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HOW TEACHERS ARE PREPARED FOR RURAL CONTEXTS IN CHINA: A CASE STUDY

VOLUME I

By

Hailing Wu

A DISSERTATION

Submitted to
Michigan State University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSPHY

Curriculum, Teaching, and Educational Policy

2010

ABSTRACT

HOW TEACHERS ARE PREPARED FOR RURAL CONTEXTS IN CHINA:
A CASE STUDY

By

Hailing Wu

This study looks at how teachers are prepared for rural contexts in China with a focus on the representation of the countryside in teacher preparation. Drawing upon the concept of the rural as social representations of space, an ecological approach to learning to teach, and the notion of curriculum as value-laden and political in terms of both product and process, this study considers the roles of various stakeholders in relation to general, academic, and professional education courses to suggest the complexity of representation and enlighten our understandings of teacher education as social (re)production of rural places.

This study concentrates on the 2004 cohort of the Chinese Teacher Preparation Program in the Department of Chinese at East Teachers College, northern Jiangsu, to examine the preparation of future teachers for rural contexts, especially the place of the countryside in teacher education curriculum. Based on the artifact, field observation, and interview data collected in summer 2006 and fall 2007, this study draws upon Fairclough's critical discourse analysis and several other analytical tools to argue that the teacher preparation curriculum tended to position the countryside as "Other" and reinforce the student teachers' disengagement from the countryside, despite the existence of conflicting images and attitudes.

In providing a thick description and analysis of several courses critical to the preparation of Chinese teachers for rural contexts, this study presents a picture of how the Party-State, the textbook writers, the college, the department, the program, the faculty, and the student teachers worked together, consciously or unconsciously, to reproduce place-based inequality. Coupled with the disengagement of teacher preparation from rural contexts was the prevalence of bureaucratic, self-interested, and technocratic discourses. This dissertation concludes with a brief discussion of the ways in which preparing teachers for rural contexts can be considered toward place-based social justice.

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DEDICATION

To my parents, Renfeng Jiang and Honggen Wu, whose country life provides me with a window from which I read Chinese rural society and its changes.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This dissertation could not have been accomplished without the care and support of a group of people and organizations. I am solely responsible for any mistakes or problems with the work.

I owe my deepest gratitude to my advisor Lynn Paine. One of the best things that have ever happened to me is that I have her, such a knowledgeable, intelligent, caring, and nurturing person, as my advisor. She has a profound understanding of Chinese history, culture, politics, and (teacher) education as both an insider and outsider. She does not intimidate me with her state-of-the-art ability to think and articulate, but patiently tolerates my weaknesses and nurtures my interests and potentials. In addition to spending a considerable amount of time and energy advising me on this dissertation, she did her best to ensure that I had some money to cover my living expenses and conduct fieldwork. She was incredibly kind and generous to let me use her own beautiful and quiet house for dissertation writing. She will be my role model forever.

My deep appreciation goes to four other professors on my dissertation committee. It was Lynn Fendler who accompanied me through the most difficult moments of my first several years in the program. She was also influential in teaching me about critical thinking and independent writing. Joseph Featherstone played an essential role in me deciding to focus on Chinese teacher education from the perspective of democracy promotion in both this dissertation and my future career. I was very lucky to work as research assistant to Dorothea Anagnostopoulos for two years. It was she who led me to the latest theories of social justice and discourse analysis. My two-year working

experience with Anne-Lise Halvorsen offered me wonderful opportunities to learn about teaching methods, field experience, and the like. All the professors supported me along the long journey of this dissertation work with enthusiasm and care.

I am greatly indebted to the teacher preparation program, the two middle schools, and the research participants, whose real names are not presented in this dissertation, for allowing my presence in their daily life and providing me with valuable opportunities to learn. Many thanks go to those friends who made my entry to the fields possible. Please accept my sincere apologies if this dissertation has bothered or offended you for one reason or another. As an inexperienced scholar who has limited writing strategies, it is extremely difficult for me to find ways to capture the complexities of the situation and the lives of the many people I have the privilege to encoutner.

I am very appreciative of the financial support given by different organizations. The pilot study of this project was conducted with the International Pre-dissertation Travel Abroad Award offered by the MSU International Center. I collected much of the dissertation data with the Research Enhancement Award jointly provided by the MSU Graduate School, the International Studies in Education, and the Dean's Office in College of Education. I extend my thanks to the MSU Department of Teacher Education and the IL/IN Midwest East Asia Education Network for supporting my trips to conferences and workshops which helped push me thinking and writing and build amazing connections with other scholars in the field of (Chinese) rural education.

Many scholars outside my committee contributed to the development of this dissertation. Among others, Kyle Greenwalt and Douglas Campbell from my program

read one or several of the chapters and encouraged me to deepen my understanding of certain issues or improve my writing. Heidi Ross from Indiana University, Gregory Fairbrother from the Hong Kong Institute of Education, and Irving Epstein from Illinois Wesleyan University provided insightful feedback on one or several chapters of this dissertation. I thank them for their generous help.

I am extremely grateful for the assistance and encouragement of colleagues and friends at different stages of this dissertation. I benefited a lot from discussions with Jingjing Lou who now teaches at Beloit College, and Dan Wang and Peggy Kong who are both faculty members at the University of Hong Kong. Yisu Zhou kindly helped me analyze data, especially at the early stage of this project, and introduced me to related works of Chinese scholars. Nai-Cheng Kuo inspired me to work long hours every day in the past several months to complete the draft. Also, thank her and her roommate Giovanna Moreano-Villena for putting me up in their apartment. Akinyi Okwako, Patricia Bozung, and Jill McKillips generously helped me with proofreading. I very much appreciate my friendship family, Louis Rutare and Lela Vandenberg, for their genuine and continuous interest in my study and deep belief in my ability and potential.

Last but not least, words cannot express the love and gratitude I have for my family. I am lucky enough to be raised in a family which thinks highly of education. For the past six years my parents celebrated the Chinese New Year without me and had no complaints. It is also my great fortunate to have a husband offered unwavering support for my work. Thank you, Yonggang Zhu, for cooking numerous delicious meals, giving me space and time to think and write, discussing data and related social phenomena with me when I

feel stuck, encouraging me to pursue what I am passionate about, pulling me from extreme thoughts, and much more.

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ABBREVIATIONS

The PRC	The People's Republic of China
The CCP	The Chinese Communist Party
The CCYL	The Chinese Communist Youth League
The MOE	The Ministry of Education
The NCEE	The National College Entrance Exam
The GRE	The Graduate Entrance Exam
The US	The United States
MSU	Michigan State University
BNU	Beijing Normal University

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

This is a dissertation about rural teacher preparation and teacher education as a site for social (re)production of rural place in the Chinese context. I explore how teachers are prepared for rural contexts, especially how teacher education represents the countryside and has an impact on pre-service teachers. In doing so, I examine the roles of various actors in constructing rural-related understandings and practices of student teachers.[1] Actors taken into account are the Party-State[2], the province, the teachers college, the teacher preparation program, the department where the program is housed, the college supervisor, the school mentor teacher, and the student teacher themselves.

In this dissertation, I study both the policy and practice of teacher education curriculum in relation to the countryside. For the convenience of data collection and analysis, I divide curriculum into three layers: the planned, the enacted, and the perceived (Kelly, 2009). They represent what is planned to be taught, what is present and absent in classroom instruction, and what is left in the mind and action of the student, respectively. To present a nuanced picture of the rural in teacher education curriculum, I also consider courses of different types: general education, academic education, and professional education. Putting the three layers of curriculum together, I seek to understand the consistency and/or contradiction of rural representations within a course and among different courses.

---

[1] In this dissertation I use "student teachers" in its broadest sense. They refer to teacher education students, rather than just those students in the midst of the practicum or student teaching experience.
[2] It seems more appropriate to address the Chinese State as the Party-State, as the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) is the ruling party of China and plays a dominant role in Chinese politics.

As I will present later in this chapter, contemporary China is a propitious place to study the representation of the rural in teacher preparation. The rural-urban dichotomy has characterized Chinese society from the time of the founding of the People's Republic of China (PRC), if not before. With an emphasis on urban development, the Party-State marginalized and overlooked the countryside for years. But a noteworthy phenomenon began in 2005 as the central government redirected its attention and started the campaign to "Build the Socialist New Countryside." Also significant for this dissertation is a second shift in policy rhetoric, associated with the 1999 teacher education reform[3] and the 2001 curriculum reform in basic education[4]; with these, the Party-State has shown an increased interest in teacher education as a place to signal social change and progress, including that in the countryside. Yet, my literature review shows that studies of rural teacher preparation that consider its complex relationship with the state and schooling have been scarce in number and superficial in analysis.

Interwoven with some background information about Chinese rural (teacher) education and its research, this chapter introduces theories that I draw upon to frame the dissertation study. They include a textured view of the state and schooling, the rural as social representations of space, and a political and ecological approach to teacher education. I conclude this chapter with an outline of this dissertation.

A Textured View of the State and Schooling

[3] Encouraging the involvement of comprehensive colleges and universities in teacher education, upgrading normal schools/colleges to comprehensive colleges/universities, and integrating pre-service and in-service teacher education are the main components of the1999 teacher education reform (the MOE, 1999).
[4] The 2001 curriculum reform (the MOE's Division of Basic Education, June 7, 2001) aims to change curriculum from the aspects of theory, structure, delivery, assessment, and administration. To promote student development in problem analysis and solving, communication, collaboration, and other learning dispositions and skills is articulated as the focus of this reform. The release of the curriculum standard and new textbooks, the emphasis on in-service training, and the like are obvious signs of the reform.

Over the past century, the European/Western nation-state, a concept closely tied to "modernity" and "rationality," has spread around the world and become a ubiquitous political form. Associated with this has been the world expansion of mass schooling (Boli, Ramirez, & Meyer, 1985; Ramirez & Boli, 1987; Ramirez & Meyer, 1980). States, especially those developing ones, have put great efforts in expanding schooling and improving its quality, whatever "quality" means. What motivates the state to do so? What is the relationship between the state and the school? What is schooling for? As some scholars (Anderson-Levitt, 2003; Boli, Ramirez, & Meyer, 1985; Fuller, 1991) have summarized, several paradigms have been developed to address these questions.

Deeply influenced by the liberal thought that "both individual and society are capable of improvement and that government is an instrument of the improvement" (Cibulka, 1999, p. 165), modernists and functionalists consider schooling as "a state-defined common good" (Fuller, 1991, p. 30) to promote modernization. For purposes of national integration and economic development, they argue that it is necessary for the state to establish a unified schooling system and use it as "the instrument that socializes children toward central authority and modern affiliations" (Fuller, 1991, p. 26). This system will also help advance the development of individuals. Children will "grow up modern" and their opportunities and quality of life will be improved. In other words, it is in the shared interest of the state and the individual to invest in schooling.

Scholars in social and cultural reproduction (e.g., Althusser, 1971; Pierre Bourdieu & Passeron, 1977; Bowles & Gintis, 1976) view the state as an agent for economic elites and schooling as an instrument to reinforce their "status, affluence, knowledge, and

customs" (Fuller, 1991, p. 35). The school teaches the rules and norms of the dominant class through hidden curriculum, as well as technical skills essential to economic productivity and expansion. Languages and cultures of low-status groups are, in turn, disregarded. By projecting the illusion that if the student works hard s/he will get ahead in the society, the state frees itself or the structure from being questioned.

Noting the rapid expansion of "the Western school, as an organization surrounded by popular support and symbols of modernity" (Fuller, 1991, p. 44) in all Third World countries since World War II, institutional theory or world culture theory (Boli, Ramirez, & Meyer, 1985; Ramirez & Boli, 1987; Ramirez & Meyer, 1980) argues that the primary interest of the state, especially the one in an uncertain environment, does not lie in economic growth but in the establishment and maintenance of its legitimacy. Since to deliver modernity and progress has become a worldwide expectation, or more precisely, is "perceived" (Ramirez & Boli, 1987, p. 3) as the best way to run a country, the state strives to "look modern" (Fuller, 1991, p. 46) and change-oriented.

Mass schooling is a relatively inexpensive approach for the state to express its legitimacy and signal modernity (Fuller, 1991, p. 47). In expanding schooling and deepening its effects on children, the state promotes the ideology that children must "learn the dominant language, the virtues of bureaucratic authority, and the wisdom of Western knowledge" (Fuller, 1991, p. 46) to grow up modern. As "mass education is the creature of a modern system of which urbanization, economic development, and industrialization ... are central components" (Boli, Ramirez, & Meyer, 1985, p. 153), it

becomes "natural" to perceive rural residents and other groups as "unmodern" or "uncivilized" and position them on the periphery of society.

As Fuller (1991) has poignantly pointed out, the above three paradigms "tend to present lifeless ideal-types" (p. 10) and fail to see the dynamic character of the state, including "its environment, its own credibility and technical capacity, and the level of individual agency within state organizations" (p. 11). Further, they "tend to ignore the diverse and contentious character of individual actors (and their coalitions) within state organizations" (p. 12). On this ground Fuller (1991) calls for a "textured view of the state" (p. 10).

Based on his observations of Malawi, Fuller (1991) argues that the relationship between the state, especially the fragile or unsteady one, and the school is "a faithful yet rocky romance" (p. 1). The state tries hard to deepen people's faith in schooling and use the school to advance its legitimacy. However, this does not necessarily involve a smooth process. The state is interdependent with other central and local institutions or groups in gaining both material and social capital, and may receive resistance or competing responses from them for various reasons. As such, "the state is best seen as a bounded institution but one that must respond to a mix of interests and interdependencies" (p. 23).

In Fuller's (1991) study, with limited resources and "fluid conflict between western ideals and pre-modern (even indigenous) forms of authority, production, and socialization" (p. 61), the state acts in favor of "the economic and cultural interests of urban elites" (p. 94) and disrespects the cultures and traditions of local communities. By

standardizing curriculum, instruction, testing, and the like, the state works towards the expansion of "individual choice and national status" (p. 146).

Drawing upon classroom observation data, Fuller (1991) argues against the representation of "the teacher as the state's messenger" (p. 133). "Signals coming down from the state are mixed" (p. 133). For example, the state provides a homogeneous curriculum in school but encourages teachers to promote the individual development of children. With large classrooms and limited resources, teachers tend to highlight the former by lecturing. They also use local languages and the like in classroom to maintain order, control, and authority. Meanwhile, it is noticeable that teachers organize classroom in accordance with the bureaucratic forms and rituals recommended by the state. "Here political elites and local educators arrive at a mutually beneficial agreement, together harmonizing the rules, rituals, and faith which signal how children are to grow up ... looking more modern" (Fuller, 1991, p. 134).

Further, Fuller (1991) discusses the state's possibility of tying school curriculum with local community. Facing the constant contradiction "between the press for modernity versus respect for local pluralism" (Fuller, 1991, p. 136), Third World states rarely prioritize legitimatizing and rebuilding local communities beyond the rhetorical sense. Schooling is first and foremost employed to serve the state's agenda, including "building and reinforcing nation-wide loyalties, promising mass opportunity, pushing cultural homogenization, and boosting economic growth and employment within corporate firms and government agencies" (Fuller, 1991, p. 136). Whether the state is willing to or can strengthen local communities concerns such factors as the level of

legitimacy and authority it enjoys, the support it gets from other institutions and various interest groups, and its "internal administrative, technical, and symbolic capacities" (Fuller, 1991, p. 61).

While Fuller (1991) puts his locus of analysis on the state and considers its interaction with surroundings with the influence of institutional theory, some scholars (e.g., Anderson-Levitt, 2003; Levinson & Holland, 1996; Reed-Danahay & Anderson-Levitt, 1991) have drawn on conflict/contradiction theory and cultural studies to highlight schooling as "a stage upon which multiple, often contradictory, interests, ideologies, policies, and practices are played out" (Carney & Madsen, 2009, p. 176). Like Fuller, they also propose studying different actors at different levels in a contextualized manner.

For example, Reed-Danahay and Anderson-Levitt's (1991) ethnography studies French teachers' images of rural and working-class families to suggest schools as "sites of a struggle for control over the role and meaning of the family vis-à-vis the state" (p. 560). In the French culture/state, discourses about families are affected by two conflicting practices, that is, to romanticize the countryside and to idealize the "rational" and "modern" bourgeois. Teachers make use of the incoherence and ambiguity to characterize rural and working class families as "deviant" in a nuanced way and explain the failure of the two student groups in school.

Take Carney and Madsen's (2009) study on Nepalese schooling for another example. In the context of globalization, three educational discourses "compete for space and influence" (p. 176) in transitional Nepal. The pervasive one is economic, social, and national progress that "constructs rural, village-based, and agricultural experiences as

being inferior to those formed in urban, suburban, and industrial centres" (p. 175). Focusing on three Nepali kids from the same primary school, the two authors recommend that we go beyond functionalist reproduction to develop a nuanced understanding of the relationship between schooling and lived identities. "Children are actively involved in establishing meaningful realities that are grounded in the worlds they inhabit" (Carney & Madsen, 2009, p. 184).

There are several points that I take away from Fuller (1991) and related literature on the state and schooling. First, the (fragile) state is concerned with its legitimacy and other issues around nation-state building, and tends to use the school to serve these purposes. In line with its emphasis on industrialization and urbanization, the state tends not to honor rural tradition and culture. Second, it cannot be assumed that the state shares a coherent ideology of schooling or has complete power and control over schooling. We need to contextualize schooling and explore not only the stances and responses within state organizations but those of different actors within the state policy machinery. It is desirable to take an ecological approach (Bronfenbrenner, 1976) or consider the interplay between individuals, organizations, and institutions in a specific environment. Equally important, we should be conscious that "deep institutional structures, including expectations of legitimate action and levers available within the Western state, constrain how the individual can move" (Fuller, 1991, p. 12).

China is one of the countries whose spread of modern schooling "accompanied the adoption of the Western model of the nation-state" (Spring, 2009, p. 22), a fact which, in many ways, surprises the rest of the world given China's long and unique history and

tradition. The expansion and improvement of China's mass schooling has been interwoven with the formation and construction of the nation-state. As has been widely observed, China in the early 21st century is in the midst of rapid transition from a traditional agricultural to a modern industrial society. Thus, what is described above about the relationship between the state and schooling may hold true in the Chinese context. Before reviewing the continuity and change of the views of the Party-State on rural education and therefore the status of rural China, I want to briefly introduce the Chinese schooling system.

A Brief Introduction to the Chinese Schooling System

China, no doubt, has the largest schooling system in the world. Take the year 2007 for example. There were over 200 million students (the MOE, 2008), if all levels of schooling are considered. Compulsory education, which is tuition free, includes six-year elementary and three-year junior high school. Over 163 million students were enrolled in compulsory education, and they had nearly 10 million teachers and staff members. In addition, there were over 45 million students studying in three-year regular, vocational, or adult high schools.

In China, discussion of schooling must pay attention to what has been long recognized as a key distinction – "urban" and "rural." Convention divides the country into two major types of places: urban (*chengzhen*) and rural (*xiangcun*). As roughly shown in Table 1 (below), urban areas consist of cities (*cheng*) and towns (*zhen*) (the National Bureau of Statistics, 2006). Provincial-, prefecture-, and county- level cities fall into the category of "city." Rural areas are those "beyond cities and towns" and include

both townships (*xiang*) and villages (*cun*). Besides geographical location, the criteria for distinguishing these communities from each other include "total population, population density, and economic indicators, including GDP and the economic structure (agriculture, industry, and service)" (B. Li & Piachaud, 2006, p. 1). According to the classification, there were about 750 million rural-registered people in 2005, representing 57.0% of China's total population.[5] Rural schools, including both elementary and secondary, had about 66 million students and 8 million teachers (Tong, May 6, 2008).

Table 1: Administrative/Place Divisions in the People's Republic of China

Level	Type (According to the National Bureau of Statistics)	Type (Identified in/from This Study)
Provincial (*shen*) • Provinces (22) • Autonomous regions (Tibet, Guangxi, Xinjiang, Inner Mongolia, and Ningxia) • Municipalities under direct administration of the central government (Beijing, Tianjin, Shanghai, and Chongqing) • Special administrative regions (Hong Kong and Macau)	City/urban	Urban
Prefecture (*shi*) or the like	City/urban	Urban
County (*xian*)	City/urban	Urban or rural?
Town (*zhen*)	Urban	Rural
Township (*xiang*)[6]	Rural	Rural
Village (*cun*) (informal)	Rural	Rural

Echoing what Fuller (1991) and world cultural theorists (Boli, Ramirez, & Meyer, 1985; Ramirez & Boli, 1987; Ramirez & Meyer, 1980) argue about the characteristics of

[5] In addition, there were more than 100 million people living in small towns.
[6] In the administrative sense, "towns" and "townships" belong to the same category. They are usually put together and called "town(ship)s" (*xiangzhen*).

mass schooling, China's schools use a highly standardized curriculum. Courses in elementary school include Chinese, mathematics, English, physical education, music, art, nature, and morals and society. At the secondary level physics and chemistry are also included. For decades, common textbooks were distributed by People's Education Press nationwide. In the context of the 2001 curriculum reform, the MOE moved from common textbooks to issuing national curriculum standard, allowing a couple of series of textbooks, developed by different publishing companies but based on the standard, to be available for the provincial- and prefecture- educational bureaus to pick from.

Partly tied to the long history of the Imperial Examination, China has a uniform testing system for student selection. The fiercely competitive National College Entrance Exam (NCEE) is offered in early June every year for senior high school students to take. Students are admitted to universities and colleges primarily based on their grade on the exam. For years one exam was administrated to all students across the country. Now some provinces have gained autonomy to develop their own exam. Because of the presence and importance of the NCEE, it is not unusual to see that elementary and secondary schools rely heavily on testing to recruit students, ensure classroom teaching, manifest their own excellence, and the like.

Coupled with testing is tracking. The practice of making the distinction between the "key" (*zhongdian*) and the "non-key" has been common for most of the history of the PRC, especially in the field of education. At present, even though the central state releases a policy once in a while to criticize the practice, schools are still categorized as weak (*boruo*), regular (*putong*), or key. Key schools, similar to college preparation

schools in the American context, are set at different administrative levels in China. As such, a key school can be one at the county, prefecture, provincial, or national level. Classrooms similarly are tracked, and even students within a classroom. The main and longstanding explanation for such a distinction in history remains that in the presence of resource shortage highlighting the education of key schools is an efficient way to prepare human capital for the construction of the state. Meanwhile, some scholars (e.g., X. Jiang, Nov. 14, 2006; S. Wang, 2007) have recognized that such a practice has become a control mechanism, leading to the unequal distribution of resources and opportunities in schools.

Rural schoolteachers used to be educated independent from urban ones (Ruan & Li, 2009). A series of measures, including free tuition and direct recruitment from and placement to rural areas, were adopted to establish a separate system for rural teacher preparation. In the early 1980s, the central government specified that three- or four- year secondary teachers' schools (*zhongdeng shifan xuexiao*) and two- or three- year post-secondary specialized colleges (*shifan zhuanke xuexiao*) assume the responsibility of teacher preparation for rural elementary and middle schools, respectively. While secondary teachers' schools were usually located in county seats, post-secondary specialized colleges had their campuses in prefecture-level cities.[7] Both have almost disappeared as a result of the 1999 teacher education reform. At present, most teachers colleges and universities are housed in the prefecture- and provincial- level cities. Those at the prefecture level label themselves or are labeled as "local."

[7] In this dissertation, at times I refer, by prefecture, to a large area. In China's administrative structure it is ranked below a province and above a county. Sometimes I use it to denote the capital city of a prefecture or prefecture-level city. It is a parallel to a county or a county seat in the American sense. This also means that different meanings are attached to "county" in China and the US.

Nowadays, in most cases, especially those in the more developed, eastern coastal region of the country, a college student studies for four years in a teacher education program before s/he receives a teaching certificate and finds a position in an elementary or secondary school.[8] The curriculum s/he takes covers general education, subject matter knowledge, and teacher education. Teacher preparation courses include general pedagogy, general psychology, educational psychology, subject-specific pedagogy, student teaching, and the like.[9] Compared to that in the United States (US), the time that teacher candidates in China spend on student teaching is much shorter, about two months.[10]

A note needs to be made about general education. As will be repeated in Chapter 3, China is one of the few countries in the world that require all college students to study moral education (*deyu*) (Lee & Ho, 2005). Here, *deyu* is used in a broad sense, and "refers not just to moral education, but also to political and ideological education, and includes courses in law, health (both physical and mental), and work-related studies and many other activities pertaining to a student's general education" (P. Li, Zhong, Lin, & Zhang, 2004, p. 449).

A Review of the Party-State on Rural Education

[8] As mentioned previously, the teacher education system of China is in the midst of transition. As a result of the 1999 teacher education reform, all higher education institutions can have programs in teacher preparation. People can also come into teaching through alternative routes.

[9] See Tables 3-6 in Chapter 2 for the courses that my research participants took in their Chinese teacher preparation program.

[10] This may not be accurate any more. There is a recent policy that pre-service teachers should spend no less than one semester in student teaching (the MOE, July 5, 2007). Consistent with the argument that nations across the world have paid increasing attention to teacher education out of considerations of international economic competiveness (Furlong, Cochran-Smith, & Brennan, 2009), in recent years the Chinese government has been strengthening the regulation of teacher education in the name of professionalization. This can be easily observed from the establishment of the teacher certification system. The standard for teacher education will also be released by the MOE soon (Z. Zhu, June 27, 2010).

It is beyond the scope of this dissertation to fully discuss the policies and practices of the Party-State around rural China throughout the history of the PRC.[11] In brief, several years after the PRC was founded with a heavy reliance on peasants, the Party-State has adopted the household registration (*hukou*) system (Decree of the President, 1958) to classify residents as "rural" (agricultural) or "urban" (non-agricultural), and to treat the two groups differently.[12] As Chan and Zhang (1999) have noted, "the Chinese system was designed not merely to divide population statistics and identify personal status, but also directly to regulate population distribution and serve many other important objectives desired by the state" (pp. 818-819).

Within this system, rural residents traditionally were prohibited from traveling or migrating from villages to urban areas. They were required to be bound to the land and farm collectively to produce cheap agricultural products for urban residents, in order to ensure the security and the industrialization of urban areas. As Kipnis (1995) asserts, the distinction between rural and urban people was "central to the distribution of state resources" (p. 113). Urban residents were offered state-provided employment after completing some education, and received social welfare of various kinds (such as free

[11] For more detailed discussions of this topic, please see Potter (1983), Cheng and Selden (1994), Yang (1996), and Unger (2002), among others.

[12] The official criteria of urban residence have kept changing throughout the history of PRC (Lingguang Zhang & Zhao, 1998). But basically, a person's *hukou* status in China is determined based on two related but different parts: residential location and socio-economic eligibility (Chan & Zhang, 1999). Take my family as an example. Both of my parents grew up in villages of Jiangsu. My mom was and is still a farmer. My dad worked in the township cement production and transportation company for about twenty years, that is, after he returned from several years' military service and before it was sold to an individual in the 1990s. Now he farms and does some odd jobs. Both have been rural registered since they were born. I inherited their rural status, but the admission letter from BNU in summer 1997 changed my "rural Jiangsu" status to "urban Beijing." Before I came to the US for the doctoral program and after I graduated from BNU in 2004, with a request from the Beijing government, I transferred my registration from Beijing to my home village. But my status was still listed as "urban." For those rural-registered students like me, to take and pass the NCEE has been the primary way to obtain an urban status.

grain and oil rations, childcare, education, health care, housing, and retirement pension). Rural residents had no such security.

However, change began with the policy of reform and opening-up starting in 1978, which framed achieving modernization, with an emphasis on industrialization and urbanization, as the only way to improve the nation's status and catch up with the West.[13] With that policy shift, the Party-State has encouraged rural-registered people to engage in non-farm activities and opened urban areas to them conditionally through a series of policies and regulations. Associated with this have been remarkable changes in rural China.[14]

Today, what rural residents do for a living can be agricultural, industrial, or service. With increasing access to media tools (including internet), they now live with the influence of and interaction with the outside world. With more and more residents originally from villages moving to live in towns (often small in size), towns have tended to be perceived as "rural" by both local officials and residents. There also has emerged a

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[13] The slogan "to achieve four modernizations" (in industry, agriculture, national defense, and science and technology) was brought up in Mao's time before the Cultural Revolution but did not gain predominance until the Deng Xiaoping government took power in the late 1970s.

[14] In the next several pages I briefly introduce contemporary rural China from the aspects of environment, economy, culture, and politics. Chapter 11 speaks, more or less, on the life and issues of a rural community in one region of one province. It is difficult to describe rural life for all China, considering that rural communities and experiences are diverse and complicated and the country is enormous in size and great in diversity. Overall, the living condition of rural people has been significantly improved in the past three decades. Issues of food scarcity, illiteracy, quality of housing stock, and so on have improved for much of China's rural areas; yet even within these improvements, regional and local factors contribute to marked differences in the level of economic development and infrastructure in various rural communities. Still, across the nation, it may be accurate to say that by the end of the first decade of the century, China's rural communities faced a number of new problems. Many of these relate to urbanization and industrialization. They include, for example, the loss of arable land, pollution of different types, brain drain migration, and the preservation of local culture and custom. Problems, such as the underrepresentation of women, the lack of transparency in procedure, the control of local clans, and the common practice of corruption, have also emerged from new reforms in the village election system and governance. For ethnographic portraits of rural life in China, please read Liu (2000), Gao (1999), and others.

trend of village and town(ship) residents migrating to live and work in county areas. Added to this, a large number of rural residents become "migrant workers" (*nongmin gong*), working in cities, especially metropolises, year-round or seasonally, either alone or with (part of) their families.

This does not mean that the rural-urban dichotomy has disappeared in China. Although having initiated some reforms to open urban areas to rural residents conditionally since the late 1970s, the Party-State keeps the *hukou* system basically intact. "The *hukou* system, directly and indirectly, continues to be a major wall in preventing China's rural population from settling in the city and in maintaining the rural-urban 'apartheid'" (Chan & Buckingham, 2008, p. 604). Coupled with the national emphasis on urban development has been a gradual rise of the "three-rural issues," that is, poverty and hardship related to rural areas, agriculture, and peasants.[15]

With the outflow of capital, land, and/or human resources, the three key elements for rural development (T. Wen, 2006), many rural communities, villages in particular, are declining or even dilapidated (Zhuo Wang, 2004). In the agricultural sector, the Party-State employs the price gap between industrial goods and agricultural products to accumulate capital for industrial and other aspects of development in urban areas (Niu, 2003), in addition to drawing away bank deposits in rural areas.[16] With respect to land, governments at different levels conspire with other players to take arable land away from

[15] The economist Tieyun Wen came up with the term "the three-rural issues" in 1996. In early 2000, Changping Li, the CCP secretary of a town in Hebei province, wrote a letter to the then Premier Rongji Zhu, in which he stated that "the peasants are really suffering, the villages are really poor, and the agricultural sector is in real danger." The term started to appear in the writings of scholars and officials in 2001, and the reports of the central government in 2003.

[16] State-owned banks in the countryside are primarily involved in saving deposits and withdrawals. The loan support available to rural individuals and groups is negligible.

peasants at a unreasonably low price (Niu, 2003). In terms of human capital, in recent years more than a hundred million rural residents, who for the most part are in the prime of their life and have a better-than-average education, have left to look for employment opportunities in cities. Those who remain in the countryside tend to be the old, the weak, the sick, and the disabled.

In the dual system that distinguishes urban from rural, rural-registered people, whether they live in rural or urban areas, are treated on the whole as less than full citizens (Niu, 2003; F. Zhang, 2005). Politically, they have become more and more under-represented in the People's Congress at different levels (national, provincial, etc.) (F. Zhang, 2005). They are denied the legitimacy of establishing their own organizations or associations. Associated with their disadvantage politically, rural-registered people do not enjoy the same health care (Niu, 2003), social security (B. Li & Piachaud, 2006), education, and other comparable benefits as urban residents do.

Rural migrants often have distinct but negative experiences in cities. Due to their rural registration, "they are being treated as non-citizens and denied of the rights bestowed on the urban populations" (Garcia, 2004, p. 20). Even though working and living in cities, migrant workers are excluded from social welfare such as public health care, legal aid, pension system, and education. Basically, they rely on "kinship and native place connections for mutual assistance and community formation at destination areas" (Garcia, 2004, p. 3). The interactions between them and urban residents are limited, and they encounter discrimination, rejection, and exclusion (F. Liu, 2005). Among them,

children and women are the two groups who occupy the "double disadvantaged position" (F. Liu, 2005).

With the practice of modernization at a rapid speed across China, rural areas as a whole have experienced dramatic social changes, which bring great new challenges to rural education. Among others, the following are worth mentioning.

Along with urbanization comes "the clustering of education" to town(ship)s and cities (Y. Cao & Gao, 2004). Village schools are cancelled and consolidated to town(ship) schools, and town(ship) schools are taken as rural by local people. With the consolidation of senior high schools, students of village origin, in many cases, need to receive high school education in county- and even prefecture- level cities. The result has been the emergence of some serious problems. First, due to the rural-urban income gap, some village families cannot afford the transportation and accommodation expenses and some other fees, especially at the senior high level. Second, with the physical disconnection between the school and the village community, how to build a healthy connection between the student's experience in school and at home becomes a more challenging task. Third, rural schools, including both village and town(ship) schools, are shrinking in both size and function. What makes the situation worse is the rapid transfer of quality teachers to cities, a phenomenon which degrades the educational quality of rural schools.

In terms of social mobility, during social transition the visible hand (the urban-biased admission policy) and the invisible hand (the market) work together to make it more difficult for rural students to achieve (Jing Cao, 2007). It is evident that recently the percentage of college freshmen from the countryside, especially those in key universities,

has kept dropping (Yan, Oct. 11, 2007). In this context, along with the sharp increase of college tuition and the rising unemployment of college graduates, many rural families accept the notion that "studying has no value" ("*dushu wuyong lun*"). Many rural students give up schooling in their early teens to become migrant workers, which may further widen the rural-urban disparity.

As discussed above, while working in cities, rural migrants either leave children behind in village or take them along. According to the national statistics (X. Lei, May 25, 2010), in 2008 there were 21.4 million children left behind (*liushou ertong*) studying in rural schools. There were 20 million taken along (*liudong ertong*) in 2001, and the number has been climbing rapidly since then. "Each [group] have to cope with different kinds of dangers and challenges in their educational and social environment" (Jungbluth, 2007, p. 8). Because of the *hukou* system and for financial considerations, some rural migrants leave children in their village to be taken care of by relatives, especially grandparents. Due to the lack of parental guidance and support from the school, children staying behind often experience difficulties in health and safety, academic performance, and social behavior (Fan, 2005; Jungbluth, 2007; Yao, 2005).

Children taken along face challenges of another type (Jungbluth, 2007). By reason of the *hukou* system, for their children to enter an urban school, rural migrants are asked to pay many other types of fees, which in most cases are beyond what they can afford. Even though some can afford the price, their children are likely to be excluded from activities and assessments within the school, due to the status of "study borrower" (*jiedusheng*). Migrant communities cope with the situation by establishing their own

simplified schools, which are mostly unofficial. Most schools are poorly located and ill equipped and daily face the fear of being shut down.[17] Furthermore, those children often experience a kind of identity crisis. With the segregation, discrimination, or/and exclusion from urban children and adults, they get to realize that they are second-class citizens compared to city dwellers. Some express resentment by committing delinquent acts.

Moreover, rural areas are confronted with an ecological crisis of a vast magnitude. More and more village and town(ship) enterprises are open in rural areas, which does help some peasants "leave the land but not the rural area; enter the factory but not the city."[18] However, for many reasons these enterprises often lead to serious environmental pollution, thus degrading the rural ecological system and jeopardizing the health status of rural residents. Added to this is the overuse of pesticide and fertilizer for productivity considerations. It appears crucial for rural education to play a role in maintaining and improving the rural ecological environment (Letian Zhang, 2003).

A cultural crisis is also evident in rural areas. Based on the experience of visits to his home village, Liu (2006, p.?) writes,

> In the process of reform and opening-up and moving toward modernization, the rural society is completely in a passive position. The cultural meaning of rural society is shadowed within the framework of modernization centering on [economic] development. The clash of external urban-centered culture makes the original order of rural culture fall apart.

[17] Since 2003, the central government has issued several policies to improve the schooling of migrant kids. The implementation of these policies varies in different cities (Chan & Buckingham, 2008).
[18] This is a slogan that the central government created in the 1980s to encourage the development of town(ship) enterprises and use them to transfer the rural labor force.

Some children feel rootless in culture, and show self-contempt and helplessness toward their surroundings. Without close connections with the place, they look down upon people and issues around. The absence of parents in their growth as a result of the outflow of the labor force (T. Liu, 2006) and the under-representation of rural culture in school (Qiang Liu, 2006; T. Liu, 2007) worsen the situation.

In the face of these widely recognized problems, the efforts that the Party-State has made to tackle the "three-rural" issues in the past several years are worth recognition. As suggested by Fuller (1991), "the state's capacity to accumulate economic resources and social legitimacy depends upon its ability to advance a mix of interests" (p. 13). Concerned about social stability and national economic growth, the Chinese government has recently directed some attention to the countryside. A series of policies and actions, such as the "tax-for-free" reform, the medical care reform, and the retirement plan, have been introduced to "Build the Socialist New Countryside" (2005).

Historical impediments, of great magnitude, to funding rural education have slowly become a focus of concern to the Party-State. Due to the dual urban-rural structure, education in rural areas has been financially placed in a disadvantaged position throughout the history of the PRC. Before and during the Cultural Revolution, the central government supported education in urban areas out of public funds but adopted the "self-reliance" policy for rural schools. After the Cultural Revolution ended, the principle of "multiple-level-run schools with separate levels of management" ("*duoji banxue fenji guanli*") (the CCP Central Committee, 1985) was implemented.

Guided by this principle, from the early 1980s to the late 1990s, it was largely village and town(ship) governments which were responsible for funding rural schools. Funds were usually collected from local taxes and fees in a top-down approach. In 2001, partially due to the consolidation of rural schools, the county governments were asked to take over the main responsibility ("*yi xian wei zhu*"). For various reasons many were not able to sufficiently finance rural education (J. Guo, 2005). The central government's urban preference was not relieved until the increased investment in rural education since 2005 (the CCP Central Committee and the State Council, 2005). The policy of free compulsory education for rural students was announced in 2007.

There are few periods during which the Party-State has not rhetorically highlighted the rural identity of education in rural areas. During the Great Leap Forward and the Cultural Revolution, Mao Zedong strongly criticized the "diploma disease" that treated education merely as a ladder to social mobility and insisted that "education should be in service of proletariat politics and connected with productive labor," thus calling for the development of rural-oriented curriculum in rural schools (Andreas, 2004; D. Han). After 1978, the Party-State has kept emphasizing the goal of education in rural areas in serving the economic and social development of the countryside (the CCP Central Committee and the State Council 1983; the State Council 2003; the State Committee of Education 1988; the State Committee of Education 1991), and therefore the implementation of vocational education in rural schools.

Even though the Party-State has used the rural for rhetorical national purposes throughout the history of the PRC, the paradigms of education carried out in rural China

under Mao and in the post-Mao era are different. Mao took a radical approach to education (Hannum, 1999; Unger, 1980), eliminating key schools and even the NCEE during the Cultural Revolution. After Mao, both were brought back to underscore "quality, competition, individual talents and mastery of concepts and skills important in the development of science and technology" (Hannum, 1999, p.?). As a response to these changes and the dual social structure, rural families tend to perceive schooling as the primary venue to escape the countryside and to employ the unified curriculum to learn to pass the highly selective NCEE (Thogersen, 2002; Y. Zhang, 2004).[19] As such, as indicated by Fuller (1991), we see a strong representation of both national and individual agendas in schooling. Attention to rural communities seems to be left out.

The Rural as Social Representations of Space

In rural studies, as many scholars in the English world (e.g. Halfacree, 1993; Rye, 2004) have pointed out, to define rurality is a challenging task. Around this there had been heated debate, of which the core is on how to understand the relationship between rural space and rural society.

To define the rural based on the socio-spatial characteristics of rural areas is an approach traditionally taken. Definitions of this type describe the rural from some variables such as "employment, population, migration, housing conditions, land use and remoteness" (Halfacree, 1993, p. 24). Its underlying assumption is that the rural has an objective and independent existence. Also, the rural is "observable and measurable" and the key is to select the "correct" "parameters with which to define it" (Halfacree, 1993, p.

[19] The State has organized some reforms on curriculum and testing in the past 30 years, expressing some interest in challenging their unified nature. But I have to say that this basically remains unchanged.

23). However, taking a close look, one may note that the rural is "a residual (after urban has been measured)" (Brown & Cromartie, 2002, p. 2).

Sensing that "a sufficient concept to explain the holistic nature of the rural is still missing" (p. 365) in current China, Zhang (1998) reviews the existing approaches to understanding the rural. The first is occupational or economic, which sees that the rural as areas in which farming is the main mode of production. Within this framework, rural residents may be conceived as equal to farmers. Another widely-accepted approach is ecological. The rural is taken as a spatial system where a small group of people live sparsely. They separate themselves from the outside world, and make use of land in an extensive manner. Both understandings of the rural are descriptive. The third one, the socio-cultural, argues that there are significant differences in behavior and beliefs between rural and urban residents. In this perspective, the homogeneity of rural population is assumed.

In the context of industrialized societies, Brown and Cromartie (2002) also look at the rural from the above three perspectives. While Zhang (1998) briefly mentions the political component in the socio-cultural perspective, Brown and Cromartie (2002) treat the institutional as a separate dimension that covers education, religion, governance, and voluntary and service organizations (p. 12).

With the accelerated pace of urbanization and industrialization, "the complexity and vagueness" (X. Zhang, 1998, p. 367) of the rural concept has been dramatically increased. Then, as Zhang (1998) puts it, the problem existing in each of the three or four perspectives is a notion of rural-urban dichotomy, which has not quite captured the

dynamic changes of China in the past several decades. Under the circumstances, the rural-urban is better conceptualized as a continuum, as well as from multiple perspectives (Brown & Cromartie, 2002; X. Zhang, 1998). This approach rejects the notion of rurality as "leftover once urban areas have been identified" (Brown & Cromartie, 2002, p. 15). It is helpful "not only for distinguishing urban from rural but also for ... recognizing important aspects of rural diversity and of focusing attention on the zone between what is clearly urban and clearly rural" (Brown & Cromartie, 2002, p. 15).

Those who use parameters to describe the rural are likely to "relegate space the position of being a mere 'reflection' of society, an unimportant detail" (Halfacree, 1993, p. 26). Supporters of the rural-urban dichotomy and continuum tend to believe spatial determinism. In this context, Halfacree (1993) calls for a socially constructed view, "when we consider (rural) space, we must not only consider the structures producing that space but also the way in which that space is subsequently used to produce other space and fundamentally, to reproduce the original causal structures themselves" (p. 27).

Following the linguistic turn in social theory and philosophy, Halfacree (1993) proposes understanding the rural as social representations or representing space. Simply put, the rural is what people represent about rural space through language, whether it is oral or written. Such representations of the rural are socially constructed in nature. They are "an amalgam of personal experiences and 'traditional' handed-down beliefs propagated through literature, the media, the state, family, friends and institutions" (Halfacree, 1993, p. 33).

Since the rural is socially constructed by different people, there can be conflicts and controversies as to what rural areas look like, what it means to be rural, and the like. Different ways of understanding the rural can be described as different "discourses of rurality" (Woods, 2005, p. 12). Some interactional types of discourses of the rural, such as academic discourses (Halfacree, 1993), lay discourses (Halfacree, 1993), policy discourses (Frouws, 1998), and popular discourses (G. Lei, 2003; Woods, 2005), have been identified.

In a certain context, a diverse array of actors can be involved in the social construction of the rural and come up with contested discourses as a result of competing societal interests and power relationships, as well as some other factors. Therefore, it is important to attend to "the socio-political processes involved in the production, reproduction and mediation of social representations" (Halfacree, 1993, p. 30). This dissertation begins with a goal of trying to understand these issues in the context of Chinese education, particularly teacher education.

In a previous section of this chapter, I have introduced the Party-State's stances on rural education and the general response(s) of rural students and their parents. Admittedly, they are not the only actors in the field of (re)constructing the rural in rural education. Educational researchers are another force we cannot afford to ignore. Given the focus of this dissertation, it is especially important to understand what discourses already exist in the Chinese or China-focused literature on rural education. The coming section is devoted to this topic.

In general, from the perspective of research methodology, I have to say that high quality studies are rarely seen in the field of Chinese rural education. As Li and Mei (2005) have pointed out, it is hard to find an empirical study, not to say a detailed description and analysis of rural education in a community context. While some publications are "null and void" (W. Li & Mei, 2005, p. 46) by listing the limited data collected by the government and offering several so-called suggestions or measures, others make general position statements.

Current Research on Chinese Rural Education

On the Concept of Rural Education

In rural education studies of China, Chen's (1999) concept of rural education has been widely cited. Grounded in "a developing country transitioning from agricultural to industrial civilization, presenting itself with a rural-urban dualistic society, and with countryside people at a disadvantaged position," Chen (1999) defines rural education as the education "that usually takes place in rural areas, targets rural people, and serves the economic and social development of rural areas" (p. 39). It concerns three parts: basic education, adult education, and vocational education.

Li (2000) adds that "at the early stage of socialism of our country, rural education refers to the education at the county level and below, including that at the county, town(ship), and village levels" (cited in H. Wen, 2005, p. 43). On this Wen (2005) remarks that "this general statement is not scientific" (p. 43) in two ways. First, some rural areas, especially those along the coast, are urban-like in industrial production and

economic development. Second, counties are classified as urban in statistics and educational finance of the central government.[20] Accordingly, Wen (2005) presents rural education as a "complicated" concept with four possible meanings: the education carried out in counties and below-county areas, in counties with agriculture as primary production and below-county areas, in below-county areas, or in the villages and town(ship)s of a county with agriculture as primary production (p. 43).

In the eyes of Chen (1999), Li (2000), and Wen (2005), rural education appears to be a socio-spatial concept. It refers to the education of the population at the village level [and possibly at the town(ship) and county level too] for purposes of local social and economic development. Rural education is perceived as a system independent of urban education. But if considering the contexts in which the definitions are given, one may note that they describe rural education against the background of education in urban areas. Rural education is considered as an education that is not high-leveled but has a singular structure and function.

As a response to the challenges posed by the rapid urbanization and industrialization, considerable attention in rural education has been given to how to help the rural labor force migrate to urban areas. For instance, Qin and Yang (2005) propose that rural education track students in middle schools and prepare the low-track to work in cities as migrant workers. Cities should also be more open to rural migrants and take the initiative to train them about how to work and live there. In this context, Qin and Yang (2005) argue that rural education in fact concerns urban areas.

[20] This is different from what the National Bureau of Statistics (2006) describes, which shows that the State has an inconsistent and ambiguous designation of the status of counties and towns (Lingguang Zhang & Zhao, 1998).

In the new situation, it does not seem appropriate to see rural education as a separate system independent of urban areas any longer (Zhaolin Wang, 2006). Zhang (2003) claims that it is time to replace the socio-spatial approach to rural education with a functional one. Rural education is "an education to serve the development of rural modernization" (Letian Zhang, 2003, p.?) that can take place in both rural and urban areas. By "rural modernization," he, first and foremost, means the out-migration of rural population to urban areas.

In Zhang's (2003) view, associated with the dual societal structure and "the ideology and concept of petty-peasant economy," the traditional approach to rural education misleadingly emphasizes the goal of rural education in "preparing able people who are ready to stay in the countryside and work in agriculture" (p. ?). It is alleged that he oversimplifies the meaning of "serving the economic and social development of rural areas" in the socio-spatial approach.

One of the great points that Zhang (2003) makes is that "rural modernization" (which I understand as rural development here) "concerns not only rural population" (p. ?) but the entire country. Following this line of thought, one may interpret rural education as an education about the rural and for the rural that should take place in both rural and urban areas. This inspires us to ask: How and what about the rural is represented in society, or precisely, in school curriculum?

On the Rural in School Curriculum

There is not much literature on the rural in school curriculum, especially at the empirical level. Meanwhile, the limited studies available suggest a stereotypical or marginalized representation. Analyzing the photograph illustration and content of four Chinese textbooks published by People's Education Press for elementary and middle schools, Yu (2005) exposes the urban preference. While the rural is expressed as "natural, fixed, and past" in the textbooks, the urban is emphasized as "civil, vibrant, modern, and developing fast" (Xiulan Yu, 2005, p. 92).

Li's (1999) analysis of the Chinese textbooks used by a rural elementary school in Hebei validates Yu's (2005) argument. He also finds that the rural is little represented in classroom teaching. The Chinese teachers take a "call and response" approach to teach the characters and terms, plots, and facts presented in the textbooks with the obvious purpose to conduct ideological indoctrination. The way that students speak in school is formal or formalized. Local language and life hardly appears in their oral expression and writing.

In the ethnographic study of a township junior high school in Zouping, Shandong, Paine and DeLany (2000) argue that

> both the formal curriculum and the hidden curriculum, as well as the pedagogical techniques used by teachers, tell students that the important work of school is learning knowledge that comes from a cosmopolitan, political center, one that is far removed from their villages and their daily experiences. (p. 111)

In accepting the discourse of modernization, "rural schooling supports a conception of knowledge that is promoted by authorities located in urban, cosmopolitan centers" (Paine & DeLany, 2000, p. 113). Influenced by the discourse and with the possible chance of leaving the countryside through schooling, rural students and their parents tend

to accept the notion as well. As a consequence, rural knowledge is marginalized in the entire practice of education.

In addition, Yu (2004) reports that most of the Chinese NCEE items between 1992 and 2001 reflect urban life and hot topics emerging in urban contexts and exclude rural-relevant content. These items have set a higher and higher requirement in information acquisition and creativity, and increased rural students' difficulty in responding. The economic, cultural, and social capital that rural students can mobilize is limited.

According to Luo (2004), in the context of the 2001 curriculum reform, rural-relevant content has been little represented in the curriculum compiled by scholars and teachers from urban centers. Few curriculum experiments have been carried out in massive rural areas. With the belief that "curriculum needs to face not only the world, the urban, and the aristocrat but also the local, the rural, and the common people" (p. ?), Song (2002) suggests developing curriculum resources from the folk society, especially from the countryside.

Zhang's (2003) revision of the concept of rural education implies the importance of looking at the rural in urban school curriculum. However, I have not been able to find any studies in this regard. This demonstrates, from another angle, the prevalence of the notion that rural education and rural development involve only rural inhabitants.

On the Identity of Rural Education

In China, the history of debate over the identity of rural education can be traced to the great Rural Reconstruction Movement in the 1920s and 1930s. At the time, with

Xingzhi Tao, James Yen, and Suming Liang as leaders, some experiments with education as a vital component were implemented in rural communities. For and from the movement, valuable theories of rural education and its development were brought forward. For instance, Xingzhi Tao, a student of John Dewey, gave prominence to the rural identity of education in rural areas and called for the connection of rural education with real life, or "life education" (X. Tao, 1991) in his terms. For him, education in rural areas should serve the development, especially the democracy, of rural communities.

Against the background, recently with the rapid process of urbanization and industrialization, there has been some discussion about how to understand the rural in rural education and position rural education. Buying into the discourse of modernization, the majority of scholars think that rural education should first and foremost prepare efficient workers for purposes of state building, and do not support the idea of highlighting the rural identity of rural education.

Take Hu (2006) for example. To disagree with Xingzhi Tao, he wrote an article titled "The Identity of Rural Education is Not Rural." Form his point of view, the purpose of education is to foster "free and all-around developed people," regardless of where it takes place. Assuming that being equal is being the same and that education is independent of place and other contexts, he holds that no distinction should be made between rural and urban schools in K-12 education. Further, since cities and towns are the main site of "socialist construction," "education in rural areas should be mainly in service of citization and townization" (S. Hu, 2006, p.?). Simply put, attention should not be focused on ongoing concerns of rural communities.

Likewise, Bao (2005) argues that, in the context of modernization, rural schools cannot follow Xingzhi Tao's theory but choose to serve the migration of the rural population. The essence of the transfer is not to build urban areas but to modernize rural people. In the name of promoting rural-urban integration and emphasizing the "basic" and "public" nature of K-12 education, Bao (2005) insists on the sameness of K-12 education in rural and urban areas. "The rural and the urban in rural basic education and urban basic education are only spatial attributes, and don't refer to two educational paradigms with different natures" (Bao, 2005, p. 31).

Some researchers, especially those living and working away from big cities, support Hu's (2006) argument that "the identity of rural education is not rural" but out of different considerations. They focus attention on how to maximize the value of rural education in promoting the mobility of rural students through the NCEE based on the rural "reality." For example, dismissing Xingzhi Tao's concentration on rural development and democracy, Huang and Wang (2006) contend that K-12 education in rural China faces two contradictory tasks: to teach rural students general knowledge for the NCEE as urban schools do, and to deliver vocational skills for their future living if they are poor in academic performance. For the limited resources of rural schools, the unpredictable outcome of vocational education, and the majority will of rural residents, rural education cannot simultaneously meet both goals but focus on the former.

Even more, Ge (2003) states that marginalization is an inevitable fate of rural education associated with modernization. In his words, rural education is "an abandoned kid of modernization." Based on the "facts" that the Rural Reconstruction Movement in

the 1930s ended in failure and that all the developed countries went through the process of marginalizing the rural during modernization, Ge (2003) believes that it is unwise for Chinese rural education to acknowledge and appreciate rural identity. To avoid further marginalization, rural areas should catch up with cities and towns as soon as possible. Accordingly, setting the clear goal of sending more rural students to urban areas through the NCEE, rural education should not teach local knowledge but the national curriculum.

Concentrating on the construction of towns/cities or the individual mobility of rural students, Hu (2006), Bao (2005), Huang and Wang (2006), Ge (2003), and many others seem to hold the notion of abandoning rural communities and their development in the process of urbanization. As a response, Wang and Feng (2005) are concerned with the urbanization of rural areas themselves. In their conception, it is unlikely to rely on the limited cities to achieve the urbanization of massive rural areas. Rural areas need to absorb urban culture and integrate it with local tradition and custom based on the real circumstances of rural life. Within this framework, rural education cannot blindly follow education in urban areas, but make sense of both urban and rural culture to promote integration and further development grounded on local contexts. It is meaningful and necessary for rural schools to make full use of rich resources in the countryside to educate students and foster their love for rural landscape and life, as Xingzhi Tao suggests.

Wang (2006) takes the developmental experience of rural students into account while positioning rural education. He is of the opinion that rural areas should strengthen vocational education and training for the transfer of the labor to urban areas in the

process of urbanization. However, as far as the part of basic education is concerned, he believes that rural schools should try to connect teaching with rural life and conditions. This is not equal to vocational education but out of humanity and a new understanding of knowledge. For too long local knowledge, individual knowledge, and other implicit knowledge that are valuable for student development have been suppressed and excluded from classroom.

Acknowledging that education in rural areas is in a dilemma of choosing between ruralization and de-ruralization, He and Hao (2005) posit that education in rural areas "can not de-ruralize based on the orientation of education in urban areas, or establish a set of ruralized educational system separate from that in urban areas" (p. ?). From the perspective of social justice, "rural and urban population should recieve the same education, however, this kind of education is not the one we currently have as it is oriented toward the urban" (p. ?). In other words, the cultural difference between rural and urban areas in education should be identified and appreciated.

As observed above, the tendency to discuss the identity of rural education from the perspective of culture and social justice has emerged in recent years. With the phenomenon of simply labeling rural culture as backward and excluding it from curriculum, Liu (2006), as well as Ding and Wan (2007), calls for the introduction of multi-cultural education. Rural culture is not inferior to but different from urban culture, and worth the same recognition and respect. Current education turns most rural students into failures and makes them despair of themselves and their future. From a multi-cultural perspective, rural schools should explore local cultural resources to boost the cultural

confidence and pride of those students and local residents, thus evoking their enthusiasm for rural life.

It has to be noticed that there are several assumptions standing behind Liu's (2006) argument. First, those rural students who go to college do not need to understand rural culture. Second, this kind of cultural education ought to take place outside of the formal curriculum. Third, it is not necessary for students of urban origin to appreciate rural culture either.

In contrast with Liu (2006) at the first two points, Liu (2001) holds the idea of incorporating rural culture into the formal curriculum of rural schools. Going beyond the dualistic understanding of the rural/urban as poor/rich, backward/advanced, civil/ wild, and modern/traditional, Liu (2001) argues against the predominance of urban culture in rural school curriculum. In criticizing a bird's (that is, urban) perspective, he suggests re-designing rural education based on the thinking of its meaning for rural children in the life world. From Liu's (2001) point of view, it is unjust for rural children to ignore the real world around in order to learn urban culture and value far away or depreciate it in the process of or/and as a consequence of the learning. There are rich educational resources embedded in rural/local culture that rural schools can lead students to explore, make sense of, and make use of.

Shi (2006) goes further to contend that for purposes of exchange and development, diverse types of civilization, rural civilization included, should be passed down to young people, whether they live in urban or rural areas. From his perspective, civilization, as a way of being and living, is connected not only with the city but the countryside. Rural

civilization is different from but not inferior to urban one. With the process of modernization concentrating on urbanization and industrialization, rural civilization is in jeopardy. More thinking needs to be done about modernization, urbanization, and industrialization. It should not be a must to "sacrifice and squeeze out rural areas, agriculture, and peasants" (Shi, 2006, p.?). With regard to education in rural areas, the most important thing to do is to direct students to appreciate rural civilization and build cultural confidence.

A Slim Literature on Rural Teacher Preparation

In contrast with a large body of Chinese literature on other aspects of rural education, the number of studies about teacher education for rural contexts is significantly smaller. This field did not seem able to receive much scholarly attention until the 1999 teacher education reform. The 2001 curriculum reform and the initiative of "Building the Socialist New Countryside" in 2005 helped to push some attention forward. Of course, this is not to say that the attention did not exist before this.

A case in point is Xingzhi Tao's experiment in the late 1920s. Seeing teachers as leaders of rural communities and agents of social change, he started a teachers' school in Morning Village, Jiangsu. Influenced by Dewey's progressive and democratic education, he understood "society as the school" and "life as education" (X. Tao, 1991), and encouraged students to engage in the daily life of the local community. It was suggested that student teachers learn to understand kids, to run a rural school, to work and live in the rural community, and to collaborate with villagers to promote community

development, as well as to teach a subject. He was also a passionate advocate of "teaching-learning-acting unity" (*jiaoxuezuo heyi*) (Su, 1996).

