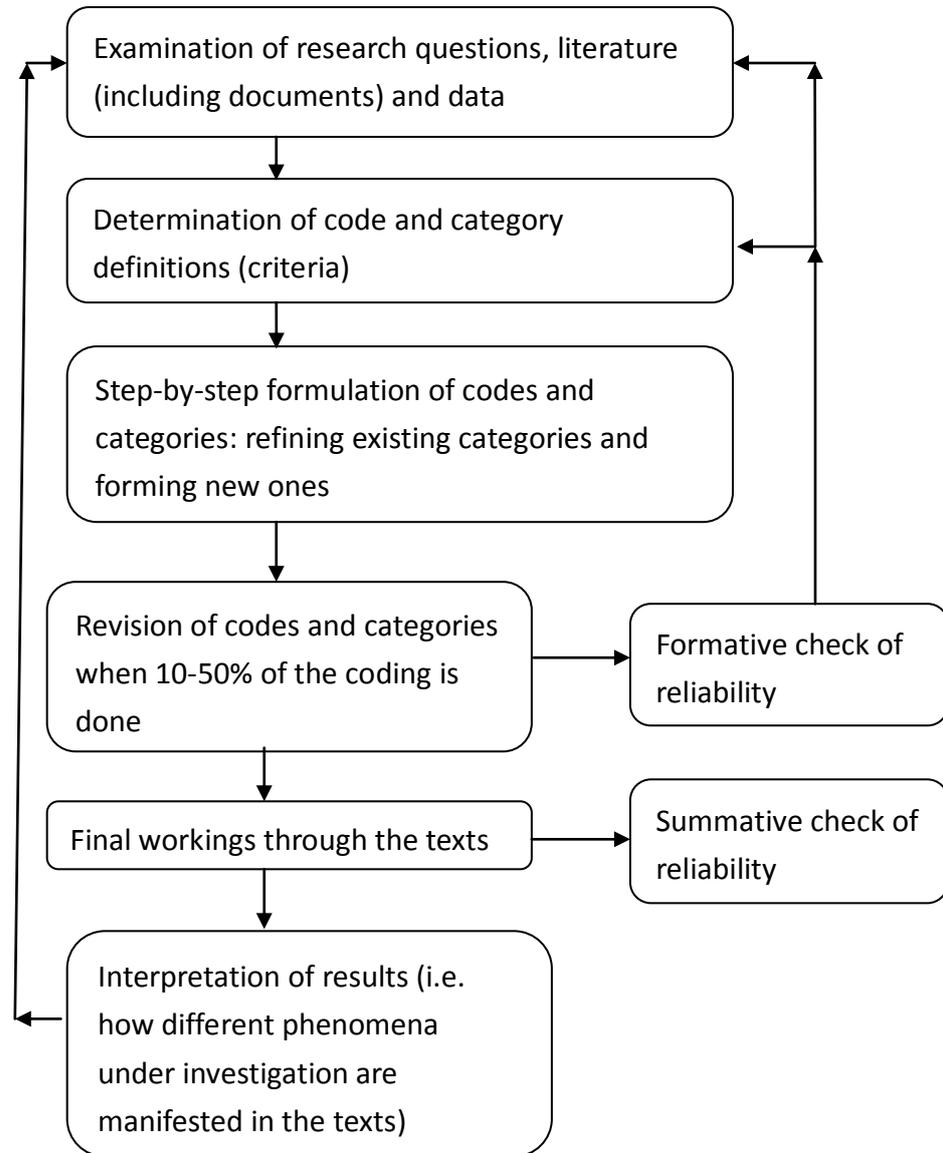


Figure 1 Step model of inductive category development (adapted from Mayring, 2000)

As seen from the figure, the first step to the coding is to have a close look at the data, research questions and literature. This helps determine the direction and focus of investigation by providing a place to start. For example, in my actual coding, I decided to first look at ‘needs and challenges of novices’ as it is the first research

question, and quite a large part of both interview and document data are about this category.

Secondly, criteria of codes and categories have to be set. Take the example of ‘needs and challenges’ again. There were two criteria in determining which parts in the interview data should be considered and therefore categorised as ‘needs and challenges’. The straightforward one was when what was mentioned was perceived and admitted by the participants as a need or challenging. The less direct one was if what was said was interpreted by the researcher as having caused the participating novice problems or difficulties in their teaching or in performing their role as a teacher. Criteria for codes will be further explored in Section 4.5.4 below.

With the criteria in mind codes were gradually formed by examining the data. The whole next section will be devoted to a detailed discussion of how codes and categories are formed, illustrated with actual examples. When a substantial part (10-50%) of the coding is done, there is a formative check of reliability by referring back to the research questions, literature and the data itself. After that the coding continues until it is almost done. A summative check of reliability is then done. Through these feedback loops, the codes and categories are carefully founded and

revised within the process of analysis. They are eventually reduced to main categories, organised, and presented. I am now going to detail with concrete examples how the codes and categories were actually developed from the data.

4.5.4 Examples of how data types were handled in developing codes and categories

The following examples show how different data types were actually dealt with. As discussed, codes and categories can be developed in two ways. They can be developed with the help of existing documents and academic literature, driven by the researcher's theoretical or analytic interest in the area (Braun and Clarke, 2006). They can otherwise be derived inductively from the data, where the data is coded without trying to fit it into a pre-existing coding frame, or the researcher's analytic preconceptions (ibid). For each core data type (see Section 4.3), namely interviews with novices, interviews with mentors, focus group, school-based documents and the Induction Tool Kit, a sample is chosen and steps in data processing and analysis will be presented in detail.

Example 1: Interviews with novices – challenges in the first year of teaching

Here I provide an example of the development of a category that belongs to the first

research question regarding the challenges of the first year of teaching (see Section 4.1 for the exact research question) and Table 10 below summarises the steps. This category is named 'medium of instruction'. It concerns difficulties in deciding what language(s) to use in (or even outside) the classroom for novice teachers who teach English as a second/foreign language, or problems that arose as a result of the teacher's choice. This challenge was almost 'anticipated' as it has been discussed in previous literature (See Section 2.1.3 in the Literature Review). However, participants were not prompted to talk about this specific challenge but only asked the general question of the needs and challenges they had.

In this particular example it was one of the participants, Tim who foregrounded the issue of language choice. The actual codes came entirely from the data when studying the transcripts and notes on recordings. Of course in later interviews this specific challenge was followed up using a direct question in order to trace development if any. This helps answer another research question which is about shifts in professional development (refer to Section 4.1).

The coding was done following the procedures that Graneheim and Lundman (2004) propose. First, each meaning unit is highlighted. Meaningful unit is defined as the

‘constellation of words or statements that relate to the same central meaning’

(Graneheim and Lundman, 2004: 106). All the highlighted bits that were related to the MOI were extracted and shown in column 2 of Table 10. Then, each text is condensed; it is shortened but the core meaning preserved (see column 3). Next, codes, or labels of meaning units, are given to each condensed text (see column 4 and key below the table for criteria for each code). These codes are then grouped into sub-categories and categories, which are groups of content that share commonalities (ibid). I only show in this example how codes are developed. How they are then grouped into categories will be instead detailed in Example 3.

Table 10 How codes under the theme of ‘medium of instruction’ are developed

| | Transcripts/ notes | Condensed texts | Codes |
|---------------------------|---|--|------------------------------|
| 1 st interview | because my school is an <u>EMI</u> , | English medium school | MOI_school |
| | and I, in class and out of class, even when I see them every day I speak English, | only speak English to students; | MOI_self |
| | in fact to some extent there’s a <u>language barrier</u> , you know | language barriers existed | MOI_problems MOI_students |
| | all the English teachers in my school speak English | colleagues used English only | MOI_colleagues |
| | and I need to coach the basketball team too and I don’t want to sacrifice, after all teaching English | considered English his profession and not coaching basketball in Chinese | MOI_self |

| | | | |
|--|---|--|----------------|
| | is my profession and basketball is just a, you know side line and I can't switch to Chinese just because of basketball or everything I've built up will come to nothing, so I use English | | |
| | but at the same time there's another teacher-in-charge and sometimes they help them with things I couldn't explain, | Another teacher helped explain (in Chinese) | MOI_solutions |
| | Some English teachers choose to use a bit of Chinese, | Some colleagues used some Chinese | MOI_colleagues |
| | because I teach the weaker students, you know if I begin say something in Chinese they will keep speaking in Chinese to me, so that's why I quite insist on this, | Insisting on English-only especially important when teaching weaker students | MOI_students |
| | but I think I knew it's gonna be difficult, | Insisting on using English only was difficult | MOI_problems |
| | in the beginning when they heard of ideas they were like, you know they would laugh, they said, you know 'how could this be possible', | Colleagues were surprised that English-only worked with the basketball team | MOI_colleagues |
| | Right sometimes you really need to try, if you don't you never know, | Important to try using English only | MOI_self |

| | | | |
|---------------------------|--|---|------------------|
| | well so far we've had quite a few practices and I've been able to manage even when | Able to manage using English only | MOI_self |
| | [you mean they didn't think it's possible to coach basketball using English?] No they didn't, you're right, so later when I succeeded in doing it they were like 'really? That's interesting! | Colleagues did not believe it's possible to coach basketball using English | MOI_colleagues |
| | It's actually good cuz you can encourage them to speak English through sports | Good to encourage students to use English through sports | MOI_students |
| 2 nd interview | *Some [local] colleagues pretended to not know English, even when speaking to the parents. The Vice-principal and the Principal asked if teachers can let students know they actually understand Chinese but that they wouldn't use it in school, as some parents had started to complain. | *Parents unhappy about teachers not speaking Chinese to them; | *MOI_parents |
| | | *Principals and Vice-principals asked English teachers to explain that they actually knew Chinese | *MOI_school |
| 3 rd interview | thought it was a <u>norm</u> that English teachers should speak English only because 2 seniors from university also taught there and they used English only | thought it was a norm to use English only because some other teachers were doing it | MOI_colleagues |
| | **There are things that | **used English only as | **MOI_colleagues |

| | | | |
|---------------------------|--|--|--------------------------------|
| | you know by doing you'd definitely be wrong and things that you don't know whether you'd be wrong. | it could not be definitely wrong | MOI_school |
| | **There is an English-only culture | **English-only culture in the school | **MOI_colleagues MOI_school |
| | Most colleagues have <u>overseas experience</u> | Many colleagues with overseas experience | MOI_colleagues |
| 4 th interview | [not mentioned] | | |
| end-of-year focus group | [not mentioned] | | |

Key:

All codes named using MOI – medium of instruction

MOI_self: novice's own beliefs about MOI

MOI_students: students' reactions to the MOI or its effects on students

MOI_school: school's (management's) policy or beliefs about MOI

MOI_parents: parents' reactions to the MOI

MOI_colleagues: colleagues' beliefs or behaviours regarding MOI

MOI_problems: problems experienced/ perceived, which are related to MOI (other than any stakeholder's reactions)

MOI_solutions: solutions to problems related to MOI

As illustrated in Figure 1, coding is not a linear process. Codes and their criteria were not developed all at once but went through a process of revision and refinement. Often times initial codes were given to the condensed meaningful units, and were later revised and refined by looking at codes across different interviews and even across participants. In this particular example, some codes were kept the same throughout (e.g. MOI_self, as texts reflecting personal beliefs were relatively obvious). However, others, such as texts now coded MOI_students, were first seen as belonging to

MOI_problems. The codes of MOI_problems were later refined to form codes such as MOI_students and MOI_parents as the ‘problems’ were indeed the stakeholders’ reactions to Tim’s choice of MOI.

It should also be noted that codes are not watertight; sometimes one meaningful unit (i.e. highlighted part of a piece of transcript/ note) could generate two codes as the whole highlighted unit was needed in understanding the meaning and it was therefore impossible to simply break it into two (or more). At the same time there might be more than one main idea in the unit (as shown in the condensed texts) and two (or more) codes were thus assigned to it. This happened in the coding of 2nd interview, marked with a *.

Sometimes more than one code is developed from one meaningful unit not because of the multiple ideas embedded but because it was difficult to determine which one code should be assigned to it. See the two examples under 3rd interview marked with **. In both of these examples it was hard to say whether Tim was referring to the school management or his colleagues. For example, when he said using English could not be definitely wrong it was not clear who he thought might judge him wrong; It could be his colleagues or the school management, or both. Similarly when he said ‘culture’ it

could be a culture among colleagues in his department, or culture of the whole school, or even a 'culture' created top-down from the management. Therefore, two codes, namely MOI_colleagues and MOI_school, were assigned in both cases.

Many of the prominent themes which are going to be discussed in the next chapter are developed like this example of the medium of instruction: recurrent issues suggested in literature guided the general direction of investigation and the actual data inform the codes and categories which in turn become the main findings for discussion. The following example is another one showing how codes were formed from relevant parts of the interview data. In this case codes were refined by studying across cases (i.e. different mentors).

Example 2: Interviews with mentors – age/experience of mentors

Some themes emerge entirely inductively from the data. Mentors' age and its relationship with the effectiveness of the support as perceived by the mentees, and sometimes even the mentors themselves, is a good example. I did not set out with this as a research focus or question, and the comparison between experienced (and older) mentors and not-so-experienced (and younger) ones was only possible because among the three mentors interviewed, one had only one year of experience and the other two

were experienced, who had been teaching for 7 and 12 years respectively.

Following the same procedures as those in Example 1, relevant meaningful units were identified and highlighted, the texts condensed and preliminary codes given. Table 11 below shows all the meaningful units and their codes. Although all the codes are related to mentor's age/ experience (all codes start with 'mentor_'), they have been refined reflecting various ideas:

- 'teachex' denotes teaching experience
- 'menex' denotes experience of being a mentor
- 'teachage' denotes age of the teacher
- 'menage' denotes age of the mentor
- 'actual' means the actual age/experience of the mentor
- 'view' is used when what was said was the view of the interviewee (either a novice or their mentor) on the ideal age/ experience of a mentor to a novice teacher

Table 11 How meaningful units and codes about mentor's age and experience are developed

(Linda's mentor, TS bb)

| Transcripts/ notes highlighted | Codes |
|---|-----------------------|
| 12 years of experience, in the same school (2:20) | mentor_teachex_actual |
| 2 years being a mentor (2:22) | mentor_menex_actual |
| Find someone who's of similar age (34:30) | mentor_teachage_view |
| perhaps someone who's just taught for a year and be their mentor (34:32) | mentor_teachex_view |
| Closer because of age and no generation gap (34:58) | mentor_teachage_view |
| While it's still fresh in their memory and they are able to feel for them (35:58) | mentor_teachex_view |

(Mary's mentor, TS cc)

| Transcripts/ notes highlighted | Codes |
|----------------------------------|-----------------------|
| 7 years of experience (2:11) | mentor_teachex_actual |
| first year to be a mentor (3:26) | mentor_menex_actual |

(Ray's mentor, TS ee)

| Transcripts/ notes highlighted | Codes |
|---|-----------------------|
| two years of experience (18:38) | mentor_teachex_actual |
| don't know how to teach or guide him (18:41) | mentor_menex_actual |
| In some traditional schools, perhaps one could benefit a lot especially in terms of pedagogy from a teacher with 5 to 6 years of experience (18:45) | mentor_menex_view |

The above transcripts and codes show that the mentors have different amounts of experience as a teacher and as a mentor. Two of them also chose to talk about how they thought a more experienced mentor and a mentor closer in age/experience would help their mentees better respectively. The most interesting finding is that the experienced mentor (Linda's) was suggesting that one whose experience was similar

to the novice might help better while the not-as-experienced mentor (Ray's) would rather the mentee had an older mentor and benefit from their experience. This will be further discussed in the next chapter in Section 6.1.1 e. How codes are further grouped into sub-categories and categories will be detailed in the next example showing the analysis of an excerpt of the focus group.

Example 3: Focus group excerpt – lesson observations

This example shows how codes are derived inductively from the data. It is a 7-minute transcription of the end-of-year focus group with all the six participants (see Appendix 8). This seven minutes has been chosen because it is believed to be representative of the interactions among the participants. In this particular part of the focus group, participants were given a list showing the most prominent issues in their first year of teaching. This list actually comprised of the categories as a result of the first stage of coding of the interview data, which was done before the focus group. The participants were encouraged to pick any challenges on the list they felt most strongly about and discuss, and lesson observation was chosen by one of the participants (Ben).

See Appendix 8 for the actual coded transcript. Table 12 below shows how categories were developed. After codes were formed following similar procedures discussed in

Examples 1 and 2, they were organised into categories. Creating categories is the core feature of qualitative content analysis (Graneheim & Lundman, 2004). A category is a group of content that shares a commonality (Krippendorff, 1980). Graneheim & Lundman (2004: 103) call it ‘an expression of the manifest content of the text’. It can be understood as a thread throughout the codes. Sometimes a category can be divided into sub-categories, when the category is broad and some codes can put together as a sub-group. This is the case for, for example, the ‘Observers’ and ‘Occasions/frequencies for lesson observations’ categories.

Table 12 How codes and categories under the theme of lesson observations are developed

| Category | Reasons for having lesson observations | | | | |
|-----------------|--|-----------|-------------------|--|--|
| Codes* | appraisal-related | | Admission-related | | |
| Condensed texts | Subject evaluation; Feedback | appraisal | Admission | fewer children; Primary schools and kindergartens take advantage | let primary school students experience S1 life |

| Category | Observers | | | | |
|----------------|------------|--------|---------|-------------------|--------|
| Sub-categories | Colleagues | | Parents | | Anyone |
| Codes* | Peers | senior | Parents | Potential parents | anyone |

| | | | | | |
|-----------------|---|---|---------|--|--------|
| Condensed texts | English Department; Peers (teaching same subject) | Management; Senior teachers (teaching different subjects) | Parents | Primary school students; Potential parents; Primary school students came as groups | anyone |
|-----------------|---|---|---------|--|--------|

| | | | |
|-----------------|---|--|---|
| Category | Feeling of participants towards own or others' lesson observations | | |
| Codes* | Negative feelings | Positive feelings | Feelings that are neither negative nor positive |
| Condensed texts | like putting up a show; scary; awkward; teachers nervous; disturbing to class | attractive to outsiders; experienced inter-disciplinary observations | casual; new; not really scary because some weren't observed |

| | | | | | |
|-----------------|--|---|---------------------------------------|----------------------|------------------------|
| Category | Occasions/ frequencies for lesson observations | | | | |
| Sub-categories | One-off | | | Routine | Occasional |
| Codes* | one day | A few times | 1-2 months | | |
| Condensed texts | Open House (December); Demonstration lessons at Open House | Demonstration Lessons; Primary school students have class with own students | During 1-2 months; Subject evaluation | Routine (every year) | Once in specific years |

| | | | | | |
|----------------|--|------------------|------------------|------------------|--|
| Category | Impacts of lesson observations on the students and the teacher | | | | |
| Sub-categories | Immediate | | | Long-term | |
| Codes* | Impacts that can be both positive/negative | Positive impacts | Negative impacts | Positive impacts | |

| | | | | | |
|-----------------|---|------------------------|---|---------------------------------------|--|
| Condensed texts | Having people in the classroom | Kids more well-behaved | Parents using Chinese in English lessons and teachers don't know how to react | Using Maths pedagogy in English | |
| | Parents fee to move around classrooms | | | Using Maths pedagogy to teach grammar | |
| | Parents free to speak to students/ ask students questions | | | | |
| | Parents free to open classroom windows | | | | |
| | Parents took notes | | | | |
| | Parents arranged to sit at the back | | | | |
| | Parents using Chinese in English lessons | | | | |

* The original codes include the prefix 'lesob' (lesson observation)

Krippendorff (1980) suggests that categories must be exhaustive and mutually

exclusive, meaning that no data related to the purpose should be excluded due to lack

of a suitable category, and no data should fall between two categories or fit into more than one category. This was achieved, and the only issue is sometimes participants talked about phenomena that did not actually belong to the theme, which, in this case, was 'lesson observation'. For example, Tim mentioned some schools' organising free summer classes in order to boost admission. While this does not belong to any categories under the theme of 'lesson observation', it is related to the fact that some participants' schools were inviting parents and students to observe the lessons and to visit the schools because of difficult admission situations. Codes like this one that 'do not fit' would still be helpful in, for example, writing up vignettes about the participants.

Example 4: School-based documents – lesson observation forms and its function in triangulation

The notion of triangulation was discussed earlier in Section 4.4. This example shows how it was actually achieved through understanding and analysing more than one data source at the same time.

Among all participants, Tim was the only one who had one of his lessons observed by a more experienced teacher (in his case the Vice-principal) and at the same time

allowed me access to the observation form. Appendix 9 is a copy of the actual filled-out form, and Table 13 below shows notes taken on the recording of his 3rd interview, where he talked about the observation.

Table 13 Notes on recording of Tim’s 3rd interview regarding the lesson observation by his Vice-principal

| | |
|-------|---|
| 06:48 | <u>Appraisal</u> , lesson observation |
| 06:55 | Luckily it was ok |
| 06:58 | The Vice-principal observed |
| 06:59 | The Vice-principal used to be an English teacher and was experienced |
| 07:10 | Prepared like during practicum in university, as detailed as possible |
| 07:14 | The feedback was fine |
| 07:16 | They thought the activities were ok |
| 07:19 | They thought more could be done about <u>enhancing</u> the students’ <u>abilities</u> |
| 07:28 | They thought the students were fine and wondered whether more <u>integration</u> could be done |
| 07:30 | Giving the students more input and pushing them |
| 07:36 | The Vice-principal was good as they gave a lot of suggestions, which were practical |
| 07:39 | After all they had been teaching English for many years |
| 07:45 | They thought the focus was the most important, could help students bit by bit rather than covering everything, making students confused |
| 07:55 | They were a lot of practical ideas |
| 08:12 | The best thing was they didn’t just criticise |
| 08:19 | They said what was good and what needed improvement, they actually told me how to improve |
| 08:25 | A lot of people feel pressured when being observed, thinking that they might be assessed |
| 08:32 | My attitude was to tell and show them what I knew and see what they thought could be improved and I would work on it |
| 08:44 | I learned something, there were a lot of suggestions, even about small things |
| 08:48 | For example, they told me how groupings could have been done better |

| | |
|-------|--|
| 09:00 | They said there could be fewer lesson objectives , when it's just a 40-minute lesson |
| 09:09 | They suggested just having 1 or 2, allowing more time |
| 09:13 | They thought students should have been allowed more time to digest |
| 09:19 | They thought it's <u>student-centered</u> , but could have been even more <u>student-centered</u> |
| 09:22 | They said <u>scaffolding</u> did not have to be used all the time, especially things that students already knew |
| 09:53 | Shortening time for <u>scaffolding</u> , and instead <u>expanding</u> the time for <u>production</u> |
| 10:06 | I realised that it was what they wanted and what might actually work |
| 10:10 | They also thought the activities were fine more but would have been better if time for <u>production</u> by students were longer |
| 10:15 | 'Less teacher's talk and more students' work' |
| 10:22 | One of the things I found really remarkable was when they said grammar teaching was like a body, the head was small, students couldn't stand long <u>grammar teaching, could have been more condensed and concise</u> , perhaps just 5 minutes, and let them do the exercises and only explained when they actually made mistakes, then they would feel they'd learned more |
| 10:45 | When too much <u>support</u> was given, students would think they'd already <u>acquire</u> it |

Points highlighted in bold were those that were mentioned both at the interview and shown on the lesson observation form (again, refer to Appendix 9). Without the interviews, it would actually have been difficult to understand the comments or suggestions made on the form. For example, the observer commented that 'too much time [was] spent on vocabulary guessing game, thus reducing time for role play, which is more important in this lesson'. What Tim said in the interview helped explain that 'vocabulary guessing game' was a scaffolding activity while 'role play' was one

that students actually produced the language learned.

Sometimes, on the other hand, the school-based documents helped clarify what was said in the interviews. For example, Tim talked about the Vice-principal's suggesting him to 'enhance the students' abilities', and to 'give them more input and push them'.

This was a bit vague and even seemed contradictory to what the Vice-principal also said about not having to give students lengthy grammar explanation or too much support (refer to 10:22, 10:45). Comments on the lesson observation, particularly under 'areas for improvement' helped reconcile this: the Vice-principal actually meant 'further [stretching] students' ability by setting higher expectation' and not providing too many scaffolding activities. As can be seen from these examples, different data types were important in the triangulation process as well as helping make sense of one another.

Sometimes the triangulation is not to do with contents but perceptions. For example, there was nothing on the observation form that actually showed that the observation was for assessment purposes (for example there was no 'grades' or even 'pass/fail' comment). If anything, the form suggested that the observation was for developmental purposes. For example, comments were given in the form of suggestions instead of

assessments; The 'Overall Comments' particularly reflected this: The three items observers were supposed to make comments on were 'Strengths', 'Areas for improvement' and 'Suggestions/Remarks', which all appeared to be for developmental purposes. However, Tim said up front in the interview when he talked about the observation that it was about appraisal (06:48), although he also appreciated that the comments made by the observer were helpful for his professional development (e.g. 08:44; 10:22). In fact, Tim also gave me another document which was indeed called 'Appraisal for Teacher, 09-10' (see Appendix 10), which did have grades and one of the areas he was appraised on was 'pedagogical performance', which was based on the lesson observation.

Patton (2002) cautions that it is a common misconception that the goal of triangulation is to arrive at consistency across data sources. He suggests that these inconsistencies should not be seen as weakening the evidence, but instead as an opportunity to uncover deeper meaning in the data. Therefore instead of judging Tim's account as untruthful or concluding that there were mistakes on the lesson observation form, it could just be how his school had chosen to present the lesson observation, perhaps in a more positive light by using language such as 'strengths' and 'areas for improvements rather than 'grades' and 'weaknesses'.

Example 5: Induction Tool Kit Preamble – needs and challenges of novices

In this example, codes are also derived from the data, and one of the research questions (Research Question A1) informs the area of interest, which is the needs and challenges of novices. This coding aims to find out how their needs and challenges are understood by ACTEQ and manifested in the Tool Kit, and I am using the Preamble (Appendix 11) of the document as an example.

First, all parts that are believed to be related to ‘needs and challenges of first-year teachers’ are identified and highlighted. Examples of highlighted parts are:

- ‘Teaching is complex and demanding.’
- ‘Teachers in their first year of teaching have just started on a path of career-long support and professional growth.’
- ‘The literature on new teachers abounds with identification of the difficulties of transition into teaching and the need for guidance and induction support.’

