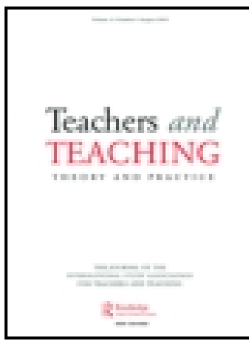

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'I need to be strong and competent': a narrative inquiry of a student-teacher's emotions and identities in teaching practicum

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ABSTRACT

In teacher identity research, limited attention has been paid to how pre-service teachers constructed their identities by negotiating with different emotions in their practice. To fill this gap, the present study, drawing upon the approach of narrative inquiry, explores how a student-teacher – Ming – negotiated and navigated conflicting emotions in the process of becoming a teacher. The findings show that while Ming experienced some negative feelings in his work, which challenged his self-belief as a teacher, the positive emotions derived from his students' progress and recognition contributed to his teacher identity. However, due to the constraints imposed by his mentor and the school context, his negative emotions gradually escalated, posing severe impediments to his teacher identity. The emotional flux and identity change of the student-teacher can be attributed to his professional learning in the structural and cultural working conditions with hidden 'emotional rules' embedded in the practicum school. This paper argues for the inclusion of teacher emotions as an indispensable part of pre-service teacher education.

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1. Introduction

Emotions play a pivotal part in teacher learning, which can serve as a filter for how they perceive and enact teaching (Day & Leitch, 2001). For pre-service teachers, they are prone to a variety of emotions in the process of learning to teach (Timoštšuk & Ugaste, 2010) and these emotions, both positive (e.g. joy and pride) and negative (e.g. fear, uncertainty, and frustration), can influence their interpretation of various learning experiences, the growth of teacher knowledge and reflective abilities, and the process through which they make sense of themselves in the teaching profession (Yuan & Lee, 2015; Meyer, 2009). In pre-service teacher education, while a cognitive orientation has an important role to play in equipping teacher candidates with teaching knowledge and skills, it is equally important to recognize the contribution of the affective domain, i.e. the emotional aspect of experience and learning (Zembylas, 2004, 2005). A focus on the emotional experiences of student-teachers

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can enrich our understanding of the complexities of teacher learning and the process of becoming teachers (Sutton & Wheatley, 2003; White, 2009).

With teacher identity emerging as an independent research area in the field of education, increasing attention has been paid to teachers' emotions as an integral part of their identity formation (Beauchamp & Thomas, 2009; Beijaard, Meijer, & Verloop, 2004). While the existing research (e.g. Shapiro, 2010; Zembylas, 2004) has contributed to our understanding of school teachers' emotional and identity change, especially in the context of educational reforms (e.g. Lee & Yin, 2011; van Veen, Sleegers, & van de Ven, 2005), how student-teachers construct their identities from their emotional experience during pre-service teacher education, including the teaching practicum, remains underexplored. A focus on pre-service teachers' emotions is important because emotions capture a crucial part of teacher identity that they will bring to the classroom and their future career (Yuan & Lee, 2015). The teaching practicum, in particular, represents a unique opportunity for student-teachers to 'try on' some of the professional roles and explore what it means to be a teacher in real practice (Meyer, 2009). As student-teachers' learning in the teaching practicum is often messy, involving a variety of challenges in relation to teaching, classroom management, and interaction with students, school mentors, and parents (Grudnoff, 2011; Veenman, 1984), pre-service teachers are likely to encounter emotional ups and downs, which may have a direct bearing on their professional identity (Timoštšuk & Ugaste, 2010).

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Drawing on the approach of narrative inquiry, the present research examines how a pre-service teacher, Ming (pseudonym), emotionally constructed his professional identity during the teaching practicum in a pre-service teacher education program in a university in Mainland China. Narrative inquiry is an effective means of 'getting at what teachers know, what they do with what they know and the sociocultural contexts within which they teach and learn to teach' (Golombek & Johnson, 2004, p. 308). Through the process of 'living and telling, reliving and retelling, the stories of the experiences that make up people's lives' (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 20), narratives not only serve as important textual resources through which teachers enact and modify their identities (Sfard & Prusak, 2005), but they also provide a rich site for researchers to locate the analysis of teachers' various identities that emerge from the dialectical interactions between their inner world (e.g. feelings and moral dispositions) and the external conditions (i.e. the classroom context and sociocultural environment) (Jenkins, 2008). Focusing on Ming's storied experiences which were characterized by emotional flux and identity conflicts, this study can shed light on the myriads of emotions student-teachers might experience during their teaching practicum, adding to our understanding of the critical factors that may impinge on the emotional process of identity formation. Also, Ming's narrative experience might generate implications for the design and improvement of pre-service teacher education programs to embrace 'teacher emotion' as a significant aspect of teacher preparation and development.

2. Theoretical underpinnings

2.1. Teacher identity and emotion

Teacher identity is a matter of 'being recognized as a certain kind of person' (Gee, 2000, p. 99) by the teacher himself/herself and by others, which 'provides a framework for teachers to construct their own ideas of "how to be", "how to act" and "how to understand" their

work and their place in society' (Sachs, 2005, p. 15). As suggested by previous researchers (Beauchamp & Thomas, 2009; Day, Kington, Stobart, & Sammons, 2006), teacher identity is fluid, dynamic, and multi-faceted (Beijaard et al., 2004), borne out of teachers' participation and practice in their situated professional and sociocultural contexts. As a result of the complex negotiation between teachers' professional experiences and a variety of external factors within and outside the classroom and school (Flores & Day, 2006; Goodson & Cole, 1994), teacher identity is not only intellectual and rational (e.g. involving knowledge building and critical reflection), but also social, political, and emotional in nature (Lee & Yin, 2011; Zembylas, 2004). For student-teachers, the pre-service teacher education program is considered to be a key stage in the development of their professional identities (Izadinia, 2013). Not only can they learn what it means to be a teacher through practical teaching and reflective activities (e.g. group discussion and reflective journals) in both university coursework and teaching practicum (Abednia, 2012; Goodnough, Osmond, Dibbon, Glassman, & Stevens, 2009), but they are also likely to encounter a wide range of emotions through their learning and interactions with teacher educators, school mentors, and students, with direct impact on the formation of their teacher identities (Yuan & Lee, 2015; Timoštšuk & Ugaste, 2010).

According to Zembylas (2005), the processes of teacher identity formation are fundamentally interrelated with their emotions. While emotions can inform and define teachers' professional and personal identities, identity can in turn guide and shape teachers' emotional decisions and reactions (Zembylas, 2003, 2005). Following this line of thinking, Shapiro (2010) argues for the centrality of 'emotional identity' in the teaching profession, which refers to the process by which teachers reflexively and emotionally negotiate their identities in relation to their professional work and social relationships in the embedded sociocultural contexts (O'Connor, 2008; Shapiro, 2010). In other words, emotions emerge from various aspects of teachers' professional lives, such as their classroom teaching (Hargreaves, 1998), collegial relationship with colleagues (Cowie, 2011), and interaction with parents (Hargreaves, 2000), which constitute and transform who they are as teachers. For instance, Meyer (2009) explored the emotional practice of student-teachers and how it was tied to their teacher identity. Through facilitating student learning and playing the caretaker's role, the participants formed strong emotional attachment with students, contributing to their growing identity as a teacher. However, the anxiety and frustration derived from the lack of trust and support from the school mentors posed impediments to their teacher identity, especially when they had to suppress their feelings and follow the mentors' requirements.