It has been argued (Ruan & Li, 2009) that several national policies implemented in the late 1990s have dramatically changed the territory of rural teacher education. First, with the influence of the 1997 higher education reform, teacher education programs started charging student teachers tuitions and fees and in return giving them the freedom in job search. Meanwhile, due to financial and administrative issues, although rural schools are short of teachers, few or no posts are open to college graduates. There emerges a disconnection between the need and provision of rural school teachers. Second, the 1999 teacher education reform quickened the disappearance of secondary teachers' schools and post-secondary specialized colleges. For financial concerns and others, normal colleges and universities, which usually reside in prefecture- and provincial- level cities, do not appear motivated to orient their teacher education towards rural schools. The new change is that the MOE started providing free teacher education programs at the six affiliated normal universities in 2007 and requires that graduates from these programs serve in the country setting for a certain length of time.

As indicated in a previous footnote, the 1999 teacher education reform expands the concept of teacher education to formally include in-service teacher development. In this context, considerable attention in recent years has been paid to this area. As seen from the titles of journal articles (see e.g., S. Tang & Liu, 2008; Xia, 2005; Xiao, 2004), it is not unusual to see that "rural teacher education" is considered the same as the continuing education or professional development of rural school teachers.

The quantity and quality of rural schoolteachers have been recently surveyed at the national level (the MOE, 2006), as well as in such different contexts as central and west China, mountainous areas, remote areas, and minority areas (see e.g., D. Zhao, Sept. 2, 2009). It is commonly acknowledged that rural schools are short of teachers, especially those in English, technology, music, and art. Young and middle-aged teachers are much needed to optimize the teacher force. Moreover, rural schoolteachers are described as "low quality" in terms of educational degree, capability to use technology, use of teaching strategies, opportunities for professional development, and the like.

In the past several years, aligning with the discourse of "Building the Socialist New Countryside," the central government has produced some (short-term and temporary) policies and programs to solve these issues. For example, college students (the MOE, 2004; the MOE, 2007) and urban schoolteachers (the MOE, 2006) are encouraged to volunteer-teach in rural areas, and special posts are designed to attract college graduates to teach in poor rural schools of west China (the MOE, the Ministry of Finance, the Ministry of Human Resources, and the State Commission Office for the Public Sector Reform, 2006). Several training campaigns specifically for rural schoolteachers were also organized nationwide.

Concerning the education of future rural teachers, according to Ren and Li (2009), since the early 1950s the Party-State has kept emphasizing the integration of the rural into curriculum. The consolidation or upgrade of secondary teachers' schools and post-secondary specialized colleges to normal colleges and universities has exacerbated the departure of teacher preparation from rural contexts. I have to say that the meaning of the

rural in the recently issued policies, such as "Free Education for Student Teachers at the MOE-Affiliated Normal Universities" (the General Office of the State Council, 2007) and "Support Rural Education Through Student Teaching" (the MOE, 2007), goes little beyond the socio-spatial sense.

There seems to be a consensus among scholars that current preparation in China is not rural responsive. "A teacher preparation system that carries the obvious feature of preferring the urban is in place in the name of urban-rural integration," Li and Yuan (2009) assert. The discourse of "de-ruralization" (*qunonghua*) penetrates the system.

> The orientation towards "de-ruralization" exists in the infrastructure of the campus, the construction of campus culture, the ideology and the life style of the student and the faculty, and the employment goal of the student, which weakens the ideology and practice of serving rural education. (Ruan & Li, 2009, p. 59)

Guo (2008) puts in her master's thesis that the tendency to alienate student teachers from the countryside is embodied in each step of teacher preparation, such as program design and curriculum implementation.

Meanwhile, there is a common request that more attention be paid to rural teacher preparation. For example, Wu (2005) wrote an article called "Teacher education should take preparing teachers for rural areas as main task." Ren and Li (2009), Li and Yuan (2009), and Yang (2007), among others, call for the establishment of a national system for rural teacher preparation. It is suggested that this system be considered from student recruitment to employment, from financial management to curriculum development (Y. Wang & Wu, 2000). The essence is to raise the awareness of student teachers around the rural ("*wunong*").

Some programs in West China have, reportedly, taken the initiative to incorporate the rural into teacher preparation. Huang (2004), a professor at Hechi College, revised the curriculum in pedagogy courses to cater to the needs of the local mountainous areas. The College of Education at Southwest University helps weak schools in the local mountains solve the issues around the shortage of teachers by continuously sending students there to student teach (Yi & Piao, ?; X. Zhang, 2004).

It is noticeable that current research on rural teacher education in China remains superficial and scattered. Little recognition has been given to the complexity of the rural. The aforementioned challenges facing the contemproary rural society and rural education and the debate over the identity of rural education has been hardly discussed from the perspective of teacher preparation. Despite the arguments, proposals, and initiatves described above, no studies have been conducted to thoroughly examine how teachers are prepared for rural contexts, especially how teacher education (re)produces the understandings and practices of future teachers around the countryside.

A Need for a Political and Ecological Perspective on Rural Teacher Education

In the English literature, some scholars (see e.g., Ginsburg & Lindsay, 1995a; Giroux & McLaren, 1986; Popkewitz, 1987) have remarked that teacher education in policy and practice tends to be considered from academic, professional, and technical aspects. Associated with this is the narrow view of teacher education as "the learning of the content and procedures of teaching" (Popkewitz, 1979; cited in Beyer & Zeichner, 1987, p. 313), which assumes teacher education as value free or politically neutral. There

is a tendency to ignore the political dimension and therefore the complexity of teacher education.

However, if considering the potentially complex relationship between the state and the school described in the first section of this chapter, and "the focal point of teacher education is schooling" (Popkewitz, 1987, p. 4), it will be difficult not to see teacher education as a complicated field or from the political dimension. "...teacher education is necessarily bounded by existing or proposed patterns of schooling and with the social, economic, and political contexts in which schooling is embedded" (Beyer & Zeichner, 1987, p. 312).

There is research (e.g., Beyer & Zeichner, 1987) to suggest that a "technocratic rationality" dominates teacher education. For example, teacher education tends to concern "the technical application of education knowledge for the purpose of attaining given ends" (Beyer & Zeichner, 1987, p. 314). This conveys what Friere (2003) terms the "banking concept of education." More specifically, it assumes the uncontested nature of knowledge and a transmission relationship between the teacher and the student.

> ...being a teacher means identifying knowledge that is certain, breaking it into manageable bits, and transmitting it to students in an efficient fashion. Being a student means acquiring this knowledge and learning to use it in a context which does not include criticism and has little patience with analysis. (Beyer & Zeichner, 1987, p. 317)

Another example is that teacher education tends to promote the "individualistic" ideology to student teachers by putting extreme emphasis on courses in educational psychology (Beyer & Zeichner, 1987), reducing teaching methods to psychological qualities (Popkewitz, 1987), and the like. Meanwhile, it would be overly deterministic to aruge

that "all teacher edcuators and teacher education institutions subscribe to this form of rationality" (Beyer & Zeichner, 1987, p. 319).

As Ginsburg and Lindsay (1995a) have asserted, the political dimension of teacher education embodies in both policy formation (both development and implementation included) and teacher socialization. The former concerns more about the role of the state. Here, it needs to be noted that the state is never a "single and unified entity" but "a set of agencies, departments, tiers and levels, each with their own rules and resources and often varying purposes" (Grace, 1987, p. 196; cited in Ginsburg & Lindsay, 1995a, p. 7).

Some scholars (e.g., Fuller, 1991; Popkewitz, 1987) have reminded us that the Western state has the tradition of making use of the school to voice social problems and signal change. It is likely to see the similar phenomenon in teacher education. As institutional theorists (e.g., Meyer & Rowan, 1977) suggest, teacher education, like the school, may focus on rituals and ceremonies to help build "institutional stability and consensus" (Popkewitz, 1987, p. 18). The same pattern may be identified from developing countries, as teacher education policies in these countries may be shaped with heavy influence from developed countries (Lindsay & Ginsburg, 1995, p. 269).

Concerning how to understand teacher socialization, several paradigms exist (Ginsburg, 1988; Ginsburg & Lindsay, 1995a; Zeichner & Gore, 1990). The functionalist approach tends to take that student teachers "receive the lasting imprint which shapes their perspectives and behaviors as teachers" (Eddy, 1969, p. vi; cited in Ginsburg, 1988, p. 6). This assumes that teacher education and schooling have a strict correspondence relationship, teacher socialization shares a simple and smooth process and produces

continuity, teachers are more of passive recipients of a given occupational role, and others.

In the interpretative paradigm, socialization is considered as "a more complex and problematic process" (Zeichner & Gore, 1990, p. 4) that requires sense making and choice making of student teachers. "Socialization is not merely the transfer from one group to another in a static social structure, but the active creation of a new identity through a personal definition of the situation" (Reinharz, 1979, p. 374; cited in Ginsburg & Lindsay, 1995a, p. 9). Both paradigms above "seem to share a conception of the *content* of socialization as being without contradictions" (Ginsburg, 1988, p. 7, italic original).

In contrast with them, emphasizing the socially constructed nature of reality and the possibility of changing the undesirable gender, class, racial, and place relationships, the critical paradigm views prospective teachers or people in general as "the creators and the products of the social situations in which they live" (Bolster, 1983, p. 303; cited in Zeichner & Gore, 1990, p. 5). Instead of viewing power and control as complete, this paradigm seeks to recognize "the acts of resistance, negotiation, and contestation of individuals in the production of meaning and culture" (Weiler, 1988, p. 24; cited in Zeichner & Gore, 1990, p. 5). It also seeks to see "the potential for contradictions, for example, between and within formal and hidden curriculum of a teacher eudcation program" (Ginsburg & Lindsay, 1995a, p. 10).

In 1987, Beyer and Zeichner expressed that, although "much of the literature on teacher socialization seems to imply a strict correspondence between teacher education

and schooling" (p. 319) or the reproductive function of teacher education, we should be open to alternatives. Three years later, Zeichner and his colleague Gore noted that

> There is a growing consensus in the field about the highly interactive nature of the socialization process and about the constant interplay between choice and constraint in the process of learning to teach. The critical tradition, in contrast, has had very little influence on work in this area. (pp. 25-26)

On this basis, they (1990) call for "a 'critical' view of socialization which depicts that socialization process as contradictory and dialectical, as collective as well as individual, and as situated within the broader context of institutions, society, culture, and history" (p. 31).

In the North American context, some classic studies have been produced on teacher socialization from the perspective of conflict or struggle since the late 1980s. Ginsburg (1988) employs the concept of "contradiction" to study teacher education and its influence on prospective teachers, with the understanding that "Not only are what people do and think constrained and enabled by existing social relations and ideologies, but their thoughts and actions help to produce social structures and ideologies" (p. 7). Based on a one-year ethnographic study, among other arguments, he asserts that the teacher education program reinforces student teachers' notion of curriculum as given and unproblematic. Student teachers, who are mostly female, are "anticipatorily deskilled." Facing the deskilling and reskilling contradiction in the economy and other areas, teacher education helps them move to the former camp.

In the classic text *Practice Makes Practice*, dismissing the notion of student teachers as empty vessels, Britzman (2003) examines how they make sense of their field

experiences and shape their teacher identity. Based on a thick description and critical interpretation of two cases in American high school classrooms, she suggests that student teachers themselves can be the site of struggle. In learning to teach, they struggle for voice "amid a cacophony of past and present voices, lived experiences, and available practices" (Britzman, 2003, p. 31). Meanwhile, this critical ethnography identifies that student teachers' "opportunities to learn are truncated by the dominant narrative of learning to teach" (Florio-Ruane & Smith, 2004, p. 630). They are "denied a voice that actually represented the complexities of learning to teach" (Florio-Ruane & Smith, 2004, p. 630). Confronted with the dilemma between tradition and change, they tend to go back to the former and to reproduce the mystified image of teaching.

By observing a social studies methods course in a teacher preparation program of Canada and actively interviewing six student teachers taking the methods course and then student teaching, Segall (2002) critically explores how teacher education enables and limits student teachers' understanding of education, teaching, and learning. He finds that, among others, the methods course transmits the notion of "organization as the panacea for good teaching" through various ways, and student teachers are likely to embrace it to deal with the hectic college- and school- based life.

Many scholars (e.gGinsburg & Lindsay, 1995b; Wideen, Mayer-Smith, & Moon, 1998; Zeichner & Gore, 1990) have recognized that a number of people and factors may be involved in the socialization of future teachers. Student teachers' observations of and interactions with significant others and schooling experiences prior to formal teacher education may play a role. Regarding formal teacher education, as Zeichner and Gore

(1990) suggest, three major components may exert influence. They are 1) general education and academic specialization courses, 2) methods and foundations courses, and 3) field experiences. Also, we should consider the characteristics of the college or university where the teacher education program is located. In present day China, I have to say that these components are mainly considered in a general and normative way (e.g., Du, 2007; Teng, 2004; Wan, 2005; Y. Zhang, 2006).

In *The Political Dimension in Teacher Education*, the two editors Ginsburg and Lindsay (1995a) specify that policy formation and teacher socialization are "related components" (p. 5). A case in point is that Paine (1995) examines how the political and economic contradiction ("nationalizing" vs. "modernizing") in the late 1980s and early 1990s shaped the inherently contested notion of teachers as being "red and expert" and affected the practices of teacher education programs. With the declining of teacher status, autonomy, and financial rewards, this further disengaged teacher educators and student teachers from education.

This echoes the statement that Ginsburg and Lindsay (1995a) make at the beginning of the edited book: "Programs for educating (developing, preparing or training) preservice as well as in-service teachers can be seen as part of a complex web of policies and practices constructed by individuals and groups interacting at institutional, local, national and global levels" (p. 3). Further, considering policy in a broad sense, that is, at different levels and in different forms (formal and informal), Lindsay and Ginsburg (1995) propose analyzing teacher education from multiple levels: macro-, micro-, and phenomenological, and considering intersections between the multi-leveled analyses.

Similarly, Wideen, Mayer-Smith, and Moon (1998) end their literature review with a proposal that we adopt an ecological approach to the process of learning to teach: "We can no longer regard courses, programs, and the other participants and structures of teacher education as unchallengeable and operating in isolation" (p. 169). This means that, among others, in our research we should consider those players we often overlook, such as academic subject-matter professors, methods course instructors, school mentor teachers, and field instructors. More attention should be given to the context in which they work and their interactions. Grossman and McDonald (2008) argue that institutional and organizational aspects of teacher education should also be considered in the ecological view.

It has been particularly suggested that we study student teaching from an ecological point of view (Clift & Brady, 2006; Securro, 1994; Valencia, Martin, Place, & Grossman, 2009; Wideen, Mayer-Smith, & Moon, 1998; Zeichner, 1986). Student teaching is a "complex, dynamic, and multidimensional reality" (Zeichner, 1986, p. 6). A variety of programs (such as college course work and the student teaching program), settings (such as the placement environment), and people (such as the mentor teacher, the college supervisor, and the student teacher) are involved and interact to (de-) construct the experiences of student teaching.

Two decades ago, anchored in the American context, Beyer and Zeichner (1987) commented that "teacher educators have devoted too little time and attention to the question of what are teacher education curricula and preparation, as well as to what is the nature of those educational institutions for which we are preparing practitioners" (p. 299).

They called for "a more rigorous, complete investigation into how teacher education curricula, programs, and policies are related to this distribution of power in society and the ethical and political consequences of this relationship" (p. 323).

This looks more imperative in a Chinese context given the current dearth of studies in the area.[21] One of the few studies, if not the only, that may meet the expectation described above is that Mak (1999) describes the change of the structure in Chinese teacher preparation curriculum in the fast-changing political and economic contexts after the opening and reform policy. Strategies are adopted to balance between academic and professional knowledge and to respond to "new market demands as well as to diverse demands of different geographical areas" (p. 347). However, the change of curriculum structure and organization does not necessarily imply that these contradictions are absent in the daily practice of teacher education.

An Outline of This Dissertation

In the context that the Party-State has employed the *hukou* system to maintain the rural-urban "apartheid" for half a century and recently shifted its attention to rural development, this dissertation asks the overarching question: How are teachers prepared for rural contexts? It considers a series of sub-questions: How is the countryside

[21] I admit that I feel hesitant to present the Chinese literature on teacher education in this dissertation, even though I refer to some in each of the coming chapters. Li and Mei's (2005) main critique of Chinese rural education appears to apply here too. In the works I have identified on teacher education, conceptual framework, research method, and the like are not well-defined. They are usually short in length and highly repetitive in content. A pragmatic approach to teacher education, which rushes to list answers to questions such as "What are the problems?" and "What can be done to fix them?," is prominent in current research. Another pattern I want to mention is that Chinese scholarship in teacher education is mainly at the stage of introducing western theories and practices, such as professionalizing teaching and expanding teacher education to include the in-service part.

represented in the curriculum? Who plays what role in creating certain images of or/and attitudes toward the countryside? What are the possible effects of such representations?

All the literature I have introduced above is relevant to this dissertation study. This study begins with the premise that teacher education is inherently political and embedded within the complex relationship between the state and schooling. Considering there has been much debate over the identity of rural education in the context of industrialization and urbanization but the perspective of teacher education has been fundamentally missing in the debate, I intend to disclose where teacher education actually stands or how teacher education contributes to or responds to the reality of rural education.

Taking Halfacree's (1993) proposal, this dissertation primarily defines the rural as social representations of space.[22] Highlighting the socially constructed nature of the rural, this definition attends to the complex relationship and dynamic change among place, power, politics, and identity, which is lacking in current Chinese literature. It suggests the use of discourse analysis in rural studies, which inspires me to examine how different groups of people involved in teacher education represent the rural and why. Besides recognizing the possible complexity and consequence of rural representation, this view of the rural also leaves space for the reconstruction of the rural from multiple dimensions in the perspective of social justice

Given the existence of various conceptualizations of social justice (North, 2006), I want to specify my understanding here. Influenced by Fraser (2003) and Furman and

[22] As indicated in Table 1, considering the current administrative divisions of China and the socio-spatial understanding of rural education, I put villages, town(ship)s, and counties generally in the category of the countryside. The attention of this dissertation is on the meaning that teacher education attaches to the countryside.

Gruenewald (2004), I believe that social (in-) justice exists on the base of "place," as well as class, gender, and ethnicity. Social justice needs to be understood at both macro and micro levels based on a place from multiple dimensions: the ecological, the economic, the cultural, and the political. The "interpenetration" (Fraser, 2003) among them and the political nature of them should be acknowledged.

This dissertation also adopts an ecological approach to study the curriculum of teacher education. Like the concept of the rural as social representations of space, this view of teacher education calls on us to see the complexity of the issue under study. Teacher education is "situated at the nexus of multiple contexts" (Grossman & McDonald, 2008, p. 192) at the local, provincial, national, and even international levels. It is multi-faceted, consisting of courses in general education, subject matter preparation, and professional education. Each course is also layered, including both design and implementation in a specific environment and sometimes by different groups of actors. As best illustrated by teaching practicum, a series of programs, contexts, and people may exert influence over how a future teacher make sense of the countryside.

There are various approaches to conceptualize curriculum, of which *Understanding Curriculum: An Introduction to the Study of Historical and Contemporary Curriculum Discourses* (Pinar, Reynold, Slattery, & Taubman, 2004) gives a comprehensive account. I tend to believe that curriculum is never neutral but ideology invested. With this said, I do not mean that only one coherent set of ideologies are apparent in curriculum. Complex and often contradictory types of ideologies held by different agencies from different

disciplines may co-exist. However, it is very likely that in curriculum voices and issues of certain groups are marginalized or even silenced.

In term of scope, as indicated at the beginning of this chapter, in this dissertation I use "curriculum" in its broadest sense. It consists of teaching content, instruction, evaluation, and the like. I consider curriculum as both product and process. For the convenience of data collection and analysis, I divide curriculum into three layers: the planned/intended/official curriculum, the implemented/enacted/observed curriculum, and the received/experienced/perceived curriculum (Kelly, 2009).

This dissertation roughly defines the planned/intended/official curriculum. I use it to refer to written materials created at different levels. It includes policies, regulations, and other official statements generated to direct at a more macro-systematic level, such as the curriculum guidelines from the central state and the province, and the program's educational goal statement and curriculum structure. Concerning a specific course, the planned curriculum is presented through syllabus, textbooks/readings, and the like.

Working together, whether consistently or contradictorily, these artifacts "serve as an important medium of instruction and the base of assessment and examination" (Tse, 2000, p. 93). Furthermore, since they are often the result of deliberate selection and organization, they are "the central objects of controversies, and they are subject to an ideological critique" (Tse, 2000, p. 94). As Quinn (2010) summarizes, "To speak of the official curriculum is also to raise questions about the relationship between knowledge and power, ideology and institution" (p. 617).

The implemented curriculum is about what is present and absent in classroom. It may be influenced by but not identical to the planned curriculum. Focusing on book discussions of a ninth grade history class with African American students as the majority, Wortham (1995) provides a convincing description of how the planned curriculum gets transformed in practice, which reminds us that "one should not jump to conclusion about the politics of official curricula without attending to their practical implementation" (p. 1). Another name for the implemented curriculum is the observed or enacted curriculum.

The received, perceived, or experienced curriculum focuses on the perspective of students in particular. It is about what actually touches, influences, and leaves an impression on their minds and actions. What students learn may be different from what is planned and carried out. Juxtaposing the three layers of curriculum, one may see the contradiction or/and consistency among them and explore questions such as "why" and "how to change."

Considering the representation of the rural and the socialization of future teachers as a "generic social process" (Prus, 1987), I organize this dissertation with the aim of charting the continuity and change of the representation and the sense making of student teachers in context. This dissertation can be divided into several major sections.

Chapter Two describes the research journey and methodology. My decision to study the representation of the rural in teacher preparation curriculum was related to my personal and intellectual experiences. Designing this study as a case study, I focused on the 2004 cohort of the Chinese Teacher Preparation Program (the Program for short) in the Department of Chinese (the Department) at East Teachers College (the College),

northern Jiangsu, to conduct the study. Data in the form of artifacts, observational notes, and interviews were collected in two waves from this program and two middle schools where my key research participants practiced teaching. I adopted Fairclough's critical discourse analysis model to analyze much of the data collected. This chapter also discusses the challenges and dilemmas I encountered in the process of data collection, analysis, and writing.

Based on the artifacts collected in summer 2006, Chapter Three focuses on several required courses (see Table 2 below) to provide a comprehensive and nuanced portrait of the countryside in the planned curricula. *Modern and Contemporary Chinese Literature* and *Secondary Chinese Teaching Methods* were representative courses of this program in subject matter and subject-specific pedagogy. *Political Courses* and *Summer Social Practice* were selected due to the Chinese special situation. *Political Courses*, including *Introduction to Mao Zedong Thought, Introduction to Deng Xiaoping Theory and Important Ideas on "Three Represents,"* presented the Party-State's discourse(s) of rural places following a historical outline, and provided pre-service teachers with a fundamental source of reference for constructing their own perceptions. *Summer Social Practice*, a project-based service-learning course, had received heightened attention lately with the implementation of the central government's rhetorical commitment to "Building the Socialist New Countryside" (2005). East Teachers College even modified the course status of *Summer Social Practice* from "selective" to "required." It was also the only course where the Program showed the obvious desire to associate future teachers with rural places.

Table 2: Courses Considered in This Study

	Course	Level	Type	Credit
1.	*Political Courses*	College	General	2+2.5
2.	*Summer Social Practice*			2×3 (summers)
3.	*Modern and Contemporary Chinese Literature*	Department	Academic	3×4 (semesters)
4.	*Secondary Chinese Teaching Methods*	Program	Educational	3+2
5.	*Student Teaching*			8

The next three chapters look at the 2007 *Summer Social Practice* curriculum, respectively, in the planned, implemented, and perceived layer. Chapter Four primarily dissects the announcements that the national agencies, the provincial agencies, and the College made to see the evolution of the concept of the countryside and their expressed intentions to attend to the countryside. In Chapter Five, I explore where the College, the Department, and the 2004 cohort of the Program did place the countryside in the implementation of the 2007 *Summer Social Practice* and why. Chapter Six presents how student teachers made sense of the countryside in relation to summer social practice (and their personal experiences).

The subsequent five chapters of this dissertation are devoted to student teaching. As has been widely recognized in both practice and research (see e.g., Hoy & Woolfolk, 1990), student teaching is an important stage of teacher socialization. It is a great stage at which we observe college curriculum intersecting school reality and student teachers learning to teach within the context of the coherence or/and, more possibly, contradiction between the two. *Student Teaching*, usually arranged by the College for senior students in the fall for about two months, was the only time period during which they learned to

teach Chinese through field practice. As seen from Table 2 (above) and Table 3-6 in Chapter 2, it was a course with the highest credits in this program, if taking the time length into consideration.

Chapter Seven reports on the placements of student teachers and disentangles the respective roles of the College, the Department/Program, the faculty members, and the student teachers in the results. In Chapter Eight, I examine the countryside in the Chinese textbooks and teaching guides that the Program distributed to student teachers for both the teaching methods and the teaching practicum courses. Chapter Nine focuses on the support that the faculty members offered around student teaching to identify the representation of the countryside in relation to the discourse of college supervision and learning to teach.

Understanding the student teacher's field experience as both part of the implementation of the *Student Teaching* course and an embodiment of the curriculum that s/he received from the college, this dissertation presents two case studies. Chapter 10 concerns the experiences of Jing, a girl who had some rural background, at Spring County Middle School of which students and teachers of rural origin occupied a decent proportion. Chapter 11 concentrates on Jiang, another girl who came from a poor rural family, to explore her experiences of learning to teach at Phoenix Middle School, a school for children from local villages and the township. In the description and analysis of both cases, I give special attention to how they made sense of the various contexts or micro-politics of the school, as well as their classroom practices. A series of factors,

including those from both the college and the school, are drawn upon to explain their thoughts and actions in the field.

This dissertation is interdisciplinary, involving rural sociology, Chinese culture and politics, Chinese literature, and teacher preparation. Its main purpose is to shed light on teacher education as part of the story of socially (re)producing rural place. It is wished that this study will enlighten our understanding of rural China through the little-explored lens of teacher education. In a global sense, I have not identified any studies of this scope on rural teacher education. Hopefully, this study will provide a starting point to (re)consider discourses of rural places in teacher education from an international and comparative perspective.

CHAPTER 2

RESEARCH JOURNEY AND METHODOLOGY

This chapter concerns the research journey of this dissertation and the use of methodology. I decided to study the preparation of teachers for rural contexts in China, especially the representation of the rural in teacher preparation curriculum, considering my personal and intellectual experiences. Designing this study as a case study, I focused on the 2004 cohort of the Chinese Teacher Preparation Program at East Teachers College, northern Jiangsu to conduct the study. Data in the form of artifacts, observational notes, and interviews were collected in two waves from this program and two middle schools where two key research participants student taught. I adopted Fairclough's critical discourse analysis model to analyze must of the data collected. This chapter also discusses the challenges and dilemmas I encountered in the process of data collection, analysis, and writing.

Emergence of the Study

My preparation for and commitment to a research project on rural teacher preparation comes out of a long personal and intellectual journey, one that involved pivotal experiences in rural and urban China, as well as the US.

I grew up in a small village of Jiangsu and had my elementary school in the village. There both my parents and teachers taught me that schooling would be the only avenue for me to escape the countryside and to have my registration identity changed to "urban"

from "rural." My parents did not like me playing (with other peers) and thought of it as a waste of time. Most of the time, they stopped me from doing things "unrelated" to book learning, like weaving, singing, and drawing. In the village school, there were no trained teachers in music, art, and physical education. The main subjects offered were Chinese and mathematics. I remembered that it was always difficult for me (and my classmates) to write a composition. There seemed nothing to write about and I did not know how to write either. I will never forget that the good-hearted Chinese teacher taught us with tons of drills and exercises for the middle school admission exam.

Similar experiences continued. I was reminded that "The only way for you to get out of the countryside is to pass the exam" more frequently after being chosen as one of the few, among my cohort, to attend the township middle school and then the county high school. To attend these selective schools, I left home to live on campus when I was 12 years old. Besides the physical distance, what I learned in school was further disconnected from my home community. The reward for the dislocating opportunities came after the 1997 NCEE. I got admitted to the College of Education at Beijing Normal University (BNU), where I stayed for seven years. Although both my bachelor's and master's theses were developed around the education of rural children, I do not remember if rural education was specifically covered or addressed at some length in any of the courses I took.[23]

[23] I do not mean to imply that BNU was not engaged in rural education and development. In fact, a nationally-renowned student association called "Peasants' Children – Rural Development and Promotion Association of China" (*nongmin zhizi*) was launched in late 1999 at BNU and has been making remarkable efforts to research and improve rural education, especially the education of migrant kids. Nowadays, BNU pays more much attention to rural education, as seen from the relocation of the UNESCO International Research and Training Centre for Rural Education at BNU in 2008 and many of its professors are leading scholars in rural education or actively involved in rural education projects.

Before joining the doctoral program in the Department of Teacher Education at Michigan State University (MSU), I constantly sensed the undesirable parts of my educational experience, but accepted that nothing could have been changed within the urban-rural hierarchy. That was the price that rural students needed to pay to leave the countryside. I always tried to see myself as a "lucky" person. I entered college by studying hard, and many of my peers took their schooling seriously but were not given the chance.

My years of study at MSU have enormously changed my views. Courses introduced me to new ideas and raised possibilities I had not considered before, nor considered possible. I read Labaree's "Public Goods, Private Goods" (1997) in a pro-seminar course. It reminded me that competing purposes of schooling might simultaneously exist and to achieve democratic equality could be one of them. The urban education course I took encouraged me to think about the role of "place" in schooling and pushed me back to confront my own educational experience. Joseph Featherstone's *Progressive and Democratic Education* course made me realize the potential contribution of teacher education to the advancement of democracy in a society. Through George Axinn's *International Rural Development* course, I got to know more about my home village and many others and to reflect upon my relationship with them. All these experiences inspired me to focus on rural China through the lens of teacher education.

Research Design

The research strategy adopted for the present study is case study, which I think is appropriate for the research question and purpose described in Chapter 1. As Yin (2008) suggests,

> The more that your questions seeks to explain some present circumstance (e.g., "how" or "why" some social phenomenon works), the more that the case study method will be relevant. The method also is relevant the more that your questions require an extensive and "in-depth" description of some social phenomenon. (p. 4)

Stake (2000) divides case studies into three types – intrinsic, instrumental, and collective – based on how many cases the researcher intends to cover and the degree to which the researcher is interested in the particular case(s) and making generalizations. The three are ideal types and may be combined in one study. In this dissertation, focusing on one cohort of a teacher education program, I intended to include several types of courses, which means several different cases. If possible, I would take two classes (ban) into account when studying the implementation of a course. For student teaching, I desired to explore at least two cases, that is, the related experiences of two student teachers. I attempted to provide a rich description of each case and look at issues involved with certain depth. I also wanted to compare cases and determine the similarity and difference. I would make conclusions and discussions based on the patterns identified from these cases, but mainly leave the question if they are generalizable to other situations to my readers.

Known for providing a contextualized and detailed description, case studies are also distinctive in highlighting an analysis of multiple perspectives (Tellis, 1997; Yin, 2008). The concentration of this dissertation is on how various stakeholders (the Party-State, the textbook writer, the College, the Department, the Program, the college instructor, the

school mentor, and the student teacher) in relation to courses of different types contribute to the construction of certain images of the rural. In this sense, case study is a good match for the project.

I am aware that "As a form of research, case study is defined by interest in individual cases, not by the methods of inquiry used" (Stake, 2000, p. 435). But case studies seem to have gained a reputation for using multiple sources of data (Tellis, 1997; Yin, 2008). Three major data sources were considered in this study. One was written texts of various kinds, such as the program's educational goal and curriculum structure, syllabi, and textbooks. They would help me gain insights into the planned curricula (and their implementation).

Another data source was field observations. Observation is not a simple issue of "method" or "technique." As argued by Angrosino and Perez (2000), it is "part of a methodological spectrum" (p. 674). I tend to consider observation as "context of interaction" (Angrosino & Perez, 2000, p. 678). As there is no pure objective observation, attention should be paid to "the ways in which ethnographic observers interact with or enter into a dialogic relationship with members of the group being studied" (Angrosino & Perez, 2000, p. 678). In advance, I knew that data collection would involve, more or less, building relationship with my research participants and participating in their activities. I needed to play my different identity cards to access diverse sites and interact with different groups of people. I had a hunch that my way and level of participation at the middle school would be different from that on the college campus, and this proved to be the case.

Interviewing was a critical method I would use to collect data. I planned to interview college instructors, student teachers, and school mentor teachers to learn about their points of view. Although I believed that there was no such thing as pure "structured interviewing" (Fontana & Frey, 2000, p. 649), it looked daunting or nearly impossible for a beginning researcher to conduct a completely "unstructured interview" (Fontana & Frey, 2000, p. 652). Accordingly, I prepared a set of interview questions (see Appendix A).[24] This was not to say that I would only focus on these questions and ask participants to answer one by one. I tried to keep interviews open-ended as much as possible.

I understand that an interview is "an occasion for constructing, not merely discovering or conveying, information" (Holstein & Gubrium, 2002, p. 118). In other words, before data collection I recognized that I would construct "a kind of limited 'improvisational' performance" (Holstein & Gubrium, 2002, p. 121) with my participants, and interpret its meanings in certain contexts. I would always keep in mind that "the interview and its participants are constantly developing" (Holstein & Gubrium, 2002, p. 119). As a researcher, I would care not only about "the substantive whats of the interview enterprise" but also "the hows of the process" (Holstein & Gubrium, 2002, pp. 119-120).

Based on the description above, one may ask if I design this study as ethnography. If assuming ethnography and case study are two different types of studies, which I know some scholars disagree with[25], I recognize that both use field observations and interviews as the main methods for data collection. In both types of studies, a holistic and in-depth

[24] Appendix A only shows the interview protocol for student teachers who learned to teach in rural schools. As will be stated later, I was not able to formally interview any college instructors. I did interview Jiang's mentor teacher at Phoenix, but will not present any data from the interview in this dissertation.
[25] As Cohen and Court (2003) summarize, while ethnography and case study are often used interchangeably in social science research, some scholars frame ethnography as one kind of case study.

understanding of a culture or social phenomenon grounded in a thick description of people's behavior and thinking in daily life is emphasized. I admit that this dissertation draws upon ethnographic methods but feel hesitant to label it as ethnography, considering that "ethnography" is often poorly defined in educational research and has caused some confusion and misuse (A. Cohen & Court, 2003).

If understanding ethnography in a strict and traditional sense, I have some reservations about calling this dissertation ethnography too. As noted in an earlier section, what I study in this dissertation is not totally strange to me. I do not position myself as a pure outsider either. Cohen and Court (2003) argue that

> The central difference between case study and ethnography lies in the study's intention. Ethnography is inward looking, aiming to uncover the tacit knowledge of culture participants. Case study is outward looking, aiming to delineate the nature of phenomena through detailed investigation of individual cases and their contexts. (p.?)

Although I do not believe that there is a clear-cut distinction between ethnography and case study in research purpose, it appears safer for me to articulate this dissertation as a case study.

Main Research Site

The main site I chose for the dissertation study was the Chinese Teacher Preparation Program in the Department of Chinese at East Teachers College, northern Jiangsu.[26] [27] It was a program that mainly prepared Chinese teachers for secondary schools. I picked the

[26] Readers should be reminded that "Chinese" in this case represents Chinese language and literature. This dissertation narrowly focuses on the preparation of Chinese language and literature teachers. One should not generalize to the preparation of teachers of other subjects. I also urge readers to disentangle "Chinese" as some national description from "Chinese" as a discipline or subject based term. This dissertation focuses on the latter meaning.

[27] For issues of confidentiality, all the names I provide in this dissertation are pseudonymous. I have worked to disguise the identities of the college, the department, the program, and my research participants.

program in part out of practical considerations. Jing, a long-time friend of mine, was a student in the Program. Mr. Jia, a faculty member in ancient Chinese literature, shared a mutual friend with me. Both made my entry to the program possible. I am happy with the selection of the site given that Chinese is "the most fundamental, accessed, and ideology-immersed" (Xiulan Yu, 2005) subject that K-12 students in China take. This particular program also offered a good site for both its big size and the possibility that it was engaging in efforts to take rural education and rural society seriously.

East, a prefecture in northern Jiangsu, had more land and population compared to most of other prefectures in Jiangsu. It also owned a higher proportion of rural inhabitants. According to the East Statistical Information Network, over 60 percent of its population were rural registered in 2004. East was an important production base of Jiangsu in agricultural and related products, such as grain, cotton, and oil-bearing crops. East comprised about ten counties and districts, of which several were well recognized for their poverty.

East Teachers College, located in the heart of East City, started several years after the PRC was founded. It included nearly 20 departments/colleges and several independent colleges. There were around 40 programs, of which about half were oriented toward teacher preparation. East Teachers College was identified as a local teachers college for two major reasons. First, it was the only teachers college in East and hypothetically took on the responsibility of educating secondary schoolteachers for East, especially for rural schools.[28] Second, most of its graduates took positions in "grassroots"

[28] Close to East Teachers College was East Teachers School, which sometimes caused confusion to the public. East Teachers School enrolled middle-school graduates and prepared them to teach mostly in

(*jiceng*[29]) communities of northern Jiangsu. There was a piece of news in a national daily newspaper, beginning with

> In Jiangsu there is such a college that has educated nearly ten thousand bachelor- and associate- degree graduates since the independent recruitment policy was put into practice in 1999, of whom *% work at grass roots level and many have become teaching experts, backbone technicians, or managerial cadres. The name of this college is East Teachers College. (Shao & Xiong, 2005, p.?)[30]

In 1996, some divisions of the central government, such as the Publicity Department of the CCP Central Committee, the Central Civilization Office, the Ministry of Science and Technology, and the Ministry of Agriculture, initiated the "Three Going down to the Countryside" (*san xia xiang*) program to encourage college students (as well as officials, doctors, and scientists) to spread scientific, literacy, and medical knowledge to rural residents. East Teachers College seemed to have earned a high reputation for arranging students to design and implement activities of this type. It was honored as "Advanced Institute in College Student Social Practice Activity Nationwide" several times by the MOE and the Central Committee of the Chinese Communist Youth League (CCYL).

The Department of Chinese, the biggest department at East Teachers College, had about 70 faculty members and over five programs. My focal program was the biggest one

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elementary schools, while East Teachers College recruited high school graduates and offered them a bachelor's or associate's degree after they received a four- or three- year study there.

[29] In Chinese, *jiceng* is a concept without fixed meaning. In the newspaper article written by Shao and Xiong (2005), *jiceng* primarily referred to the economically less-developed "old revolutionary base of northern jiangsu" but literally included "western areas of China." Out of curiosity at other possible meanings of *jiceng*, I googled to find that one month before the publication of this article the General Office of the CCP Central Committee and the General Office of the State Council (2005) distributed a document to encourage college graduates to work in grassroots (*jiceng*) communities. In the document, working in "western areas, tough remote areas, hardy occupations, and massive rural areas" was highlighted as working in *jiceng*.

[30] To protect my research participants, in this dissertation I use pseudonyms for (the authors of) the artifacts concerning the college, the department, and the program. Some contents were not literally translated into English. Out of concern about exposing identities of research participants, I do not list these data sources in the "References" section either.

in the department in terms of both size and status. For instance, nearly 400 students graduated from the program in summer 2006. According to the department website, this program had received several provincial-level honors in design and implementation. The department was proud of the accomplishments that this program had made.

In terms of social practice, according to a provincial report, long before the 2006 summer break came, the Department of Chinese had called on student teachers to design activities for "*san xia xiang*." Presenting a gala performance at a county auditorium, disseminating information on "Building the New Countryside" in a town, launching campaigns on how to protect land in a tidal flat area, and volunteering to teach in village and town(ship) schools were activities involved.

The Program recruited about over 300 students in fall 2004 and placed them into seven classes according to their scores on the NCEE from the highest to the lowest. During the next two years, about 20 students were added to the last class – Class 7. While some were transferred from other majors of the College, others, from this or another college, were upgraded to a bachelor's degree from an associate one as a result of an examination.

To graduate from the Program, a student teacher needed to take at least 141 credits within four years, including 39 (27.7%) college-required credits, 16 (11.3%) college-wide selective credits, 51 (36.2%) program-required credits, and 35 (24.8%) program-wide selective credits. Tables 3-6 (below) list the courses by type. The number of credits for each course per semester varied from 0.5 (*Admission Education*) to 8 (*Student Teaching*). While all the general education courses were offered college-wide, the Program

highlighted courses in Chinese language and literature as "core." All the educational courses were labeled as "selective."[31]

In terms of assessment, there were two types of courses: pass/fail- (*kaocha*) and final exam (*kaoshi*)- based. For the former, in most cases, an essay was submitted at the end of a semester and rated on a fail/pass basis. It could be ranked as "fail," "pass," "good" (*zhong*), "pretty good" (*liang*), or "outstanding" (*youxiu*). For the latter, a pencil-paper exam was given and then graded based on a scale of 0-100. Prospective teachers saw the difference between these two types of courses more than this. In their eyes, exam-based courses, in general, were much more important.

[31] According to Jing, student teachers in the Program were expected to take all these educational courses.

Table 3: Courses Required at the College Level

	Course	Credit	Assessment	Semester #
1.	*Philosophical Foundations of Marxism*	2.5	Exam (*kaoshi*)	1
2.	*Moral and Spiritual Cultivation*	2	Pass/Fail (*kaocha*)	1
3.	*College English I*	4	Exam	1
4.	*College Physical Education I*	1	Exam	1
5.	*College Computer and Information Technology*	2.5	Pass/Fail	1
6.	*Military Training*	1.5	Pass/Fail	1
7.	*College Physical Education II*	1	Exam	2
8.	*College English II*	4	Exam	2
9.	*Introduction to Law*	2	Pass/Fail	2
10.	*Foundations of Marxist Politics of Economics*	2	Pass/Fail	2
11.	*College English III*	4	Pass/Fail	3
12.	*Introduction to Mao Zedong Thought*	2	Pass/Fail	3
13.	*Labor (laodong)*	1	Pass/Fail	3
14.	*College English IV*	4	Exam	4
15.	*Introduction to Deng Xiaoping Theory and Important Ideas on "Three Represents"*	2.5	Exam	4
16.	*Contemporary World Politics and Economics*	2	Pass/Fail	5
17.	*Labor*	1	Pass/Fail	6
Total		39		

Table 4: Selective Courses Provided College-Wide

	Course	Credit	Assessment	Semester #
18.	*Calligraphy Practice*	1	Pass/Fail	1
19.	*English Writing Practice*	3	Pass/Fail	4
20.	*Characteristics and Pronunciation Correction Practice*	1	Pass/Fail	1/2/3/4
21.	*Public Speech Practice*	1	Pass/Fail	1/2/3/4
22.	*Academic Seminars*	1	Pass/Fail	3/4/5/6
23.	*Sports and Entertainment Activities*	1	Pass/Fail	2
24.	*Calligraphy Activities*	1	Pass/Fail	1
25.	*Club Activities*	1	Pass/Fail	2/3/4/5
26.	*Social Practice*[32]	2	Pass/Fail	2
27.	*Social Practice*	2	Pass/Fail	3
28.	*Social Practice*	2	Pass/Fail	4
29.	*Social Practice*	2	Pass/Fail	5
30.	*Social Practice*	2	Pass/Fail	6
31.	*Social Practice*	2	Pass/Fail	7
32.	*Social Practice*	2	Pass/Fail	8
33.	*Admission Education*	0.5	Pass/Fail	1
34.	*Training on Computer Rank Examination*	1	Pass/Fail	3/4
35.	*The Design of Multi-Media Courseware*	1	Pass/Fail	5/6/7
36.	*Reading Report*	1	Pass/Fail	3
Total		27.5		

[32] Here, *Social Practice* was described as "selective." But as the 2007 college announcement, which I shall describe in Chapter 4, shows, each student was required to have it during summer and winter breaks. In other words, all students took it seven times (2×7 credits) during their four-year study at East Teachers College. In practice, much more attention was paid to the summer one.

Table 5: Courses Required by the Program[33]

	Course	Credit	Assessment	Semester #
37.	*Modern Chinese Language I*	3	Exam	1
38.	*Modern Chinese Language II*	3	Exam	2
39.	*Modern and Contemporary Chinese Literature I*	3	Exam	3
40.	*Ancient Chinese Literature I*	4	Exam	3
41.	*Introduction to Literature I*	3	Exam	3
42.	*Modern and Contemporary Chinese Literature II*	3	Exam	4
43.	*Ancient Chinese Literature II*	4	Exam	4
44.	*Introduction to Literature II*	3	Exam	4
45.	*Ancient Chinese Literature III*	4	Exam	5
46.	*Foreign Literature I*	2	Exam	5
47.	*Ancient Chinese Language I*	3	Exam	5
48.	*Modern and Contemporary Chinese Literature III*	3	Pass/Fail	5
49.	*Modern and Contemporary Chinese Literature IV*	3	Exam	6
50.	*Ancient Chinese Literature IV*	4	Exam	6
51.	*Foreign Literature II*	3	Exam	6
52.	*Ancient Chinese Language II*	3	Exam	6
Total		51		

[33] It deceptively looks like there were 16 program-required courses. The actual number was six. All these courses were on subject matter.

Table 6: Educational Courses Offered by the Program

	Course	Credit	Assessment	Type	Semester #
53.	*General Psychology*	2.5	Exam	Selective	4
54.	*Public Speech*	1	Pass/Fail	Selective	4
55.	*Mandarin Practice*	1	Pass/Fail	Selective	5
56.	*General Pedagogy*	2.5	Exam	Selective	5
57.	*"Talk Lesson" (shuoke) Practice*	1+1	Pass/Fail	Selective	5+7
58.	*Research into Secondary Chinese Teaching*	2	Pass/Fail	Selective	5
59.	*Theory in Secondary Chinese Teaching*[34]	3	Exam	Selective	5
60.	*Contemporary Educational Technology*	3	Pass/Fail	Selective	6
61.	*Analysis of Secondary Chinese Text Materials*	2	Pass/Fail	Selective	6
62.	*Educational Probation (jiaoyu jianshi)*[35]	2	Pass/Fail	Selective	3/4/5/6
63.	*Student Teaching*	8	Pass/Fail	Selective	7
Total		29			

Data Collection

Data presented in this dissertation was collected during two periods of time. The first wave occurred in summer 2006. I arrived at East Teachers College in late May. For six weeks I immersed myself there by living with Jing and five of her classmates, who were in their second year of this program, in a campus dormitory. Partly due to the pilot nature of this study, I remained open and flexible about what to see and hear in the field. Besides collecting various curriculum artifacts, I went to observe the classes Jing was

[34] As I will repeat in Chapter 3, in practice *Theory in Secondary Chinese Teaching* and *Research into Secondary Chinese Teaching* were considered two parts of one course, namely, *Secondary Chinese Teaching Methods.*

[35] This course was not carried out in practice. No classroom observations were actually arranged for the 2004 cohort before the student teaching.

taking. I also talked, formally and informally, with course instructors and student teachers. Although in the pilot study report (see Chapter 3) I did not present any observational and interview data, it did produce a background against which I decided which courses to focus on, what artifacts to collect, or/and how to read the artifacts in context.

I returned to East Teachers College in early September, 2007. This time I spent the entire fall semester collecting data on the five courses: *Political Courses*, *Modern and Contemporary Chinese Literature*, *Secondary Chinese Teaching Methods*, *Summer Social Practice*, and *Student Teaching*. I chiefly followed two classes in their fourth year or of the 2004 cohort. They were Class 1 and Class 7, and rated by the Program as high- and low- performing, respectively. They were chosen thanks to two key participants. While Jing was from Class 7, Jiang came from Class 1. A high-performing class and a so-called low-performing class should allow me to present a relatively rich picture of the phenomenon under study.

Around the two classes, I collected artifacts of various kinds on the five courses, such as syllabi, textbooks, announcements, and reports. On *Summer Social Practice* I made a copy of the homework they submitted in early September with the help of Zhou, the department-level Student Association Chair. Without meeting me, Mr. Tan, the department CCYL secretary [and also head teacher (*banzhuren*) of Class 7] orally consented to this. Since student teachers in the two classes had taken *Political Courses*, *Modern and Contemporary Chinese Literature*, and *Secondary Chinese Teaching Methods* in their first three years, I asked them for the names of those instructors. I audited some sessions of the classes these instructors were teaching. To see if they had

changed teaching contents, I also photocopied the course notes taken by several of my student participants. Given consent issues and space limitations of this dissertation, I do not present any classroom teaching data on the three courses. But these classroom visits did help me gain a general sense of the curricula and built a foundation for talking with student teachers.

As explained at the end of Chapter 1, I paid special attention to student teaching during my time in the field. I attended the college-wide motivational meeting for student teaching, and observed the "trial lessons" (*shijiang*) that some students from the two classes gave and the feedback that the college supervisors provided.[36] I went with Mr. Mao, a faculty in modern and contemporary Chinese literature, to a vocational high school on the outskirts of East City, observing a lesson given by one of his student teachers and his on-site guidance. Also, I attended to the supervision that some college instructors offered after the two classes returned from their field experience sites.

I took Jing in Class 7 as my default participant and observed her student teaching at Spring County Middle School for about two weeks. After a painstaking effort to locate teacher candidates who were to student teach in rural schools, I found Jiang in Class 1 and joined her in Phoenix Middle School, a township school in the upper north of East Prefecture. There I observed her student teaching for five weeks. After returning to East Teachers College in mid-November, I went to her "report lesson" (*huibao jiangke*) and "talk lesson" (*shuoke*) and that of many others. All the observations were accompanied by detailed notes, both descriptive and reflective.

[36] For definitions of "trial lessons," "report lessons," and "talk lessons," please see Chapter 9.

As Tellis (1997) contends, "Case studies... are designed to bring out the details from the viewpoint of the participants by using multiple sources of data" (p. 1). Besides collecting artifacts and observing classrooms described above, I had both extensive and intensive conversations with student teachers from the two classes.[37] I lived with Jing and five of her classmates at East Teachers College. She and I also shared a bed when she was student teaching at Spring County Middle School. Jiang's dorm at Phoenix Middle School was next to mine. I stopped by Jiang's dorm often after she got back to the College from the field. I also communicated with them regularly to understand what they thought about the five focal courses in relation to the rural, how they perceived the countryside, where they put time and energy, and the like.

Finally, to get the perspectives of more teacher education students, I conducted in-depth active interviews with seven student teachers of different backgrounds.[38] All females, they were chosen on a "snowball sampling" basis. Four came from Class 1 (Jiang included), and three from Class 7 (Jing included). Besides oral explanation, both the consent form and a prepared list of interview questions were provided for them to decide whether to participate in the study or not.[39] Interviews took place individually face-to-face over multiple and lengthy sessions at either a tea house or an unoccupied classroom on campus. To ensure the validity of data and obtain rich data, when interviewing a student teacher, I used strategies such as asking the same question in

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[37] In Chapters 7 and 9, I also include some data that I collected from Classes 2 and 6 around student teaching. One may say that the dissertation data was collected based on availability.

[38] As a footnote in Chapter 5 shows, I also interviewed two students from Class 2 for long hours. From the two interviews, this dissertation only presents the part on field placement.

[39] Appendices B and C present the interview questions I had for Jing and Jiang. Regarding the interviews I conducted with five other participants, only the parts relevant to *Summer Social Practice* and student teaching placement are covered in this dissertation.

different ways and going back and forth among the questions. Besides audio-taping each interview, I wrote about how it went in my notebook that I carried with me.

A Reflection on Data Collection

A more detailed description of research participants, data collection, and data sources will be offered in almost each of the coming chapters. In what follows I provide two reflective thoughts on the data collection.

First, access to and interaction in the field entails a situational negotiation of identity (Angrosino & Perez, 2000). I (re)negotiated my identity throughout the field work. I expressed my interest in studying student teaching in rural contexts to Mr. Jia after being introduced to him by Wei, a good friend of mine in high school. He reported my research request to the department, and the chair approved it without asking to meet me. Mr. Jia assisted me in looking for suitable student teacher(s). He introduced me to a range of colleagues, including those teaching *Modern and Contemporary Chinese Literature*, those teaching *Secondary Chinese Teaching Methods*, and those engaged in research on rural education. He also kindly suggested that I use the internet in his office and conduct interviews with student teachers in the conference room nearby. In the meantime, he kept reminding me that "You should pay special attention to your tone and wording in dissertation writing. Plenty of instructors in the department know of your existence. If you paint East Teachers College too dark, I will be involved and share the risk" (personal communication, Sept. 27, 2007). Mr. Jia took the risk to help me mainly because of our mutual friend Wei.

With Mr. Jia's introduction, I talked with some of his colleagues and observed their classroom teaching. I informed them that my dissertation was about learning to teach in rural contexts. Maybe because of the way I framed it, they did not seem to see any connections of this study with teacher preparation. They were eager to chat with me as they wanted to know more about American education, especially at the tertiary level. However, my identity as a doctoral student at an American university did not always help me collect data. For example, I had a one-hour discussion with Mr. Xiao, the director of the college's rural education research center. He gave me a piece of paper, listing the research projects the College was working on. Worrying that I would write something negative about the center, the next day Mr. Xiao called Mr. Jia and asked him to get it back. Sensing some awkwardness, Mr. Jia called to suggest that I photocopy and return the original version to him.

Jing's family and mine had known each other for a decade before I went to East Teachers College and conducted the study. Jing and I were like sisters to each other.[40] She was willing to do whatever she could to assist me with my dissertation. She shared a single-sized bed in the dorm with me. She introduced me to her roommates and other classmates with enthusiasm. Her parents negotiated with her uncle, the principal, to make sure my entry to Spring County Middle School unquestioned. The family did this, apparently thinking that I could be a companion and a help to her in student teaching.

[40] In daily life, Jing addressed me "elder sister" (*jiejie*) instead of my name. In China, or at least in Han culture, we have the tradition of calling friends or acquaintances older/younger sister/brother. Mutual respect, trust, support, and commitment are usually underlying obligations associated with the address. In other words, the identity of "elder sister" or building relationship with research participants as "elder sister" was important for me to access information in the field.

Jing's roommates shared their already crowded room with me primarily because I was "Jing's elder sister." They were also curious about my two other identities: a BNU alumnus and a person who was studying as a doctoral student in the US. I made myself available when they approached me to discuss issues around student teaching, employment, the Graduate Entrance Exam (GRE), and the like. I became a friend and bigger sister of theirs through the pilot study. They welcomed my arrival in September 2007 and also saw me off on the day of my departure to Shanghai for the flight to the US. As "elder sister" and friend, I often bought them meals and fruits. Sometimes we went shopping together. I remember that I also helped them interact with a visiting English instructor from the US. One of the roommates, later, complained a bit that I had stayed with them in the dorm for too long. I appeased her by giving her a chance to make money, that is, to transcribe a lengthy interview for me.

Jiang accepted my research request initially because I mentioned in my first phone conversation that Mr. Shu, her head teacher, gave me her name. She also thought that I would only visit her for one or two days, as this was the impression she had for data collection. As time went on, she took me both as a companion and extra help in the field. To thank her for her participation in this study, I bought her some daily-use stuff and took her on a trip to Shanghai. Immediately after returning to the College in mid-November, Jiang (re)started concentrating on her preparation for the GRE. Despite this, she spared four periods of time, altogether over 10 hours, to converse with me around the prepared questions. My sense is that she did this, thinking that I was a friend to her and had helped her in the field.

As will be described in Chapter 11, Phoenix, Jiang's host school, not only accepted my request of observing her student teaching but went out of their way to prepare a lot extra for me. Their comments and behavior led me to think this was because I showed interested in their/rural education and recognized their role in preparing future teachers. It also had to with the thought that I might help the school in the future. Mr. Song, the school principal, was explicit in letting me know that he once helped a researcher who turned into a top official in the provincial education bureau.

Second, the use of situational identity raises questions about the exercise of power and how this affected the data I collected. Although my educational experience in the US attracted some course instructors' attention and they opened their classrooms to me and spared time during recess or after class to chat with me, their interest was obviously not in preparing teachers for rural schools. Given my identity as "outsider" and "student," it was hard for me to take the initiative to bring forward issues of rural (teacher) education or challenge their existing perceptions. I was not straightforward or strategic enough to express that I was studying the representation of the rural in their courses either. I had the plan of interviewing them about the program's education of future rural schoolteachers at the end of the data collection, but gave it up, seeing that they were extremely busy with preparing for the teaching evaluations from both the state and the province. All these imposed limitations on the data I present in the dissertation and on the interpretations I am able to reach. The data I drew upon around these courses was primarily written texts and publicized information.

By contrast, when considering student teachers, I have to admit that I was in a more privileged position. I felt much more confident in interacting, formally and informally, with them. To break the ice, I usually started a conversation with storytelling. In addition to listening with empathy to their perspectives on the five courses, especially on *Summer Social Practice* and *Student Teaching*, I took a more critical stance. Sometimes I challenged them and encouraged them to think differently or critically. This appeared more often in the final interviews as I had gotten to know them better.[41] For this very reason, each interview was an active and emergent process, and I am able to present more oral evidence from student teachers in this dissertation than from the other participants in the teacher education process.

In the case of Jiang, her main interest at the time did not lie in student teaching. Facing the ethical struggle of whether to influence her student teaching as both a researcher and future teacher educator, I, to some degree, played the role of field instructor and created opportunities for her to put more emphasis on student teaching. I also encouraged her to go beyond the school and explore the local community where her students were living. Given Phoenix Middle School's warm welcome of my arrival, I cannot claim that my presence at the school did not change the way that Mr. Song, Mr. Hang – Jiang's mentor teacher, and many other teachers treated her student teaching. But the data I gathered around Jiang was comprehensive, including both written and oral information from different people involved.

Data Analysis

[41] I did not want to influence their thinking too much or too early in the field. But as a future teacher educator, I did think that it was important for me to bring up the concepts of critical thinking and social justice in the final interviews. I thought it was a small pay-back for their big contributions to the study too.