Preliminary codes are then given to each of them. For example, codes given to the above three examples are, respectively:

- complex; demanding

- need for support; need for professional growth
- transition; the need for guidance; the need for support

These codes are then grouped into sub-categories and categories (which are pre-determined in this case), which look like this:

| Categories | Needs | | Challenges | |
|-------------------|---------------------------------|---|-----------------------------------|--|
| Sub-categories | Needs that involve other people | Needs that don't necessarily involve other people | Challenges that all teachers face | Challenges that especially new teachers face |
| Codes | The need for support | The need for professional growth | Teaching being complex | Transition into teaching being difficult |
| | The need for guidance | | Teaching being demanding | |

The two arrows denote that while the categories are pre-determined and informed by the research question (top-down), how the codes are grouped into sub-categories could be inductive (bottom-up). The two sub-categories under each category are considered to help answer the research questions: for 'needs', because their relationship with the support, that is, whether they can be catered by others in the community (mostly the school and colleagues), is one of the main areas for investigation; and for 'challenges', since it is important to focus on the unique challenges new teachers are faced with instead of those encountered by all teachers at all stages.

4.6 Conclusion

It can be seen from this section that coding of the data for the current project following the Qualitative Content Analysis tradition can be both inductive (from the data) and deductive (from the research questions and literature). In the actual analysis, transcribed interview data and the documents are approached using pre-determined codes and categories first, and parts that do not fall into these will be otherwise examined using the inductive method of letting codes emerged themselves, as shown in the mentor's interviews (Example 2) and focus group (Example 3) examples.

From just a few examples shown here, we can already see that themes can be diverse, but since the core research question is the relationship between support and the first-year experience, those that are related to notions such as induction, mentoring and collegial support will be focused on.

Chapter 5

Findings & Discussion (I): Needs and challenges of participating beginning teachers

*... beginning teachers not only have to teach, but also have to learn to teach.
(McMaugh et al., 2009 :2)*

Following an elaborate discussion of how data was collected and analysed as well as the issues involved, I now move onto presenting the main findings of the case study. First, I will provide readers with background of each participating novice, such as information about their initial teacher training and school settings, together with an overview of their first year of teaching, in the form of vignettes. It should be noted that while on the surface the vignettes do not seem to provide the actual ‘voice’ of the participants (for example, by having interview extracts and quotes), it is a product using data from most of the sources including the interviews with both the novices and the mentors, school visits and lesson observations, focus group, as well as my research journal.

Then, the prominent categories and themes emerged as a result of the content analysis will be discussed, responding to the three major areas outlined in the research questions (refer to Section 4.1) namely needs and challenges of novices, support they

experienced (or did not have) and their professional development. Such research outcomes will be presented through combining the findings and the discussion. It is recognised that this is not a 'traditional' way to represent research. However, the analysis (through coding of the data) is emergent in nature and allowing the findings to emerge through the discussions is more consistent with and representative of the actual research process. At the end of each chapter there is a summary of findings to clarify for the reader important outcomes.

The findings and discussion are further divided into two parts – Needs and challenges (which is further categorised into external and internal ones), and forms of support (which are grouped under two dimensions: school-based vs outside school, ad-hoc vs structured), for clearer representation. The remaining research question, the novices' professional development, will be dealt with in appropriate sections of the above two parts, while it is believed to have closer relationship to the latter (i.e. the support systems). The first part, needs and challenges, will be presented in Chapter 5, and the forms of support outlined with in Chapter 6. An overall summary of the main findings can also be found in Chapter 8.

5.1 Vignettes

As well as serving as a brief introduction to the case study, the following short accounts of each participating novice provide a context for understanding the discussion that follows. Some of the themes in the vignettes will be further explored in later discussion sections.

Ben

Ben did an education-related degree because his English grades were relatively higher than those of other subjects when he was a student himself. He then became a teacher as he believed his success as a student in spite of initial difficult circumstances would inspire students to learn.

Ben worked in a demanding secondary school. His panel head, for example, had high expectations for themselves and the students, and as a result many of their students managed to do well enough in public exams to be admitted to universities, despite not being a Band-one school. The school was therefore popular, but because of the heavy workload and demands, teachers' turnover was high too.

Ben experienced his first year of teaching in the midst of staffroom politics, because

of the existence of two camps within the English department. Morale was low and experienced teachers who suspected Ben to belong to the opposite camp would not even talk to him in the beginning. Although Ben was assigned a mentor, they did nothing with him apart from having one meal together. At the end of the year half of the teachers in his department resigned, which caused Ben to consider whether to quit too. Eventually he decided to stay as it was time to renew the contract and would be hard for him to secure a new job in a short period of time.

Despite the very little support he was getting from his school and having no one to guide and facilitate reflections, Ben thought a lot about his teaching and learning. For example, in the interviews he shared his views on streaming versus mixed-ability classes, using authentic materials, word frequency as criterion for words to test students on, to name but a few, when other participants had very seldom mentioned something similar. He started being quite confident of his views, but towards the middle of the year he started to feel perplexed when encountering the differences between the teaching and learning principles he held, informed by his initial teacher training, and the craft knowledge and practices of his colleagues.

Linda

It was not Linda's plan to become a teacher, neither did she want to work in a primary school. She actually wanted to do a Translation degree but accidentally chose an education one. However, after she started teaching, she very quickly gained trust and recognition from the school management. She was even invited to be involved in a special publicity team aimed to boost future student intake, very early on in her first year of teaching. Her principal was careful about not offending the parents, sometimes even at the expense of undermining the teachers' position and power. She also kept coming up with new teaching and learning goals and tasks, which both teachers and students found too much to take.

There were quite a few behavioural problems and difficult students in her classes.

Also, some of her students came from families who were new immigrants from Mainland China, and they had significantly lower English proficiencies than the local students. These challenges were exacerbated by the tight teaching schedule. A lot of her effort was therefore spent on managing the classroom and catering for diversity, which proved to be difficult because of the large class sizes. The workload and frustration had once made her want to quit, but she eventually decided to stay mostly for job security reasons.

Linda was the only participant assigned two mentors instead of one; one of her mentors was the English panel head who mentored her on anything related to the English subject and the other was the teacher-in-charge of the school's induction scheme, who helped her with administrative matters. The former was often too busy for her and the latter met with her more regularly over lunch to give her emotional support and advise her on disciplinary strategies. A lot of her professional development was however a result of self discovery and by attending events organised by universities and government bodies.

Mary

Mary wanted to become a Chinese teacher in the beginning but eventually did an English language teaching degree because she did better in the subject in her A-level exams and foresaw a better prospect in teaching English than Chinese. Also, she had wanted to teach in a secondary school but ended up teaching in one of the top primary schools in HK. Many parents there were educated and some were rather vocal, and the Principal kept emphasising to teachers the importance of handling everything carefully for fear of offending the parents.

Among all six participants, Mary was the only one who possessed a postgraduate qualification, although she had decided to only make her first degree qualification known within the school community as other colleagues were not as academically qualified as she was. Apart from English she also taught subjects such as Science and Information Technology

There was an induction scheme in Mary's school, which aimed to support both first-year and second-year teachers. Mary was assigned a mentor who primarily acted as a 'local guide', answering questions she had about the school and the duties, as well as occasionally providing her with suggestions on aspects of being a teacher. However, the hierarchy created by the seating of the staffroom stopped Mary from approaching her mentor as often as she would wish. There was also a sense of isolation as there were not many colleagues she felt comfortable talking to, mainly due to age differences and her introverted personality. A sense of community was important to Mary. She eagerly hoped for opportunities to collaborate with teachers, to observe how they manage class matters (administration-wise) instead of only their lessons, and to belong to a class (by being a class teacher), but these wishes were mostly unfulfilled.

Mary's first year of teaching was a mixture of tremendous stress and gradual discoveries. The former was a result of her high expectations for herself and the students, which led to serious sleeping problems. The latter involved, for example, realising that after all she liked teaching primary school students and being able to establish some rewarding friendships with some colleagues in the last term. Eventually she wanted to stay for another year.

Sarah

Sarah had some very positive experiences during the practicum of her initial teacher training, so much so that she decided to become a fulltime teacher. She began teaching in a secondary school of very low banding. Students of the school had performed poorly in school-based assessments at the end of their primary education. Most of them also came from families of low socio-economic status and/or with single parent. Parents relied a lot on the teachers to take care of their children, and many students had little respect for the teachers especially new ones like Sarah. There were a lot of behavioural problems and the bottom classes had almost no motivation to learn. Sarah also had to spend a lot of time modifying the textbooks and designing exercises to suit the needs and language abilities of her students. Despite the challenges she preferred teaching weaker students as she felt she could make a bigger difference.

For each of the three English classes Sarah had she co-taught with another more experienced teacher, and one of them was also her mentor. She benefited a lot from this arrangement in terms of professional development and finding support.

Sometimes she was frustrated that the school did not provide enough technical support for new teachers like her, such as how to enter students' grades into the system.

Sometimes time was wasted in the process of trial and error. However, on the whole she was very satisfied with the support given by not only her mentor but other teachers and administrative staff. Her teaching partners were also very willing to share the workload and to give her clear suggestions on various teaching tasks such as levels of difficulty when setting test papers.

Despite the challenging school condition, the lack of respect from students, and a partnering class teacher leaving the school suddenly in the middle of the school year, Sarah not only survived the first year but also found satisfaction and received very positive feedback from the management on her lesson observations.

Ray

Ray was the more mature one among the six participating teachers as Education was

his second degree. He did not like his first one and was eager to become a teacher as he liked interacting with youngsters. He was also highly proficient in English as he had spent many years abroad. He even succeeded in pretending that he did not know any Chinese in front of his students. The secondary school Ray worked in was a new one under the direct-subsidy scheme. The school was gaining popularity in the area mainly because it was an English-medium one. Most teachers were young and passionate, and students were generally well-behaved.

Ray was particularly interested in and good at finding new ways to motivate students. For example he succeeded in stopping students from using Cantonese in his lessons by means of a reward system. He also spent two whole weeks revising with students after school before one of their examinations and most of them passed, when most had actually failed in the first one. He was actively involved in the community of practice he was in, regularly modifying teaching and learning materials, perfecting existing practices and letting his colleagues comment on his ideas and resources.

Ray and his mentor were class teachers of the same class and they also taught students with similar levels of English. The mentor only had one year of teaching experience and there was no guidelines or preparation for her as a mentor teacher. Nevertheless,

She and Ray worked together very well as equal partners, collaborating on designing materials, lesson planning, finding ways to motivate students as well as solving students' behavioural problems, which Ray found most challenging in the entire year.

Tim

Tim worked in the same school as Ray's and he became a teacher also because he liked to work with young people. He was very cautious about getting things right and following the existing school culture and traditions, although these sometimes put him in difficult situations. In particular he struggled with the issue of whether to use English not only as the medium of instruction in the classroom but also in all other interactions with students. This English-only practice seemed to be common among his fellow English teachers, to which Tim believed was important to conform, but on the other hand this had created a language barrier between himself and the students. On the whole he was conscious of acting in ways that would be acceptable in that teacher circle.

Although Tim's school was one of the better ones in the district, his students tended to be weak in English and he struggled to change their learning attitudes and boost the passing rates. He was assigned a mentor and was the class teacher of the same class

with another experienced teacher, but he relied more on his own resources, especially those found on the Internet to aid his teaching. Having said that, he benefited from the sharing culture of his school, in which colleagues generously exchanged teaching and learning materials with one another through a shared folder, as well as their honest advice, such as that on how to relate to students without being taken advantage of as a new teacher.

If teachers' beliefs and resulting pedagogical decisions were Ben's favourite subject, Tim's would have been how stakeholders such as parents perceived different schools, including his. He made sure he was in touch with the development of the education system and the situation of schools in Hong Kong, and considered this kind of information essential for those who pursued their career in the education industry, as it affected their employability.

5.2 Needs and challenges at different times during their first year

As mentioned in the Literature Review (Chapter 3), the vast majority of studies that have investigated the needs and challenges of new teachers have two main limitations. First, they examine the needs and challenges of novice teachers in general, rather than the unique problems and concerns beginning language/English teachers have (Farrell's

collection, 2008 being the exception). Second, they deal with the first year as a whole, without paying attention at the specific needs and challenges at different times of the first year and noting if there are any changes or development.

The present study aims to fill both of these gaps by investigating needs and challenges specifically related to English language teaching and learning, and their shifts over time during the teachers' first year. Case studies vary in the extent to which they are longitudinal but an important contribution of this one is that it tracks novice teachers' experience and support over a whole year. Such longitudinal design, drawing on data collected from multiple sources, also allows useful comparisons across the multiple-cases and increases reliability.

In the discussion below I will first start with a general overall picture of their needs and challenges during the year before moving on to describing each of the main ones.

The following table (Table 14) shows the most prominent (or the two most prominent) needs and challenges each participant mentioned in each of the four interviews. It allows the reader to trace the changes of each participant as well as to compare and contrast among the six cases. There are a number of reasons why these responses have been chosen as 'the most prominent': They might be given as answers to direct

questions (e.g. ‘What do you think have been the most challenging task in the first term?’); they might be issues that the participants spent the most time talking about, or those perceived by the researcher as having triggered the strongest emotions from the participants when they talked about them. In the last interview with each participant, the teachers were also asked to name the most challenging aspect in their whole first year, and their responses can be found in the last row of the table.

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Table 14 The most prominent needs and challenges of participants in their first year of teaching

| | Ben (a) | Linda (b) | Mary (c) | Sarah (d) | Ray (e) | Tim (f) |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|--|
| 1 st interview (late September 2009/ early October 2010) | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Not knowing the overall English proficiencies of students (tended to overestimate and designed something too difficult) 2. Finding ways to teach different aspects of the language (e.g. vocabulary, phrasal verbs) | Classroom management – dealing with individual misbehaving and difficult students | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Finding ways to cater for individual differences in the midst of administrative constraints (e.g. worksheets needed to be approved by panel head) 2. Struggling whether to follow own philosophies or the existing school culture which was | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Workload – not having enough time to plan lessons and ended up being very teacher-centered 2. Managing students of both low academic performance and poor conduct | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Not knowing what should be done and feeling confused in the beginning 2. Finding solutions to practical issues such as dealing with absentees | Time management and workload – not having enough time to prepare and plan things as he would want to |

| | | | | | | |
|--|--|--|---|---|---|---|
| | | | more 'spoon-fed' | | | |
| 2 nd interview (mid/ late December) | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Handling students' issues and communicating with parents 2. Issues in observing other teachers – e.g. hard to arrange a time, did not find it particularly helpful to observe how they taught in general | <p>Behind schedule –</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Too much work (e.g. marking) and too little time 2) Too many learning tasks for students and insufficient time for them to complete | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Behind schedule – <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Too much marking and no time for lesson planning 2) Not enough lesson time to give out and brief students on homework 2. Classroom managements – being too lenient and had not learned students' names (comments by management and other | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Controlling own emotions and managing the whole class when students was aggressive and lacked respect 2. Not knowing how certain jobs were to be done until the needs arose (e.g. making photocopies, requesting help from IT Team) | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Hoping to discuss at co-planning meetings forthcoming teaching (e.g. how advance the contents should be) but time was limited 2. Students' behavioural problems – not sure when to refer to other specialised units | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Struggling whether to use English only or to use some Chinese 2. Some parents and students unwilling to cooperate |

| | | | | | | |
|---|--|---|--|--|---|--|
| | | | colleagues) | | | |
| 3 rd interview (mid/late March) | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. A colleague was forced to leave which triggered a crisis between a group of teachers and the management – low morale, issues with trust among colleagues 2. Own beliefs and school policies/other teachers’ opinions being different | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 3. Involvement in a new Public Relations Team – stress and workload 4. Classroom management (students ‘bullying’ new teachers) | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Stress (sleeping problems, easily agitated and exhaustion) – Worried about own teaching and students’ responses 2. Being commented that she was ‘acting cool’ and that she seldom talked to other colleagues, which was perceived as not socialising | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Motivating low-achieving students to learn English 2. Juggling among many duties and not having time to properly prepare lessons | Finding ways to motivate and help students especially the low achievers | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Setting and revising exam papers which took up a lot of time 2. Being faced with poor learning attitudes and low passing rates |

| | | | | | | |
|--|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | enough | | | |
| 4 th interview (mid/late June) | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Many teachers in the panel leaving – struggled about whether to leave too and concerned about the situation next year 2. Not confident that he was preparing students well for their public exams | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Offended by other teachers in terms of work responsibilities 2. School demanding a lot from both students and teachers, and new tasks came up often | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Hoping to plan lessons and share materials with other colleagues but chances were few 2. Hoping to be a home room teacher in the next year and to observe other teachers handle class matters | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Long working hours and neverending workload 2. Markings that took up a lot of time, sometimes because of different marking standards among teachers | Putting teaching and learning materials in order and planning modifications and future teaching | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Setting and revising exam papers that took up a lot of time because of different opinions from colleagues and careless mistakes 2. Teaching according to different student characteristics (e.g. in terms of ability level, attitude, attention span) |

| | | | | | | |
|--|---------------------------|---|--|---|---|---|
| Perceived biggest challenge in the entire first year | Teaching the subject well | Handling individual differences especially in writing lessons | Catering for individual differences (in terms of learning abilities) | Motivating the bottom classes (when even the better students were influenced by the unmotivated ones) | 1. Dealing with students' behavioural issues 2. Finding ways to modify existing academic practices (e.g. reading system) that did not work | 1. Doing everything in a very organised way 2. Not being too lenient with students especially in the beginning |
|--|---------------------------|---|--|---|---|---|

It can be seen from Table 14 that participants had a wide range of needs and experienced different kinds of challenges. Some were very specific to their contexts or even unusual experiences such as having problems with particular colleagues and a large group of colleagues resigning at the same time; some were commonly experienced by other participating novices (for example catering for individual differences and having exceedingly heavy workload).

In terms of the biggest challenge in the year (see last row of the table), five out of the six participants named some-thing/ things that involve(s) the teaching and learning of English; while they all encountered different difficulties during the year, finding ways to teach English in mixed-ability classes and motivate students to learn it were the main concerns of the majority of participating teachers when they first began to teach fulltime. This again confirms that novice language teachers face unique difficulties, particularly for those who teach English in the HK context. Whether schools responded with subject-specific support will be discussed in Section 6.1.

In terms of shifts during the year, in the beginning of the year (1st and 2nd interviews, both of which conducted by the end of the first school term), challenges the novices mentioned involve feeling lost because they were unfamiliar with either the students

or the school's policies and routines (see Sarah's, Ben's and Ray's for example), and feeling overwhelmed because of the sheer volume of work (see Linda's, Mary's and Tim's for example). Looking back onto her first year in the last interview, Mary confirmed that the first term was particularly difficult for her (she described her first week as 'chaotic' in our first interview) because of these two challenges. It is also interesting that when she got to the end of the first year she felt a lot more positive in continuing to be a teacher, no matter how tough it was in the beginning or middle of the year. On top of actually having survived the year successfully, the perceived greater sense of efficacy was also a result of learning from and having a closer relationship with other more experienced teachers, which helped her to have much better classroom management, as illustrated in the following transcript extract. The last column shows the actual codes developed from the content analysis, following steps described in Section 4.5.4 in Chapter 4.

| | | | |
|------|-------------|---|--------------------------|
| 0032 | Researcher: | can you recall when it was the toughest | |
| 0033 | | or what it's about | |
| 0034 | Mary: | I think it's last October (.) November= | challenge_tight schedule |
| 0035 | Researcher: | =uh | |
| 0036 | Mary: | because ((tuts)) it seemed that it's really | |
| 0037 | | tight (.) everything was done in a really | |
| 0038 | | tight schedule | challenge_unfamiliar |
| 0039 | Researcher: | mm | |
| 0040 | Mary: | and I wasn't familiar with many things | |
| 0041 | | yet (.) and so it's really difficult (.) also | |

| | | | |
|------|-------------|---|-----------------------|
| 0042 | | the weather wasn't very good then= | |
| 0043 | Researcher: | =right= | |
| 0044 | Mary: | =and I fell ill= | |
| 0045 | Researcher: | =mm | |
| 0046 | Mary: | well I was really unwell (.) | |
| 0047 | Researcher: | mm= | |
| 0048 | Mary:: | =but then later when I got used to | |
| 0049 | | things it's ok | |
| 0050 | Researcher: | mm because at that time er (.) you told | |
| 0051 | | me that there might be things | |
| 0052 | | happening suddenly in your school (.) | |
| 0053 | | for example (.) that what performance | |
| 0054 | Mary: | oh yes that's right | |
| 0055 | Researcher: | and some lessons were taken away | Challenge_lesson time |
| 0056 | | and then it was the exam | |
| 0057 | Mary: | right and I needed to rush through | |
| 0058 | | things | |
| 0059 | Researcher: | actually a lot of times you were in a | |
| 0060 | | rush because you were to give students | |
| 0061 | | things back weren't you | |
| 0062 | Mary: | yes (.) you know those homework. | Challenge_markings |
| 0063 | Researcher: | right mm | |
| 0064 | Mary: | so it's particularly difficult then (.) yes | |
| 0065 | | later actually I think it was after (.) after | |
| 0066 | | the new year it was much better (.) | |
| 0067 | | because that <u>show</u> was over too | |
| 0068 | Researcher: | mm you mean in terms of time | |
| 0069 | Mary: | yes that's right (.) so actually <u>the</u> | |
| 0070 | | <u>second term</u> felt a lot easier than the | |
| 0071 | | first, perhaps there's enough time, and I | |
| 0072 | | didn't need to rush through the syllabus | |
| 0073 | Researcher: | mm | |
| 0074 | Mary: | so (.) I mean it's ok as long as I could | |
| 0075 | | meet the schedule | |
| 0076 | Researcher: | why was there more time | |
| 0077 | Mary: | because there weren't that many | |
| 0078 | | activities which took away my lessons | |
| 0079 | Researcher: | ((laughs)) | |

| | | | |
|------|-------------|---|-----------------|
| 0080 | Mary: | right (.) and I also ((tuts)) you know | Profdevt_CR mgt |
| 0081 | | I've got better in handling discipline | |
| 0082 | | now | |
| 0083 | Researcher: | mm | |
| 0084 | Mary: | so I don't spend as much time on | |
| 0085 | | discipline anymore | |
| 0086 | Researcher: | mm when do you think the discipline | |
| 0087 | | started to get better | |
| 0088 | Mary: | when did it start (.) er (.) I think it's | |
| 0089 | | most obvious in March (.) April | |
| 0090 | Researcher: | ((laughs)) what happened ((laughs)) | |
| 0091 | | ((laughs)) I have no idea either (.) I | |
| 0092 | Mary: | started to (.) you know have learned | Profdevt_CR mgt |
| 0093 | | some tricks you know (.) ((laughs)) you | |
| 0094 | | know some colleagues told me that | |
| 0095 | | actually some kids were very afraid of | |
| 0096 | | copying books a punishment | |

Key: challenge – need and challenges; profdevt – professional development; CR mgt – classroom management

While in the middle of the year Mary had thought about changing jobs (which will be further discussed in Section 5.3.1 c), in the end she decided to stay for another year. It was mainly because a friend who had had one year of teaching experience reassured her by saying that the first year was the toughest anyway and that it would be a lot easier in the second year, especially when she was probably going to teach the same grades and subjects again and could therefore recycle the lessons and materials she had designed (TS 4b, 0420-0497). There are two implications: First, sometimes just a handful of useful tricks and encouragement from other experienced practitioners can help new teachers survive the toughest periods of their first year; Second, both

novices and those who support them need to be aware that the first half of the year almost always feel hard, so much so that the new teachers might want to quit but when they persevere till the end they might think that it is actually manageable and would stay for a second year.

In the middle of the year (3rd interviews), teachers were more specific about the difficulties they were having, rather than a general feeling of being weighed down. Most of the challenges involved classroom management (including difficult students), communication with parents, motivating the learners and workload (which included having multiple roles). The findings match very closely with the results of Meister and Melnick's (2003) study regarding the experience of 273 first and second year English teachers across the United States; Three major concerns emerge from their data are almost the same as what has been found in this study, namely managing the behaviours and diverse needs of students, time constraints and workload, and conflicts with parents and other adults. These challenges are named time and again in numerous studies by novices as their biggest concerns. These are both large-scale like Meister and Melnick's and also small as mine, but it seems that schools and educators are yet to find ways to address them. Some of the difficulties in helping novices to tackle these problems, such as how students might perceive and treat new teachers

differently, will be discussed in Section 5.3.2 c. Also, while most of their perceived concerns were problems that actually happened, some were needs that were not met. For example, some novices (see Ben's and Ray's 3rd interviews) expressed the wish to learn from other colleagues by co-planning and observing their lessons but it was not fulfilled.

Towards the end of the year, some beginning teachers were still struggling with the same problems they started with such as unbearable workload and unrealistic demands from the management (see Linda's and Sarah's for example). At the same time it is easily noticeable that many of their concerns were related to hopes and worries about the following year. For example, Mary expressed the need to collaborate with colleagues and the wish to become a class teacher; Ben was really concerned about the situation of his department the following year when most colleagues had resigned, and Ray was already thinking about ways to modify materials for use in the next year. As Marshall et al. (1990) have rightly pointed out, normally it is not until the novices have survived the initial shock of the first year that they are able to begin to concentrate on the important areas of long-term planning and overall educational goals such as catering for students' needs. Novices and their colleagues should not be surprised that it might take a whole year before the new

teachers can focus on the ‘real’ business of teaching.

The shifts in needs and challenges clearly show that beginning teachers encounter different difficulties at different times during their first year of teaching. As their needs changed it is also reasonable to assume that support mechanisms for them (such as mentoring relationship) needed to evolve accordingly. I will come back to this idea of ‘dynamic mentoring’ in the Chapter 8 when discussing the implications (see Section 8.1.3 a).

5.3 Specific needs and challenges

After looking at the big picture of what the first year was like for each participant and for the whole group, this section discusses in detail the specific needs and challenges.

Codes and categories related to this theme have been organised into two strands, namely contextual challenges, and needs and deficiencies. The former focuses on practices and tasks in the school settings or wider education environment the teachers found problematic or challenging. They were things that were external, which the teachers had little control over. The second part outlines the teachers’ own needs and deficiencies, which are considered to be more internal – knowledge and skills that they would want to have acquired but lacked. They can also be emotional states that

caused the novices to function at a less-than-desirable level as a teacher.

There are definitely overlaps between the two categories. For example, more often than not an external challenge was only a problem because the novices did not possess the required skills, knowledge, experience and character to deal with it.