In addition, teachers' emotions and identities are constructed and transformed through their negotiation with the school structures, culture, and power relations (van Veen et al., 2005; Zembylas, 2005). O'Connor's (2008) research has found that the school policy could have a direct impact on teachers' professional identities and emotional experiences. When the school emphasizes the teacher's role as a 'service provider' above all else, the ethical and emotional dimensions of teachers' work can be marginalized and repressed. For instance, the participants in O'Connor's (2008) study had to regulate and manage their emotions and identities in order to guide and shape their professional decisions as a 'caring teacher', which was not entirely in line with the school's focus on teacher as a 'service provider'. Moreover, the emotional rules embedded in the cultural expectations, social standards, and professional norms of teaching can influence teachers' professional identity (Shapiro, 2010). While the emotional rules dictate what kinds of emotions teachers should express or suppress, they also prescribe the kinds of identities they should or should not embrace in

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their work (Zembylas, 2004). In this sense, maintaining and controlling different emotions is an integral part of teachers' identity work, which can be referred to as 'emotional labor' (Hochschild, 1983), through which teachers make an effort to inhibit, generate, and manage their feelings and emotions according to the normative beliefs and expectations held about the teaching profession (Isenbarger & Zembylas, 2006; Wharton, 2009; Yin & Lee, 2012). In Shapiro's (2010) self-study, she criticized the school policy and conventions that encode emotional rules, creating a dichotomy between teachers' professional and personal identities. In the teaching profession, teachers as recognized professionals are supposed to demonstrate their perfect and flawless image, hide and bury certain profound emotions, and avoid open disagreement with and disclosure of their personal lives to others. These entrenched emotional rules and norms created emotional labor and tensions and could result in two exclusive identities – human being versus model teacher. In Bloomfield's (2010) study, the field experience of the student-teacher, Lou, was characterized by a deep and diverse range of emotional expressions, including feelings of isolation, inadequacy, resentment, and vulnerability. These emotions, mostly arising from her marginal status relative to her mentor, exerted an eroding effect on the development of her professional identity as she had to combat and suppress her emotions (as a form of emotional labor) in order to 'survive' the teaching practicum.

On the other hand, teachers' professional identities are associated with their sense of agency, which is determined by the individual's ability to reflect on their professional actions and achieved through their resistance to the institutional structures as well as the embedded emotional rules (Kelchtermans, 2005; Lasky, 2005). While teachers might confront different contextual challenges (e.g. constraining educational administration/policy and lack of collegial support) and experience feelings of vulnerability in their daily work (Kelchtermans, 1996), by exercising their professional agency, they can actively draw upon different arrays of social positioning, experiences, and resources and enact identities that align with their own beliefs and values (Sexton, 2008). In face of emotional ups and downs, they can also try to monitor and reflect on their own and others' feelings in order to guide their thinking and actions in their classrooms. This resonates with the concept of 'emotional intelligence' (Salovey & Mayer, 1990) that can help teachers agentively and wisely cope with the emotional complexities inherent in teaching and develop a strong and positive professional identity in their work. For instance, against the increased accountability pressure brought by educational reform, Lasky (2005) described how teachers tried to cater to students' social and emotional learning needs while facilitating their academic development. The immense pride the teachers derived from students' overall growth helped overturn their previous negative emotions and strengthen their identity as 'individuals working in a human-centered profession' (p. 913). For pre-service teachers, their professional agency can be fostered through their collaborative learning with teacher educators, school mentors, and their peers, through which they can develop confidence in their own abilities, seek out feedback, and try out innovative approaches in their teaching (Goodnough et al., 2009), which can engender positive emotions and contribute to their emerging identities as prospective teachers (Izadinia, 2013; Yuan & Lee, 2015).

On the other hand, teachers' agency is also subject to the social and cultural structures and norms mediating the process of learning to teach (e.g. Bloomfield, 2010; Timoštšuk & Ugaste, 2010). The lack of adequate professional training, hierarchical relationship between student-teachers and teacher educators (including school mentors), as well as

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unsupportive school environment can exert negative impact on student-teachers' autonomy and agency, resulting in emotional struggle and turbulence (El Kadri & Roth, 2015), where student-teachers are exposed to feelings of vulnerability and powerlessness (Flores & Day, 2006; Kelchtermans, 1996). However, as shown in Roberts and Graham's study (2008), in spite of the school climate that militated against the student-teachers' self-development, the participants tried to revert to different strategies to seek opportunities to exercise agency on their own teaching. One strategy, referred to as 'tactical compliance', indicates how the student-teachers initially tried to fit in the school environment (e.g. by following their mentors' instructions) to win acceptance and approval so that they could gain autonomy at the later stage in the practicum. Thus, by strategically maneuvering within the constraining school context, the student-teachers gained feelings of satisfaction and achievement from their work and pursued 'a personally compatible self-as-teacher identity' (p. 1409).

Overall, student-teachers' emotions are deeply intertwined with their professional identities, which are constituted and reconstituted in relation to the institutional policy and social structure (with emotional rules) as well as the individual's sense of agency.

2.2. A narrative perspective on teacher identity and emotion

Identities emerge from and through the collections of stories people create and tell about their lives (Sfard & Prusak, 2005). According to Connelly and Clandinin (1999), teacher identity can be interpreted in terms of 'stories to live by' (p. 4), which are fraught with various emotions, both positive and negative (Zembylas, 2003, 2005). By constructing and telling their own narratives, people can give explanations to their actions, make sense of their relationship with others, reflect on the past and plan for the future, express and manage their emotions, and therefore, construct and reconstruct their identities (Connelly & Clandinin, 1999; Sfard & Prusak, 2005). As Holland, Lachicotte, Skinner, and Cain (1998) point out,

> Through narratives, people tell others who they are, but even more importantly, they tell themselves and they try to act as though they are who they say they are. These self-understandings, especially those with strong emotional resonance for the teller, are what we refer to as identities. (Holland et al., 1998, p. 3)

In light of this perspective, narrative inquiry provides a useful means of representing and understanding human emotions and identities (Golombek & Johnson, 2004; Zembylas, 2005). In the field of teacher education, narrative inquiry as both a research approach and a research product (Barkhuizen, Benson, & Chik, 2014) has shed light on the complex and dynamic process of teachers' identity formation in which their emotions play a crucial part. In Liu and Xu's study (2011), they present a narrative account of how a language teacher coped with negative emotional experiences (e.g. loss of motivation and loneliness) and negotiated conflicting identities (e.g. active participant versus passive followers) in the context of education reform. The negotiation and resolution of identity conflicts in relation to different emotions underscores the contested relationship between the social expectations and obligations associated with the teachers' roles as well as the way they reacted to the normative practices in their professional work (Zembylas, 2005). Using narrative inquiry, Karlsson (2013) also probed how student-teachers expressed and negotiated their emotions (e.g. feelings of embarrassment, inadequacy, joy, and success) and built up their identities as prospective teachers through narrative interactions. Therefore, student-teachers' professional identity is narratively constructed and transformed, which is bound up with a

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variety of emotions in the process of learning to teach. By living out different stories in their professional lives, student-teachers engage in their learning, interact with different others, and experience various emotions, through which they try to compose and transform their identities as teachers. The narratives of student-teachers about themselves and their professional practice can therefore offer valuable opportunities for exploring and revealing how they are emotionally engaged in shaping and reshaping their identities in specific classroom and school settings (Beauchamp & Thomas, 2009; Zembylas, 2003).