From the field I collected a huge amount of data in different forms. For example, put together, there are over 300 pages of summer social practice reports that the two classes handed to the Department/Program. Besides an over-300-page textbook, two 150-page middle school Chinese textbooks and two nearly-500-page teaching guides were distributed for the *Secondary Chinese Teaching Methods* course. I wrote field notes in 12 "student exercise books." After coming back to MSU, I typed them up on my laptop for purposes of moving and categorizing. Jing transcribed the interview she had with me into text and the script has about 90 pages. The interview I conducted with Jiang was transcribed by one of her roommates and the written file is 110 pages long.[42]

As I have previously indicated, the concentration of this dissertation is on representation and hence discourse is vital. I primarily drew on Fairclough's (1992) critical discourse analysis – a textually oriented approach to language use – to read the data collected. Like Gee (2005), I distinguished discourse (with a "little d") from Discourse (with a "big D"). I used the former as "language-in-use or stretches of language" (Gee, 2005, p. 26), and the later "as a category for designating particular ways of representing particular aspects of social life..." (Fairclough, 2005, p. 2).

Texts, whether they are in written or oral language, are shaped by two forces of power and the tension between them: structure and agency (Fairclough, 2004). In texts some ways of sense making may be legitimated as dominant or mainstream, while others as excluded, silenced, or marginalized (Fairclough, 2005, p. 4). After the production,

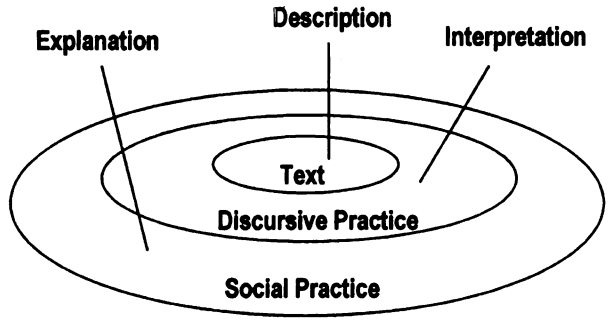
[42] I felt constrained by time to transcribe all the interviews. For issues of confidentiality, I would rather pay Jiang to transcribe the audio-taped interview. Unfortunately, she was up to her neck in preparation for the GRE at the time.

texts are "involved in processes of meaning making and...have causal effect ..." (Fairclough, 2004, p. 229).

As to how to implement a critical discourse analysis, Fairclough (1989, 1992) offers us a very useful three-dimensional model (see Figure 1 below). The first dimension defines language use as text and describes the features of the text in texture, grammar, and vocabulary. In doing so, the analyst seeks to understand the producer's perception of social reality, social relationship with the text reader, and identities of subjects involved in the text. The second dimension considers language use as discursive practice and interprets the production and consumption of the text. By contextualizing the text, the analyst attempts to specify the discourse type. Understanding language use as social practice, the third dimension explains the situational, societal, and institutional factors that account for the discourse type, and the possible ideological effects caused.

Figure 1: The Three-Dimensional Model for Critical Discourse Analysis

(adapted from Fairclough, 1992, p. 73; Sarkkinen & Karsten, 2005, p. 187)



Concerning this particular study, after reading a text several times and gaining a basic understanding, I looked for rural-relevant words, such as "countryside" (*nongcun*),

"agriculture" (*nongye*), "peasant" (*nongmin*), and "village people" (*cunmin*), and pick out related paragraphs. I read the paragraphs to see the producer's "*contents* and knowledge and beliefs" (Fairclough, 1989, p. 112, italic original) about the rural, justification for the arguments, and assumption(s) made behind. For instance, as Anagnostopoulos (2003) has noted, some propositions are given without reasoning in some texts. In this case, I tend to think that the producer, if doing this on purpose, is assuming his/her authority and power, and practicing hegemony over the reader.

The next thing I did was to investigate the grammar of the text.[43] At this stage I put emphasis on two aspects: transitivity and modality. By identifying the process type (for example, the use of transitive verbs, intransitive verbs, or non-verbs), I aimed to examine the normalization level of the process. "Normalization is the conversation of processes into nominals...and usually not specifying its participants, so that who is doing what to whom is left implicit" (Fairclough, 1992, p. 179). Modality represents the affinity level that the producer desires to show toward the statement made. Based on the use of modal auxiliary verbs (e.g. "must," "may," "can," and "should") and others, I identified how the producer positioned himself/herself, others, and the relationship between them.

Vocabulary was the part that I paid great attention to in analysis. I sought out the words that I thought were important to take a more careful look. I specified the meaning(s) of a word in context with the purpose of exploring the underlying assumption(s). I also paid some attention to the issue of wording and saw if there was the phenomenon of

[43] As my dissertation committee has pointed out, I often use the passive voice in this dissertation. I think this, more or less, has to do with the topic under study. As the representation of the rural in teacher education is the focus of this dissertation, I often need the passive voice to highlight how the countryside is positioned by relevant players.

overwording. "Overwording is a sign of 'intense preoccupation' pointing to 'peculiarities in the ideology' of the group responsible for it" (Fairclough, 1992, p. 193).

Since a text is always produced, distributed, and consumed in the context of other texts, we cannot understand the text without considering its "intertextuality." When analyzing the collected data, I thought about the following questions: What other texts were drawn on in the text and how? What discourse type was represented in the referred texts? In what context was the text distributed? Was the text more different from or similar to the referred texts and how? My intention in doing this was to determine the discourse type(s) of the rural represented in the text in context.

As this dissertation considered five courses, competing discourses of the rural might exist. For this reason, I compared and contrasted to see the consistency or/and contradiction of the discourses represented both among the courses and in each course. Further, I evaluated their social nature (reproductive or transformative) and explained what might have contributed to the result. Discourse analysis, for me, was a continuing back-and-forth process.

As Fairclough (1992) himself points out, his critical discourse analysis is "especially relevant to detailed analysis of a *small number* of discourse samples" (p. 230, italic added). In Chapter 3 and 4, I took advantage of this to dissect the planned curricula or the texts originally in the written form. Other chapters followed covered an enormous amount of data in different forms. In this situation, it seemed unrealistic for me to look closely at each aspect of text analysis suggested by Fairclough. I still followed his model

to analyze the variety of qualitative data, but focused my attention mainly on themes, content and structural features, and key words and phrases.

To proceed with the enormous amount of interview data, in addition to following Fairclough's critical discourse analysis model, I also turned to the three-phase coding approach (Strauss & Corbin, 1998) evolved from grounded theory. At the stage of open coding, I read through the data multiple times, broke them down into parts according to topics or questions, categorized the similarities and differences of responses by employing the method of "constant comparison," and examined the characteristics of a category. While doing axial coding, I attended to connections between categories and identify conditions (causal, intervening, or contextual), (inter)action strategies and consequences. After this in selective coding, I identified themes, explicated a story line, and validated/confronted it. I used this coding approach in a repeated and continuous manner.

Here, I need to make one thing clear. I do not want to fall into the debate over the relationship between discourse analysis and grounded theory. My reference to grounded theory in this dissertation is quite restricted to the coding method. When revising Chapter 5, I had the chance to read Wood and Kroger's (2000) *Doing Discourse Analysis*. I understand the two authors argue that discourse analysis is different from the analysis based on grounded theory in various ways. Even though I see their point, I recognize that the strategies they discuss in the book for discourse analysis are very similar to what I present in the last paragraph. I tend to agree with Starks and Trinidad (2007) that in terms

of general methods of interpretation the two qualitative approaches are "fairly familiar" (p. 1375).

In addition, in Chapter 5, to analyze the summer social practice homework that Class 1 and 7 submitted to the Department/Program, I also fell back on SPSS for some quantitative analysis. This was a quantitative analysis approach to qualitative data, or what Wood and Kroger (2000) called "quantification" in their discourse analysis book. Frequency tables enabled me to see patterns more clearly. In Chapter 7, crosstabs were used for a similar reason.

A Reflection on Data Analysis and Writing

As a young scholar facing this amount of data, I ran into problems and dilemmas in both analysis and writing. From my master's program in China and then Avner Segall's *Introduction to Qualitative Methodology* here, I learned the importance of providing a rich description of contexts, events, and actions in a qualitative study. Unfortunately, using "everything descriptive is interpretative by nature" as excuse, I tended to supplant analysis or interpretation with description. I forgot Erickson's (1985) reminder that "richness of detail in and of itself does not make a vignette ethnographically valid. Rather, it is the combination of richness and interpretive perspective that makes the account valid" (p. 105). I sometimes reveled in details without a specific point to make. Several things, I think, contributed to the tendency. What I observed in the field resembled my college experience. The data I collected was so familiar that I could not distance myself to analyze. Also, I lacked both analytical tools and an appropriate overarching framework to de-familiarize the familiar.

I started reading literature on critical discourse analysis several months after I was back from the field for the pilot study. It took me at least one semester to come to grasp the analytical strategies proposed by Fairclough. When applying these strategies, I encountered problems of translation, among others. Since all the data was originally in Chinese, I needed to translate rural-related parts into English for writing. In order to keep their original meaning as much as possible, I tried to "literally" translate the contents. This may have made them somewhat unintelligible. It is also likely that some meaning got lost in translation.

Maybe because I became over-excited about the power of critical discourse analysis (and the concepts such as "democratic equality" and "place-based social justice"), I often struggled, confusing "criticism" with "critique," despite the fact that the distinction between the two was stressed in Segall's methodology course. "While criticism tends to end discussion by handing down a verdict, critique attempts to open it up" (Segall, 2002, p. 16). Somewhat against the warning of Mr. Jia, my tone of writing in this dissertation, especially in the first several chapters, sounded like I was blaming some agencies or groups of people.

This situation was worsened by my oversimplified way of expressing complicated issues, and did not turn any better until my dissertation committee suggested that I consider explaining findings in a more humane way and from the perspective of competing purposes of schooling. While revision has given me an opportunity to see how this perspective opens up new ways of seeing the phenomenon I am studying, the dissertation text still reflects the layered journey of my growing understanding as a

researcher and hence does still at times have jarring moments of "criticism" interspersed amidst "critique."

As suggested in Chapter 1, this dissertation does not use a single theoretical framework but several major groups of ideas. I know they are inherently coherent and all attend to the dynamic complexity of the issue under study. However, they did not come to me naturally or simultaneously. It took me a long time to find and understand each of them. There is no data analysis without theoretical framework. For this reason and the fact that no similar studies were available for reference, data analysis for me was a tediously slow process. I spent a good amount of time feeling lost about how to analyze the data or wandering in descriptive details.

I was not, and still think I am not, prepared for handling the complexity. Put anotehr way, data analysis provided me with wonderful opportunities to broaden my perspectives and developing new understandings. For example, Chapters 4-6 are concerned with the complex relationship between the central state, the province, the College, the Department, the Program, individual faculty members, and student teachers in understanding the countryside and responding to rural issues. I had a long hard time wondering how to explain the patterns identified. During my study at BNU for the master's degree, I read about institutional theory but was not deeply impressed. I did not recognize its importance until, in the midst of analysis of this study, I was reminded that ritual performance was an essential part of Chinese culture and politics. The literature on the role of ritual and ceremony in institutional theory served as a great help to this dissertation.

I truly appreciate that the teacher education program and two middle schools opened their door and let me collect data. I also have a deep gratitude toward the college instructors, the student teachers, and the school teachers who allowed me to intrude into their daily life. Inside my heart, I truly see them as collaborators of this dissertation. In the field, I was explicit in letting Jing and Jiang, the two key participants of this study, know that they were not my research subjects but partners.

However, I am well aware that I am in a privileged position in terms of data analysis, representation, and result dissemination. Despite the thought of having student teacher participants engage in data analysis and writing of the dissertation, for various reasons I did not invite them to do so. After I came back from the field, I did not contact them except for occasionally checking with them about what they meant by certain phrases and asking for more explanation from them on certain points. I tried to provide materials and leave space for readers to make sense of them and come to your own conclusions in this dissertation. I also tried to present numerous quotes from my research participants and get their voices represented. Despite these efforts, I know that it was me who decided what to include or not. This dissertation was mainly my perspective on or interpretation of what happened in the field.

My interpretation is to a great extent colored by my critical stance thanks to the main analytical tool used in this work, as well as my own educational experience. As Rogers (2004) has asserted, the "criticalness" of critical discourse analysis is embodied in three major aspects. First, it rejects naturalism, rationality, neutrality, and individualism and intends to "uncover power relationships and demonstrate inequalities embedded in

society" (p. 3). Second, it attempts to "study the relationship between language form and function and explains why and how certain patterns are privileged over others" (p. 4). Third, it is action-oriented and strives to "address social problems and seeks to solve social problems through the analysis and accompanying social and political action" (p. 4).

> A great deal of concern has been expressed in this literature about the "wronging of persons" that may result from existing research practices. Teacher education students, teachers, and teacher educators are often portrayed in a negative way in these studies sometimes without having an opportunity even to read and respond to researchers' interpretations of their work. Research that is concerned with teaching and teacher education has rightly been criticized at times for being research on rather than for the people who are studied. (Zeichner & Gore, 1990, p. 28)

Because of the lens I use to examine the issues, while recognizing that my research participants act with agency, I often focus on how their agency was constrained by structure. As a novice researcher, it has been challenging for me to find a balance in capturing the combination of strcutre and agency in play. I feel frustrated at the identified patterns. At the same time, I feel sorry that I was not able to present them differently due to my lack of strategies and skills. Sometimes I sense that I took advantage of them and did not live up to their trust. As I have promised, I will show Jing and Jiang the dissertation after it is completed. It will also be sent to other participants upon request. Hopefully, they will understand that this dissertation was written not to attack them but to enlighten the topic under study, even though sometimes it appears so as a consequence of my critical perspective and limited ability as a writer.

Throughout the dissertation, I engage in a kind of dance that has me moving me between description and interpretation. The interpretation is, of course, my own and reflects my critical framework, as well as my personal experience. Of course, other

frameworks would lead to alternative interpretations. Given the complexity of the phenomenon studied, there are several frameworks one could bring to the data. In writing that follows, I attempt to signal as I move from description to interpretation.

As one may have noted, I drew upon a large range of literature in the West in this dissertation. It also served as the major conceptual framework for this study. This may make one wonder about the transferability of Western scholars' arguments to the Chinese context. Throughout data analysis and writing, I was faced with the dilemma and challenge of balancing the use of literature in Chinese and English. I know that within China there has been some discussion around this and a general request for both internationalizing and localizing scholarship (see e.g., Comparative Education Review, 2006; Ha, Nov. 20, 2009). Meanwhile, I do sense that Chinese scholarship in teacher education and other fields of social science remains to be strengthened, especially in the aspect of conceptualizing.

I recognize an unintended irony in this dissertation. My study calls for place-based (teacher) education but does not draw upon any perspectives unique to China. I hope in the future that I could add more depth and humanity to the analysis by considering a Confucian perspective. Frankly speaking, associated with the (mis)understanding that Confucianism was used as a dominant ideology of governance for centuries to over-emphasize loyalty and conformity to authority, I have not given it sufficient attention and thought. To explore the ideas and possibilities of Confucianism is one of the goals I set for my future work in China.

Also, I note two other inter-related qualities of the literature cited in this dissertation. That is, most was published in the 1980s and 1990s and has not departed much from reproduction theory. My reliance on reproduction literature may have led me to an over-emphasis on criticism and a one-dimensional analysis. I do not intend to deny the possibility, but want to explain that I was in the field for two periods of time, keeping reminding myself to be open-minded and to see sparkles of transformation and hope. I found some of the "old" literature after I had a general and rough understanding of the collected data. The literature is cited for its relevance to the subject. Research results presented in this dissertation, more or less, show the explanatory power of reproduction theory in contemporary China.

I feel obligated to make some clarification concerning the use of tense in this dissertation. Following the convention of academic writing, I use the present tense to frame the study and discuss the results. Meanwhile, I am well aware that the data presented here was collected several years ago. In other words, this dissertation only captures a moment of history regarding the teacher preparation of this particular program, and has no intention of claiming the permanence of the findings. It is important to recognize the dynamic nature of the social process, educational practices and institutional settings under investigation. Readers must bear in mind that I seek here to paint a rich picuture of one moment in time, not to argue about the timelessness of the situation.

I tend to see this dissertation as a journey of inquiry. In the process of data collection, analysis, and writing, I experienced both times of "darkness and light" (Garman, 2006, p. 9). I felt pain, frustration, despair, and hopelessness. I frequently doubted and questioned

myself. I also felt energized and excited to see that I identified a pattern by means of an analytical tool or that a phenomenon could be powerfully explained by a concept or theory.

The journey may not stop here. I understand that

> Analysis leads to production of texts which are socially distributed and consumed like other texts, and the discourse of analysis is, like any other discourse, a model of social practice: it is dialectically related to social structures, it is positioned in relation to hegemonic struggles, and it is open to being ideologically and politically invested. Analysts are not above the social practice they analyse; they are inside it. (Fairclough, 1992, p. 199)

I have no intention of pronouncing that what I present in the dissertation is truth. Readers are welcome to give your voices and provide "second texts" (Segall, 2002). I always view myself as a learner. It is my sincere wish that I will improve in the future in such aspects as conceptualizing, collaborating with research participants, and writing.

CHAPTER 3

THE COUNTRYSIDE IN THE PLANNED CURRICULA: A COMPREHENSIVE LOOK

Introduction

As explained in Chapters 1 and 2, this chapter was written based on the data I gathered in summer 2006 in the pilot study. I look at the planned curricula of several courses required by the focal program in general education, academic education, and professional education. These courses, including *Political Courses*, *Modern and Contemporary Chinese Literature*, *Secondary Chinese Teaching Methods*, and *Summer Social Practice*, embodied the countryside from the lenses of politics, literature, pedagogy, and practice. After briefly introducing the process of data collection and selection, I move to describe and analyze the countryside in the planned curriculum of each course one by one. This chapter concludes with a comparison of the patterns identified from these courses of different types.

Data Collection and Selection

It was a painful and long process to pin down the focal courses. There were too many (types of) courses (see Tables 3-6) available for student teachers, and originally I had the naïve plan of covering as many courses as possible in order to systematically examine the planned curricula of the Program. Finally I turned to the work of Schulman for help. In the classic article "Those Who Understand: Knowledge Growth in Teaching"

(1986), he suggests that prospective teachers develop knowledge around several domains, and two key ones are subject matter and pedagogical content.

Concerning subject matter, as Table 5 displays, the Program, like all others in the Department of Chinese, required students to take six courses: *Modern Chinese Language* (3 credits × 2 semesters), *Modern and Contemporary Chinese Literature* (3 credits × 4 semesters), *Ancient Chinese Literature* (4 credits × 4 semesters), *Introduction to Literature* (3 credits × 2 semester), *Foreign Literature* (3 credits × 2 semesters), and *Ancient Chinese Language* (3 credits × 2 semesters). Seen from the course length, *Modern and Contemporary Chinese Literature* was one of the most important courses for the Program. Only *Ancient Chinese Literature* received as much time as it did. Considering several factors, including Jing's argument that in the Program *Modern and Contemporary Chinese Literature* was much more important and interesting than *Ancient Chinese Literature*, my understanding that *Modern and Contemporary Chinese Literature* was more incorporated in current secondary Chinese teaching, and my hunch that it would be beyond my capability to translate Ancient Chinese into English, I decided to focus on *Modern and Contemporary Chinese Literature*. The materials identified on this course were a syllabus posted on the department website and a four-volume set of textbooks. Due to limitations of space, I will concentrate on the former in this chapter.

To prepare teacher candidates in pedagogical content knowledge, the Program provided them with the *Secondary Chinese Teaching Methods* course. It was this course that officially distinguished the Program from others in the Department of Chinese and teacher preparation programs in other subjects. It included two parts that were usually

offered by the same instructor to student teachers in their fifth semester: *Theory in Secondary Chinese Teaching* (3 credits) and *Research into Secondary Chinese Teaching* (2 credits).[44] One textbook was used, that is, a revised version of *Secondary Chinese Teaching Methods* (Qian & Xu, 2000). *Theory in Secondary Chinese Teaching* involved more "theory" and used the first half of the book, while *Research into Secondary Chinese Teaching* focused on "practice" and therefore the second half. The nearly 400-page textbook was the main artifact that students received from this course.

In addition to the above two types of courses, there is a "special circumstance" (*guoqing*) that I can not ignore. As has been mentioned in Chapter 1, China is one of the few countries in the world that require college students to study moral education (*deyu*) (Lee & Ho, 2005). Students in the Program were not an exception. They needed to take two sets of courses (*liangke*): Marxist theory (usually called "political courses") and "ideology and morality" (*sixiang daode*) courses (the MOE's Division of Social Science Studies, 1998b). Of the 10 required moral education courses, the first two Jing and her peers thought of were *Introduction to Mao Zedong Thought*, and *Introduction to Deng Xiaoping Theory and Important Ideas on the "Three Represents."* (See Table 3 for other courses in general education.) The materials used for the two courses were "Basic Teaching Requirements" posted on the website of the College's CCP Publicity Department and textbooks. For the same reason mentioned above, I focus on the former in this chapter.

In the process of data collection, another course called *Social Practice* kept attracting my attention. Some student teachers in the Program were designing summer

[44] See Table 6 in Chapter 2 for the educational courses offered in the Program.

'*san xia xiang*" activities with the request from the Department of Chinese. As mentioned in the previous two chapters, East Teachers College in recent years had been actively organizing and disseminating "*san xia xiang*" social practice, especially in summer. Indeed, it was part of the *Social Practice* course. *Social Practice* was a service-learning course that students must take during each summer and winter vacation.[45] As it was the only course that showed an obvious connection with the countryside, I chose to take a look at its planned curriculum as well. The main text I collected was "Opinions on Further Strengthening and Improving the Work of Social Practice," a document disseminated online in 2006 in the name of the College's CCP Committee. Added to this was a short "Registration and Evaluation Form."

Table 7 (below) lists the texts I picked based on availability and length for the above courses. One may say that these texts are like "apples and oranges" and can not be validly compared. I know that they came from different sources and shared different levels of legitimacy and authority. This chapter is not aimed to compare the official curricula in a strict sense. I take pains to cover the five courses of four types and the texts created by groups with different levels of authority because I intend to provide a comprehensive and nuanced account of the countryside in the Program's planned curricula.

[45] For more background information about this course, please see Chapter 4.

Table 7: Courses and Texts Included in Chapter 3

	Course	Level	Type	Text
1.	*Introduction to Mao Zedong Thought*	College	Political	(?). *Basic teaching requirements for Introduction to Mao Zedong Thought*. East: the CCP Publicity Department, East Teachers College.
2.	*Introduction to Deng Xiaoping Theory and Important Ideas on the "Three Represents"*			(?). *Basic teaching requirements for Deng Xiaoping Theory*. East: the CCP Publicity Department, East Teachers College. (2003). *Putong gaodeng xuexiao "liangke" jiaoxue jiben yaoqiu [Basic teaching requirements for liangke in ordinary colleges and universities]*. Beijing: the Division of Social Science Studies and the Division of Ideological and Political Work, the Ministry of Education.
3.	*Modern and Contemporary Chinese Literature*	Department	Subject matter	(2006). *The syllabus of "Modern and Contemporary Chinese Literature."* East: the Department of Chinese, East Teachers College.
4.	*Secondary Chinese Teaching Methods*	Program	Subject-specific pedagogy	Qian, W., & Xu, Y. (Eds.). (2000). *Zhongxue yuwen jiaoxue fa [Secondary Chinese teaching methods]*. Shanghai: East China Normal University Press.
5.	*Social Practice*	College	Practical	(2006). *Opinions on further strengthening and improving the work of social practice*. East: the CCP Committee, East Teachers College.[46] (2006). *Social practice activity registration and evaluation form*. East: East Teachers College.

[46] Out of consideration for confidentiality of the participants, the pinyin titles of the college-, department-, and program- documents are intentionally not given. These titles are not literally translated into English either.

The Countryside in the Political Courses

East Teachers College had a special website for moral education. According to the website, it was the CCP Publicity Department that took on the responsibility for moral education. More importantly, a set of curriculum documents were listed on the website, including almost all the "basic teaching requirements" for the "two sets of courses."

Introduction to Mao Zedong Thought: Positioning the Peasantry as "the Most Reliable Ally of the Proletariat"

Below presents the rural-relevant content from "Basic Teaching Requirements for *Introduction to Mao Zedong Thought*:"

III. The general route and the guiding principle of the New Democratic Revolution
...The New Democratic Revolution is a revolution made by the general public to fight imperialism, feudalism, and bureaucratic capitalism with the leadership of the proletariat. The peasantry is the most reliable ally of the proletariat, and the main force of the Chinese revolution...The CCP is the leading core of the New Democratic Revolution of China. ...
Questions for thinking:
1) Why can the CCP become the leading core of the Chinese Revolution and construction business?
2) Why is it said that the peasantry is the main force of the Chinese Revolution?
...
IV. The three magic weapons of the New Democratic Revolution
1. ...
2. Armed struggle
... Armed struggle in China is a revolutionary struggle with the proletariat as the leader and the peasantry as the main force. ...
3. The construction of the Party
The particular difficulties of building a new proletarian party in the rural and the warfare environments of semi-colonial, semi-feudal China. To build the Marxist proletarian party nationwide with the broad support from the masses is the great project of the Chinese Revolution. During the Revolutionary War, the primary experience in the construction of the Party: focuses on the construction of the Party in ideology. Inherit and develop the fine tradition and style of the Party.
...

V. The developmental route of the New Democratic Revolution
1. The special law of the Revolutionary War
The central task and highest form of the Revolution is to seize political power by armed struggle. The situation of modern China determines the special law of the Chinese Revolutionary War. The Chinese Revolution cannot copy the experience of the October Revolution of Russia to make armed uprisings in the central city. The cognitive transformation of the Chinese Communists from urban-centered to rural-centered.
2. Use the countryside to encircle the city and armed forces to seize the state political power
The reasons and the conditions for the existence and development of rural revolutionary bases led by the CCP. The relationship among land reform, armed struggle, and the construction of rural bases. The Chinese Revolution must take the developmental road of using the countryside to encircle the city and armed forces to seize the state political power. (The College's CCP Publicity Department, ?)

This specific text was concerned with the positioning of the peasantry before the PRC.[47] It repetitively argued that the peasantry was "the main force" of the New Democratic Revolution led by the proletariat, especially the core of the proletariat – the CCP, but did not provide any justification. A message embedded within the text was that the CCP had no choice but to mobilize the peasantry for the Revolution. The force that the CCP preferred to mobilize was the proletariat or the working class in urban areas. Nevertheless, unlike Russia, China at the time had a tiny number of urban workers. It was also apparent that the College's CCP Publicity Department aimed to praise the might of the CCP, including leading the peasantry to construct rural areas and to fight for the independence of the state.

At first glance, the text acknowledged and appreciated the important role that the peasantry played in the process of establishing the PRC. However, identity is often constituted and expressed in relation with others. If understanding the peasantry in relation with the CCP and the proletariat, one may note that the text supposed that the

[47] The relationship between the peasant and the CCP before the establishment of the PRC have been studied by scholars such as Han (2005), Hofheinz (1977), and Johnson (1962).

peasantry was not part of the leading group but led by the CCP and its working class. It read as if the peasantry was inferior to the working class for some unspoken reason, thus needing to be under the absolute leadership of the CCP and its working class.

In the text above, the sentence structure of "subject- is- object" (e.g. "The peasantry is...") was commonly used. The text preferred to use the "relational process" to highlight the general state of things and people as opposed to the concrete process. In doing so, the producer displayed a preference for nouns over verbs in word choice. There were even sentences that did not include verbs of any type, such as "The cognitive transformation of the Chinese Communists from urban-centered to rural-centered." "Turn[ing] processes and activities into states and objects, and concretes into abstracts" is a sign of "nominalization" (Fairclough, 1992, p. 182). Employing this rhetorical strategy, the producer conveyed that what were described in the text were inarguable facts regardless of time and place. The use of imperative modes, such as "must" and "cannot," also indicated the power and authority of the producer.

No quotation marks or citations were applied throughout the text, which might make one wonder which words or arguments exactly came from Mao Zedong, the College's CCP Publicity Department, and others (e.g., scholars in Mao Zedong studies). By doing so, the College's CCP Publicity Department appeared to illustrate that Mao Zedong thought, including the statement about the place of the peasantry in the Revolution, was fixed and universal truth. It was anticipated that student teachers would read Mao Zedong thought in a similar, if not unanimous, way. As shown in the question sample "Why is it said that the peasantry is the main force of the Chinese Revolution?," the Department did

not expect student teachers to hold different views but to justify the arguments presented. Indeed, this was clearly prescribed in the teaching goal set for the course:

> (This course) teaches basic principles of Mao Zedong thought; and helps students understand that Mao Zedong thought is the great achievement of the first historical leap into the actual situation of China from Marxism-Leninism, master the main content and the live soul of Mao Zedong thought, appreciate the law of the social-historical development and the revolutionary movement of modern China, and be aware that only the leadership of the CCP and adherence to the road of socialism can save and develop China.[48] (The College's CCP Publicity Department, ?)

On the webpage of the College's CCP Publicity Department, no information about the text producer was mentioned. I assumed that it was this department which produced the text. Later on, I came to know that the text came from the MOE's Division of Social Science Studies (1998). So did "Basic Teaching Requirements for *Deng Xiaoping Theory*." In directly and completely representing the discourse created by the MOE, the College's CCP Publicity Department kept itself closely aligned with the central state. By removing the authorship information from the text, it also showed that who wrote the text and why did not matter and the text told indisputable and self-evident truth.

The 1998 version of "Basic Teaching Requirements for *Introduction to Mao Zedong Thought*" was "trial" in nature. The MOE's Division of Social Science Studies and the Division of Ideological and Political Work collaboratively issued a formal version in 2003. (It was not on the website of the College's CCP Publicity Department as of this writing.) The 2003 version was more explicit about the relationship of the peasantry with others.

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[48] Some works have been published to discuss the perceptions of Marx, Lenin, and Mao on peasants separately or comparatively. If interested, please see Kelliher (1994), Kingson-Mann (1983), and Duggett (1975), among others.

> The basic experience in the construction of the Party: under the circumstances of the rural and the warfare, builds the Party, of which most members are peasants, into the vanguard of the working class and maintains the advanced nature of the Party. (The MOE's Division of Social Science Studies and Division of Ideological and Political Work, 2003)

The 2003 text contended that the CCP was "the vanguard of the working class" and the leader of "the general public" for its "advanced nature." It gave a more complete picture of the Party-State's understanding of the social reality, the social relationship, and the peasantry's identity during the Revolution. With the chasing of the Nationalist army and an ultimate aim to achieve the state political power, the CCP transferred to rural areas to mobilize peasants to surround cities from the countryside.[49] For considerations of political mobilization, the CCP recruited members from the peasantry. In the meantime, the CCP appeared to believe that the peasantry was inferior or backward and it was of necessity to re-educate peasant members up to the level of the working class. Otherwise, these peasants were likely to put the "advanced nature" of the CCP in danger. A close eye needed to be kept on them to ensure that they would not bring any risks to the CCP. Ways to achieve this included transforming party members of peasant origin, and refusing to invite the peasantry as a whole to take any leadership role.

In summary, in the official curriculum of *Introduction to Mao Zedong Thought* produced by the MOE, the representative of the central state in education, the peasantry was basically positioned as secondary to the working class and a vehicle to reach the goal of establishing the PRC. The College's CCP Publicity Department, on behalf of the

[49] With this said, I do not mean to oversimplify that CCP did not attend to the concerns and benefits of the peasantry in the era of the Revolution. In fact, among all the parties at the time, I believe that CCP cared most about the peasantry for purposes of state building.

college, tended to take the official curriculum without questioning and to have course instructors and student teachers think of the peasantry in a similar way.

Introduction to Deng Xiaoping Theory: A Continuous Concentration on the Positioning of the Peasantry

As one may have noticed, while the course described in Table 7 is called *Introduction to Deng Xiaoping Theory and Important Ideas on the "Three Represents,"* the head of this section – "*Introduction to Deng Xiaoping Theory*: A Continuous Concentration on the Positioning of the Peasantry" indicates a focus on the first half. Please let me explain. By the time of the publication of the 1998 version of "Basic Teaching Requirements," Jiang Zemin had not formed his concept of "Three Represents."[50] The 1998 version concentrated on Deng Xiaoping theory and included some of Jiang Zemin's speeches. It was the only version posted on the website of the College's CCP Publicity Department as of this writing. I will focus on the 1998 version in this section, and switch to analyze the 2003 version in the next section. This will help us gain a historical picture of the Party-State's stance on the countryside and make sense of contemporary rural China.

If the discourse of class struggle was emphasized in *Introduction to Mao Zedong Thought*, the theme of *Introduction to Deng Xiaoping Theory* changed to "development." A similar approach was taken by the Division of Social Science Studies to write both

[50] The "Three Represents" theory was first used in Jiang Zemin's talk on his trip to Guangdong in 2000 and formally brought forward in his speech at the 16th CCP Congress in November 2002. It claimed that "the Party must always represent the developmental requirements of China's advanced productive force, the developmental orientation of China's advanced culture, and the fundamental interests of the overwhelming majority of people in China."

curriculum guidelines, including the use of relational processes and imperative modes. Nevertheless, much less about the countryside was spoken of in "Basic Teaching Requirements for *Deng Xiaoping Theory*." The countryside was only mentioned at two places in the text. Within the framework of development, the Party-State appeared to pay less attention to the countryside.

Positioning the peasantry in the social order was still the focus of the Division of Social Science Studies:

> Constructing socialism with Chinese characteristics must rely on workers, peasants, and intellectuals. The working class is the country's leading class. The peasantry is the numerous and reliable force of our country. The intellectual is part of the Chinese working class. ... The CCP is the vanguard of the working class. Insistence on the leadership of the Party is the key to achieve socialistic modernization... (1998a)

Following the perception described in *Introduction to Mao Zedong Thought*, the Division re-claimed that the Party-State relied on the peasantry to construct "socialism with Chinese characteristics" on the one hand, and that the peasantry was not as good as the working class and could not take any role of leadership but be commanded by others on the other hand. [51] That the peasantry was inferior and backward was still the assumption standing behind.

A sentence in the text attracted my special interest, namely, "The intellectual is part of the Chinese working class." What criterion or criteria were used to make the distinction between the working class and the peasantry and to determine that the intellectual was part of the working class while the peasantry was not? The text offered no reasoning to support the proposition. I searched the textbook (D. Wang & Zhu, 2005)

[51] See Kelliher (1994) for a detailed discussion of the CCP's discourses on the peasant during Deng's time.

used for the course and identified two major reasons. First, as a result of the industrial revolution in massive production there had been higher and higher demands for science and technology which the intellectual could satisfy. Second, a lesson was learned that the Party-State must solidify the intellectual for political purposes from the collapse of the Soviet Union. In the era with economic development as priority number one, the CCP seemed to take that the peasantry was backward in "knowledge and culture" (*zhishi wenhua*) (D. Wang & Zhu, 2005, p. 354), along with its inferiority in political consciousness.

Important Ideas on the "Three Represents:" Toward "Rural Economy" and "Citization and Townization"

In the 1998 version few words were present to discuss rural development, which was a sharp contrast to the keynote of development set by the Party-State. The 2003 version added the following sentence in the section of "Development strategies for the construction of socialist China:" "Prosper rural economy in an all-around way and speed up the process of citization and townization (*chengzhenhua*)" (the MOE's Division of Social Science Studies and the Division of Ideological and Political Work, 2003).

No quotation marks were used in the sentence. After some searching, I found that this sentence originated from Jiang Zemin's speech at the 16th CCP Congress in November 2002. It was imperative in mood, which showed the authority and power of the Party-State to give the order. One may leave with the impression that the Party-State was sagacious to take the initiative to promote rural development. Throughout the text no background information was given about why the development of rural areas suddenly

became critical. It read as if the policy and practice of the Party-State in the past several decades had little to do with the shaping of the "three-rural issues."

As the section heading of the 2003 version indicated, the Party-State considered rural development from the perspective of state building. In the sentence, Jiang Zemin or the Division of Social Science Studies considered economic growth as the primary indicator of rural development and left other aspects unmentioned. This might mislead student teachers into thinking that it was not important to highlight other aspects of rural communities than economic development.

The second part of this sentence was "speed up the process of citization and townization (*chengzhenhua*)." As some scholars (e.g. J. Zhou, 2002) have pointed out, the term *chengzhenhua* has a variety of meanings. For example, it can be used to refer to citization and townization of both rural and urban areas. The two divisions from the MOE kept vague about the meaning of the term in the text. After checking both the textbook and Jiang Zemin's speech, I understood that here *chengzhenhua* primarily meant that village people migrated to develop towns and cities. The Party-State appeared to continue its focus on the development of urban areas.

The Countryside in *Modern and Contemporary Chinese Literature*

According to the website of the Department of Chinese, the syllabus for the *Modern and Contemporary Chinese Literature* course was provided as a response to the call for

the construction of "competitive courses" (*jingpin kecheng*) from the MOE's Division of Higher Education (2003).[52]

In the 21-page-long syllabus, more than 100 works themed on different perspectives of the countryside since the May Fourth movement were included. Some of them were even paid particular attention to and provided with a brief description and analysis. In what follows I present and analyze five excerpts in which the countryside was most mentioned. The five excerpts involve the works of Lu Xun, Mao Dun, Mao Zedong, Zhao Shuli, and Gao Xiaosheng, respectively. An analysis of the text's statement about the main works written by the five writers will help draw a rough historical outline of the literary discourses of the countryside in the eyes of the Department.

Lu Xun: "Truly reflecting" the Tragedy of the Peasantry with the Backward Nature in the 1920s

Excerpt 1:

Chapter 2: Lu Xun...
1. The ideological content of *Call to Arms* (*Nahan*) and *Wandering* (*Panghuang*) Vividly mirror the face (*mianmao*) of the semi-colonial and semi-feudal society, reveal "the degeneration of the upper classes and the misfortune of the lower classes," and deeply explore the social and historical root of this phenomenon, and at the same time summarize the experience and the lesson of the Old Democratic.
2. The artistic feature of *Nahan* and *Panghuang*
1) The realistic (*xianshi zhuyi*) feature: Deep and broad emotions of concern and anger are poured into the typical (*dianxing*) circumstance and the typical character. ...
3) The feature of language: refined, popular, satirical, and poignant.
3. The True Story of Ah Q
1) The piece truly reflects (*zhenshi de fanying*) the social style and feature (*fengmao*) in the period of the Old Democratic Revolution, and portrays the tragedy of the peasantry in old China.

[52] Later, this course and *Foreign Literature* from this department were selected as provincial-level "competitive courses."

2) The representative (*dianxing*) significance of Ah Q is especially deep and broad. ... (The Department of Chinese, 2006, p. 3)

Lu Xun is commonly considered as the first person to depict peasants[53] in the history of modern Chinese literature. Many peasant stories (identified as "classic" later on) are included in his two short story collections: *Nahan* (1923) and *Panghuang* (1926), such as "A Madman's Diary" (*kuangren riji*) (1918), "My Old Home" (*Guxiang*) (1921), "The True Story of Ah Q" (*Ah Q zhengzhuan*) (1921), and "the New-Year Sacrifice" (*Zhufu*) (1924). These stories portray the "misfortune" and "tragedy" of the peasantry, the majority of "the lower classes," and position the peasantry as victims of the old social system. However, this is not to say that in Lu Xun's works peasants are merely represented as victims.

"The True Story of Ah Q" is commonly regarded as Lu Xun's best novel, of which the plot unfolds around the main character called Ah Q. The letter "Q" has multiple meanings, including that Ah Q wears the Qing Dynasty hairstyle with feudalistic thinking and has nothing in both material and spiritual wealth, just like a zero. Ah Q, the best-known peasant image in China one may say, is an illiterate part-time laborer who has a murky understanding of who he is (and his name). When faced with extreme defeat or humiliation, he uses "psychological or spiritual victories" (*jingshen shengli fa*) by talking to himself and deceiving himself. While easy to be frightened by those who have higher rank, strength, or power than him, Ah Q bullies the less fortunate.

[53] As Cohen (1993) states, in China *nongmin* is a "cultural and political invention" in the early decades of the 20th century and usually translated as "peasant."

In Excerpt 1, what the Department of Chinese kept highlighting was the "realistic" characteristic of *Nahan* and *Panghuang*, including that of Ah Q image. "Realism" is a term whose meaning has experienced many changes around the world. As many scholars in Chinese literature (e.g. Feuerwerker, 1998) have noted, writing can never give a truthful, objective, and impartial representation of the "real" world. How a work is written and what it says have to do with the observation of a writer from certain perspectives with the influence of certain school(s) of politics and ideology at a specific time. As seen from the adjectives "true," "typical," and "representative," the Department seemed to dismiss the complexity of "realism" and hold that literary works directly reflected the "real" world. If so, this department showed the possibility of helping student teachers reinforce a stereotypical image of peasants.

An interesting aspect to look at the positioning of the peasantry is to examine how the writer situates the writing self in relation to the created peasant character. In the case of Lu Xun's "The True Story of Ah Q," as Feuerwerker (1998) keenly argues, although Lu Xun "claims a literary space for his unprecedented subject," he "continually belittles and undermines his own subject throughout the process of representation" (p. 75). In the process, peasants, among others, "become objects of satire and mockery" (Feuerwerker, 1998, p. 76).

In the syllabus, the Department of Chinese also deployed the words "satire" and "poignant" to describe the language feature of "The True Story of Ah Q." Nobody can deny that Lu Xun was worried about the tragic fate of peasants. However, his way of writing does indicate that peasants were "others" to him, an intellectual scholar. Without

suggesting a critical way of thinking about the relationship between the writer and the character displayed in "The True Story of Ah Q," the Department might help student teachers subconsciously internalize the notion to form the identity that they were intellectuals and peasants were stereotypical "others."

Mao Dun: "Realistically" Portraying Peasant "Representatives" of both "Old" and "New" Generations in the 1930s

Excerpt 2:

> 2. Spring Silkworms (*chuncan*)
> Portrays the social reality of the countryside falling into bankruptcy with the invasion of Imperialism and under the rule of the feudal comprador bourgeoisie, and peasants' tragic life and spontaneous resistance in the 30s of old China. Lao Tongbao is the representative (*daibiao*) of the "stuck-in-old-ways" (*shoujiu*) and stupefied (*yumei*) peasantry of the old generation, and Duoduotou is the representative of the new-generation peasantry awakening and fighting. (The Department of Chinese, 2006, pp. 8-9)

If Lu Xun is the first person to discover peasants from more of a cultural perspective, one can argue that Mao Dun is the first to pinpoint the political and economic aspects of peasants (G. Luo, 2004). Mao Dun wrote many stories related to the countryside in the 1930s, such as the trilogy: "Spring Silkworms" (1932), "Autumn Harvest" (*qiushou*), and "Winter Ruin" (*candong*). In Excerpt 2, the Department of Chinese introduces and reviews the content and character feature of "Spring Silkworms." "Spring Silkworms," generally recognized as the best of the trilogy, describes the trial and tribulation of an old peasant named Lao Tongbao and his family during the silkworm-raising season, and discusses how and why a harvest turns into a disaster for the peasant.

The Department of Chinese was of the opinion that the two main characters Lao Tongbao and Duoduotou were peasant "representatives" of their respective generations. The former were stereotyped as "stuck-in-old-ways" and "stupefied," while the latter were "awakening and fighting." As Zhang (2006) puts it, Mao Dun, a person who has never lived or actually worked in the countryside, represents the countryside from a city perspective and considers the countryside as a place dependent on the city, which is Shanghai in this case. Given that Shanghai is a unique city of China at the time, it is hard to generalize the image of peasants around the area of Shanghai to that of the entire country (H. Zhang, 2006). By over-generalizing the images of the peasants, the Department might help future student teachers perceive present peasants in a stereotypical way.

Mao Zedong's Yan'an Talks: Toward Creating Revolutionary Literature in the Name of the Peasantry in the Early 1940s

Excerpt 3:

> The Talks apply Marxist and Leninist universal truth (*pubian zhenli*) to evaluate and summarize Chinese revolutionary literature and art movement since the May Fourth (Movement), solve the fundamental issue of whom revolutionary literature and art should serve and how...The Talks are the typical model (*dianxing*) of connecting Marxism-Leninism with Chinese revolutionary literature and art movement, lay down the theoretical foundation of our Party's (*wodang*) line and policies toward literature and art... (The Department of Chinese, 2006, pp. 11-12)

Mao Zedong's talks at the Yan'an Forum on literature and art in May 1942 represent a dividing ridge in the history of Chinese modern literature. The talks developed around the question of literature and art "for whom?" As the new leader of the CCP at the time,

Mao answered firmly that literature and arts should serve "the great masses of workers, peasants, and soldiers." Given that there were a small number of workers and soldiers were workers and peasants who joined the army, it can be said that "the great masses" here were primarily peasants. It appeared that Mao Zedong and his Party were most concerned with the massive number of peasants and tried to meet their needs first. But the awkward part was that no peasants were invited to the forum. It was suspected that Mao Zedong and his CCP dominated literature and art in the name of the peasantry. In order to gain political acceptance of the CCP, many writers and artists redefined and reconstructed the image of the peasantry by following certain literary approaches proposed by the CCP.

In Excerpt 3, the Department of Chinese claimed that Marxism-Leninism was "universal truth" with the assumption that it had one specific meaning and that Mao Zedong's Talks were a perfect application of Marxism-Leninism based on China's real circumstances. By using the term "our party," the Department spoke directly on behalf of the CCP and assumed the unproblematic nature of the CCP's policy line in literature and art. In doing so, the Department left little room for student teachers to take a more independent approach to the Talks and their implications. Consequently, students might think of the CCP as "our party" and take its ideology without much thinking. It was also likely that students would follow the CCP's approach to understand peasants, consciously or subconsciously.

Zhao Shuli: "Truly" Praising "the New Countryside Life in the Liberated Area" after the Yan'an Talks

Excerpt 4:

> The stories created by Zhao Shuli around peasant problems are true reflections (*zhenshi fanying*) of the new countryside life in the liberated area, and are fully nationalized (*minzuhua*) and popularized (*dazhonghua*) in the form. [His] Representative works include: "Blackie Gets Married" (*Xiao Erhei jiehun*), "The Rhymes of Li Youcai" (*Li Youcai banhua*), and the like. (The Department of Chinese, 2006, p. 13)

In the talks given at the Yan'an forum, as to how to serve the great masses Mao Zedong made explicit that the language of literary writing should be "nationalized and popularized." As the writers felt confused about what forms could be counted as "national and popular," the CCP "made" a model "peasant writer:" Zhao Shuli, a person who had much exposure to rural life and art in his childhood. Zhao's first great success came with "Blackie Gets Married," a short story written in 1943 with the impact of Mao's Yan'an Talks. The story portrays how two young lovers, Xiao Erhei and Xiaoqin, overcame the opposition of their "backward" parents (Second Zhuge and Third Fairy) and some village leaders to get married.

In Excerpt 4, the Department of Chinese commented that Zhao Shuli's stories, including "Blackie Gets Married," "are true reflections of the new countryside life in the liberated area." According to Feuerwerker (1998, pp. 118-119), "Blackie Gets Married" originated from a "true" story, of which the two lovers ended up with suicide and lynching respectively. Zhao Shuli chose a happy ending for the story: the mother sees her own mistake and the couple get married with the blessing of the district head. To serve the political goal of revolution, Mao Zedong had suggested that "new" literature and art should look upon the bright rather than the dark side of reality.

"Blackie Gets Married" was written especially to sing a "praise song" (the Department of Chinese, 2006, p. 17) and disseminate the CCP's ideology: under the leadership of the CCP, the countryside life in the "liberated" area is nothing but "new" and happy. What brings about the marriage of the young couple? It is "not any change in the behavior of their obstructive parents, but the freedom of choice provisions in the new Marriage Law as expounded by the head of the district government" (Feuerwerker, 1998, p. 122). Simply put, it is the power imposed from the top.

In "Blackie Gets Married," Zhao Shuli presents three types of peasant images. The father of Xiao Erhei, Second Zhuge, is poor, passive, superstitious, and feudalistic in thinking. The mother of Xiaoqin, Third Fairy, is an old ridiculous woman who likes flirting with men of different ages but has lost her charms, in addition to being backward and superstitious. "For the purpose of finding images of the new peasants that would confirm the ideology of a peasant-based revolution" (Feuerwerker, 1998, p. 135), Zhao described Xiao Erhei and Xiaoqin as "heroic idealized peasants." But their images are "indistinguishable one from the other and utterly forgettable" (Feuerwerker, 1998, p. 123), and they "are seldom on stage or given more than a sentence or two here and there in the course of the narrative" (Feuerwerker, 1998, p. 122).

As Feuerwerker[54] (1998) puts it, Zhao Shuli produced "Blackie Gets Married," and "the Rhymes of Li Youcai" (1943) [, and *Three Mile Bay* (1955)] under the enthusiastic sponsorship of the CCP.

[54] When analyzing the *Modern and Contemporary Chinese Literature* course syllabus created by the Department of Chinese, I relied on the arguments made by Feuerwerker. As of this writing, I have identified few publications in Chinese that critically read these literary "classics."

> Both writer and party were engaged in a cooperative effort to define, shape, and indeed create the mold to bring such a writer into being. Yet from the very beginning, as we have seen, there are observable fissures and discrepancies in the goals and processes of the project. Each story demonstrates in different ways the tensions between supposedly reflected reality and predetermined ideology, between popular tradition and textual authority, while pointing up the uncertain role of the writer caught between the proclaimed empowerment of the people on the one hand and authoritative party control on the other. (Feuerwerker, 1998, p. 134)

By simply emphasizing the "truthfulness" in both pilots and characters of Zhao Shuli's stories and ignoring the complicated relationship that the writer was involved in with peasants and the CCP (Feuerwerker, 1998, p. 134), the Department of Chinese allegedly turned the appreciation of the literary works into ideology indoctrination. The text tended to justify and legitimate the power and authority of the CCP and serve to enhance students' gratitude toward and trust in the CCP. This was also the case in forming students' attitude toward peasants.

Gao Xiaosheng: Inheriting the Tradition of Realism to Depict Peasants in the Era of Reform

Excerpt 5:

> 1. Rural reflective fiction...The ideological content of stories such as "Li Shunda Builds a House" (*Li Shunda zaowu*) ...
> Section 4: The uprising of "reform literature" and the opening development of realism...
> 3. Fiction on rural transformation and Gao Xiaosheng's "Chen Huansheng series:"
> 1) The developmental process of fiction writing on rural transformation;
> 2) An introduction to Gao Xiaosheng's creative writing;
> 3) The profundity, richness, truthfulness (*zhenshixing*), and creativity of Chen Huansheng's image. (The Department of Chinese, 2006, p. 20)

After the ending of the Cultural Revolution, with China entering the post-Mao era, many literary works came out to critique the policy and practice of Mao's time. Gao

Xiaosheng's "Li Shunda Builds a House" (1979) is considered as a masterpiece of them. The short story makes a vivid narrative of how Li Shunda, a poor peasant, has dreamed of building a brick house for his family for nearly 30 years but fails to do so. Through the story, Gao suggests that the CCP in Mao's period kept promising a better life for peasants rhetorically but failing to achieve it. While portraying Li Shunda as a victim of misguided Party policies, Gao highlights his identity as conformist (*gengen pai*) of the CCP's policy. In the meantime, the writer expresses the idea that in the "new" era with the focus of the Party-State switching to economics and the more visible of corruption and bureaucracy, the peasant still has a basic sense of right and wrong and "remains a yardstick by which to evaluate a society that has gone wrong and that has wronged him" (Feuerwerker, 1998, p. 163). In addition to "Li Shunda Build a House," Gao Xiaosheng wrote a series of stories around a peasant called Chen Huansheng. The experience and character of Chen Huansheng is quite similar to that of Li Shunda.

Compared with Lu Xun, Mao Dun, and Zhao Shuli, Gao Xiaosheng presents a more complicated picture of peasants and other aspects of the countryside. He also points directly to the policy and practice of the CCP in the countryside. However, the Department of Chinese did not pay the same attention to Gao's works as it did to others' described above. As seen from the syllabus, the Department appeared hesitant to articulate the content of "Li Shunda Builds a House." Regarding the Chen Huansheng series, the Department chose to emphasize the image features of Chen Huansheng but kept silent on the content of this series. It seemed that The Department avoided presenting negative images of the CCP and touching upon the complicated situation of the countryside in the period of transformation.

In short, in the literary works described in the five excerpts, peasants tend to be monolithically described either as victims of the society with backward features or as idealized revolutionary heroes. In the early decades of the last century, peasants are positioned by writers as "others" worthy of both sympathy and resentment. With the increasing influence of the CCP, writers tend to present peasants of the old generation as feudalistic and superstitious but describe those of the new generation as awakened fighters for ending the "old" society and disseminating the CCP ideology. In the "new" era of reform and opening-up, peasants are more likely to be portrayed as victims and blind followers of the Party-State policy again.

By prescribing the content of the "classic" work (and talking little about that of the alternative one), highlighting the truthfulness and representativeness of the character feature, and overlooking the complex relationship between the writer and the peasant character, the Department showed a tendency to serve the interest of the Party-State, exclude a critical way of reading, and reproduce a homogenous view of peasants (and other aspects of rural areas). From the overlook of more-recently-published works about peasants and the countryside in the syllabus, one may sense the tendency too.

The Countryside in *Secondary Chinese Teaching Methods*

Secondary Chinese Teaching Methods was a book edited by Qian and Xu, two professors from a local teachers college in Zhejiang province, and published by China East Normal University Press in 2000. This textbook was first compiled from a request of the State Committee of Education (whose name changed to the MOE in 1998) in 1986 especially for Chinese teacher preparation programs in East China.

As described in the "Introduction" chapter (Qian & Xu, 2000, p. 7), three sections constituted *Secondary Chinese Teaching Methods*: curriculum, teaching, and teachers. The first section included six chapters, talking about the nature, the task, and the content of Chinese teaching, and the principle, process, and method of Chinese teaching. The teaching section covered intellectual education, moral education, and aesthetic education in relation to Chinese teaching; the teaching of reading, writing, oral communication, and Chinese knowledge; the design, review, and evaluation of Chinese teaching; and guidance on extracurricular activities. The last chapter spoke on the significance, the role, and the quality of Chinese teachers.

Chinese Teaching and Learning: In/with/for the Interests of the Party-State

About the significance of Chinese teaching, the textbook wrote that

> The importance of a subject depends on the importance of its research subject. *Wenhui Bao* once published an editorial to point out that "Chinese teaching has very important status relating to the implementation of the Party's educational line, the knowledgization of labor people, and the political issue of building our country into a socialistic country with great power as soon as possible." ...
>
> Comrade Deng Xiaoping points out that "education needs to face modernization, face the world, and face the future." This proposes higher requirements for Chinese teaching. The current world has entered a new era of science and technology modernization. The emergence of a series of new technologies and new industries dominated by information technology will bring greater and greater influence on Chinese teaching. In the era of science and technology revolution and education competition, cultivating able people is the key. "Revitalizing the country through science and education" (*keji xingguo*) has been set as a national policy, which is a powerful motivation and forceful measure. ... The subject of Chinese teaching methods is a specialty course with important status, playing a very important role in cultivating qualified Chinese teachers and improving the quality of the people (*minzhu suzhi*). (Qian & Xu, 2000, p. 11)

By referring to the words of *Wenhui Bao*, the Shanghai Party newspaper, and the Party-State leader Deng Xiaoping, the textbook justified the importance of Chinese teaching. The purpose of teaching Chinese was described as two-fold: to implement the line and policy of the CCP and to build the state into a powerful socialist country with strong international competition. Since international competition lied in science and technology, Chinese teaching should serve the goal of improving science and technology of the country by "improving the quality of the people." As such, the indicator of people's quality improvement was reduced to science and technology development, and the improvement of people's quality became a means to state building. Probably associated with the thinking that the interests and needs of individual students, communities, and the Party-State were inherently coherent, the former two were invisible in the goal statement of Chinese education.

Language Education: "Overcoming the Influence of Dialect" for the National Comprehensive Power

About the importance of Chinese language, the textbook wrote that

> Our country is a country with many ethnics (*minzhu*) and many dialects but also a united (*tongyide*) country. Mandarin Chinese is the common communication tool of all ethnics of our mother country, including the common written Chinese.
>
> ...Standardizing language is an important task that school Chinese education carries. Enhancing the standardization level of language is an important foundation for improving the quality of the whole Chinese people and promoting the unification (*tongyi*) and social development of our country, while the unification and social development of our mother country is also an important reason for language unification and development. With the development of human society, a world-wide used language will gradually emerge based on international languages. With the swift development of information technology in such as Chinese-controlled electronic computer, the building-up of our country's national comprehensive power,

> and the continual improvement in international status, it is completely possible for Chinese to gain the gold medal of the world-wide used language. (Qian & Xu, 2000, p. 19)

The above text defined Chinese teaching as equal to mandarin Chinese teaching and excluded the content relevant to dialects (and other languages). The reason that Qian and Xu (2000) give was naturalized: "mandarin Chinese is the common communication tool of all ethnics of our mother country" (p. 19). Afterwards, they went to disclose the "truth:" the spread of mandarin Chinese "into all the important public domains are its high status among most of the population are achievements of standardization...as a part of the economic, political, and cultural unification" (Fairclough, 1989, p. 21) in the context of modern China.

Qian and Xu (2000) posited that the unification of the state, including both the unification of the territory and the formation of a unified Chinese identity, needed the standardization of language, that is, a unitary and homogeneous language throughout the society. One may wonder about their stance toward dialects (and other languages). No description in this regard was offered in the text. This might mislead future Chinese teachers into believing that in Chinese teaching it was unnecessary or unimportant to attend to or appreciate dialects (and other languages) that students spoke. If so, Qian and Xu (2000) seemed to suggest that students not speak any dialects (or other languages) for the standardization of Chinese language, the unification of the state, the common use of Chinese in the world, and consequently the international status of the state.

In the chapter of "Oral Communication Training," Qian and Xu (2000) proposed that in daily life students follow the standard of *putonghua* to speak by citing "without

rule without order," a sentence from Mencius to justify. Since many students in rural areas of China speak dialects, the question that interests me is still how future Chinese teachers should react to the situation in which students speak local dialect. The text did not attend to this specific situation but generally suggested that "overcome the influence of dialect" (Qian & Xu, 2000, p. 227). Without acknowledging the value of dialects, Qian and Xu (2000) might mistakenly lead future Chinese teachers to assume that it was shameful for rural students to speak dialectics in school, and/or rural students in daily life had access to *putonghua* equal to urban students.