Hargreaves and Fullan (2000) suggest that new teachers often lack not only the conceptual knowledge but also contextual knowledge to teach effectively. Indeed individual teachers' learning is shaped according to both personal factors and situational ones that frame their contexts (Feiman-Nemser, 2001). The two groups of 'needs and challenges' below could therefore be understood as contextual problems the novices were faced with and abilities they needed to possess in order to enact the teacher role but had not developed enough of.

5.3.1 Contextual challenges (external)

a. School policies, systems and logistics

i. Format for setting test/exam papers

The majority of the teachers mentioned difficulties in setting test/exam papers, particularly in getting the formats right. Although they were supported by colleagues and had papers from previous years to refer to, most still had to revise the drafts

many times and found it very frustrating. One obvious reason for this difficulty was the novices' lack of experience.

because I am new I wasn't familiar with the format but the colleagues were very nice (.) they'd tell me whenever they spotted anything (.) I kept revising. (TS 3f, 06:03)

At the same time, the fact that novices had to revise the papers for many times was also a result of the schools' administrative weaknesses. For example, Sarah commented that although setting test/exam papers was one of the central tasks, there was no handbook explaining the school's requirements. Neither were there instructions on other administrative matters, such as how to request assistance from the IT support. When asked what she would add to better the induction programme in her school, Sarah's first suggestion was to provide the newcomers with information on administrative procedures right at the beginning, such as how to get worksheets printed (TS 2d, 41:50).

Sarah went on to explain that paper setting was challenging for new teachers like herself because this was not covered in the pre-service education. As Farrell (2006: 218) suggests, 'language teacher education programs have a history of emphasizing "How to teach" with its main stress on methods rather than what it means to be a

language teacher'. The more administrative type of real world tasks is often not the emphasis of initial teacher training. It is also revealed in his study that beginning teachers are not always made aware of what they will face when they make the transition from the teacher education programmes to the real world of the classroom. Farrell (op. cit.) argues for a move of these programmes towards promoting development of skills in anticipatory reflection, such as analysing written-up case studies (i.e. stories about problems that new teachers encounter), and linking this to journal writing and classroom discussions.

Some teachers, such as Mary and Tim, had colleagues who were very particular about the papers and the revision seemed to have gone on forever. Every time they came up with a new draft their colleagues noticed some other things and wanted amendments for them, instead of giving the new teachers their comments all in one go.

The final exam you see (.) any colleagues had different opinions so I had to keep revising (.) for a long while (.) I didn't really get to take a break (.) I worked really hard till they started their exams yesterday and now I can finally say life is less busy ... for example I set a paper and the colleagues thought it's too difficult (.) some colleagues said there weren't enough hints (.) and there were lots of things to revise regarding the format (TS 4f, 16:15)

For some new teachers there were so many rounds of revision that it became even

easier for them to overlook small things such as typos, and making careless mistakes in front of the team or even the management could be embarrassing, as Tim also mentioned. Sometimes it was not the actual mistake that caused anxiety but the fear of getting things wrong, which, apparently, came from the parents, who had actually complained about mistakes or typos on test/exam papers. This was exactly Tim's concern, too.

Yes we were very particular about these things because parents were too (.)
You know if you (.) they can spot even really small things and would
feedback to us (TS 4f, 17:40)

ii. Marks calculation and entering students' grades into the system

When students had done their tests/ exams, the calculation of marks also created stress for the novices. In particular, Linda did not realise that her understanding of what should be counted towards the final grade was different from her other colleagues' until the report cards had been printed off, which caused her and her colleagues to re-do all of them:

the class teachers had stamped and signed everything, before we discovered the reasons why my marks were lower than the others', until then did we take everything back and do it all over again. (TS 4b, 1212)

Again, no one briefed her on things such as the composition of students' grades.

However, her own reaction, as well as that of the Principal's, almost suggested that it was her fault, when she was actually uninformed. It took her a mistake to 'learn the lesson'.

Well the boss was aware of this but they smiled and said (.) that's alright (.) it's your first time (.) as long as you don't do this next time (.) yeah (.) you know they just smiled and that's it (.) but I gave the class teachers troubles, because they had to sign them again (.) you know they had all been printed off and signed (.) yes and then (.) the rest was (.) you know this was one of the big issues (TS 4b, 1286)

Sarah was more fortunate as her mentor was willing to tell her how to enter students' grades into the system. Sometimes other colleagues such as the IT support staff also supported her on these duties, but this happened on an ad-hoc, rather than a planned basis (TS 3d, 43:40).

All in all, designing and marking students' tests/exams could be difficult for the new teachers. When the advice was not given timely and the novices had to do it by trial and error it could be frustrating. The data also suggests a lack of training in the area in their pre-service education. However, one could argue that apart from raising awareness and analysing possible scenarios (Farrell, 2006) there is not much that teacher educators can do, since assessment formats and procedures are largely

contextualized; Every school has their own unique practices. Inevitably new teachers would not be able to learn to use the school-based system until they join a school. Support from the school especially the mentors and grade coordinators is therefore essential. However, this is proven to be reactive depending upon the novices' requests, similar to Draper and Forrester's (2009: 79) observation regarding how HK novices acquire information:

Understanding school policies and procedures can enable new staff to prepare work and to avoid early mistakes. In HK formal arrangements were commonly non-existent. Many new teachers lacked basic information and guidance and self-discovery was an important avenue for finding required information.

The support can instead be preventive, perhaps by means of a staff induction day and/or staff folder, outlining all the technical and administrative details newcomers need to know.

b. Workload and covering the syllabus and materials

Probably one of the biggest complaints teachers have, novices included, is that there

is always too much work and too little time. This might be an issue of general workload, since, in HK, there is ‘no upper limit set either for weekly class contact or for workload’ and new teachers are ‘expected to teach a full workload from their first day of employment’ (Draper & Forrester, 2009: 77). The syllabus teachers were expected to cover also contributed a lot to the problem.

For example, Linda started her second interview by grumbling about the fact that there were piles of exercise books and worksheets waiting for her to mark. Later in the interview she revealed that she was not sure if she wanted to continue working in the same school because of some of its unreasonable policies. The school kept adding new things to the students’ and teachers’ already heavy workload.

... I think some policies are too demanding for both students and the teachers ... for example when they gave student Homework A and students failed to do it (.) they would give students another set of homework but they wouldn’t cancel the previous one (.) so students did Homework A plus B (.) and if they still failed to do A plus B (.) they would need to do A plus B plus C and there were just more and more things to do (TS 2b, 03:50)

Apparently these additional tasks had become more of a burden than something beneficial for both the teachers and students. The curriculum and task changes were seen as a nuisance since teachers could not use them productively. As

Feiman-Nemser (2001: 1013) suggests, ‘policies can improve schools only if the people in them are armed with the knowledge, skills and supports they need’. In Linda’s case she was not even allowed enough time to cover what she had to.

Another problem in Linda’s school was that teachers were expected to cover a lot of learning tasks, following a really tight schedule. In particular, there were three types of writing to be covered in only two lessons, when there was not even enough time to finish just one of them in one lesson. While her colleagues asked students to complete some of the tasks at home, which they were actually not supposed to, Linda had no choice but to skip one of the writing tasks. She expressed her concern to colleagues and although they all experienced the same problem, they thought ‘there [was] no way out’ (TS 2b, 0920) because the Principal insisted on not cutting the syllabus down. Linda experienced almost the same problem in the Listening lessons:

... for phonics and listening there’s actually one lesson only (.) but the problem is there are a total of 4 pages of exercise for phonics and listening (.) even if you just spend half a lesson on phonics you still need another 10 (.) 15 minutes to finish the phonics exercises with them don’t you (.) and then there’s still listening to do (.) it’s just impossible to complete so many things in one lesson (TS 2b, 11:34)

The multiple tasks were not only counter-productive for the students and very

confusing to the weaker ones (TS 2b, 05:14), but parents also complained that materials were gone through too fast (TS 2b, 04:52), which made it hard for them to help their children with revision and homework. In addition, the teachers' beliefs and quality of teaching were also compromised.

[In listening lessons] you know if you want them to learn well you can't just check answers with them but there's simply no time to go through things once again (.) I've never had time to go through with them once again or teach them how to listen (.) you know (.) well you know all listening is about doing and checking answers (.) doing and checking answers (.) I really have no idea (TS 2b, 12:02)

Similarly, Mary always found herself behind schedule. There was not enough lesson time to brief students on homework, especially with a lower grade since she needed to collect homework at the beginning of the lessons as well, which took up even more of the time (TS 2c, 07:38). Her solution was to 'steal' some time from the lunch hour (TS 2c, 07:31). For example, she asked students to complete their corrections, explained to students how the homework was to be done and gave out exercise books during lunchtime. There was just not enough 'official' lesson time for her to complete everything she needed to.

It can be concluded that the schemes of work in some schools were unrealistic; there

was not enough official lesson time for teachers to complete all teaching and learning tasks. As a result they had no choice but to rush through materials and tasks or to skip them entirely. This left them feeling frustrated, and the students and parents confused.

c. Appraisal and contract renewal

Draper and Forrester (2009) suggest that the employment of new teachers in HK is commonly based on temporary contracts. This was precisely the situation with all the participating teachers who were either on a one- or a two-year contract. Also, half of the participants (Ray, Tim and Linda) needed to go through appraisal procedures although they were not comprehensive. For Ray and Tim it was simply an appraisal form (see Appendix 10) filled out by the Principal and the Vice-Principal. They gave the teachers grades (A, B, C and D) on two main parts, called ‘professionalism’ and ‘character/ personality’, which included areas from work attitude to relationships with colleagues to the teacher’s appearance and manner. While some (such as language ability) were based on tangible evidence such as everyday interactions and meetings, others (e.g. the novice’s ‘open-mindedness’) were rather subjective feelings of the appraisers, which Tim found rather strange. For Linda appraisal equaled her performance in one lesson observation, which was done at the end of the first term (TS 2b, 21:00). She was not evaluated in any other ways.

However, there was no obvious worry among the participants about whether their contracts would be renewed. Instead they were more concerned about whether to stay in their current schools or to change jobs, although eventually all of them decided to stay for another year, for different reasons. For example, Mary, who had always wanted to teach in a secondary school but ended up working in a primary one, was thinking about changing to a secondary school or, better still, to her alma mater, half way through the school year. Her considering to change was mainly a result of a weak sense of belonging to the school she worked in.

with this school (.) sometimes my attitude is (.) you know it's somebody else's school and I am only here as an employee (.) you know it's just a job (.) but with that school (.) after all it's my alma mater and there's a special attachment (.) I think the effort and passion I'd invest would be a lot greater than those that I have for this school now (.) and I reckon I'd be truly happy teaching there. (TS 3c, 01:15:10)

However, towards the end of her first year, Mary decided to stay. As mentioned, it was mainly because she was more confident in handling the discipline. She also realised that many of the materials and skills she had built up in the first year could be reused for her future teaching, meaning that she could spend a lot less time on lesson planning and preparation in the next year.

Some teachers, on the other hand, chose to remain in their schools not because they had resolved their struggles but mainly for job security reasons. For example, both Ben and Linda believed that leaving a school after teaching there for only one year would not look good on their CVs, although they both had reservation about staying. Ben's situation was especially difficult as the English panel in his school was experiencing a major 'political division' and the majority of the panel members eventually resigned. This caused him to think about whether or not to leave too because he could foresee the challenges of running the panel and teaching the subject when most veterans were leaving. Still, he decided to stay in the end:

well then when they offered me the contract there was a bit of a, I mean I wanted a permanent one, well but I signed it anyway, because even if I decided to leave I wouldn't have been able to find a job in a week, my intention was to secure a new job before quitting this one, well so instead of letting them know that I hesitated I might as well just sign it on the spot. (TS 4a, 0662)

As mentioned in the individual vignettes, Linda was already invited to a publicity team which involved work in the following year in as early as the first school term. Although by then Linda already had doubts about whether to stay on in her school, when asked by the Principal about whether she would like to renew the contract for another year she said yes. Of course this was mainly because of the awkwardness that

would have been created if she had said no. Although Linda was expecting even greater workload in the next year (because of the publicity team and the fact that she was invited to design the curriculum for the Computer subject), she agreed to stay as it would be hard for a novice to compete with other teachers in the market, a challenge I mentioned in Section 2.1.2:

and you know I know that as a novice (.) if I compete outside with others (.) I can't say (.) how should I put it (.) I can't say there're lots of opportunities for me (TS 4c, 1084)

It can be seen from Ben's and Linda's cases that the novices sometimes accepted less-than-satisfactory work conditions because of their greater need in securing a job and a perceived lower employability than their more experienced colleagues. Also, unlike many other studies which reveal higher retention rates as a result of mentoring, a straightforward relationship between the two cannot be claimed for the present one. For example Ben did not experience any form of structured support and ad-hoc ones were also patchy but he seemed to have survived his first year alright and stayed for another year. There was a structured induction scheme in Mary's school and she was assigned a mentor, but she felt fairly isolated and unsupported most of the time during the year, and in the end she decided to stay too. Again, as already argued in the Literature Review, induction support should not be conceptualised mainly as

mechanisms to combat attrition. I hold that its quality and impact on new teachers' long-term professional development are of greater importance.

d. Management and colleagues

Interactions with the colleagues including those at management levels as a form of support for the new teachers will be discussed in Section 6.1.2 a iii. This part instead focuses on concerns of the novice teachers in relations to working with their colleagues.

On the whole the participating teachers had colleagues who were responsible and did not mind taking up extra work. Of course there were situations where colleagues were not particularly cooperative. For example, the NET in Linda's school would not work outside their official working hours and therefore refused to help in an English course for kindergarten children who were the school's potential students. This did not affect Linda's workload though as she needed to be involved in the course anyway. Having said that, Linda was upset because while this teacher could refuse being added more work, even to the extent of bringing in government officials and threatening to quit the job (TS 4b, 0056 & 0180), she did not feel she could have done the same thing such as saying no to any additional duties:

this [the job of running these courses] was assigned by the Principal (.) they asked me whether I was interested (.) and it's impossible for me to say no (.) right ((laughs)) (TS 3b, 04:09)

ok they [the NET] had their reasons (.) their contract was to serve primary school students (.) primary school students at our school you see (.) and kindergartens was not part of their job duties (.) but I don't know perhaps it's a difference in culture (.) we have different cultures (.) we can't say no ((laughs)) (.) and they can so they did (TS 4b, 0216)

Indeed, this culture of not daring to say no to the management was evident in all the cases. Some of the participants were ultra careful about not challenging the existing practices or culture. Tim presented his philosophy rather interestingly:

you know for certain things (.) you can't be sure whether it's right to do them (.) and there are things that you know you definitely can't be wrong by doing them (TS 3f, 36:16)

By 'things that you know you definitely can't be wrong by doing them' he meant conforming to the existing practices. He therefore chose to follow the English-only rule that he thought all colleagues on the English panel were abiding by, which will be discussed in detail in Section 5.3.1 h.

Sometimes not daring to have an opinion on school policies or feeding back to the

management was also because the novices were not sure if they had seen enough to make valid judgements, as Ben stated:

well I'm new so I do everything (.) I can't see (.) well I do see some conflicting beliefs but I'm new and wouldn't give any comments... I want to get to know more about the system (.) as well as English teaching and to have more experience first ... even if there're things that go against my beliefs, when they say they work I don't have evidence that they don't so I follow at least for now, the policies ... even if I think it's not good (.) it could just be my own guess (TS 3a, 08:35)

The most obvious incident of finding it hard to say no to more senior colleagues because they were new was that of Ray's, when he struggled in finding the best way to refuse joining the IT team after the person-in-charge had invited him (TS 3e, 51:05). He asked both his mentor and the NET for opinions and suggestions because the two colleagues, who had known the IT team leader for longer, might have a better idea how to approach them best. Upon further investigation, it was discovered that the relationship among colleagues in his school, even those from different departments, was very positive. It is therefore quite surprising why this incident had created so much worry for Ray. Anyway, it was obvious that acting diplomatically towards other colleagues, especially more senior ones, was considered very important by the novices.

e. Staffroom politics

It can be said that none of the participants were directly involved in any form of staffroom politics in the first year themselves, although some were indirectly affected or had heard of cases of dispute and that had an impact on themselves.

In Ben's school, for example, the English panel had always been divided into two camps. As discussed above in Section 5.1, at the end of his first year, the majority of the English teachers in his school, who were against the management, left. Needless to say, the group resignation had a huge impact on Ben. He was worried about not being able to deal with the challenges in the next year without the help of the more experienced teachers and did consider quitting too. This division in the panel had actually deprived Ben of the support he could have been given throughout the year:

... I've just started to be in their circle (.) but you see it's already April now ... we knew we were colleagues but we didn't know anything about one another (.) and they actually talked about why (.) they said the tension between them and the management was too serious (.) and they thought the reason why the management hired new people was definitely to have more people on their side (.) especially fresh graduates who were even easier to mold (.) well so they thought that if (.) er (.) they said they didn't want to contaminate us (TS 3a, 17:11)

On the whole this staffroom politics created a lot of confusion and tension for Ben.

For example, he was not sure if getting closer to the ‘camp’ against the management would affect his work (TS 3a, 19:45), whether some school policies would really work and benefit students after hearing ‘the talks behind’ (22:51), whether some school problems were the result of bad policies or problematic personnel, whether some practices (for example, giving ‘tips’ to students before exams) were absolutely unacceptable, or were only excuses teachers used to accuse their rival (25:00). It is also clear that although Ben was not directly involved in the disagreement between the two groups of colleagues, because he was perceived to belong to the ‘management camp’ (at least in the first half of the school year), the group against the management would not even talk to him, let alone provide him with the support and help he needed.

Also, both Ben and Linda were aware of how the school management treated some of their colleagues differently; When the Principal and Vice-Principal wanted a particular teacher to go they would find faults in them and either not renew their contracts or ask them to resign. However, Ben and Linda responded to such politics rather differently: Ben was caused to become even more careful about doing his job and handling different tasks lest he would be the next one to be sacked. Linda did not feel much about it since she was not among the ones forced to leave anyway,

especially when, as mentioned, her Principal and Vice-principal had already expressed their favour towards her very early on in the year.

f. Parents

Dealing with parents is often listed as one of the top concerns of novice teachers in the literature (e.g. Veenman, 1984) and Melnick and Meister (2008) even contend that compared to experienced teachers, new teachers feel significantly less prepared to communicate with parents when conflicts arise. On the whole, however, novices in this study did not experience much stress nor have any major issues in interacting with parents. For example, one might think the Open House in Ray and Tim's school, where parents of potential students could freely walk into any classroom to observe a teacher's lesson, would be a rather stressful experience for the new teachers. However, both of them were very relaxed about the event (Focus Group, 35:58; 36:19).

In some cases, however, novices were very careful in dealing with parents because of the school culture – colleagues and management were generally very fearful of parents' opinions and complaints. Mary talked about her worry about parents' complaining:

Mary in fact described the parents of her school as ‘obviously powerful’ (TS 3c, 04:04). The parents’ active involvement in school affairs was also noticed during the school visit. Quite a few students’ mothers helped with handing out lunchboxes during lunchtime (Fieldnotes_12032010). Mary explained in our next interview that the mothers saw it as a chance to keep an eye on their children and also to ask the teachers about their children’s performances. The fathers were very keen in competing for positions in the parents-teachers’ association committee (TS 3c, 04:42).

When handling actual feedback and complaints from parents, Mary was keen to seek advice from her mentor and welcomed her suggestions (see Section 5.3.1 f). While discussing issues with the mentors is usually helpful, Chubbuck et al. (2001) also warn against the tendency for novices to ‘play it safe’. In particular they suggest that a perceived lack of safety seems to discourage novice teachers to experiment in isolation with possible solutions to the problems they are encountering, which can soon deteriorate into avoiding the difficult reflection and study needed to explore alternative means of meeting different needs. This issue will be further examined in Section 6.1.1 a on mentoring.

Another issue related to parents' opinions is that of giving students extra learning materials and exercises. In Mary's school, teachers could not design and print worksheets for students unless they did so for the whole grade. Previously when some teachers had prepared materials for their classes some parents complained about it because they thought it was unfair (TS 1c, 3665). This indirectly affected the way teachers catered for individual differences. For Mary, she found it too troublesome to seek the grade coordinator's approval as well as to make copies for the whole grades, and as a result she never made supplementary worksheets for her classes; Conformity came at the expense of responding to learners' needs. I will come back to this in Section 5.3.2 b when examining problems regarding catering for learners' diversity.

Linda actually encountered a situation where a parent called her panel head and complained about Linda's asking her child to use scissors for a General Studies project (TS 1b, 1712). Although it was resolved quickly, Linda felt frustrated that some parents were complaining about anything and everything, often directly to the management, because the Principal had extended an invitation to them. Linda talked about her frustration:

The Principal once told the parents 'if you are not happy with anything let me know directly', well the parents, you know in the past, in our generation we talked to the class teachers first, and the class teachers would try to

resolve everything and bear the good, I mean the bad things themselves, but if you go directly to the Principal, it becomes a very big deal, you know the class teachers don't even have the chance to explain, before going to the Principal's office to be told things. (TS 2b, 1735)

The Principal obviously wanted to make sure the parents were happy about the school and the teachers as well as to hold the teachers accountable. This is believed to be related to school management's aim to increase or at least maintain intake, a phenomenon in the HK education context which have been discussed in Section 2.1.2.

Linda's case clearly illustrates that this was detrimental to the novice's perceived identity and power; as Scherff (2008) describes, appeasing students and parents sometimes came at the expense of teacher control, decision-making and professionalism.

On top of being detrimental to the novices' identity and security, the Principals' way of dealing with parents seemed to suggest that they expected teachers to behave as 'organisational persons' (Gavish & Friedman, 2011), representing the institution which supplies services to its customers (that is, students and parents). According to Gavish and Friedman (op. cit.) an organisational person focuses on students' satisfaction, pleasure and experiences (and in this case parents' too) more than on the students' educational achievements. This might have a negative impact on the

teachers' professional development too as the scholars continue to say that

conceiving the organisation as a primary point of reference before
establishing and strengthening classroom-oriented professionalism, instead
of a gradual shift from the classroom to the school and from the individual
student to all the students, which would be the natural course of development
of a teaching career, might lead to shallow, misguided educational practices.

(p. 463)

In other words some Principals were not allowing enough time and space for the new teachers to develop as classroom teachers but instead misplaced the focus on parents' opinions, as they were almost always taken as an indicator of the school's reputation.

What have been discussed in the above two sections on relationships with colleagues and parents have a two implications. Firstly, how the novices perceived their position and power in relation to the parents affected how they saw themselves and thus how they acted. Zembylas (2003: 223) suggests that 'teacher identity is largely a constituted outcome of [a] continuing dialog with students, parents, and colleagues'. For this group of teachers, the identity formation was not as much a result of direct interactions with the parents as how they saw other colleagues and school authorities acted towards the parents. Even before the new teachers had a reasonable amount of

contact with the parents they had already assumed a less powerful position. Of course this was partly due to their actual lower position in terms of seniority but also obviously a result of the Principals' undermining their power and professionalism when trying to 'pacify' the parents. There is also evidence showing that some novices were unnecessarily careful about not offending their more experienced colleagues, as Ray was in turning down the IT team leader's invitation to join the team.

Secondly, as briefly discussed, some novices rely a lot upon their mentors' advice when faced with the thorny issue of dealing with other colleagues and the parents. This might result in the novices' dependence and risk-avoiding in the process of learning to become a teacher. English (1999) warns against this possible over-dependence on the mentors. While mentors need to help novices work through their challenges in the first year they should also bear in mind that it is not a lifelong commitment – the ultimate goal is promoting self-directedness in the mentees, enabling the new professionals to work independently and successfully (ibid). Protégés need to be guided to find solutions for themselves, rather than be given ready-made ones by their mentor straight away.

g. Multiple roles

Apart from being English teachers, four out of the six participating teachers were class teachers themselves. Obviously this meant more duties and sometimes also difficulties for them. For some of them the class teacher role was actually perceived as more challenging than that of an English teacher. For example Ray felt that

providing appropriate pastoral guidance to his students was the most challenging role/task in the entire year (TS 4e, 17:47). Particularly, he struggled to make a judgement on how serious some student problems were; he was not sure which cases involving behavioural and/or emotional problems needed to be taken to the discipline-in-charge and which he could just deal with on his own. Sometimes he was in a dilemma: if he went to the discipline-in-charge the students' identities would be revealed too soon, but at the same time he was not sure whether he could handle the cases himself properly (TS 3e, 28:19).

Tim also found it very hard to balance between having a good relationship with students as a class teacher and at the same time not being perceived as too lenient hence being taken advantage of (TS 4f, 25:40). In the lesson observation, I also noticed that some of Tim's students, especially the girls, would behave in ways that suggested a testing of his limits, such as deliberately not following his instructions and finding excuses to not do work (e.g. insisting that the room was too warm) (Fieldnotes_04122009_2). However in the interview after the school visit, Tim attributed the students' disciplinary problems to their being spoiled by their parents. Towards the end of the year Tim admitted that his partnering class teacher had spotted his being taken advantage of and suggested him not to be too friendly with the

students at least in the beginning.

There could also be role conflicts at times. Having other roles in the school did not merely mean more work but that other duties of an English teacher could affect their subject teaching. For example, Sarah noticed that her students, who were not motivated to learn English anyway, disliked English more and more because she was demanding a lot from them as a class teacher. It is understandable as how much students like a subject often times depends a lot on how much they like the subject teacher themselves.

While sometimes being a class teacher as well had created problems, it could be beneficial to a new teacher, particularly on their fully fledged identity and sense of belonging to the school. Mary, who was not a class teacher in her first year, expressed her hope to be one in the next year:

actually I'd like to be a class teacher (.) now I feel lonely (.) you know when you are outside (.) I mean there isn't a class of students I can attach to (.) and being a class teacher's different ... and now I'm like a loner ((laugh)) ... if I were a class teacher at least I could go to my own class in those events (.) you know it's like having a home ... but now I don't have any, so that may be why I don't have a strong sense of belonging to this school (.) I think that if I become a class teacher my sense of belonging to this school will be stronger (TS 4c, 2232)

Having a class of students whom she felt belonged to and responsible for was important to Mary. Her wish to be a class teacher was especially strong when she saw other teachers having a class to sit with in events such as carol services. She felt left out and out of place (TS 4c, 2119).

h. Medium of instruction

Another issue, partly related to the teachers' multiple roles, was deciding what language to use with students. Choosing whether to use English with students (and parents in some cases) all the time is actually a common challenge for English teachers in HK, because of the distinct English learning environment there (refer to Section 2.1.3 of the Context). Although English has always been perceived as important it is also overshadowed by Cantonese. English lessons might very likely be the only time students can use English and that is why most English teachers would want to use as much English with their students as possible. However, at the same time this may create a language barrier particularly for weaker students, and this in turn affects their communication with the teacher and how they learn.