Informed by a narrative perspective and drawing on the existing research on teacher identities and emotions (e.g. Bloomfield, 2010; Lasky, 2005; Zembylas, 2003, 2005), the present study looks into the storied experience of the student-teacher, Ming, during the teaching practicum and investigates the (trans) formation of his professional identities in relation to various emotions he experienced in the situated institutional and sociocultural contexts. Such a study can shed light on the relationship between student-teachers' emotions and identities and enrich our understanding of the 'emotionally infused ambiguities, confusions, inconsistencies and resistances, as well as the accommodations and valuable insights' (Bloomfield, 2010, p. 233) that arise from student-teachers' complex journey of learning to teach, which can have important implications for teacher educators and policy-makers for the improvement of pre-service teacher education.

3. The study

The central research question that guided our study was: *How did the participant construct his professional identity in relation to the emotions he experienced in the teaching practicum*?

3.1. Context and participant

The study took place in a pre-service language teacher education program offered by a university in Beijing, China. The four-year program, with a combination of coursework and teaching practicum, aims to prepare qualified language teachers for both primary and secondary teaching. In the first three years of the program, student-teachers are exposed to a series of language proficiency courses, e.g. Intensive Reading and Oral English, as well as language teacher education courses, e.g. Language Teaching Methodology and Curriculum and Syllabus Design. In the fourth year, student-teachers are assigned to field schools for a 10-week teaching practice. According to the program arrangement, a serving teacher from the field school is appointed as a mentor for each student-teacher, who is responsible for guiding, supporting, and evaluating the student-teacher's learning in the practicum. Besides, a university supervisor is assigned to each student-teacher, who pays regular visits to the field school and provides necessary support in collaboration with the school mentor.

At the outset of the study, an invitation for participation in our research project on pre-service teachers' practicum learning was sent to 70 Year-4 pre-service teachers. Given the requirements of the study (i.e. the participants would conduct in-depth interviews, engage in ongoing interactions with the researchers, and keep personal reflections during their teaching practicum), five student-teachers responded to our invitation and agreed to participate in this study. This paper reports on the case of Ming, whose intense, negative emotional experiences in the field school considerably impacted his professional learning and identity formation, whereas the other participants with more positive learning experiences were

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reported in Yuan and Lee (2015). As a narrative case study, a note of caution needs to be sounded about the generalizability of the research findings; however, storying and restorying Ming's experiences can result in a new and richly textured understanding of student-teacher' emotional experience and identity construction in relation to specific school contexts and enable readers to envision their own stories and to consider how they might apply lessons learned from Ming's narratives (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Golombek & Johnson, 2004).

Ming was born and raised in a small city in the northern part of China. He received primary and secondary education in his hometown, and was then admitted to the pre-service language teacher education program through College Entrance Examination. After three years of study in the program, he began his 10-week teaching practicum in a public boarding school, named Fountain school (pseudonym), in the suburb of Beijing. Students in the school are generally from relatively well-off families and their academic abilities are not strong compared to their counterparts in other key schools in Beijing. Influenced by the examination-oriented culture in the Chinese context and driven by the need to attract more outstanding students and elevate the school level, the school management tended to place a strong emphasis on teachers' teaching effectiveness and students' academic achievement.

In the school, Ming followed his mentor (an experienced English teacher) in a Grade 8 class she taught by observing her teaching and conducting teaching practice. The mentor was also the head teacher of the class who was responsible for classroom management and student affairs. At the time of the study, the first researcher worked as an assistant university mentor in the pre-service teacher education program, which helped him gain full access to the filed school for data collection (though he was not directly assigned to be Ming's mentor). Ethical approval was obtained from the university, the field school, as well as Ming before the study commenced.

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3.2. Data collection and analysis

The study draws on in-depth interviews and diary entries to collect storied experiences from Ming in relation to his learning during the teaching practicum. First, a total of four semi-structured interviews (with different focuses) were conducted and audio-recorded, ranging from 90 to 120 min each. The first and last interviews were conducted before and after the teaching practicum, while the second and third took place in the fourth and eighth weeks of the 10-week teaching practicum. The first interview focused on Ming's personal history, feelings, and attitudes about language teaching and learning before he entered the pre-service teacher education program. The focus of the second and third interviews was on his experiences in the field school, such as his interactions with different people in the school, as well as various emotions that arose from these experiences (see Appendix 1 for sample interview questions). In the last interview, Ming was invited to reflect on his overall learning associated with different emotions, and how he perceived himself as a language teacher at the end of the teaching practicum. In all the interviews, while the first researcher engaged in meaning-construction with Ming (Barkhuizen et al., 2014) in which he naturally and spontaneously shared his personal stories as a student-teacher, the first researcher also tried to elicit critical stories (the ones with strong emotional resonance and impacts on his self-understanding) (Sfard & Prusak, 2005) from Ming by inviting him to share his thoughts and feelings regarding specific issues (e.g. his relationship with the students and mentor) in the practicum. The interviews were all conducted in Chinese as Ming felt easier

to express his ideas and feelings in his mother tongue. In addition to the interviews, Ming was asked to keep an 'emotional diary' (Zembylas, 2005) in Chinese during the teaching practicum. In the diaries (one piece per day), Ming recorded his feelings and thoughts about what happened in the field school. At the end of the research, Ming also submitted 20 diary entries (from 20 different days, each piece including 500–1000 words), which, according to him, were most representative of his emotional experiences and inner thoughts during the practicum. Last but not least, during the process of data collection, the first author also engaged in personal communication with Ming through emails, phone calls, and informal meetings (e.g. in university canteen and dorm). While this type of data was not subjected to systematic analysis, it generated insights for the understanding and interpretation of Ming's emotional experiences and identity construction. Particularly, this form of informal interaction helped the first researcher establish rapport with Ming, thus allowing him to share stories and feelings that were personally meaningful and significant.