Ignoring Literacy Education in Rural Contexts in the Name of Focusing on the General

Throughout the textbook, Qian and Xu (2000) showed no interest in addressing issues around teaching and learning in rural contexts. Little was discussed about how to teach secondary Chinese in rural schools or how to connect experience of students of rural origin in urban schools with secondary Chinese teaching. Qian and Xu (2000), apparently, intended to focus on the general teaching and learning of secondary Chinese. However, taking a closer look, one may note that in the book the description was basically urban-contextualized. For example, all the "excellent" teaching lessons presented came from teachers in city schools. It was assumed that a common family in East China had recorders, VCDs, and even computers to support the Chinese learning of children (Qian & Xu, 2000, p. 360). Another example was on how to teach a poem called "*Qingpingle · chunju*:"

> ...Creativity cannot live without rich and fresh imagination. ... For example, while teaching Xin Qiji's "*Qingpingle · chunju*," teachers need to try ways to evoke and mobilize various kinds of ideas that students collect in mind about countryside life,

> re-present a piece of tranquil (*tianjing*) and harmonious (*xianghe*) country picture, and accordingly experience and understand the artistic conception (*yijing*) that the work expresses. (Qian & Xu, 2000, p. 284)

"*Qingpingle · chunju*" is a poem written during the Southern Song (1127–1279) that describes the countryside life of a family. Qian and Xu (2000) suggested using the method of imagination to teach the poem. If following this way, Chinese teacher candidates might connect the countryside with "long long ago" and "far away," in addition to being "tranquil" and "harmonious." More importantly, by using the sentence "try ways to evoke and mobilize various kinds of ideas that students collect in mind about countryside life," Qian and Xu (2000) seemed to presume that students that future Chinese teachers would face in classroom were from cities and had very limited experience of life in the countryside.

Making Use of Rural-Related Literary Texts to Implement Ideological and Political Education

What Qian and Xu (2000) highlighted most throughout the textbook was the ideological and political education aspect of Chinese learning and teaching. They explicitly put that Chinese learning and teaching should transmit the ideologies of "the ruling class" (Qian & Xu, 2000, p. 250) or the CCP, including patriotism, communism, advocating the leadership of the CCP, and recognizing the importance of science and technology. No reasoning was provided for the claim, which read as if it was commonsensical and unquestionable.

In *Secondary Chinese Teaching Methods*, the countryside was only slightly mentioned in the description of how to teach rural-related reading texts selected in the secondary Chinese textbooks. Here is an example:

> Solidify students' political stance for the proletariat by disclosing the counterrevolutionary and degenerating nature of capitalism. For example, by analyzing the texts such as "Spring Silkworms," "A Better Harvest"...., make students see clearly the counterrevolutionary nature of the capitalist system, and stand firmly on the ground of the proletariat. (Qian & Xu, 2000, p. 256)

To serve the purpose of implementing ideological and political education in Chinese teaching, Qian and Xu (2000) employed the reading texts that described the countryside in the 1930s to argue that the capitalist system was "counterrevolutionary" in nature and students should politically support (the proletariat and) the leadership of the CCP. This proposition was logically questionable. Meanwhile, looked from another angle, the countryside was again portrayed as a vehicle for political education.

Also to this end, Qian and Xu (2000) concentrated on the so-called "classic" readings to emphasize the enormous image difference of rural residents (and the countryside) before and after the governance of the CCP. For instance, after the Xinhai Revolution led by the bourgeois, the countryside was still imprisoned in feudalism and superstition under the rule of the landlord. For this reason, Xianglin's wife, the main character of Lu Xun's novel "the New-Year Sacrifice" (*zhufu*) and "typical character" of the countryside, lived a pathetic life and had a tragic death. Runtu, the main figure of Lu Xun's "My Old Home," once a healthy and active boy, grew up dumb and superstitious (Qian & Xu, 2000, p. 136). By contrast, with the guidance of the CCP, peasants awoke to fight for their own interests, such as those in worn terai hat in Ye Shengtao's "A Better

Harvest" (*Duo shoule sanwu dou*), and to devote themselves to the well-being of local communities, such as Guo Quanhai in "Distributing Horses" (*fenma*) (Qian & Xu, 2000, p. 136). Even more, the textbook generalized that these peasants represented "the track of the development of peasant personality (*nongmin xingge*) in modern China" (Qian & Xu, 2000, p. 136).

Future Chinese Teachers: Being Loyal to the Party-State

Qian and Xu (2000) supposed that future Chinese teachers should follow the unitary curriculum outline set by the State and the accompanying Chinese textbooks to teach students. However, as mentioned in passing above, this was not the only requirement that Qian and Xu (2000) prescribed for future Chinese teachers. They made explicit that

> Chinese teachers carry on the responsibility of cultivating people. Teaching books needs to cultivate people, and cultivating people needs to first cultivate the soul. As "soul engineers," Chinese teachers first of all need to try hard to learn Marxism, hold on to the belief in communism and the political direction of socialism, need to love the mother country, love the Chinese people, love the CCP... (Qian & Xu, 2000, p. 369)

Similarly to what the Department of Chinese did in the syllabus of *Modern and Contemporary Chinese Literature*, in the textbook Qian and Xu (2000) offered future teachers a homogeneous and unitary image of the countryside and overlooked the more recent situation of the countryside. Further, Qian and Xu (2000) paid little consideration to the rural contexts of Chinese learning and teaching by presupposing that their audience – Chinese teacher candidates – would teach in urban schools. By assuming that Chinese teachers ought to stick to what the Party-State advocated, Qian and Xu (2000) might

discourage future Chinese teachers from giving special attention to local (rural) contexts or taking an independent and critical standpoint on what and how to teach.

The Countryside in *(Summer) Social Practice*

The Purpose of Social Practice: Positioning the Countryside as a Vehicle to Strengthen the Association of the Individual with the Party-State

At the steering meeting held in June 2006, Ms. Pang, the College's CCP vice-secretary-general stated that

> That college students attend summer social practice activity is an important measure taken by the College to promote quality education (*shuzhi jiaoyu*) of college students, to strengthen and improve the moral and political matter of youths/students, and to guide students to grow healthily and make success; and an important approach for students to access the society, understand the society, and serve the society, and to foster the spirit of creativity, practical competency, and hand-on operational skills. Integrating with the real circumstances of your own, insisting on taking Important Ideas on the "Three Represents" as guide, surrounding the requirement of strengthening specialty knowledge and developing all-around quality, each department/college needs to carefully organize and unfold social practice activities in summer 2006, of which the theme is "Putting the Socialist Ethics Concept on Honors and Disgraces[55] (*rongru guan*) into Practice, Serving the New Countryside, Devoting to 'the First Two' (*liangge shuaixian*) goal[56], and Constructing a Harmonious Society[57]." (A provincial report, 2006)

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[55] Chinese President Hu Jintao went to visit the 4th Session of the 10th National Committee of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference in March 2006 and brought forward his new socialist ethic concept, which is generally called "Eight Honors and Disgraces" (*barong bachi*): "Love the country, do it no harm; serve the people, never betray them; follow science, discard superstition; be diligent, no indolent; be united, help each other, make no gains at other's expense; be honest and trustworthy, do not sacrifice ethics for profit; be disciplined and law-abiding, not chaotic and lawless; and live plainly, work hard, do not wallow in luxuries and pleasures."

[56] The CCP Jiangsu Provincial Committee formed the slogan "the First Two" in 2004, which signified that Jiangsu planed to take the lead in comprehensively building up a well-off society and in realizing basic modernization across the country.

[57] The idea of building a harmonious society was officially put forward as one way to promote the CCP's overall capability of governance at the 2004 4th Plenum of the 16th CCP Central Committee through "Decisions on Strengthening the Party's Capability of Governance."

Someone, with some background knowledge about China's college curriculum, may ask why I put *Social Practice*, a moral education course, in a section different from that for the two political courses. Ms. Pang's speech tells us that East Teachers College attempted to design the practical course of *Social Practice* in a comprehensive way. In other words, the College expected students to apply all that they learn from college classroom, including political, subject matter, and subject-specific pedagogical knowledge, to social practice. There was a possibility that all the discourses of the countryside represented in the previous four courses converged in the planned curriculum of *Social Practice*.

Based on "quality education" in Ms. Pang's speech, a term coined in the late 1980s for basic education and introduced to higher education in the 1990s (San, 2005), and the sentence that "College students attending summer social practice activity is an important measure taken by the College to promote...," one might mistakenly think that *Social Practice* was a course recently initiated by East Teachers College itself. The idea of developing social practice among students in China came from Mao Zedong. According to the analysis by Seeberg (2000), social practice was first implemented in schools during land reform in the period of 1949-51. After the Cultural Revolution was over, the CCYL Central Committee and All-China Student Federation (1983) renewed the tradition by calling for universities and colleges to develop social practice activities around social investigation, consulting, and service. In alignment with the rise of and the increasing attention on the "three-rural issues" starting in the late 1990s, the Party-State (the CCYL Central Committee, the Publicity Department of the CCP Central Committee, and The State Committee of Education, 1996; the Publicity Department of the CCP Central

Committee, the Central Civilization Office, the MOE, and the CCYL Central Committee, 2005) had been attaching more importance to social practice of college students.[58] Seen from the historical perspective, it seemed likely that the College designed the course of *Social Practice* with the heavy influence of the ideology of the Party-State.

In the first sentence of the speech excerpt, Ms. Pang argued that college students should partake in summer social practice activities by connecting the interests of individual students (as seen from the words "moral and political" "growth," "quality," and "success," "the spirit of creativity, practical competency, and hand-on operational skills") with that of the society. However, when speaking about the guiding theory and the theme of social practice in summer 2006, all the terms that Ms. Pang drew on were from the Party-State (at the national and provincial levels): the "Three Represents," "Socialist Ethics Concept on Honors and Disgraces, "the New Countryside," "Construct a Harmonious Society," and "the First Two." As seen from the overwording of these terms, the College was likely to hold accountability for the Party-State when organizing social practice.

In addition, Ms. Pang seemed to have presupposed the relationship among the individual, the society, and the Party-State. That is, the interests of the three parties were always harmonious. The Party-State, as the patriarch of China, was responsible for planning, while the individual and the society should follow to implement the plan. In fact, I sense that the society was blurred in Ms. Pang's speech, which made social practice more of a strategy taken to strengthen the association of the individual with the

[58] See Chapter 4 for a more detailed background introduction to social practice.

Party-State. If so, the countryside involved in *Social Practice* became more of a vehicle to the goal.

"San Xia Xiang" vs. "Si Jin Shequ:" Prescribing the Identity of and the Relationship between College Students and Village Residents

In "Opinions on Further Strengthening and Improving the Work of Social Practice," the College's CCP Committee asserted that

> Sending "the three:" culture (*wenhua*), science and technology, and hygiene, down to the countryside, and taking "the four:" science and education, art and sport, law, and hygiene into the community are effective carriers under the new situation. Need to mobilize college students on a large scale to make use of summer and winter vacation time to develop "Three Going down to the Countryside" (*san xia xiang*) and "Four Entering the Community" (*si jin shequ*) activities. (2006, p.?)

This paragraph was drawn, without quotation marks, from the document of "Opinions on Further Strengthening and Improving College Students' Social Practice" jointly released by the Publicity Department of the CCP Central Committee, the Central Civilization Office, the MOE, and the CCYL Central Committee (2005). Again, this, more or less, showed that the College sought to keep pace with the central state's policy on social practice.

I am particularly intrigued by two terms: *san xia xiang* and *si jin shequ*. In what follows I attempt to examine the rural (and the urban) embodied in the two terms by using the method of comparison. First, *xiang* (countryside) vs. *shequ* (community). Here, *shequ* became a term used to especially designate the community in an urban setting. In other words, the text did not seem to consider villages as one type of communities. With

this said, I do not mean that the expression of "rural community" did not exist.[59] However, based on the subtle difference in word use, one may suspect that the Party-State did not aim to value the sense of community in the development of the countryside.

Second, *san* vs. *si*. Comparatively speaking, the text assumed that rural residents needed more help in getting *wenhua*. As for urban dwellers, it was art/sport and knowledge of law that they wanted to know more. The term *wenhua* has multiple meanings in Chinese. But when used on village residents, it primarily refers to basic reading and writing. It is true that at present some people in the countryside cannot read or write. However, this does not mean that they do not have generally-called "indigenous knowledge." Following the use of the term *wenhua*, one may wonder: How would college students perceive rural residents in social practice? Would they acknowledge and respect local knowledge? Would what they do in the field be prescriptive or oriented to the needs of rural residents and communities? How would they communicate and work with rural residents? The text remained silent on these issues, which might prompt one to misleadingly assume that rural residents were just ignorant and backward.

Third, *jin* (enter or come into) vs. *xia*[60] (go down to). As clearly seen from the difference in verb choice, the text producers tended to assume that rural residents were lower than urban residents in social status, and that college students belonged to the

[59] See Hu and Jiang (2005) for a historical account of the understanding of "community."
[60] "*Xia xiang*" ("going down to the countryside") is not a newly-coined term either. In the middle 1950s, Mao Zedong started encouraging urban students to "go down to the countryside and up to the mountain" ("*shang shan xia xiang*"). Before and during the Cultural Revolution, a large number of urban students were sent to the countryside. Mao's expressed intention of doing so was to let urban students get re-educated by living with the peasants and learning from them. However, after some careful review, Ren (2003) argues that Mao's actual intention was to switch the burden of feeding the unemployed urban youths to the peasants of the countryside. In either case, the use of the verb "*xia*" reveals an assumption made by Mao Zedong at the time: Urban areas were higher than or superior to rural areas.

urban camp, no matter where they came from. More importantly, from the verb "*xia*," one may allege that the text, to some degree, stipulated the relationship between college students who would go to the countryside and residents there. The former were givers from above in a superior position and the latter tended to be passive receivers at the bottom.

"The Work Unit at the Town(ship) level or above:" The Issue of Accountability

Procedurally speaking, at the end of a semester, all the students would be given a sheet called "Social Practice Activity Registration and Evaluation Form" (East Teachers College, 2006), on which they were expected to describe when and where they helped whom to do what and how. Before submitting the form to their respective departments at the beginning of the next semester, students needed to have "approval and feedback from the work unit (*danwei*) at the town(ship) (*xiangzhen*) level or above" (East Teachers College, 2006).

According to Bjorklund (1986), *danwei* was "one of the principal territorial forms used to organize China's *urban* population" (p. 19, italic added). "The *danwei* group, led by the Party organization, creates[d] additional social infrastructure to serve both political and socioeconomic purposes" (Bjorklund, 1986, p. 24). Since the introduction of the economic reform, the influence of *danwei* has been reduced. At present, it becomes a term used to designate all kinds of enterprises, regardless of industry, and whether private sector or public sector. However, to the question "Can enterprises at the village level be called *danwei*?," the answer appears to be "no."

Despite the ideology embedded in the use of *danwei*, on the form the College especially asked "*danwei* at the town(ship) level or above" to provide feedback and stamp. The form left space for the college student, the supervising teacher, and the program director to give voice as well. What was missing was the room for the so-called "beneficiary" (East Teachers College, 2006) at the village level. One may wonder what the College had in mind about where college students should do the practice and who they should hold "accountability" (Axinn & Axinn, 1997) to in the process of social practice.

One may suspect that the College did not encourage students to go to work for/with the village enterprise, group, or individual. The direct interaction between college students and villages did not seem to be advocated, if not discouraged. Certainly, there were other possibilities, one of which could be that the College urged students to work at the village level but supposed that village people were not eligible or able to give a voice of their own on the form. In this case, the town(ship) government, as a type of *danwei*, was expected to represent them. Even though, it appeared likely that the College did not seek to be accountable to village people or communities.

Although Ms. Pang expressed the College's wish to design *Social Practice* in an integrated way, there was little evidence in the planned curriculum to support her point. The practical course inherited and developed the rural represented in the two political courses. More precisely, the latter was integrated in the practical course. Like Mao Zedong and his Party before the establishment of the PRC, *Social Practice* at East Teachers College drew attention to the development of the countryside but mainly

adopted it as a vehicle to satisfy the needs of the Party-State, that is, to build the nation state and to teach people about the loyalty to the Party. Mao Zedong, on behalf of his Party, perceived the peasantry as inferior to the working class mainly from a political perspective. Following more of the notion of Deng Xiaoping/Jiang Zemin and his Party, *Social Practice* understood rural residents as secondary to others more from the angle of "knowledge and culture."

Conclusion

In the Program's planned curricula, the Party-State's discourses of the countryside were directly represented in the required political courses through the basic teaching requirements set by the MOE. The focus of the Party-State was on the positioning of the peasantry in the social order. In both political courses, the peasantry was basically placed as "Other" who could be made use of. In *Introduction to Mao Zedong Thought*, the Division of Social Science Studies maintained that the peasantry was the centerpiece of the Chinese New Democratic Revolution led by the CCP and its working class. Similarly, in *Introduction to Deng Xiaoping Theory and Important Ideas on "Three Represents,"* the Division posited the peasantry as a reliable force for the socialist construction of China with the leadership of the CCP and the Chinese working class (here the intellectual included). The hidden message that the Party-State sent in an authoritarian way appeared to be that the peasantry, as one collective group, was not worthy of the same social status and power as other groups due to its inferiority in political awareness or/and "knowledge and culture."

According to Liu (2005), "Chinese language education [in K-12 school] has always been perceived and used by the government and cultural elites as an important means of transmitting the dominant ideology in China" (p. 234). This argument also applies to literature education at the tertiary level. In accordance with the discourses of the Party-State, two stereotypical images of peasants were highlighted in the course syllabus of *Modern and Contemporary Chinese Literature*. The Department of Chinese tended to focus on the so-called "classic" literary works that monolithically described peasants as victims of the system with backward characteristics or/and idealist heroes under the leadership of the CCP. Equally important, the Department took an uncritical approach to reading and teaching them. With the literary works that critiqued the policy and practice of the CCP in the countryside, the Department showed an attempt to avoid concrete description.

Regarding the pedagogical discourse of the countryside, the textbook used for the *Secondary Chinese Teaching Methods* course was written on behalf of the central state and had the second highest authority next to the basic teaching requirements of the MOE. The textbook began with the statement that the teaching and learning of Chinese should primarily serve the needs and interests of the Party-State. After setting the keynote, Qian and Xu (2000) singled out the significance of teaching and learning Mandarin Chinese from the perspective of state building, and kept silent on dialects (and other languages) that numerous rural students and local communities spoke. The textbook was set to discuss the teaching and learning of secondary Chinese in general terms but actually urban-biased. The countryside was only explicitly represented in the description of how to teach rural-relevant works selected in the secondary Chinese textbooks. These works

were produced half a century ago and adopted for purposes of fostering the loyalty of students to the Party-State.

The present situation and development of the countryside in different aspects was given little attention to in the Program's planned curricula. In *Introduction to Deng Xiaoping Thought*, the Division of Social Science Studies concentrated on the development of urban areas. In *Modern and Contemporary Chinese Literature*, few works that showed the situation of the countryside after 1990 were presented. In the name of focusing on the general, the *Secondary Chinese Teaching Methods* course did not attend to educational development in rural communities or show any initiatives to interact with rural schools. Of all the focal courses, it is my understanding that the teaching method course showed the most indifference to current rural issues. The only place where the word "rural" appeared was the rural literary works selected in the textbook, and these writings were produced half a century ago.

It was undeniable that some attention had started being drawn to rural areas and their development. *Important Ideas on "Three Represents"* slightly mentioned rural development. In recent years East Teachers College had given prominence to *Social Practice*, especially to the "*san xia xiang*" program. However, both were not without problems. *Important Ideas on "Three Represents"* talked of rural development mainly for considerations of state construction and understood it mainly from the economic dimension. In *Social Practice*, as the words in Ms. Pang's speech indicated, going "down" to the countryside was more of an attempt for college students to bond with the Party-State. The planned curriculum designed by the College with the guidance of the

Party-State presupposed the identity of and the relationship between rural residents and college students. The latter were in a superior position and did not need to be accountable to the former. Also, no direct interactions of college students with village communities seemed to be encouraged in the planned curriculum.

This study is on the representation of the countryside in the Program's planned curricula. The Program did not seem to have a say in this regard. No curriculum artifacts described above were written by the program. This program, at least on the surface, appeared to agree with all the discourses of the countryside made by the State, the College, the Department, and the textbook writers. The only curriculum text that, I think, possibly came from the Program was the educational goal statement. It was on the website of the Department of Chinese and read that

> This program aims to cultivate Chinese teachers who are morally, intellectually, physically, and aesthetically[61] well developed; have basic theory, knowledge, and skills in Chinese language and literature; and are competent to teach Chinese and related subjects, and to work as head teacher. (2006)

I searched to identify that the words above were commonly used in the goal statements of other Chinese teacher preparation programs. The Program did not appear to have considered local needs and interests when designing the educational goal. The educational goal was set as broad and general as possible.

In conclusion, as seen from the focal courses at the planned level, the textbook writers, the College, and the Department were all inclined to follow the discourses of the

[61] Five components of education are often discursively emphasized in China: moral, intellectual, physical, aesthetical, and labor (*laodong*). It is believed that Mao Zedong was the person who first came up with the five components. Here, somehow oddly, the Program removed the part of labor education from the statement.

Party-State on the countryside. They all described the course goal, content, and instructional method primarily from the perspective of the Party-State. Meanwhile, they did present different attitudes toward the Party-State's rhetorical attention on the countryside in recent years. Qian and Xu (2000) and the Department mentioned little about this in their respective courses. The College was responding actively to the Party-State in the stated curriculum.

On the whole, the Program's planned curricula produced by different agencies from different disciplines showed a tendency to reproduce current power relations and place-based inequalities by placing the peasantry in a lowly position in the social order, presenting a stereotypical image of rural residents and the countryside, and excluding the new complicated situation that rural communities face with the rapid process of urbanization and industrialization. If internalizing the curricula without questioning, student teachers were likely to stereotype and look down upon rural residents, ignore rural development in education and other aspects, refuse to teach in or connect with rural schools, and the like.

CHAPTER 4

THE COUNTRYSIDE IN THE PLANNED SUMMER SOCIAL PRACTICE CURRICULA[62]

Introduction

In present-day China, it is highly recommended at the national level that colleges and universities involve students in social practice activities during summer breaks. Since 2005 the Publicity Department of the CCP Central Committee, the MOE, the CCYL Central Committee, and All-China Student Federation (June 2005) have repeated their request that higher education institutions formalize the course of *Social Practice* by creating course syllabus, specifying credit hours, and the like.

As for the content, these national agencies and the Central Civilization Office (2005) have recently mandated that social practice for college students take the form of "teaching practice, specialty internship, military and political training, social investigation, productive labor, voluntary service, socially useful activities, science and technology invention, work for study, and the like" (p.?). Meanwhile, they highlight "Three-Going-Down-to-the-Countryside" ("*san xia xiang*") and "Four-Entering-the-Community" ("*si jin shequ*") as "effective carriers" (2005) of the *Social Practice* course. Compared with the latter, related national agencies seem to have put much more emphasis on "*san xia xiang*." Every year in June, they jointly send a notice to inform "each province, autonomous region, Publicity Department of the CCP Committee of

[62] Both Chapter 3 and this chapter are concerned with the planned curriculum of *Summer Social Practice*. While the former only briefly reports on the plan that the College had for 2006, this chapter focuses on the year 2007 to compare the planned curricula created by agencies at different administrative levels.

municipality directly under the central government, Civilization Office, Education Bureau/Commission, CCYL Committee, and Student Federation" on how to develop summer "*san xia xiang*" social practice among college students.

There is a mainstream belief that the term "*san xia xiang*" was coined in December 1996 by ten divisions of the Party-State, such as the Publicity Department of the CCP Central Committee, the Central Civilization Office, the Ministry of Science and Technology, and the Ministry of Agriculture. It is said that they (1996) initiated the "*san xia xiang*" program to encourage professions in all lines of work (officials, doctors, and scientists in particular) to help rural residents with "culture, science and technology, and hygiene (*weisheng*)." One year later, related agencies (1997) launched the summer program especially for college students. From 1998 on, it has been described by these agencies as "an important item" (1998) of college student summer social practice. Since 2000 the term "culture, science and technology, and hygiene '*san xia xiang*' social practice" has been presented in the title of the national announcement (2000).

Although a decade has passed since "*san xia xiang*" summer social practice of college students was put into effect, there is a lack of quality research in this area. Few studies have been independently conducted to examine the assumptions underlying the course design, the development of the curriculum at different levels, or the like.[63] Most identified works (e.g., Y. Zhao, Cui, & Bu, 2001; Zhong, 1999; S. Zhou, Wang, & Xing, 2001) are two or three pages in length. They basically follow the format of singing praise

[63] All the writings concerning this topic are in Chinese except Geng and Ma's (2005). It is also the only piece that independently provides a condensed description and commentary of the evolution of college students' social practice and the emergence of "*san xia xiang*." In this paper, they only discuss those activities organized by volunteer societies independent of the universities and the governments.

songs on the design of "*san xia xiang*," and making a short list of suggestions on how to implement it.

As can be easily observed, "*xiang*" (the countryside) is the center of "*san xia xiang*" summer social practice. Understanding the countryside is vital for both designing and implementing the curriculum. Different ways of understanding the countryside may lead to different "*san xia xiang*" curricula. As "*san xia xiang*" is a top-down program (at least for now) and involves various agencies at different levels, I cannot help but wonder: How is the countryside represented in the national curriculum? Does the notion evolve at the provincial and the college levels in designing the "*san xia xiang*" summer social practice curriculum, and how? Are these understandings coherent or contradictory with each other, and how? What possible effects may these understandings exert? I intend to explore these questions in this chapter.

Research Data and Collection

When I was in the Program for the pilot study, the course (*Summer*) *Social Practice* attracted my special attention. It was the only course that demonstrated the articulated intention of the program bonding student teachers with the countryside. All the artifacts I gathered about this course were said to be produced by the College's CCP/CCYL Committee. However, after some reading and tracing, I came to realize that plenty of words in these texts were pulled from the national curriculum without quotation marks. In addition, I had a vague feeling that although on the surface the College complied with the statement of the national agencies in "*san xia xiang*," its incentive and purpose to

organize activities of this type seemed to be divergent from that of the latter. These two small observations inspired me to ask the questions posed above.

While doing fieldwork for the second round, I paid some particular attention to the artifacts relating to the Program's 2007 summer social practice. Table 8 (below) presents the main texts I found at the national, provincial, and college levels. All of them were online. The national curriculum was put on the website of the CCYL Central Committee (http://www.gqt.org.cn/). At the provincial level, the official website of Jiangsu Student Federation included a special section called "'*san xia xiang*' Social Practice" (http://www.redmay.cn/) and listed all the provincial documents concerning this topic since 2004. The College had a special website for *Social Practice*, which provided a detailed documentary of how it developed the 2007 summer social practice through announcements, briefings, news reports, and others. In considerations of protecting my research participants, I will not reveal the College's website here.

Table 8: Main Artifacts Relating to East Teachers College's 2007 "*San Xia Xiang*" Summer Social Practice

Level	Artifact
National	The Publicity Department of the CCP Central Committee, the Central Civilization Office, the Ministry of Education, the CCYL Central Committee, and All-China Student Federation. (June, 2007). *Yuanyu kaizhan 2007 nian quanguo dazhongzhuan xuesheng zhiyuanzhe shuqi wenhua keji weisheng "san xia xiang" shehui shijian huodong de tongzhi [The notice on developing summer culture, science and technology, and hygiene "three-going-down-to-the-countryside" social practice activities among college student volunteers all over China in 2007].*
Provincial	The Publicity Department of the Jiangsu CCP Committee, the Civilization Office of Jiangsu, Jiangsu Provincial Education Bureau, the CCYL Committee of Jiangsu, and Jiangsu Student Federation. (June, 2007). *Guanyu zuzhi kaizhan 2007 nian jiangsu dazhong xuesheng zhiyuanzhe shuqi shehui shijian huodong de tongzhi [The notice on organizing and developing summer social practice activities among Jiangsu college and secondary school student volunteers in 2007].*
College	The College's CCP Committee. (2007). *The notice on organizing and developing summer social practice of student volunteers in 2007.* East Teachers College. (2007). *Student social practice (career practice) registration and evaluation form.*

The Expression of "'San Xia Xiang' Social Practice:" A Long-Standing History of Positioning the Countryside as a Lowly Backwater

In terms of genre, "*san xia xiang*" is a slogan. China is a country permeated with slogans (Z. Liu, 2006). Slogans, especially those political ones, "serve as a means for controlling mass consciousness and shaping an individual's 'reality'" (X. Lu, 1999, p. 490). The defining characteristic of slogans is that they tend to promote consensus by "preempting discussion of options" (Clabaugh & Rozycki, 2000, slide 3) and others. Meanwhile, as Hopkins (1998) poignantly argues about country-related slogans,

> Slogans are loaded with secondary or connotative meanings; they signify more than a superficial glimpse might suggest, and they are intended to operate as such. These short, memorable, uncomplicated phrases are used to capture attention... It is these secondary connoted meanings, beyond the literal denoted meanings of the slogans or "rhetoric," that reveal ... the ideology...which constitute(s)...the...identities of the symbolic countryside. (p. 70)

Several meanings were stated or implied in the national agencies' use of the verb "*xia*" (go down). First, it clearly demonstrated that they understood rural areas in relation to and against urban areas and supposed that rural areas were lower than urban ones in terms of social position. They privileged urban spaces over rural ones by creating an invisible divide between "we" and "they." Second, these national agencies were prone to view that once entering the college/university, students were non-rural in terms of identity regardless of where they came from. If this was true, they delivered the message that students of rural origin should detach themselves from the countryside in order to construct their new identity as "college students." Last but not least, by using the word

"*xia*," these agencies at the national level, to a great degree, stipulated the relationship between college students who went to rural areas and residents there. The former were presumed as givers from above in a superior position and the latter were passive receivers at the bottom.

As shown in the notice title, the national agencies assumed that "culture (*wenhua*), science and technology, and hygiene" were what rural areas needed. In putting "culture, science and technology" ahead of "hygiene" in the word order, they revealed a tendency to prioritize the goal of modernizing the nation over the physical well-being of rural people. Equally important, they labeled rural residents as a problem group who slowed down the speed of modernization and who "need(ed) special remedial attention" (Murphy, 2004, p. 3), and at the same time avoided an institutional and historical perspective to explain rural people's lack in these regards.

Further, about "*wenhua*" (culture), as I have noted in Chapter 3, it is a term without fixed meaning. It can be employed to denote basic knowledge and skills in reading and writing, that is, basic literacy. It can also be applied to signify values embedded within daily life, customs, traditions, and so forth. At present some rural residents can/do not read or write. However, this does not imply that residents in the countryside do not have generally-called indigenous or local knowledge or culture. Following the use of the term "*wenhua*," one may wonder what these curriculum developers suggested about how college students should respond to knowledge of this type in the process of planning and implementing "*san xia xiang*" activities. They said nothing about this in the Notice but prescribed what college students should do in the countryside, that is, "propagandizing

theory and policy, supporting the countryside with science and technology, helping enterprises (*qiye*), performing gala, offering legal assistance, protecting the environment, providing medical service, and so forth[64]" (June 26, 2007). These agencies appeared to perceive rural residents as backward or deficient in various aspects. Or, they were likely to help other agencies involved in activities of this category to form or reinforce such an understanding of rural residents.

There are two other points worth mentioning about these activities. First, here they expanded "the three" to include the perspectives of promoting industrial development, law enforcement, and ecological maintenance. As seen from the sequence of these activities, they put disseminating the discourses of the Party-State (including supporting the theory and policy of the CCP, recognizing the significance of science and technology, and highlighting the economic development of the nation) in a more important position. Medical support was placed at the bottom of the priority list. Second, there appeared the possibility that these national agencies reduced college students sending culture "down" to the countryside to gala performance, a superficial form that easily put rural people in the position of an "audience" who clapped in time.

As for the last word of the slogan, namely, "*xiang*," like most other scholars in the field, I mostly translate it as "the countryside." Yet, I do use "rural areas" and "the country" in the preceding sections. I acknowledge that I have difficulty finding an appropriate English term with a set meaning for it. As explained in Chapter 1, this is partly because in terms of administrative level there lacks a clear understanding of what "*xiang*" is. Some use it to represent the village level specifically, while others put the

[64] These activities have existed since the beginning of the "*san xia xiang*" program.

township (*xiang*), the town, and even the county into the category as well. (As has been indicated in the previous sentence, in a narrow sense "*xiang*" means "township," a place smaller than a town but bigger than a village in size and function.) Another possible meaning of the word is "home place," regardless of what characteristics this place has. Even though people in different fields tend to associate land and farmers with "*xiang*," which leads to the basic understanding of "*xiang*" as villages, the meaning potentials provide a base on which agencies at different levels can play with the word. In the coming sections I address the question of how the 2007 national, provincial, and college curricula geographically defined "*xiang*," respectively.

In fact, *Social Practice* as curriculum in relation to the countryside has a long-standing tradition in the PRC. As Seeberg (2000) states, social practice is "a cornerstone of Maoist educational theory" (p. 288). Between 1949 and 1951, students and teachers in urban schools were asked to go to the countryside and help peasants fight against landlords. In the campaign for collectivizing the countryside in 1954, urban young people were also requested to help educate village children and adults. Mao (and his colleagues) perceived the importance of *Social Practice* mainly from the stance of the Party-State.

> Social practice was conceived to teach children about work, about caring for the greater good of the nation, to become involved in political struggle, and to get a first-hand impression of the conditions and forces that lead to the revolution and that still needed change. (Seeberg, 2000, p. 289)

Furthermore, although the first word of the slogan "*san xia xiang*" is probably an invention of these national agencies (1996), the part "*xia xiang*" does not originate from them. The first public appearance of the expression can be at least traced back to October 1957.

> Urban youths with an elementary or secondary school education, except for those who can enter higher schools or have jobs in urban areas, should enthusiastically respond to the call of the nation to go down to the countryside and up to the mountain ("*shang shan xia xiang*") to take part in agricultural production, and in the great cause of socialist agricultural construction. (The CCP Central Committee, Oct. 1957, p.?)

The CCP Central Committee's articulated intention of propelling urban youths to "go down to the countryside" at the time was to promote agricultural production for the sake of constructing the newly established state. However, as Ren (2003), among many others, has argued, the major consideration of the Party-State was to switch the burden of feeding the unemployed urban youths to the peasants of the countryside. The notorious movement of "*shang shan xia xiang*" lasted until the Cultural Revolution was over. While the so-called "educated youths" (*zhiqing*) have produced numerous complaints in various forms, little reflection seems to have been done from the perspectives of (equalizing the status and the right of) the peasants and the countryside.

The term "*xia xiang*" has gained a new life and popularity since the national agencies created the "*san xia xiang*" program, and re-incorporated and highlighted it in(to) the college curriculum of *Social Practice*.[65] In the past decade, these national agencies (1996) have been promoting "*san xia xiang*" without linking it to the "*shang shan xia xiang*" movement or countryside-related social practice in Mao's time. Within this context, one may ask: What is the purpose of the national agencies to promote "*san xia xiang*" among college students in a more present day? Is it different from that in history by giving more direct consideration to the livelihood of rural areas and residents?

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[65] Another interesting phenomenon is that some parents, who were once "educated youths," encourage their children to live, work, or volunteer in the countryside for a while as a grown-up experience. This, more or less, adds to the popularization of "*xia xiang*" nowadays.

Understanding "San Xia Xiang" Primarily as a Means to Disseminate the Practice and Ideology of the CCP

The 2007 national announcement began with the following paragraph:

> In order to guide and motivate a vast number of youths/students to in-depth study and practice the new invention of the Party theory, to actively devote themselves to the great practice of pushing scientific development[66] and promoting social harmony[67], to follow the requirement of "a New Generation with Four[68]" ("*sige xin yidai*") brought forward by General Secretary Hu Jintao to grow healthily, to prepare for the convening of the 17th CCP National Congress in a high spirit, the Publicity Department of the CCP Central Committee, the Central Civilization Office, the Ministry of Education, the CCYL Central Committee, and All-China Student Federation have decided to continue developing culture, science and technology, and hygiene "Three-Going-Down-to-the-Countryside" social practice activities among college student volunteers all over China this summer. (June 26, 2007)

In this paragraph (all one sentence), the national agencies justified their decision to call for the participation of college students in the 2007 "*san xia xiang*" program. The reasons provided were, not exceptionally, associated with the CCP. They can be divided into two categories. One was to disseminate the newly produced discourses of the CCP – "the Scientific Outlook on Development," "Building a Socialist Harmonious Society," and "a New Generation with Four." And the other was to prepare for a nationwide CCP representative meeting. The theme that these agencies set for the 2007 summer social practice was "implementing the Scientific Outlook on Development, and serving the

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[66] "The Scientific Outlook on Development" was first put forth in the statement made at the 3rd Plenary Meeting of the 16th CCP Central Committee held in November 2003, in a context of recognizing the enormous gap in development between rural and urban areas. It was introduced to the national social practice curriculum in the following year (June 2, 2004).

[67] The idea of building a harmonious society was also brought up against a background of the serious imbalance in development between rural and urban areas.

[68] In the letter to celebrate the "May Fourth" Youth Day and the 85th anniversary of the establishment of the CCYL Central Committee, Hu Jintao called for Chinese young people to "strive to be a new generation with ambitious goal and firm belief, a new generation with noble morality and strong will, a new generation with broad horizon and rich knowledge, and a new generation with exploit and enterprise and the spirit of working hard to build a business" (May 4, 2007).

countryside to promote harmony[69]," which also represented the ideologies of the CCP. The writers of the text seemed to hold that there was an inseparable relationship between the nation-state and the CCP, and therefore it was unnecessary to point out the former in particular. Embedded in this was the conception of the CCP as the patriarch of the nation.

This sentence consisted of two clauses, between which a purpose-means relationship existed. In the relationship, "*san xia xiang*" was primarily perceived as a means to the end of disseminating the practice and ideology of the CCP among/by college students. Further, it needs to be pointed out that the argumentation of the text was incomplete. There was a lack of cohesion between the two clauses. The producers of the text provided no explanation about why "*san xia xiang*" would help enhance, for example, "the Scientific Outlook on Development" and "Building a Socialist Harmonious Society," the two major considerations of the CCP in the past several years.

Viewed from another aspect, these national agencies appeared to deliberately highlight that the CCP had taken measures, that is, "the Scientific Outlook on Development" and "Building a Socialist Harmonious Society," to solve the existing problems relating to the countryside, and at the same time to stay away from issues like the (institutional) root of these problems and its connection with the previous practice of the Party-State. Indeed, one can find evidence from a later part of the notice to support

[69] I do notice that a more equal relationship between college students and residents in the countryside seemed to be embedded in the use of the term "serve the countryside." However, the impact power of this term seemed to be much weaker than that of "*san xia xiang*." For example, on December 24, 2008 I typed in "college students serve the countryside" and "college students '*san xia xiang*'" respectively to Google, and found that the former (10,100) appeared much less frequently than the latter (48,500). Additionally, I am aware that the verb "serve," more or less, suggested the care of these national agencies for the countryside. Again, based on the words following "serve the countryside," that is, "to promote harmony," one may sense that they were paying attention to the countryside for purposes of the stability of the society and the legitimacy of the Party-State.

this argument. When prescribing the first (and most important, one may argue based on the sequence and the length) type of "*san xia xiang*" activities, that is, "'developing scientifically and constructing harmony together' dissemination," the national agencies wrote,

> Taking such forms as handing out publicity materials, holding photograph exhibits, seminars, and gala performances, [college students] exert themselves to **propagandize** (*xuanchuan*) the important tactics of the Party Central Committee such as the Scientific Outlook on Development, and Building the Socialistic Harmonious Society, to **propagandize** the spirit of the 3rd Plenum of the 16th CCP Central Committee, to **propagandize** the series of important policies in helping the countryside and benefiting the countryside that the Party and the state have taken by using the Scientific Outlook on Development to lead the comprehensive economic and social development and balance the development of urban and rural areas, to help the cadre and the populace at grassroots level learn and understand the innovative theories of the Party, to strengthen the self-awareness of implementing and fulfilling the Scientific Outlook on Development, and to build a rich and heavy atmosphere of promoting scientific development and building a harmonious society together. (June 26, 2007, bold added)

As suggested by the bold part, these agencies presented the verb "propagandize" three times in a row to underscore the enormous efforts of the central CCP to address social issues. One may walk away with not only the simplistic impression that the countryside itself was "unscientific" and "inharmonious," but that the central CCP was working hard to help the countryside get rid of the undesirable characteristics.

It may not be fair to contend that "a New Generation with Four" purely represented the CCP's discourse. Although put forward by Hu Jintao, General Secretary of the CCP Central Committee, the discourse focused on the development of young people in general terms and did not embody any specific ideologies of the CCP. In this sense, these national agencies did consider college students and their development while designing "*san xia xiang*" summer social practice. Also, the above excerpts were open to a reading

that these agencies cared for the well-being of the countryside. Yet, it was conceivable that they did not come straight to discuss the countryside or put it in the first and most important place, but situated the countryside in the big shadow of the CCP. This might leave the text receivers with the defining impression that to cater for the CCP was much more important than to think and work around the interests of rural communities.

Concentrating on "Key Service Teams" to Volunteer at the Village Level

As the title of the notice indicates, these national agencies set the nature of "*san xia xiang*" summer social practice as voluntary. Further, although the title showed that it was designed for all "college student volunteers all over China," the concentration of the national agencies was on "key service teams" (*zhongdian fuwu tuandui*). They spent most of the words discussing how higher education institutions should organize key teams, 600 altogether, to "go down to the countryside." The intention of doing so was articulated to "centralize resources, exert advantages, and demonstrate the example and take the lead" (June 26, 2007).

These national agencies exclusively focused on "key" groups, maybe due to the limited funds and supplies and the practical thought of making full use of them, as stated in the announcement. Yet, in doing so, these agencies did implicitly classify college students into two categories: elite and ordinary. Conveying the idea that "*san xia xiang*" was primarily the business of a small group of elite students could be a consequence of such a classification. Other related agencies might render it as unnecessary to engage the majority of students in activities of this kind. In this light, it was also possible that they would view "*san xia xiang*" first and foremost as a small-scale showcase project to

demonstrate their attention to the countryside, instead of a channel to work authentically based on, with, and for the needs and interests of rural communities.

These national agencies planned to have 100 teams in "'developing scientifically and building harmony together' dissemination," 100 in "prospering the countryside with science and technology," 100 in "voluntary teaching," 100 in "medical treatment and hygiene," and 100 in "backbone (*gugan*) college students working with a job title (*guazhi*) in the countryside." Besides, they desired to have 100 doctoral student teams to support local economic development. East Teachers College, as a teachers college, was expected to focus on three types of activities, that is, propagandizing the theories of "the Scientific Outlook on Development" and "Building a Socialist Harmonious Society," arranging backbone students to work in the countryside, and organizing students to teach in the countryside[70].

Of the three categories, the first two noticeably reflected the priority of these agencies to disseminate the CCP ideologies. It was self-evident that the first type of activities served this purpose. The second was permeated with the CCP ideology too. The national agencies considered arranging backbone students to work in the countryside as part of the program of "Cultivating Young Marxists" (June 26, 2007). The specific goals they set for backbone students were to deepen the understanding of the new CCP theories and to strengthen the belief in "Socialism with Chinese Characteristics," in addition to

[70] In the national announcement, "voluntary teaching" was divided into three sub-categories. One was to help rural students, especially those whose parents were working in urban areas as "migrant workers," with academic work and extracurricular activities. Another was to provide training for rural school teachers based on their educational level. The other was to promote the use of Mandarin among rural students and the elderly.

"understanding the situation of the country in a profound way, going through the mill (*jingshou molian*), and increasing the capability" (June 26, 2007).

Concerning the spatial definition of the countryside, the national agencies made it clear that they expected college students to voluntarily work at the village level by highlighting the continual implementation of the "plan of a thousand universities/colleges serving ten thousand villages" (June 26, 2007). Did the province and the college stick to the understanding and encourage students to focus on villages to implement activities? I will explore this question in the following sections.

The Countryside in the Provincial Curriculum

As described earlier on, the documents on student summer social practice since 2004 were well stored in the section of "'*san xia xiang*' Social Practice" on the website of Jiangsu Student Federation. The number and the content of documents issued in 2004 suggested that it was in the context of the publicization of the 2004 countryside-focused "No. 1 document" (the CCP Central Committee and the State Council, Dec. 30, 2003) that related provincial agencies sparked a (rekindled) interest in college student "*san xia xiang*."

If reading the curriculum announcements of the documents chronologically, one will find that, after keeping the term "culture, science and technology, and hygiene '*san xia xiang*'" in the title three years in a row, the Publicity Department of the Jiangsu CCP Committee, the Civilization Office of Jiangsu, Jiangsu Provincial Education Bureau, the

CCYL Committee of Jiangsu, and Jiangsu Student Federation[71] cut it out of the 2007 version. Besides, although still concentrating on "*san xia xiang*" of college students, the 2007 notice included a special section for "four one" ("*si ge yi*"[72]) summer social practice of secondary school students and mentioned "*si jin shequ*," another summer social practice form for college students.[73]

Considering "San Xia Xiang" Mainly from the Perspectives of the Centre and the Province

Like the national notice, the 2007 provincial announcement opened with a statement about the motivation for having college students engage in "*san xia xiang*" (and secondary school students in "*si ge yi*"). These provincial agencies articulated it in a way that revealed no direct connection with the countryside. According to the provincial agencies, the intention of developing "*san xia xiang*" activities among Jiangsu college student volunteers (and "*si ge yi*" among secondary school students) was two-fold. One was to "implement and fulfill the important spirit of General Secretary Hu Jintao's speech," in educating youths into "a New Generation with Four" characteristics, and the other was to "cultivate qualified constructors for 'Comprehensively Achieving a Well-off Society and Building a New Jiangsu[74]'" (June, 2007a). The two slogans referred to here were the most recent constructs of the centre and the province, respectively.

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[71] These were all separate organizations but released the annual summer social practice announcement together.

[72] On this theme, the CCYL Central Committee and the MOE asked secondary school students to develop four activities during the summer break: pay a visit to a revolutionary site, experiment and explore "the striving mother country" (*fenjin zhong de zuguo*), provide voluntary service for "the harmonious homestead," and do physical exercise.

[73] See Chapter 3 for a comparison between "*san xia xiang*" and "*si jin shequ*."

[74] The slogan "Comprehensively Achieving a Well-off Society and Constructing a New Jiangsu" originated

Apparently, these agencies at the provincial level called for institutions to organize "*san xia xiang*" (and "*si ge yi*") mainly from the perspectives of the centre and the province. One was to follow the command of the centre to strengthen the cultivation of students, and the other was to prepare human capital, that is, college students in this context, for the development of Jiangsu. Although it was highly possible that both perspectives involved developing the countryside, that was not explicit. It seems reasonable to argue that these provincial agencies did not put meeting the desires of the countryside in the first place.

After the motivation statement, the writers of the provincial announcement, somewhat awkwardly, switched from the two specific forms to discuss summer social practice in general. They used one paragraph to especially underline the "guiding theory" for organizing summer social practice activities:

> Set Important Ideas on the "Three Represents" and the Scientific Outlook on Development as guide, intimately surround the annual theme of "Disseminating the Spirit of 'Creating Three' ('*san chuang*[75]'), and Devoting to the Construction of a New Jiangsu," use developing social practice during the summer break as a carrier, direct the masses of youths/students to keep pace with the time, to breathe simultaneously with our mother country, to strive with the people, to turn the patriotic enthusiasm, the strong desire for success and development, and knowledge and skills into actual actions to reach our province's grand goal of "Comprehensively Achieving a Well-off Society and Building a New Jiangsu," to understand the situation of our country in practice, to contribute to the society, to raise quality, and to prepare for the convening of the Party's 17th National Congress with excellent achievement. (June, 2007a)

Not that surprisingly, discourses from the centre and the province were presented as guiding theories. This paragraph (also all one sentence) started with the new ideologies of

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from the Jiangsu 11th CCP Representative Conference held in November 2006.

[75] The slogan "*san chuang*" was put forward by Yuanchao Li, the secretary of the Jiangsu CCP Committee, in 2005 at the working conference of Jiangsu ideology dissemination. It called for Jiangsu people to be competitive in creating business (*chuangye*), innovation (*chuangxin*), and excellence (*chuangyou*).

the centre (the central CCP), namely, "Three Represents[76]" and "the Scientific Outlook on Development," which revealed the incomparable significance of the centre in these provincial agencies' mind. In setting the theme of the 2007 summer social practice, the provincial agencies also legitimized the new theories of the province (the provincial CCP), that is, "the Spirit of 'Creating Three'" and "Building a New Jiangsu," as guiding theories in an indirect way.

In this sentence, the part of "direct the masses of youths/students to...with excellent achievement" spoke to the purposes that these provincial agencies had for the 2007 summer social practice. In addition to highlighting the purposes of saluting the opening of the CCP 17th National Congress and promoting the development of Jiangsu, they attended to the perspective of the student. In describing this perspective, these provincial agencies suggested an attempt to bind the individual (development of the student) to the Party-State, to the society, and to the people. However, compared with the Party-State, "the society" and "the people" had a much more blurred and abstract presence.

In terms of intertextuality, after some word tracing, I found that (a) "to direct the masses of youths/students ... to strive with the people" was drawn from "Hu Jintao's Letter to Outstanding Chinese Youths" (May 4, 2007); and (b) "to turn the patriotic enthusiasm ... to raise quality" (except the part about Jiangsu, that is, "to reach our

[76] See Chapter 3 for how the concept "Three-Represents" was brought forward. After taking over the title of General Secretary from Jiang Zemin, Hu Jintao offered a new interpretation of the thought in his July 1st speech in 2003 (Bo, 2004). The term "Three Represents" was not really present in the 2007 national announcement of "*san xia xiang*" social practice. After tracking the publication dates of the two 2007 announcements, I found that the provincial one was released 20 days earlier than the national one. In other words, the provincial agencies created the 2007 version based on the documents previously made by themselves and at the national level, of which "Three Represents" was the catchphrase (between 2004 and 2006). As shown from the difference in time for publication, the provincial level seemed to have formed the habit of organizing "*san xia xiang*" and other forms of social practice with or without the notice from the centre.

province's grand goal of 'Comprehensively Achieving a Well-off Society and Building a New Jiangsu,'") was for the first time presented in the 2004 national curriculum of "*san xia xiang*" summer social practice (June 2, 2004). In directly representing the words of the centre and incorporating them into the text without quotation marks, these provincial agencies demonstrated a tendency to blend their own voice with that of the centre and to consider "*san xia xiang*" (and other summer social practice forms) from the perspective of the centre.

Defining "Xiang" in a Vague and Confusing Way

This section seeks to identify the definition of "*xiang*" in the provincial curriculum. As the concept of "*xiang*" was embedded within the description of summer social practice activities, I use the first several paragraphs below to give an introduction of these activities before going to unpack its meaning.

The main task of the provincial announcement was to ask colleges and universities within the territory of Jiangsu to organize and report "service teams" to the Provincial Lead Office for Student Social Practice Activity by the end of June, so that the latter could select 300 "key" teams at the provincial level and join the competition for key teams nationwide.[77] These provincial agencies planned to have 50 "key service teams" in "disseminating the theory of building a harmonious society," 50 in "disseminating the Olympic Games spirit," 50 in "visiting the red revolutionary base," 50 in "building a

[77] Before moving to talk especially about "key service teams," the announcement did briefly point to "*san xia xiang*" of college students in general. The provincial agencies asked the colleges and universities in Jiangsu to organize activities in both collective and individual forms based on their real situations.

socialist new countryside," and 50 in "building the moral ideology of juniors[78]," as well as 50 in "doctoral students building a new Jiangsu."

Of the five types of activities pertaining to college students, the first four clearly underscored the interests of the centre and the province. Promoting their new theories, namely, "Building a Socialistic Harmonious Society," "Comprehensively Achieving a Well-off Society and Building a New Jiangsu," and "the Scientific Outlook on Development," was exclusively included in the first type of activities. The second type of activities served as a campaign for the Party-State to host a successful Olympic Games. The provincial agencies provided no explanation about how or why the Olympic Games was relevant to (the life of) rural areas and residents. Further, from their point of view, "visiting the red revolutionary base" was primarily a way to help college students identify, acquire, and act upon a dedication to the CCP.

Concerning the fourth activity type, if assuming that all "*san xia xiang*" activities were supposed to be developed around "Building a Socialist New Countryside," the most recent project/discourse that the CCP Central Committee and the State Council (2005) had launched to cope with the "three-rural issues," one may feel surprised to see that the provincial agencies took it as only one type of activity. They condensed activities of this type into one sentence and reduced "Building a Socialist New Countryside" primarily to improve rural young people in techniques and skills. Furthermore, they highlighted this aspect out of the consideration of developing the province, or in their own words, "to

[78] This was, indeed, part of the Provincial Civilization Office's project titled "Colorful Summer: A Series of Activities for Juniors in Summer Break." The focus of this project was on helping "children left behind" in rural areas and "migrant children" in urban areas have a rich and meaningful summer. To develop activities around the latter, college students did not need to physically "go down to the countryside."

further implement the strategy of using science and education to prosper the province and people with abilities to strengthen the province" (June, 2007a).

More importantly, in contrast with the 2007 national notice's clear-cut assertion that college student volunteers should focus on the village level to conduct "*san xia xiang*" activities, the provincial agencies sent vague and confusing messages to their expected readers, namely, "each prefecture publicity department, civilization office, education bureau, CCYL committee, student federation, and higher education institution." In describing the five types of activities relevant to college students and underlining places to implement the activities, they presented five different (and contradictory) usages of the word "*xiang*."

Usage 1: "Xiang" as "Grassroots Areas"

When asking colleges and universities to organize dissemination teams in "Building a Socialistic Harmonious Society" and "Comprehensively Achieving a Well-off Society and Building a New Jiangsu," these provincial agencies used the term "to the massive cadres and populace at grassroots level in urban and rural areas (*chengxiang jiceng*)" (June, 2007a). Here, "*san xia xiang*" was targeted at both rural and urban areas. "*Xiang*" was thought of as equal to "grassroots areas" (*jiceng*). However, as I have mentioned in a footnote of Chapter 2, "*jiceng*" is another messy concept without specific content. This version of "*xia xiang*" did not explicitly or exclusively target rural communities.

Usage 2: "Xiang" as "Villages" in a Narrow Sense

When it came to call for groups in the second type of activities, that is, disseminating the 2008 Beijing Olympic Games, the provincial agencies stated that "(Related groups) organize college students to widely go to communities, towns and townships, and villages/the country (*shequ, xiangzhen, nongcun*) and rigorously disseminate the green, science and technology, and humanistic Olympic Game ideas to the grassroots populace..." (June, 2007a). Here, in a broad sense, these provincial agencies still understood "*xiang*" as "grassroots areas." This time, they were specific that by "grassroots areas" they meant "communities, towns and townships, and villages."

It is worth pointing out that in this understanding "*xiang*" embraced "communities," which was contradictory with another practice of these provincial agencies. In the announcement, they treated "*sheque*" (community) as a phenomenon peculiar to urban areas by juxtaposing "*san xia xiang*" with "*si ji shequ*," another form of college student summer social practice oriented toward urban locations. Considering that the provincial agencies used "*nongcun*" (the country) to indicate "villages" in the sentence and "*nongcun*" was a synonym for "*xiang*," one may argue that in a narrow sense they saw "*xiang*" as "villages." (I note that in the sentence they literally used "*xiang*" to signify "townships." Yet, there were no other signs in the document that they used "*xiang*" to specifically indicate "townships.")

Usage 3: "Xiang" as "Towns and Below" in Political-Administrative Terms

In the section of "Practice/Service Teams in Building the Socialist New Countryside," the provincial agencies were specific to state that "Make full use of college student's advantage in specialty skills, [ask them to] go in-depth to towns and townships,

and villages and groups (*xiangzhen, cunzu*), to rigorously disseminate good moral customs, promote healthy and civilized way of living..." (June, 2007a). Here, they defined the countryside in political-administrative terms, and incorporated four levels of units: towns, townships, villages, and groups (*xiaozu*). (Besides, it is worth noting that excluding urban "communities," this time these provincial agencies were straightforward to characterize the countryside as backward in terms of moral value and lifestyle, among others.)

Usage 4: "Xiang" as "Home Places"

At the end of the section describing "building the moral ideology of juniors," these provincial agencies used the word "*xiang*" as follows: "College students who return to their native places (*xiang*) for vacation need to report their success stories to elementary and secondary school students of their home places (*jiaxiang*)..." (June, 2007a). Here, the provincial agencies shared the broadest understanding of "*xiang*." It is a concept positioned in contrast to where college students currently live. It can be used to denote any place in the territory of China, as long as it is the place where a student was born or brought up. (In this sentence, no specific description of whether or not the content should be country-related was provided.)

Usage 5: "Xiang" as (Economically) Backward Areas without an Emphasis on "Villages"

Finally, close to the end of the announcement, the provincial agencies emphasized that "About the places for '*san xia xiang*' activities of college students, they need to be

province-wide, but the focus are on "*wushi xianxiang he chengshi shequ jiceng danwei* (which can be paraphrased as 'the five prefectures counties town(ship)s and urban communities grassroots work units') in northern Jiangsu" (June, 2007a). According to this sentence, they employed "*xiang*" to broadly stand for (economically) backward areas. In the context of Jiangsu, it included (five prefectures of) northern Jiangsu as a whole.

From the perspective of grammar, this sentence is indeed problematic. The part "*wushi xianxiang he chengshi shequ jiceng danwei*" is confusing and can be interpreted in different ways, depending on how one pauses between phrases. But however one reads it, with the presence of all other place levels but "villages," one may suspect that these provincial agencies did not make a strong effort to direct college students to work at the village level. This was a sharp contrast from the point of the national agencies.

As Fairclough (1992) has shrewdly observed, as a word usually has a range of meanings, producers are always faced with choices about how to use the word (p. 185). The processes of decision-making are not completely individual but socially variable and contested (Fairclough, 1992, p. 185). On the meaning of the key word "*xiang*," in the announcement the provincial agencies presented readers with ambivalence, ambiguity, and contradiction. In doing so, they shifted the boundary of "*xiang*" to uncertainty. They implicitly told their text recipients that college students might do summer social practice anywhere they wished to. "*San xia xiang*" became a name, and hence a reform, without much substance.