Medium of instruction may appear to be a school policy or pedagogical decision, but a closer look at the data reveals that knowing which language to use and when

depends not only on personal choices or beliefs about, for example, the use of students' first language in English lessons, but also what the novices perceived to be appropriate behaviours within their school cultures. This was especially the case for teachers teaching in schools where there was a strong English-only culture among English teachers. At the same time the choice of classroom language could bring about other problems.

Ray and Tim's school was an English-as-the-medium-of-instruction (EMI) one. In theory, all English teachers only spoke English and most actually really did. Both Ray and Tim seemed very strict about only using English with students. For example, Tim was in charge of the school's basketball team, and he only used English even when coaching the team:

I don't want to sacrifice (.) after all teaching English is my profession and teaching basketball is just a (.) you know side line and I can't switch to Chinese just because of basketball or everything I've built up will come to nothing (TS 1f, 0182)

I mean I wouldn't say I don't know Chinese (.) I only said (.) in this school (.) you know the Principal hires me to speak English and I hope that no matter I teach English or basketball I use English (.) and if you don't understand you can seek help from other students or Sirs (.) but I insisted using English and they would accept (TS 1f, 0316)

I told them [students] that the Principal's hired me to give them more exposure to English (TS 2f, 21:10)

Tim explained that he only used English with students, both inside and outside classroom, because he saw himself primarily as an English teacher, and if students had problem understanding him they could seek help from other teachers who spoke Cantonese. As for Ray, he even went to the extent of pretending that he did not know Chinese (and the spoken dialect, Cantonese) at all. He only used English with parents too. This was his personal conviction; He really wanted to try using English all the time, and see whether it would work, especially in his first year of teaching in the school. There were no serious problems because of this practice except with parents who did not know English, whom his mentor (who was the other class teacher of his class) would deal with instead (TS 2e, 32:00). Eventually he succeeded in using English only for the whole year, without much struggle.

For Tim, the picture was very positive in the beginning of the year: students were using English (TS 1f, 0307) and colleagues were amazed at his success (TS 1f, 0272).

However, since the second interview (two months after term started), Tim was in a dilemma regarding whether to use English only. There were both reasons for using English only and for using some Chinese:

Reasons for using Chinese:

- Once the 'English-only' rule was relaxed, students would keep talking Chinese to the teacher, which was evident with one of his colleagues. (TS 2f, 51:50; 01:11:17)
- If students found out that he spoke Chinese with their parents they would start using Chinese with him too. (TS 2f, 21:20)
- His integrity would be at stake if students found out that he could actually speak Chinese but had pretended that he could not. (TS 2f, 29:22)
- He regarded himself primarily an English teacher. (TS 2f, 21:12)

Reasons for using some Chinese:

- Apart from English, he would want to teach students life skills and using Chinese would help them learn these best. (TS 2f, 47:10)
- Principal and vice-Principal thought English teachers could use Chinese with parents. (TS 2f, 21:20)

His dilemma was a result of the two roles he expected himself to play (to teach English and to teach students other skills as well), as well as expectations of the management. Also, different from Ray who was driven by his personal belief, Tim

admitted later in the year he used English only because he thought other teachers were doing so too and he felt that it was important to conform, and he later realised that they were not really:

You know in the beginning I insisted this just because I thought everyone was doing it (.) I thought it was a norm that everyone pretended not knowing Chinese ... I didn't realise until later [that using English was not really a must] (.) I didn't ask (.) I just saw that everyone's doing it so I followed ... Because both my seniors only use English, and I simply follow the way they do things ... I saw that they'd established this culture (.) and in order to be part of them I need to follow the ways they do things (.) well if they change I will also change (TS 3f, 35:59)

Roberts and Graham (2008: 1409) suggest that it is common for new teachers to do their best to fit in. They 'try not to transgress the (often unwritten) rules of the school culture' and avoid 'faux pas' in order to enter the group as a potential member (cf the idea of community of practice, Wenger, 1998). Sometimes this fitting in is more 'a means to an end' than actually 'assimilating the norms of the school'; the new teachers try to 'affirm the expectation of others' with the intention and consequence of 'winning some autonomy within the system of the school department', which Roberts and Graham (op. cit.) term 'tactical compliance'. However, this did not seem to be Tim's rationale of conforming; he simply thought it was safe to do what everybody was doing.

In Mary's school, English teachers were also supposed to use English with students only. Personally she did not have any strong beliefs about the medium of instruction. She admitted that it was only a policy she felt she needed to comply with (TS 1c, 1261). However, ironically, Mary's trying to enforce this English-only policy in turn created some other disciplinary issues. At the beginning of the year, she came up with a rule for students: if anyone spoke a word of Cantonese, marks would be deducted from the group they were in. However this resulted in quite a lot of classroom 'disputes':

But then it turns out that when a group ((laughs)) is talking Cantonese (.) the other groups would raise their hands (.) ((laughs)) their group is talking Cantonese (.) yeah (.) so now ((sigh)) I am now thinking of ideas (TS 1c, 1220)

While Mary's intention was to encourage students to use English only, the students were complaining against classmates in other groups when they heard them speak Cantonese. By the second interview she had come up with a new system of 'punishing' those who always spoke Cantonese (bringing sweets for their classmates) (TS 2b, 0731) and reinforcing those who spoke English by giving them 'Good Student Stamps' (a school-wide reward system) (TS 2b, 0973), both of which seemed

to work well. I also noticed in the lesson observation, which was done right before the third interview, that Mary had come up with different ways to handle students' complaining against each other, such as asking them to write down the complaints on pieces of paper so lesson time would not be wasted. This is what I put down on my notes:

Entering classroom

- Students complaining about other's behaviours before the teacher came
- Assigning students to tasks
- Students complaining
- Write on a piece of paper.

(Fieldnotes_12032010)

An interesting phenomenon is that while both Mary and Linda tried not to use Cantonese themselves they would ask students to 'interpret' for their classmates. For example, Linda asked one of her students to tell the whole class what 'diary' meant in Cantonese in the lesson I observed (Fieldnotes_17022009). Mary also talked about a very similar practice; she allowed students to use Cantonese with one another when she was explaining abstract vocabulary (TS 1c, 1278). Also, both she and Linda

would use Cantonese when handling classroom discipline (TS 2c, 27: 29; Fieldnotes_17122009). This once again shows the complexity of being a non-native English teacher in HK – teachers somehow think that it is right for them to use English all the time (and hence not using Cantonese when teaching) but at the same time the first language is preferred when they are carrying out roles other than English teaching (such as disciplining).

To summarise, while teachers' challenges and identity can be affected by the more obvious factors such as perceived self-efficacy and students' respect, for the language teachers it could just be the subject they teach. The case illustrates that using English only and trying to motivate the students to learn the language not only affects the classroom dynamics but also how students treat the teachers, which in turn influences the teacher-students relationship and the teachers' professional identity. The same is true in the opposite direction – how teachers see themselves (such as what role they primarily identify with) affects their professional decisions, and ultimately the teacher-student interactions.

5.3.2 Needs and deficiencies (internal)

- a. Pedagogical knowledge and skills

i. Knowledge of students

No matter how capable a new teacher is, they are bound to experience the challenge of getting to know what their students are like, in the first few months of teaching anyway. Most participants had this common problem of overestimating their students' the level of English proficiency, and as a result a significant amount of time was spent on getting it right through trial and error. Having an accurate assessment of students' abilities seemed to be Ben's biggest challenge not only in his first few months of teaching but was actually already a problem in his pre-service training (e.g. TS 1a, 0407); He always tended to overestimate the students and gave them too much and too difficult work to do (TS 1a, 0498; 1387), as he 'would generalise the proficiency of the whole class based on one or two conversations in class [...] with students' (TS 1a, 0477) who turned out to be the stronger ones of the class and their proficiency thus not representative of the group on average.

Although different teachers probably have different perceptions of the same group of students, and ultimately the novices will need to get to know the students including their language proficiency themselves, in the beginning a new teacher might benefit from seeking advice from teachers who had taught the students in previous years.

This was precisely what Ray did when he did not know the students at all but had to

select some to help with class matters (TS 1e, 1491). As both he and his mentor were new to the school, other teachers also advised them on the students' characteristics, especially those with special learning needs (in his school there were some students with Asperger's Syndrome), right at the beginning of the year (TS 1e, 1474). How the beginning teachers catered for diversity in the classroom will be further examined below in Section 5.3.2 b.

ii. Knowledge of the language

As earlier mentioned, setting test/exam papers was one of the areas new teachers had concerns about. Besides getting the format right, sometimes the issues were to do with content, which was related to one's knowledge of the English language. One example was Ben's setting vocabulary questions for a test. His colleagues had different opinions from his on what kind of words they should test students on. Thinking that he should test them on higher frequency words, Ben set questions for words such as 'browser' and 'Internet Explorer', but other teachers thought that words such as 'denim' were more important (TS 3a, 10:25). In the end he changed the questions. He admitted that although he had a guiding principle (word frequency), which was introduced to him during his pre-service education, he did not have concrete evidence to convince his colleagues (TS 3a, 09:58 & 12:53). Also, there

could be other factors such as gender (as in, whether it was because he was male and was therefore ignorant on words related to fashion). He did not tell his colleagues his rationales behind and neither did he find out theirs. He simply changed the questions rather reluctantly (TS 3a, 11:08).

b. Catering for individual learning differences

In HK, the individual differences have been drastically increased within school and within class as a result of the conversion from five student bandings to three and the implementation of inclusive education however without sufficient corresponding support package (Cheng, 2009). Individual learning and English proficiency differences among students vary across the schools the participants were teaching in, but on the whole they were significant and catering for such diversities was a challenge for most of the novices.

Setting test/ exam papers at appropriate levels of difficulty so that they could actually test students was not an easy task. Tim's school was starting to administer two different sets of paper to students at different levels.

our school is a DSS [Direct Subsidy School] and there's huge learners' diversity (.) some classes are really strong and some are really weak (.) but

then the school emphasises that there's no top classes (.) you know for example for strong classes we ask them harder questions and for the weaker classes the questions are more straight-forward (.) but then the answers are the same ... you know for example for the lower sets there are more hints (.) and for higher sets it's more tricky (.) the wordings (TS 3f, 02:27)

Despite the effort, some students still performed well above average and the weakest ones far below. This was due to the fact that some students had parents who were native speakers, while others were very weak at English (TS 3f, 03:19). The school tried to address the problem of teaching students with mixed abilities by allocating them to different 'sets' (there were two sets in a class), but finding the best ways to test and assess students was still a challenge.

Sometimes the novices' inexperience in managing the classroom exacerbated the challenge of catering for individual differences. For Linda, the Primary 4 writing class was her biggest headache in the entire year (TS 4b, 2512). One of the constraints was time discussed earlier in Section 5.3.1 b; she always found herself running out of time and eventually had to drop out one of the three writing tasks she was supposed to complete. On top of that, while she was giving the weakest students individual supervision at the teacher's desk, other students would keep raising their hands, trying to catch her attention, and some even left their seats to ask her questions.

Both Linda and the Principal were not happy about the situation:

so it's really chaotic (.) the whole lesson people are walking around and I am telling people off (.) you know (.) er (.) er (.) the Principal thinks this is not ok (.) you know students are not allowed to leave their seats as they wish (.) no they shouldn't (.) but yes (.) so in the end I can neither take care of the one out there nor those in the class (.) right (TS 4b, 2663)

Even if the new teachers are willing and able to cater for different learning needs, what they are allowed to do can be limited due to contextual constraints. Sometimes because of external limitations teachers might even resort to more traditional ways of teaching (Urmston and Pennington, 2008). In Mary and Linda's schools (interestingly, both are primary schools), as mentioned, all the worksheets (or any teaching and learning materials in hard copies) a teacher designed for their class would have to be given to other classes as well (TS 1c, 3780; TS 2b, 3827). They both suggested that the policy was a result of parents' complaints about fairness (TS 1c, 3690; TS 2b, 3830). In Mary's school, the materials even had to be approved by the grade coordinator. To save the trouble, the two new teachers either did something that required less work or avoided having extra class activities altogether (TS 1c, 3719; 3791), or resorted to other methods such as putting the materials on Powerpoint and asking students to copy them onto their own notebooks. With the former, students were not exposed to learning activities which might have been beneficial, and the

latter was not ideal as much time was taken up (TS 2b, 3821). It can be said that some school policies actually made it harder for new teachers to address their students' learning needs, and this might explain why both Linda and Mary considered catering for individual differences their biggest challenge in the first year of teaching. For Mary it was particularly frustrating when this was not a concern at all in her pre-service education; she was allowed to design and copy any materials for students then (TS 1c, 3709).

To summarise, new teachers, who already have less experience and resources to start with, are further frustrated by school practices such as unrealistic teaching schedule and policies that discourage the use of tailored materials (albeit unintentionally) in their attempts to cater for individual differences among students. This lack of understanding and awareness from the school, together with the increase in diversity as a result of educational reforms and new immigrants, makes teaching students with different ability levels and classroom management even more difficult.

c. Relationship with students and students' behavioural problems

Relationship with students is a large part of a teacher's life. Varghese et al. (2005: 34) even suggest that 'the interpersonal relations generated between teachers and students are not simply a context for language learning. At times, they are texts themselves,

indivisible from the meanings produced through schooling'. Various pieces of research show that new teachers especially like to establish positive relationship with the students (e.g. Hirschhorn, 2009; Oberski et al., 1999). The case study shows evidence of the new teachers' wish and need to establish good relationship with their students.

Sometimes new teachers struggle between having a positive rapport with the students, and setting boundaries and rules; Tim was inspired when a more experienced teacher told him not to worry about establishing good relationships with students, in the beginning anyway, but instead to be strict with students and firm with rules.

and she also told me not to worry too much about relationship with students in the beginning (.) she said you know with relationships when they get good grades the relationship would be good anyway (.) ((laughs)) ... she said when they get good grades first the parents wouldn't complain (.) and second the students think you're effective (.) but if you seem too friendly and then you are firm about things it's not that good (.) the relationship would actually get more distant ... I think that makes a lot of sense yeah (TS 4f, 26:51)

Sometimes the problem was not about establishing good relationships but basic respect. The six participating teachers taught in rather varied school contexts; some of them were teaching in schools that were in some of rougher areas of HK, and a lot of their students came from lower-income and single-parent families. Needless to say, teachers who were teaching students from underprivileged backgrounds tended to

0669 Science and they say it's really quiet (.) ((laughs))
 0670 and not in my class
 0671 Researcher: it's the same class isn't it ((laughs))
 0672 Mary: yes it is (.) ((laughs)) but then they behave very
 0673 differently

(TS 2c, 0666-0673)

Sarah's students even lied to her sometimes, claiming that past teachers had allowed them to do things that Sarah forbid (TS 3d, 01:02:46). They also assumed that Sarah did not know the school's usual practices and dared not punish them, such as rules and conventions surrounding detention (TS 3d, 01:01:46).

The fact that the novices were treated differently by their students affected their emotion and the way they disciplined these students. Linda admitted that she acted stricter and ruder towards the students who showed little respect for her (TS 1b, 3034). At the end of the first interview she went on at great length about how annoyed she was with those who ridiculed others (TS 1b, 3054). She would 'tell them rudely' that they were not doing the right thing, and these students made her 'very angry'. The students' behaviours and her reactions seemed to be creating a vicious cycle – when she got annoyed she acted ruder, and students as well as herself got more defensive:

You would think (.) I mean (.) it [the schedule]'s very (.) I mean very tight and someone's still interrupting (.) and I get really annoyed (.) and sometimes when I get annoyed (.) I will (.) sometimes I will get ruder (TS 1b, 3251)

and when I feel that they are very offensive, when I am in their class I would be defensive myself (.) and have a bad look on my face ... I feel that some students dislike [me] (.) because maybe they think that I pick on them (TS 1b, 3339)

It is worth noting that very often, behavioural issues stem from students' bad learning attitudes. It is actually difficult for a lot of English teachers in HK to motivate students to learn the language, as Cantonese is the dominant language as well as the MOI in most schools (see Section 2.1.3 in the Context Chapter). Sarah, who taught in a low-banding Chinese-medium school, found it extremely hard to motivate her students to learn English, which was perceived to be 'useless and difficult' (TS 3d, 53:58). It was especially challenging for her as other issues such as having little respect from students (TS 3d, 59:09) or being treated differently (TS 3d, 01:01:36) were tied to this problem of low motivation. Sometimes the problem spread; students of poor attitudes disturbed the rest of the class, which Tim also experienced with one of his weaker sets. Their classes ended up having very low passing rates (e.g. TS 3f, 43:17).

To conclude, establishing a good relationship with students is a tricky task for new teachers. On the one hand they hope to build rapport with students and on the other they need to gain respect from them. However, at the same time, students might take

advantage of their friendliness and the fact that they are less experienced and usually more lenient.

- d. Stress: expectations for self and students, and others' expectations on the novices

Most participating teachers seemed to have coped with their heavy workload and other day-to-day challenges well in terms of emotions, without obvious signs of unmanageable stress. Some novice teachers, on the contrary, at times clearly experienced higher-than-average levels of stress, mainly because of their expectations for themselves and the students.

In particular, Mary suffered from sleeping problems for a period of time in the middle of the year, to the extent where she sometimes needed medication to help her go to sleep. Apart from keeping thinking about how the lessons on the next day should be run when she was in bed, the problem was due to the fact that she worried much about the responses of the students:

you know I've been worried about the class atmosphere being bad, because sometimes I really fear that when I've prepared a lesson but the pupils didn't give me any responses (.) I feel really bad at that moment ... when I saw them unmotivated I would be upset (.) I am very easily influenced by the

students, that type of person (.) for example if the students do something that upsets me on a day I'd be unhappy the whole day ... I tried so hard in setting those exercises for you but you didn't do them and did so badly in exams (.) you know I would be really really really angry (TS 3c, 20:05; 20:35; 21:02)

This stress and sleeping problems not only affected her health but also her performance at work. For example, she felt very tired (TS 3c, 17:40) and very easily found students irritating (TS 3c, 18:06). It became a vicious cycle when the more she worried about not having enough sleep, the less likely she actually managed to get some (TS 3c, 17:40).

Sometimes the expectations came from other people such as the Principals. For example Linda was made to run a course for kindergarten children who were the school's potential students. It was initiated by the kindergarten Principals as they knew they could take advantage of Primary schools trying to boost intake (Focus Group, 01: 11: 45). The extra work imposed on Linda and the fact that she was not trained to teach really young learners made her very stressed (TS 3b, 09: 33). There was also pressure from the Principal on how a teacher should behave:

stress is normal (.) it's a motivator (.) but of course don't give yourself too much pressure (.) relax as you need to and let me know if you find things too stressful (.) we can delay the deadlines ... I work from 7 to 7 and that's

why I managed to become a Principal in ten years' time (TS 3b, 11:50 & 12:43)

The Principal was empathetic towards the stress she was having, but at the same time suggesting that she had got to work hard (like she did) in order to become successful and be promoted. She was even a bit manipulative when she went on to say that both the English panel and the vice-Principal liked her a lot (TS 3b, 14:35), suggesting that working hard for the school would pay off.

5.4 Conclusion

All in all beginning teachers are faced with various difficulties. These can be related to their relative inexperience in classroom teaching which results in problems such as inaccurately assessing students' abilities and not being able to manage discipline. At the same time, demands from the wider educational context, unreasonable school policies and complicated personnel can bring about even more challenges rather than provide support. On top these, managing both their own and other people's expectations on their performance can sometimes result in high level of stress. I now move onto the different forms of support available to the participants, the factors affecting their effectiveness, and their relationship with the needs and challenges of the novices.

Chapter 6

Findings & Discussion (II): Support available to participating novice

teachers

With things like this all you want is support like that from a friend, you know, 'hey what should I, what should I do? He's a grown-up and all he needed was to listen to somebody else's advice, I think. (Ray's mentor, TS ee, 35:20)

On the whole, some kind of support was available to all beginning English teachers in this study. For example, all of them were assigned a mentor, although the roles each mentor played varied substantially. Because of the semi-structured nature of the interviews (refer to Methodology), the forms of support discussed below are either 1) findings coded and gathered from answers given by participants in response to my questions, or 2) things that participants have chosen to talk about, which are believed to be significant from their perspectives. In other words, while it cannot be said that the forms of support that the novices did not mention did not exist, the ones discussed in this chapter are likely to be those that impacted their first year of teaching most.

A useful way to categorise and understand the different kinds of support the participants experienced is by considering their source. Support can either be school-based, that is, available within the institution the teacher worked in, or outside the institution. For the former, some forms of support were organised and put in place

by the school management. Others were ad hoc and were either 1) practices that new teachers were introduced or exposed to, and had relatively more freedom to decide how much and how often to make use of, or 2) things that happened in the regular routine of school-life which might be supportive to the new teachers. In other words, ad hoc forms of support were not specifically designed as part of an induction programme for the newcomers, but nevertheless were available to all teachers, both veteran and novice.

6.1 Support within the institution and related issues

Unsurprisingly, the majority of the kinds of support experienced by participating teachers in their first year were school-based. The most commonly seen forms include having a mentor, observing mentors and/or colleagues' lessons, own lessons being observed and given feedback, co-planning meetings, interactions and chats with colleagues on different seniority levels, and sharing of teaching and learning materials among colleagues. Details and issues related to each type of support will be discussed below.

6.1.1 Mentoring

Findings confirm that mentoring is the most common organised form of support. As

mentioned in the Methodology Chapter (please see 3.2.1), this study aims to gain insights about the support for new teachers and their first year experience from multiple perspectives, including that of their mentors. While all findings and discussion in this Chapter are the result of the analysis of all the data sources, the interviews with the mentors have particularly informed the analysis and discussion in this section on mentoring. Again, it should be noted that only three mentors (Linda's, Mary's and Ray's) had agreed to be interviewed.

Both mentors and mentees (even Ben, who experienced virtually no mentoring) believed that mentoring was an essential element in the induction of new teachers. One of the main reasons was that mentors normalised the mentees' need to talk to colleagues. It is evident that the novices were afraid of regularly seeking help from other more experienced teachers, mainly because they did not want to bother them. In other words, mentors took away the stigma perceived by novices of asking colleagues for help (Hirschhorn, 2009).

Also, the deteriorating work conditions of teachers in HK, discussed in the Context Chapter, means that it could be hard for novices to get support from experienced teachers because everyone was overwhelmed by the reform changes and workload,

and keener competition among schools and therefore in securing a job. Because of this, Linda's mentor believed that it was all the more necessary to have some kind of a formal scheme:

there must be a scheme in order for people to do something (.) everyone's so busy these days with administration etc and if there's no systematic planning (.) if I just ask people to volunteer [to mentor novices] (.) if there were no such scheme (.) can you take care of this new teacher (.) I think it was like this in the past when there's no such thing [as induction] (.) take care of them (.) I'll do it when I'm free (.) people were free in the past (.) they would definitely do it (.) especially when you asked them to (.) unless it's someone really mean but these days I can't even finish (.) workloads these days are not about meeting deadlines next week but tomorrow... [experienced teachers] are too busy to take care of new teachers to be honest... if it's a duty at least it motivates the teachers (.) can't just rely on volunteers (.) those who intrinsically want to help (TS bb, 45:35; 46:30; 46:43)

All participants were assigned at least one mentor. Linda had two – one supporting her on subject matters and another on administration. Although Ben was assigned one too his mentor did nothing with him apart from having a meal together. This is what I put as one of my research diary entries when looking at the data:

Isn't it troubling that despite numerous research advocating for socialisation structures for beginning teachers, some teachers are still left to 'sink or swim' on their own? (RD_09032010)

All participants had mentors who taught the same subject as they did (which was

obviously English), and Ray and his mentor were form teachers of the same class, and they taught classes of similar English proficiencies. It can be said that the schools believed that providing subject-specific and even class-specific support to the new teachers was important. Indeed pairing new teachers with carefully selected mentor is found to affect the effectiveness of mentoring programmes (Vonk, 1993). Similar to the findings of other studies, participants were most commonly matched with mentors in the same subject areas (e.g. Smith & Ingersoll, 2004) and grade levels (e.g. Heider, 2005). However, at the same time schools might have overlooked other matching criteria, such as proximity, which was proved to have caused problems in the mentor-mentee interactions, and will be discussed in Section 6.1.2 a iii.

a. Mentor's roles and mentoring styles

There are many ways in making sense of how the mentors provided support to the protégés. I have chosen to present their relationships and interactions in terms of what they actually did, which I name mentor roles, and how they did it, which can be taken as their mentoring styles.

Data shows that types of support mentors offers were wide-ranging. The three different mentor roles proposed by Fieman-Nemser and Parker (1993) provide a

framework in understanding them:

- ‘local guides’ basically only provide emotional support and short-term technical assistance;
- ‘educational companions’ also help novices focus on student thinking and on developing sound reasons for their actions.
- ‘agents of change’ work to reduce the traditional isolation among teachers by encouraging collaboration and shared inquiry.

Since mentors more often than not performed all three roles (or at least two of them), instead of fitting each of them into one particular type of mentor, I have categorised tasks and roles they performed under the three types according to their nature, based on the above definitions.