All the interviews were transcribed by the first researcher, which were further translated together with the emotional diaries. The translated version was sent to Ming for member checking with further revision conducted based on his comments. Informed by the theoretical underpinnings on teacher identities and emotions (e.g. Bloomfield, 2010; Lasky, 2005; Zembylas, 2003, 2005), narrative analysis of the collected data was conducted to interpret and (re)construct Ming's emotions and identities as the units of analysis. Specifically, the data interpretation process consists of three main stages. First of all, the first researcher carefully reviewed and coded the interview transcripts and Ming's emotional diaries with particular attention paid to the various emotions (e.g. excitement, anxieties, shock, joy, anger, and disillusionment) Ming experienced during the teaching practicum and how these emotions related to different identities (e.g. 'a teacher-to-be', 'an accomplice', 'a caring and supportive teacher', 'an outsider/sojourner', and 'a competent and agentive teacher') he took up, and/or were ascribed to in the field school. As a result, five major themes reflecting Ming's emotional identities were identified, including (a) 'I am ready to be a teacher', (b) 'I am an accomplice', (c) 'I hope I can do more', (d) 'I am at the bottom', and (e) 'I need to be strong and competent'. Take the theme 'I am at the bottom' as an example. While Ming attempted to facilitate his students' language learning by adopting a communicative approach, his teaching was controlled by the mentor, thus resulting in some negative emotions (e.g. anger and frustrations) as well as his identity as an 'outsider' of the school. Further, as a student-teacher 'at the bottom of the school hierarchy', Ming had to repress and hide his negative feelings and follow the mentor's instructions, which brought her intense emotional labor with negative impact on his teacher identity development.

Following the identification of the five themes, the first author reexamined the themes in depth by rereading the original data and composing mini-stories (or 'interim texts') (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000) in relation to the specific time, space, and characters involved. Through the process of deconstructing, constructing, and reconstructing the social meanings in writing mini-stories with reference to the identified themes (Liu & Xu, 2011), the storyline of Ming's narratives was thus developed, which knitted them into 'story constellations' (Craig, 2007), shedding light on the emotional process of the student-teacher's identity (trans)formation. Lastly, while the data analysis was conducted by the first author, researcher triangulation was achieved through the two researchers' rigorous discussions and critical challenges, which facilitated the data interpretation. The constructed narratives were also shared with Ming, not only to validate the data analysis results, but also to enrich

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and enhance our narrative inquiry by gathering more insights from his further sharing of stories and comments on our data interpretation (Barkhuizen et al., 2014).

4. Research findings

4.1. Excitement and anxiety: 'I am ready to be a teacher'

Before the teaching practicum, Ming described his feelings as both 'excited and anxious'. He was excited because for the first time he had opportunities to practice his own ideas of language teaching in the real classroom:

> I want to organize different learning activities and tasks in my class and see if my ideas can work. I will also try to cater to students' needs and interest because they are just children and it is important to foster their interest in language learning. (Interview 1)

Ming's idea of catering to students' needs and interest was partly derived from his primary education experience in a rural school, which was referred to as his 'most cherished time in the childhood with great fun and pleasure' (Interview 1). As he recalled, although the school condition was poor and one teacher usually taught several courses, he enjoyed the process of learning and made good progress:

> At that time, there were not many exams and learning was closely related with our daily lives. I remember in the summer, the teacher led us to a small mountain near our town and taught us about the plants, insects, and birds we saw. This was our biology lesson. Then we went to a small pond and the teacher taught us how to swim in our PE lesson. I think this is the best education I have ever received. It is simple, effective and stress-free. (Interview 1)

This experience instilled with positive emotions influenced Ming's understanding of teaching and learning and his projected self-image as a teacher:

> I am grateful for my teacher and school that allowed me to grow up in a carefree learning environment. I hope I can offer the same experience to my students, letting them enjoy the process of learning instead of suffocating them with endless exams. (Interview 1)

In the language teacher education program, Ming was more than happy to find out that his personal beliefs were strongly advocated by the teacher educators, which were further enriched by his learning about different theories of second language acquisition in the coursework:

> I felt thrilled to see that my own ideas of teaching and learning are emphasized in the courses I took. For example, in the course 'Theories and Practice of Language Teaching and Learning', I learned that teachers need to pay attention to students' motivations and interest, as well as their individual differences and learning styles. I will try to apply these ideas to my teaching practice in the field school. (Interview 1)

Therefore, influenced by his own learning experience (with positive emotions) and the teacher education courses, Ming began to construct his identity as 'a teacher who caters to pupils' interest and nature in his teaching practice' (Interview 1).

Nevertheless, for student-teachers, facing a new environment with a different organizational system and culture can be challenging and intimidating, especially when Ming was not confident about his teaching competence and language proficiency:

> I am worried it might be difficult for me to implement my ideas in the classroom as I don't have any teaching experience and my English is not good enough. (Interview 1)

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Additionally, he was anxious about his relationship with the students, given the high standard he set for himself as a 'caring, supportive, and friendly teacher':

> I want to build a rapport with my students like my high school head teacher. He was like a friend and always gave us suggestions and encouragement. However, if the students don't cooperate with me or treat me as a stranger, I am worried that there is not much I can do. (Interview 1)

While Ming hoped to model on his high school teacher in his teaching practicum, the prospects of 'uncooperative students' brought him a feeling of uncertainty, which posed threats to his ideal teacher identity as a 'friendly teacher'. Despite these conflicting emotions of excitement and anxiety, Ming was still optimistic about the upcoming teaching practicum and his future work as a 'teacher-to-be' (Interview 1):

> Of course there will be a lot of difficulties in the teaching practicum and my future career. However, since I choose this path, I will stick to it no matter how rocky it is. I think I will become a good teacher. (Emotional diary)

The above quote showcases Ming's optimism and willingness to tackle difficulties in his future work, in spite of anxiety and feeling of uncertainty, which testified to his budding identity as a language teacher.

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4.2. Shock and guilt: 'I am an accomplice!'

It is understandable that student-teachers might experience some 'reality shock' (Veenman, 1984, p. 143) due to the change of learning environment from university to the practicum school. In Ming's case, this 'shock' was particularly severe to begin with, and was accompanied with intense feelings of confusion, disappointment, and guilt. In the first two weeks of the teaching practicum, he found that the mentor's teaching was in direct contrast to what he had learned in the teacher education coursework and it conflicted with his personal beliefs about language teaching:

> My mentor teaches in a traditional way. Her lessons are all about grammar and vocabulary, followed by drills. I feel surprised and a bit disappointed because I think language teaching should be interactive, authentic, and student-centered. (Interview 1)

The relationship between her mentor and the pupils also came as a surprise to Ming. Having admitted that some pupils were rebellious and difficult to manage, he was startled by the high-handed approach adopted by the mentor, which created a passive learning atmosphere in the classroom:

> The classroom is like a 'prison': the students are 'prisoners' who are under the strict supervision of the mentor as 'warden'. (Emotional diary)

He further elaborated the 'prison' metaphor by revealing the details of his daily routine in the school:

> Every morning at 7:00 AM, I follow my mentor to the classroom and supervise students' morning reading. During the lunch break, we are there to answer students' questions and make sure they behave themselves. In the evening, though the individual study starts at 7:00 PM, we are always there at 6:00 PM because the mentor wants the students to spend more time on learning and she needs to 'take care of' some misbehaved students. By 'taking care of', I mean lecturing and scolding. (Interview 2)

As a result, Ming found that the students in general lacked motivation to learn, and their interest in English learning was particularly low:

> Many students told me they didn't like English. I guess it is because all the memorization and drills take their interest away. Also, as the English teacher (the mentor) happens to be their head teacher, they are afraid of English as they are afraid of the mentor. (Interview 2)

In addition to the 'reality shock', Ming recounted an incident in which he was asked by the mentor to return the test papers to students after marks had been given. This incident caused him strong emotions of discomfort and guilt:

> When the mentor asked me to give the papers back to the students, I thought it was a simple task. However, she also asked me to announce the names of those who failed the exam in front of the class. I felt very uncomfortable as I believe it would hurt those students' self-esteem. Sadly, I couldn't gather the strength to say no. (Interview 2)

For Ming, it was demotivating and cruel to disclose the names of the students who failed the examination, given his firm belief in fostering pupils' interest and motivation for language learning. As he desired a caring and harmonious relationship with the students, he felt this incident just pushed him to the opposite side and turned him into 'an "accomplice" of her mentor who disrespects students and kills their interest in learning' (Emotional diary). A flow of guilt thus overwhelmed him:

> I feel so guilty because I have become a harsh and unsupportive teacher, at least in my students' eyes. (Interview 2)

In face of the strong negative emotions, Ming admitted that he did not know how to cope, which might be explained by the university coursework's strong emphasis on teaching knowledge and skills, with limited attention paid to helping student-teachers learn how to deal with emotional complexities in schools:

> I felt a bit overwhelmed as I did not know how to react to the situation … In the program, no one had talked about how to manage our emotions in school contexts. This was so new and challenging to me. (Interview 2)

Also, he believed 'it might not be appropriate to doubt or question the mentor's teaching given his status as an intern teacher in the school' (Interview 2). Thus, he decided to hide his feelings and followed the mentor's instruction in the practicum:

> I think the teachers and school principals expect us (student teachers) to follow their instructions without making any trouble because we are just sojourners … It is better we stay quiet and keep our feelings to ourselves. (Emotional diary)

4.3. Joy and pride: 'I hope I can do more!'

For Ming, the first four weeks in Fountain school constituted a period of shock, doubt, and guilt, which affected his growing identity as a language teacher. While Ming tried to hide these negative feelings from the mentor, he learned that the problems (e.g. the passive learning atmosphere and students' lack of motivation in learning) in the mentor's class could partly be attributed to the hierarchical structure and accountability system in the school, where teachers' performance was assessed primarily based on students' exam results. Thus, the traditional approach was widely employed by most teachers as they were driven by the school policy to improve students' scores through memorization and drills. Also, teachers were not given much autonomy in the design and implementation of the school curriculum, which made it challenging for any change and innovation (e.g. task-based language teaching) to take place.

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> To be honest, I am surprised at the school's policy on teacher evaluation. Under such pressure, I am wondering how much attention teachers can devote to students' learning and their own professional development. (Interview 2)

With a better understanding of the teachers' situations in the school and driven by the negative emotions he encountered, particularly his sense of guilt, Ming tried to reflect on his own practice and exercise his sense of agency so as to bring some positive change to the pupils' learning:

> I feel so bad because I am not being helpful to the students. What can I do to improve their language learning? (Emotional diary)

Bearing this question in mind, Ming made attempts to cultivate students' interest and motivation in learning English, which was in line with his self-belief as a student-centered teacher. First, as the mentor asked Ming to mark students' homework during the internship, he took it as an opportunity to communicate with students by giving them specific suggestions and encouragement:

> It is like having a chat with the students so that they not only learn how to make improvements but they also know you care about them. (Interview 3)

For a few students with poor exam scores and passive attitudes about English learning, Ming conducted conferences with them with the mentor's approval:

> Some students told me it is frustrating to study English because even though they tried, their scores were still low. I realize if I cannot change the way English is taught here, maybe I can help them improve their scores so that they can gain a sense of achievement in the process of learning English. After discussing with the mentor, I became a 'private tutor' for some students and helped them with their problems through conferencing. (Interview 3)

Ming' efforts seemed to pay off as his class performed well in the middle-term examination, ranking first in the whole grade, and even the students in his tutor group made rapid progress as well. Thus, the mentor spoke highly of his hard work as a 'good assistant' (Interview 3). However, what really brought him joy and satisfaction was students' change of attitudes toward English learning:

> The exam results were satisfactory, but the change of their attitudes made me even happier. Some students told me that they felt English was not that horrible and they gained more confidence and motivation to learn it. (Emotional diary)

Moreover, one student wrote a comment on her homework book for Ming, which deeply touched his heart:

> One girl wrote on her homework book: 'We think you are the best teacher in the world!' This comment made me very moved and proud. I really hope I can do more as their 'teacher'. (Interview 3)

As Ming tried to bring some innovations to students' language learning, the joy derived from students' increasing motivation and the pride emanating from their recognition dispelled the anxieties he previously felt about his interactions with students before the practicum. More importantly, they helped Ming cope with the negative feelings (e.g. shock and guilt) he initially experienced in the practicum, thus giving strong impetus to his identity growth as a 'caring and supportive teacher'. Nevertheless, the change he brought about was limited, given the mentor's traditional teaching style and the static school culture characterized by accountability and performance appraisal, which placed limits on his professional agency

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(Roberts & Graham, 2008). Overall, he still felt that he could not really generate significant impact on students' language learning in the school:

> What the mentor really cares about is the exam result, just like all the other teachers and the school management. I think the main reason why she supported what I did was it could improve students' exam scores. However, I cannot do anything more because I am only her 'assistant'. (Interview 3)

4.4. Anger and frustrations: 'I am at the bottom'

Ming attached great importance to his teaching practice as he was keen to apply his beliefs about language teaching into the real classroom, hoping to lead the students to experience the 'fun and pleasure of language learning which the mentor deprived them of' (emotional diary). However, it turned out that the mentor placed strict control on his teaching, which completely disrupted his plan:

> The mentor gave me only four lessons to teach, which were much less than a total unit of work (usually eight lessons) as the program's minimum requirement. When I told her that I needed to submit the lesson plans of a whole unit to our program, she said I could just design the course without necessarily teaching it. (Interview 3)

Some negative feelings, e.g. anger and frustration, were thus provoked, as reflected in the rhetorical questions he raised in the emotional diary:

> What is the point of designing all the lessons without teaching them? How am I supposed to know if my ideas can work? How am I supposed to learn from my practice? (Emotional diary)

For Ming, what's more irritating was that in the four lessons he taught, while he planned to teach the lesson by following the communicative approach he believed in, the mentor still asked him to talk about students' grammatical mistakes in the mid-term exam:

> The mentor asked me to review their (students') exam papers and go through their grammatical mistakes one by one in the class. She also asked me to prepare some related grammatical drills for them to practice. So I had to put aside my teaching plans and follow her requests. I felt I was like a 'puppet' without any autonomy in my teaching. I only got to teach what I wanted when the university supervisor came to visit me. It was like putting up a show. I was really angry and upset. (Interview 3)

The mentor's control deprived Ming of his professional autonomy and agency in implementing his beliefs about language teaching in the classroom, thus affecting his practical learning as a student-teacher (Timoštšuk & Ugaste, 2010). Not only was his own learning interrupted, but he was also not able to offer students the opportunities to learn English in a meaningful and authentic way as he desired, which further added to his negative emotions and impeded his identity development as a 'real teacher':

> Although there was not much I could change in the school, I thought I could still introduce a different experience of language learning to the students, something more interesting and communicative. However, my attempt failed as the mentor took control of my teaching and imposed her own agenda on me. I felt a bit sorry for the students. But what can I do? I was not a teacher there. (Interview 4)

When asked if he could share his feelings with other people, such as the school principal and university supervisor, and ask for more freedom in teaching, Ming admitted he was influenced by an 'emotional rule' embedded in the overall school environment, where the

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teachers were expected to display a competent and flawless image with their negative emotions suppressed and concealed (Shapiro, 2010):

> Teachers in the school always look confident and assertive. No one seems to be emotional … I dare not share my anger and frustrations with people here, including other student teachers. I am worried that they would think of me as immature, unprofessional and incompetent. (Interview 2)

More importantly, Ming felt he was 'at the bottom of the school hierarchy' (emotional diary), where his voice could not be heard:

> I feel like invisible in the school. No one ever asked us how we are doing or what help we might need. For the mentor and school, they do not even treat me as a student teacher who needs guidance and help, but an outsider and sojourner. Besides, the mentor is responsible for my practicum assessment, and I don't want to get a bad result in the end. So even though the university supervisors paid visits and observed my teaching, I did not say much to her. What is the point? I thought there was not much she could do given my situation. Maybe I was gradually losing confidence and just want to finish it (the teaching practicum) as quickly as possible. (Interview 4)

The status of 'being at the bottom' and the high-stakes practicum assessment silenced Ming's voice and suppressed his emotions in front of both the university supervisor and the school mentor, which not only made him feel far less than a real language teacher (only an 'assistant') with limited agency, but they also threatened his legitimate identity as a prospective teacher who was learning to teach in the field school (only an 'outsider or sojourner'). As Ming had to follow different 'emotional rules' by hiding his emotional turbulence in front of others (e.g. his peers and the mentor), the negative emotional labor took a toll on his teacher identity:

> Sometimes, I feel I just want to shout. I don't come here to be a secretary or assistant in the school. I really want to ask her (the mentor): Am I a teacher or not? But I dare not. (Interview 4)

Thus, while the mentor's constraints created practical obstacles for Ming's learning to teach, the different emotional rules emanating from school norms and structures also became a critical source of emotional labor with negative impact on his identity development (Zembylas, 2005).

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4.5. Disillusionment and Determination: 'I need to be strong and competent!'

As the teaching practicum was drawing to an end, another incident occurred which put Ming into deep frustration and depression. One night during the individual study[1], two students got into a fight under Ming's supervision. As Ming was helping other students with their homework, he did not notice the fight until it broke out. One student' head was injured and bled, and Ming immediately carried him to the medical room. After hearing this news, the mentor hurried to the medical room with the vice principal of the school. Regardless of his explanation, both the mentor and the vice principal instantly placed blame on Ming for his negligence. However, what he found most shocking and disappointing was that he was also criticized for not asking the injured student to write down what had happened in the fight:

> The mentor and the vice principal scolded me because I did not ask the student to give a written report of the fight, which they can show to the parents proving that his injury was merely due to his own misbehavior and the school has no responsibility. (Interview 3)

For Ming, he thought what the injured student mostly needed was comfort and rest rather than 'being pushed to write a report like a criminal, which might cause him some emotional damage after the fight' (emotional diary). Thus, this incident aroused his deep concern about students' welfare in the school, where teachers and school management appeared to pay more attention to their liability (i.e. legal responsibility) than their ethical and moral responsibility (e.g. love and care for students):

> It feels really wrong that teachers cared more about their liability (whether or not they would be implicated in the student's injury) than the student's safety and health. (Emotional diary)

> I know my students are not happy in the school, and the fact that I can do nothing to help them really tortures me. (Interview 3)

The word 'torture' here suggests the sympathies Ming felt toward his students. Despite the unfair criticism he received and the powerlessness he experienced in the school, he still considered himself their teacher ('my students') and held moral responsibilities for their personal learning and growth. As for his attitudes toward the mentor and the school, however, this incident was like 'the final nail at the coffin' (Interview 3), which sank him into complete disillusion:

> I want to finish my teaching practicum as soon as possible. I don't want to waste my time in a school where students are not being cared for and I am treated as an outsider. I know I can only become a real teacher when I graduate, but never here. (Emotional diary)

The quote evidently shows Ming's strong disappointment and dissatisfaction, which psychologically led to his self-exclusion from the field school. His teacher identity construction through the teaching practice was thus thwarted, which is indicative of the inhibiting role the school norm and structure could play in student-teachers' professional learning and identity building (Flores & Day, 2006). Further, the 'emotional rules' embedded in the school context forced Ming to keep quiet about his emotional flux and follow the mentor's instruction, which imposed a great deal of 'emotional labor' on Ming and eroded his teacher identity development:

> I felt I am not a teacher but an actor who is good at showing and hiding emotions. Sometimes it was very tiring and I felt lost. (Interview 4)

Overall, although the practical constraints and negative emotions created barriers to Ming's teacher identity development, his teaching practicum experience offered him a dose of reality which stimulated his personal reflection. For instance, two weeks after the teaching practicum, as Ming distanced himself from the experience and reflected on it, he felt the teaching practicum experience had reinforced his beliefs in the communicative approach to language teaching, and strengthened his motivation to be 'a caring and student-centered teacher'.

> Looking back, I really think how teachers teach and treat students can play such an influential role in their learning. In the future, I don't want my students to become demotivated and even hate English … I will use a communicative approach and make my teaching interesting and engaging. I want my students to think of me as a 'caring and student-centered teacher'. (Interview 4)

Also, by projecting himself in the future work contexts where different challenges might be present (e.g. rigid school management), Ming expressed his determination to become a competent and agentive teacher who would not yield to the 'tough and challenging reality':

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> My teaching practicum is like a 'wake-up call' to me. It reminds me that the reality of teaching can be tough and challenging and as a teacher, I need to be strong and competent to do what I think is right for my students. (Interview 4)

5. Discussion

This study demonstrates that student-teachers' emotions and identities are fundamentally interrelated (Zembylas, 2005) and narrative in nature (Connelly & Clandinin, 1999; Golombek & Johnson, 2004). The different stories Ming experienced and constructed served as a narrative site through which his identity as a student-teacher was shaped and reshaped in relation to his internal emotional struggle and conflicts as well as the external institutional and sociocultural contexts (Sfard & Prusak, 2005). Drawing on Ming's storied experiences during the three-month teaching practicum, this study further reveals the complex and contested emotional processes of a student-teacher's identity construction (Shapiro, 2010), which are influenced by his relationship with the mentor and students, the situated school system and culture (with hidden emotional rules), as well as his own emerging sense of professional agency.