After tracing these usages, I noted that (at least) two of them were relevant to the national agencies. Usage 4, namely, "*xiang*" as "home place," was borrowed from the

2004 national curriculum without quotation marks. This showed that the national agencies used to offer confusing understandings of "*xiang*" to their text recipients. The national level updated the definition of "*xiang*" to refer to "villages," but the provincial agencies had not yet internalized the concept. About Usage 1, "*xiang*" as "grassroots areas," the original expression of the national agencies was "to the massive cadres and **farmers in rural areas** (*nongcun*) (June 2005, bold added). The provincial agencies changed it to "to the massive cadres and **populace at grassroots level in urban and rural areas** (*chengxiang*)" (June 2005, bold added) in their own 2005 announcement.[79] These two usages of "*xiang*" indicated that the relation of the province with the centre could not be oversimplified as "compliance" (L. C. Li, 1998), something I discuss later.

The Countryside in the College Curriculum

Prioritizing the College's Interests in Conceiving "San Xia Xiang" Summer Social Practice

Soon after receiving the provincial announcement, the College's CCP Committee sent out a notice to "each Party office for internal affairs, CCP branch, and secondary-level college/department," while using carbon-copy to inform related agencies at the provincial and prefecture levels. The notice was composed of four sections: "Activity Theme," "Guiding Theory," "Activity Content," and "Work Requirement." Although not presenting the term "*san xia xiang*" in the title, the Committee took it as the dominant form of summer social practice, as stated in the first sentence of the notice:

[79] They kept the revised expression in their announcements for both 2006 and 2007.

> In order to deepen the work of college student ideological and political education and the teaching work of specialty practice, guide youths/students to develop a career plan, set a long-range and big goal, get committed to serve the mother country, and strive to serve the society, based on the spirit of "*The Notice on Organizing and Developing Summer Social Practice Activities among Jiangsu College and Secondary School Student Volunteers in 2007*" (No. 32 document jointly released by the CCYL Committee of Jiangsu and others in 2007) of the Publicity Department of the Provincial CCP Committee, the Provincial Civilization Office, the Provincial Education Bureau, the Provincial CCYL Committee, and the Provincial Student Federation, our college has decided to continue organizing and developing culture, science and technology, and hygiene "*san xia xiang*" social practice. (2007, p.?)

The very first sentence addressed the question of "What motivates the College to engage students in '*san xia xiang*?'" Like those producers of the provincial announcement, the College's CCP Committee neglected the wants and needs of the countryside in its reasoning. As seen from the fact that the Committee referred to the full title of the provincial document and its producer names, a main force that moved the College to organize "*san xia xiang*" summer social practice was the directive from the provincial level. Added to this was that the Committee cited (by using no quotation marks) "set a long-range and big goal... strive to serve the society," a patriotic education discourse, from the preparatory notice of the province (June, 2007b).

However, it would be mistaken to assume that catering for those agencies at the provincial level was the only reason the College attended to "*san xia xiang*" activities. Its CCP Committee put the needs to carry out specialty practice (*zhuanye shijian*) and "career education/practice" (*shengya jiaoyu/shijian*) of students even before meeting the requirement of the provincial agencies.[80] According to my observations in the field on

[80] "Specialty practice" is a concept raised originally as part of the curriculum to educate a professional. It refers to field-based learning experiences in certain subject area, and takes place in the (junior or/and) senior year of undergraduate students. For an education major, it usually means (classroom observations in the third year and) teaching practicum in the fourth year. Whilst "specialty practice" has been in use for years, emphasizing "career education/practice" is a recent phenomenon in Chinese universities and colleges.

both student teachers and course instructors, the two needs were highly co-related, and both served the goal of increasing the employment rate of graduates.[81] In recent years, due to many factors it had been difficult for college graduates to find jobs. This was particularly true for those in local colleges (Geng & Ma, 2005). The employment rate of graduates was usually considered as one of the most important indicators of a college's quality, especially from the point of view of future college students' parents. Under a lot of pressure, the College had adopted many strategies, such as stressing career education and practical skill training, to improve the rate.

Nothing pertaining to the countryside was described in either the activity theme or the guiding theory of the 2007 summer social practice. With regard to the former, the College's CCP Committee supplemented the description of the provincial agencies with another sentence, "Deepening the practice of educating people, and enhancing the quality of education" (2007, p.?). A similar approach was taken by the Committee to address the issue of "Guiding Theory." The Committee on the one hand copied and pasted the corresponding writing of the provincial agencies (June, 2007a), and on the other embodied the College's own concentration.

> Set Important Ideas on the "Three Represents" and the Scientific Outlook on Development as guide, intimately surround the annual theme of "Disseminating the Spirit of 'Creating Three' and Devoting to the Construction of a New Jiangsu;

Its popularity is due to, to a great extent, that after the expanding enrollment policy was carried out in 1999 issues of college graduates hunting for jobs have been worsening. Therefore, "career education/practice" is heavily employment oriented. At the College, it was arranged every year and covered a range of activities, such as writing a career plan and listening to lectures on how to manage time, to collaborate with others in a team, to have a meaningful college life, to communicate with a potential employer, to talk a lesson (*shouke*), as well as to obtain internship opportunities (East Teachers College's Employment Division, 2008).

[81] During my stays at the College, I observed that the topic that most frequently appeared in student teachers' talk was job searching. It was also the main place where course instructors interacted with students.

> **deepening the practice of educating people, and enhancing the quality of education,**" use developing social practice during the summer break as carrier, **expand the approaches of career education, further strengthen the work of college student ideological and political education and integrate it with the work of specialty practice, further strengthen the work of college student ideological and political education and the reform of undergraduate teaching,** direct the masses of youths/students to keep pace with the time, to breathe simultaneously with our mother country, to strive with the people, to turn the patriotic enthusiasm, the strong desire for success and development, and knowledge and skills into actual actions to reach our province's grand goal of "Comprehensively Achieving a Well-off Society and Building a New Jiangsu," to understand the situation of our country in practice, to contribute to the society, to raise quality, **to prepare for the evaluation of undergraduate teaching from the Ministry of Education** with excellent achievement, and to prepare for the convoking of the Party's 17th National Congress. (2007, p.?, bold added)

After a glance at the bold highlights I made above, the College's CCP Committee thought highly of teaching and education (which included "ideological and political education," as it was highlighted at the very beginning of the announcement and repeated twice in "Guiding Theory"), apart from meeting the demand of the provincial agencies. I have no doubt about this. I feel that another big reason for the College to emaphasize summer social practice was to build capital for the college to pass the crucial evaluation of the MOE in fall 2007.[82] The Committee was, indeed, explicit about this in the "Guiding Theory" statement: "to prepare for the evaluation of undergraduate teaching from the Ministry of Education" (2007, p.?).[83]

As a matter of fact, in the first "*san xia xiang*" briefing that the CCYL Committee sent to the same group of recipients as the CCP Committee did, it was underlined that

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[82]This round of nationwide evaluation of undergraduate teaching was initiated in 2003 and did not end until 2007 (The MOE's Division of Higher Education, 2003). If a college or university failed the evaluation based on certain criteria (in mission statement, teaching force, teaching equipment and use, program building and teaching reform, teaching administration, learning culture, and teaching effects), it would be asked by the MOE to improve within a certain period of time, stop recruiting students, get the license withdrawn, or the like. No universities or colleges were allowed to apply for new programs or funds before passing the evaluation either.

[83] Before the arrival of the evaluation team from the state, the provincial education bureau made an evaluation and offered suggestions for further preparation.

"summer social practice this year needs to be combined with the key work of preparing for the evaluation" (p. 2). At the end of her writing, Yuan, on behalf of the College's CCYL Committee, reduced the goal of the College engaging students in summer social practice to "prepare for the evaluation of undergraduate teaching from the Ministry of Education with excellent achievement" (2007, p. 2). Later on, in the self-evaluation report submitted to the MOE on teaching quality, the College consumed a lot of ink to depict its devotion to summer social practice.

To sum up, in the notice (and other materials) the College's CCP Committee did not explicitly express any authentic concerns for rural communities. By contrast, there was evidence that the Committee attended to summer social practice and "*san xia xiang*" in particular with the aim of implementing the command of the provincial agencies. Meanwhile, the Committee tended to employ it to fulfill the urgent needs of the College, including both reducing the employment pressure of graduates and demonstrating the excellence of the college in order to pass the high-stakes evaluation in undergraduate teaching.

Likely to Understand "San Xia Xiang" as a Showcase Relating to a Small Number of Elite Students

After "Guiding Theory," there followed a description of "Activity Content." In this section, the College's CCP Committee copied word for word (without quotation marks) from the provincial announcement. All the words of this section described "*san xia xiang*" activities except that the last paragraph spoke of "*si jin shequ.*" With this, one may suspect that the Committee had a clear intention of sticking to what the provincial

agencies advocate on the one hand, and that the Committee organizationally followed the direction of the provincial agencies without much serious or independent thinking about "*san xia xiang*" on the other.

Compared with the provincial agencies, the College's CCP Committee offered a much more detailed description of how to organize activities in the notice. In the section of "Work Requirement," the Committee first emphasized that every organization of the College should "highly attend to and strengthen leadership in" (2007, p.?) summer social practice. Further, the Committee stated that the College had established a leading group especially for summer social practice, with the Vice General Secretary of the Committee as group leader, the Vice Dean as vice group leader, and the heads of various organizations as member. Clearly, the Committee was showing that the College attached extreme importance to summer social practice, especially "*san xia xiang*."

In the notice title, summer social practice was presented as "voluntary." However, when it came to the section of "Work Requirement," the Committee put that "Need to expand the coverage, and guide students to widely participate in summer social practice activities, and ensure that **all members** get engaged" (2007, p.?, bold added). In doing so, the Committee changed the nature of summer social practice from "voluntary" to "compulsory." Based on this, the first paragraph of the notice, and the description in the section of "Activity Content," one may expect that the Committee concentrated on "*san xia xiang*" in the 2007 summer social practice.

This was not the case. Afterwards, in the process of describing "Mobilizing broadly and developing deliberately," another part of "Work Requirement," the Committee

overturned its previous (to be precise, the provincial agencies') writing on "Activity Content," redefined summer social practice activities, and classified them into three categories.

The first category was career practice activities, of which the purpose was to ask college students to build experience for future job hunting. In this regard the Committee stated,

> Based on their own career plans, all students (need to) actively develop career practice activities through the form of experiencing a profession, participating in the creation of a business, visiting a human talent market (*rencai shichang*), searching information on the Graduate Entrance Exam, contacting an unit for internship, and understanding the new trend of educational reform, and so forth. (2007, p.?)

Given the requirement for full participation of students, it is no doubt that the Committee considered career practice as the most important part/form of summer social practice. The great emphasis on career practice can also be discerned from the fact that the College juxtaposed the term "career practice" with "social practice" in the title of "the Registration and Evaluation Form" handed out to each student before the spring semester ended. When describing this most important category of activities, the Committee mentioned nothing concerning the countryside.[84]

Category 2 pointed specifically to issues of "*san xia xiang*:"

> (2) Recruit team members who are relatively high in ideological and political quality, rich in science and technology and cultural knowledge, and enthusiastic about work publicly across campus. Divide them into voluntary service teams after intensive

[84] I note that there was a file titled "Topics for Reference on 2007 Summer Social Practice Activities" attached to the college announcement. Three of the 20 topics were oriented toward the countryside: "Building a Socialist New Countryside," "Attending to 'Left behind Children,'" and "A Survey of Compulsory Education in Rural Northern Jiangsu."

> training, and (let them) go to key areas and concentrate on the development of summer "*san xia xiang*" social practice activities. (2007, p.?)

The Committee appeared to see "*san xia xiang*" as a business that only related to a small group of elite students. In its understanding, participants needed to be competitively selected based on several considerations: quality in (political) ideology, ability in science and technology and culture, and attitude. In doing so, the Committee excluded the majority of students from participating in collective "*san xia xiang*" activities. The Committee transmitted the hidden curriculum that the improvement of the countryside depended on elites under the leadership of the CCP (and related agencies) as opposed to common people. This approach might discourage the majority of students from working independently in/with/for rural communities.

From Category 2, I also note that the college planned to direct and hold responsibility for "*san xia xiang*" activities. This suggested the great importance that the college placed on "*san xia xiang.*" In the meantime, based on the illusion of full attention on "*san xia xiang,*" the little consideration of the countryside in justifying its decision, the selectivity of student participants, and the concentration on "key areas," one may suspect that the Committee intended to construct "*san xia xiang*" as a showcase.

The view that the Committee probably understood "*san xia xiang*" as a showcase was supported by its description of media use. The Committee stressed, much more than the national and the provincial agencies did, the role of media dissemination. In the notice, with an emphasis on the goal of "striving to enlarge our college's influence in social practice activities" (2007, p.?), the Committee spent plenty of words describing how related propaganda departments should employ media of various kinds at different levels

(the college, prefecture, provincial, and national). Media use was never linked with the well-being of rural communities, thus the Committee might leave one with a strong sense of taking advantage of the countryside to increase the college's influence and popularity.

Less Likely to Work in/with or Hold Accountability to Village Communities

In Category 2, the Committee was ambivalent about its definition of "*xiang*." Switching to the third category of activities, it wrote that "Student cadres at the levels of class presidents and CCYL secretaries (*tuanzhishu*) and above go to practice with a job title for a period at grass-roots level [community committees (*juweihui*), village committees (*cunweihui*), and town(ship) CCYL organizations]" (2007, p.?). If considering Category 3 as part of "*san xia xiang*," based on the information provided in parentheses, one may argue that the Committee spatially defined "*xiang*" as "grassroots areas," including "urban communities," "town(ships)," and "villages."

However, when moving to underscore places for forthcoming activities, the Committee repeated the statement made by the provincial agencies (but took away the term "*san xia xiang*"). "About the places for activities, they need to be province-wide, but the focus are on the five prefectures counties town(ship)s and urban communities grassroots work units (*wushi xianxiang he chengshi shequ jiceng danwei*) in northern Jiangsu" (2007, p.?). The Committee did not yet seem to have identified the problem with the sentence. Yet, if taking this sentence seriously, with the absence of "villages," it appeared unlikely that the Committee planned to prioritize villages as sites for summer social practice.

The College tended to neglect villages as the main sites to implement ("*san xia xiang*") summer social practice. One piece of evidence lied in the "Registration and Evaluation Form." One cell of the form wrote "Approval and Feedback from the Practice Unit (*danwei*) [at the Town(ship) Level and above]."[85] Following some blank lines was the place for the work unit to "stamp." The form also left space for the college student, the supervising teacher, and the program director to give voice. In contrast with this, throughout the form there was the absence of any reference to the village level.

The urban bias embedded in the use of *danwei* put aside,[86] as seen from the phrase "at the town(ship) level or above," the College did not appear to encourage students to go to work at the village level. The direct interaction between college students and villages did not seem to be advocated, if not discouraged. There is another way to interpret it: the College hoped to see students work in the village but assumed that residents there were not eligible or able to give voices of their own on the form. In this case, the town(ship) government, as a type of *danwei*, was supposed to represent them.

In either case, the College appeared less likely to seek accountability to village people or communities. There was actually evidence to suggest that it was more likely to give accountability to the powerful rather than to ordinary residents or communities when implementing activities in villages. For instance, in the entire notice, nothing was written about how "*san xia xiang*" participants should interact with rural residents. By contrast, the Committee emphasized that how they should "contact the local CCP committee, government, and related enterprises" (2007, p.?) to gain their support of various types.

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[85] See Appendix D for the form.
[86] See Chapter 3 for an explanation of the term "*danwei*."

Conclusion

China has a highly centralized social system "where the few make highly consequential decisions for the many" (Richman, Aug. 2004). In the field of higher education, various layers of organizations (such as the national, the provincial, and the college) are involved and work in accordance with this institutional environment.

According to the institutional theory, institutionalized organizations are "(a) connected to and (b) constructed by wider social environments" (Meyer & Scott, 1992, p. 1). They "achieve societal support – legitimacy and resources – by virtue of having the proper connections with their environments. ... Conformity to the requirements of these external agencies is a condition for the survival and success of this type of organization" (Scott, 1992, p. 102). Then, there is a high probability that "a simple chain-of-command organization structure" exists in higher education, that is, each layer seeks to "be directly and solely responsible to the one above it" and "have authority and control over the one below it" (Meyer & Scott, 1992, p. 1).

Meanwhile, as Meyer (cited in Scott, 1992, p. 102) argues, formal organizations, especially those in the field of education, share the characteristics of "loose coupling." Educational organizations may merely ceremonially comply with the institutional environment, and use it to serve their own interests, that is, "maximize their legitimacy and increase their resources and survival capabilities" (Meyer, 1992, p. 184). They may even adopt some strategies to achieve the purpose.

Since the late 1990s, some scholars and social activists have given increased attention toward the "three-rural issues." This has caused an enormous legitimacy challenge to the central Party-State. The central Party-State copes with the challenge by formulating the discourses of "Building a Socialist New Countryside," "the Scientific Outlook on Development," and "Building a Socialist Harmonious Society." Agencies at the national, provincial, and college levels have responded by implementing them in "*san xia xiang*" summer social practice for college students, among others. This has presented a good appearance that they all care for rural areas and strive to improve the situation there. However, beyond this, my detailed description and interpretation of their respective formal curricula in 2007 suggests that they tended to attend to the countryside in a ceremonial way, define (the needs of) the countryside in their own interests, and take "*san xia xiang*" as a means to serve their own agenda.

At the national level, administrating higher education was supposedly the duty of the MOE. It turned out that four other national organizations joined the MOE to take the collaborative responsibility for calling for the organization of "*san xia xiang*" summer social practice in universities and colleges. This produced a ritual performance that they were all committed to rural development (and also proved that institutional organizations were anything but isolated). However, to propagandize the practice and theory of the (central) CCP and to promote the building of the nation-state were highlighted in the announcement as the main incentives that attracted these national agencies to college student "*san xia xiang*."

Echoing the command of the national agencies, the corresponding Jiangsu agencies created a provincial version of college student "*san xia xiang*." It was evident that the provincial curriculum developers sought to be accountable to the centre and the province. In accordance with this, "*san xia xiang*" became a tool for them to show loyalty to the central Party (-State). Also, it served as a channel for these provincial agencies to spread the practice and theory of the provincial CCP, and consequently preserve and maximize its legitimacy and power.

Meanwhile, this chapter suggests that their conformity to the national agencies was pretty ceremonial. According to the curriculum document, the provincial agencies adopted the "chameleon" strategy (Meyer, 1992; Meyer & Rowan, 1977) to decouple themselves from "*san xia xiang*" activities. They embodied the strategy in stuffing "*si jin shequ*" and "*si ge yi*" into the text, repacking non-rural-specific projects such as "disseminating the Olympic Game Spirit" and "building the moral ideology of juniors," and, more importantly, providing an uncertain and ambiguous understanding of "*xiang*." In a word, they presented an attempt to change appearance to match the environmental requirement for "*san xia xiang*," while leaving their core services intact.

As a response to the demand of the provincial agencies, the College's CCP Committee produced its own "*san xia xiang*." As articulated in the text, the first intention of the College to invest in "*san xia xiang*" activities was to abide by the provincial directive. In order to show a high level of conformity, the Committee even switched the status of summer social practice from "selective" to "required." However, this did not stop it from incorporating or even prioritizing its own aspirations in the curriculum plan.

The Committee tended to utilize "*san xia xiang*" to prove the excellence of the College for evaluation purposes in the short term, to help students prepare for their career search, and to gain resources in both material and symbolic senses for survival and development of the College in the long run.

Contrary to the common expectation that promoting the well-being of rural communities and residents was the goal of "*san xia xiang*," it was lost sight of in all the three curricula. What was more, apart from painting a picture of full attention on rural areas and their development, the national, provincial, and college agencies reinforced institutionalized place-based injustice in using and underscoring "*san xia xiang*," a slogan that tended to "obscure dissensus" and "dodge hard problems" (Clabaugh & Rozycki, 2000, slide 1).

The expression of "*xia xiang*" displayed that the national agencies tended to understand "rural areas and residents" in relation to urban counterparts and position the former lower than the latter. In putting emphasis on sending "culture, science and technology" "down to" the countryside, they appeared to not only dismiss the value of rural knowledge and culture but understand rural dwellers as a homogenous group which impeded the progress of the nation-state. Furthermore, by expanding the "three" items of "*xia xiang*" into "many" in the body of the text, they revealed the perception that rural residents were ignorant and deficient in almost all aspects.

As seen from a historical perspective, these national agencies inherited the tradition of "*san xia xiang*" social practice from Mao and his time. However, on the one hand they denied the origin by presenting it as a program recently created, and on the other hand

left the basic assumption behind the slogan intact. In this sense, they also adopted the "chameleon" strategy to avoid the unpleasant history of "*xia xiang*" and therefore the challenge to the legitimacy of the central Party-State. Both the provincial and the college levels went after the national agencies by using the expression of "*san xia xiang*" to portray the countryside in a stereotypical and negative light, which moved the process of reproducing the particular notion of the countryside forward.

Hypothetically, the goal of "*san xia xiang*" was to help college students develop a sense of civic responsibility and social justice by building an equal and reciprocal relation with rural communities and residents through service activities. However, the agencies at all the three levels appeared to overlook this goal, to focus on something else in curriculum design. It was apparent that they presented "*san xia xiang*" as an instrument to enhance the bonding of college students to the Party-State. By comparison, in using the verb "*xia*," these agencies positioned rural communities and residents as passive potential recipients of pre-defined services, and college students as superior service-providers, which might further the distance between the two. Moreover, they might discourage the majority of college students from contacting rural communities and residents by concentrating on showcase projects with elite students as participants. This might result in a further dependence on the Party-State and the elite to meet the needs of rural communities and residents.

In this chapter I do not intend to claim that the cycle of reproducing this particular understanding of the countryside had been completed. How did the College, especially the department where my research participants came from – the Department of Chinese,

implement the 2007 summer social practice, especially "*san xia xiang*?" What did the students in the Program actually do for this course? How was the countryside portrayed in their materials submitted to the Department? How did the students understand the summer social practice course, "*san xia xiang*" in particular? I will investigate these questions focusing on two other layers of curriculum, that is, enacted and perceived curriculum, in two coming chapters.

CHAPTER 5

THE COUNTRYSIDE IN THE ENACTED SUMMER SOCIAL PRACTICE CURRICULUA

Introduction

In the last chapter, I have examined how the national agencies, the provincial agencies, and the College presented the concept of countryside in their 2007 *Summer Social Practice* announcements. My reading suggests that all the three levels perceived the countryside as a lowly backwater. Meanwhile, attending to and working for the needs and interests of rural (especially village) communities was not their priority. They tended to utilize "*san xia xiang*" as an instrument to serve their own/different interests.

In this chapter, focusing on the 2004 cohort of my focal program, I further explore how the countryside was represented in the implementation of summer social practice. More specifically, I intend to address four questions in this chapter: 1) How did the College depict the countryside when implementing the 2007 summer social practice? 2) How did the Department position the countryside in its delivery of social summer practice? 3) How did the students in the Program portray the countryside in their submitted homework? 4) What did these students do for the homework and how?

I highlight the "generic social process" (Prus, 1987) of the summer social practice implementation in this chapter. The College, the Department, and the student teacher were three main groups involved in the process of enacting summer social practice. Asking and exploring what each of the groups did for summer social practice and hence

how they treated the countryside in their actions should enable us to see "the existence of multiple realities (or worldviews)" and "the emergent, ongoing nature of group life" (Prus, 1987, p. 255), among others.

The emphasis of this chapter is upon the actions of student teachers. As you may have noticed, both Questions 3 and 4 focus on student teachers. The two questions point to how they placed the countryside through summer social practice from different angles: in the written materials to be reviewed for grading or evaluation, and in the process of constructing the materials. Patterns identified from the two angles can supplement or/and conflict with each other. I consider Question 3 first for two reasons. First, as the coming section will show, like Questions 1 and 2, it is concerned with how this group presented the countryside to others, or what Goffman (1959) calls "front stage." Second, I believe that research results on this question will naturally inspire us to go "backstage" (Goffman, 1959) and ask Question 4.

Research Data and Collection

To answer Questions 1 and 2, I rely on the documents that the Department and the College posted on their respective websites. The College highlighted that each department should arrange one or two students to report on summer social practice teams and to send them to the CCYL Committee for briefing. As a result, in accordance with the development of 2007 summer social practice, the Committee issued about 20 newsletters entitled *Briefings on 2007 "san xia xiang" Summer Social Practice Activities.*

Added to this was that the Department documented their activities for the 2007 summer social practice in the form of "Guidance Plans" and reports.[87]

In this chapter I concentrate on two classes – Classes 7 and 1 – to explore Questions 3 and 4. Class 7 was comprised of 67 students, including 50 girls and 17 boys. There were 46 students in Class 1, nine of whom were male. As we shall see, the data obtained from Classes 7 and 1 does not perfectly match. My aim is not to compare the two classes but to provide a comparatively rich picture of how the 2004 cohort completed the countryside-themed summer social practice.

For Class 7, during the first week of the fall semester, that is, early September 2007, I observed how Jing, her roommates – Fang, Hong, Qing, Jie, and Ning – and some other classmates living nearby finished their summer social practice homework. I also collected the materials that Class 7 submitted to the Department. More specifically, I received 52 filled-out "Student Social Practice (Career Practice) Activity Registration and Evaluation Forms" (thereafter "Registration and Evaluation Form") and 57 summer social practice reports.[88]

With respect to Class 1, due to timing issues I was not able to access the submitted registration and evaluation forms.[89] Yet, I did make a copy of 43 summer social practice

[87] I understood what was written down might be distinct from what actually happened. I tried to interview Dr. Yao, an associate professor in the Department, after seeing his name on the department "Guidance Plans" as "guidance teacher" of the Program's 2007 summer social practice. This did not work out. Besides the fact that Dr. Yao had a very tight schedule in fall 2007, my conversation with him suggested that he was not involved in students' summer social practice except that he contributed a reference topic to the "Guidance Plan" for the 2004 cohort. I did not succeed in finding any other faculty members for interviewing either. For the entire fall semester, they were stuck in preparation for the high-stakes undergraduate teaching evaluation from both Jiangsu Education Bureau and the MOE.

[88] See Appendix D for the form.

[89] I was not able to know Jiang until the very end of September, while her class was required by the

reports and the "Social Practice Grade Report" with the assistance of the department-level Student Association Chair, and to obtain the student background information sheet with the help of several faculty members.

To answer Question 4, I also drew on interview data. I conducted in-depth interviews around summer social practice with seven student teachers – three from Class 7 and four from Class 1 – apart from chatting with them and others. During each interview I asked questions such as "How was the summer social practice homework given in your class?," "What did you (and your classmates) do to complete the homework?," and "How was it graded?"

The three interview participants from Class 7 were Jing, Fang, and Feng. Jing grew up in a small town of East Prefecture but enjoyed visiting her grandparents who were living in a nearby village. I started communicating with her about this study in summer 2006 and formally interviewed her in an empty classroom on the college campus in December 2007. Both Fang and Feng came from a village of a county adjacent to East but administratively belonging to middle Jiangsu. Fang was the CCYL Secretary of Class 7. After returning to MSU and reading the collected data more carefully, I found that both Feng's and Fang's cases were interesting and unique.[90] I reached them through Jing and

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Department to turn in homework materials by the September 10th. After receiving them, the Department sent the registration and evaluation forms to the College for record but kept the reports in the Student Office of the Department. This indicated that at the College the form was considered more important than the report to evaluate the summer social practice of a student.

[90] In fact, I found another student teacher from Class 7 called Li who participated in a summer social practice group themed on the countryside and collectively organized by the Department. He was quite active in the Department and also the head of a student body. I contacted him via another acquaintance from Class 7 and chatted with him online for an hour. After he agreed to provide information about this group, I emailed him some questions. But I have not got any reply from him as of this writing. According to Jing and her roommates, Li was quite cautious about what things to do and what not to. Also, maybe long influenced by his father, the principal of a county Party school, he spoke with an "official tone"

interviewed them in June 2008 via QQ – an instant messenger program widely-used in China.

In Class 1, the four student teachers I interviewed were Jiang, Meng[91], Shen, and Zhong.[92] Jiang was the oldest of four children and her parents were living in a village of northern Jiangsu. To pay tuition and fees she borrowed student loans. Meng, Jiang's roommate, grew up in a village of East. Her father was working annually in Shanghai as a migrant worker, while her mother was staying behind in the village and farming. Her brother was teaching Chinese in a township high school of her home county. Zhong came from the same county as Meng did but had her family in the county seat. Of all the interview participants, Zhong appeared to enjoy the most privileged family background.[93] She was the vice president of Class 1 and used to be the head of a department-level student association. Shen was raised by her grandparents in a village of Mid-Jiangsu. Although her parents built a house in the central town where the village was located, they were in Shanghai working on the construction site. The interviews were separately

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(*guanqiang*). There was a story about him spread in Jing's dorm. Fang came from the same county as he did. Once while having dinner as "classroom cadres" together, Hong and Qing, two other girls from the dorm, said to Li that "Fang is your fellow townsman (*laoxiang*)." To their surprise, he responded that "No! I am from the county urban area (*xiancheng*), while she is from the down countryside (*xiangxia*)!"

[91] Noting that Meng's report was missing – it was separately handed to the Department as an "Excellent Social Practice Report," I asked her to write an overview of the report for me.

[92] While selecting interviewees from Class 1, I took such factors as gender, home place, and school for student teaching into account and used the method of "snowball sampling." Despite this, I was not able to interview any male students from Class 1. I did interview a male named Chen from Class 2, in addition to a girl whose family lives in East City. He grew up in a village of northern Jiangsu. Since this chapter focuses on Class 7 and Class 1, I will not include him as my research participant, although I know that Classes 1 and 2 took most courses together and shared the same head teacher.

[93] Zhong's grandpa on mother's side joined the Huaihai Campaign, the determining war for the CCP to take power from the Kuomintang nationalists. After the founding of the PRC, he was located to work in Shanghai, and then in Suzhou as the principal and the CCP General Secretary of a school. According to Zhong, during the Cultural Revolution, he was sent back to his native place – a village in northern Jiangsu – with the whole family to serve the countryside. Her close relatives now work in the fields of education, medicine, and the like in the county seat. Zhong's father is an accountant of the county printing company, while her mother works in the county spinning mill.

conducted in late November and early December of 2007 in a tea/coffee house or an unoccupied classroom on campus.

Data Analysis

As mentioned in Chapter 2, I used SPSS to analyze the registration and evaluation forms and the summer social practice reports. Concerning the former, I classified student teachers' responses to each part into categories. For example, I grouped their places of practice into five main categories: village, town(ship), county seat, prefecture city, and not written specifically. Then I read the stamps to see if they matched the listed places, and assigned a "yes" or "no" code.

For a more complicated example, I reviewed the "Main Content of the Practice Activity" part to decide if it was consistent with the topic reflected in the "Purpose of the Practice Activity." I also read this part multiple times to tell if the student wrote it on his/her own or copied it from somewhere else. To this end, I sometimes submitted one or several suspicious sentences to Google or Baidu[94] looking for a match.

Turning qualitative data (words) into quantitative data (numbers) was not easy, as in some cases there were no clear-cut distinctions between categories. I coded repeatedly and kept revising codes. It took me about two months to stabilize them. After entering the numbers into SPSS, I ran frequencies to generate descriptive statistics. This enabled me to see patterns more clearly. I did the same to understand the distribution of topics in the summer social practice reports from the two classes.

[94] Baidu (http://www.baidu.com/) is China's largest internet search engine.

The College: Obscuring the Countryside in the Name of "*Xiang*"

Shortly after the release of the 2007 summer social practice announcement, the College Lead Office for Student Social Practice ("the Office" for short) sent out a "Work Reminder." It requested that each student hand in 1) a filled-in registration and evaluation form and 2) a reflective or investigative report with about 2,000 words after completing the summer social practice. The Office also divided "key teams" into two levels: college- and department-, and asked all departments to submit application materials for both levels by certain times. For those students who would prefer individual practice, the Office required that each department provide differentiated plans by following a certain template based on the year and the program they were in, and the topics on a sheet of paper attached to the college announcement.

According to the agenda that the Office posted online a week later, four and eight teams were, respectively, selected as "key" on the college and department levels. Gala performance[95], book donation, and knowledge/discourse dissemination were considered as the main form of team activities. More importantly, those names indicated that no teams were tailored for ordinary rural people or communities. By contrast, there were teams pointing to soldiers, industrial workers, and urban communities. No teams claimed that they would highlight villages as places for activity implementation either. Of the 12 teams, two planned to develop activities in a town setting. One was exclusively made of students with the CCP membership, and their goal of going to a well-known town was to receive Party education from a historical perspective. The other specified that they would

[95] Gala performance was singled out as an essential activity to be developed by college-level key teams, as the Office made the specific request that the departments hand in applications in this area for college-wide selection.

go to volunteer teaching at the center kindergarten close to the College. As for others, they were designed to focus on a military site, an industrial center of a county seat, a county school, a river, or a prison.

After the fall semester started, the College's CCYL Committee reviewed the activities that both the key and non-key teams developed in the final briefing. The review began with a strong and authoritative argument about "*san xia xiang*:"

> At present "*san xia xiang*" social practice activities have become the effective carrier of our college's students to receive education, enhance ability, and make contributions; have become an important approach to strengthen and improve college students' thought and political work; and have become the "favorite" of college students. (2007, p.?)

The irony lies in that after referring to "*san xia xiang*" three times in the first paragraph the Committee completely left it out in the rest of the body text. No words pertinent to "*xiang*" were mentioned again.[96]

Attached to the review was a long list of reports on the College's 2007 summer social practice, which suggested that the CCYL Committee used the level of media exposure as the key indicator of success in organization. Over 100 pieces of related news were listed in the attachment. It was noticeable that the same event was repeatedly reported by the same or different people in different media channels. As seen from the titles of those reports, only a handful of activities took place in village or town(ship) contexts, or highlighted rural-related content.

The Department

[96] I will provide a sample from the Department of Chinese in the next section about how the countryside was described in the briefings or reports.

The "key Teams:" Primarily Seeing the Countryside as a Locale

According to the agenda of the Office, two teams relating to the Department of Chinese were selected as "key." The college-level "key team" "Send Science and Technology and Culture to the Army," developed by the Department with two other organizations on campus, focused on soldiers at a military radar site in a geographically isolated setting. All the activities to be undertaken included gala performance, science and technology books and literature works donation, and information broadcasting about the Olympic Games. The department-level "key team" "Protect the Mother River of East" was a product of collaboration between the student environmental protection association of the Department and three other departments. Investigating a river in the urban area of East City, making a documentary, and providing information about environment protection were the activities designed.

In exploring the concept of place, Agnew (1987) makes the distinction between locale and location. Whereas "locale" means "the physical settings in which social relations are constituted" (Agnew, 1987, p. 26), "location" refers to the social, economic, cultural, and political surroundings of a physical place. In this perspective, the two "key" teams considered the countryside primarily as a locale for activities to be implemented. The "location" dimension of a rural place was absent in the activities of both teams. In fact, neither of the projects was designed for or implemented in ordinary rural communities. The Department of Chinese and its partners took a descriptive approach to the rural (Halfacree, 1993). More precisely, they used a certain "parameter" to define the

rural, and therefore to justify their summer social practice as "rural." For the former it was "remoteness" of a place and for the latter "the natural environment."

The Non-Key Rural-Focused Group: Positioning Countrymen as Recipients of the Pre-determined Service on Behalf of the Party-State

In addition to the two "key teams," the Department formed three other groups to carry out summer social practice of the collective type. One was to spread information about the Olympic Games in several urban communities close to the College and a large farm under the direct leadership of the province. Another was to warn young students in several towns of a district near the College against the risks of drug use and abuse. As seen from the planned activities, the two groups did not go beyond the notion of seeing the countryside as a locale for activity delivery.

The third one was named "Serving the Construction of the Socialist New Countryside," which appeared to be the only group that the Department organized centered on the countryside in summer 2007. Their actions on a specific morning were reported not only in a briefing issued by the College's CCYL Committee and on the Department's website, but on the College's News Center page, on the College's summer social practice page, and in two other local newspapers. Although having different reporter names on them, these reports presented very similar words. In what follows I take a look at the consideration of the countryside in the report. The version I focus on is

the one titled "Students Come to Practice in * Town and Commit Themselves to Serving the New Countryside." It was posted on the website of the Department.[97]

The first paragraph of the report provided a contextual introduction to the event:

> On the morning of *, with a hail of enthusiastic applause, the Department of Chinese opened the curtain of the 2007 summer social practice around the theme "Put the Concept on Honors and Disgraces into Practice, Serve the New Countryside, Devote to 'the First Two' Goal, and Build a Harmonious Society"[98] at the fair market of * town in * district of East. About * country friends from * villages and* resident committees of the town crowded into the ceremony site. They witnessed this indelible moment with the CCP and the CCYL of the Department of Chinese from East Teachers College, and the party and administrative leaders of * town. (The Department of Chinese, 2007)

In the report both the central town and the villages around were classified as the countryside. Hence, the residents from both places were called "country men." Further, they were positioned more as the audience eager to watch or the backdrop for the event. The CCP leaders and administrators from both the Department and the town were more seen as the main actors or the focus of the event.

The second paragraph reported on the speech made by the CCP Secretary of the Department at the ceremony. The main issue addressed in his speech included the purpose of the team coming to the countryside:

> The main purpose is to disseminate various "benefit the rural" policies of the Party and the state to "Build a Socialist New Countryside," and let the country friends understand the benefits of these national policies. Meanwhile, (it) is also to let college students go beyond the campus, go into the countryside (*nongcun*), understand the countryside, go close to country men, convert book knowledge into

[97] Since it has been approved by the Department and no individual reporter name is present, here I take the Department as the collective producer of this report.
[98] It is more or less awkward that the summer social practice theme presented here was the one that Jiangsu province and the College designed for 2006.

practice, serve country friends, and forge their own capabilities. (The Department of Chinese, 2007)

In terms of activities, the team designed "Knowledge Propaganda in the New Countryside Construction" and "Picture Exhibit on the Cheerful Prospect of the New Countryside" as the two most important ones. They were simultaneously implemented immediately after the opening ceremony. The third paragraph of this report read,

> Students enthusiastically presented the pictures on the cheerful prospect of the new countryside they prepared beforehand to the countrymen on the site. ... The student team presented these pictures on one hand, and introduced various "benefit the rural" policies implemented by the Party and the Central government in the countryside since the 16th CCP National Congress carefully and in detail to the country friends on the other. (The Department of Chinese, 2007)

As observed from both the articulated purpose and content, the team perceived themselves as representatives of the Party-State on rural issues. They assumed their main responsibility in the countryside was to speak for the Party-State, that is, to deliver positive messages from the Party-State to rural residents. The team presented the photos prepared beforehand on the future of the countryside to the rural dwellers, which suggested that what they did in the field was, to a great degree, pre-decided. In doing so, they also seemed to ignore the right of the latter to engage in the process of imagining and deciding the future of the countryside or to question their ability or potential to do so.

Following the description of the two activities, the report offered an effectiveness statement:

> Through the dissemination and the exhibit, the country friends truly understood the meaning of the "benefit the rural" policies that the Party and the Central government have implemented in the countryside, and authentically felt the importance that the Party and the State have attached to the interests of the massive common country people. As a country friend said on the site, "In the past we only knew that the Party

and the State had brought forward the guideline of building the new countryside, and that the local government was doing many things to construct 'the socialist new countryside' as well. But we didn't actually understand. Now it is great that you college students are here disseminating and explaining these policies. We feel ensured in heart and understand. I feel very happy. Thank you." (The Department of Chinese, 2007)

These words indicated that the "country friends" on the scene were positioned to be passive. The team primarily saw them as the grateful "objects," beneficiaries, or recipients of the pre-determined service. The interaction between the students and the rural residents appeared to be superficial or limited. It seemed that the rural residents were not empowered to give their authentic voices or express their true concerns. Or, their voices were not considered as worthwhile enough to be incorporated into the report.[99]

In the final (fourth) paragraph, the report claimed that

Leaders of the Department of Chinese and the local Party-administration have agreed that from * on the student practice team will go into villages for further dissemination with the guidance of a person especially arranged by the local government, introduce all aspects of content pertaining to "Building the New Countryside" to the country friends in a systematic and thorough way, truly go into the villages, fully serve the country friends, make efforts to help the countrymen get rich, and do what a college student should do to contribute toward "the Construction of the Socialist New Countryside." (The Department of Chinese, 2007)

No follow-up reports were published to show their activities in the villages.[100]

[99] Indeed, I doubt that the words quoted in the report were originally derived from a rural resident. The same sentence structure was adopted in another report to demonstrate the effectiveness of the activities organized by another group on the Olympic Games promulgation.

[100] There were at least three interpretations for this. One likely scenario was that they did not actually "go into" the villages in the light of the great importance that the College attached to media exposure. Another was that the team or the person responsible for reporting thought it as news-unworthy to report their practice at the village level. If so, the significance of the village seemed to be devalued. The other was that the team repeated what they did at the fair market in the villages and did not see the value of repeated reporting. In the previous two cases, it could be alleged that the Department placed the emphasis on the construction of a ceremony to show their commitment to the countryside. With regard to the third one, even

The Guidance Plan for the 2004 Cohort: Representing the Countryside as a Homogeneous Entity and Student Teachers as External Helpers in an Intellectual Sense

As a response to the requirement of the College, the Department of Chinese also produced separate guidance plans for the students admitted to the Chinese teacher preparation program in different years. The plan for the 2006 cohort attended to Chinese teaching skills in general, while the 2005 cohort plan highlighted them in the context of employment. The one made for the 2004 cohort was themed on rural education.

Along with the room for a signature from "the main department leader in teaching" and a stamp from the Department, the plan for the 2004 cohort consisted of three short sections on one piece of paper: "Requirement and Purpose," "Content for Practice," and "Reference Topics for Practice." In the first section the Department wrote,

> Through the social practice, student teachers can make a comprehensive understanding (*liaojie*) of rural (*nongcun*) Chinese teaching and learning, not only comprehending the achievement that rural Chinese education has achieved and its drawback, but providing corresponding measures about how to construct new rural Chinese education accommodated to the construction of the new countryside in the context of constructing the new countryside and offering (materials) for reference in how our College, as a local (*difang*) teachers college, can better prepare qualified teachers for the local. (2007)

In this section the Department acknowledged that East Teachers College was a college preparing future teachers for the local area. Yet, about how much of the local area was rural, the Department remained ambiguous. In the meantime, the use of verbs "understanding," "providing," and "offering" seemed to indicate that the Department tended to position student teachers as outside of rural education. Also, the Department

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if implementing all that they had planned to do in the villages, there seemed to be a slim chance that the team went beyond the category of political propaganda.

seemed to consider their engagement of rural education mainly from an academic perspective. Without demonstrating the possible link between the future of student teachers and rural schools, the Department might implicitly encourage them to separate research from practice, and hence convey the hidden message that it was not decent to teach in rural context. Furthermore, in this section, or more precisely, throughout the "Guidance Plan," the Department was silent about the relationship between summer social practice and "*san xia xiang*," which might lead to confusion on this matter among the students in the Program.

Similar but abbreviated words were presented in the second section. What followed were ten reference topics:

> 1) Investigation into the current status of Chinese education in the rural elementary and secondary school,
> 2) Study of the current status and effectiveness of multi-media use in the rural elementary and secondary school classroom,
> 3) Investigation into Chinese teacher quality in the elementary and secondary school,
> 4) The current status and improvement of the teachers college in training[101] the rural elementary and secondary school teacher,
> 5) Interviewing to understand student's dropping-out in the rural elementary and secondary school,
> 6) The developmental status of rural education after the rural tax reform,
> 7) The efficiency status of elementary and secondary school Chinese teaching and the measure for enhancement,
> 8) Research on the problem of Chinese teacher burnout in the rural elementary and secondary school,
> 9) Research into resources for Chinese teaching in the rural elementary and secondary school,
> 10) How can rural elementary and secondary education serve the construction of the new countryside? (2007)

Of the ten topics, half (No. 2, 4, 5, 6, and 10) went beyond Chinese teaching and learning to emphasize other aspects of rural education, which was more or less

[101] It stands for in-service training as opposed to pre-service teacher preparation.

incongruous with the theme expressed in the "Requirement and Purpose" part – Chinese education in rural China. Explicit reference to "rural" was also missing in two topics (No. 3 and 7). As seen from the two details, the guidance plan did not seem elaborately thought out.

In terms of overall texture, the above words read as if the Department understood rural areas of China, rural education included, as a single entity with the characteristic of homogeneity. Although positioning East Teachers College as a "local" teachers college, the Department failed to contextualize the ten topics. They were broad and general in scope, which might inspire readers to understand rural education in an abstract and context-free manner.

Furthermore, what I read about the "Requirement and Purpose" section holds true here. As seen from the topics listed, the Department seemed to only boost student teachers' involvement in rural education from a research point of view. Besides, the Department said nothing about student teachers' background or prior experience. This might mislead one into thinking that the Department placed the recipients of the text – the 2004 cohort of the Chinese teacher preparation program – as an undifferentiated group of people who were outside of or even distant from the countryside or rural education.

Student Teachers

The Countryside on the Submitted Forms: Identified Mostly as Fabricated...in a Detached Manner

After counting the student background information reported on the 52 forms, I found that all the students of Class 7 were from Jiangsu, of which 23 (44.2%) came from northern Jiangsu. There were 17 (32.7%) students whose parents lived in a village, while 11 (21.2%) others had a town(ship) origin. Nine of these forms were completed by male students.

Table 9: Topics Presented on the Registration and Evaluation Forms, Class 7

Topic	Frequency	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
rural Chinese education: general	5	9.6	9.6
rural Chinese education: multi-media use	3	5.8	15.4
rural Chinese education: teachers	1	1.9	17.3
rural Chinese education: teaching	9	17.3	34.6
rural education: general	3	5.8	40.4
rural education: multi-media use	6	11.5	51.9
rural education: teachers	2	3.8	55.8
rural education: students (general)	1	1.9	57.7
rural education: research	2	3.8	61.5
rural education: rural development	2	3.8	65.4
rural development (specific case)	2	3.8	69.2
non-rural specific education	14	26.9	96.2
neither rural nor education related	2	3.8	100.0
Total	52	100.0	

As displayed in Table 9 (above), the majority (36, 69.2%) of the forms from Class 7 were focused on a rural-related topic. 18 (34.6%) students covered rural Chinese education in a general sense or from a specific aspect. 16 (30.8%) chose a topic on rural education in other aspects than Chinese. Additionally, two (3.8%) students showed interest in the development of a village.

Over half (27, 51.9%) of the student teachers claimed that they completed their practice at the village or/and town(ship) level on the form. However, both my observation in the field and reading of those forms indicated that at most three truly developed an activity. Among the three student teachers, only Ning, a girl from Jing's dorm and who had been an active "student cadre" in the class and the Department, specified her practice as rural themed.[102]

In other words, of the 36 who wrote on rural (Chinese) education or other aspects of the countryside in the "Main Content of the Practice Activity" section, 35 fabricated their evidence. Of the 35 student teachers, most borrowed words and phrases directly in varying degrees from the web without citing them,[103] or/and concentrated their description on an abstract and macro subject like "rural education of China." Only two (Feng and Jia) wrote based on a concrete place and in a somewhat truthful way. After taking Ning into consideration, I learned that the number was three.

In studying how students filled out the form, certain patterns emerge. The 36 students focusing on the countryside tended to see the cell of "Guiding Theory for Practice" as place to perform "political correctness" or their loyalty to the Party-State. One third (12) of the students reported the much disseminated Party-State discourses – "Important Ideas on the 'Three Represents'" or/and "the Scientific Outlook on Development" – without explaining how they were related to the announced practice. Seven (19.4%) wrote down the CCP slogans "seek truth from facts" and "combine theory

[102] As for two other student teachers, they did internship in a company. One worked in an investigation company closed to the College, while the other sold one machine for a machinery company.
[103] In an extreme case, paragraphs of same words appeared on two forms. It is not unusual to see that similar words were used on several forms.

with practice" with no further illustration.[104] One (2.8%) student put both as a theoretical framework for practice.

Paralleling this trend is that, following the guidance plan of the Department, these student teachers wrote about rural education from a research point of view. In the section "Purpose of the Practice Activity," the majority (23, 63.9%), including Ning who actually did something around summer social practice, used the verb "investigate" or "understand." Few reported to consider future teaching in rural context as one incentive to attend to rural education. Besides, they wrote very briefly (one short sentence) about the purpose, which might lead one to believe that they took developing summer social practice, or more precisely, completing the form as merely a task.

Moreover, on the forms these student teachers tended to characterize rural areas/education as problematic or/and desperate for improvement on the one hand, and to avoid engaging themselves in, and therefore to maintain an impersonal tone on the other. This was especially the case in the section of "Reflection upon the Practice." For instance, Jing wrote that

> There are big differences between rural schools and urban schools. The most visible contrast lies in material equipment. Urban secondary and elementary schools have relatively sufficient teaching equipment. By contrast, rural secondary and elementary schools are urgently short of facilities and need to be strengthened and improved.

Fang borrowed some words from an online source without citation as "her" reflection: "These serious problems place rural children in a position of lacking

[104] The number will become 19 (36.5%) and 14 (26.9%), respectively, if I include those non-rural focused forms.

educational recourses and being unable to receive a decent education, seriously prevent rural juveniles from developing, and make it harder for rural youths to find jobs."

Meanwhile, in the reflection section some put the rural focus aside to write about the relationship between social practice and the development of themselves in general. For example, Ning wrote that "Social practice can quickly increase our extracurricular knowledge and enhance our practical and operational skills, strengthen (our) understanding of the society, and (make us) go closer to the society." In cases like this, both thinking and action in the interests of rural communities were forgotten to be recognized.

Although a few (6) students displayed a connection with rural areas/education, their expressions were mostly superficial and general. These reflections read as if they were making ceremonial promises (Meyer & Rowan, 1977) as opposed to genuine commitment. A girl of village origin, for example, wrote that "I will also study harder and make efforts to improve the Chinese education in rural elementary and secondary schools" after describing its backward status from multiple angles. A male student (Hai), from the urban area of a county in northern Jiangsu, took the tone of the Party-State to put down the following words:

> There are still many drawbacks in current secondary and elementary education, especially in rural secondary and elementary school education. We should take the initiative to devote to rural secondary and elementary school education based on the guideline of the Party in education, nurture the successors of the next generation, and contribute to the peaceful prosperity and stable development of the society.

Feng's reflection was relatively honest but still shared the component of being ceremonial:

> Although tired after this practice activity, I felt very happy to make some (rural) elementary and secondary school students serve the construction of the new countryside in the future. Sadly not all the people want to return to the countryside in the future. But I will not give up. I will strive to make more elementary and secondary students and people in other professions serve the construction of the new countryside in the future.[105]

Another interesting finding was that these student teachers did not seem hesitant to picture rural people as beneficiaries of their imaginary summer social practice. In the section of "Beneficiary of the Practice Activity," eight (22.2%) student teachers reported their investigation participants as the only ones who benefited. Nearly half (44.4%, 16) over-generalized to include all the "massive rural elementary and secondary schools," "rural elementary and secondary students," or "rural elementary and secondary (Chinese) teachers." Only six students wrote "myself" into the category of beneficiary.

A similar pattern can be identified in "Purpose of the Practice Activity." Nine (25.0%) reported that the purpose of their practice was only to improve the current rural situation. To give an example, a town-originated student teacher put down "to enhance the educational quality of rural elementary and secondary schools." Only three (8.3%) students described summer social practice as a channel to improve themselves, and one (1%) combined the two aforementioned purposes in writing.

Of the 36 forms, 29 (80.6%) have a stamp in the section of "Approval and Feedback from the Practice Unit." After looking at those red stamps and excluding the three that cannot be clearly identified, I find that 11 (42.3%) of the 26 have nothing to do with the announced practice site. For example, of the six forms that presented the village as the practice site, five were stamped. However, only one was provided with a stamp fit with

[105] Feng's perception of the countryside and her role shown in the interview differed from what she presented on the submitted form, which I return to in the following chapter.

the practice site listed.[106] A village-originated girl wrote about the general situation of a village but offered an irrelevant company stamp. Another girl called Yin described her home village as her place for practice but gave a stamp of a township government that her village did not administratively belong to.[107] Feng's form was themed on her conversation with children in her home village about "Building the new countryside" but stamped by her township government.[108] The stamp that another Jing's roommate – Jie, a girl from a village in mid-Jiangsu – provided was a blur. She did this purposefully to avoid further inspection as the stamp she put on was fake.

Further, I found that the same stamp was presented on several forms. For instance, the stamp of a machinery production company showed up twice, even though the summer social practice "places" for these two students were a township school and a county school in different prefectures. Another example was that the stamp of a county high school appeared three times. Of the three students who used the same stamp, one reported a practice site different from the school whose stamp was used, another mentioned nothing about the school except in the section of "Place," while the other – Jia – portrayed the county school as a rural one.

These student teachers put their energy to obtain a stamp, less to what the stamp was, and least to truly develop an activity somewhere. In doing so, they revealed the notion that it would not matter if the stamped unit and the handwritten site did not match. They

[106] It was from Yu. She came from a village in Suzhou. As the stamp on "the Resident Committee of Community Four" showed, the village was divided into several communities, which was rarely seen.
[107] Yin selectively copied an online article for her registration and evaluation form. She attempted to change all the words indicating the original research site to her home village but ended up with leaving several places unchanged.
[108] No student teachers presented a stamp from an individual or group at the village level. In other words, all of them followed the instruction of the College to ask for a stamp "from the practice unit [at the town(ship) level and above]."

seemed to have learned that what really mattered was to show approval from the powerful and authority group represented by the red round stamp.

Of the "practice units" that stamped the form, relatively few (11) offered comments. As seen from the handwriting, it appeared that some students cooked up remarks by themselves. Also, there existed several cases where an organization unrelated to the articulated practice site provided feedback, which was awkward to see. A company, for example, commented on a girl from a prefecture city regarding her "investigation" into teacher and student quality in rural secondary schools that "This is true. (Her) attitude toward practice is serious." For another example, on Hai's form about his "investigation" into current situation of rural education, a county fishing bureau approved that "This student took part in social practice with seriousness and particularity, listened carefully to suggestions, and received raves."

In the situation where the stamp fit with the stated practice place, the feedback did not provide any specifics related to the student's performance either. For instance, the practice of a girl growing up in a village was completely left out of the comments made by a township elementary school. "This comrade has a strong will for improvement and works hard, and will have a very bright future." In short, all the (real) stamps and comments seemed to suggest that these work places of various kinds did not take college students' summer social practice as a serious matter either.

The Countryside in the Submitted Reports: Represented Dominantly as Borrowed

Table 10 (below) shows the distribution of topics presented in the summer social practice reports of Class 7. Compared to that on the registration and evaluation forms, there were a higher percentage of students who went beyond Chinese to write on rural education in general. More importantly, a higher percentage (73.7%, 42 out of 57, compared to 69.2%, 36 out of 52) of students focused on a rural topic.[109]

Table 10: Topics Covered in the Summer Social Practice Reports, Class 7

Topic	Frequency	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
rural Chinese education: multi-media use	2	3.5	3.5
rural Chinese education: teachers	1	1.8	5.3
rural Chinese education: students	1	1.8	7.0
rural Chinese education: teaching	8	14.0	21.1
rural education: general	7	12.3	33.3
rural education: multi-media use	7	12.3	45.6
rural education: teachers	6	10.5	56.1
rural education: students (general)	1	1.8	57.9
rural education: students (left-behind children)	1	1.8	59.6
rural education: parents	2	3.5	63.2
rural education: research	2	3.5	66.7
rural education: rural development	1	1.8	68.4
rural development (general or specific)	3	5.3	73.7
Non-rural specific education	15	26.3	100.0
Total	57	100.0	

[109] Of the 52 students whose form I have, there are three (Ning included) whose report cannot be found. As far as the rest (49) are concerned, I note that in the report 26 (53.1%) focused on a topic different from the one presented on the form. There might lack a clear understanding of what the summer social practice task was among the students.

However, after a closer examination of the 42 rural-themed reports, I was astounded to realize that most of them contained plagiarism.[110] 37 (88.1%) of the reports can be easily identified online. Apparently, the 37 students downloaded an article from a website and turned it in as if it was their own. In an extreme case, three students submitted the same paper on multi-media use in rural schools. Some modified the investigation site while others did not bother to. Some found a non-rural specific source online and "transformed" it into one by adding the word "rural" (*nongcun*) to the title, the beginning, and the ending while leaving the main body intact. Some plagiarized the whole piece while others shortened it by taking out some words or paragraphs. Three student teachers pieced several articles together to form their reports. There were only two who wrote their report by mostly or completely using their own words.

[110] I acknowledge that plagiarism is a culturally loaded word and recognize concerns about its use here. I agree that to cite a text is not part of the traditional Chinese culture. The finding, mentioned in the preceding chapters, that the provincial agencies and the college repeated the phrases of the higher-up without citing them is open to this explanation. Here, as I explain subsequently, the level of borrowing in these reports was extremely severe.

Table 11: Topics Covered in the Summer Social Practice Reports, Class 1

Topic	Frequency	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
rural education: left-behind children	7	15.9	15.9
rural education: student learning	2	4.5	20.5
rural education: Chinese teaching	1	2.3	22.7
rural education: teachers	2	4.5	27.3
rural education: multi-media use	1	2.3	29.5
rural development (general or specific)	4	9.1	38.6
graduate employment (not rural specific)	18	40.9	79.5
environment protection (in general or a specific city)	4	9.1	88.6
Non-rural specific education	3	6.8	95.5
Political dissemination[111]	2	4.5	100.0
Total	44	100.0	

On the 44 reports (Meng's included based on her written overview) from Class 1, I want to first provide some basic information. 20 and 16 of them were respectively produced by students from northern Jiangsu and mid-Jiangsu. The majority (33, 75%) of the reporters have a village (17, 38.6%) or town(ship) (16, 36.4%) background.