It is also worth noting that mentor and mentee was not the only relationship between each pair. The table (Table 15) below only shows jobs that are quite obviously what a more experienced practitioner performed in supporting and helping a new one professionally. It does not include things that did together out of, for example, their personal friendship. An example is Ray, who also considered her mentor his friend and although he was less experienced, he actually helped his mentor out a lot. This is what

his mentor said:

I don't feel like a mentor to him because he's helped me a lot (.) you know
I think it's a relationship like this. (TS ee, 07:54)

Table 15 Mentors' roles and jobs

| | Local Guide | Education Companion | Agent of Change |
|----------------------|---|--|------------------------|
| Linda's mentor | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Giving the mentee daily reminders - showing mentee around the school, explaining things to them and having the panel head explain things to them on Orientation Day - explaining the school ethos to the mentee - explaining to the mentee the professional development requirements | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - observing their lessons and giving feedback - providing a space for mentee to 'grumble', and emotional support - giving suggestions and support on classroom management - helping mentees gain respect among students and deal with difficult students - helping the mentee adapt, with the hope that they do not leave the profession | |
| Mary's mentor | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - looking after the mentee - explaining the school-based syllabus, curriculum and scheme of work - showing her around the school | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - giving advice and suggestions - helping with anything that has to do with the classroom, teaching, marking and setting papers - helping the mentee deal with parents and tricky situations | |

| | | | |
|---------------------|---|--|---|
| | | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> involving students - protecting the mentee and leading her towards independence so she does not need to be reminded that often - observing the mentee's class and giving feedback - Evaluating mentees in the middle and at the end of the year | |
| Ray's mentor | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Making sure the mentee read the staff file (which included things like marking and giving grades) and highlighting things which were the most important - explaining policies about e.g. taking students out for activities, applying for money reimbursement etc) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Talking about students and teaching on a regular basis | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Discussing new ways to motivate students' learning - Sharing teaching and learning ideas and tailor-making materials for students together |

As seen from the table, mentors were supportive in many ways. There is also a clear contrast between Mary and Linda's mentors and Ray's. The former are mainly the new teachers' 'local guides' or 'educational companions'. They primarily saw their role as fixing the new teachers' problems rather than treating them as co-inquirers into problems (Wang & Odell, 2002). It resembles what Carter and Francis (2001) call 'hierarchical apprenticeship' where the majority of the role centres on reinforcing conformism and mentees are guided into 'low-risk' activities (Malderez et al., 2007). It can be said that these mentors approached mentoring from a 'deficit perspective' (Hirschhorn, 2009: 215), assuming that beginning teachers were 'pedagogically empty' and must be given 'tools', instead of an 'ability perspective' that empowered their mentees to build on a capacity they had already possessed before becoming a teacher, such as interpersonal skills.

In fact, Linda's mentor considered the primary purpose of mentoring to be helping the new teachers survive the induction year and stay in the profession, which she admitted might be too low an aim:

I hope that new teachers don't leave or change jobs (.) wondering whether they can ever be a teacher (.) I think that's fine when I've helped them to go through that period (.) perhaps I'm asking for too little (TS bb, 37:45)

Feiman-Nemser and Parker (1993) suggest that some mentors tend to lean towards fixing the new teachers' problems only because they have limited ideas about their role and tend to have limited time to mentor. It can also be because in Mary's and Linda's cases, the mentor-mentee relationship was 'not established as a result of choice and goodwill' but 'rather as a fulfillment of obligation and entitlements' (Rippon & Martin, 2003: 215).

On the other hand, Ray and his mentor were also good friends who shared similar thoughts about teaching. As a result it was more like a peer partnership. They spent relatively more time discussing ideas and they collaborated on a regular basis.

these might not be because of mentorship but the usual collaboration (.) we know each other very well and we hold the same values like encouraging students to read (.) it's out of friendship (TS ee, 11:00)

Similarly, Ray's mentor also thought it was really important to have a group of colleagues whom one was close to and could feel at ease bouncing ideas off one another:

we spend so much time at school so it's a pain if those are not our friends...if they're just colleagues (.) it would be really boring (.) we need a group who are very close in order to work happily... it helps with work too (.) if everyone's a stranger to one another (.) when you give comments (.) you don't know if (.) you fear if it's personal (.) are you just trying to be mean (.) but if we're close we know

it's about the matter not the person...it's easier than there are things to be raised
(TS ee, 46:18)

Also, while mentors tended to focus on what they saw as their duties/responsibilities, such as giving reminders and taking care of the mentees, prominent in the mentees' recollection (and probably what they valued) were the mentors' advice and suggestions and emotional support. Similar to what Hall and Cajkler's (2008) find in their study, most new teachers particularly valued the opportunity to work with others regularly, even if some collaborations were informal and relatively unstructured. In fact, continuing professional development is most effective when it is collaborative and sustained (Evidence for Policy and Practice Information and Coordinating Centre 2005). However, the case shows that, as already established in the discussion of shifts in novices' perceived needs and challenges during the year (Section 5.2), often the participants' hope to collaborate with colleagues or at least to observe their lessons was not met.

Another way to look at how mentor enacted the role is their mentoring styles. Young et al. (2005) observe three main types from their empirical data, namely responsive, interactive and directive. *Responsive* mentors usually function as a resource or guide, and their interactions with the mentees are based almost exclusively on the agendas

the protégés set, such as the questions they pose or the problems they present. They *respond* when the mentees seek help. *Interactive* mentoring usually only exists when the mentor and mentee recognise each other at least in some sense as peers. The mentor might regard themselves as a friend or colleague, and both the mentor and the mentee want to be helpful and supportive to each other. Lastly, the *directive* mentor ‘takes charge, sets the action agenda, has a clear expectation for protégé performance, and seeks through a variety of means to guide the protégé and to encourage corrective action’ (p.176). Directive mentors assume a role of a master teacher or a coach.

Ray and his mentor were obviously in an interactive mentoring relationship. They both bring valuable contributions to the relationship and the action agendas were jointly formed. This was most obvious when they planned lesson together, and when they dealt with students’ behavioural and motivational problems. They both bring to the issues resources and ideas and often even carried out the plans together (this was possible also because they were form teachers of the same class). Ray described what they were trying to do together to encourage students to read more:

Linda’s and Mary’s, and even Tim’s and Sarah’s mentorships, as seen from the jobs they did in Table 15, were mainly responsive. At times they were more directive,

giving strong recommendations, particularly when the novices were struggling (e.g. Mary's dealing with parents' complaints discussed earlier in Section 5.3.1 f). This works out of a deficit view of protégé ability, and not necessarily of the protégé's potential (ibid).

On top of that, the mentoring support seemed to be 'static' rather than 'dynamic' (Draper & Forrester, 2009: 83). There was no evidence of mentors' consciously adjusting their styles and roles according to the different developmental stages the novices were in, such as 'initially providing close support but then dynamically responding to the mentee's growth in confidence, independence and resilience'. This was evident in Young et al.'s (2005) study; some of the mentors began the year in a *directive* mode, setting meeting times, agendas, and letting the interns know of school meetings and expectations, and sometimes outlining content and suggesting activities. This quickly oriented the interns to the tasks of teaching and to the school and to get them started. But very quickly, the mentors shifted away from a *directive* toward a *responsive* pattern, assuming a helping and supporting set of roles. However, in the present case mentoring was mainly responsive even at the start of the year. As a result the new teachers felt lost and novices such as Sarah, as discussed, did not even know where to do the printing or how to go about setting examination papers. Again this

suggests a need to conceptualise mentoring as a process and relationship that changes through time, catering for the needs of novices at different times of the school year.

In the case of Ray and his mentor, the mentor did not play a more directive role in the beginning of the year when the novices needed clear advice and direction not because she chose to but because she herself was not given any guidelines on what was actually expected of her and the mentorship. Apart from highlighting the most commonly used pages in the 'staff file' and asking Ray to read the whole file himself, she would just offer help and ask Ray 'to refer to a particular guideline when an incident came up' (i.e. adopting a more responsive approach) (TS ee, 04:55). This lack of preparation for mentors will be further explored below in Section 6.1.1 b.

Furthermore there seems to be a link between the relationship with mentor (and thus the perception of how supportive they were) and the culture among colleagues of the English panel. Ray, Tim and Sarah, compared to the rest of the group, perceived their mentors as more supportive and expressed having a much more positive relationship with the colleagues than the rest of the participants. At the same time they were the ones who more often described their school cultures as 'sharing'. They also experienced mechanisms such as co-planning and sharing of teaching and learning

resources (in Sarah's case, the existence of co-teaching as well) and actually perceived these to be helpful for their teaching. This suggests firstly, that the effectiveness of mentoring cannot be examined in itself without looking at the wider school context, and secondly that interactions with other colleagues are equally, if not more, important as the support from a mentor.

b. Preparation and training for mentors

This section deals with the issue of training for mentors that has emerged from the data. This might appear to be a problem for the mentors as they performed the role but ultimately I seek to explain how the lack of pre-service preparation for mentors affects the support for and development of the novices.

In the interviews with the three mentors, the issue of the lack of training for mentors was recurrent. However, the mentors did not perceive this as a problem, mainly because they, like a lot of people, believed that good teachers automatically became good mentors. For example, when asked what training and support were given to her, Mary's mentor answered,

no there hasn't been any but I guess being in the school is a form of training (TS
cc, 4:16)

Very similar to the phenomenon that one's teaching is hugely affected by their experience as a pupil (see e.g. Raths, 2001), mentors' beliefs on how to enact their roles are also very much influenced by their experience as a novice when they first started teaching. When Mary's mentor first started teaching, there was no induction scheme, but she could approach all colleagues very freely and they were all very willing to answer her questions (cc, 2:22). Together with her belief that 'experience is the best training' shown above, she seemed to be suggesting that mentoring was mostly about an experienced teacher answering a mentee's questions and providing everyday practical support, which was precisely what she mainly did. Mentoring was conceptualised by some mentors as a general kind of support that all willing experienced practitioners could offer, instead of a professional practice that involved a repertoire of skill sets that must be learned over time.

However, induction, the one put forward by ACTEQ (2009) anyway, involves a planned effort to provide new teachers with comprehensive learning experiences. Therefore, instead of simply providing advice and emotional support, or technical pointers, such as familiarising the protégé with the marking system (TS ee, 04:00) and procedures in getting reimbursement (TS ee, 04:16), which was what Ray's mentor mainly did, mentors need to learn to thoughtfully and purposefully structure learning

opportunities for the novices so they can develop an ‘educative habits of mind’ (Schwille, op. cit., p. 164). In other words, mentor training should not concentrate on the procedural but rather the pedagogic aspects of the role (Braund, 2001), aiming to ultimately help the novice learn to teach and be reflective (Schwille, op. cit.).

Mentors also need to be familiar with things like adult education principles and different ways of assessing a new teacher, to possess interpersonal skills especially in tackling sensitive situations such as assessing novices’ lessons (Kajs, op.cit.), as well as given regular supervision (Lazovsky & Reichenberg, 2006). None of these kinds of training and support were mentioned by the mentors in the study. Of course, what constitute relevant and effective generic training needs to be well thought out since mentoring is highly contextualised (Carter and Francis, 2001). Recommendations as to what would be relevant for the HK context and suggestions in response to findings of the present study will be discussed in the Chapter 8 (Evaluation).

c. Involvement of the management in the mentoring process

On the whole, the Principals were quite hands-off in their approach to managing the mentors and mentorship. The mentors also felt trusted by them. Nevertheless, there was an interesting dilemma regarding how much the mentors and mentees wished the

management, especially the Principals, to be involved. On the one hand, mentors resented the fact that Principals did not follow up on their role as mentors and that mentorship was not paid much attention to (TS ee, 09:41). On the other, all mentors from these three different schools were actually happy to be left alone. For example, when asked ideally what support the school would have offered, Ray's mentor said,

I can't think of an ideal situation because I think it's already ideal now (.)
actually it's best that the Principal doesn't pay any attention on me ((laughs)) (.)
you know it's fine now (TS ee, 30:10)

Instead of feeling supported, when the Principals were around the mentors actually felt awkward as Linda's mentor explained:

I personally think it's good that the Principal is not involved (.) because it's awkward whenever the Principal is present (.) yeah (.) or perhaps there's no emotional support at all (.) it's simply (.) you know if the Principal is there you dare not say anything (.) even for the experienced teachers (.) we know the Principal and still we don't say whatever that's in our hearts (TS bb, 24:45)

When she said 'no emotional support' she meant it would be hard for any teachers, both novice and experienced, to admit and talk about their mistakes when the Principal is around:

but then if it's less formal (.) if a new teacher made a mistake (.) which is inevitable isn't it (.) I do too (.) you know no one will dare talk about it [in front of the Principal] (.) even I myself won't tell the Principal when I've

made a mistake (TS bb, 25:03)

When the Principal was too busy to attend the meeting the novices were actually very happy (TS bb, 26:30). She held the view that formal meetings did not only have an adverse effect because they added to both the mentors' and the novices' already heavy workload, but that there might also be extra emotional pressure when the Principal asked them questions and they worried that they might give the wrong answers (TS bb, 26:10; 26:30). On the contrary, in informal occasions where the Principal was not present, novices would dare share their mistakes and aspects of teaching that they were not sure about (TS bb, 25:45). A non-threatening and supportive learning environment is vital to the learning and growth of new teacher (Lambson, 2010).

Johnson (2004) suggests that successful Principals do not only ensure that the infrastructure of their schools provides sufficient resources, support and clarity of expectation for new teachers, but they also develop personal relationships with the novices. The case study seems to suggest otherwise; neither the mentors nor the novices thought their Principals needed to build a personal relationship with the new teachers through frequent interactions. They should instead trust the mentors to do the job.

d. Status and power of the mentors

None of the mentors involved had been invited or asked about their willingness to mentor the new teachers before taking up the role. Neither had the mentees had any say about who would be their mentors, and vice versa. Not only were mentors simply appointed by the management to act as one but being a mentor was communicated as an administrative duty among the very many. The ways mentors talked about how they first got to know their role as a mentor were actually very similar:

no one invited me (.) I found out that I needed to be a mentor when I looked at the duty allocation (TS cc, 3:35)

the school assigned the duty...I received the duty list in July that said mentor to Ray (TS ee, 1:15)

it's one of my administrative duties (.) which also includes supporting student teachers having practicum in our school (.) you know those from [University X] (TS bb, 3:22)

And she (Linda's mentor) continued to say:

I couldn't say no to this duty (.) and I wouldn't say no unless I really hated it (.) but it wasn't something I was passionate about and volunteered to do either (TS bb, 06:28)

This is surprisingly similar to what Mary's mentor said when she was asked whether

she would like to involve again if there were a mentorship programme in the next year:

this is not for me to say (.) it's the school's decision...I don't mind being a mentor but I wouldn't say I'm passionate about it (TS bb, 23:09 & 23:57).

These comments suggest that the mentor teachers did not have any say in deciding whether or not to become a mentor, or rather, they were reluctant in expressing their unwillingness. All of them stated that they 'didn't mind' (TS cc, 03:52) or that they 'were not surprised' (TS ee, 01:19). They perceived themselves as 'old enough' to take up the position or had known that all experienced/senior teachers in their school were expected to mentor novices and that it would be their turn someday anyway. However, none of them volunteered to do so either and there was obviously a lack of passion. This is not surprising as after all mentorship is an additional professional undertaking for already busy educators (English, 1999).

Also, not only was being a mentor a compulsory instead of a voluntary duty, but mentors also had little power in deciding what the mentorship would involve. Linda's mentor was the only mentor teacher involved in designing the induction programme and mentorship arrangement. The others were asked to act as a mentor without even

being given any guidelines or job descriptions of what was required and expected of them. In particular, Ray's mentor, when asked what could have been done differently regarding the whole mentorship, expressed how some kind of job specifications would have helped her:

apart from going through the staff files (.) I wonder what the school's expectations of a mentor are (TS ee, 30:35)

A clearly defined set of roles is the first step to empowering a mentor, but it was not available. Ray's mentor went on to talk about specific induction elements, in particular the need for mutual lesson observations, which was also absent:

it's always useful to observe somebody's lessons (.) even if they teach really badly you can learn something (TS ee, 31:31)

However, she was reluctant to take the initiative to make this suggestion to the school management:

it's a challenge to the Principal's administration which I don't want to do (.) if he asks me I may tell but I won't take the initiative to (.) I definitely will tell if he asks (.) things like clearer guidelines (TS ee, 32:01)

While this was obviously an issue regarding hierarchy, it was also due to the low

status of mentors she perceived:

anyway the school doesn't see this duty as very important (.) you know how they put this duty? under (.) others (.) mentor to so and so (.) so I think they don't really regard this as a big duty (.) no I don't think so (TS ee, 32:17)

Despite the positive impacts they made on the novices' development as well as the reported benefits for themselves, the fact that mentors did not feel secure to say no to the role and were not involved in deciding what to include in the induction/mentorship programme except for Linda's mentor has at least three implications on the development of new teachers.

First, mentors' perceived status and power affects quality of the mentorship. Although 'procedural' mentoring relationship, which is driven mainly by the demands of a scheme, facilitates an expectation that there will be someone from whom the novice can expect guidance and support, it also tends to be mechanistic and unresponsive to the needs and abilities of the beginning teachers (Rippon and Martin, 2003: 215). This relationship is 'not established as a result of choice and goodwill, rather as a fulfillment of obligation and entitlements'. This is not to say that formally assigned relationships cannot be successful, but in order to develop a genuine partnership based on professional and interpersonal collaboration, the mentoring relationship has to go

beyond procedural requirements. Rippon and Martin (op. cit.) term this type of mentorship 'personal', and is arguably the most desirable and effective mentoring relationship.

Second, when the mentor role is assigned as a compulsory duty instead of offered as an opportunity for mentors' own professional development as well as to contribute to the profession as an experienced practitioner, it is hard to expect them to voluntarily strive for improvement in performing the roles, for example through training and sharing good practices with other mentors. Among the three mentors, Linda's was the only one who went for a training course which was actually required by the Principal. Mary's mentor said that if time allowed, she would take some courses about mentoring new teachers, but the fact was that she was too busy (TS cc, 17:34). Of course it would be unfair to say that mentoring or mentor training that is involuntary cannot be effective. At the same time it is not hard to imagine that mentors would be more motivated in receiving training and doing the job if they had volunteered. How well a mentor prepares and is prepared for the role in turn affects the quality of the mentorship.

Third, the mentors' lack of power or even courage to say no once again confirms the

culture of fear discussed earlier. Decisions of the management and the hierarchy were perceived as givens which were not to be challenged, which was obvious in the reluctance of Ray's mentor in giving feedback to the Principal about the mentoring system in her school. Under such culture where even experienced teachers dare not question the status quo, a culture of change is hard to be fostered. Needless to say, it would be even more difficult for novices to become change agents, since they already feel less powerful and 'qualified' to begin with.

e. Age/experience differences between the mentor and the mentee

Instinctively one would think that the more experience a mentor has, the better.

Findings from the present study instead suggest that it is not necessarily a problem to have a mentor of similar age. There are pros and cons in both having an experienced mentor and a not-as-experienced mentor.

Ray and his mentor, who only had one year of teaching experience when she started acting as a mentor, both agreed that they were more like 'peers' (TS 2e, 55:34) and 'friends' (TS 2e, 25:20) to each other. A lot of the time Ray would volunteer to help

her (e.g. helping with maintaining students' order during the reading sessions) even when it was not part of his duty (TS ee,10:30). It was out of friendship and natural cooperation and because of the fact that they knew each other very well (TS ee, 11:00), rather than the official mentoring relationship:

a mentor's supposed to guide more but it turned out that he was so capable and I really needed to work harder (TS ee, 42:45)

As seen here and discussed above, there were a lot of collaboration and interactions between the two of them, regarding both teaching such as material design and school practices such as the format of setting exam papers. The close relationship and frequent collaborations can be largely attributed to their closeness in age and similar amount of teaching experience. Ray's mentor talked about this rather explicitly:

it's hard to be really good friends with somebody who's taught for 10 years isn't it ... how would someone with 10 years of experience work with you (.) who on earth would ever do that (.) they know everything and don't need any collaboration (.) perhaps they've already accumulated loads of materials but we haven't and so need to share (TS ee, 19:55)

She also suggested that since they were both young, they had the passion to design lesson together (ee, 19:19). Of course, the perceived positive relationship was also

due to their similarities in terms of personality and values (TS 3e, 26:12). At the same time, obviously there are things that a not-so-experienced mentor cannot offer. For instance, Ray's mentor felt that a lot of the time she was unable to inspire or guide him, or provide him with some new learning experiences (TS ee, 19:11), which Ray agreed. He stated in one of the interviews that while they could both explore and learn together, especially with things that not even his mentor had encountered before (TS 2e, 55:59), it actually took longer for them to solve a problem (TS 2e, 55:12).

However, having young mentors was an intrinsic feature of their school since it was a very new one and that the Principal seemed to prefer to hire young teachers anyway.

The 'more experienced' teachers actually had 3 to 4 years of experience only.

Mentors with substantially more experience, such as Mary's and Linda's, were regarded by their mentees as older veteran teachers. For example, as discussed in the section regarding interactions with colleagues (see 6.1.2 a iii), Mary seldom approached her mentor because she was sitting with other senior teachers. It is obvious that she did not consider herself 'peers' with her mentor, like Ray did.

A mentor with lots of teaching experience obviously has a lot to offer, but it is also precisely their experience that makes it hard for novices to develop effectively with

their help; Novices can find it frustrating to see their mentors capable of handling problems in ways that seem unattainable for them. Linda's mentor was actually very aware of this problem; when she was asked how she would help Linda with classroom management, she said:

things that I can do (.) you know there's nothing I can do for them (.) at best I can tell them (.) well for this case I think it would be better if you handle it like this because a lot of times it's a teacher's image in front of the students (.) which can only be built by the teacher themselves (.) if a student misbehave I could tell them off and the problem's solved (.) but that doesn't mean the new teacher will be able to handle a similar case in the future (TS bb, 09:55)

When a novice was faced with a problem, she would tell them what she would do in a similar situation, and suggest them to try the solutions out. Of course it would have to be novice themselves who handled the problem or the students would have even less respect for them. However, she added that even when they were offered suggestions, new teachers often felt incapable of putting them into practice. As mentioned in the last section, what a veteran is able to do might seem unattainable for a novice. For example, regarding disciplining students, it takes time for novices to build up a sense of authority whereas the mere presence of an older teacher would already intimidate the students (TS bb, 36:17).

Also, even for very capable new teachers, there is something that they definitely do not possess – having been with the students in the previous years. Linda’s mentor thought that oftentimes, knowing a student from Primary 1 to Primary 6 per se would cause students to ‘give face’ (TS bb, 36:42) to a teacher; They would be well-behaved in front of a teacher who had taught them in junior grades. These are the things that she felt ‘couldn’t be taught but accumulated’ (TS bb, 37:08)

With these in mind, Linda’s mentor actually suggested finding someone who had only taught for a year to be a beginning teacher’s mentor for the following reasons:

- They would be close in age, thus no generation gap;
- They would be very good at providing emotional support because they could empathise more with the novice;
- They could advice them on things while they are still fresh in memory and as they are able to feel for them;
- The new teacher would feel that ‘you made it last year so I should be able to too’.

(TS bb, 34:32-36:17)

It may be worthwhile to explore the possibility of asking less experienced teachers to

act as mentors. The picture Linda's mentor had in mind matches very closely with the real case of Ray and his mentor where the age/experience difference was small.

Although as discussed above a not-so-experienced mentor might not be able to help the novices with pedagogical challenges as much, they were indeed very good sources of emotional support and partners to work with as they were perceived to be more approachable and their suggestions more attainable.

All in all, the evidence from the case study suggests that age/ experience was not the most important factor affecting the perceived effectiveness of mentoring. Similarly Carter and Francis (2001: 257) also suggest that both young and older mentors can be successful; younger mentors find it easier to 'recall what it was like to be a beginning teacher, have 'the ability to empathise', which are both 'important conditions that contributed to effective mentoring and school-based induction'. At the same time, 'larger differences in age and experience between mentors and beginning teachers were no impediment to successful and lasting relationships'. They conclude that physical proximity and general availability appear to be much more important factors. (The relationship between staffroom seating and how it affects interaction between mentors and mentees will be discussed below in Section 6.1.2 a iii.)

f. Ways of improving the mentorship and induction programme

Both the mentors and mentees suggested a number of ways in which their school-based induction and mentorship (if any) could be improved. Since every school was very different in terms of, for instance, how their programmes were run and years the mentors had been teaching and mentoring, their needs and suggestions for improvement were inevitably very different. That said, there were also a few unfulfilled needs that were prominent and suggestions which were common across all cases.

One thing that all mentors and some mentees thought would have been helpful in the development of a beginning teacher was having more lesson observations, which included both the mentor observing the mentee and the mentee observing their mentor.

Ben suggested that even cross-disciplinary lesson observations could be useful. For example he had learned from a Maths teacher an effective way of presenting subject contents (Focus Group_32: 08). However, increasing the number of lesson observations could be more difficult than it looks as it requires careful arrangement and facilitation by the management in a number of ways.

First, the school management would need to be committed to helping novices develop

to the extent of giving them priority in timetabling. For example, Mary only had two chances to observe her mentor in the whole school year, because their timetables had so many clashes that they only allowed Mary to observe one of her mentor's classes (TS bb, 32:55). In order for her to observe another class (and hence two observations in total), they needed to shift things around and made special arrangements (TS bb, 32:58). It can thus be inferred that the timetabling in their school was not particularly 'novice-friendly', that it was not organised in such a way that would allow them to observe their mentors' classes as they wished. In their school environment where the novices were concerned about conforming and mentors were not empowered (Mary's being one), it would be unfair to leave these arrangements to the mentor and novice to sort out on their own, without much support from the administration and management, and it would be unrealistic to expect them to jump over so many hurdles (e.g. lack of passion in the first place and not having the administrative power, which have both been discussed) in doing so.

Second, in some schools, lesson observations are still used only for assessment rather than developmental purposes. Under such circumstance it would be hard for the management to see any need for increasing their number, since more often than not the novices were assessed one-off. For example, in Ray's and Tim's school, new

teachers were observed by the Vice-Principal once and for the whole year as part of their appraisals. There would not be any observations until the 4th year they taught in that school, if they were still teaching there then (Focus Group, 50:28). Ray's mentor was not involved in any observations which she thought would have been helpful for both her and Ray's professional development (TS ee, 31:00) especially by receiving feedback from each other (TS ee, 31:21). If more observations were to be put in place, the management, not only the mentors, would have to see their developmental value.

Third, more lesson observations means more work for the mentors, if they are the ones doing the observation or being observed, as well as holding the pre- and post-observation conferences. Of course again it goes back to the question of how committed and passionate the mentors are as discussed above. This also depends very much on how the management balances between the benefit to the novices in having more observations and not burdening the mentors too much. Linda's mentor, who was the one designing her school's induction scheme, voiced this concern:

I actually think it's good to observe more lessons but I won't put that down in the plan because actually (.) you know if it's me that's fine but for some colleagues, preparing a lesson for others to observe is, it's like adding to the mentors' workload (.) so I will only put down the minimum requirement but I think observing others' lessons is a good thing for novices or well I observe their lessons or they observe

mine (TS bb, 33:05)

Of course, it is easy to imagine that more often than not the teachers involved will do no more than the minimum requirement, and it might be difficult for a novice to ask for more observations even if they find them useful.