First of all, the complex relationship among Ming, the mentor, and their students was a strong influential factor in Ming's negotiations of identities in relation to conflicting emotions (Meyer, 2009). Echoing previous research findings (e.g. Bloomfield, 2010; Timoštšuk & Ugaste, 2010), this study demonstrates the unequal power relationship between student-teachers and their mentors, leaving student-teachers especially vulnerable to a wide array of negative emotions. Specifically during the teaching practicum, Ming was treated as the mentor's 'assistant' instead of an autonomous teacher who was learning to teach. Due to his peripheral status in the field school and the pressure from practicum evaluation, Ming conformed to the preferences and requirements of the mentor while hiding the negative feelings in order to live up to her expectations of a student-teacher. The power differences can also force student-teachers to disguise and control their emotions in front of the mentor, constituting a form of negative emotional labor (Isenbarger & Zembylas, 2006), which could have a detrimental effect on Ming's teacher identity development. For instance, when Ming's classroom teaching was controlled by the mentor, he suppressed his frustrations and anger without raising any disputes, which in a way strengthened his identity as an 'assistant' in the school.

In terms of Ming's relationship with students, his personal beliefs and prior experiences positioned himself as 'a student-centered teacher', explaining why he made efforts to facilitate students' language learning. The recognition and support from the students alleviated his prior anxieties, enhanced his self-confidence, and bolstered his teacher identity. However, pre-service teachers' relationships with students are politically juxtaposed with their mentor teachers' relationships with students (Meyer, 2009), and as a result how the student-teacher interacts with the students is to a large extent determined by the pre-established relationship between the mentor and the students. In the incident where Ming was asked to announce the names of the students who failed the exams, he was forced to maintain the top-down management style established by the mentor, despite his desire for a caring and friendly relationship with the students. The shock and guilt emanating from this incident therefore posed challenges to his ideal teacher identity ('caring and supportive teacher'). Moreover, pre-service teachers' relationship with students is also under the direct influence of their own

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relationship with the mentor. Although Ming planned to give students a different learning experience, his hands were tied, given the constraints the mentor imposed on his teaching practice, which stirred up his intense negative feelings, like frustration and anger. Central to these feelings was also a sense of powerlessness in accomplishing his educational goals and developing his preferred relationships with students (Shapiro, 2010). Thus, in spite of his sympathies and concerns for students' future learning, he was emotionally undercut as a full-fledged language teacher in the school.

In addition, the school policy and system with its entrenched emotional rules were revealed to be a powerful source of influence on Ming's expression of emotions and the construction of his teacher identity, which demonstrated the political characteristics of emotion in teaching (Zembylas, 2004). For instance, in the field school, student-teachers were generally positioned as 'outsiders' without sufficient professional support and autonomy. Thus, while Ming felt frustrated and under-valued, given the mentor's control on his teaching, he found it difficult to change the situation due to his status of being 'at the bottom of the school hierarchy', resulting in a strong sense of powerlessness and disappointment. His identity and agency as a student-teacher who was learning to teach were thus severely confined (Timoštšuk & Ugaste, 2010). More seriously, the 'fighting' incident was a devastating experience for Ming as he was criticized for the 'wrong' priority he put on attending to the needs of the injured student without asking him to give a written report about the injury in the first instance. The mentor and the vice principal's concern for exempting the school from liability rather than the injured student's immediate emotional needs contradicted Ming's teacher identity and led to his psychological self-exclusion from the school.

Closely related to the school management and culture are the hidden 'emotional rules' embedded in the school context, which also posed serious challenges to Ming's emotional practices and identities (Zembylas, 2003). Despite the emotional flux throughout the practicum, Ming could never reveal his inner thoughts and feelings to others in the school. First, the suppression of emotions was a direct result of his peripheral position in the school community, which imposed an implicit 'rule' on his emotional practices. This 'rule' dictating how a pre-service teacher should behave in the field school (i.e. 'keeping quiet and making no trouble') impacted negatively on Ming's identity as a legitimate and autonomous student-teacher. He seemed to be reduced to a 'teaching robot' who was asked to perform duties perfunctorily. The silencing of his emotions could also be attributed to the 'emotional rule' prevalent in this school, which prohibited teachers from openly exhibiting their vulnerabilities and imperfections, as well as negative emotions, such as anger and sadness (Sutton & Wheatley, 2003; Yin & Lee, 2012), characterized as threats to teachers' 'professional/expert images' (Shapiro, 2010). Due to the two hidden rules in the field school, Ming was forced to control and regulate his feelings and manage and adjust his behavior, which had a significant bearing on his identity development. For instance, as he felt like an 'actor' who was good at displaying and hiding emotions, he experienced a strong sense of loss as a teacher. Furthermore, for student-teachers, it is a daunting and demanding task to manage and control all the negative emotions encountered in the practicum (e.g. shock, disappointment, and anger), which involved a considerable amount of emotional labor (Hochschild, 1983; Isenbarger & Zembylas, 2006). During the practicum, on the one hand, Ming had to work with his mentor while hiding his anger and disappointment; on the other hand, he battled with the sentiments of guilt and powerlessness while trying to promote students' language learning and develop a friendly relationship with them. The

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constant efforts to repress, hide, and manage his emotions in line with the 'emotional rules' in the school took a toll on his teacher identity development (Zembylas, 2005; Schutz & Zembylas, 2009), leading to his diminished self-identity as a teacher.

While school policy and culture with emotional rules were a powerful contextual factor that mediated the emotional process of Ming's identity construction, his professional agency as a language teacher was also found to play an important role in shaping his emotional experiences and identity development (Roberts & Graham, 2008; Zembylas, 2005). Specifically, Ming's professional agency could be seen from his attempts to resist the normative discourses in the school, reflect on his own practice, and initiate positive changes to students' learning that aligned with his own educational beliefs (Sexton, 2008), influenced by his prior learning experience as a student in a rural school and student-teacher in teacher education program. Further, our findings suggest that the student-teacher's professional agency had an emotional dimension, which is related to the concept of 'emotional intelligence' (Salovey & Mayer, 1990) in monitoring and managing his own and students' feelings and guiding his thinking and actions. For instance, during the first four weeks in the practicum, the shock and doubt Ming experienced from his observation of the mentor's work as well as the guilt he suffered as an 'accomplice' of the mentor served as 'productive guides' (Bloomfield, 2010, p. 231) driving him to seek possible changes to promote students' language learning. In other words, stimulated by the negative feelings, while Ming complied with the emotional rules in hiding his emotions and following the mentors' requirement, he tried to find ways to adhere to his own beliefs and hold moral commitments to students as a reflective and agentive teacher (Turnbull, 2005). Through his 'tactical compliance' (Roberts & Graham, 2008, p. 1401) and agentive work (e.g. conducting conferencing with students), Ming managed to inject positive feelings into the students' English learning and build up their motivation and confidence. The feeling of doing something good for students' learning and growth was part of what made his teaching rewarding and a source of psychological satisfaction, adding to his developing identity as a teacher (Lasky, 2005). Therefore, teachers' emotions and professional philosophies can be viewed as 'the means by which they individually navigate, interpret and occasionally resist the officially ethos of the school in which they work' (O'Connor, 2008, p. 118).