Table 11 (above) demonstrates the topics that Class 1 chose for their reports. Compared with Class 7, Class 1 showed more interest in the topics provided by the college level. As clearly seen in Table 11, "graduate employment," a focus of the college on the topic-for-reference sheet, was their favorite. 18 students (40.9%), three of whom were my interview participants, selected this topic. By contrast, there were fewer students

[111] One student teacher plagiarized an online editorial on the publication of *Selected Works of Jiang Zeming*. The other turned in a downloaded article on one aspect of Hu Jintao's "Socialist Ethics Concept on Honors and Disgraces" – "Advocate Science and Oppose Superstition."

(17, 38.6%) who developed their report around rural issues. This was especially true when compared to Class 7.

The 17 student teachers, who picked a rural theme, seemed more attracted to general rural education than to their specialty – Chinese education. Only one chose the latter to write about. Also, among all the rural-specific topics, left-behind children – another topic presented in the college document – received most attention. Seven student teachers altogether focused on this topic in their reports.

This is certainly not to say that the 17 students paid rural (education) issues truthful attention. A similar statement about Class 7 can be made here. All the students except Meng plagiarized an article they found online. Two students submitted the same piece on the learning psychology of rural school students without changing a word of the original version. For another example, of the seven reports on left-behind children, four, two of which were the same, looked entirely the same as the ones posted online; one differed from the original piece only by presenting a different research site; one was pieced together from several sources; and the other was drawn partly from an article written by a high school teacher.

The Class CCYL Secretary: Procedurally Distributing the Homework

Evidence suggested that the *summer social practice* course was treated differently from others. While in other courses it was usually the instructor who gave an assignment,

for summer social practice it was the CCYL Secretary of a class, that is, a student, who did so.[112] In Class 7 Fang was the person to distribute the 2007 homework.

With my interview question "How did your head teacher assign the summer social practice task to you?," Fang answered in a rather procedural approach.

> It was Teacher Tan[113] who informed all the CCYL Secretaries of the 2004 cohort to go to the *th floor (his office). (He) said that Teacher Yao in the Department designed some topics for reference, asked us to distribute them down[114] to the class by passing around and asking the students to pick one. I wrote down (the topics that students chose) (on a form) and handed (it) to the Department (for record). (Fang, personal communication, June 20, 2008)

I followed her response to ask: "How did you explain the task to your classmates at the time?" She stated: "I had a piece of paper. ... I copied (the topics) down to a blackboard at the time. And then I let them see (the sheet)" (personal communication, June 20, 2008).

This was also the impression left in the minds of both Jing and Feng. And, a strikingly similar pattern was found from Class 1.[115] In this context, I tend to argue that the sincere meaning and significance of participating in summer social practice, not to mention that of engaging in rural-specific summer social practice, had little presence in

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[112] It should be footnoted that there were exceptions. For example, according to a student teacher called Ting from the 2005 cohort, it was the head teacher who gave the 2008 task to her class. The head teacher read the documents from both the college and the department in class.

[113] As noted in Chapter 2, Teacher/Mr. Tan was the head teacher of Class 7 and also the department CCYL Secretary.

[114] According to the expression here, "down to" somebody or someplace is not a phenomenon peculiar to the countryside and related groups, although I believe that it is much more used to refer to them. People in different fields seem to take the hierarchical system for granted by adopting related discourse without attending to its reproductive effect.

[115] I do notice that there was a difference between the descriptions of the two groups. Three interviewees from Class 1 only clearly remembered those topics on "graduate employment" in an attachment of the 2007 college Notice, while the recall of the Class 7 interviewees was restricted to the topics listed in the department "Guidance Plan."

the distribution of the task in the two classes. Summer social practice was primarily presented as an assignment required by the Department/College. [116]

Student Teachers: "Coping with" the Homework by "Copying"

Although I was not able to observe any students from Class 1 about how they constructed their summer social practice homework, I gained some basic understanding from the four interviewed student teachers. To quote Meng,

> It is true that (we) people have the idea of going online to look for one (report) immediately after getting a topic. It is really a conditional reflex...Do you know how we get ours done? Here we don't write (it) during the summer break. We don't write (it) during the summer break. I personally build some notes. It is not until after we get back to school and the teacher says "turn (it) in next week." We rush to write (it) this weekend. It is made in a hurry, and completed within a short period of time. It shows the meaning of "coping with" ("*yingfu*") a little bit. This is true. (We are) not that responsible. (Personal communication, Dec. 8, 2007)

Meng was the only prospective teacher identified from Class 1 who wrote the entire report by herself. Inspired by the acts of her brother – a town(ship) high school teacher – at home, Meng wrote on rural school teacher burnout in her 2007 report.[117] While writing the report, she did not refer to any online sources but a Chinese dictionary.[118] According to herself, she had done this for the previous two years. She appeared to be a person who

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[116] These student teachers' memory of the assignment distribution process might not fully reflect what actually happened. For example, Fang remembered that she only presented the "Guidance Plan" with Dr. Yao's name on to Class 7. So did Feng and Jing. Yet, other sources, namely, the documents Fang gave me and my interview with her, suggested that Fang was more likely to read the 2007 college Notice to the whole class, write the topics listed on both reference sheets to a board, and then pass around the sheets among the students. With this said, I do not mean that there was a high possibility that Fang attached any authentic meanings and values to this course in homework distribution.

[117] Not enough middle school graduates were attracted to the township high school. As a strategy to solve the problem, the principal asked each teacher to complete the task of getting six students enrolled during the summer time. Otherwise, s/he would get fined or even moved from the current teaching position. For this reason, at home Meng's brother was busy making phone calls and at the same time grumbling about the school. After a visit to the school, Meng found that her brother and his colleagues cared little about teaching. In the report she connected these observations with the issue of "teacher burnout."

[118] Meng did not trust what was written on the internet. She used the dictionary to search words and phrases for better ways to express her ideas.

was caring for her home place. She enjoyed observing and writing, and often wrote about people and issues there. In her words, "That is my environment. That is the environment I live in. If you ask me to write about cities, I cannot" (personal communication, Dec. 8, 2007).

As far as three others were concerned, they selected a topic around "graduate employment" but did not actually write their report.[119] Jiang chose the subject of "the difficulty of looking for a job after graduation" as it was an often-discussed topic in her dorm. However, with the concern that writing a report on her own "would take time" and interrupt her preparation for the GRE, she "pulled a piece from the internet" (Jiang, personal communication, Nov. 22, 2007). She confessed that "Previously I pulled one online and handwrote it. But this time I printed the entire (piece) out, put my name on, and turned it in" (personal communication, Nov. 22, 2007). Zhong picked the "easy to write about" topic "factors influencing graduate employment" but also wound up with finding a report online. She excused herself from borrowing with "It was easy to find. This is a topic everybody writes about. It was so easy to find" (Zhong, personal communication, Dec. 14, 2007)! Shen did the same for a similar reason: "I felt at the time too many students would write (about rural education). We would find similar stuff if we searched online" (Shen, personal communication, Dec. 12, 2007).

Consider the situation of Class 7, or more specifically, that of Jing's dorm. Of Jing and her five roommates, only Ning completed the registration and evaluation form before returning to the College in early September. Regarding the report, like others in her dorm,

[119] Their actions did demonstrate that plagiarizing an online article was not a phenomenon peculiar to rural-related topics.

Ning did not start writing until after she was back to campus. In addition, she admitted that "I wrote half on my own and copied the other half (online)" (personal communication, Sept. 9, 2007). [120]

Ning described how she completed the form in summer to her roommates and me. Once back to her hometown in July, she went to the local middle school with a blank form and asked for a stamp from her uncle – the principal. "I will not stamp (your form) unless you practice in the school and fill in the form" (personal communication, Sept. 9, 2007), the principal replied firmly. As a result, Ning stayed at the school for one afternoon to observe the use of multi-media. This case, along with the previous description of the stamp and comment use on the forms, illustrated the point that the attitude of the society could have an influence on how student teachers implemented summer social practice.

As for Fang, before the spring semester ended, the head teacher had made clear to her that

> I will select you as "Excellent Student in Social Practice." You'd better write your report a little better (than others). Do not just pull an article online. After the provincial and national evaluation teams come, they will see your materials submitted. (Fang, personal communication, Sept. 9, 2007)

Fang's self-statement indicated that the head teacher had expected most of the student teachers not to write their own reports and taken such behavior as acceptable. Equally important, with the explicit requirement Fang did little beyond downloading a

[120] Because that Ning's report was graded as "excellent" and separately submitted to the department before the deadline, I was able to read hers but failed to make a copy.

paper from a webpage and following Ning's sample to fill out the form. It turned out, somewhat ironically, that a classmate of hers submitted the same report.

Since among my research participants I communicated most with Jing on this subject, below I describe how she produced her homework in more detail. As "the homework did not come to my mind" (Jing, personal communication, Dec. 7, 2007) for the entire summer, Jing was anxious to see that some of her classmates had handed their homework to Fang. With this, two of her roommates – Qing[121] and Hong[122] – reacted: "What is it to worry about? Isn't this easy to do? It will be just all right to go and look for one (report) online" (Jing, personal communication, July 22, 2008). While Jing was starting her laptop, the two girls added: "Pull one out for me!"

After typing the key words of her topic chosen based on the criteria "can be written about most easily" and "have the most stuff to write about" (Jing, personal communication, July 22, 2008) into Baidu, Jing found "her" report in a second. This time she selected "hers" on the basis of article length: "The words couldn't be too few. Otherwise I would not have enough to copy from and would need to make up some words by myself, which would be a truly hard thing" (Jing, personal communication, July 22, 2008). She did the same for Qing and Hong.

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[121] Qing's father was working in the county Public Security Bureau and her mother was staying home due to illness. During her four years in Class 7, Qing always left her grandpa's living address – a village of mid-Jiangsu – as her mailing address. In contrast with this, while I was in the field, Qing expressed strong feelings about country people. For example, she once said to other roommates and me: "Rich people don't live in the countryside...I could move back to live in the countryside since my family has a house there. ... I don't dislike the countryside because of its poverty. I don't like people there. (People there) even carry their bowls to move from one house to another and gossip about neighbors while having a meal. On the surface it is said that country people are simple and honest. This is not true at all" (personal communication, Sept. 11, 2007). She was quite friendly to me but constantly felt confused about why I, a doctoral student in an American university, was interested in rural issues.

[122] Hong's parents owned a grocery store and a bath house in a central town of southern Jiangsu.

After pasting the article into Notepad, Jing did "some editing. I read (and evaluated) which paragraphs were close to (my) topic and kept them. I cut out of the content that didn't fit the (local) reality. ... (I) made few changes or supplements, and basically copied the original text" (Jing, personal communication, July 22, 2008). Then, she put the file into her flash disk and went downstairs to get it printed at a shop. Jing did not hand in the printed version but handwrote this report on lined letter paper to show the originality of her work.[123]

About the registration and evaluation form, Jing went to Fang's desk, browsed several, and grabbed two "clearly written and with an appropriate amount of content" (Jing, personal communication, July 22, 2008) to follow. One sample selected was from Ning. After seeing both the "Important Ideas on the 'Three Represents'" and "the Scientific Outlook on Development" on Ning's form as "Guiding Theory for Practice," Jing got curious enough to ask her roommates: "Why these two?" What followed was Fang's "shouting:" "Why (do you) care? We don't know either. We followed others. We copied whatever others had filled in" (Jing, personal communication, July 22, 2008).[124]

Besides, I had some opportunities to understand how student teachers from other dorms did their homework. For instance, on the evening before Fang sent those submitted materials to the Department, I was in her dorm glancing through them. When I was

[123] Indeed, she and her roommates except Hong handwrote their report after printing the downloaded article out. According to my observations in the field, Hong did not seem to care much about college education. She was little involved in the conversations of her roommates around the college. Her concentration was on embroidering, sleeping, shopping, TV- and movie- watching, and relationship maintenance with her potential boyfriend. With this said, I do not mean that other girls in the dorm did not engage in these activities. In fact, they had a high engagement in these activities. My point is that what Hong did was extraordinary among those I observed.

[124] Fang explained in the interview that she used the two theories because "In daily life while doing things we all use some empty conventional talks (*taohua*)" (personal communication, June 20, 2008).

reading a table that Min presented on her form to show the education situation of her home village, she came in looking for Jing to chat with. As a result, we had the following dialogue:

> Wu: I am reading your social practice form. How many people did you ask in your village to get the numbers?
> Min: I didn't do any investigation. I found some data online and changed the investigation site to make it mine.
> Wu: How many of you actually wrote the social practice materials on your own?
> Min made a big gesture of "0" with her hands in a very relaxing manner. (Personal communication, Sept. 9, 2007)

Likewise, Jing's dorm doubted that anyone would truly write a report on summer social practice, let alone develop an activity. Also on that evening, seeing a sense of sincerity in Feng's writing, I asked "Did Feng write hers on her own?"[125] Three members of the dorm responded:

> Fang: I will ask her for you.
> Ning: Copied.
> Wu: I feel there is something about herself in her writing.
> Qing: After these years of training, students in the Department of Chinese know how to compose (*bian*).
> Ning: The key is whether we are willing to do this or not.
> Qing: If we are happy, we will make up. If not, we will copy (*cao*). (Personal communication, Sept. 9, 2007)

Further, these student teachers justified their action of "copying" by blaming that the head teacher took an unserious attitude toward the homework they handed in.

> Jie: What's the use of writing by myself? I wrote on my own before. I got nothing after turning it in.
> Wu: What do you mean by no use?

[125] Later on, I asked Feng the same question in my online interview with her. She answered, "As a matter of fact I wanted to search (one) online at the time. But finally I was aware that the stuff I found was not suitable for my topic. Also it was hard to find (a related one). Therefore, I thought I would rather write (one) by myself. I didn't actually conceive. I just took a pen to write. It didn't take much time (to finish it) either, about two hours" (personal communication, June 23, 2008).

Qing: Nobody will read it even if you write by yourself. Previously I was serious enough to look for a stamp.
Wu (laugh): How about I read it?
Jing: What good will you do if you read it? What will you give them after you read it? If the (head) teacher gives comments, we will write seriously just for those comments. He doesn't treat (the homework) seriously, why should we treat it seriously? (Personal communication, Sept. 9, 2007)

In summary, my observation in the field and subsequent interviews showed that these student teachers basically considered the summer social practice homework as a task that they had to "cope with." The strategy they chose for "coping" was "copying." In doing so, they turned their care for rural places and issues into a formal performance without much sincere meaning. Meanwhile, they placed the fault on the head teacher.[126]

The "Student Cadre:" Grading Arbitrarily without the Countryside in Mind

As I have previously mentioned, Fang was predetermined as a recipient of "Excellent Student in Social Practice" by the head teacher. She took this for granted: "That's because I was the CCYL Secretary... the CCYL Secretary was considered first...Every class CCYL Secretary would be selected" (Fang, personal communication, June 27, 2008). As far other students in Class 7, it was she who did the grading. This, again, indicated a different status of summer social practice than other courses.

With my question "Do you still remember how many 'excellent,' 'pretty good,' and 'pass' you gave?," Fang jumped right to the nature of grading: "(They were given) unfairly" (Fang, personal communication, June 27, 2008). In her own recall, after "slightly reading" the materials, she found "It was very hard to do, to grade. They were

[126] On other occasions they presented other reasons for not engaging in summer social practice. I will discuss them at more length in the coming chapter.

pretty much the same thing" (Fang, personal communication, June 27, 2008). She graded based on some arbitrary criteria.

Fang gave an "excellent" score to two classmates in the light of her "relationship" ("*guanxi*") (personal communication, June 27, 2008) with them. One was Ning as "her writing was OK and the (Chinese) characters were decently handwritten. I prioritized considering my dorm(mates)" (Fang, personal communication, June 27, 2008). Fang provided the Class President with the other "excellent" "for the sake of face (*mianzi*). He was the Class President" (personal communication, June 27, 2008)! Indeed, she used the same standard to offer Li a "pretty good" under the circumstances that he neither submitted any homework nor identified her as his "*laoxiang*" (fellow townsman). Fang did so on the basis that "he is my *laoxiang*" and "he has a good relation with the head teacher" (personal communication, June 27, 2008).

Fang also offered a grade of "pretty good" or "pass" to other classmates for a reason irrelevant to the quality of the homework turned in. Learning that Feng received a "pretty good," I asked Fang "The reason was ..." She finished the sentence with "The majority of students ought to get a 'pretty good.' Therefore, I should treat them the same" (personal communication, June 27, 2008). The idea that Feng's writing stood out for its originality did not seem to come across her mind. Additionally, Fang answered my question "Who got the 'pass'?" with "Those who don't perform well in daily life, and those who don't show much care about things" (personal communication, June 27, 2008).

Another interesting thing was that Fang did not feel sorry for being unfair in grading. She understood her way of grading as problematic but acceptable. Fang listed two main

excuses to back herself up: "The previous CCYL Secretaries did the same thing. ...I had no other way;" and "The grade has not much significance" (personal communication, June 27, 2008). In the interview Fang did spend a good proportion of the time describing how corrupt the previous class cadres (and even the head teacher) were.

In contrast with that in Class 7, according to Meng, in Class 1 the work of grading summer social practice homework was done "pretty fairly" (personal communication, Dec. 8, 2007). A particular approach had been adopted in Class 1 since the first year.

> The Class President passed around a piece of paper and said "Those who wrote (the report) by yourself, sign on this sheet." After a round of circulation in class, the Class President got a sheet with seven or eight names on. The Class President picked (the "excellent") from the seven or eight... Anyway, there might be some phenomena behind that I didn't see. What I saw was pretty fair...Later on, Yan (the third President of Class 1) knew who might write by her/himself and who might not. (Meng, personal communication, Dec. 8, 2007)

Meng might be over optimistic about the number of her classmates writing their own reports.[127] She also appeared to see the fairness of grading in a loose sense. The "Social Practice Grade Report" of Class 1 demonstrated that 26, 18, and 2 student teachers received a grade of "pass," "pretty good," and "excellent," respectively. It might be fair for the Class President Yan[128] to rank the reports of Meng and another girl as "excellent" based on originality. She did show arbitrariness in grading the rest, as they were obviously the products of plagiarism.

Two assumptions seemed to be embedded within Class 1's way of grading homework in summer social practice. First, they tended to take the practice of borrowing

[127] Or, it could be that the number decreased as their year in the program increased.
[128] Yan pulled out an online article on "demands of employment units toward college students" as her report. She gave herself a "pretty good."

a report from the internet as acceptable, as long as the student ended up with a non-excellent grade. Second, they seemed not to care much about this course. Indeed, Meng verified both assumptions in my interview with her.

> People don't feel this honor is too...We don't think highly of (this honor). It is true. I didn't feel too happy when I got it. I didn't feel sad either when I didn't get it. It's true that I was not sad when I wrote (the report) on my own ... but was not offered the honor... Anyway, people don't attach importance to it. Then people don't mind who is selected and who is not ...because people feel that it is a task distributed by the school and that the task is to make you fabricate (evidence). (Meng, personal communication, Dec. 8, 2007)

Conclusion: A Drama of Performing Care

Political ritual can be seen as "rule-governed activity of symbolic character which draws the attention of its participants to objects of thoughts and feeling which they hold be of special significance" (Lukes, 1975, p. 291). As Bell (1990) summarizes, it is "a powerful ideological arena in which symbolic images and gestures exercise a particularly persuasive effect on the participants' sense of identity and social reality" (p. 299). It can be practiced as a form of social control in the name of social integration.

Reacting to the complaints and grievances about rural reality, the Party-State brought forward the project of "building the new countryside" to heal the rift with rural residents – the majority population of the country – and to build a unified "harmonious society." Different branches of the central government gave this an immediate response by (re-)giving prominence to the country-themed summer social practice of college students in a bureaucratic fashion (by asking the subordinate bodies of the provincial to assign the task rather than directly dialoguing with college students.)

At first glance, the national curriculum in summer social practice looked promising and transformative. It symbolically drew the attention of college students and other groups to the countryside, a place that had been overlooked as a whole for years, and provided an opportunity to practice for social justice. Nevertheless, as Lukes (1975) suggests, political ritual can sometimes lead to "mobilization of bias." After a close examination of the text, I have found that it served more to consolidate a particular way of seeing the countryside, thereby maintaining the existing social and political order. More specifically, it was intended to (re-)legitimate the hierarchy of place and distinguish the countryside as a lowly "other," prioritize the interests of the nation-state in rural development and therefore an exogenous approach to rural development, excuse the Party-State from mistakes in addressing rural issues, and renew the loyalty and accountability of college students and others to the Party-State.

The national summer social practice curriculum, a ritual of attending to the countryside, offered a script as well as "a source of creativity and improvisation" (Lukes, 1975, p. 302) for other groups and actors to play in. Then, a ritual was turned into a theatre (Esherick & Wasserstrom, 1990). Putting the performance of different groups and agents together, I have seen a Party-sponsored but mutually constructed drama which contributed to what Knotternus (1997) termed "structural ritualization" and reproduction.

As part of the state, the provincial institutions followed to underscore the slogan "*san xia xiang*" in their summer social practice curriculum. Yet, what these provincial agencies did was not entirely copying. As mentioned in the last chapter, they employed the "chameleon" strategy to decouple themselves from "*san xia xiang*" activities, that is,

re-packing the already existing activities. As a consequence of the re-packing, they diluted the specific geographic definition of "*xiang*" in the national curriculum to an extent that it could mean any place. Along with this was the little presentation of direct and sincere care for rural residents.

East Teachers College, as an institutionalized organization, performed great enthusiasm for summer social practice in the curriculum announcement. Whereas the national and provincial curricula encouraged college students to engage in summer social practice on a voluntary basis and in groups, the College asked for the participation of all students in either collective or individual form. However, after a close reading of the text, I have found that this was little driven by the consideration for the countryside. The College's main motivation for going for summer social practice was two-fold: to comply with the bureaucratic requirement as a habit, and to make use of the request to its own advantage. Further, the College inherited the ambiguous understanding of "*xiang*" from the province, and strategically utilized other types of summer social practice activities to fill the number and replace "*san xia xiang*." As a result of the evolution of the planned curriculum, the countryside became marginalized and blurred under the spotlight, in addition to being objectified and looked down upon.

A similar pattern can be observed from the college-level implementation of summer social practice. There was a particular office to arrange ("key") groups, and a special website to document activities of various types. Numerous pieces of news were reported. Plenty of briefings were produced and each was entitled with the term "*san xia xiang*." All of these demonstrated the extraordinary attention of the College given to summer

social practice, "*san xia xiang*" in particular. Yet, beneath the surface there were a very limited number of groups or activities targeted at rural communities.

The practice of summer social practice in the Department of Chinese was an illustration of that at the College. As a reply to the requirement from the college, the Department organized activities around three categories: "key" teams, "non-key" groups, and individual homework. The two "key" teams were considered as "rural" chiefly because their activities took place in a remote or natural area. Of the three "non-key" groups, one specifically focused on the countryside. Yet, in the report approved by the department, the country people, including both village and downtown residents, were delineated as the backdrop of the event and the passive recipients of care, whilst the group members were praised as the loudspeakers of the Party-State. Although the Department set rural literacy education as the 2007 theme for the 2004 cohort of the Program, there was still a concern that the guidance plan positioned student teachers as one group of people distant from the countryside and restricted them to understanding rural education from an academic perspective. A hidden curriculum that undermined the connection between their future teaching and the countryside appeared to exist.

Moving to the 2004 cohort, my examination of two focal classes has suggested a lower status of the summer social practice course. Different from most of, if not all, other courses, for summer social practice it was the class CCYL Secretary or president who delivered the assignment and graded the homework handed in. After procedurally getting the assignment from the department CCYL secretary, the "student cadre" procedurally announced it in class. To the materials turned in, s/he gave grades in a rather arbitrary

way. Several students were honored as excellent based on the head teacher's preference or a low standard accepted by the class. The sincere meaning and significance of engaging in rural-focused summer social practice was rarely presented throughout.

After scrutinizing the summer social practice forms and reports from the two classes, from a critical theoretical perspective, I have identified some disturbing trends toward rural representation. Although a decent percentage of student teachers developed their writing around a rural topic, a predominant number of them did not actually implement any activities. They, regardless of where they came from, took means to fabricate facts, such as making up a place for practice, borrowing a report or some words from the internet, putting a "whatever" stamp on, and cooking up some feedback. There was a tendency for them to portray the countryside as a homogenous place filled with problems and needing to be rescued, and meanwhile to detach themselves from it. Also, these teacher candidates showed political savvy to uphold and highlight the discourses of the Party-State, whether they were truly tied with the articulated practice or not.

My observations in the field and interviews later on confirmed these trends, and indicated that my focal participants did not take summer social practice seriously but used the strategy of "copying" to cope with the task at the last minute. They recognized the insignificance of summer social practice (from the distribution and grading of the homework and others, which I will elaborate in the coming chapter), and tended to justify their actions from this perspective. Up to this point, the political ritual of concern with rural development through summer social practice had been turned into a ritualistic and superficial performance of care.

In the performance of completing the summer social practice homework, student teachers from the two classes exhibited a high homogeneity with only several small variations. Meng's case embodied one variation. Another was that Ning conducted a one-afternoon investigation at a township school due to the insistence of the principal. This showed that the societal sector, of which some organizations were institutionalized (P. C. C. Huang, 1993), could buffer the effect of summer social practice implementation. Yet, those stamps and comments presented on the registration and evaluation forms indicated that there was a general tendency for the societal sector to help ritualize the implementation of summer social practice.

CHAPTER 6

THE COUNTRYSIDE IN THE PERCEIVED SUMMER SOCIAL PRACTICE CURRICULUM

Introduction

In Chapter 4, I looked at several artifacts to see how the State, Jiangsu province, and East Teachers College, respectively, defined the countryside and expressed the purpose of (college students) engaging in rural-related activities in their planned *Summer Social Practice* curricula, and how they resembled and differed from each other in these two aspects. I found that the national agencies mobilized discrimination against the villages in the process of performing the ritual of care. Also, they sought to disseminate the ideologies of the Party-State and promote patriotism and loyalty to the CCP. While accepting these understandings and upholding the national decision to attend to the countryside, the province and the College employed certain strategies to decouple themselves from the commitment. Meanwhile, they tended to take advantage of summer social practice to serve and protect their own interests.

In Chapter 5, I first explored how the College and the Department placed the countryside in relation to the implementation of the 2007 summer social practice curriculum. After analyzing related artifacts, I identified a drama of performing care to the countryside. In each document that the College released, the countryside was emphasized in the title or/and at the beginning but dramatically disappeared in the main body. Of the five (non-) key teams that the Department of Chinese organized, one was

geared to ordinary rural communities. The title of the Department's report indicated that this team intended to "serve the new countryside." In stark contrast to this assertion, my reading of the full text showed that in the field this team tended to speak for the Party-State, to devalue rural residents, and to ignore their voice, agency, and potential. In the summer social practice guidance plan for the 2004 cohort, the Department invited student teachers to pay attention to rural (literacy) education but implicitly confined their perspective to that of the intellectual. Further, the Department seemed to encourage student teachers to posit themselves as outsiders to rural education and rural place.

I put my emphasis on what two classes of the 2004 cohort did for the 2007 summer social practice in Chapter 5. After putting various data sources together, what I sensed was still a drama. After a glance at the forms and the reports that Class 1 and 7 submitted to the Department, I sensed that more than half of them were themed on rural. However, a more careful examination revealed that the overwhelming majority were borrowed from somewhere else without citation. Most of the student teachers took the strategy of copying and others to fabricate a social practice activity. I was able to go backstage and understand how they produced their homework. Both the observations and interviews reinforced my previous reading. From the way in which the summer social practice homework was distributed and assessed, among others, teacher candidates recognized the low status of this course and therefore viewed the homework as a task they had to complete. They coped with it by copying.

Chapters 4 and 5 embody my understanding of the planned and implemented summer social practice curricula and the portraits of the countryside in the two layers.

With this you may wonder: How did student teachers themselves talk about this course and the countryside pertinent to this course? As the homework that student teachers submitted hardly reflected their actual thinking about summer social practice and related rural activities, and in Chapter 5 it was only slightly mentioned that they saw summer social practice as a course without much importance, in this chapter I plan to concentrate on the perceived curriculum, and use interview data to investigate the question aforementioned.

In line with Chapters 4 and 5, I address three specific questions in this chapter: 1) How did student teachers understand the concept of "*san xia xiang*" summer social practice? 2) How did they think about the implementation of collective "*san xia xiang*" summer social practice at the college and department levels? 3) How did they perceive the individual summer social practice themed on rural (literacy) education?[129] Similar patterns could be identified in the responses of student teachers to Questions 2 and 3. I separate the two for consideration of complexity. One goal of this chapter is to see if teacher candidates would phrase the countryside differently in different contexts. By the same token, in this chapter I also explore: 4) How were student teachers' perceptions of the countryside in relation to summer social practice different from or similar to what they built based on previous personal experiences?

Overall, I think that the summer social practice course provided an opportunity or platform for student teachers to (re)construct rural reality, their relationship with the countryside and the Party-State, and their own identity. In this chapter I intend to

[129] Of course, we actually do not know what people understand, think, or perceive. A more precise verb I might use here is "talk about."

elaborate these points and evaluate the effects that the summer social practice course had on student teachers.

On the Concept of "*San Xia Xiang*:" Taking the State's Understanding for Granted

Although all the seven interviewees heard of "*san xia xiang*" from various sources after entering college, their understanding of the term tended to be superficial and confusing. No one adequately knew its current design and implementation, not to mention its origin. All of them answered my question "Do you know what '*san xia xiang*' stands for?" with "I don't know" or similar words. As a further response, Fang searched Baidu and showed me a passage of article on the College's interpretation of "*san xia xiang*." Feng viewed "*san xia xiang*" as a job that one "may consider under the condition of unemployment" (personal communication, June 17, 2008). Meng did not discover the term until receiving an honor certificate for her work in this. Even though, she was under the impression that the expressions of "*yi* (one) *xia xiang*" and "*er* (two) *xia xiang*" existed before "*san xia xiang*" was brought forward (personal communication, Dec. 8, 2007).[130]

On "San:" Knowledge, Development, and Modernization

None of the interview participants was able to explain what "*san*" signified. Meng, Shen, and Zhong speculated that it might denote "multiple times" or "three groups of people." Fang had "science and technology, and hygiene" in mind before searching Baidu.

[130] Yet, I have to say that compared with other interviewees Meng was more aware of her own limitations. For example, she reflected that "...I received the title of excellent individual in '*san xia xiang*' and feel proud to tell others this. But if others ask me what '*san xia xiang*' is, I don't actually know. ...I have to admit that ...I don't think, don't think at all" (personal communication, Dec. 8, 2007).

After realizing that "culture" was listed as the first item of the three, she agreed that knowledge, a synonym of culture, was what country people needed most. In her own words, "(If they) improve in knowledge (*zhishi*), (they) will improve in other aspects too" (personal communication, June 20, 2008).

Fang was not alone in emphasizing the severe lack of knowledge among rural residents. It was a point commonly made by my interviewees, and the clearest indication of this can be found in Jing's response.

> "*San xia xiang*" reflects a notion of ... (ponder) I feel it is ... (ponder) "*san xia xiang*" should be that let more peasants master knowledge, master not only science and technology knowledge and cultural knowledge. Yes, knowledge, of course, includes many kinds, science and technology knowledge, and some legal knowledge. It includes all kinds of knowledge. (Personal communication, Dec. 7, 2007)

These student teachers seemed to have embraced the notion embedded within the planned curricula. They tended to see knowledge as equivalent to scientific knowledge, and therefore to consider rural residents as deficient or inferior. They did not seem to recognize indigenous knowledge – a system of local knowledge that includes not only "technical" aspects but "non-technical insights, wisdom, ideas, perceptions, and innovative capabilities which pertain to ecological, biological, geographical, and physical phenomena" (Thrupp, 1989, p. 15). Without acknowledging and drawing upon knowledge of this kind, if involved in "*san xia xiang*" activities, they were likely to "displace" as opposed to "empower" (Thrupp, 1989) rural people.

In the meantime, Jing singled out the aspect of sending "science and technology" to the countryside by raising the case of computer use to illustrate its necessity and purpose:

> They (country people) have never heard of and seen a computer, the most common seen (item) in urban areas. Some of them heard of it but don't know what it is. Then "*san xia xiang*" is to tell them what it is used for, what it does in modern society, and if it is helpful for the economic development of the countryside ... The main purpose of it ("*san xia xiang*") is to let the countryside and the modern (*xiandai*), the development of the countryside and the development of modern economy and modern science and technology connected. (Personal communication, Dec. 7, 2007)

"Development" and "modernization" are twin words used interchangeably in the national rhetoric. Jing appeared to have little understanding of the genealogy or the meaning of the two words, but have learned to use them to position rural society. Rural society was pictured as economically underdeveloped or "traditional," and desperate for development and modernization. As McMichael has argued, "the development project has offered a universal blueprint for national economic development" (1996, p. 147; cited in Munck, 1999, p. 199). In saying the above words, Jing took the stance of the nation-state to highlight the economic development of rural society through the advancement of science and technology. By contrast, she missed the chance to comprehensively consider the meaning and direction of development from the standpoint of rural communities. This might strengthen "monologue rather than dialogue" (Tucker, 1999, p. 10), and ultimately the unequal power relationship among the nation-state, college students, and rural communities.

On "Xia:" Setting the Social Construct as Default

No student teachers appeared to have questioned the use of verb "*xia*" before the interview. With the question "What do you think of the word '*xia*' in '*xia xiang*'?" Fang responded "It is not bad. I, myself, am from the down countryside (*xiangxia*)" (personal communication, June 20, 2008). Feng commented with the simple phrase "no feelings

(*mei ganjue*)" (personal communication, June 17, 2008). It sounded as if the two had internalized the notion that the countryside was lower in the social order and chosen to take it for granted.

Zhong and Shen took an "objective" approach to the verb. Zhong interpreted "*xia*" as "enter," and therefore "*xia xiang*" as "let advanced knowledge enter the countryside" (personal communication, Dec. 14, 2007). Without any prompting from me, she continued "But it does put the countryside in a lower position. We go down to rather than up to the countryside" (personal communication, Dec. 14, 2007). After pondering for a second, Shen came to realize that "I feel there is a status different herein. I feel I bend over. Here it doesn't say an equal relationship and positioning" (personal communication, Dec. 12, 2007).

More complexity and dynamics were added to Meng's and Jiang's responses. For instance, in the first part of the interview – a part that accented her personal and educational experiences, Meng shared a view with Fang and Feng on how to understand "*xia*:"

> ..."*xia*" is not used discriminatively but accidently...because people think that going from the countryside to a small city and then to a bigger city is like climbing stairs up step by step...I think it is unarguable from a general point of view. People say that in this society there are many customs needing to be followed. (Meng, personal communication, Dec. 5, 2007)

As the interview proceeded to the fourth part, a part focusing on summer social practice, Meng slightly recognized the dilemma of identity posed by the verb "*xia*."

> If I am in the activity (of "*san xia xiang*"), I will feel (I have an) awkward (*bugan buga*) (identity), staying in the middle of the urban and the rural. ... I feel I am

> positioned on the side of the city. ... But I didn't ever think about this. ... (I) approved tacitly (*moren*). (Meng, personal communication, Dec. 8, 2007)

On "Xiang:" Backward, Distant, and the Rural-Urban Dichotomy

Whilst taking both "villages" and "town(ship)s" as the "*xiang*" in "*san xia xiang*," all the interviewees concentrated on the former. Meanwhile, "*xiang*" was not only an administrative-geographical concept in their view. As seen from what was selected into social practice forms and reports, which I have described in Chapter 5, they tended to associate "*xiang*" with somewhere backward and conservative. Indeed, in my interview with Fang, she literally defined "*xiang*" as "those backward places that need help" (personal communication, June 20, 2008). Jing claimed that "Country people...first of all, they are conservative as they have been living in the countryside all over their life" (personal communication, Dec. 7, 2007).

Also, there was a tendency for these student teachers to deem the "*xia*" in "*san xia xiang*" as far away from their home or living place. Fang, a person originating from a village, rendered "*xia xiang*" as "going to an unfamiliar (*mosheng de*) place..." (personal communication, June 20, 2008). Meng mainly categorized "west China" as the target audience of "*san xia xiang*." This implied the possibility that they were disposed to distance themselves from rural matters, which I will elaborate later in this chapter.

Further, in expressing her concern for "*san xia xiang*" participants being in the countryside, Jiang offered an account of rural life.

> For example, it usually feels very quiet (*anjing*) in the evening of *xiangxia* (the down countryside). That is, it is very comfortable (*shufu*), not as noisy (*chao*) as the city. Then they may feel it is a little better to be in *xiangxia*. However, some have

> been used to the richness (*fengfuhua*) of life in the city, that is, the night life. They may feel (life is) pale (*pingdan*) in *xiangxia*. There is no place for fun. Take people in my place for example. They migrate to work in cities. While visiting home after several years, they say it is not fun to be home. There is no place to play or eat at home. No people play. They have got used to the city life. If going back to *xiangxia*, they are not used to the calm life in *xiangxia*. (It is) the same for ourselves. While at home not staying with classmates, (I) feel calm (*pingjing*) at the first beginning and very bored (*wuliao*) just after several days. (I) have nothing (to do) except watch TV and sleep. Many people have such feelings. (Personal communication, Nov. 22, 2007)

Apart from excluding herself from the membership of the "*san xia xiang*" program, Jiang presented her perception of rural life against urban one, which revealed her concept of the rural-urban dichotomy. In her understanding, rural life shared the properties of being "quiet"/"calm"/ "comfortable," "pale," and "boring," whereas for urban life they were "noisy," "rich," and "fun." Added to this was the time dimension. As time went on, a person's feeling about rural life would change from being "quiet"/"calm"/"comfortable" to "pale" and then to "boring." As for urban life, s/he would first feel "noisy," but such feeling would be subsequently replaced by "rich" and "fun." In other words, along with time, his/her sense of the disadvantages of rural life would intensify. So would his/her preference for urban life.

After discussing each word and its meaning, the students interviewed noted that country people were primarily positioned as beneficiaries in the design of "*san xia xiang*." For instance, Shen identified that

> There should be very little (that country people can teach us). Maybe there is some too. But based on what hear about the definition of "*san xia xiang*," I feel it is primary that we give them stuff, they are listeners and subjects to be helped. (Personal communication, Dec. 12, 2007)

Jiang further interpreted that "It ("*san xia xiang*") probably assumes country people need us to advise on something, or to help them with something, maybe more with thinking (*sixiang*). Help them to broaden their horizon and let them understand the city" (personal communication, Nov. 22, 2007).

As the above excerpts show, these student teachers had the potential or ability of analyzing information and expressing their deep thinking. They had learned that "*san xia xiang*" presumed the inferiority of the rural. The issue of interest was where they chose to stand. According to my interviews, they were most likely to implicitly accept the premise. They appeared to have internalized the assumption that devalued and objectified rural residents. They might hold that it was logical for the outside forces to impose visions and ideas on rural residents, which would normalize or reproduce the notion of development as "a process whereby the lives of some peoples, their plans, their hopes, their imaginations, are shaped by others who frequently share neither their lifestyles, nor their hopes nor their values" (Tucker, 1999, p. 1).

On "*San Xia Xiang*" in Practice: Gala Performance of the Few and the Construction of Detachment

It needs mentioning that these interviewed students articulated their perceptions of "*san xia xiang*" from a conceptual perspective. None of them claimed to have attended any "*san xia xiang*" activities. Based on their observations of who had participated, all these student teachers regarded "*san xia xiang*" as a business irrelevant to themselves. To use Zhong's expression, "Issues of '*san xia xiang*' activities don't seem to be valued in

our life. It is like some issues only relating to some people and having nothing to with the majority of us" (personal communication, Dec. 14, 2007).

Distinction and the Construction of Detachment

These student teachers had constructed the notion that "*san xia xiang*" participants were elite in status. All the interviewees recognized that they held an "official position" (*guanwei*) (as class president, class CCYL Secretary, or head of a student association) or/and showed talent for "science and technology" or gala performance, in addition to maintaining a close relationship with the faculty member. For instance, Fang reported that they were "active members of the Department, the left and right hands of the teacher...those who frequent the Department (faculty's building)" (personal communication, June 20, 2008). They were "recommended" by the faculty member with "quota" (Jing, personal communication, Dec. 7, 2007) in mind and "picked" ("*chou*") (Jiang, personal communication, Nov. 22, 2007; Zhong, personal communication, Dec. 14, 2007) by the Department. Further, they were "a fixed group of people" (Fang, personal communication, June 20, 2008) or "the same passel of people every year" (Zhong, personal communication, Dec. 14, 2007).

About why this special group of students joined "*san xia xiang*," it was the unanimous belief of my interviewed students that they did this to satisfy the bureaucratic requirement, for their own interest, and/or out of no choice. For instance, it was straightforward for Jiang to state that "They are not interested. They have to do (it) in that position. The task is just assigned. In a class there are few who would love to do it...then the class president is asked to do it" (personal communication, Nov. 22, 2007).

Even though, the interview participants offered divergent opinions on their eligibility to attend "*san xia xiang*" activities. For example, Jing took the view that

> I can do (these), but I don't have the eligibility to do (these). ...I can because I have mastered some knowledge...at least I have something to chat with them, talk with them, and communicate with them...the down mass populace (*dixia de renmin qunzhong*)...but I don't have the eligibility. Maybe because my knowledge is still limited, my ability is not strong. And then my relationship with the teacher, the teacher's impression of me is not very good either. ...No, it is that the teacher has no impression of me. (Personal communication, Dec. 7, 2007)

Shen did not think she had the "excellent" (personal communication, Dec. 12, 2007) qualities needed for "*san xia xiang.*" Zhong supposed that she was eligible for application but never tried one. She ascribed this to the lack of transparency in the selection process:

> ...the teacher...doesn't dare to pick me...I may have more respect for him and there is more distance (between him and me) as teacher and student. ...The teacher doesn't say now it is time to apply and which students need to apply for "*san xia xiang*" activities. It is all internally decided. ... Every year after the summer break... and you are back (to campus), the teacher has publicized the excellent individuals in "*san xia xiang*" social practice in a school journal. Then we see it and know these people participated in "*san xia xiang.*" Or we see the pictures that these students took from a website and know they went to do "*san xia xiang.*" (Personal communication, Dec. 14, 2007)

These prospective teachers viewed "*san xia xiang*" as institutional and collective demeanour. They had never thought of doing something in the countryside alone or organizing a group by themselves. Zhong took this for granted: "I don't know. This is how it ('*san xia xiang*') is organized, very thin and weak. It is not only like this at the department level but at the school (college) level" (personal communication, Dec. 14, 2007). Jing argued that "(I) have never heard of any individual '*san xia xiang.*' I feel this cannot be called '*san xia xiang*'" (personal communication, Dec. 7, 2007). Jiang

expressed the practical concern: "If you go alone, whether they (*renjia*), like a school, will accept you will be a problem" (personal communication, Nov. 22, 2007).

It looked as if the practice of the State, the province, and the College to distinguish "key" teams from others in the summer social practice curriculum had made an impact upon student teachers. Such distinction in effect provided a chance for them to (re)gain a sense of self. Bourdieu (1990) brought forward the concept of "habitus" – a system of "durable, transposable dispositions" (p. 53) of a person with the influence of previous experiences – to reconcile the relationship between structure and agency. Looked at from this framework, after taking the summer social practice course, these student teachers appeared to have (re)formed the disposition to depend on the institutional and structural around rural affairs in action taking (and understanding, as has been previously noted). Consequently, they tended to undermine or divest themselves of personal agency and public engagement. Excising their individual agency did not seem to be expected or encouraged by the society either, according to Jiang.

Gala Performance of the Few and Social Reproduction

These teacher candidates grounded their understandings of "*san xia xiang*" implementation in the Program on what they had heard. Meng heard that Yan, president of Class 1, and several others stayed on campus for a while during a summer break, but she had "no idea" (personal communication, Dec. 8, 2007) about what they did. Jing and Fang were informed by their roommate Jie that her boyfriend, Tong, joined a group to give counties in northern Jiangsu gala performance as he was talented in comic dialogue

and active in the Department.[131] Shen was told that one of her roommates and another girl from her class did a similar thing.

Zhong's boyfriend Xie, coincidently a previous class president of Class 7, once attended a "*san xia xiang*" group.[132] Zhong recapped the Program's "*san xia xiang*" implementation based on his experience.

> "*San xia xiang*" (is that) different people (go to) live in different places. For example, some go to * County, some go to Rong County, the countryside under the urban area of the county. They are placed in a district, that is, a street (committee) office (*jiedao bangongshi*), an office. It is more often they are (placed) in a street (committee) office. Then they don't actually do anything substantial. Or, they just give some performances (*yanchu*) for others to watch...They enrich...people's life...then provide some service to them (local people), or provide some information... (Personal communication, Dec. 14, 2007)

As for what Xie gained from his "*san xia xiang*" experience,

> Zhong: He had never been to * County. He had heard that people were saying that (it's) poor. Then he went to * County and finally understands why people say it is very poor.
> Wu: Eh.
> Zhong: This is to say, he also sees northern Jiangsu, or what status the countryside of northern Jiangsu is in.
> Wu: He went to the county seat of *, a town, or a village? ...
> Zhong: It seemed to be the county seat.
> Wu: You two consider it as part of the countryside, right?

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[131] Tong, admitted to the Program in 2003, grew up in a village of a well-known county, southern Jiangsu. At the end of June 2006, accompanied by Jing, I had a lunch with Tong, and hence an opportunity to chat with him about "*san xia xiang*." According to him, "*san xia xiang*" of every year was basically "political dissemination" and took the main form of gala performance. In most cases the gala was performed to the cadres and residents in the county seat. He was reluctant to participate in activities of this type but had to. Tong's impression was that he experienced great hardship in "*xia xiang*" but was not appreciated enough by the college. (The response of the targeted audience to his work was an aspect omitted in his talk.) He was frustrated by the fact that every time the title of "Excellent Student in Social Practice" went to a class president or a CCYL branch secretary.

[132] Xie had a notorious reputation as the second president of Class 7. On the first day in Spring County High School for student teaching, he even acknowledged in front of me that he used this position to his advantage (personal communication, Sep. 22, 2007). Xie thought of himself as a smart person, knowing how to adjust himself to the real society. He even said that since the society was very "dark" he needed to behave "darker" to go with the environment.

> Zhong: Yes. He understands it (the countryside)...as the poor place. (Personal communication, Dec. 14, 2007)

According to Zhong, Xie did not seem to go and work in any villages in the process of "*san xia xiang*." What he experienced in "*san xia xiang*" did not seem to arouse his interest or engagement in the countryside either. Xie positioned himself as "onlooker" as before.[133] In fact, what he learned from "*san xia xiang*" contributed to more social reproduction than transformation. He reinforced the simplistic notion that the countryside was equal to being poor, which could be interpreted in both ways: the countryside was poor, and poor places were the countryside.[134] He also spread the perception, which might serve as a reference for others to understand rural places.

On how to comment on the Department/Program's implementation of "*san xia xiang*," all the interview participants chose "a form" or similar terms to describe it. For example, Zhong commented that "What the few people (who are involved) do tends to be a mere formality (*liuyu xingshi*)" (personal communication, Dec. 14, 2007). Jing elaborated that

> I feel (they) just did a form (*xingshi*), just a form. ... If you really want to send culture, send entertainment to the bottom, to countrymen of East, you have to communicate with them while sending culture. ... Concerning the activity that the school organized, (the school) just took them (students) there for gala performance (*wenyi biaoyan*), and brought them back after the show (*yanchu*), after the show. There were no communications with others at all. They were performing on the up stage while the down mass populace were watching from below. After watching, (the bottom populace) clapped and gave some small comments. Maybe they didn't even hear the comments. Then (two groups of people) went back to do their own things. (Personal communication, Dec. 7, 2007)

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[133] My conversations with him on several occasions confirmed Zhong's description.

[134] Xie came from a county seat of mid-Jiangsu, and never claimed it was rural. By contrast, he classified a place of northern Jiangsu with the same administrative level as rural.

Jing was disparaging not only the Department/Program's "*san xia xiang*" but that of the entire College. In her view, several interrelated features of the College's "*san xia xiang*" activities contributed to its formalistic nature: the activity type – gala performance, the short length of activity, and the lack of interaction between the performer and the audience.

Here, Jing used the term "gala performance" in a realistic sense. In the light of the main argument of the previous chapter, one may add that it can be employed as a metaphor to describe the College's "*san xia xiang*" as well. "Gala performance," taken place in a theatre-like setting, is "cultural performance before a mass audience" (Esherick & Wasserstrom, 1990, p. 845) who usually play the passive role of clapping. It shares the main characteristic of being highly scripted. If what Tong described in the restaurant was true, the College's gala performance borrowed a lot of scripts from the national and provincial policy texts in rural matters or was a "ritual performance" (Esherick & Wasserstrom, 1990). It was "performed for social effect," or more specifically, for "symbolic effect" (Esherick & Wasserstrom, 1990, p. 846). Gala performance was "designed to impress and move an audience, not a lecture designed to inform" (Esherick & Wasserstrom, 1990, p. 846). It was carried out to make the audience believe that the State and various state apparatuses cared about rural people and there was no conflict between the two groups. In this sense, gala performance helped to "defend their position against attacks from below or to maximize their power vis-à-vis other elite groups" (Esherick & Wasserstrom, 1990, p. 845).

Competing Concepts of "Xiang" in Practice

My interview participants had sensed that only a small proportion of "*san xia xiang*" groups were organized to target villages. For instance, Jiang contended "those groups who truly go to a village are estimated to be few" (personal communication, Nov. 22, 2007). Zhong answered that

> At the level of town(ship). Because...for example they went to the * district here. It was a street office of a town nearby... They possibly understand "not the urban area of a prefecture city" (*bushi shiqu*) as the scope of "*san xia xiang*," neither the urban area of East City nor that of another prefecture city. (Personal communication, Dec. 14, 2007)

Recall that in the planned curriculum, the "*xiang*" in "*san xia xiang*" was specifically defined as "villages" at the national level, and became ambiguous and confusing at the provincial level. During the design and implementation of activities, as I have pointed out in Chapter 5, the College tended to overlook villages. When it came to perception, Zhong was under the impression that the College implicitly (re-)defined "*xiang*" as "not the urban area of a prefecture city," and possibly considered more about the convenience (e.g., the distance from the College) than who needed support most when choosing a place.

Indeed, Jiang was able to point out the contradiction of the Program's discourse about the countryside in between "*san xia xiang*" and job searching.

> This ("Building the socialist new countryside") is an empty word (*konghua*) to us...It (the school) says (we should help) build the socialist new countryside. What can you provide for the construction of the new countryside? ...At best you can prepare some teachers. But when it comes to prepare these teachers, it seems you don't actually want them to go to the countryside. In general (they) go to county seats (*xiancheng*)...I feel they don't encourage us (to consider the countryside) in job hunting. There was a student last year who gave a good lesson and was admitted to East High School (the so-called best school in the region of East). Then they say we need to have a high quality in every aspect as an individual student (teacher). If

> so, good schools will select you when you go for a position there. Good schools are mostly in the regional city area and the county seat. They think there are few good schools in the countryside. You go to the countryside because you indeed can't find a job (in the urban area). Or, you go to the countryside because you are not that good in ability. (Personal communication, Nov. 22, 2007)

According to Jiang, individualism – "an idea of society as a neutral area within which each individual is free to pursue his [sic] own development and his [sic] own advantage as a natural right" (Williams, 1958, p. 325; cited in M. E. Finn, 2007, p. 241) – dominated the Program's teacher preparation. The Program labeled schools as "good" or "not that good" in alignment with their urban or rural location. Correspondingly, a graduate who found a position in an urban or rural school was tagged as "good" or "not that good." When emphasizing the pursuit of self-interest to student teachers, the Program appeared to minimize the teaching of their obligation to civic engagement. As far as effect is concerned, this program's either-or thinking and practice might have legitimized student teachers' neglect of rural schools or at least in job searching.

In contrast to dismissing the countryside on graduate employment, in the summer social practice course the Program asked its students to show care for rural issues. Yet, Jiang's words indicated that the Program failed to present persuasive reasons to explain why students should attend to the countryside other than the national request of "building the socialist new countryside." Although the two messages about how to treat the countryside were contradictory, Jiang had learned to identify which one had a regular and prevalent presence. As a consequence, she deemed the Program's attention to the countryside as "an empty word."

Furthermore, none of my interviewed students accepted the idea that the College's participation in "*san xia xiang*" was out of sincere care for the countryside. For example, Feng precisely put that "Every school is asked to have this...to disseminate itself" (personal communication, June 17, 2008). Jiang explained at more length that

> Probably for the dissemination of the school. That is, each school does this. If not doing (it), our school cannot pass the public opinion (*shuobu guoqu*). ... I don't know much either. My point is maybe the State has attached importance to the countryside, as well as education in the countryside, and has come up with some policies and some measures. Then some schools took the initiative. Those who showed the initiative may have got some praises. (Smile) I feel it is like this. Or put in another way, (they) have received a better public voice. (Personal communication, Nov. 22, 2007)

It has been observed (by e.g., Meyer & Rowan, 1977) that an isomorphism relationship exists among institutions. Taking a step further, DiMaggio and Powell (1983) subdivide the process of institutional isomorphism into three types: coercive, mimetic, and normative. Following this perspective, it can be said that these future teachers understood the College's involvement in "*san xia xiang*" as the effects of both coercive and normative isomorphism, that is, a response to the formal and informal pressure on it. In terms of the former, the Party-State (at both the national and provincial levels) had given educational organizations a clear mandate to join "*san xia xiang.*" In the centralized system, East Teachers College, like many other universities and colleges, relied on sources of various types from the government for survival and development, and had to conform to the institutional requirement, at least in a ceremonial sense. With the release of the request from the Party-State, groups of the society were expecting the College to get involved as well. Under the circumstances, the College's resources and reputation would be at stake if it chose not to participate.

Another thought-provoking finding is that in spite of the implementation reality, my interview respondents overall claimed that "*san xia xiang*" was a desirable project in and of itself.[135] For example, Shen stated that

> First of all (it) must bring good aspects to the countryside, that is, can enhance those in their forties and fifties who don't have much culture or are illiterate, can improve their knowledge in daily life. It is to pass down culture. They must benefit (from it). Then for our college students who are organized (to go) down, it is for sure to practice your ability, how to truly interact with people. Then you pass down all the knowledge you know to them. I feel it is pretty good too. (Personal communication, Dec. 12, 2007)

Their focus was on calling for a better approach to practice "*san xia xiang*." For instance, Jing wished for a "true" and "solid" implementation:

> To do it real refers to, of course, can't just do (it) only for a show (*biaomian wenzhang*). Have to talk with them. Without talking, you will go down, understand some things, contact some people, have some meals, and then leave. (You will) go and leave quickly, haste, come and go in a hurry. (You will) only do (it) as a form (*xingshi*). (It) doesn't seem to reach the requirement of (doing it) real. Secondly, need to do it solid. (pause). Need to contact the common populace, namely, farmers in the countryside. Contact them and truly put knowledge into their hands, let them know the importance of knowledge, ... let them experience for themselves that knowledge is actually very important. (Personal communication, Dec. 7, 2007)

The above words confirm my preceding interpretation that these prospective teachers were inclined to take an uncritical approach to the premise of "*san xia xiang*." They did not seem to have any doubts about the understanding of "knowledge" or the relationship between them and rural residents embedded in the slogan "*san xia xiang*."

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[135] Of the seven interview participants, only Meng and Jiang slightly mentioned the shortcoming of the "*san xia xiang*" design. Jiang vaguely pointed out that "There is something standing between (the countryside and me)" (personal communication, Nov. 22, 2007). Meng remarked that although these "socially good" ("*gongyi*") activities would offer rural residents some timely help ("*jishi yu*"), they were filled with the smell of a short-term "show" while there is a need for "constant attention" to the countryside (personal communication, Dec. 8, 2007).

Along with this was their tendency to free the Party-State from being questioned. In this case, it can be argued that the purpose those national agencies proposed for "*san xia xiang*" summer social practice had been basically achieved.

In short, my interview participants perceived "*san xia xiang*" summer social practice chiefly as a program related to a small group of elite students who they were not part of, and involving poor rural places that were distant or remote from their own life. Under the circumstances, as the guidance plan for the 2004 cohort was rural-themed and individual-targeted, one may wonder: Would the student teachers talk about a concrete rural place (such as their home place) in the related part of the interview? If yes, how? To what extent would their understanding of a concerte rural place (or/and the countryside in general associated with individual summer social practice) resemble or differ from that of the "*xiang*" in "*san xia xiang*" summer social practice? I will cover these issues in the coming section.

On Individual Summer Social Practice: Selective Cynicism and a Sense of Detachment from the Countryside

On Rural Education: "Cannot be Compared with Urban Education" and to Enhance "Suzhi" for Modernization

By the time of interview my participants had forgotten most of the reference topics for the 2007 summer social practice, yet they were left with the general impression that education in rural areas was nothing but fraught with problems. For example, Fang recalled "After reading those topics (I) felt (they) pointed out some problems existing in

rural secondary schools, (which) can be said to be typical and can be said to be commonly existent" (personal communication, June 20, 2008).

The three interview participants from Class 7 focused on rural education in their submitted homework, but all needed my help in recalling what they had "written" into their report. With my question "What do you think the education in rural schools is approximately like?," Fang gave me a one-sentence response: "I feel it cannot be compared with that in urban schools" (personal communication, June 27, 2008). Jing mainly saw "a sharp contrast" between rural and urban schools in resources (personal communication, Dec. 7, 2007). They appeared to follow the thinking of the rural-urban dichotomy to see rural schools in the shadow of urban ones. Further, as seen from the brevity of their answers, they were reluctant to discuss rural education. This could be partly explained by the fact that before the interview Fang had made the decision not to pursue a teaching career[136], and Jing had planned to teach in a privileged county middle school by means of personal connections.

Knowing that Feng wrote about "building the new countryside" on her form, in the interview I asked how she understood the term. As a result we had the following conversation:

> Feng: Need to develop rural economy...need to make the countryside modernized too. The seniors will not need to farm but get retirement pension.
> Wu: You feel the countryside in your area is not modernized.
> Feng: No.
> Wu: How do you understand "modernized?"
> Feng: (to make the life in the countryside) Similar to the life in the city.
> Wu: Did you write about your true thoughts in your submitted form and investigation report?

[136] Fang's dad had found an oil company for her to work at through personal connections.