6.1.2 Ad-hoc support within the institution and its issues

a. Interactions with colleagues

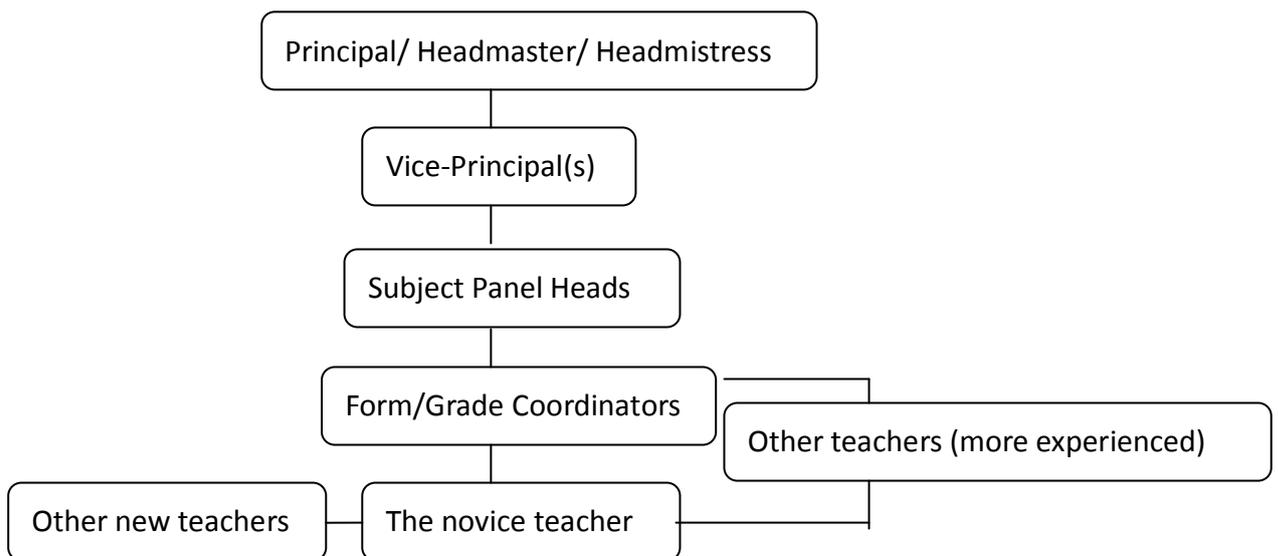


Figure 2 Common structure of teaching staff members in Hong Kong primary and secondary schools

The above figure shows the common structure of teaching staff members in HK primary and secondary schools. The different levels denote the seniority where the ones on the top are more senior.

i. Interactions with those who were more senior (e.g. Principal)

School policies such as how certain tasks are to be carried out, and personal views of the school leaders should be two separate things, but in most of the participants' schools they were practically the same thing; what the Principal demanded was the 'unwritten policies', which the novices had to follow. A very good example was the case of excessive teaching and learning tasks in Linda's school. As mentioned in Section 5.3.1 b. Linda was very frustrated when there was always too much to cover. The additional tasks were actually the idea of the Principal's, who was very involved in monitoring the syllabus design, particularly that of the English subject (TS 2b, 0465). Despite teachers' complaints (TS 2b, 0435) and external evaluators' comment that regarding the amount of homework they 'should emphasise quality but not quantity' (TS 2b, 0494), the Principal still insisted having more. As Linda put it, 'the boss [couldn't] be bothered' (TS 2b, 0509) to change her way.

Also, in general, there was a strong feeling of hierarchy; novices always took note of what the Principal said, which had a huge impact on how the novices perceived themselves and their teaching, as well as the decisions they made as a result. This is interesting because all participants actually had very few encounters with their Principals. There might not be any correlation between the frequency of interactions

and their impacts on a novice's development.

There were very few interactions between Tim and his Principal. However, the way his Principal ran the school created certain ethos which Tim valued. For example, there was no difference in terms of the terms of contract among teachers, unlike the majority of HK primary and secondary schools where teachers who are degree-holders could be a Graduate Master/Mistress (GM) and those who do not possess a degree are Certificate Master/Mistress (CM). The two mainly differ in the salary ceiling and this usually results in comparisons among colleagues, especially new entrants who possess a degree or even higher qualifications but nonetheless need to take up a CM position because of keen competition in the market (as discussed in Section 2.1.2). In Tim's (which was also Ray's) school, however, all teachers were GMs. There was no jealousy among his colleagues, and this might have resulted in the perceived supportive and sharing culture of the school. In our first interview Tim mentioned an analogy of a 'machine' that his Principal used in describing the staff team; Each member was seen as a vital part.

Similarly, while Linda only remembered talking to her Principal for 2 to 3 times during the first school term, these encounters seem to have affected how she saw

herself as a new teacher a lot. For example, her Principal promised to renew her contract as early as in November because they wanted to involve her in the aforementioned publicity team. Although Linda experienced some kind of pressure because she could not but accept the offer, at the same time she perceived it as a recognition from the Principal. This is understandable as the Principal '[determined] the expectations for teaching and learning' and the beginning teacher wanted to 'please and receive a good evaluation' from them (Brock & Grady, 1998: 179). They wanted the Principal to affirm their efforts.

Also, Linda's colleagues suggested to her that the fact that the Principal did not meet her often was actually something positive; It was a sign that they were satisfied with her performance. Previously there had been new teachers who were complained about by parents and therefore asked to see the Principal often (Recording 2b, 18:11 & 18:31). This is interesting as one would normally imagine that being supportive means regular contacts. However, in Linda's case anyway, a low frequency of meeting with the Principal was a sign of their approval of her work, which is believed to have positively affected her perception of her teaching and identity as a teacher. This suggests that the role of the Principal might not be one involving direct contact with the novices. Instead, for example, their job is to promote a collaborative school

culture and resource model (Fantilli & McDougall, 2009), as well as making sure that mentoring strategies, such as regular developmental meetings and meaningful instructive feedback, are in place (Roberson and Roberson, 2009)

ii. Informal interactions with other colleagues

Again, the atmospheres in Ray, Tim and Sarah's schools seemed to be ones that helped the novices feel at ease to ask questions. They all expressed positive feelings towards working with a mentor, that having a mentor made a huge difference. At the same time they were the ones who perceived that other colleagues were supportive and approachable. As Ray commented, although he was not given specific details about the mentorship programme at the start of the term, this did not bother him as he could ask any colleague any questions he might have. Also, one of his seniors in university had started teaching in the same school one year before he did, and he had therefore learned from her the sharing culture of the school even before becoming a teacher there.

Interactions with colleagues took place in various physical contexts but data shows that they mainly happened in the staffroom, which Kainan (1994: vii) describes as 'the familiar and apparently trivial institution'. There is a certain rhythm to the

staffroom, which is very different from but related to classroom teaching – when teachers go to their classrooms they are the only adult and are the responsible and knowledge one, and when they walk to the staffroom they turn into a team and a group of colleagues (ibid). Similar to what Kainan has found, there seems to be a relationship between the interactions inside staffrooms and factors such as physical settings (e.g. furniture, seating arrangements) and the differences in age between the participating novices and their colleagues, which I am going to discuss below.

iii. Relationship between collegial interactions and seating arrangements in the staffrooms

Findings suggest the physical setting of a school such as the seating arrangement of teachers in staff rooms has quite a big impact on the interactions between the novices and their colleagues. Such arrangement was very different in each school. In Ray and Tim's school, for example, teachers were seated according to the subjects, regardless of experience, making it very easy for them to talk to any teachers from the English department. There was also a common room which was perceived as a space for both casual conversations and work. In some schools teachers are seated according to the subjects they teach (e.g. in Ray and Tim's school), in some the grades/forms they teach (e.g. Mary's school) and yet others almost randomly (e.g. Ben's, Sarah's and

Linda's schools).

Moreover, in Mary's school, for some reasons teachers who were in more senior positions (e.g. the panel heads) and who were teaching more senior grades (e.g. class teachers of Primary 5 and 6) were seated on one end of the staff room and the junior ones (whom Mary called 'the Primary 1 to 4 teachers, the newcomers – those small potatoes') the other. There was also a long aisle between the two sides although they were in the same big room. This had actually created a feeling of hierarchy for her and some of her colleagues (TS 3c, 08:16). This is evident as when they talked about the senior teachers, they would refer to them as 'those on the other side of the river' (TS 3c, 08:34).

In terms of support, this physical setting had somehow discouraged Mary from interacting more with her mentors and other senior teachers:

I belong to the Primary 1 to 4 side so I won't bother walking to the other to socialise with people (TS 3c, 31:28)

Physical setting, in Mary's case anyway, is not a neutral entity. Instead it affected the interaction pattern and frequency. The separation of senior and junior teachers creates

a sense of hierarchy. A certain part of the staffroom is perceived to be occupied by the seniors and therefore not belonging to the whole staff team. Also, novice teachers might not be willing to make extra effort (e.g. having to walk to the mentor's seat and stepping into the seniors' 'territory') in interacting with the more experienced teachers. They therefore could not benefit from interacting with the experienced teachers on a more regular basis and in a more casual and spontaneous manner, which might otherwise would have been more likely if the novices were seated closer to their mentors and other veterans.

The only person whom Mary talked to almost every day is another new teacher (TS 3c, 34:50). However, even after the Principal had talked to her about her being 'cool' (shy), which she perceived as a hint from the Principal that she should socialise more with the other teachers (TS 3c, 1:03:20 and 1:03:32), she very rarely talked to the other colleagues. She attributed this to her personality (TS 3c, 01:03:50) and the physical setting aforementioned. There did not seem to be any interplay between autonomy and collegiality. Instead, she seemed to be isolated in her own world:

I am not like the other teachers who bought a set of breakfast (.) signed in and went to the kitchen to have breakfast and chat with the others (.) for me (.) once I've arrived and signed in (.) I went back to my seat and started preparing and marking (TS 3c, 01:04:15)

She described that the same happened during lunchtime and after school, and it could be inferred from her tone that she was not particularly happy about this.

It should be noted here that an ‘isolated’ work condition is not the same as an ‘autonomous’ one. Autonomy is a conscious decision to make space and time for one’s professional development, and as Clement and Vandenberghe (2001) suggest, effective workplace learning of teachers should be comprised of both autonomy and collegiality in a balanced way. Within autonomy, teachers’ individuality, and their needs to plan, teach and work on their own are appreciated. There is an inspiring interplay between profound variants of autonomy and collegiality, where, for example, there is collaboration but no forced consensus (ibid).

iv. Interactions with other new teachers

All participants had colleagues who were also new teachers in the schools. For Mary and Ben, they were their main source of emotional support:

I offered them emotional support when they were upset by a student (.) they were the class teacher of a naughty class (.) we complained to one another... it’s mainly emotional support (.) we very rarely talked about teaching (.) not only with this new colleague but also among all colleagues...we grumbled to

one another (.) I hardly recall any interactions about teaching (TS 3c, 34:53)

so among new colleagues so far it's mainly emotional support (.) about teaching the chats are very brief (TS 1a, 3872-3877)

Such support was important in meeting their affective needs as new teachers have the need to share information with other comparably inexperienced teachers since knowing that the trials and tribulations of teaching are shared by others is reassuring (Brady & Schuck, 2005). However, the fact that in their schools small communities were formed around teachers with similar amount of teaching experience posed an obvious problem of having very few chances for them to interact with the veterans. Kardos et al. (2001) suggest that while professional cultures that are veteran-oriented pay little attention to the needs of beginning teachers, those that are novices-oriented also run the danger of having very little experienced guidance about how to teach. This may explain why Mary and Ben both suggested that the interactions with other novices were purely for emotional support. There were very few exchanges about teaching with other new teachers which helped with their professional development.

v. *Contents of interactions with colleagues*

i) *Information new teachers found particularly useful*

Regarding the contents of the chats with colleagues, information about students

especially their background and behaviours in previous years was most valued. For example, this kind of information really helped Sarah in understanding students who were unmotivated and as a result she would think more carefully before telling them off in future encounters. Ray also relied heavily on this sort of information when he appointed student representatives such as class captains and subject captains in his class/sets.

Obviously, beginning teachers needed knowledge about their students in order to get started, and the only way they had access to this information apart from finding out for themselves was to ask colleagues who had been there in previous years. This 'starter's kit' (which might be an actual physical entity, or shared through social interactions) might include background of students as well as documents such as schemes of work used in previous years, from which participants such as Mary benefited.

In some schools such as Ray and Tim's, there were actually teachers' shared folders where materials of all subjects in the previous and current school years were put, and the new teachers had free access to. This in turn saved them time and effort in preparing their own teaching and test materials. Although due to student differences

they might need to modify and adapt, these provided with ideas and lightened their workload by not having to design things from scratch.

ii) *Grumblings*

A recurring theme of the interactions between the novices and their colleagues is grumbling – venting of negative emotions with one another especially towards students and teaching:

we grumbled to one another (.) for example about how the students were behaving (TS 3c, 35:19)

I mean if I don't sleep well I would also (.) hey last night I (.) have you been sleeping well lately (.) I mean we would chat briefly like this (.) there aren't any formal exchanges about teaching though (.) I mean so far it's only mutual emotional support, and with new colleagues in the other departments there are even fewer contacts (TS 1a, 3777-3792)

Like Ben, one might not see the real functions of grumbling, but it actually helps one to survive and protect their professional identity. Kainan (1994: 119-120) suggests that grumbling '[gives] the teachers mutual confirmation that the students, and not the teachers, were to [be blamed] for the situations'. The aim of the complaints is not to show how bad it is for the teachers, but to stress the level of hardship, energy, and sacrifice the teachers endure for their work and that they are functioning, in spite of

3808 shopping
3809 Researcher: right
3810 Mary: but teaching's not like this=
3811 Researcher: =mm
3812 Mary: well for me even if I leave at around 5 or
3813 6 every day I take a pile of things home to
3814 do
3815 Researcher: mm
3816 Mary: I mean it might be worksheets (.) anything
3817 (.) also (.) there would definitely be lesson
3818 preparation (.) even now I am preparing
3819 for lessons (.) carefully (.) I mean I think
3820 it would be (.)
3821 Researcher: mm=
3822 Mary: =because (.) yes (.) because it's my first
3823 year of teaching
3824 Researcher: mm
3825 Mary: or I don't know what a unit is all about.
3826 Researcher: right
3827 Mary: let's say after 8 (.) perhaps the period after
3828 dinner I spend on lesson preparation (.) I
3829 don't even have time to watch the TV
3830 ((laughs))=
3831 Researcher: ==((laughs)) yeah I know (.) mm
3832 Mary: I mean I would ask them to consider it's a
3833 sacrificial kind of job

b. Co-planning meetings

Co-planning meetings was perhaps the most structured ad hoc support and an event where the novices could interact with other colleagues. In some of the schools investigated these meetings were called Learning and Teaching (L&T) Sessions or grade meetings. In some schools, these meetings were intentionally used as an induction element. For example, Linda's administrative mentor, who was also the

teacher in charge of the induction programme in her school, purposefully put her in the same grade meeting with (and thus teaching the same grade as) her subject mentor so that Linda could learn from her strategies of tackling students' problems.

Lovett (2002) and Lovett and Davey (2009) argue that structured time for professional talk is especially important for new teachers as they can easily become disheartened if their need to talk about their practice is dismissed or perceived as being a burden to colleagues who are already busy with their own concerns. New teachers who work in close proximity to their colleagues, either by having common workspaces or common planning time, are better placed to ask for and receive help when questions arise during their everyday teaching. In other words these meetings increase the likelihood of spontaneous conversations and collaborative problem solving, and are also protective places where teachers can air frustrations and share successes and challenges (Shank 2005). Of course the ability of these communities in sustaining new teachers' enthusiasm depends not only on frequency but the depth of the conversations (Lovett & Cameron, 2011).

In this case study co-planning meetings were indeed perceived to serve the function of sharing in learning communities. In Ray's school, for example, there was sometimes

spontaneous sharing of teaching ideas in general. In terms of specific topic they talked a lot about ways to further develop and improve the existing school-based teaching and learning materials. Ray felt that other colleagues were able to support him more in terms of classroom activities (i.e. techniques) than the actual teaching items (i.e. contents). For example, when he expressed that students tended to find reading lessons very boring, one of his colleagues suggested a reading game that he later tried on a different text and found effective. However, for things such as what grammar items to be teach, he was more or less left to decide on his own because of the varied abilities of students.

Mary really treasured the chances to co-plan with other colleagues but these were occasional rather than regular practices in her school. There was only one opportunity in the entire year where she could plan lessons with other colleagues by each writing a lesson plan and circulating among themselves for comments. The whole grade then tried using the same plans to teach their classes and in the end evaluated the process together. She particularly valued the amount and quality of ideas when they put their heads together and when other colleagues spotted problems in the lesson plan that she had overlooked (such as not realising that she needed to first recap what students had previously learnt). Linda did something very similar with her colleagues, and they

even observed each other's lessons during the process. Both Mary and Linda found the collaborations positive although they both mentioned the problem of time consumption, when the teachers needed to find time to sit together to plan and comment, and to evaluate. This might explain why some of their more experienced teachers were not as positive as they were in working together. They would rather plan lessons on their own, which was not a problem for them as they were experienced. This resonates with Ray's mentor's comments about the benefits of having an inexperienced partner/ mentor – both parties can take advantage of the collaboration whereas experienced teachers are not as eager as they have accumulated a lot of experience and teaching materials themselves (see Section 6.1.1 e).

Co-planning meetings were however not without problems. Firstly, not all teachers found the sharing useful because of huge student diversity just mentioned. For example, Ray suggested that planning lessons with colleagues was difficult because their students had varied abilities and the sets (normally one class was divided into two 'sets' in his school) thus had different work progresses.

Second, because of more pressing needs these meetings gradually became a time to sort out logistics. For example, in at least half of the schools investigated (Ray and

Tim's, Sarah's and Ben's), the meetings were mainly for reporting work progress (whether a particular set/class was ahead of or behind schedule), resolving issues such as unavailability of books for students, and duty allocation, even if they started off being a sharing and learning session for teachers. In some schools the meeting had never been one about collaboration although they were named 'co-planning meetings'.

Third, these meetings tend to focus on tasks instead of needs and feelings. Upon hearing the recordings of the co-planning meetings that Ray and Tim have recorded (see Section 4.2.6.2), I discovered that the discussions were exclusive on teaching and learning, and there was not even one instance of teachers' expressing needs or offering one another support. This might explain Jarzabkowski's (2002) observation that most research on collegial practices tends to focus on its impact on students' learning outcomes and neglect the social benefits for the teachers themselves. For novices who had emotional support from their mentors and close peers this might not be a problem, but for those who did not, such as Mary, this kind of emotional support from more experienced colleagues could determine even whether they stay in teaching and what kind of teachers they become (Liston, Whitcomb & Borko, 2006).

6.2 Support outside the institution

Support outside the institution can be anything from family support, to support from other teachers, to professional development activities organised by the government.

Findings suggest that virtually all forms of support available to the participants outside the institution were related to their pre-service training. They included support from former coursemates, which took the forms of face-to-face meetings and sharing of teaching and learning materials on the Internet, as well as materials designed by the universities where they were trained as teachers.

Mary and Sarah both talked about meeting their former coursemates from time to time, and the fact that these interactions had given them chances to ‘vent’ their feelings and frustration of teaching and being a teacher to one another. However, Mary found it hard to relate to her ex-coursemates because the majority of them were teaching in secondary schools while she was in a primary one. While meeting with former coursemates (people whom the participants had known for years and were also teachers) was a good form of emotional support, grades these teachers were teaching made a difference in whether or not they perceived such support as relevant and helpful.

Sarah, on top of meeting her former classmates, was involved in a Facebook (a social networking website) group in which they shared teaching and learning materials with one another. However, she had not contributed by sharing something herself as she felt her materials were incomplete (because she co-taught with other teachers and she only had parts that she was responsible for). Also, although she expressed the wish to benefit from the shared materials, she did not actually do so as the year went by. This, and my own unsuccessful attempt of trying to support the participants using a Ning online group (see Section 4.2.6.6), seems to suggest that teachers would rather design their own materials than to access online resources. Even if they were to benefit from materials created by other teachers, the preference was for those designed by teachers in their own schools (such as the shared folder in Ray and Tim's school mentioned in Section 6.1.2); Differences among school-based curricula mean that the materials might not be relevant or that the teachers had to do a lot more work in adapting them, which might not be time-effective.

well because we all teach in schools where the students' abilities vary ... so it's impossible that what they've put up will definitely be useful (.) one definitely needs to modify (TS 1d, 1747)

6.3 Other professional development activities

In HK, there is no official territory-wide requirement for engagement in professional

development activities. It is generally driven by individual teachers' self-evaluation and reflection (Draper & Forrester, 2009). However, ACTEQ (2006) considers that an indicative target of 150 Continuing Professional Development (CPD) hours in three years should be maintained as a constructive pressure as well as a common goal for teachers. Although there have been reservations from teachers who considered the quantitative target to be too high (ACTEQ, 2006), data from the present study suggests that most novices had taken it as a norm and going to CPD events was part of their professional life, as will be demonstrated below.

All participants who had attended professional activities were given the freedom to select and take part in events they were genuinely interested in. They tended to pick very short courses or workshops that were subject specific, or teaching and learning related. For example,

- Ray joined a workshop that helped teachers to train students in English public speaking and to prepare them for speech festivals, as well as a half-day one that looked at learners' diversity;
- Linda attended a short course about designing websites (as she was also an IT teacher) and one about English story-telling;

Another form of one-off professional development activity was school-based teachers' development day, which has become commonplace in most HK schools. It normally takes the form of a one-day training, run by an external speaker or trainer. This is Ray's recollection of one of the teachers' development days on the New Senior Secondary curriculum (see Section 2.1.2):

there were lots of games and activities but I've yet to think about how to incorporate them (.) for example (.) yes (.) they taught us how to do those activities but then (.) actually those were dramas but then you could use them in other lessons (TS 3e, 06:20)

Like Ren, when how they had benefited from the teachers' development day, the novices could recall an episode or two, or a few tricks they had learned. There was not enough evidence to determine whether or not these activities had any long-term impact on the novices' practice, although it was evident that some institutes who organised them tried their best to help the teachers process what they had learned. For example, in the training about learners' diversity and learning styles that Ray attended, he was given a task to take home, which he then sent to the tutor for comments (TS 3e, 03:22).

Manuel (2003) actually challenges the effectiveness of these one-off, one-size-fits-all

events for beginning teachers, and instead suggests that professional development is to be participated and even constructed by new teachers over time. This however does not seem to be encouraged by ACTEQ. Within its CPD framework (ACTEQ, 2003, 2006) there are two types of professional development activities, namely 'structured learning' (e.g short course, seminars, workshops) which was what participants mainly engaged in, and 'other CPD modes' which include activities such as sharing of good practices within or across schools, serving in education-related committees, and presenting as trainers/ speakers for professional development programmes. The longer-term activities that involve planning and construction on the novices' part which Manuel (op. cit.) proposes, such as self-initiated action research, are not CPD events that could be counted towards the 150 hours. While further evidence is needed to establish the claim, there seems to be a tension between 'one-size-fits-all' CPD activities and the more individual and school community based development elements facilitated through mentoring (Chau and Forrester 2010: 66).

So far two conclusions regarding professional development can be drawn. Firstly, participating novices' conceptualisation of CPD was rather narrow; even with the guidelines from ACTEQ (2003, 2006) the teachers took it as nothing more than going to a few training sessions every year. It could also be because what could be considered

CPD activities was not communicated clearly to the teacher. Other modes such as sharing good practices and mentoring were often neglected but were actually important aspects of CPD. Secondly, the 'other CPD modes' do not seem to have taken novice teachers' developmental stage into account. It is not hard to imagine, for example, that acting as speakers in CPD events and serving in committees would be difficult for novices to achieve. In other words their junior position could be a barrier to the legitimate entry into a community of practice (cf. Wenger, 1998).

There was another problem with going to one-off professional development events; very often they took place during the week when the teachers had to go to class. Therefore they were only able to go to those that fitted in with their schedules, and even then with permission from the school. For example, Ray suggested that he always needed to make sure that the CPD events did not clash with his lessons before signing up. In this sense teachers were not given absolute freedom in participating in activities they found helpful. On top of that, participation may actually add burden to their already busy and challenging first year.

6.4 Conclusion

I have examined in this chapter the different forms of support available to the participating novices and also discussed problems and issues associated with them, such as the experience of novices as a result of the interplay between support from more experienced colleagues and Principals, and the power relations involved. Among different sources of support, that from the school-based mentors was most common. Mentors mainly helped the novices to adapt to their school contexts and provided emotional support. Mechanisms that were absent or lacking but mentors and mentees thought would have been helpful were also detailed. In the next chapter I am going to outline the analysis of the Induction Tool Kit, designed by ACTEQ (2009: 2) to ‘support schools in their endeavours to facilitate beginning teachers’ professional learning in their first year of experience’. The analysis will be compared to what has been found in the case study.

Chapter 7

Induction Tool Kit (ACTEQ, 2009) and the first year of teaching

... the current lack of mandatory school-based mentoring [in Hong Kong] accords new teachers greater personal freedom; how the individual utilizes this freedom is, in practical terms, judged by the school community. (Chau & Forrester, 2010)

This chapter answers the subsidiary research question (see Section 4.1), which deals with how the first year of teaching is understood by ACTEQ, manifested primarily in the Induction Tool Kit (ACTEQ, 2009) and also other documents such as the emailed letter from the director of ACTEQ when he turned down the proposed interview.

Parallel to the main research question and its elements, the analysis and investigation in this part are done on the two main areas namely the needs of beginning teachers and support for them, as well as their relationship with the novice's professional development and identity. Within the notion of support I look at both how support is thought about by ACTEQ and the extent to which the Tool Kit itself facilitates the provision of support for novice teachers.

7.1 Relationship between Induction Tool Kit and other ACTEQ documents

The following figure (Figure 3) shows the relationship of the Induction Tool Kit and a few other documents, which needs to be clarified here although this has been done

briefly in the Literature Review (Chapter 3).