By contrast, the negative emotions stemming from his strained relationship with the mentor and the school conventions and practices could be so overwhelming that they put serious limits on his professional agency. Despite his strong willingness to try out new ideas of language teaching in the classroom, Ming was to a large extent cut off from real teaching practice by the mentor. Also, the school's hierarchical structure and accountability culture with the entrenched emotional rules made him feel alienated, which together repressed his teacher agency and impeded his teacher identity construction. Interestingly, given the negative influences from the mentor teacher and school culture, while Ming might have stayed frustrated and disillusioned, he actively projected his imagination into his future work and restored his optimism and determination, thus leading to an 'imagined identity' (Wenger, 1998) as 'a strong and competent teacher' committed to students' learning and growth. His change from 'disillusionment' to 'determination' might be derived from his post-reflections on his practicum experience detached from the field school, as well as his active imagination of his future work based on an ideal work context that differs largely from his practicum school. This change reflects the future-oriented nature of student-teachers' professional agency and identity in looking beyond the present and seeking changes in the

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future (Beauchamp & Thomas, 2009). Whether and how Ming can live out his imagined identity (i.e. 'a strong and competent teacher') in his future work context is an open question, which is beyond the scope of the study but worth further exploration.

6. Conclusion and Implications

In the field of teacher education, while the emotionality of learning to teach has remained an under-researched area, this study provides a detailed narrative account of how a student-teacher negotiated and navigated conflicting emotions in the process of becoming a teacher. More importantly, it reveals the structural and cultural working conditions (Kelchtermans, 2005) with hidden 'emotional rules' embedded in the practicum school, which could exert considerable impacts on his emotional experiences and identity construction. Such understanding can deepen our existing knowledge of the complexities of teachers' learning to teach by taking the centrality of emotions into account (Shapiro, 2010).

This study is not without limitations. First of all, the findings derived from the narrative analysis of one student-teacher in a high school in China cannot be generalized to other contexts; second, the absence of field observation data makes it difficult to explore how the participant experienced different emotions and constructed his identities in real practice. Nevertheless, a number of practical implications can be drawn from the study for the improvement of pre-service teacher education. First of all, in terms of the design and implementation of teacher education programs, teacher educators might need to integrate issues of emotions into their teaching, and support student-teachers to form an awareness of, and a capacity to interrogate and reflect on their emotional experiences and develop a strong and solid professional identity (Bloomfield, 2010). In this way, student-teachers can gradually foster their 'emotional intelligence' (Salovey & Mayer, 1990) as a crucial competence to interpret, mediate, and manage their various emotions in order to embrace, revise, or reject discourse practices embedded in the teaching practicum and their future work contexts. To achieve this, teacher educators can be open with their own emotional practices in the classroom, and model how to turn emotions into useful resources for their students' teaching and learning. Besides, some concrete strategies, such as 'emotional diaries' (Zembylas, 2003) and 'role play' (White, 2009), can be adopted to give student-teachers opportunities to confront and reflect on their own or others' emotional experiences, anticipate classroom situations with which they may struggle, and discuss possible strategies to cope with the emotional challenges (Schutz & Zembylas, 2009). After the teaching practicum, student-teachers can share their emotional practice in the field school (e.g. by reviewing each other's emotional diaries) and engage in a critical and reflective discussion on these experiences, from which they gain more opportunities to enhance their reflective abilities and understand how to come to terms with what it means to be a teacher in face of emotional flux.

Second, although teacher education literature has already emphasized a collaborative relationship between university and school in preparing future teachers (e.g. Tsui, Edwards, & Lopez-Real, 2009), it is necessary to take the power issues inherent in this relationship into reconsideration. In order to cater to student-teachers' emotional needs and facilitate their learning in transferring from one context to the other, more importance should be attached to student-teachers as a key 'partner' and 'stakeholder', who share an open and democratic relationship with university supervisors and school mentors. Based on such a relationship, student-teachers not only learn how to teach and manage students, but also

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how to handle the various emotional episodes they encounter in school and how to be an autonomous teacher. This relationship is not merely beneficial for student-teachers, but it also serves as a device to initiate change and reform and build a strong professional culture in the school, with a view to improving teaching and learning (Hargreaves & Fullan, 2000). However, the transformation of the mentality and practice in teaching practicum is not an easy task due to the traditional boundary between university and schools and barriers posed by deep-seated structures and conventions. Thus, necessary resources and support from the university and the field school need to be in place to encourage more boundary-crossing communication and collaboration to effect change to the existing systems (Wenger, 1998).

This study, through the lens of narrative inquiry, illustrates how a student-teacher's emotions and identities were deeply entangled and mutually informed in his situated institutional and socio-political contexts, thus adding to our understanding of the emotional dimension of learning to teach (Sutton & Wheatley, 2003). Future research can make use of field observation to draw a fuller picture of student-teachers' learning in practice, such as their classroom teaching and interaction with students, the mentor and school leaders, so as to gain a deeper understanding of the school context in which different power relations are at play. Research can continue to probe pre-service teachers' emotional process of identity formation, especially in contexts where institutional support and learning resources are available (in contrast to Ming's case). Also, there is a need for more studies to explore the transition from the pre-service to in-service context, with a focus on the emotions new teachers might experience and how these emotions relate to their learning and identity formation in the real teaching context.

Note

1. Students were required to study in the classroom from 7:00 PM to 9:00 PM on weekdays in Fountain school.

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the authors.

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Appendix 1

Sample interview questions for interview 2

(1) Could you describe your feelings when you first came to the field school?
(2) How did you engage in your learning (e.g. observation and discussion) in the first month? What have you learned and how did you feel about your learning?
(3) How did you interact with the mentor/students/other school teachers? What emotions did you experience during these interactions?
(4) How did you perceive and cope with your emotions in the practicum? How did these emotions influence your self-perception as a teacher?

Sample interview questions for interview 3

(1) How did you engage in classroom teaching? How did you feel about your teaching?
(2) Have you experienced any difficulties in your teaching? How did you feel about these difficulties? What did you do to cope with the difficulties?
(3) Have you received any support (e.g. from the mentor or the school) in your teaching?
(4) How was your relationship with your mentor/students/other school teachers? What emotions did you experience during your interaction with them? How did these emotions influence your identity as a teacher?
(5) Can you share with me some critical incidents in which you experienced strong emotions during your classroom teaching? What influence did these incidents have on your teacher identity?

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