Feng: I forgot (what I had written).
Wu: For example, you wrote that a girl said "want to be a teacher in the future and come back to the countryside to teach those kids." Is this your true thought?
Feng: Yes.
Wu: You wish that people back to the countryside to construct the countryside after school?
Feng: A little.
Wu: The reason is?
Feng: To develop rural education.
Wu: To develop rural education for?
Feng: To enhance the general quality (*suzhi*) of (country) people.
Wu: What do you think is "quality?"
Feng: A little higher in culture level (*wenhua shuiping*).
Wu: Again, what is "culture?"
(Two-minute silence online)
Wu: Just forget about it if you don't want to answer. It will be fine.
Feng: A little higher in credential (*xueli*).
Wu: But just now you said that in actuality student teachers are unwilling to go to the villages and towns.
Feng: Yes.
Wu: What do you think the reason is?
Feng: People all want to go to good places. (Personal communication, June 17, 2008)

Like Jing, Feng followed the State's modernization discourse to mainly see rural development from the economic dimension. Moreover, she set living an urban life as the goal for rural modernization or as the dream for rural residents to pursue. It read as if there was little value in having a rural life.

In her summer social practice homework, Feng fudged the story that, with the influence of her, a girl from her village promised to come back and teach after growing up. She wrote this maybe because it was her intuitive wish, it followed a conventional plot, and/or she attempted to create something that went with the prescribed theme. Meanwhile, Feng was very conscious of the reality that teacher education graduates disliked working in rural areas. Toward their choice she took a very understandable attitude: "People all want to go to good places." She seemed to assume that rural places

were anything but "good," which echoes my interpretation of her idea about rural life above.

As some scholars (e.g., Hsu, 2007; Kipnis, 2006, 2007; Murphy, 2004) have keenly observed, "*sushi*" ("quality") has become a crucial discourse in contemporary China. It "offers a way of speaking explicitly about class without using the word 'class'" (Kipnis, 2007, p. 390) and hence a unique system of social stratification (Hsu, 2007). It adopts superficial indicators such as credentials to determine a person's quality and accordingly his or her value and right. "Reference to *suzhi* justifies social and political hierarchies of all sorts, with those of 'high' *suzhi* being seen as deserving more income, power and status than those of 'low' *suzhi*" (Kipnis, 2006, p. 295). It has been used as an excuse for the state institutions to reduce investment in improving the well-being of rural residents (Murphy, 2004), among others. Feng had learned to frame the purpose of rural education within the framework of "*sushi*." In saying so, she conveyed the belief that rural individuals themselves were solely responsible for their own problems.

Reponses from Class 1 resembled those presented above. For example, Jiang phrased "the three-rural issues" as if the root of agricultural, community, and peasant problems lay in the countryside itself. Following the State, she proposed modernization as the omnipotent solution to the current rural problems. Jiang tried to identify "another aspect" of rural education than "problems," but ended up with considering improving rural education from a state point of view, that is, to raise "the overall quality of the nation" (*guomin de zhengti suzhi*) (personal communication, Nov. 22, 2007).

On the Attention to Rural Education in Individual Summer Social Practice

At first glance, different perspectives appeared to exist in student teachers' responses to "What do you think led to the Department's concentration on rural education in 2007 summer social practice?" Jiang reasoned "This was probably due to the directive of the State" (personal communication, Nov. 22, 2007). It was her impression that the State had been committed to the countryside – tackling "the three-rural issues" and promoting its development. She also surmised that the Department partially aimed to help student teachers "understand the current situation of the countryside" (personal communication, Nov. 22, 2007). However, shortly after she signed that "But what's the point, after all, of 'we understand it? I am not clear about this'" (personal communication, Nov. 22, 2007).

Another perspective could be student teaching. Fang stated that "It was somehow related to (the fact that) we would go back to [the town(ship) school and] student teach in September" (personal communication, June 27, 2008). Yet afterwards, she contradicted herself with "Numerous students were placed in the urban secondary schools under East (for field teaching)" (personal communication, June 27, 2008).

Zhong raised the possibility that the Department attended to rural education in 2007 individual summer social practice out of consideration for further employment of some teacher candidates. By "some teacher candidates" she specifically meant those from the countryside. It was assumed that teaching in a rural school was an option primarily for student teachers of rural origin. Then, like Fang, Zhong gave it a second thought: "I don't feel that they designed the focus with such a good intention, maybe just to show that the

social practice of our department reaches the countryside" (personal communication, Dec. 14, 2007).

In accord with Zhong but expanding her thought, Meng adopted a rather skeptical attitude toward the entire college's, including the Department's, interest in the countryside: "(Our college) pays attention to the countryside? I feel they try to stay away from the countryside as far as possible. ... Teachers, teachers don't even care about students. They care about the countryside" (personal communication, Dec. 8, 2007)?

Piecing the above information together, I see two major themes. One is associated with the Program's guidance plan for the 2004 cohort. Recall that the very plan contained the implicit desire that student teachers engage in rural education as an outside researcher rather than a potential practitioner who would later teach in rural context. If Fang's observation about student teaching placement reinforced this possibility, Jiang's questioning could be a consequence of such a design. Jiang separated understanding from practice and could not envision herself as a social change agent. The other has to do with the overall summer social practice design. Consistent with the wish of the official curricula to strengthen the tie between the Party-State and college students and the finding presented at the end of "On '*san xia xiang*' in Practice," these student teachers did not recognize any possible problems with the Party-State. Instead, they criticized the intentions and practices of the local. Below I present more about the phenomenon of "selective cynicism."

On the Implementation of Individual Summer Social Practice: A Form without Meaning or Use

All the interviewees also described the College's implementation of individual summer social practice as superficial and artificial by repeating phrases like "a form" and "a show." Although writing most of the report on her own, Feng suggested that "It doesn't actually have any meaning. It is just a task ... The teacher won't read (it). It is just a form and has no meaning at all" (personal communication, June 17, 2008). "It is just for 'reporting to the superior after accomplishing a task' (*jiaochai*)" (personal communication, Nov. 22, 2007), Jiang said. Take Jing for another example.

> Jing: ...How to say? Those students senior to us said that the stuff of this kind would be useless in the future.
> Wu: What do you mean by "useless?"
> Jing: That is, even if you write, write on your own, the teacher won't take a look after you turn it in.
> Wu: Eh. Those students senior to you have told you this.
> Jing: Yes. You are right. (They) have actually told us. We wanted to know what the practice was for through them. Then they said "this is useless. Even if you write and turn it in, the teacher won't take a look. Then about 'Excellent Individual in (Social) Practice,' they will give it to either the class president or the CCYL Secretary. That's it." Then we all keep this in mind, saying why write this, he won't read after you write and turn it in. It will be fine if you read it. But you don't read what I write. It takes so long to investigate one thing, and then takes so much ink to write a long paper. You don't even glance at it with your eyes but put it aside. What is the point of us spending so much energy? Is it still worthwhile? Then we didn't do that. (Personal communication, Dec. 7, 2007)

These student teachers were externally driven by their desire for (immediate) recognition and appreciation, and looked at the value and importance of individual summer social practice from this narrow aspect. Granted that the head teacher would not offer any feedback on their submitted materials but granted the honor of "Excellent Individual in Social Practice" arbitrarily to several student cadres, they generalized summer social practice as "meaningless," "useless," or "worthless" to do. The procedural approach of the College toward implementation seemed to have blocked these future

teachers from thinking about summer social practice – one version of service learning – in the perspective of the common good. They were using their distrust of the College as justification for fabricating evidence for or/and plagiarizing homework, and hence divorcing themselves from civic engagement or public responsibility. What's more, Jing's information about the advice from the senior student teachers indicated that the "culture of cynicism" (Giroux, 2001) permeated not only my focal group but, possibly, the entire program.

Cynicism alone did not seem to explain these student teachers' disengagement in summer social practice. Tightly associated with cynicism was their sense of detachment from rural society. For example, Jing made it clear that rural development and the future of the countryside would have nothing to do with her. Jiang acknowledged that

> On the one hand it is our fault. Probably still plenty think it is not that much related to themselves, and only think it as assigned homework. It is like that we (are asked to) write a small essay or review a character in history or a character in a literary work. We don't think it is related to our real life. (Personal communication, Nov. 22, 2007)

As a person who was raised in a village, Jiang wished a "good life" (personal communication, Nov. 22, 2007) for her family and others in the village. Yet, she did not sense any obligations to the countryside for now or in the future. She believed that solving "the three-rural issue" was not the responsibility of each citizen but that of the Party-State. On her own terms, "I didn't think it was related to me in any sense, I felt it was far away from myself" (personal communication, Nov. 22, 2007).

All the participants understood summer social practice as an individual project, which confirmed the dominance of the individualistic ideology in teacher preparation

(Diniz-Pereira, 2003). Only Meng mentioned that the thought of collaborating with her classmate or friend living close to her home village came to her mind. Yet, she never put it into practice as

> I feel, for example, (if) I ask my peer, another college student...that let's go to a school and do an investigation together, she will make fun of you (me): "are you crazy? (You) *chi bao le cheng de*?" This is my understanding. (Personal communication, Dec. 8, 2007)

If what Meng said was true, peer influence and pressure was a factor restraining her from group work on summer social practice. Further, "*chi bao le cheng de*" signifies "stick to your rib after eating and have nothing else to do." In using the Chinese common saying, Meng disclosed the serious unpopularity of summer social practice among student/college teachers – it was the last thing that they desired to do. As for students with rural background, this showed that they had developed the psychology of staying away from rural affairs.

With regard to what they had learned from the 2007 summer social practice, my participants responded with "nothing" or "little." Fang's explanation for this was clear-cut: "Nobody actually put their heart in ... The reason is practical. The teacher is not serious, and we are not serious either. ... Turning those materials in is all a form" (personal communication, June 20, 2008). Feng reasoned in more detail.

> Wu: What do you feel that you learned from summer social practice?
> Feng: Nothing. I didn't practice at all.
> Wu: Why not?
> Feng: No chances.
> Wu: You mean?
> Feng: (I) don't want to go a place far away.
> Wu: How far? Can you do this close to your home?
> Feng: No chances at home.

Wu: Why?
Feng: A concrete place is needed.
Wu: You mean your community – the group or the village – doesn't allow you to do?
Feng: It is not "don't allow" but nobody organizes.
Wu: Does it have to be "collective?'
Feng: Yes.
Wu: Can you do this alone or with several of your friends?
Feng: No.
Wu: You feel that somebody should come and organize?
Feng: It is not easy to find a subject. The school (should).
Wu: Are you talking about the "summer social practice" or "*san xia xiang*?" I don't understand.
Feng: Both.
Wu: You mean your social practice investigation has to be collectively (done)?
Feng: Yes.
Wu: Then is this to say that the form and the social investigation you submitted don't meet the requirement?
Feng: The school won't care. (Personal communication, June 17, 2008)

In this passage of our conversation, Feng still held the countryside in the individual summer social practice as far away from her home village. To act on her own initiative and do something with or for the local community did not occur to her. She was waiting for collective actions or using it as excuse for walking away from summer social practice. Again, it read as if the emphasis on collective "*san xia xiang*" in summer social practice design had helped Feng and others (re)construct the mentality of dependence on the elite. There was also a tendency for them not to interrogate their own detached position with the countryside.

If Feng and others were right to say that the College did not truly fall for summer social practice, then, why did the College have to perform great interest in this? Two excerpts below showed my interviewees' typical responses.

Wu: Why do you feel your school needs to design the "form?"
Fang: It is a must (*bixu de*) every year. All the colleges and universities have social practice.

Wu: It is "a must?" Why it is?
Fang: Jiangsu Education Bureau and the Ministry of Education arranged this project ... Jiangsu Education Bureau and the Ministry of Education assigned the project. Therefore, the school must do.
Wu: What's the starting point of the school (to do this)? Are you saying that your school and you do summer social practice just to complete the assignment distributed by the higher-up (*shangji*)?
Fang: It is nationally uniform (*quanguo tongyi de*). It is pretty much it. I think so. (Personal communication, June 20, 2008)

Wu: Do you know why your school has such a design? To let you understand the society?
Meng: The school...I feel the school asks us to do this first because the higher-up, I guess, requires us to do.
Wu: What do you mean by the higher-up?
Meng: The level one stage higher than the school. For example, to evaluate our school, they must evaluate the part of our social practice. Therefore, the school needs to implement this step. ... (Personal communication, Dec. 8, 2007)

Both Fang and Meng recognized that an "acquiesce" (Oliver, 1991) approach was employed by the College to respond to the institutional pressure. Notwithstanding their similarity in that both implied the top-down or coercive nature of summer social practice, they offered nuanced perspectives on the College's conformity. Fang pointed more to the "habit" (Oliver, 1991, p. 152) side of the College's response, assuming that the College was taking the external requirement for granted and acting blindly or unconsciously toward it. Slightly different from Fang, Meng argued that the College was "complying" (Oliver, 1991, p. 152) more actively. Put in another way, the College was consciously and strategically accepting the state requirement of involving in summer social practice with the anticipation that it would "be self-serving to organizational interests" (Oliver, 1991, p. 153).

On the Concept of Social Practice (Related to the Registration and Evaluation Form): History, Beneficiary, and Accountability

No students interviewed were familiar with the history of "social practice." "I don't know. I don't know. Nobody asks either. It (the school) distributes the assignment down, that is, asks (us to) write a social practice report, a report. Just write a practice report" (Jing, personal communication, Dec. 7, 2007); "I don't know... We all do social practice activities in summer. Every summer (the school) gives (us) two assignments. One is investigation report and the other is a social practice activity" (Shen, personal communication, Dec. 12, 2007).

> I don't know how summer social practice came into being. .... I don't know how summer social practice came into being. I have had it since I was little. I started to have it when I was in the elementary school. (The school) distributed the homework for every summer and winter break, (asking us) to write a reading report...an investigation report. I don't know how many years (I have been doing this). (Zhong, personal communication, Dec. 14, 2007)

Neither did they understand which department at each level was organizing summer social practice. These findings demonstrated that associated with the lack of sense of civic engagement and public responsibility was the ignorance of history, public affairs, government, and social issues (Giroux, 2001, p. 3). Without such background, Jing and Zhong reduced summer social practice to a "report," whereas Shen misapprehended it as two distinctive "assignments." The authentic value or meaning was stripped off from summer social practice. With the repeat of such experiences, these student teachers became passively obedient to the local authorities, a proposition oddly juxtaposed with being cynical about their practices.

On the issue "Who is the true beneficiary of social practice?," my interview participants presented different views. Feng and Shen insisted that country people were

the only beneficiaries. "It is people in the countryside who gain knowledge" (Feng, personal communication, June 17, 2008).

> Because after conducting the investigation ... (many people) come to realize some shortcomings, and then report to the higher-up one level by one level. Probably the higher-up attaches importance to the problem and then improves (the situation). Then I feel (the people who) truly benefit are students in the countryside. (Shen, personal communication, Dec. 12, 2007)

Apparently, they were inclined to perceive summer social practice as a one-way transmission of knowledge from college students to rural residents and to take the superior position of the former for granted. Shen's words also suggested that she mainly relied on bureaucracy to address rural issues, and put rural communities in a primary position of depending on the hierarchy of state-power and waiting to be rescued.

Zhong wrote "whatever unit" or whoever came to her mind. She answered my question presented at the beginning of last paragraph with "I have never thought about this issue. Because social practice here is not given importance. Perhaps at other places (it is probably) paid decent attention to. But here at our place it is nearly a form" (personal communication, Dec. 14, 2007). Added to her explanation emphasizing organizational attitude could be that as a person growing up in an urban environment she did not sense much connection of herself with the countryside nor the value of taking summer social practice seriously.

Of my interview participants, Meng was the only who displayed guilt over putting "rural people" or the like down as "beneficiary" on her registration and evaluation form.

> I feel that I need to thank them for providing materials for me to write about. It is not through my writing that they benefit. Now it is the opposite. It is because of

them that I can write and write well. ... It is like that they are providing materials for us. (Meng, personal communication, Dec. 8, 2007)

Few seemed to have questioned the "accountability" issue in relation to the use of stamp either. As Jing said, "Be responsible for whom in social practice? (Ponder)... No subjects to be responsible for...because I have never seriously done (a social practice). I have never considered who I should be responsible for" (personal communication, Dec. 7, 2007). With the assumption that it was Jiangsu Education Bureau who asked them to stamp from the "practice unit [at the town(ship) level and above]," Fang thought it was "normal" to do so on the one hand and "It won't matter if you don't have a stamp or a signature ...You may go to a village but very few (do so)" (personal communication, June 20, 2008) on the other. Habitually following the demand of "the higher-up" was presented on the surface of Jing's and Fang's thinking. Deep down was the feeling of separation from the countryside driven by the pursuit of individual goals.

Meng used to wonder "why can't I just go to my home village and get a stamp there" (personal communication, Dec. 8, 2007)? Before her brother started teaching, it was not easy for Meng to get the form stamped. She turned to her classmates who had connections for help. She (and her roommates) even went to a book store on campus for stamp. "Many people stamp there. The book store (owner) says 'you need to keep the stamp a little vague, yes, a little vague. The school will only see the red'" (Meng, personal communication, Dec. 8, 2007). Meng confirmed the message that response from the society played a mediating role in the implementation of summer social practice. Yet, again, the society taught her to avoid engagement by superficially obeying the authority, or "behind a façade of acquiescence" in the words of Oliver (1991, p. 154).

During the interview Meng thought hard about why the College asked a stamp from the "practice unit [at the town(ship) level and above)." She came up with several possibilities. The first explanation was that the College attempted to avoid responsibilities. If the social practice writing of a student is found to be poor by the "higher-up," the College can argue with the practice unit that "This student did the practice at your place. You also read his/her practice form and filled stuff. If s/he wrote poorly, isn't this your business? Why did you stamp it" (Meng, personal communication, Dec. 8, 2007)?

The second possibility was that the College intended to obtain approval from or build connection with the powerful organization.

> The higher the better, which shows the school is more serious (about social practice)... it makes the school feel what my students do is valuable...they are approved by the higher authority rather than you poor small village (*xiaopo cunzi*) presented through the village stamp. (Meng, personal communication, Dec. 8, 2007)

Meng considered "it is just a tradition inherited down" (personal communication, Dec. 8, 2007) as the third possible interpretation.

> Schools like ours never think of, I guess, few people will think why ask (a stamp) from the town(ship) (or above) level. If you ask some leaders (of our school), (they) will feel "the person who was in this position ahead of me did this, and the form is always printed like this." (Meng, personal communication, Dec. 8, 2007)

According to Meng, three contradictory strategies were simultaneously presented in the College's response to the national and provincial stipulation in summer social practice. The second and third strategies she identified were, respectively, active and passive "acquiescence," which I have pointed out in a previous section. As seen from the sequence, the prior strategy that the College considered was what Oliver (1991) termed "concealment," a subcategory of "avoidance." The College created "elaborate rational

plans and procedures in response to institutional requirements in order to disguise the fact that it doe not intend to implement them" (Oliver, 1991, p. 154). The College also took the concrete tactic of sharing the responsibility of monitoring student's summer social practice with the practice unit, or even dumping the responsibility to the latter when necessary. Rural needs and interests seemed to never enter the sight of summer social practice for authentic consideration.

About the relationship of summer social practice with the countryside, the following two responses were widespread among my interviewees. Feng supposed that there was a constant connection between the two. She felt cheered to see summer social practice's attention on the countryside as "I have been living in the countryside since I was little. I still know a little about the countryside. (I) feel foreign (*mosheng*) to the city" (personal communication, June 17, 2008). Yet, when turning to the implementation of summer social practice, she concluded without any hesitation that "they (my classmates) are not from the countryside and will never care. People all think for themselves" (personal communication, June 17, 2008).

Shen noticed that a higher and higher proportion of summer social practice activities had been required to be targeted on rural areas in the past several years. Nevertheless, she did not feel it was necessary: "because the situation of the countryside is only a part of big social issues. There are many other (social issues). I think it is not appropriate to particularly highlight its importance" (personal communication, Dec. 12, 2007). I followed her response to ask: "Do you think you know the countryside around you?" "Not enough," she calmly replied.

In short, to answer the questions I proposed in the transitional paragraph to this section, evidence showed that these student teachers conceptualized the countryside in individual summer social practice in a strikingly similar manner to that in collective "*san xia xiang*" summer social practice. Although this part of interview offered them an opportunity to discuss a specific rural place, they tended not to bring it in. Some of them (Feng, Jiang, and Meng) mentioned their home place with prompting, but the information they gave was too sketchy to be used for identifying the place. They seemed accustomed to understanding the countryside in a general and unified way within the framework of summer social practice. They also leaned toward describing the countryside in a negative light by following the State's "*shuzi*" and "modernization" discourses.

Meanwhile, there was consistency between these teacher candidates' understandings of collective "*san xia xiang*" summer social practice and the individual version. They did not possess a decent knowledge of either issue, but put the design aside to cast doubt on local implementation. They used the latter as the excuse for sliding away from actual practice, but failed to interrogate their own disengagement and the mentality of depending on others for change. They saw through the strategies used by the College, but did not go beyond this to see the big picture. They did not realize that they were part of the process of reproducing the concept of the countryside and the mind of passive conformity/resistance to the Party-State/the local.

In the above, I have analyzed student teachers' views of the countryside in the context of summer social practice or in an educational context and presented some truly depressing results. But the complexity lies in that I cannot argue that they completely

disregarded the countryside. The fact that they wished to see the advance of their home village or the countryside in general reminded me that there was more or less some connection between the two.

According to Bourdieu (1984), we are exposed to different fields, and may respond differently to the same issue at different times. What image would these teacher candidates present in describing the countryside in a more personal context? Could it be different from that presented above in any sense? If yes, what would the difference tell us? I will (briefly) tackle these questions by bringing in the part of the interview on their personal rural experience.

Understanding the Countryside: Personal vs. Educational and Before vs. Now

Interview data showed that all these student teachers had a pleasant memory of country life in their childhood. Jiang enjoyed looking at the land under the blue sky and listening to the various conversations of neighbors while they were working in the field. She liked catching crayfish, walking the buffalo, and picking greenfeed for pigs with her peers. She recalled vividly the folktales that her parents and neighbors had told her. Jing could not wait to "go back home" (personal communication, Dec. 4, 2007) from the township cotton purchase company – the place where her mom was working. She went with her grandpa on a boat to catch fish. She played a lot with her two dear friends, such as hide-and-seek and using wheat straws to grill sweet potatoes. Shen could not forget the joy of stealing the ripe fruit hanging on the trees or lying on the field with her friends as they could not resist the sweet smell.

Zhong recollected two intimate contacts with the countryside. As footnote 6 in Chapter 5 indicated, her grandpa originated from a village of the county. After he died of illness, several brothers of his were still living in the village. Zhong went to visit them twice with her parents and other relatives. There she felt that rural life was "fresh" (personal communication, Dec. 9, 2007). With the assistance of several country children, she looked for wild fruit and vegetables to eat, studied how tadpoles turned into frogs or toads with enthusiasm, played with a grunting pig, and learned to cook food with a mud-made stove. She sensed the hospitality of the local people throughout. She also remembered that she observed an interesting country wedding during which the groom used a bicycle to pick up the bride.

In their (early) memory, rural residents did not seem that ignorant either. Jiang's parents enjoyed reading and sharing stories with her and her siblings. Jing appraised the environment-friendly practice of using horsebean leaves and the like to make fertilizer. Meng's mom read books, magazines, and newspaper, and wrote regularly to her husband who was working in Shanghai. She understood the harm of using pesticides and grew organic food. She was also an expert in local language expressions and phrases.

However, when it came to current understanding, the tone of the interviewed students turned negative. The first thing they saw was economic poverty. A lot of people were still farming a small plot of land by using physical labor, hands, and sweat. Their income and living condition was a lot worse than that of those in (big) cities. When I asked about the village culture, what they (except Zhong who said little about the current countryside in the interview) observed first and foremost was the prevalence of gambling,

such as playing poker and mahjong. These student teachers also took note of the bleak life that the elderly people were having. It was caused by the fact that their sons or daughters treated them poorly or were out working all year round. In terms of ecological environment, all the rural student teachers were concerned about the pollution of water. That the pesticide factory discharged wastewater to the river, and that the farmer overused pesticides to raise agricultural productivity and threw domestic garbage to water contributed to the phenomenon. The interviewed students cared little about the village politics. Yet, after I came up with the topic, they condemned the village cadre as corrupted and incapable. Shen even used the metaphor "hog" (personal communication, Dec. 12, 2007) to describe this particular group of rural residents.

Nonetheless, the current notion of these rural student teachers about their home village had some positive elements. Jing acknowledged that the residents of her grandparents' village were "trying all means to make money" (personal communication, Dec. Dec. 4, 2007). Although the ties of kinship and friendship were weakening in the village due to the increasing interest in money, neighbors were still hospitable and cordial to each other. Both Jiang and Meng noted that farmers were industrious and worked around the clock during certain seasons, such as planting and harvesting. For Meng, local custom, tradition, language, and change were always the headstream of her writing, although she did not fully realize they were representations of the local culture or knowledge.

After considering the interview data on personal background, I have been able to identify a more complicated picture of their relationship with the countryside. In the case

of Jing, she tended to separate her personal life/position from professional one. In private, she still liked visiting her grandparents very much. She enjoyed being in the quiet and friendly environment, chatting with local residents, and helping around in the field or fishing. Nevertheless, when I followed the questions on the summer social practice course to ask about her relationship with the countryside, as I have presented previously, Jing boldly put that as she would teach in a county middle school after graduation rural development and the future of the countryside (including that of her home village) would have nothing to do with her, the students she would be teaching, and the colleagues she would be working with.

Feng saw that she had a good chance of ending up teaching in a rural school. In regards to this she presented mixed feelings. Feng claimed on the one hand that she cared about the home place as her parents were still living there, in addition to the fact that she grew up in the countryside (as noted before). To take care of them in the future, to some degree she had the idea of looking for a teaching position close to her home. She positioned herself as "a person from *xiangxia*" (personal communication, June 17, 2008) too. On the other hand, she considered teaching in a rural school as the last choice and made this point with the rhetorical question "Who wants to go to the countryside" (personal communication, June 17, 2008)?

A similar case was reported by Jiang. As indicated in a previous section, at the end of my interview with her, she came to realize that the "*xia*" in "*san xia xiang*" put rural students in an identity dilemma. Even though, Jiang refused to deny her rural background and said that she leaned toward articulating herself as a country or "*xiangxia*" person

(personal communication, Nov. 22, 2007). Still, when it came to the thought of teaching in rural context, like Feng, Jiang took it as a have-no-alternative-but-to choice.

Comparatively speaking, Shen showed more willingness to teach in the township school that she graduated from. This was not because she liked the school but because she felt that it was familiar to her and near the village where her beloved grandparents were living. Meanwhile, in college she chose to temporarily dislocate herself from or suspend the connection with her home place. "Because in this current environment I am a college student (I don't feel that the countryside is related to me). After I am back I will be a member of that village" (personal communication, Dec. 12, 2007), she explained.

In summary, the analysis above suggests that student teachers' perceptions of the countryside had changed over time. More importantly, their description of and relationship with the countryside in a personal context was different from that held within the framework of summer social practice. They portrayed their home village in a more balanced way, and the relationship between the two did not seem that distant. The education (from the family and the school) they had received over the years, of which summer social practice was part, appeared to have encouraged them to disconnect the personal with the educational or to suppress their rural experience or background. According to Jiang, the ultimate purpose of education had been to "get out of the countryside" and "find a foothold in the (big) city" (personal communication, Nov. 22, 2007) for her and other rural students since middle school.

Finally, I have to acknowledge that Meng's case was, more or less, exceptional. Throughout the prolonged interview, she did not express any strong preference for city

schools. She was also the only participant who discussed with me about what teacher preparation could possibly do to cater for the needs of rural communities. It is noteworthy that she had both experiences and dispositions that led her to consider the countryside. At the same time, from a critical perspective, I noted that she did not yet seem to develop a big-picture view of rural issues or concrete tools to think and act for change.

Conclusion

According to Bell (1992), "ritualization is a strategy for the construction of a limited and limiting power relationship" (p. 8). As a result of (the Party-State's ritualistic attention to the countryside and) the ritualization of summer social practice implementation, around the countryside a certain way of viewing the social reality, their own identity, and the relationship with others had been constructed or reinforced among the student teachers.

My interviews with seven teacher candidates suggested they had formed the habit of taking the stance of the Party-State. Knowing little about the past and the present of "*san xia xiang*" summer social practice, they believed that the countryside was lowly in the social order and backward in culture and economy, and needed to be modernized based on the blueprint of the Party-State. They were prone to count on the Party-State for rural change, and to view rural residents as passive beneficiaries with a stigma attached.

In contrast to exempting the Party-State from blame, these future teachers saw through the formalistic nature of the College's engagement in collective "*san xia xiang*" summer social practice. Only a handful of elite students were recruited; their decision to

participate did not seem relevant to the thought of considering the countryside; and what they did in the field, which had a low chance of being a village, was anything but substantial. From this and an opposing but dominant discourse on where to teach, my interview participants had (re)constructed the perception that "*san xia xiang*" summer social practice was extraneous to them, and then had a tendency not to exert any agency of their own. Further, what they knew from participants and others about "*san xia xiang*" reinforced the over-simplified notion of the countryside being poor and backward.

Such culture of selective cynicism prevailed over the student teachers in understanding and practicing the individual rural-related summer social practice as well. On the one hand, they appreciated the current attention of the Party-State to rural (education) development without a basic understanding of the history of its policy and practice in rural affairs/education, and particularly in summer social practice. They uncritically applied the discourses of the Party-State, such as "modernization" and "*suzhi*," to posit rural places and rural education. On the other hand, these future teachers understood that summer social practice was enforced at the College as a form without much meaning. They were well aware that the College presented enthusiasm for summer social practice due to the "higher-up." That is, the College was (strategically) responding to the environmental pressure rather than authentically to the rural reality. More importantly, they used this, which they gained from the distribution and grading of homework and from the student teachers ahead of them, as the excuse to disengage from summer social practice.

The ideology of individualism (Theobald, 1997) was embedded in the disengagement of these student teachers from (rural-themed) summer social practice. As Jiang's words suggested, in the Program the educational success of a student teacher was implicitly defined in terms of whether she or he could get a job in a "good" place, which usually referred to an urban area. Immersed in this discourse for long, these future teachers overall had reinforced the perception of thinking and acting for their own interests. Circumscribed by the either/or logic and in the consideration of their future, they might have put their agency and responsibility as a citizen for social change aside, and thus sensed the necessity of getting away from the countryside.

I also briefly compared rural student teachers' description of the countryside related to personal experience with that in the context of summer social practice, and recognized the existence of a dualism. They were apt to separate private life from educational one. In personal space, they still maintained a certain degree of connection with or care for the countryside, or precisely, their home village. Their description of home village became more comprehensive and balanced in the private field. The perception differentiation between the two fields seemed to suggest that education over the years, of which summer social practice was part, had been helping student teachers to ignore the vivid personal experience, to create an unfavorable and abstract country image, and to construct the psychology of "learning to leave" (Corbett, 2007) or escaping the countryside.

In conclusion, I have presented how they understood the countryside in relation to summer social practice (and personal experience) in this chapter. I have found that summer social practice – the only rural-themed course of the program – not only failed to

create a transformative effect on student teachers in their perception of and relationship to the countryside, but actively promoted bias, cynicism, and detachment. They took an uncritical attitude toward the premises of summer social practice, and consequently reinforced a stereotypical view of rural place. This course also boosted the popularity of selective cynicism among these student teachers, that is, increased the possibility of them habitually trusting the Party-State and questioning the local practice. Finally, it helped student teachers to further separate personal rural experience from the educational for professional considerations.

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HOW TEACHERS ARE PREPARED FOR RURAL CONTEXTS IN CHINA: A CASE STUDY

VOLUME II

By

Hailing Wu

A DISSERTATION

Submitted to
Michigan State University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSPHY

Curriculum, Teaching, and Educational Policy

2010

CHAPTER 7

THE COUNRYSIDE IN THE ARRANGMENTS FOR STUDENT TEACHING

Introduction

This chapter is concerned with arrangements for student teaching. I focus on the placements of student teachers (and field instructors) in fall 2007 and the expectations for the student teaching experience to include exploration of the countryside. Specifically, I address the following two interconnected questions: 1) Where were student teachers (and field instructors) placed or where did they choose to practice teaching and based on what considerations? 2) What were student teachers expected and what did they expect to learn from student teaching? In doing so, I examine the countryside in the arrangements for student teaching, and the role that multiple stakeholders (such as the college, the program/department, faculty members, and student teachers) played in such a construction.

Before addressing the two research questions, I give some background information about the Program's teaching practicum. I do this from three aspects: the state policy, the provincial regulation, and the self-articulation of the College.

In terms of state policy, as Li (2006) has noted, for about 30 years after the Reform and Opening policy, teachers colleges and universities were granted the power to design and implement their own student teaching programs. The MOE (the National Education Committee before 1998) only required that student teachers focus on classroom teaching and share some of the head teacher work within a time period of about 6 weeks.

As mentioned in a footnote of Chapter 1, the policy changed in July 2007, about two months before I went to the College for dissertation data collection. The MOE released a document titled "Opinions on Vigorously Promoting the Work of Student Teachers Supporting Teaching through Student Teaching (*shixi zhijiao*)." It expanded the time period for student teaching to "no less than one semester" (July 5, 2007). More importantly, it encouraged teachers colleges and universities to collectively place student teachers and field instructors to rural schools for teaching practice. Yet, in terms of what can be called "rural schools," the MOE made no specification.[137]

Regarding Jiangsu province where the College is located, I have not found any regulations about student teaching as of this writing. Meanwhile, in accordance with the Party-State's attention on "Building the Socialist New Countryside" during "the Eleventh Five Year" (2006-2010) plan, Jiangsu Education Bureau (2006) launched the "Ten Thousand College Graduates Support Rural Education" project. It is aimed to select about 3,000 college graduates each year to serve rural schools in northern Jiangsu.

According to this plan, all Jiangsu-originated senior-year college students who are in teacher education programs or are qualified for teaching are eligible to apply. But strong preference is given to applicants from poor families or economically poor counties/cities. Moreover, in this project Jiangsu Education Bureau specifically defines "rural schools" as town(ship) schools or those "under the county seat" (2006).

[137] The MOE vaguely recommended "a patch of elementary and secondary schools that have moderate resources and are clustered in a contiguous stretch (*jizhong nianpian*) as sites for student teaching" (July 5, 2007).

Concerning the College, in the context of "Building the Socialist New Countryside," the college disseminated the message that it cared about rural education, especially rural education in northern Jiangsu, and oriented its teacher education toward this. For example, a report team of the College wrote to a Jiangsu newspaper that

> As a local teachers college located in an economically less-developed area of northern Jiangsu, East Teachers College has been long committed to preparing qualified teachers for rural elementary and secondary schools, and has formed a series of experiences in teacher education. (Qian & Dou, 2007, p.?)

They also described student teachers' enthusiasm for serving rural areas as follows: "Most of them are from the countryside; they deeply understand that rural children need excellent teachers most; and they set working on rural elementary or secondary school education as their own occupational choice" (Qian & Dou, 2007, p.?).

In its teaching self-evaluation report to the MOE, the College highlighted its rural orientation in teacher education as well. It was reported that the College offered sufficient sites for student teaching, and had built a sound system to guarantee the quality of student teaching. The performance of student teachers had been highly spoken of by host schools.

How did the Program/College incorporate the new state policy and the provincial project into student teaching in fall 2007? To what degree is what the College articulated about itself in its teacher education orientation and practice consistent with my findings? I discuss these at the end of this chapter. Before presenting any results, I describe the research data and its collection.

Research Data and Collection

I used multiple data sources to explore the research questions raised in this chapter. They include artifacts, field observations, and interviews.

Table 12 (below) lists the main artifacts I looked at in this chapter. The first two help address both questions. One is the preparatory notice that the College's Practice Teaching Division, Office of Academic Affairs, sent to each department one month before the spring semester of 2007 ended. I found the text on the internet. The other is the plan produced by the College's Student Teaching Lead Group one week after the fall semester started. According to the preparatory notice, this college plan was pulled together based on those that different departments submitted. Student teachers, at least those in the program I focus on, were not given this text. Mr. Mao, an instructor in modern and contemporary Chinese literature, kindly made a copy for me.

Table 12: Main Artifacts Considered in Chapter 7

1.	(2007). *Notice on well developing the student teaching work in fall 2007*. East: The College's Practice Teaching Division, Office of Academic Affairs.
2.	(2007). *East Teachers College's student teaching plan for fall 2007*. East: the College's Student Teaching Lead Group.
3.	(2007). *A grouped list of host schools, field instructors, and student teachers]*. East: the College's Student Teaching Lead Group.
4.	Student teacher list, Class 1
5.	Student teacher list, Class 5
6.	Student teacher list, Class 6
7.	(2007). *Student teaching handbook*. East: East Teachers College.

Several lists (artifacts 3-6 in Table 12 above) were analyzed for Question 1, namely, student teacher placements. The first list I received was attached to the college plan for student teaching. It included (incomplete) information about the allocations of student

teachers in the Program. With the assistance of Mr. Jia, two head teachers, and two class presidents, I obtained the list of student teachers from four (out of seven) classes of the 2004 cohort – Classes 1, 2, 5, and 6. Student's home address and host school appeared on each list. Each list also reflected whether the student was collectively placed by the program or chose the site for teaching practice alone. As the information about over 10 student teachers was missing on the list of Class 2, I did not include this class in analysis.

To address Question 1, I also drew on interview data. In the field, I talked, formally or informally, with 21 student teachers from the 2004 cohort around issues of placement. As Table 13 (below) shows, they were from four classes. 16 were female and five male. 13 were from northern Jiangsu, six from mid-Jiangsu, and two from southern Jiangsu. 17 (81.0%) of these student teachers came from a village or town(ship) family, three from the county seat, and one from East City. While 13 have been described or mentioned in previous chapters on summer social practice, eight new participants will be added to this chapter. Those from Class 7 were included in this study out of convenience or availability. Others were identified based on my pilot study, the placement lists received, or snowball sampling. When reading this part of the data, I emphasize why these student teachers picked or wrote down a certain school for their teaching practice.

In the process of explaining why they chose a particular school for field experience, these student teachers expressed their anticipation of what and how they would learn from the field. For Question 2, a question on the intentions and contents of student teaching, I looked at the *Student Teaching Handbook* distributed to each student teacher. It represented the College's expectations of student teaching.

Table 13: Characteristics of the Student Teachers Interviewed around Placement

	Name	Class	Gender	Home Region	Home Place
1.	Meng	1	Female	Northern Jiangsu	Village
2.	Jiang	1			
3.	Hui	1			
4.	Mei	6			
5.	Min	7			
6.	Jing	7			Town
7.	Zhong	1			County
8.	Niu	2			Prefecture
9.	Shen	1		Mid-Jiangsu	Village
10.	Fang	7			
11.	Feng	7			
12.	Jie	7			
13.	Zhan	7			Town
14.	Qing	7			County
15.	Hong	7		Southern Jiangsu	Town
16.	Dai	7			
17.	Chen	2	Male	Northern Jiangsu	Village
18.	Mo	2			
19.	Bing	7			
20.	Hai	7			Town
21.	Yu	6			County

Finally, some observational data/notes were employed to answer the two research questions. A motivational meeting was held by the College for the upcoming student teaching in the middle of the first week of the term. It was given in the context of welcoming the teaching quality evaluation from both the province and the state, and knowing that the student teaching program would be a significant part of this evaluation. Accompanied by Mr. Mao, I attended this meeting. He filled me in on the Program's placements of student teachers and offered his own perspective. I was also able to talk with Mr. Xiao, the director of the College's Rural Education Research Center. Additionally, I went to the meeting that Class 7 had on the morning before they were

dismissed for teaching practice. The meeting lasted about 20 minutes. Both placements and expectations were topics discussed on these occasions.

The Countryside in the Placements of Student Teachers

In the College Documents: "Collective" and "Individual" Placements

Regarding the placement of student teachers, the College laid out one principle in the preparatory notice, that is, "entirely collective" (*quanbu jiti*) (2007, p. 2). In other words, each department should take on the responsibility of selecting schools and placing student teachers in groups. The purpose of doing so was articulated "to strengthen the work of supervising and managing student teaching and to enhance the quality of student teaching" (the College's Practice Teaching Division, 2007, p. 2).

The formal college plan outlined the guiding principle and requirements of student teaching. It was stated that the host school (including the mentor teacher) and the college supervisor should assume joint responsibility for student teaching. Meanwhile, two types of student teachers were presented in the plan: those who were collectively placed by the department and those who individually chose their own site for student teaching. A question that this action raised was: Would field instruction be arranged to support student teaching in both collective and individual forms?

Another statement in the student teaching plan provided a clue. It read, "All students who practice teaching individually by signing a contract with the host school should also fill out the report forms of student teaching as required, and mail (*ji*) them to the department in time" (the College's Student Teaching Lead Group, 2007, p. ?). The verb

"*ji*" implied the possibility that the college would not interact directly with student teachers of this kind in the field. If a student teacher chose to practice teaching individually, probably no field instruction from the college would be provided.

As far as the Program goes, nearly 350 senior-year student teachers grouped in 7 classes were anticipated to take the teaching practicum. Expanding on this information, I question: Where did the Program place student teachers and college supervisors (and where did the Program not place them)? Who student taught in what school for what reason? How did the College and the faculty describe (and comment on) the placements? How were rural schools represented in the placements? I focus on these questions in the next section.

On the List Attached to the College Plan for Student Teaching: Rural Schools Absent

As has been mentioned, attached to the college student teaching plan was a list of field instructors and the number of student teachers grouped by host schools. According to this text, there were three schools in which student teachers from the Program were placed: East Teachers School, East Middle School, and East No. 2 Secondary School.[138] They were all situated in the urban part of East City. Altogether 39 student teachers were placed. One college instructor was allocated to each school for supervision.[139]

A footnote of the 2005 student teaching plan stated that "The list above does not include those who student teach individually." This rule was implicitly applied to the

[138] On the list only four schools were presented. Added to the three schools was East High School. But no student teachers from the Program were placed in this school.
[139] Two of them specialized in Chinese teaching methods, and the other was an associate professor in Chinese literature.

2007 plan for student teaching. In other words, the three schools presented above were those where the Program collectively placed student teachers in fall 2007. Although it turned out that more student teachers were placed by the Program to more schools, a point I will develop shortly, the list attached to the college student teaching plan implied the Program's tendency to leave out rural schools for student teacher and field instructor placements.

On the Placement Lists from Three Classes

In what follows I take a look at the placements in Classes 1, 5, and 6. On the three placement lists there were 132 student teachers in all whose information was completely presented. As Table 14 (below) suggests, most of them (123, 93.2%) were native inhabitants of Jiangsu. The majority came from either northern Jiangsu (56, 42.4%) or mid-Jiangsu (42, 31.8%). Further, as Table 15 (below) shows, the majority of these future teachers (98, 74.2%) wrote down a village or town(ship) home address.

Table 14: Class and Home Region Cross-tabulation

		Home Region				Total
		Northern Jiangsu	Mid-Jiangsu	Southern Jiangsu	Others	
Class	1	23	16	6	1	46
	5	15	14	8	5	42
	6	18	12	11	3	44
Total		56	42	25	9	132

Table 15: Class and Home Location Cross-tabulation

		Home Location				Total
		Village	Town(ship)	County	Prefecture	
Class	1	19	16	7	4	46
	5	22	8	4	8	42
	6	28	5	7	4	44
Total		69	29	18	16	132

Collective Placements: Concentrating on City Schools

Of the 132 student teachers, the Program collectively placed fewer than 50% (57, 43.2%). Tables 16, 17, and 18 (below), respectively, display their distribution by class, home region, and home location. As Table 18 suggests, the majority (42, 73.7%) of these collectively placed student teachers originated from a village or town(ship) family.

Table 16: Class and Placement Type Cross-tabulation

		Placement Type		Total
		Collective	Individual	
Class	1	15	31	46
	5	21	21	42
	6	21	23	44
Total		57	75	132

Table 17: Collective Placements Indentified from Classes 1, 5, and 6: By Home Region

	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Northern Jiangsu	31	54.4	54.4
Mid-Jiangsu	16	28.1	82.5
Southern Jiangsu	5	8.8	91.2
Others	5	8.8	100.0
Total	57	100.0	

Table 18: Collective Placements Identified from Classes 1, 5, and 6: By Home Location

	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Village	32	56.1	56.1
Town(ship)	10	17.5	73.7
County	9	15.8	89.5
Prefecture	6	10.5	100.0
Total	57	100.0	

Table 19: Collective Placements Identified from Classes 1, 5, and 6: By School

	Host School	Student Teacher #	Location	School Type
1.	East Middle School	7 (3+3+1)	Downtown area of East City	City
2.	East No. 2 Secondary School	4 (1+0+3)		
3.	East No. 4 Secondary School	2 (2+0+0)		
4.	East No. 8 Secondary School	2 (1+0+1)		
5.	East Ming Secondary School	12 (2+5+5)		
6.	East Chen Secondary School	3 (2+0+1)		
7.	Hu Middle School	6 (2+3+1)	Edge of East City	District
8.	East Biology and Engineering School	2 (0+0+2)		(Post)secondary, vocational
9.	East Teachers' School	10 (0+5+5)	Downtown of East City	
10.	East Technician College	7 (1+5+1)		
11.	Xiang County High School	1 (0+1+0)	Xiang County, East Prefecture	County
12.	Spring County High School	1 (1+0+0)	Spring County, East Prefecture	
Total		57 (15+21+21)		

These 57 student teachers were grouped in 12 schools (see Table 19 above). Of the 12 schools, six were secondary schools located in the downtown area of East City. Three were (post)secondary vocational schools. Two of the vocational schools (East Teachers' School and East Technician College) were neighbors of the College, and the other – East Biology and Engineering School – was on the edge of East City. The Program chose the middle school in the same area, namely, Hu Middle School, for a group of student teachers as well. Two others – Xiang County High School and Spring County High School – were the so-called best high school of their respective county. Another

noteworthy comment is that although 12 schools were involved, the Program assigned the majority of these student teachers to those in the downtown area of East City.

Individual Placements: Nearly 50% Reported to Practice Teaching in Town(ship) Schools

75 (56.8%) student teachers were documented to pick their own school and to practice teaching individually. About half of them (36, 48%) came from town(ship)s (see Table 20 below). In the perspective of the home region, by putting Table 21 (below) and Table 17 (above) together, it can be noted that student teachers from Mid-Jiangsu and Southern Jiangsu were more likely to practice teaching alone, compared to those from Northern Jiangsu.

Table 20: Individual Placements Identified from Classes 1, 5, and 6: By Home Location

	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Town(ship)	36	48.0	48.0
County	25	33.3	81.3
Prefecture	14	18.7	100.0
Total	75	100.0	

Table 21: Individual Placements Identified from Classes 1, 5, and 6: By Home Region

	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Northern Jiangsu	26	34.7	34.7
Mid-Jiangsu	25	33.3	68.0
Southern Jiangsu	21	28.0	96.0
Others	3	4.0	100.0
Total	75	100.0	

Table 22: Individual Placements Identified from Classes 1, 5, and 6: By School Location

	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Town(ship)	36	48.0	48.0
County	25	33.3	81.3
Prefecture	14	18.7	100.0
Total	75	100.0	

Table 22 (above) presents the distribution of the 75 student teachers by school location. Nearly half (36, 48%) reported to learn to teach in town(ship) schools. Further, two patterns can be observed from these individual placements. First, as Table 23 (below) shows, there was extremely high consistency between the student teacher's home region and the region where the student teaching was reported to take place. These student teachers tended to experience teaching in a school of their home region. Second, a strong association between home location and their site for student teaching was easily identified (see Table 24 below). In other words, the chance for a student teacher from the prefecture/county to practice teaching in a prefecture/county school was high. There was

a tendency for village- or town(ship)- originated student teachers to learn to teach in town(ship) schools.

Table 23: Home Region and Region for Student Teaching Cross-tabulation

		Region for Student Teaching				
		Northern Jiangsu	Mid-Jiangsu	Southern Jiangsu	Others	Total
Home Region	Northern Jiangsu	23	1	1	0	25
	Mid-Jiangsu	2	24	0	0	26
	Southern Jiangsu	0	0	20	0	20
	Others	1	0	0	3	4
Total		26	25	21	3	75

Table 24: Home Location and Location for Student Teaching Cross-tabulation

		Location for Student Teaching			Total
		Town(ship)	County	Prefecture	
Home Location	Village	24	9	4	37
	Town(ship)	12	5	2	19
	County	0	9	0	9
	Prefecture	0	2	8	10
Total		36	25	14	75

Considering the rural school placements, it was reported that 36 teacher candidates altogether practiced teaching in town(ship) schools. In percentage terms, this was 48% of the individually placed students, and 27.3% of the total 132. All of them belonged to the individual student teaching cases. 100% had a village (24, 66.7%) or town(ship) background. For their distribution by class and home region, see Tables 25 and 26 (below). Knowing the respective number of student teachers from each region in the total

sample, it can be argued that student teachers from a northern Jiangsu village or town(ship) were much less likely to take a rural placement, compared with their counterparts from mid-Jiangsu and southern Jiangsu.

Table 25: Rural School Placements: By Class

	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
1	17	47.2	47.2
5	6	16.7	63.9
6	13	36.1	100.0
Total	36	100.0	

Table 26: Rural School Placements: By Home Region

	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Northern Jiangsu	12	33.3	33.3
Mid-Jiangsu	14	38.9	72.2
Southern Jiangsu	9	25.0	97.2
Others	1	2.8	100.0
Total	36	100.0	

Student Teaching Placements in Interviews: Factor Analysis

Of the 21 student teachers I talked with in the field, seven (33.3%) took the collective placement. As Table 27 (below) displays, it was for different reasons that they accepted the arrangement of the Program/Department.

Table 27: Collective Placements, Identified from Interview Data

	Name	Host School	Location	Reason(s)
1.	Mei	East Biology and Engineering School	Edge of East City	Future job
2.	Meng	East Middle School	Downtown area of East City	Opportunities to learn
3.	Niu	East No. 2 Secondary School		Convenience. Opportunities to learn
4.	Yu	East Teachers' College		College policy
5.	Zhong	Spring County High School	Spring County, East Prefecture	Opportunities to learn
6.	Chen			College Policy
7.	Min	Xiang County High School	Xiang County, East Prefecture	n/d

Among the more than 10 student teachers I interviewed during my pilot study, Mei was the only one who expressed the desire to student teach in a town(ship) school and subsequently serve in a rural school for several years. She grew up in a modest village family and believed in the significance of education for rural children to transform their lives (personal communication, July 8, 2006). However, Mei, with several others, ended up teaching as a substitute teacher at East Biology and Engineering School. She was President of Class 6 and was recommended by the Department for this position. She took this position based on the information that the chance for her to get a permanent job there would be high, as this school was in urgent need of teachers.

Meng was cheered about the fact that she was placed in East Middle School. She was influenced by her older brother – a township high school teacher – concerning where to practice teaching.

> At first the College said all the student teachers should do (their) student teaching in East City. There were some changes later. ... My brother said to me, "If you go to teach lessons in an ugly (*chou*) school, although you will give many lessons, you will only teach in your own way. But if you go to East Middle School, East No. 2 Secondary School, or Hu Middle School, things will be different. You can learn a lot by listening to others' (teachers') lessons." (Meng, personal communication, Dec. 5, 2007)

Niu was happy to return to her old school – East No. 2 Secondary School – for student teaching. This school was close to her living place, and therefore it was convenient for her to walk to the school. The idea of practicing teaching at East Middle School – the so-called best middle school in East Prefecture – did come to her mind. But she gave it up, thinking that a school that cared too much for teaching quality would not open up many opportunities to student teachers (personal communication, Dec. 15, 2007).

Zhong's first choice for field experience was East No. 2 Secondary School. She was told by a previous student teacher that this school took a flexible approach to supervision. "If you want to teach in the future, they will provide more support in teaching. If you want to take the GRE[140], they will give you more time for preparation" (Zhong, personal communication, Dec 14, 2007). Her application was rejected for the reason that too many student teachers applied for East No. 2 Secondary School. She was reassigned to Spring County High School by the Program as the vice group leader.

At first Zhong was disappointed with the arrangement. "At the time, nobody was willing to go to Spring County. ...It's troublesome to...pack all the stuff and carry it over.

[140] The first part of the GRE is called the initial exam. It is usually given several days after the winter semester ends, that is, in late January or early February. Several subjects, including political theory, English, and specialty subject, are tested within two days. If the student passes the initial exam, a campus visit or an interview will be arranged in the spring semester.

Isn't it easier to just live on campus[141]" (Zhong, personal communication, Dec 14, 2007)? With advice from a previous head teacher she felt relieved. She came to realize that

> Spring County High School is in the downtown area (*shiqu*) of a county-level city (*xianji shi*).[142] This means it is the best high school in the county. Actually in some sense it is for sure better than East No. 2 Secondary School, and may be even stronger than East No. 1 Secondary School. All the teaching attention of the county is put on this school. (Personal communication, Dec. 14, 2007)

Zhong also noticed that

> The most important goal of student teaching is that I can practice and get improved. That is all. It does not really matter which school (to practice teaching). If I go to a not-that-good school, although all the lessons are given by me, the teacher (mentor) does not come and listen to my lessons or give any constructive comments, the 17 lessons I give will only be equal to one lesson. Right? (Personal communication, Dec. 14, 2007)

Zhong's classmates felt sorry that she had to go to Spring County for student teaching. "Later before I left (for Spring), my classmates said, 'Oh dear, you are going to Spring County?! Let's do a farewell (party) for you!' It sounded as if I was leaving for a battlefield (*zhanchang*)" (Zhong, personal communication, Dec. 14, 2007).

Two male students – Yu and Chen – originally planned to student teach in a town(ship) school close to their home place. Yu preferred a well-known town(ship) high school for purposes of future employment. In his vision, the field experience at the school and the connection with a dean of this school would give him a high chance of finding a job there. For Chen, whose parents were both farmers, teaching was not his first choice

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[141] Student teachers who take the Program's placement often continue living in the college dorm during student teaching.

[142] As it is stated on Wikipedia (n.d.), "a county-level city is a county-level administrative division of mainland China. County-level cities are usually governed by prefecture-level divisions, but a few are governed directly by province-level divisions." People, such as Zhong, tend to understand the expression of county-level city as the symbol that "It is better developed than regular counties."

for career. He wanted to first try the (Shanghai) Civil Servant Exam[143] (and then other much better paid occupations). According to him, student teaching in a town(ship) school might give him more time to prepare for the exam.

Nevertheless, a college-wide policy change at the beginning of the fall semester aborted both Yu's and Chen's hopes. Student teachers were informed that if they wished to take the practicum alone, the selected school needed to stamp on an employment disposition letter (*jiuye yixiang shu*). In the letter, it was written that if the student teacher performed well in the school, the school would first consider employing him or her. Student teachers interpreted the new policy as though the College was trying to show the upcoming national/provincial expert team (and the public) that its graduates were favored by employment units. This new policy did scare off many schools that at first were willing to accept student teachers individually. The two town(ship) schools that Yu and Chen picked turned down the employment disposition letter. As a result, they were placed by the Program to East Teachers School and Spring High School, respectively.

Min was from a village family of Xiang County.[144] The Program assigned her to Xiang County High School for student teaching. She did not directly comment on this placement but sighed, "I need to prepare materials for multi-media teaching. It will be

[143] There are two types of civil servant exams: national and provincial. Both consist of written and oral sections. The written part of the national civil servant exam in 2007 was given in late November. Applicants took the Jiangsu written civil servant exam in March 2008. In recent years, the competition among applicants has been extremely stiff for the reason that too many college graduates apply for this exam. In the difficult job market applicants are particularly attracted by the advantages of being a civil servant, such as high social status and honorable salary. Concerning Chen's case, some prisons of Shanghai are located in Jiangsu and recruits staff members from Jiangsu. These prisons select employees from those have passed the Shanghai Civil Servant Exam, switch their identity to Shanghai, and accordingly pay them based on the Shanghai standard.

[144] This county was reportedly the economically weakest in the region of East. During my pilot study, Min chatted a lot with me about how lazy and unreasonable the village people were. Also, as her big brother was a civil servant in Nanjing and had built up some connections there, Min wished to find a non-teaching job there through him.

best if they are back-projection slides. Schools in the down countryside (*xiangxia*) only have slide projectors" (personal communication, Sept. 9, 2007).

The remaining 14 student teachers (66.7%) (see Table 28 below) were documented to take the practicum individually. Their reasons in picking a particular site were not completely the same either.

For Jing, the student teaching placement was planned long in advance. Jing and her parents had thought about having her experience teaching at Spring County Middle School since she entered college. A big reason for this was that the school principal was her uncle. With such a connection, Jing believed that she would be offered plenty of opportunities to learn.

Table 28: Individual Student Teaching Cases, Identified from Interview Data

	Name	Region for Student Teaching	Site for Student Teaching	Reason(s)
1.	Jing	Northern Jiangsu	County school	Opportunities to learn. Future employment.
2.	Hai			Future employment.
3.	Bing		Town(ship) school	Exam
4.	Mo			Exam
5.	Hui			Exam
6.	Jiang			Exam. Boyfriend.
7.	Fang	Mid-Jiangsu	Town(ship) school	Convenience.
8.	Jie			Convenience.
9.	Ning			Convenience.
10.	Feng			Convenience.
11.	Shen			Opportunities to learn
12.	Qing		County school	Convenience.
13.	Hong	Southern Jiangsu	Town(ship) school	Convenience
14.	Dai			Exam

Jing's parents saw more in the possible association of her student teaching with employment. They had long wished that their daughter would find a teaching position at Spring County Middle School, and they utilized all connections and resources to make this possible. They were well aware that teachers in this school were much better paid than those in town(ship) schools. They were also aware of the fact that Spring County Middle School was privileged in teacher quality, student background, and the like.

> My father told me that in this school teachers are all transferred up from town(ship)s through tests. They are all experienced and capable. They are all great teachers. ...At this place not only teachers are terrific. Students are all from decent families (*youtou youlian*). They are from the urban area (*jieshang*). Those kids from decent families in the urban area come to this school. This school is great. The status of this school is high. It is the best middle school of the entire Spring. (Jing, personal communication, Dec. 4, 2007)

Related to Jing's placement, there is another thing worth mentioning. Provided that she found the site by herself and she would be the only student teacher in Chinese at Spring County Middle School, Jing assumed that her student teaching belonged to the category of "individual." (She submitted a fake employment disposition letter to the Program as her uncle refused to sign on the letter.) However, this was not the answer I got from Mr. Mao – the supervisor that the Program assigned to the Spring group. Although Jing's name was not on the Spring group list that Mr. Mao gave me, he considered Jing as one of the student teachers he would supervise in Spring County.