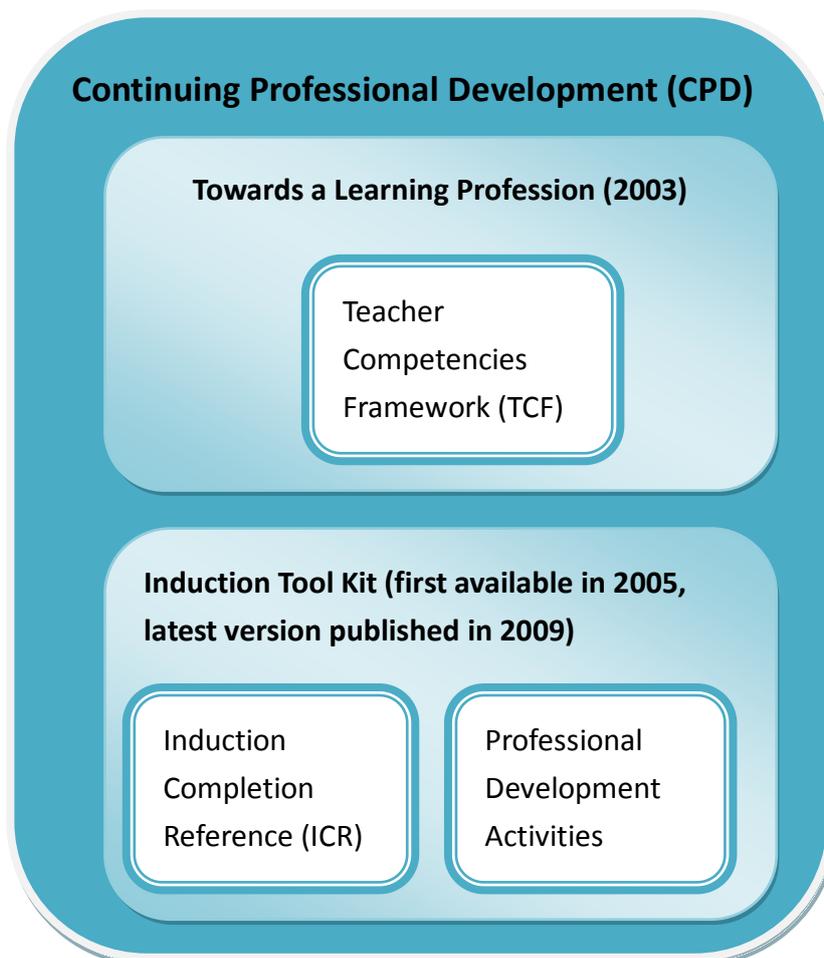


Figure 3 Relationship of Induction Tool Kit and other ACTEQ documents

ACTEQ, charged with the mission to advise the HK government on teacher education and development policies, published in 2003 a document called 'Towards a Learning Profession', recommending a system that 'recognises and facilitates teachers' efforts to continuously refresh and upgrade themselves (ACTEQ, 2003: i). The recommendations have been introduced in separate documents published at different stages. Included in this 2003 publication is the Teacher Competencies Framework

(TCF), which is a structure serves to ‘illustrate what teacher competencies should broadly embrace during the different stages of the teachers’ professional growth and development’ (p. 6). The function of the Framework is twofold: First, it provides a template that schools can use in developing their school-based professional frameworks, appropriate to their students, background and mission; and second, it enables individual teachers to ‘make meaningful self-evaluations of their learning needs over a wide spectrum of professional experience’ (ACTEQ, 2003: 6). The TCF is multidimensional, built around four core domains, namely teaching and learning, student development, school development, and professional relationships and services. Under each domain, there are four dimensions, and under each dimension there are a number of strands. Each strand has its stage descriptors, suggesting the typical competencies associated with a particular stage of professional maturity, which can be taken as goals for teachers to aim for. The three stages are ‘Threshold’, ‘Competent’ and ‘Accomplished’.

The Induction Completion Reference (ICR), the main tool of the Induction Tool Kit (2009), is built upon the TCF. It is a set of school-based pointers ‘proposed for use as a vehicle for facilitating a mentee’s first-year learning in a school-specific context to ensure that he/she can build threshold competencies upon completion of an induction

period' (p. 4). The 'Threshold' stage outlines the basic competencies expected of teachers – sufficient for them to be able to carry out daily routines smoothly and independently. Part V of the tool kit, called Professional Development Activities, aiming to help new teachers identify their professional development needs and to undergo continuous learning, is also built upon the TCF.

7.2 Adoption of the Induction Tool Kit by schools

The Induction Tool Kit (ACTEQ) has been widely promoted in HK; however, it was only used in one (Mary's) among the five schools investigated and even then in a greatly simplified and adapted version. The fact that other schools did not use it at all is surprising, given that it has been piloted for three years since 2005 and made officially available since 2008. It was also reported that three hundred schools joined the scheme in the 2008/09 school year (ACTEQ, 2009: 2), although joining does not mean adopting the kit fully.

For example, there was an induction programme in Linda's school and her mentor, who was also the teacher overseeing professional development of new teachers, was well aware of the existence of the kit. However, she had intentionally chosen not to fully adopt it but only to borrow some of its ideas, although it is actually supposed to be used

as a complementary resource to the schools' own effort of induction for new teachers.

The followings show how the message of flexible usage is repeated throughout the document:

- Since schools 'may have their own mechanisms in place, they can 'integrate such activities with those proposed in the Tool Kit, and make modifications where necessary (p.2);
- Tools and processes are to be 'integrated into the schools' existing practices' whenever possible, and adapted to suit the schools' needs, keeping the processes simple (p. 5)
- 'There is no intention to ask the schools to follow rigidly the instrument and mechanisms proposed'. Schools are instead expected to 'use their own processes and mechanisms that are comparable to providing the equivalent learning experiences as proposed in the ICR items' (p. 5)

It is clear that ACTEQ recognises the fact that schools might be 'adopting multiple approaches to setting an effective induction system' (p. 6), and that documentation should be kept 'as brief and concise as possible' (p. 5) in order to minimise paper work.

The induction systems in schools are only expected to comprise a few baseline expectations, namely a scheme, a mentoring system, provision of comprehensive

learning experiences for the novices, an instrument to document the development and evaluation of the system itself (p. 6).

While flexible use of the tool kit is recommended, the tools might be daunting to just look at. The two main tools, Quantitative Evidence and Interim and ICR, have a total of twenty A4 pages of items and domains organised in tables for both the mentors and mentees to check against and comment on. Two reviews are to be done using each tool, once in the middle and once at the end of the first year. Also, as described earlier, ICR is further divided into numerous dimensions and strands, each having its own descriptor.

In fact, one of the biggest inherent problems of checklist-type competence-based lists is that since they need to be detailed enough to capture the complexity of teaching. As a result they might become unwieldy and difficult to use (Randall and Thornton, 2001).

Furthermore, since the tool kit is designed based on the TCF, reading and understanding it is also important, but that would mean another twenty pages. This might explain why some schools had opted not to use tool kit. Linda's mentor suggested that it was complicated and mechanistic:

it would be really complicated if we were to follow that kit (.) it's very detailed and they don't expect us to do everything (.) (TS bb, 0617)

7.3 How the tool kit was used in the school that adopted it

Mary's school was the only one that actually used the Induction Tool Kit. The school-based document that I managed to have a copy of was an evaluation form that resembled the Chinese version of the ICR to a large extent. It comprised of all the four domains of the ICR. There were also both interim and final reviews. The main difference is that it was much simplified. For example, on the ICR, there are three strands and four descriptors under the 'Subject matter knowledge' dimension, and on Mary's form there was only one strand and one descriptor. At first glance it might seem that Mary's school had simplified the tool a great deal. However, this simplification was rather random. For example, under the dimension titled 'Teaching strategies and skill, use of language and multi-media', there were four strands and five descriptors, and three strands and four descriptors were kept on Mary's form, suggesting a possibility that the school valued the novice's development on this area more and wanted to make sure that they fulfilled all the strands under it.

For both reviews (interim and final), Mary first filled out the form on her own and then her mentor would validate it by putting in her own comments. In fact the mentor would have discussed with Mary areas she felt Mary needed improvement on before Mary completed the form, most of which were related to the lessons the mentor

observed. What they wrote was very similar, since Mary put on the form what the mentor had already discussed with her.

Their practice suggests two things: First, Mary relied a lot on her mentors to provide comments on her teaching and other aspects of being a teacher. There did not seem to be chances for her to reflect on her teaching and lessons and write down reflections on her own before hearing her mentor's feedback. This might be due to the asymmetric power relations inherent in most feedback situations (e.g. Waite, 1995); both the new teacher and their mentor expect the more experienced practitioner to be the one giving feedback and suggestions and the novice to just listen. Also, as Copland (2010) suggests, the assessors (in her case, pre-service education trainers) and new teachers might prefer different kinds of feedback delivery framework: some a more structured approach and some an informal chat. Such framework would certainly affect how much the novices are expected to contribute, and when.

Second, most of what they put down on the form under 'area(s) for improvement' was rather general and short. For example, under the strand 'Updating and sharing of pedagogical content knowledge', Mary had put 'can participate [in] more sharing' and her mentor 'can take a more proactive approach'. This was probably related to Mary's

feeling of isolation and her Principal's comment of her being unsociable (see Sections 5.2 and 6.1.2 a iii). It would have been better if, for example, the mentor specifically suggested in what ways and what Mary could share more, since her passive approach suggested that it was difficult for her to initiate conversations on teaching with her colleagues. The short remarks might also be due to the limited spaces – they were only big enough for possibly one suggestion, although in most of the instances they actually did not write anything.

7.4 Needs and challenges of new teachers as understood by ACTEQ

I have established in Sections 3.2 and 3.3 (Literature Review), as well as 5.2 and 5.3 (Findings and Discussion) that beginner teachers have specific needs, different from their experienced counterparts. ACTEQ is however not particularly specific about the unique needs and challenges of first-year teachers in the preamble and introduction of tool kit. While it recognises that transition into fulltime teaching is difficult (for the actual content analysis refer to Example 4 of Section 4.5.4 in the Methodology Chapter), nowhere in the tool kit does it mention how the needs and challenges faced by new teachers are different from that of experienced teachers. The only place in which issues that particularly concern beginning teachers are mentioned is in Appendix 1 of the document (Effective Induction and Roles of Various Stakeholders),

but even there the named difficulties are those that teachers generally face, such as assessing students' work and lesson organisation, although new teachers arguably experience them more frequently and intensely.

Neither do the two main tools, Quantitative Evidence and ICR reflect a sense of development. There is no guidance on how the interim reviews might be done differently from the final ones. Mentors and mentees are expected to go through the whole tools when doing both reviews. Also, schools are encouraged to offer the novice two chances to be observed and two other to observe a peer or the mentor in the year, and for each, one in the first half of the year and the other in the second.

Although these arrangements seem to suggest that novice's performances would be different at different times of the year, again there is no explanation as to how the lesson observations in first half of the year might be different from the ones in the second half of the year in terms of objectives and evaluation criteria. There could be some general guiding principles for both the mentors and the mentees, even when it is emphasised that they can 'make modifications to suit their own needs' (ACTEQ, 2009: 2).

7.5 Support as outlined in the Induction Tool Kit and the kit as a form of

support

To investigate how support for beginning teachers is understood in the tool kit, a content analysis was done on the notion ‘support’ by highlighting and coding all instances of the word ‘support’ in the tool kit’s Preamble and Introduction. The analysis indicates that ACTEQ recognises that a successful induction should not only help new beginning teachers survive their first year but should also have an impact on their long-term professional development, as well as the importance of both community (mentors and colleagues) and autonomy (self-reflection and self-evaluation) in the development of novice teachers. In terms of the ‘community’ element, the vision of strengthening collaboration of all teachers that ‘ultimately changes the entire school culture into a learning community that strives for collegiality to improve student learning’ (p. 45) is clear, so as the description of key roles of different stakeholders in providing whole-school support for novices. These elements have been discovered to be important, albeit sometimes lacking, in the actual experience of the participating novices. An example is the relatively more successful mentoring experience in the Ray’s, Tim’s and Sarah’s schools, which were perceived as having much stronger collegial communities.

In terms of the usage of the tool kit, it is clear that the kit is to be used for

developmental and support and not assessment purposes (ACTEQ, 2009).

Notwithstanding the clear principles and strengths aforementioned, the language used in some parts of the tool kit is likely to communicate an emphasis on the evaluation of the new teacher's performance rather than on helping them develop. An example of this is the language of the Interim and Final Reviews on Quantitative Evidence (p. 8-12) and Interim and Final Reviews on Individual Domains (p.13-28). Prompts such as 'mentee's satisfactory fulfillment of daily responsibilities' (ACTEQ, 2009:9) and 'has the mentee fulfilled the following?' (ACTEQ, 2009:14) reinforce the essentially evaluative dimension of the tools. Such language suggests that novices need to meet certain requirements and be evaluated based on quantifiable elements, rather than being supported in their first-year survival and longer-term development, as the aims of the induction scheme claim. Review profiles such as these also assume that criteria of competent teaching can be clearly itemised, widely agreed and reliably used as the basis of teacher assessment (Calderhead & Lambert, 1992), while in reality there are many models of good teaching and definition of competences varies across school contexts.

7.6 Professional Development suggested in the tool kit and its comparison to the case study

Underpinning the guidelines regarding Continuing Professional Development (CPD) laid out in the tool kit is also the TCF, which ‘helps provide goals for the identification of personal and school-based professional development needs’, whereas CPD is ‘the means to attain these goals’ (p. 31). The main roles of induction in terms of CPD are to help the novices identify their developmental needs, to help enhance their professional skills and knowledge, and to help the novices develop into ‘life-long learners’ and a ‘contributing members in a learning community’ (p. 31).

As explained in Section 6.3, a target of 150 CPD hours in a three-year cycle is encouraged although not rigidly required. It is stated in the tool kit that the ‘relevance and quality of teachers’ CPD activities’ should be focused on rather than the quantity (p. 31). ACTEQ also recognises that structured mentoring support provided to mentees can be their initial professional development, and mentoring activities should be counted towards the 150 hours.

Most of these expectations of ACTEQ did not quite match the real picture. First of all, the novices were left on their own to identify their developmental needs and to assess

the suitability and quality of certain CPD activities in meeting these needs. All novices who had been to these activities were informed of them through their subject panel heads, who were the ones receiving and disseminating information on CPD activities, but none of the novices had been given suggestions as to which ones they should go to in light of their learning needs. In fact, Ray's mentor asked me for opinions on further studies after our interview (Field notes_2). It can be seen that sometimes even the mentors could be confused about their own CPD path, let alone advising their mentees.

The other discrepancies between what is suggested in the Induction Tool Kit and what is found in the case study have been discussed in Section 6.1.1 (school-based mentoring support) and Section 6.3 (other professional activities). For example, in terms of mentoring, instead of allowing their experiences to stretch the new teachers, mentors often offered quick fixes to their problems. There was no evidence indicating that mentors were expecting and challenging new teachers in becoming a contributing member of a learning community beyond their first-year survival. In terms of professional development, novices' idea of CPD activities was usually nothing more than going to some one-off training events. None of them seemed to realise that mentoring activities would actually count towards the 150 hours either.

Regarding documentation, there is a 'Proforma for CPD Activities Undertaken' (refer to Appendix 12), which is to be completed by the mentee. The proforma comprises of three main sections: Section A is a record of the professional development activities attended, including the respective course providers, date and CPD hours, and to emphasise mentoring and induction as an integral part of mentees' initial professional development, this item has already been entered in the first box; Section B is for listing membership to any professional bodies or organisations and Section C is a reflection of what the novice has learned in the activities. The fact that novices and their mentors did not realise that mentoring could actually be counted as a CPD activity also reflected that they actually did not use this proforma.

Although, again, quantity is not ACTEQ's focus in formulating the CPD framework, at the same time it is undeniable that quantifying one's CPD activities is sometimes helpful, as it provides 'proof' of attainment that could be of personal use and for updating a CV, as well as for audit purposes for the organisation/ school, which might in turn encourage the employer's support for CPD (Friedman & Phillips, 2004).

However, it is whether mentoring can be quantified using the number of hours that is questionable. It has been shown in the earlier discussion on mentoring (Section 6.1.1) that a lot of the 'mentoring activities' were unstructured, and the interactions between

some mentor-mentee pairs, for example Ray and his mentor, were so frequent that it would be impossible to differentiate what could be considered ‘mentoring activities’ and what was not. Covering only the structured activities such as post lesson observation conferences is inappropriate either since mentoring is not only about having formal meetings.

7.7 Conclusion

All in all, the Induction Tool Kit (ACTEQ, 2009) is a very comprehensive tool for supporting schools in designing and implementing their school-based induction for first-year teachers. However, in order to cover all basic aspects of teaching and being a teacher, it is also inevitably complicated. Some of the language used is also considered to communicate the importance of evaluating the novices rather than the providing support and facilitating development.

They are also discrepancies between the first year of teaching described in the tool kit and what has been found in the experience of the case study participants. One of the biggest differences is that ACTEQ envisages an induction that does not only focus on helping the beginning teacher survive the first year, but one with the ultimate aim of helping them to develop into life-long learners and contributing members of a learning

community. However, the case study suggests that both mentors and mentees were most concerned with support related to day-to-day operations. Neither were mentors aware of roles which might be more far-reaching such as helping the protégés identify their CPD needs and encouraging them to draw up plans to respond to them. Also, teachers' understanding of concepts such as CPD could be a lot more limited from what ACTEQ has proposed in the tool kit and other documents such as the TCF.

At the same time, the tool kit is not specific enough in supporting teachers with the more 'micro-level' practices. It fails to show mentors and mentees how mentoring style, development focuses, as well as criteria for lesson observations and evaluations of the novice's overall development in the first half of the year can be different from those of the second, when it actually emphasises having an interim and a final review and more than one lesson observation.

Chapter 8

Evaluation: Contributions, Implications, Recommendations and

Limitations

...it is vital that beginning teachers' voices are heard in designing what would support them in their development as beginning teachers. (Long et al., 2012: 22)

This chapter is an evaluation of the research project. It discusses what it has successfully achieved in terms of adding knowledge about the first year of teaching to the field of teacher development, especially that of English teachers, as well as its limitations. I will also suggest what myself and other researchers could do in the future in studying the experience of and support for novice teachers.

In terms of outlining the study's contribution, I will first present a summary of main findings that have arisen from the analysis and discussion in the three preceding chapters. I will then discuss the implications of these findings on early career teacher development in HK and make recommendations respectively. These are offered as 'illustrative outcomes' (Richards, 2011: 216). They summarise the case study and document analysis contributions and make suggestions that I feel are most important in helping support novice language teachers. While practical recommendations for this specific context will be made, I hope that they also provide resonance with other

researchers or professionals involved in the training of pre-service teachers as well as provision of support for novice teachers in wider contexts. This section will be wrapped up with an overall conclusion of the study.

After discussing the contributions I will point out the limitations of the study and suggest what can be attempted in future studies. I will end the chapter with plans for the dissemination of the findings, both in the forms of academic publications and recommendations to relevant bodies.

8.1 Contributions: Main findings, their implications and recommendations

8.1.1 Overview of the novices' development

The novice teachers in this case study all survived the first year and although they found it difficult to cope with the demands of students, staff and parents, they have gone onto their second year in the same schools. Although it is true that novice teachers have a 'pressing need to comply with the current school in order to increase chances of re-employment' (Draper & Forrester 2009: 79) and that part of this socialisation could be characterised as 'compliance', there is evidence of useful mentoring involving personal and professional engagement, 'the willingness and ability to share understandings and values' (Sundli, 2006: 213). The study also reveals that interaction

and support from other members of staff were as important, if not more important, than support and engagement with mentors. Moreover, school culture and context in which beginning teachers work is significant; in schools where the atmosphere was more collaborative and supportive, mentoring seemed to work better.

8.1.2 Needs and challenges faced by English language teachers (especially those in Hong Kong)

a. Motivating students to learn the language and taking care of learner

differences

As seen from the needs and challenges of participating novices throughout the year (Section 5.2 and Table 14), finding ways to teach the English subject effectively and catering for students with different language abilities and learning needs are perceived as the biggest challenge for beginning language teachers. This suggests that first-year English teachers, although most of whom have completed subject-specific initial teacher training (ITT) when they begin to teach, need pedagogical support first and foremost. Teaching a full load looks very different from their practicum experience as they have to cover the whole syllabus and have many other tasks such as marking and setting test/ exam papers to complete, which they receive very little training on in the ITT (see e.g. Section 5.3.1). Since

Classroom teaching and classroom management go hand in hand, as low achievers are almost always the ones disrupting classroom discipline because they have no interest in the class activities, if new teachers can find ways to motivate them and keep them on task they are also more likely to succeed in maintaining discipline.

The implication is that providing subject-specific support is essential, which most schools have already recognised, shown in their assigning of mentors that also teach English. Mentors, instead of focusing on inducting the protégés into the technical side of language teaching, such as how to use the scheme of work and computer system, should make use of interaction time with mentees on discussing teaching and even co-designing lessons and materials with the novices. Mentors also need to appreciate that while the collaborations might seem time-consuming and not particularly useful for themselves, new teachers usually value them a lot.

Schools can also consider letting new teachers co-teach with another experienced teacher which appears to work well both in terms of supporting the novices and enhancing students' learning, evident in Sarah's case (see description in the vignettes in Section 5.1), although this is not always possible as some schools are struggling even just to survive due to the low birth rate and resulting keen

competition. For example Linda's school was trying very hard to attract prospective students from kindergartens by organising courses for them (refer to Section 5.3.1 d).

It is unlikely that schools like her will have extra resources for putting one more adult in the classroom.

b. School policies that are not sympathetic towards (new) teachers' needs

Lam and Yan (2011) suggest that what de-motivate new teachers most are having to expend too much effort on non-teaching activities and being bound by rigid and unfair administration. On the contrary, teachers are likely to become interested and engaged in teaching when they can focus on the core business of teaching and when they are allowed a reasonable work-life balance (ibid). This is very similar to what has been found in the case study – the novices' teaching and morale are negatively affected by the unhelpful policies.

It is actually ironic that schools on the one hand provide induction support aiming to help new teachers, but on the other have practices that are perceived as unhelpful.

The support elements they had put in place were meant to help the novices develop into more effective teachers but some school policies and practices were actually limiting or even reducing their teaching effectiveness. In some cases these involve

unrealistic scheme of work and excessive learning tasks, resulting in extremely heavy workload such as endless marking, and ineffective teaching and learning due to limited lesson time (which Linda experienced; see Section 5.3.1 b). In other cases it is the result of policies on how teaching and learning materials should be copied to achieve fairness among different classes (which is the experience Mary and Linda, as discussed in Section 5.3.2 b), which actually discourage teachers from designing materials that would otherwise cater for student diversity. Clearly schools need to carefully consider the implications of their policies and practices.

c. Interacting with parents who are perceived to be ‘customers’

There are cases where the Principal encourages parents to approach them directly instead of discussing issues with the teachers involve first (see Section 5.3.1 f).

Some principals are also apparently trying to please the parents (or at least not offending them) at the expense of trusting the beginning teachers and their colleagues. As a result parents become more vocal and teachers’ professional image is at stake. This is obvious in Linda’s school when the Principal extended the invitation to parents to make complaints directly to him (see Section 5.3.1 f).

Principals should instead foster a safe environment for novices to grow. They need

to be sensitive to the relatively fragile professional status that novices may have and make sure that accountability does not evolve into a culture of fear or complaint. This adversely affects the development of new teachers, who already feel less powerful than other more experienced teachers. At the same time, Principals also need to recognise that some sources of vulnerability are beneficial to the teacher's development and should actually be encouraged, such as taking the risk to try out new things in their teaching and allowing oneself to sometimes fail, which is an inevitable part of competence building (Bullough Jr., 2005).

d. Insufficient preparation on certain areas in pre-service education

There is evidence showing that the novices are underprepared in some aspects of teaching in their ITT. The most obvious one is setting test/ exam papers, both in terms of formatting and setting questions at the right levels of difficulty (refer to Sections 5.3.1 a i & 5.3.2 b). Also, most teachers apparently have not considered the impact of their choice of the medium of instruction on classroom dynamics (e.g. discipline) and interactions with students (e.g. language barrier). This is evident in Tim's struggle of whether or not to use English only, discussed in Section 5.3.1 h. Local English teachers can be better prepared, for example, by being guided in their ITT to think about the pros and cons of using only English in their classrooms (or

even all the time), in schools of different bandings and thus different average English proficiencies of students.

8.1.3 Support for first-year English teachers

a. Mentoring

1) Roles of mentors and mentoring styles

All participants are assigned a mentor and mentoring has indeed become a main element of school-based induction in HK. Mentors enact their role in different ways and the majority of both mentors and mentees tend to see mentors as colleagues providing emotional support and the ‘tour guides’ of the school, introducing the technical and administrative side of the school. There is little evidence of a structured programme of pedagogical discussion and reflection. Only one pair of mentee and mentor (Ray and his mentor) seem to work collaboratively frequently, and even then it is a result of compatible personalities and beliefs about teaching, as well as the closeness of age, instead of a deliberate plan to provide the novice with comprehensive learning experiences.

This case study also suggest that factors affecting the impact of mentoring such as timetabling (for discussion, collaboration and mutual observation) and proximity to

supportive colleagues are more important than whether the mentor is experienced or not.

Also, most of the time mentoring is reactive. It functions to respond to the questions novices have and address the difficulties they encounter. Mentoring is not seen as a dynamic process that involves constant changes according to the novice's most up-to-date developmental stage either.

2) Mentor status

Despite the significant role they play, mentors do not feel particularly valued. Mentoring a novice is assigned to them as a duty rather than a position which they are invited to fill.

In one of the schools (Ray and Tim's) teachers even just take turns to act as newcomers' mentors. It can be said that in the schools investigated, being appointed as mentors is not a result of the management's recognition of an experienced teacher's expertise and capability. A low status is implied and indeed perceived.

Implications

a. Mentor roles and mentoring styles

Instead of focusing predominantly on behaviour management and to confine

discussions to practical advice, mentors need to facilitate richer pedagogical discussions between themselves and the novices (Haggarty, Postlethwaite, Diment & Ellins, 2011). There is a need to ‘change the beliefs and practices of induction mentors and develop their skills in discussing pedagogical ideas’ (p. 925). If novices are engaged in collaborative and exploratory activities, their perceived need to fit in and conform would also shrink.

Also, mentors need to be aware that their mentoring styles can vary depending on the developmental stage of the novices at different times of the year and on the different issues they are dealing with. For example when the novices have overcome the initial shock and are on track to developing their teaching repertoire, mentors can adopt a reactive and hands-off approach, only meeting the novices when they have unsolvable problems. On the contrary with problems that involve risks that they cannot afford, such as those that concern the health and safety of students, mentors will instead need to be more directive. There can be more research into the shift of mentoring styles and how they affect the experience and development of beginning teachers in the future.

b. The need to raise mentor status

Since mentors play a key role in supporting novice teachers, they need proper

recognition within schools. Although lack of recognition does not necessarily stop mentors from playing an important role in supporting novice teachers, it may limit its effectiveness. Recognition of mentors can be done on a few levels:

1) Careful selection and proper invitation

For a position to be considered a profession the entry requirement has to be high.

Therefore the first step to professionalising mentoring and thus raising mentors' status is a careful selection based on a teacher's suitability in being (or becoming) a mentor.

Mentoring can only be successful when there is good arrangement on the administrative level. In some ill-structured ones some novices might even question the qualifications of their mentors and their motivation to volunteer for the position (Fantilli and McDougall, 2009), and needless to say these mentoring relationships could not be effective. In some schools there does not seem to be careful mentor selection nor accountability in place.

The mentor hardly functions as one and no one is there to find out whether they do.

Novices in these schools can only survive on some patchy support from different colleagues.

Fantilli and McDougall (2009) also propose the possibility of involving the mentees in

the mentor selection process, such as letting them build relationships with colleagues first and then invite one that they deem compatible to be their mentor. This might be difficult as the case study suggests that novices really value being given detailed information about school policies at the very beginning of the school year, or better still before then. A possibility is to assign the novice an administrative mentor at the beginning of the year and as they grow in familiarity with the colleagues they can invite one that they really want to learn from as mentor. Basic information about the school that is straightforward can actually come in the form of a package (e.g. staff file) given to novices at the beginning of the school year.

2) Recognition from the Principal and the wider school community

The Principals need to value mentors and acknowledge their contribution. The findings suggest that instead of directly involving in the mentoring process such as sitting in at mentor-mentee meetings, which has proved to add stress rather than show support to both the mentors and the novices (see Section 6.1.1 c). Principals should trust mentors with the job and give them timely recognition.

While recognition such as verbal affirmation is important, Principals also need a conceptual understanding of mentoring. It would be difficult for mentorship to have a

real impact on the novices' development if Principals do not hold similar values regarding mentoring as mentors do. Tang and Choi (2005) propose training for the Principals as well, even if they are not directly involved in the mentoring process, so that the message of the importance of mentoring can be conveyed both among management and in schools.

3) Providing pre-service preparation and training for mentors

The case study finds that mentor training in the schools is limited at best. Once again it confirms Wang and Odell's (2002) argument that mentor preparation has been a weak link in many mentoring programmes. Unfortunately, the lack of training is generally not perceived as a problem by the mentors. If teacher education reforms, such as that proposed by ACTEQ (2003) discussed in the Context Chapter, are to succeed, there have to be links among visions of teaching, views about mentored learning to teach, as well as ideas about mentor teacher development (Norman, 2011: 66). In order to help mentors become 'school-based teacher educators' of the beginning teachers, aspects of mentoring practice need to be more carefully conceptualised and core challenges mentors face examined.

Together with selection, training affects the perceived status of mentoring; If the mentor

role could be fulfilled by any untrained individuals it would be hard for it to be viewed as a profession. Of course, the most important reason for providing appropriate training for mentors is to raise the quality of the mentorship and thus that of the support for first-year teachers.

First and foremost novice mentors need help with conceptualising mentoring and understanding the dynamics involved. As discussed in the Literature Review Chapter, this is of great importance since mentoring has long been criticised for being ‘vaguely conceptualised though widely promoted’ (Parker-Katz and Bay, 2008: 1267).

One cannot assume that mentors themselves know what mentoring is all about.

Fundamental to the success of any mentorship, or even induction programme, is the commitment of both the mentors and the wider school community to the vision that mentoring is a necessary element in teacher development and professionalism.

Mentoring practice may fall short of its ideals not because of poor policies or programme design but because we fail to regard mentoring as integral to our approach to teaching and professionalism. Mentoring of new teachers will never reach its potential unless it is guided by a deeper conceptualisation that treats it as central to the task of transforming the teaching profession itself.

(Hargreaves & Fullan, 2000: 50)

The case study findings have deepened the understanding of mentoring in a number of ways: First, while in many parts of the world mentoring is still practised between a beginning practitioner and a much-more-experienced one, this study reveals that mentor of a younger age can be effective and helpful in many ways. For example they are perceived as more easily approachable and collaboration between the two teachers is thus more frequent (see Section 6.1.1 a). This notion of involving relatively new teachers to be mentors will be further explored below. Also, as discussed earlier in the implication for mentoring styles, mentoring does not only involve being reactive to the novices' questions and concerns. Mentors also need to be directive and interactive in their approach to helping novices develop, consciously designing learning for and engaging in pedagogical discussion and collaboration with their protégés, depending on the developmental stage they are at. These ways of conceptualising mentoring are currently lacking, as reflected from the case study, and should ideally be emphasised in mentor training and preparation.

Secondly, mentors need induction-type preparation. Ironically mentors who were about to play a significant role in a new teacher's induction period did not get any induction themselves. Some mentors are just assigned the mentor role without being informed what is expected of them. Some mentors have a traditional and rather narrow view of

mentoring and therefore do not consciously create learning opportunities for the protégés nor facilitate them to be critical about own teaching.

My suggestion is to provide mentors with the followings, which are currently absent in most of the schools investigated, perhaps in the form of a handbook:

- a set of guidelines on their roles and duties;
- an overview and objectives of the induction programme;
- criteria for lesson observations and assessments, if any, and roles of the mentors in them;
- different ways of creating learning opportunities for the novice (see Feimen-Nemser & Reimillard, 1995);
- support mechanisms, resources and facilities for the mentors;
- ethical issues such as confidentiality (e.g. whether what the novices say and do would be reported to the management)

Of course this list is not exhaustive, and the exact content would be highly contextualised. For example, not all schools would agree that mentors and mentees should be critical of their current practices, and thus being a change agent might not be viewed as an appropriate mentor role in these schools. Some mentor roles can also be

conflicting. For example if a teacher is both the appraiser and the mentor, not only the school but also the mentor would need to balance between assessing the novice and helping them develop. This requires their value judgement.

While some mentors (e.g. Ray's) are eager to know what more they could offer, some mentors (e.g. Ben's) clearly hardly fulfill their mentor roles. Schools can stipulate a certain number of lesson observations and specify their aims instead of expecting the new teachers and their mentors to sort these out for themselves. For mentors, because they do not get any reduction in teaching load or non-contact hours it might be fairer if school provides them with guidelines on approximately how many hours they are expected to spend on mentoring. These are important as mentors are usually given little support or training in how to serve their dual roles (as classroom teachers and as mentors to novices) (Valencia et al., 2009). Of course, one would hope that these guidelines would not put mentors off and that they would not take the suggested hours simply as a minimum requirement they need to fulfill but a helpful reference.

4) Encouraging in-service development and sharing of good practice

While there was evidence of CPD among all new teachers in the study, although most of which were one-off events, the picture of their mentors' in-service development was not

quite as positive. Not only did the majority of mentors not receive any pre-service training, but they also did not have the chance to develop during the course of acting as mentors. Neither was there evidence for sharing of good practice with other practitioners either within or outside their schools.

Schools need to make sure that mentors are regularly supported, challenged and that they share practices in groups. Just as learning to teach is a socially collaborative experience, mentors make sense of meaning within communities that are contextually and culturally specific (Parker-Katz & Bay, 2008), where the participants 'struggle along with others to construct meaningful local knowledge' (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1999: 278). There are multiple advantages of mentors' constructing knowledge together; For example Parker-Katz & Bay (2008) find that engaging a group of mentors in regular conversation groups help them question prevailing practice as well as promote a vision of teaching and mentoring that is recursive and focused on collaboration. Tang and Choi (2005) also suggest that it would be helpful for a team of mentors of the same school (where possible) to be trained together so that they can set up a mentoring system, support one another and foster a workplace culture that is collegial. Actually this would have been a good form of support for Tim's and Ray's mentors as they were in the same school and both supporting novices.

5) Involving relatively new teachers in mentoring first-year teachers

Stakeholders in this study express the view that it does not matter whether mentors are experienced. Experience does not seem to be the most important factor affecting the perceived helpfulness of mentors. It may be a good idea to further encourage mentoring by relatively new teachers. An alternative is to provide two mentors, where the experienced mentor plays a more advice and information giving role and the relatively inexperienced mentor played a collaborative and empathetic role.

b. Other forms of support

1) Lesson observations

Opportunities of mutual observation are seen as key by mentors and mentees in helping new teachers develop. However, the study also reveals that this was either generally lacking or sometimes difficult as mentor and mentee needed to go to class at the same time. Also, in some other cases the observations were one-off and perceived more as for assessment rather than developmental purposes. Nevertheless, novices on the whole valued the chances to observe experienced teachers' lessons and to receive feedback on their lessons. Comments were considered useful and were well received. Novices need priority in timetabling to allow them and their mentors to observe each other's lessons

and to meet up (for pre- and post-observation conferences).

If instruments and tools are used in observation or mentor/mentee meetings, it is better if they are developmental and reflective in nature rather than mechanistic and evaluative.

Language in such tools that is overly evaluative should be replaced by questions that prompt novices and their mentors to be reflective and collaborate. Specific suggestions for improving ACTEQ's Induction Tool Kit (2009) will be discussed in Section 8.5.2.

2) Collegial support

One of the most prominent findings of this study is that mentors and colleagues make the most positive impact on the novice's first year of experience when they have opportunities to collaborate, to work on things together (e.g. teaching the same classes, planning lessons together, sharing teaching ideas and materials). This supports the findings of Ingersoll and Smith's (2004) study that mentees particularly value collaboration, whether it is with the mentor or other teachers in the school. The school can facilitate a more collaborative approach to induction (see 'interactive' mentoring, Young et al, 2005). Although arrangements such as time-off and lighter teaching load might not be possible in the HK context, schools can at least make sure that novices and their mentors have some same free periods and that there are no barriers to easy access

and support from mentors and colleagues in the staffroom. Schools should not overlook things that might look trivial such as where the novices are seated so that there is proximity to mentors and other supporting staff.

3) Support outside school

Sharing and collaboration on teaching and learning with teachers outside novices' own schools seemed rare. Both the Ning group which the researcher set up as a means for participating teachers to support one another and for the researcher to reciprocate the help (refer to Sections 4.2.6.6 & 6.2), as well as platforms the teachers and their ex-coursemates themselves initiated such as material sharing on Facebook (see Section 6.2), were not used by the novices; These were meant to save the teachers' time in planning lessons and designing materials but paradoxically teachers did not even have the time to access them. Although teachers occasionally benefited from online resources by not having to create teaching and learning materials from scratch, the huge difference in school curricula and needs of students also mean that collaboration would primarily be school-based. This echoes Schuck et al.'s (2000) view that accessing expertise beyond the school is not a viable substitute (to school-based support) but is nevertheless a valuable supplement. Therefore instead of encouraging more sharing with teachers from other schools which can be unrealistic, or the use of Internet communities and

resources which does not seem to be time-effective either, I suggest that schools, especially the mentors and grade coordinators, should facilitate collaboration among their teachers.

One way of enhancing collegiality and facilitating collaboration is by means of regular form/grade or co-planning meetings which are now commonplace in HK schools.

However, as found in the study some of these meetings gradually became times used solely for sorting out logistics such as marking schemes and job allocation. Instead the panel heads, form/grade coordinators and mentors have to carefully position these meetings; they need to make sure that there is an appropriate balance between handling administrative issues like those just mentioned, which is inevitable, and having time for professional development where teachers of different levels of experience can genuinely share and learn together.

8.2 Continuing Professional Development

Most novices equate CPD to occasionally going to workshops and seminars, not being aware of the many other modes of CPD that ACTEQ had listed on the TCF, such as presenting in teachers' sharing sessions. This suggests that ACTEQ and schools need to draw novices' attention to the TCF as they make their CPD plans.

Short courses and one-off workshops are of course not without merits, as they indeed provide teachers with new teaching ideas. In fact a worthwhile kind of CPD activity would be to encourage novices to process what they have learned in these activities with their mentors and better still, to present how these ideas can be translated into their unique school context in co-planning meetings and/ or collegial sharing sessions. This is one of the first steps schools can take to help novices become contributing members of a professional community, as new teachers are usually not confident enough to take the initiative.

8.3 Overall conclusion of the study

All the participating novices had completed their initial teacher training before beginning to teach. This case study once again confirms that in spite of this it is challenging for teachers teaching fulltime for the first time to arrange their professional life in order to fulfill their multiple roles and expectations from different stakeholders. In HK language teachers often have 'to negotiate their pedagogic roles with demotivated students, unsupportive parents, critical mass media and educational authorities (Gao 2011: 495). Also, given the persistently low birth rate, there is much stronger competition between schools, which is adding to pressure on novice teachers. These pressures are varied; some affect their identity and emotions, such as being

expected to appease parents, while some add to their workload and stress such as running extra language classes for prospective future students.

In order to develop into effective and competent teachers, novices need to be involved in a whole range of learning experiences. In particular the case study reveals that most novices value opportunities where they can collaborate – design materials, plan lessons, discuss teaching – with other experienced teachers. Both casual chats in the staffroom and more formal co-planning meetings are helpful. What is the most important is that teachers need to move beyond discussing mere logistic, technical matters and instead take these interactions as chances to make collective inquiry into teaching practices.

The study shows that school-based support is of utmost importance as teachers' busy professional lives and differences among school syllabi mean that it would be difficult for teachers to benefit from resources outside of their schools. Currently, schools in HK are supporting their new teachers predominantly through mentoring, which plays an important role in negotiating the above pressures and demands faced by novices, although the fact that induction is not compulsory means that novices do not always get the support they want and need, such as mutual lesson observations.

None of the experienced teachers in the study become mentors voluntarily; nevertheless they offer the novices support, arguably because mentoring is assigned to them as a duty, but evidently also out of goodwill. In order for mentors to play an even more significant role and to provide more comprehensive and effective support there needs to be both careful selection as well as appropriate preparation, support and training for them, which are currently lacking in many HK schools.

All in all, in HK mentorships and induction programs are largely in their infancy.

The birth of the Induction Tool Kit (ACTEQ, 2009) can be a catalyst in facilitating their development, although the study findings suggest that it is not as widely used as the ACTEQ claims. The main tools in it also need revising so that it addresses the developmental needs of novice teachers at different stages more effectively. More studies, especially longitudinal ones like the present one, are also needed to investigate what kind of induction system is most cost-effective and contextually-appropriate for HK, especially if induction continues to be non-mandatory and mentors do not get any incentives such as a reduced teaching load. In any case it is hoped that the government and school principals will observe the positive long-term effects of induction on the

improvement of teaching and the retention of quality teachers, and as a result more structured and comprehensive entry-year mechanisms will be developed.

8.4 Limitation – Access and issues of researching new teachers

The biggest limitation of the current study has been access. As discussed in the Methodology Chapter, despite effort to negotiate access especially after some kind of trust had been built with the participants over time, some school visits were turned down and recordings of mentor-mentee meetings turned out to be that of events such as grade meetings, which were not particularly useful in understanding the support available for the new teachers, let alone how mentoring was actually carried out.

Interviews with the novices and mentors reveal that some novices actually had a lot of interactions with their mentors, but unfortunately none of the conversations were recorded.

Since most natural interactions are rather short and tend to be less formal, the only way to capture them would be by having the recorder switched on for the whole day so that all conversations would be picked up. This was actually suggested to the participants and only one of them tried, which turned out to be problematic; In reality, the recorder was only turned on when it was convenient and not all the time, and

sometimes there were technical problems such as not realising that the recorder was running out of battery. This resulted in problems with both the quantity and quality of the data but since participants were only volunteers it would be unrealistic to expect that they would be as committed to the data collection as the researcher.

Also, although the project is not ethnographic in nature, some kind of shadowing in the schools and recordings of actual mentor-mentee interactions would have been useful. Admittedly, data of this study is primarily self-report, and what people say can be very different from what they do.

Having said the above, gaining access in order to research beginning teachers, I hold, is more difficult than it may appear. This has much to do with the perceived power of new teachers; they feel powerless in negotiating their freedom as a researched, possibly for fear of offending the school. There have indeed been occasions where this was apparent. One of them was when Sarah's mentor knew that she had shared some lesson observation tools with me, revealed in our third interview. She suggested Sarah to ask me not to use it as a form of data for the study. Sarah actually did although she had known that all school names would be kept strictly confidential and I also reiterated it when she expressed the concern.

Another illustrative example of the difficulty of access was Ben's case. He honestly admitted that he did not even try to ask his colleagues and Principal about the possibilities of recording meetings and conversations because the school was 'very chaotic'. This was when their department was experiencing one of the most serious conflicts between the two divisions, and it would be inappropriate to enquire about the possibility of helping with a research that did not really concern the other colleagues. Also, when asked if he could supply some school-based induction documents, he indicated that asking the administrators about them would make them think that he was interested in knowing more which might mean more work, and he therefore turned down the request. Hearing these might be frustrating to a researcher but his concerns were indeed understandable.

This might explain why a vast majority of the research in the area of novice teachers and their mentors have been done by either university staff, particularly teacher educators (e.g. Norman, 2011; Tang & Choi, 2005). It is much easier for them to gain access than independent researchers like myself. In a lot of those research projects access does not even need to be negotiated because of the power-relations – the researchers are the novices' university tutors or induction supervisors. Because of the

problem of access the data types of the current projects are limited to mainly interviews, and some school-based documents I have managed to get and some school visits and lesson observations I was allowed to do.

8.5 Further research

In response to the achievements discussed and the limitations outlined above, I propose the following further research in the area of experience of and support for first-year English teachers, for myself and other researchers with similar research interests. Some of the following suggestions might be more relevant to researchers conducting research in places similar to the HK context where induction for beginning teachers is not yet compulsory but some kind of school-based support has started to emerge or become common.

8.5.1 Relationship between interactions of novices with their mentors and other colleague, and the physical setting of the staffroom

The findings suggest that the physical setting of the staffroom and seating of teachers affect the novices' interactions with their mentors and colleagues a lot. However, due to the problem of access it was not possible to study the actual layouts and interactions in the staffrooms. It would therefore be worthwhile to examine the

relationship between interactions of novices and their colleagues, and the physical setting of the staffroom, and how this in turn affects the development of new teachers. This can be done by means of video recordings and observation by researchers in the staffrooms over a period of time.

8.5.2 Use of ACTEQ's Induction Tool Kit

The findings indicate that the Induction Tool Kit by ACTEQ was only used in one of the participants' schools, and even then in a much simplified version. The mentor from another school suggested that they had deliberately chosen not to use the kit because it was too complicated. Since neither the novices nor most mentors were the ones designing the induction programmes of their schools, they were only able to provide minimal information as to why the tool kit was or was not used. Also, again, because many participating new teachers did not feel comfortable asking their schools, the researcher did not have access to many of the school-based documents used during their induction.

For researchers who have access to not only the novices but senior teachers in the schools in charge of induction for new teachers (who is usually the Vice-principal), they can attempt to investigate the schools' reasons for (not) using the Induction Tool

Kit. With the consent from the management they would possibly also be able to have access to other school-based documents, as well as to find out the rationales behind their design, how and when mentors and mentees use them, and the stakeholders' perceptions of their impacts on the novices' development

8.5.3 Mentor-mentee interactions

In examining the experience and support of new teachers, the actual interaction between a novice and their mentor is probably the most valuable form of data. This type of data is however very hard to get. As already explained in the Limitation Section, the success in collecting such data depends a lot on the willingness and cooperation of the new teacher and their mentor, as well as their effort to record the conversations, unless the researcher is one of the parties.

In future research, other researchers and myself can further explore the feasibility of recording new teachers' interactions with their colleagues and students for the whole day, as well as asking teachers to record the interactions in retrospect. While part of the difficulty is technology (for example, using a recorder whose battery can last a whole day), the issue is mainly commitment and motivation; Teachers are very busy people and it takes both their willingness to give their time and energy out of goodwill,

as well as constant reminders and encouragement from the researcher(s). Because of the issue of power discussed above, it might help if the school management and mentors could be approached first.

8.6 Dissemination of findings and recommendations

8.6.1 Academic publications

A journal article (Mann & Tang, forthcoming) based on the present study, focusing particularly on mentoring and its impact on the socialisation of the novice teachers, has been officially accepted and will be published later this year (2012) by TESOL Quarterly in its Special Issue on Novice Language Teachers. The special issue itself is an indication that there is a need and an increasing interest in understanding the unique needs of beginning English teachers, as well as exploring ways to provide relevant support for them. The article will be a very effective way for researchers, teacher educators, mentors and novices, who otherwise do not have access to this thesis, to read about how mentoring is carried out in HK and its relationship with the specific contextual challenges.

At least two other manuscripts will be prepared and submitted to different journals for review. One of the papers will be about aspects of qualitative interviews. As mentioned in Sections 4.2.6.1 and 4.5.1, when conducting interviews with

respondents who speak more than one language, the choice of interview language affects both the type and amount of data the researcher would end up getting. It also has strong implications on transcribing and translating the interviews (again, see Temple & Young, 2004; Cortazzi et al., 2011). The present study provides an example with actual data for discussing the above issues involved. This would help bi- (or multi-) lingual researchers working with respondents who can speak the same languages as they do in making decisions regarding their interviews and transcription. This is likely to be submitted to the journal *Qualitative Research*.

Another possible submission, probably to *Teaching and Teacher Education*, is on the relationship between the Induction Tool Kit (ACTEQ, 2009) and the actual experience of HK novices. The paper is likely to be the first one that reveals how the tool kit is actually used (and why it is not used in some schools) in HK. It discusses the gap between its orientation and what first-year teachers and their mentors actually do. As detailed in Chapter 7, the differences include, for example, the roles of mentors and the goals of mentoring, and how CPD is conceptualised. The paper will also point out how the tools (e.g. ICR) can be revised to better suit the developmental needs of the novices, as will be detailed below.

8.6.2 Recommendations to ACTEQ

ACTEQ welcomes feedback on the induction programme and tools from relevant stakeholders. As a researcher who have conducted an in-depth longitudinal study with six beginning teachers and analysed the tool kit, I am going to make a few specific suggestions to ACTEQ:

1. Language of the tools that suggests evaluation may be changed to one that facilitates both self-reflection of the novice and constructive conversations with the mentor. For example, the problematic ‘Has the mentee fulfilled the following?’ (p. 14) can be changed to ‘Mentee reflects and discusses with mentor how they are doing in the following areas’.
2. The problems of the lengthy main tools (e.g. ICR) and failure to recognise novices’ needs at different times of the year can be solved by breaking the tools into two. I provide below an example.

This is the original version of one of the dimensions under the ‘Teaching and Learning Domain’ of the ICR, called ‘Subject Matter Knowledge’

| Strand | Descriptor (Has the mentee fulfilled the following?) | Core | National | Interim Review | | Final Review | |
|---|---|------|----------|--|--|--|--|
| | | | | Reflection by Mentee | Remarks by Mentor | Reflection by Mentee | Remarks by Mentor |
| Dimension : Subject matter knowledge Displays a basic command of content knowledge of the subjects assigned to teach, and just begins to show awareness of gaps and misconceptions in the basic subject content. Has sporadic and infrequent updating of subject knowledge. | | | | | | | |
| Command of subject matter knowledge | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Shows a basic command of subject matter knowledge in lesson preparation and delivery and through interaction with colleagues | ✓ | | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes Area(s) for development: |
| Updating of subject matter knowledge and search for new subject knowledge | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Recognizes the importance of updating subject- specific knowledge, trends and developments Makes attempts at updating subject matter knowledge | ✓ | | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes Area(s) for development: |
| Sharing and exchange of subject teaching practice | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Attends sharing and exchange sessions on specific subject areas in school when invited to | ✓ | | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes Area(s) for development: |

Expecting novices to be able to do well in all of the three strands under this dimension does not take into account their development, and in fact the three strands can be taken as a progression in themselves; It is reasonable for the novice to focus on putting into practice what they have learned in their initial training in the first half of the year, achieved through lesson preparation and delivery (i.e. first strand), before finding out about the latest trends (i.e. second strand) and sharing with other practitioners (third strand), perhaps in the second half of the year when they have got used to the daily routines. My suggestion is that the novice can reflect and the mentor can comment on the first one in the Interim Review and other two in the Final Review. The recommended version might look like this:

| Strand | Descriptor (Mentee reflects and discusses with mentor how they are doing in the following areas) | Core | Optional | Interim Review | |
|--|--|------|----------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| | | | | Reflection by Mentee | Remarks by Mentor |
| Dimension : Subject matter knowledge Displays a basic command of content knowledge of the subjects assigned to teach | | | | | |
| Command of subject matter knowledge | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Shows a basic command of subject matter knowledge in lesson preparation and delivery and through interaction with colleagues | ✓ | | Area(s) for development: | Area(s) for development: |

| Strand | Descriptor (Mentee reflects and discusses with mentor how they are doing in the following areas) | Core | Optional | Final Review | |
|---|--|------|----------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| | | | | Reflection by Mentee | Remarks by Mentor |
| Dimension : Subject matter knowledge Displays a basic command of content knowledge of the subjects assigned to teach, and just begins to show awareness of gaps and misconceptions in the basic subject content. Has sporadic and infrequent updating of subject knowledge. | | | | | |
| Updating of subject matter knowledge and search for new subject knowledge | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Recognizes the importance of updating subject-specific knowledge, trends and developments Makes attempts at updating subject matter knowledge | ✓ | | Area(s) for development: | Area(s) for development: |
| Sharing and exchange of subject teaching practice | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Attends sharing and exchange sessions on specific subject areas in school when invited to | ✓ | | Area(s) for development: | Area(s) for development: |

The revised version has three advantages; First, the new teacher can focus only on strands that are realistic and attainable for them at each particular stage; second, mentees and mentors do not need to go through the whole document (and hence all strands) at both the Interim and Final Reviews, when some of the goals might not even be appropriate for the mentee at that time of the year; last but not least, breaking the form into two allows more space for formatting, making the spaces used for putting remarks on 'area(s) for improvement' bigger. Novices can therefore more specifically put down their reflections and mentors their comments.

8.6.3 Recommendations to universities that offer training programmes for mentors

As discussed earlier in Sections 6.1.1 b and 8.1.3 mentors' training is of utmost importance to the success of support for a new generation of teachers. Universities need to be informed that in many cases, mentors first of all need to be convinced why such training is actually essential. Although it is out of the scope of the current study to recommend universities on what an effective training programme for mentors should include, the above summary of the main findings can be sent to universities as a reflection of what mentoring looks like in reality and hence how mentor trainers can better prepare the teachers.

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