By contrast, a male student teacher from Class 7 – Hai – chose Spring No. 2 High School for student teaching as a result of a connection with the teaching dean. (He intended to apply for a permanent job there as well.) This school was also located in the county seat. It was only one mile away from Spring County Middle School but had a

lower social reputation. Interestingly, Mr. Mao and the Program did not include him on the list for field instruction.

In addition to Jing and Hai, Qing – a girl from mid-Jiangsu – also practiced teaching in a county school near her home place. Of the 11 student teachers who put down town(ship) schools as their sites for student teaching, five were Jing's roommates or dorm neighbor. Four (Fang, Jie, Feng, and Ning) came from mid-Jiangsu and one (Hong) from southern Jiangsu. They all returned to their home town(ship) school for field experience. They did this for considerations of convenience. For them, convenience had two layers of meaning. First, they were familiar with the school and knew how to act and interact with teachers and students there. Second, with the understanding/permission of the mentor teacher they could spend some time on the task they wished to do. They were preparing for the Qualification Examination on Customs Declarers, the Secretary Proficiency Level Exam, or the Civil Servant Exam at the provincial level. It was believed that if they student taught in the home town(ship) school, the mentor teacher who they had already known would leave some time open for them to study for the exam. Qing went back to a county school for field experience with the same thinking.

Two of the remaining six town(ship)-school placed student teachers, Jiang and Shen, did go to the field and student taught. Four told me two weeks after they were dismissed that they were unlikely to do any student teaching. Two of them – Bing and Dai – would go home and prepare for the Civil Servant Exam. Two others – Mo and Hui, both from Xiang County – would stay in college to study either for the GRE or for the Civil Servant Exam.

Of the four student teachers, Bing and Mo were from a farmer family in northern Jiangsu. Dai grew up in a small town of southern Jiangsu. As for Hui, while her father was working in the county broadcasting unit, her mother was farming at home. They all categorized town(ship) schools as rural, but were averse to considering a rural school for their teaching practice.

Among them, Hui expressed the strongest dislike. Hui had her first two years of education in her home village but transferred to a county school later. During our meeting, she repeatedly stated that rural schools were poorly equipped; rural students spoke local dialect ("*tuhua*[145]") (personal communication, Sept. 26, 2007) instead of mandarin Chinese; and teachers lacked knowledge and sense of responsibility. Therefore, she for sure did not want to teach (or even to practice teaching) in a rural school. She reported a certain town(ship) school to the Program under the circumstances that her uncle was the principal of that school and stamps could be easily got from him for various student teaching materials.

Among the student teachers I contacted who were from rural families of northern Jiangsu, Jiang was the only one who truly went to a town(ship) school for her field experience. She was also preparing for the GRE in ancient literature. Knowing about this as her roommate, Meng once suggested that if Jiang did not want to student teach, her teacher brother could place her in his town(ship) high school and ask her to do nothing. Considering the possibility that she would fail the fiercely competitive exam, Jiang decided to practice teaching at Phoenix Middle School. Meanwhile, as noted in Chapter

[145] The literal meaning of "*tuhua*" is "country expressions."

11, Jiang lacked clear expectations about how much she should be involved in student teaching and what to learn from field experience.

Phoenix Middle School resided in a remote township of East Prefecture and was far away from Jiang's home. Why did she choose this school? The simple answer was her boyfriend – Gang. Gang graduated from the Program one year ahead of Jiang. After passing the Village Official (*cunguan*) Selection Exam[146] among Jiangsu college graduates, he was assigned to work in Fan Township – a remote township of his home county. In order to see Jiang often, Gang arranged for her to student teach at the local middle school.

Different from the individual student teaching cases described above, Shen – a rural-originated mid-Jiangsuer – firmly believed that she would become a Chinese teacher in her home county-level city. At the outset she wished to find a county school for student teaching through his uncle's connections. She had the idea for two considerations. First, she assumed that she would learn more in a "better" (personal communication, Dec. 12, 2007) school. Second, the student teaching experience in a county school might help her find a teaching job in the county area. Unfortunately, her uncle was too busy at the time to arrange this for her.

[146] In Jiangsu the Village Official Selection Exam can be traced back to 2005. It was initiated on the one hand to ease the pressure of employment market, and on the other hand to echo the State's command of constructing the socialist new countryside. If a graduate is selected to serve an "economically weak" village for three years, he or she will enjoy many advantages, such as being first considered for the graduate program and the civil servant position. Gang was determined to be an official. Before applying for the Village Official Selection Exam, he had taken the provincial civil servant exam but failed to pass the oral part. He wanted to use the experience of working as a village official to build up his resume. He took the provincial civil servant exam the next year and passed. As of this writing, he works in the juridical division of his county.

Then, Shen adjusted her thinking to include that it would be just fine to practice teaching in her home town. With the advice of a middle school classmate she decided to believe that in a "not-that-good school" (personal communication, Dec. 12, 2007) she would possibly have more opportunities to truly teach instead of primarily observing lessons. Therefore, she contacted two Chinese teachers – a couple – in the township middle school via another relative.

Shen was pleased by her placement for several reasons. First, she felt comfortable and natural in front of the two Chinese teachers, and thought that it would be better to have advice from more than one teacher. Second, she believed that students who grew up in the country were "simpler" (*chunpu*) and less "arrogant" (*aoqi*) than those in cities, and therefore were easier to manage (personal communication, Dec. 12, 2007). Third, she could live with her beloved grandparents for two months.

Putting the 21 cases together, I identified some factors that might have contributed to the placements of these student teachers. The first one was future career or employment. As seen from the use of the employment disposition letter, the intention of the College to associate student teaching with employment was obvious. As for student teachers, it had to do with if they prioritized teaching over other career choices after graduation. If "not," they usually preferred the individual student teaching. The sites they tended to pick were town(ship) schools. Among the 21 student teachers, 10 (Chen, Bing, Dai, Mo, Hui, Jiang, Fang, Jie, Ning, and Qing) clearly demonstrated this tendency. In these cases, the town(ship) school, more or less, served as a shell where they could do as they wished.

Among those who wanted to pursue a teaching career after graduation, some also attempted to utilize the student teaching to improve their chances for future employment in the same school. The best illustration of this point was Mei's placement. She once thought about serving the ordinary rural community through both the student teaching and formal teaching; when there was a chance to get a permanent job in East City, she changed her mind to stay. In addition, it was apparent that Jing, Hai, and Yu intended to tie student teaching with employment. The schools that Jing and Hai picked were both situated in the county seat. Yu preferred a town(ship) high school, but this school could not be said to be ordinary. It was privileged in many aspects as well. There was the pattern that, in considering future employment, few would choose to student teach in ordinary town(ship) schools.

The second factor was school status. Meng, Zhong, Niu, Jing, and Shen took this into account when deciding where to go for field experience. Hui thought about this even though she had no plan to student teach. Although Min took the Program's arrangement and went back to practice teaching in the county school, she expressed her view on the status of this county school. They all used similar words to divide schools into two or three primary types. For example, in Meng's eyes there were "ugly" schools and those in or on the edge of East City. Zhong categorized schools into three kinds: schools in East City, the "best" of a county-level city, and "not-that-good" schools. For Shen, there were "better" schools in the county seat and "not-that-good" ones. Hui and Min made a distinction between rural schools and others, although defining them differently.

As a result, a hierarchy of schools emerged. In this hierarchy, prefecture-level schools were positioned on the top, county schools in the middle, rural/town(ship) schools at the bottom.[147] They were correspondingly perceived as "best," "better," "not-that-good"/"ugly" schools. Location was used to indicate the quality of the school, including the lessons that teachers there gave, the background that students brought to the school, and the resources available to the school. According to Zhong's and Meng's statements, the Program understood schools in the same way and tended to place student teachers in the so-called "best"/city schools.

The third factor was opportunities to learn. Five teacher candidates (Meng, Zhong, Niu, Jing, and Shen) considered this when deciding where to student teach. In the process of thinking about learning opportunities available in the host school, Meng, Zhong, and Jing saw rural schoolteachers as a homogenous group and doubted their capabilities to teach and mentor. Although choosing to student teach at a town(ship) school, Shen did not expect to learn much from the teachers there either. For Niu, a native of East City, the idea of leaving the familiar environment to practice teaching never occurred to her. Inserted in these student teachers' statements around learning opportunities were their expectations for student teaching. I give a more detailed analysis of related data later in this chapter.

The fourth factor was the level of convenience. This partly explained why Niu and Zhong preferred the prefecture school for their practicum. This was also the reason for Fang, Hong, Jie, Ning, and Feng to student teach at their home town(ship) school.

[147] As Niu's and Min's words, as well as Yu's case, reflect, there were some variations within prefecture schools, county schools, and town(ship) schools.

Furthermore, this factor appeared to work more for rural student teachers coming from a region other than northern Jiangsu. The chance for village- or town(ship)- originated northern jiangsuers to return to their home town for student teaching based on the thinking of convenience was low. Of the 21 student teachers, there were eight (Meng, Jiang, Hui, Mo, Bing, Min, Chen, and Mei) whose parents had a house in a northern Jiangsu village. But none of them went to their home town school (or any other school close to where their parents were living) for teaching practice.

The fifth could be the influence of others. Meng, Jing, Zhong, and Shen were obviously affected, respectively, by a teacher brother, a caring father, a former head teacher, and a previous classmate. With the influence of the family or other individual, they ended up practice teaching, respectively, at a prefecture middle school, a county middle school, a county high school, and a town(ship) middle school in mid-Jiangsu. A variety of opinions were expressed for these different considerations within different contexts. However, it was noticeable that the ordinary town(ship) schools in northern Jiangsu were beyond consideration as sites for student teaching.

Personal connection could play a role in shaping the placements of student teachers as well. This helped Jing and Hai enter a county school. If Shen's uncle had had the time to help her, she would have gone to a county school. This also made it possible for Hui, a girl who disliked rural schools but needed one, to avoid student teaching. There seemed to be a tendency for student teachers with connections to skip rural school placements.

The final factor had to do with college policy. Chen and Yu considered student teaching in a town(ship) school alone, but the new requirement for an employment

disposition letter from the host school killed off this idea. To some degree, it could be said that the College not only failed to arrange student teachers to experience teaching in rural contexts but also in terms of consequence blocked their thoughts of doing so.

In the Words of the College and the Faculty: Rural School Student Teachers Unnoticed

At the student teaching motivational meeting with "an unprecedented importance (*qiansuo weiyou de longzhong*)" (Mr. Mao, personal communication, Sept. 5, 2007), the college president – Mr. Qiu – gave a speech. It was described the next day in the campus news as the most important part of the meeting. Mr. Qiu began with the statement that the College was a local teachers college oriented toward preparing teachers for rural schools, especially for those in northern Jiangsu. Afterwards, he mentioned the situation of student teacher placements across the college. It was a short sentence: "70% of the student teachers are collectively placed" (Sept. 5, 2007).

These words sounded as if Mr. Qiu – the representative of the College – intended to emphasize both points, that is, the College's rural orientation in teacher preparation and the collective type of student teaching. But he did not go on to specify each concept or the relationship between the two. As seen from the fact all the schools listed on the sheet attached to the college plan for student teaching were exclusively in the downtown area of East City, Mr. Qiu and the College seemed to understand the rural orientation of the College from a perspective other than student teaching placement.

At the meeting of Class 7, the head teacher – Mr. Tan – did all of the talking. The first thing he spoke of was the placement for student teaching. It was also brief: "This

time we have 9 people who will stay in East City in groups for student teaching. Several are practicing at East TV station. ... Except for them the majority of us contacted (the site) by ourselves and will go back for independent (*zizhu*) student teaching" (Sept. 13, 2007).

In Mr. Tan's statement above there were several things worth noting. First, what he said about the percentage of individual placements was significantly higher than that (30%) Mr. Qiu implicitly mentioned in his speech. The majority of student teachers in Class 7 reported to practice teaching on their own, which was consistent with my finding based on three other classes in the Program. Second, Mr. Tan used another word to describe the nature of the individual student teaching, namely, "independent." It confirmed my reading of the college plan for student teaching, that is, field instruction from the college would not be offered to student teachers who chose to practice teaching alone. Third, Mr. Tan did not elaborate upon where these individual student teaching cases would take place. Instead, he used the term "go back" to generally cover the topic of location.

I asked Mr. Mao to help me identify student teachers who would like to gain teaching experience in rural schools. Several days after the motivational meeting, he called me late at night to share information about the student teachers placed to Spring County. Noting that all eight student teachers he had mentioned would practice teaching in the county middle or high school, I asked, "Is there anybody who will go to the town(ship) school?" He replied, "I don't know. ... These two schools are rural schools! It depends on how you define (rural schools) in your dissertation" (personal communication, Sept. 11, 2007).

During the next two weeks (during which student teachers were already in the field experiencing teaching), I kept asking program instructors (including Mr. Mao, Mr. Jia, and two Chinese teaching method course instructors), as well as student teachers, to look for town(ship) placement cases for me. All of them checked and answered, "The Department still does not have the lists of individual student teaching placements. It only has those of collective placements. These schools lie in East City or several county seats" (personal communication, Sept. 19, 2007). Seeing that I was as stubborn as a mule to search for a town(ship) student teaching case, Mr. Mao kept reminding me that "Those who find their own (site) usually find better schools" (personal communication, Sept. 21, 2007). By "better schools," he meant those at least on the county level.

After a lot of futile attempts, I ran into Mr. Jia's office to declare a state of urgency. He put his own work aside to help me collect placement lists from different classes. He also arranged me to meet Mr. Xiao, the director of the College's Rural Education Research Center. At the meeting with Mr. Xiao, I asked whether or not it was contradictory to say that the College was a local teacher college preparing teachers for rural schools if it actually assigned groups of student teacher to urban schools. His calm response was as follows: "Some students are placed in county schools as well. If you take county seats as the countryside, it is not contradictory (to say so) at all" (personal communication, Sept. 25, 2007).[148]

[148] Finally, Mr. Xiao lowered his guard to describe the factors that had contributed to the absence of rural schools in the College's student teaching placement. A big reason he mentioned was employment. According to him, in the era of guaranteed job assignments, students of rural origin were willing to practice teaching in a rural school close to their home, as they were likely to be located there as formal teacher. Nowadays, with an eye to future job searching, few choose to do so.

However, this was the only time during our meeting when Mr. Xiao characterized county schools as rural. In other cases, he used rural schools to specifically refer to village and town(ship) schools. For instance, according to his observation, after the new curriculum reform was carried out in 2001, county schools updated their teaching methods, but rural schools have changed little except in textbooks.

Mr. Tan's announcement about the placements of Class 7 and my analysis of the placement lists from three other classes were consistent in reflecting that over half of the student teachers in the Program chose to practice teach alone and about half of the individually chosen sites were town(ship) schools. While some student teachers used town(ship) schools as umbrellas to engage in non-teaching related work for their future considerations, others truly went to practice teach there. This somehow disproved Mr. Mao's argument that "Those who find their own (place for student teaching) usually find better schools."

My difficulty in finding town(ship) student teaching cases appeared to suggest that the Program/Department and faculty members overlooked this group of student teachers. In their understanding, once a student chose to student teach alone, their responsibility for her or him automatically ended. As a result, student teachers in town(ship) schools were actively hidden by the Program/Department and the faculty. From a critical perspective, in this practice the College seemed passively complicit.

Further, as I have pointed out, it was even rare for the Program/Department to place student teachers to county schools. Town(ship) schools were not in the range of consideration. Even though, as seen from Mr. Mao's and Mr. Xiao's perspectives, the

fact that a very limited number of student teachers were allocated to county schools could be easily employed to make the claim that the Program/Department/College was targeting rural schools and placed student teachers there to support rural education, when necessary.

The Countryside in the Expectations for Student Teaching

In the College Documents: Place Unconsidered with a Traditional View of Learning to Teach

Both the preparatory notice and the final plan presented the schedule that the College set for student teaching in fall 2007. 10 weeks in all were arranged for the student teaching. Senior-year student teachers would use the first week – the second week according to the college fall calendar – to do "trial lessons" (*shijiang*) with the guidance of an instructor. They were expected to go to and settle down in the field during the following week. It was required that they return to the College in mid-November and spend the weekend demonstrating what they had learned from their field experience through a "talk lesson" (*shuoke*) and a "report lesson" (*huibao jiangke*).[149] This was the procedural expectation that the College had for student teaching.

About the basic expectation for student teaching, I want to point out two things. The first is concerned with the College's model of student teaching. At the College, the practicum was arranged for student teachers in their last year of study.[150] Such an

[149] See Chapter 9 for definitions of the three types of lessons.
[150] It was also the time when student teachers started looking for job or preparing for exams of different types. This could explain why student teachers tried to bond student teaching with future employment or/and avoided (rural schools for) student teaching (White & Reid, 2008).

arrangement seemed to reflect what Korthagen and Kessels (1999) called the "application-of-theory model" (pp. 5-6). The second has to do with the College's understanding of teaching. As observed from the activities designed for student teaching preparation and summary, the College was likely to oversimplify teaching. In what follows I will further develop these two points.

The purpose of student teaching was first highlighted in the college plan.

> Student teaching is an indispensable part of teacher education, and is an important approach to strengthen the link between theory and reality/practice (*lilun lianxi shiji*) and to cultivate qualified teachers for basic education. Through student teaching, make students get to understand the current status of basic education, enhance the enterprising heart (*shiye xin*) and sense of responsibility for undertaking educational work, consolidate professional thinking, master teaching skills, and nurture the competence of engaging in educational and teaching work. (The College's Student Teaching Lead Group, 2007, p.?)

As seen from the statement above, especially the use of the term "*lilun lianxi shiji*" (linking theory with reality/practice), the College understood student teaching in a traditional manner, that is, student teaching as the bridge between theory and reality/practice. In this notion of student teaching some assumptions are especially important. Learning to teach is viewed as "a two-step process of knowledge acquisition and application or transfer" (Feiman-Nemser & Remillard, 1996, p. 79). While the teacher education program offers prospective teachers theory or general knowledge, future teachers learn teaching reality/practice through their student teaching. As far as a learning sequence goes, it is theory or general knowledge that comes first and then reality/practice. It is also assumed that "the school provides the setting, and the student teacher provides the effort to bring them (theory and setting) together" (Wideen, Mayer-Smith, & Moon, 1998, p. 152).

In terms of concrete requirements, the College listed three tasks for student teachers to complete in the field. One was to understand the host school, especially its new practice in curriculum and pedagogy within the context of "accommodating the construction of socialist modernization" (2007, p.?), and to write a report of about 2000 words. Another was to "acquire basic skills of each teaching step"(2007, p.?) by observing and practicing classroom teaching. The last was to get to know students and learn from schoolteachers about how to practice moral education through the work of the head teacher.

According to these requirements, the College assumed that all host schools were modernizing and developing. Associated with this was the suggestion that student teachers look at school education from a state perspective and in a positive light. Also, the College appeared to see student teaching as learning from a master. This implied, more or less, a hierarchical milieu in which the future teacher essentially received accumulated knowledge about teaching from the host school, especially from the mentor teacher. Meanwhile, it looked as if the College forgot to remind the student teacher to think authentically (Halliday, 1998; Zeichner & Liston, 1987) or critically (Bullough & Gitlin, 1994; Cochran-Smith, 1991) about teaching practices and schooling.

Although the College stated in the plan that student teachers needed to understand the school and subsequently submit a report to the program, this was not included in the evaluation of student teaching. Appendix E shows the criteria that the College adopted to evaluate student teaching. They were originally presented in the *Student Teaching Handbook* as a form (East Teachers College, 2007, p. 6).

East Teachers College did, indeed, develop a list of criteria to evaluate student teaching. Embedded within this practice was its understanding of what the good teacher or good teaching was. The College mainly defined the good teacher as a "skilled or competent craftsperson" (Moore, 2004, p. 40). Good teaching meant following a recipe or "a predetermined list of desirable teaching skills" (Bullough & Gitlin, 1994, p. 67). Apparently, the College viewed student teaching as training to acquire these skills (Bullough & Gitlin, 1994; Moore, 2004). As Moore (2004) summarized, although this approach toward student teaching shows strength in terms of criteria-sharing and transparency, there are some problems associated with it. This was particularly true for East Teachers College on three issues.

One issue is the "macro"-"micro" problem (Moore, 2004). As observed from these items for evaluation, the College encouraged student teachers to narrow their attention to micro aspects of teaching, that is, the classroom and their own knowledge, dispositions, and skills. This was promoting a narrow image of good teacher/teaching. Student teachers were likely to simplify teaching as planning and delivering lessons/extracurricular activities and as addressing issues concerning the teacher-student relationship. This might hinder them from situating and analyzing teaching issues in a broader social and political context (including within the context of the local community) (and working against the odds).

Another is the issue of universality (Moore, 2004). The College assumed that there was one way to teach. The components of "good teaching" (and their weights) were all fixed and needed to be addressed in a lesson. More importantly, such a list highlighted

the universality of teaching skills and asked all student teachers to follow this "regardless of the kind of person they are or the circumstances in which they operate" (Moore, 2004, p. 83). In other words, it ignored the situated or contextual aspects of teaching. This might dis-empower student teachers and suppress their context-bound creativity.

The third issue is the problem of language. As Moore (2004) has pointed out, statements of competence tend to use "vague forms of language" (p. 84). On the College's student teaching evaluation form, adverbs and adjectives were used in large quantity, such as "earnestly," "correctly," and "enthusiastically." Each of them came with "no indication as to how best to achieve this or how the student teacher's success in this area might be assessed" (Moore, 2004, p. 84). In a word, they were ambiguous and general.

To sum up, my reading of the student teaching documents indicates a traditional view of learning to teach. The College positioned the teacher education program as the place to teach theory, and student teaching as the occasion for the student teacher to be apprenticed and learn teaching skills/competence from the experienced. No tension between the two was recognized. What to learn in the field was seen as normative, universal, general, technical, and micro. Not surprisingly, then, the College gave no specific considerations to the contexts of student teaching, including student teaching in rural places.

In the Words of the College and the Faculty

Context is Just Context

At the motivation meeting, Mr. Qiu – the college president – devoted half of his speech to what student teachers should attend to in the field. In this part, Mr. Qiu did point out that student teachers in rural schools needed to overcome difficulties. He particularly asked these student teachers to beware of personal and property safety. He even used an example to illustrate this, that is, the electrical wires of some rural schools were aging and would easily cause fire.

Every time I met him, Mr. Mao expressed his set understanding of student teaching in different settings. To him, in terms of content there was no difference. Regardless of school location and other contexts, student teachers followed and should follow the same requirements. In other words, contexts are just contexts and irrelevant to teaching content or the teaching of content.

At my meeting with Mr. Xiao, he did not go beyond student teaching placement to discuss the content of student teaching. He did not consider student teaching as a topic worth talking about or studying (personal communication, Sept. 25, 2007).[151] Meanwhile, he did say that there was little that teacher preparation could do for rural education. Teacher education programs could only teach future teachers "universal rules" (*pubian guilv*) (personal communication, Sept. 25, 2007); otherwise, student teachers would lose interest.

[151] Among the faculty members I met at the College, few regarded student teaching as worth studying or observing. In terms of the latter, for instance, Mr. Shu remarked: "What can be the good of observing student teachers on their teaching practice? Haven't you done student teaching before? Why not just write (part of) your dissertation based on your own student teaching experience" (personal communication, Sep. 6, 2007)?

Further, while discussing rural education, Mr. Xiao revealed that it was self-deceiving to integrate rural contexts with the daily education of rural children in the broad social context of urbanization. In his own words, "This is an embodiment of Ah Q spirit" (personal communication, Sept. 25, 2007).[152] All the kids, regardless of where they are from, should receive the same compulsory education, or more precisely, learn the same core academic courses.

My main understanding of my field notes is that the College and the faculty failed to take a context -based or -responsive approach toward (teacher) education. Mr. Mao saw no interactions between context and content in teaching. Compared with Mr. Mao, Mr. Xiao was more purposeful in not considering rural contexts in teacher education or schooling. It was assumed that rural contexts carried a stigma and were not what student teachers desired to explore. Although referring to rural places for the sake of safety, Mr. Qiu ignored recognizing their value from the angles of curriculum and pedagogy.

Student Teaching as an Apprenticeship

During the motivational meeting, Mr. Mao whispered his perspective on student teaching to me. From his point of view, student teaching was primarily a channel for teacher candidates to gain a little experience or get their feet wet before truly entering the teaching profession. It sounded, from his point of view, as if the faculty, in general had quite a low expectation for student teaching.

[152] The expression of "Ah Q spirit" derived from Lu Xun's short novel "The True Story of Ah Q." For a more detailed analysis of this, please check Chapter 4.

Mr. Mao also used a metaphor to describe student teaching. He compared teaching to doing Kung Fu, and hence student teaching was learning basic "steps and acts" (*zhaoshi*) (personal communication, Sept. 5, 2007). Meanwhile, he admitted that what the teacher education program taught to future teachers was theoretical and disconnected from the real needs of schools. Therefore, the work of supervising student teachers was de facto on schoolteachers. According to him, these schoolteachers were reliable thanks to their rich experience in teaching.[153] By contrast, college instructors were not "teaching in the front line" (*yixian jiaoxue*) (personal communication, Sept. 5, 2007) and thus could not supervise student teaching.

Furthermore, Mr. Mao acknowledged that student teaching was proceduralized in reality. It was like a "running account" (*liushui zhang*) (personal communication, Sept. 5, 2007) that few student teachers and faculty members would like to go back and review. What they had in mind was to get the task completed. In this sense, student teaching seemed like a hoop that had to be jumped through.

Of the 20-minute talk that Mr. Tan gave at the meeting of Class 7, about two minutes were used to address the question of what student teachers were expected to do in the field.[154] After underlining the importance of student teaching within the framework of future employment, he sketched out two items. One was to take lesson planning, teaching, and grading seriously; and the other, a more important one, was to "learn a lot from the experienced teachers by observing their lessons a lot" (Sept. 13, 2007).

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[153] When saying this, Mr. Mao seemed to exclude teachers in vocational schools from this category, not matter how experienced they were. I will explain this in the coming chapter.
[154] Mr. Tan spent more than 10 minutes talking about issues of job searching and about five minutes on what materials student teachers should fill in and hand to the Department after the student teaching.

It was noticeable that both Mr. Mao and Mr. Tan held a narrow view of student teaching, that is, student teaching as an apprenticeship (Cochran-Smith, 1991; Zeichner, 1986). They gave full attention to accumulated knowledge based on experience. Consequently, they positioned student teachers basically as passive recipients of such knowledge and asked them to observe and follow the practices of experienced practitioners. The expectations they defined for student teachers tended to be neither explicit nor specific (Zeichner, 1986). They also, explicitly or implicitly, handed the responsibility of supervising student teachers to experienced schoolteachers. While doing so, they either negated or dismissed the value of the college program, including college teacher educators, in teacher preparation.

Expectations for Student Teaching: As Seen from Student Teachers' Choices of Sites

As I have mentioned earlier in this chapter, opportunities to learn was a factor considered by some student teachers (Meng, Zhong, Niu, Jing, and Shen) in deciding where to take their teaching practicum. Embedded within related statements were their expectations for student teaching. Overall, in accordance with the College and the faculty, student teachers rendered student teaching as an apprenticeship. They expected that in the field they would observe teaching skills from schoolteachers and apply these skills to their own teaching under the guidance of a master teacher. It was wished that this teacher was an expert not only in teaching but also in supervising the student teacher.

With this view in mind, these future teachers searched for their field placements. For pure considerations of learning to teach, Meng, Niu, and Zhong laid their attention on prefecture schools with the assumption that teachers there excelled at teaching. They saw

the differentiation within the prefecture schools. That is, the "better" the school was, the chance they would be provided with hands-on experience was lower. With this, Meng attached more importance to observing teaching, and was happy to be more of an observer at the so-called "best" school of East Prefecture. Niu and Zhong sought the second "best" prefecture school to hone their own teaching skills.

Taking future employment into account, Jing and Shen desired to find one from the second "best" schools, namely, county schools. Jing assumed that the arrangement of her relative principal at Spring County Middle School would offer her balanced opportunities in observing and practicing teaching. For Shen, not until after knowing that her uncle was unable to arrange a county school for her, did she start considering the town(ship) school. In Zhong's case, although she was not assigned to East No. 2 Secondary School as she had wished, she had a feeling that the guidance from a county-level city school would be acceptable.

As seen above, concentrating on understanding student teaching as an apprenticeship, none of these student teachers first considered a town(ship) school for field experience. They placed little emphasis on reflective and critical thinking and practice, or on the value of exploring teaching at a town(ship) school in these aspects. Indeed, like Mr. Mao and Mr. Tan, the program faculty, before entering the field these student teachers had an unstructured and non-specific expectation for what to learn and achieve. In the meantime, they tended to disregard the role of the college and its program in preparing them for (student) teaching.[155]

[155] One night at Jing's dorm, when working on the lesson plan for the teaching rehearsal task, Qing

Conclusion

In the Chinese literature on teacher education, the placement of student teachers is a topic that has received some attention (e.g., Q. Wang, 2007; Zheng, 2007). Teacher education programs have the tradition of placing student teachers in groups to schools for practice teaching (Xiaohong Yu, 2008), but have been open to other options in recent years due to the expansion of recruitment and other reasons. These options include having individuals find a school and take the practicum by themselves. A few articles have started discussing what colleges can do to improve the quality of field experiences of this type of student teachers (e.g., J. Lu & Zhang, 2008; Ma & Yuan, 2005).

Although in the past several years there have been some writings (e.g., Cai, 2009) that call for a bridge between student teaching and the development of rural schools, the absence of research on the actual placements of student teachers and field instructors has become critical.[156] The first half of this chapter was devoted to filling in this gap. After examining the document, interview, and observational data I collected from the field, my interpretation is one that finds that the College, the Department/Program, the faculty, and the student teachers worked together to create the neglect of rural placements.

In the name of ensuring the quality of student teaching, the College concentrated on collective placements and omitted mentioning any supervision on the college side for those who ended up practice teaching alone. None of the schools presented in the

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remarked that "We should go directly to teach after graduating from the high school. We can definitely teach better" (personal communication, Sept. 9, 2007). It was agreed by all the roommates.

[156] I am aware that since fall 2007 the six MOE-affiliated universities have been providing free teacher education programs to student teachers on the premise that they will work at the K-12 level for 10 years after graduation and first serve rural education for a certain amount of time. How these programs place student teaches for field experience remains to be seen.

College's plan for student teaching was located outside of the downtown area of East City. To get ready for the teaching evaluation from both the province and the state, the College particularly asked those considering individual student teaching to get the selected school's signature on the employment disposition letter. This further constrained student teachers from looking for sites beyond those appointed by the Department/Program.

Concerning the Department/Program, my analysis of the lists from the three classes shows that fewer than half of the student teachers were grouped and placed in schools. The schools that the Department/Program selected were exclusively located in East City. Most of them lay in the downtown area. Coinciding with the College, the Department/Program assigned one instructor to each of these schools for field support. No similar arrangement was made for the majority who identified their place for student teaching on their own. From my critical perspective, the fact that the Department/Program lacked a record of who went where for individual student teaching seemed to indicate their inattention to this group of student teachers.

I looked at the individual placements presented on the three not-easily-accessed lists with the aid of SPSS. The number of student teachers who reported to experience teaching at town(ship) schools was not actually negligible. They occupied half of the individual placements and a quarter of the entire sample. However, these rural placements remained unrecognized by the faculty members. They either assumed that few teacher candidates would choose to student teach in rural schools or neglected to see the actual distribution of locations picked for individual student teaching.

The perspectives of student teachers on placement were included in this chapter too. A close examination of the individual placements reveals that the student teacher of village or town(ship) origin was most likely to find a town(ship) school for field experience on their own. Meanwhile, some region-based differences were identified among student teachers. Teacher candidates from northern Jiangsu preferred the arrangement of the Program/Department more than those from mid- or southern Jiangsu. The chance for student teachers with rural background from northern Jiangsu to select a rural school for field experience was much lower than that of their counterparts from mid- or southern Jiangsu.

A great deal of interview data was also described to illustrate what student teachers had in mind when deciding where to experience teaching or which school to put down as their site. The factors that stood out included future employment, school status, learning opportunities, the degree of convenience, the influence of others, personal connection, and college policy. As a result of considering one or several of these factors, some student teachers used the town(ship) school to avoid the radar of the Department/Program and pursue their non-student teaching related interest. Others ranked schools and tried to keep away from those located at the bottom of the hierarchy, namely, town(ship) schools, for student teaching.

In the English literature on teacher education, expectations for student teaching is a subject that has attracted some attention. For instance, in a classic case study Feiman-Nemser and Buchmann (1987) considered the viewpoints of student teachers and described their nuanced expectations of field experience. Cole and Knowles (1993)

studied pre-service teachers' expectations and realities of field experience and pointed out the discrepancies between the two. However, according to my search, little literature on this has been published in Chinese.

The second half of this chapter examined the expectations for student teaching in relation to the concept of teacher education. The perspectives of three groups of players – the College, faculty members, and student teachers – were covered. Putting artifacts, interviews, and field notes together, I recognized the similarities as well as the differences among them in understanding student teaching and teacher education. More importantly, there seemed to be a link between their perceptions of student teaching and teacher education and their unwillingness to get involved in rural schools.

The College understood its role in teacher preparation as theoretical or to generally inform its students. Taking a widely held view by many programs of teacher education around the world, the College appeared to have assumed that teaching practice gave student teachers the responsibility to apply the theory or general knowledge learned in college to the classroom. The College also adopted a competency discourse about teaching. Good teaching was perceived as following a list of prescribed steps and skills, and correspondingly, student teaching was seen as learning from the experienced teacher in a "good" school to master these steps and skills. In giving prominence to the universality of teaching, the College showed a tendency to de-contextualize teaching. Furthermore, the College tended to stress the micro aspects of teaching, and to discourage student teachers from reflecting upon teaching from a much broader and more complicated perspective.

Like the College, the interviewed faculty highlighted the importance of experience or learning from the experienced to the student teacher in the process of becoming a teacher. They tended to think of teaching content as prescribed and fixed, and not to consider the influence of context on teaching. These faculty members also set the role of the College/Program in teacher education as theoretical. Slightly different from the College, they did not seem firmly positive about the actual value of the College/Program in preparing future teachers, and therefore appeared somewhat hesitant to speak about this. Despite the College's statement that both college instructors and schoolteachers were obligated to supervise student teaching, these faculty members lacked confidence in supervision and were inclined to transfer the responsibility to schoolteachers. In addition, while holding a low and vague expectation, the faculty tended to overlook the complexity of student teaching and to understate its significance in research or discussion.

I admit that during the period of data collection I did not directly ask all the pre-service teachers about their own expectations of student teaching. But the interview data on how they selected/reported certain schools for field experience did help me respond to this question. The student teachers defined learning to teach as practical. It meant going to a "good" school, a category that the rural school did not belong to, and observing the practice of the experienced. They seemed to think that it would be ideal if opportunities to develop supervised instruction were provided. They resemble the College and the faculty in the sense of emphasizing teaching experience. Meanwhile, compared to the latter two, the degree to which they dismissed the worth of the Program/College seemed more observable.

In China/Chinese careful and in-depth studies on student teaching are few. In the US, after a comprehensive review of the literature on learning to teach, Wideen, Mayer-Smith, and Moon (1998) call for "a more holistic and critical approach to interrogate and challenge the structures, approaches, and methodology of teacher education" (p. 169). It has also been suggested that more quality research be conducted to examine how multiple players, including teacher educators, "affect the landscape and process of learning to teach" (Wideen, Mayer-Smith, & Moon, 1998, p. 169). This chapter, with a focus on the countryside in the arrangements for student teaching, was one attempt to do so.

As a response to the questions posed at the end of the "Research Context" section, this study found that the College/Department/Program did little to incorporate the national and provincial request for attention to rural schools in the arrangements for student teaching. This was a sharp contrast with the College's own claim to prepare teachers for local rural schools.

Indeed, at my meeting with Mr. Xiao, he argued that the College's orientation is not local but national: "Now East Teachers College enrolls students nationwide. This year we recruited from 14 provinces." Yet, when describing how the College's Rural Education Research Center was launched in May 2007, he slipped into another claim. He confessed that the idea of starting this center came from a deputy director of the Jiangsu Education Bureau. At a meeting with the recently retired College CCP General Secretary, this director instructed, "Yours is a local teachers college, and has connections with rural schools. You, coming from the countryside, can build a center to do some research on them" (personal communication, Sept. 25, 2007).

In China, colleges and universities are categorized as two types – central and provincial – based on where they administratively belong and who mainly financially supports them (the MOE's Division of Development and Planning, 2007). Provincial universities and colleges are further divided into two types: those located in the provincial capital, and those seated in the prefectural city.[157] Although the MOE considers all the provincial colleges and universities as local (*difang*), the province and others tend to use "local" to describe prefectural-level ones. In addition, the term "local college/university" is perceived as associated with a series of disadvantages, such as a limited student pool, a lower level of reputation, and constrained resources (Z. Cheng & Liu, 2006; L. Zhu, April 27, 2004).

Putting the College's self articulation, President Qiu's speech, and Mr. Xiao's words together, I see the possible dilemma the College had regarding how to position itself. In the political-administrative sense, the College was, no doubt, a local teachers college. This was the main reason why the official head from Jiangsu Education Bureau called on East Teachers College, and why President Qiu mentioned it in his speech that was made on the eve of the high-stakes evaluation. At the same time, it was likely that the College did not want the term "local" to limit its development, and therefore did not prefer this adjective to describe itself.

As the main responsibility of a local teachers college was assumed to be preparing teachers for local schools, and the majority of students come from rural families, in the new national environment of "Building the Socialist New Countryside," it was politically savvy for the College/President Qiu to contend that this college first served rural schools

[157] Few seem to reside in a county seat, not to say in a town(ship) or village setting.

in northern Jiangsu. It was also on this basis that the provincial official asked the College to develop a rural education research center. However, this did not mean that the College necessarily genuinely desired to connect with rural schools, especially when it came to student teaching.

Associated with the College's identity dilemma was its perception of student teaching and teacher education. It was evident that the College held a rather traditional and narrow view. Despite the difference of opinion in understanding the actual worth of the College/Program in teacher preparation, the Department/Program, the faculty members, and the student teachers seemed to overall continue this view. Seen from a critical lens, there was a compelling absence of discourse that bolstered special attention to rural placements, such as inquiry-oriented student teaching (Zeichner, 1986) and preparing teachers for diversity, equity, and social justice (see e.g. Nieto, 2000).

CHAPTER 8

THE COUNTRYSIDE IN THE FOCAL CHINESE TEXTBOOKS AND TEACHING GUIDES

Introduction

In the previous chapter, I have reported how several groups of players, namely, the College, the Department/Program, faculty members, and student teachers, constructed and understood the placements and expectations of student teaching. I argued that despite the College's rhetorical claim to prioritize teacher preparation for rural schools, all groups tended to avoid rural placements. With the understanding of student teaching as an apprenticeship, and with rural schools at the bottom of the school hierarchy, they dismissed the value and significance of learning to teach in rural contexts.

This chapter will report further on the intended curriculum of student teaching, but will shift the focus to subject matter and subject-specific pedagogy. I will examine the Chinese textbooks and teaching guides that the Program distributed to student teachers in order to identify how the countryside and students/teaching in rural contexts are considered. This question is closely associated with another issue, the discourse of literacy education. Therefore, this chapter will also explore the question of "what approach to literacy education stands out in the artifacts?"[158]

[158] Considering the school textbooks and the teaching guides covered in this chapter were in use by a number of students and teachers at the time of this writing, I use the present tense to frame the research questions, as well as present research results.

As many scholars around the world (e.g., Olson, 1989) have pointed out, textbooks are the primary educational resource of the school. This is particularly true in China for various reasons. In the schools of China, both students and teachers show an extreme reliance on textbooks. Textbooks play a critical, if not determining, role in learning and teaching. They also serve as a basis for student teachers to learn to teach. In teacher education programs, students are usually provided with one or several textbooks. It is expected that they follow the textbooks to write their lesson plans and practice teaching.

Meanwhile, textbooks, especially those in language and social studies, are an essential channel for the Party-State and related groups to transmit dominant ideologies in China. For example, after a careful reading of the elementary school Chinese textbooks published by the People's Education Press in 1999, Liu (2005) identified the dominance of a close and hierarchical discourse system that highlights patriotism, cultural values and beliefs, and science and technology.

Concerning the subject of my dissertation, although there is the common understanding that the countryside is under-represented in school textbooks, serious studies in this field are scarce. One of the few existing studies comes from Yu (2005). She selected four Chinese textbooks published by the People's Education Press to compare the involvement of the countryside and the city. While one selected textbook was for new middle-school students, the other three were tailored to lower primary schools (grades 1-2).

Yu (2005) found that there was a balance in terms of the frequency that rural and urban things, people, and happenings appear. However, the difference was significant

regarding what got represented. In the textbooks, natural views, animals, and historical stories were emphasized around the countryside. When it came to family, play, school, or cultural activities, the context was often urban. Whereas the countryside was used to represent the natural, the fixed, and the past, the city was seen as modern, cultural, and developing at a high speed. This set of textbooks are no longer in use.

For teachers, textbooks are accompanied by teaching guides. They are widely and heavily used for lesson planning, classroom teaching, and grading, especially among new teachers and rural schoolteachers (Qiu, 2004). It is believed that these two (overlapping) groups of teachers rely on teaching guides for different reasons. New teachers feel the lack of knowledge and experience needed to develop a curriculum of their own (J. Yang, 2001). For teachers in rural schools, it is mainly due to the unavailability of other teaching sources (see e.g., Mingcheng Zhu, 2001).

In recent years, many critiques have been raised about both the structure and content of teaching guides (e.g., Dai, June 22, 2006; Z. Guo, May 18, 2006). Some debate has also been generated around whether teachers should stay away from teaching guides (e.g., China Education Daily, 2001) or whether teaching guides should be abandoned (e.g., Chinese Teachers' Newspaper, 2005) in the context of the 2001 curriculum reform (the MOE, 2001a). Even though, a systematic examination of teaching guides is missing in the current literature, let alone how the countryside is portrayed in teaching guides.

Research Data

Compared to other chapters of this dissertation, the data source that this chapter draws upon is singular. It is comprised of four books (see Table 29 below). Two are Chinese textbooks (student edition), and the other two are the corresponding teaching guides. In subsequent sections, I will respectively call them Textbook 1, Textbook 3, Guide 1, and Guide 3 for short.

Table 29: Main Artifacts Focused on in Chapter 8

1.	Hong, Z. (Ed.). (2006). *Chinese: Grade 7 (part I)*. Nanjing: Jiangsu Education Publishing House.
2.	Hong, Z. (Ed.). (2005). *Chinese: Grade 8 (part I)*. Nanjing: Jiangsu Education Publishing House.
3.	Hong, Z. (Ed.). (2006). *Chinese teaching guide: Grade 7 (part I)*. Nanjing: Jiangsu Education Publishing House.
4.	Hong, Z. (Ed.). (2006). *Chinese teaching guide: Grade 8 (part I)*. Nanjing: Jiangsu Education Publishing House.

When taking the *Secondary Chinese Teaching Methods* course in their junior year, besides the course textbook student teachers were offered the four aforementioned books. As the student textbooks and the teaching guides were developed for the seventh and eighth graders in the fall semester and *Secondary Chinese Teaching Methods* was the most important, if not the only, subject-specific pedagogy course offered in the Program, one may argue that this program concentrated on the middle school level to prepare future Chinese teachers.

Equally important, given that the College usually arranged student teaching in the *fall* and that the Program/Department tended to place student teachers in the seventh and eighth grades, it appears that these books were given out of considerations for student teaching as well. In fall 2007, no other textbooks were distributed for student teaching in

the program. Student teachers were expected to continue using the materials provided in *Secondary Chinese Teaching Methods*. Therefore, in this dissertation I consider the four books as the intended curriculum for student teaching in the areas of subject matter and subject-specific pedagogy.

The two student textbooks, coming from different editions, are part of the series called "Experimental Textbooks (Aligned with) the Compulsory Education Curriculum Standard." They, along with four other textbooks on middle school Chinese, were first compiled by overlapping groups of people after the experimental version of the *Chinese Curriculum Standard* (the MOE, 2001b) was released. This set of textbooks, published by the Jiangsu Education Publishing House with Hong Zongli as general editor, are widely used across the country and are ranked as among the best.[159] They are about 150 pages each and are printed in 16 Kai paper, that is, about half the size of a letter page.

As far as structure goes, the textbooks are arranged around units and there are six units in each textbook.[160] A big portion of each unit is devoted to reading. In each unit, there are three or so pieces for intensive reading, one or two for skimming reading, and several for "Read Aloud and Appreciate."[161] (See Table 30 below for the distribution of the three types of readings in Textbook 1 and 3.) Texts for intensive reading or skimming

[159] At present about 10 publishing houses, such as the People's Education Press and the MOE's Chinese Publishing House, produce and distribute Chinese textbooks.

[160] In Textbook 1 they are "Go Close to Literature," "Golden Years," "Customs and Habits," "Colorful Four Seasons," "Attend to Science," and "Wonderful Ideas and Fabulous Thoughts" (Hong, 2006d). Textbook 3 include "Song of the Long March," "Patriotic Affection," "Beloved Relationship," "Charming Landscape," and "Human and Environment," and "New High-Tech" (Hong, 2005).

[161] The *Curriculum Standard* (the MOE, 2001b) distinguishes texts for intensive reading from that for skimming, and sets different requirements in evaluation for these two types of reading. For a text to be read intensively, students are assessed in "word and sentence understanding, content comprehension, key point summary, content explore, thought on the text, and the like" (the MOE, 2001b, p.?). When skimming a text, students are asked to put emphasis on understanding the general meaning of the text and capturing important messages. Those texts in the section of "Read Aloud and Appreciate" are usually short. If it is a poem (which is often the case), students are usually expected to memorize it (Hong, 2006d, p. 4).

are usually organized around three components: the text, footnotes, and items for "Explore and Exercise." Besides the reading section, there is an introduction and a writing[162] topic in each unit.

Table 30: Distribution of the Reading Texts in Textbook 1 and 3

		Reading Text			
		Intensive	Skimming	Read Aloud and Appreciate	Total
Textbook	1	24	8	24	56
	3	18	15	12	45
Total		42	23	36	101

In addition, for every two units there is a theme on oral communication or practice activity (*shijian huodong*).[163] In each textbook one or two "Special Topics" (*zhuanti*) and "Masterpieces Recommended for Reading" are arranged.[164] These sections are new and have been included into Chinese textbooks as a result of the 2001 curriculum reform.

The accompanying teaching guides are much thicker, having 471 pages on average, and each page is about twice as big as that of the student version. According to the compilers, these teaching guides are created to

> suggest operational methods for teachers to implement teaching, provide related materials, and strive to be strongly practical and operable in order to support teachers in a practical and concrete way; and in the meantime leave sufficient space for teachers to be active and creative in teaching, to use the textbooks independently, and to correctly, comprehensively, and concretely

[162] Here "writing" is understood in a narrow sense. It is used to indicate "composition."
[163] "Practice activity" is a new design that has emerged from the 2001 curriculum reform (the MOE, 2001a). It is another expression of project- or activity-based curriculum.
[164] "Wolves" is the topic designed for special reading and discussion in Textbook 1. In Textbook 3 the two special topics are "Great Wall" and "Chinese Characters." Mark Twain's *the Adventures of Tom Sawyer* and Nikolai Ostrovsky's *How the Steel was Tempered* are, respectively, listed in Textbook 1 and 3 as the suggested reading.

carry out various requirements of the *Curriculum Standard.* (the Compiling Team, 2006, p. 1)

In recommending what and how to teach, these designers present their understanding of teachers, students, Chinese teaching and learning, and the like.

The Countryside in the Chinese Textbooks

The Countryside in the Reading Texts

A Small Proportion

In the two textbooks, rural places are mostly reflected in the literary works selected, even though they have a low presence in the reading section. Of the 101 reading texts, there are only 11 (10.9%, see Table 31 below) in which the countryside is mentioned or elaborated on.[165] Nine are from Textbook 1 and 2 in Textbook 3. Six are defined as texts for intensive reading, and five others for skimming or "Read Aloud and Appreciate."

The Tendency to Paint a Postcard Image of the Countryside

[165] There are six texts in which the author obviously writes around an urban place. Two are arranged in "Golden Years" of Textbook 1 and four are in "Human and Environment" of Textbook 3.

Table 31: Rural-Related Works in the Focal Chinese Textbooks

		Unit	Title	Author	Time for first publication
1.	Textbook 1	Customs and Habits	Village Opera (*Shexi*)	Lu Xun	1922
2.			Dragon Boat Festival (*Duanwu ri*)*[166]	Sheng Congwen	1934
3.			A Look Back in My Zodiac Year (*Benmingnian de huixiang*)	Liu Shaotang	1996
4.		Colorful Four Seasons	Spring (*Chun*)	Zhu Ziqing	1933
5.			Ji'nan Winter (*Ji'nan de dongtian*)	Lao She	1931
6.			Summer (*Xia*)*	Liang Heng	1984
7.			West River Moon (Xijiang Yue)**[167]	Xin Qiji	South Song
8.			The Vibrant Spring (*Chongman huoli de chuntian*)**	Gao Xiaosheng	1980
9.		Attend to Science	Use Insects to Manage Insects (*Yi chong zhi cong*)	Shen Kuo	North Song
10.	Textbook 3	Song of the Long March	Laoshan Sector (*Laoshan jie*)	Lu Dingyi	1934
11.		Charming Landscape	Beautiful Xishuangbanna (*Meili de xishuangbanna*)*	Li Tuo	2001

[166] *: the text for skimming reading.
[167] **: the text for "Read Aloud and Appreciate."

Of the 11 pieces, five concern (one of) the four seasons. In "Ji'nan Winter" (1931), Lao She included the country in his portrait of Ji'nan's winter, and characterized village houses with snow on the roofs as a piece of fine art – a delicate brush painting (Hong, 2006d, p. 135). In the "classic" essay "Spring" (1933), Zhu Ziqing outlined a bright, pleasant, and peaceful image of the countryside in spring (Hong, 2006d, pp. 127-128). Liang Heng (1984) draws our attention to the little-praised summer and recognizes the "tense, vehement, and hurried rhythm" of the countryside during this season: crops are running to ripen, and farmers are working around the clock (Hong, 2006d, pp. 137-139). "The Vibrant Spring" is a one-paragraph excerpt from Gao Xiaosheng's rural-themed novel "the Purse" (*qianbao*) (1980). It highlights the viability of creatures in the spring of south Yangzi.

There are two writings in ancient Chinese. Xin Qiji's poem "West River Moon" presents a fresh outlook of the country on a summer night. Shen Guo's "Use Insects to Manage Insects" documents how one particular kind of insect helped to kill the numerous destructive insects in the civilized land, and thus to ensure a big harvest in a year of the Song Dynasty. This reading is placed in the fifth unit of Textbook 1 – "Attend to Science."

Three pieces are developed around local custom and culture. "Dragon Boat Festival" goes into detail about how people in Western Hunan celebrate the Dragon Boat Festival (Hong, 2006d, pp. 102-108). It is an excerpt from Sheng Congwen's best-known novel "The Border Town" (*Biancheng*) (1934), which gives a poetic account of the natural environment and state of life in Western Hunan through a tragic love story. "Dragon Boat

Festival" resembles "The Vibrant Spring" in that the textbook designers give full attention to how the writer describes scenery or an event by detaching it from (the core theme of) the original novel.

Although "A Look Back in My Zodiac Year" (1996) (Hong, 2006d, pp. 105-108) focuses on a Beijing village and "Beautiful *Xishuangbanna*" (2001) (Hong, 2005, pp. 134-139) sets its background in a small town of the remote southwest, both writers think highly of the local custom and culture. Liu Shaotang recounts how he enjoyed the Spring Festival when he was little. Li Tuo introduces the unique ecological environment, architecture, food, and life style of the local Dai people in Xishuangbanna.

Lu Dingyi's "Laoshan Sector" (1934) is themed on the CCP Red Army during the Long March, that is, on the way to the remote countryside with the chasing of the Chinese Nationalist Party army. Besides the difficulties of marching, the Red Army's relationship with peasants is another focus of this so-called documentary. The Lao farmer family in Mountain Laoshan is portrayed as suffering from warlordism, and looking forward to the arrival of the Red Army (Hong, 2005, pp. 7-13).

Compared to the works described above, Lu Xun's "Village Opera" presents much more complexity in subject, a point I shall come back to. It narrates "my" childhood memories of staying in Pingqiao Village – "my" mom's home village – in a summer.[168] "I" looked forward to watching an opera to be performed in a nearby village. With the great efforts made by a group of rural kids, "my" wish finally came true. It turned out that although the opera did attract "me," it was the boat trip to and from Zhao Village that left

[168] The novel was written in the first person.

"me" with the most impressive memory. "I" particularly enjoyed the views under the moon, and the enormous fun that "my" country friends brought me that night. They were kind, hospitable, and smart in "my" eyes.

As seen from the incorporation of the above texts, the two textbooks intend to portray the landscape of the countryside as either peaceful or vibrant, but always charming. They also tend to emphasize the delightful local custom and tradition. Overall, there is a tendency for the textbooks designers to romanticize the countryside and create a picturesque image. In the cases of "the Vibrant Spring" and "Dragon Boat Festival," this is achieved by choosing content that features scenery/scene description but disconnecting it from the original novel.

These designers are inclined to evade information on the complex realities that rural people face in the context of urbanization and industrialization, or on the status of the countryside in the current social order. In "Laoshan Sector" peasants are described as suffering, but the past (or precisely, during the Chinese revolution) is set as the background and the reason is attributed to the exploitation and oppression of the warlords. Also, this piece is chosen with the clear purpose to praise the greatness of the CCP and to conduct revolutionary education on students.

Related to the thematic pattern identified above, in terms of how the countryside is treated in the selected readings the following features are visible.[169] First, not all the pieces deal with the topic of the countryside in an intensive manner. In "Ji'nan Winter," "Spring," and "Laoshan Sector," only a tiny fraction involves the countryside. Second, of

[169] Concerning the authors, although their life experiences were more or less connected with the countryside, most of them created their work in a non-country setting.

the pieces themed on the countryside, some show no presence of rural people. While the country scenery or creature is the focus of "West River Moon," "the Vibrant Spring," and "Use Insects to Manage Insects," rural people or their life are little mentioned in these pieces. Third, while rural people are considered in "Summer," "Dragon Boat Festival," "Beautiful Xishuangbanna," and "A Look Back in My Zodiac Year," they tend to be collectively and flatly described. Not much ink is devoted to portraying individuals. These characteristics, again, display the disposition of the textbook designers on the countryside, that is, not to pay close attention to rural people and their life or to expect students to form a deep understanding of rural society. What they desire to present seems to be a postcard impression of the countryside.[170]

The only reading that endows rural characters with vividness and depth is Lu Xun's "Village Opera." As it is commonly viewed as a "classic" country piece and some student teachers chose it for teaching practice (in the form of talk lesson, field teaching, talk lesson, or report lesson), in what follows I focus on this text and explore its selection and organization in Textbook 1.

The Selection and Organization of Lu Xun's "Village Opera"

The first footnote: Displacing the work from the writer and the context of writing

Regarding each text for intensive reading or skimming, although the rest of the footnotes address the spelling or/and meaning of new or difficult words or phrases, the

[170] Much more richness and depth is presented in the related texts about urban places. For example, a vivid description of school life and student characters is given in a novel excerpt called "The Cell of a Great Person" (*weiren xibao*) (Qin, 1999). The unit "Human and Environment" in Textbook 3 focuses on urban environment and provides readers with a diverse picture. One text aesthetically introduces the Suzhou gardens and three others concern the protection of creatures and plants in big cities.

first one usually provides students with background information on the text. As for "Village Opera," in addition to a very short description of who Lu Xun is and what "village opera" refers to, the first footnote reads: "[it] is extracted from the first volume of *Lu Xun's Complete Works* (the 1981 edition published by the People's Literature Publishing House)" (Hong, 2006d, p. 90).

In this footnote, no specific time for when "Village Opera" was first published is given.[171] The socio-historical context in which Lu Xun wrote this novel is unmentioned. These two points are not addressed at any other places in this reading either. This finding supports Olson's (1989) argument that textbook designers intend to make the text impersonal, objective, and above criticism through the basic strategy of displacing the writing from the writer and the context of its production.

Framing a watered-down version to one perspective of reading

After some search online, I found that "Village Opera" was initially published by *Novel Monthly* (*Xiaoshuo yuekan*) in 1922 and was selected into Lu Xun's first story collection – *Calls to Arms* (*Nahan*) – a year later. In "Preface to *Nahan*," Lu Xun himself stressed that "Village Opera," "The True Story of Ah Q" (*Ah Q zhengzhuan*)[172], "Hometown" (*Guxiang*) [173] and 11 other short stories were created based on his personal

[171] This is often the case for the so-called "classic" pieces, including "Spring," "Ji'nan Winter," and "Dragon Boat Festival."
[172] For more about "True Story of Ah Q," please read Chapter 3.
[173] "Hometown" is Lu Xun's another "classic" country-themed novel. It is narrated by "I." Here is a simplified story outline: "I" returned to "my" home village to sell the old house after living in somewhere else for more than 20 years. When "I" was little, "I" played a lot and had fun with friend Runtu. (His father was a long-term farm laborer in "my" family.) He was a vibrant, brave, and smart kid. "I" looked forward to the reunion with him with the thinking that "my" homework would be still beautiful. However, the person "I" met later was a sharp and disappointing contrast with the one "I" remembered in mind. He became superstitious and numb for multiple reasons. "I" sensed the thick "wall" between "me" and him/my

experience and thinking rooted in the large social and political environment of China. He intended to represent the society of the time through people of different types: some were corrupted while the majority of others remained benumbed, and only a few were fighting for freedom and democracy – alone and lonely.

More importantly, I came to note that this version of "Village Opera" is not a complete one.[174] More than 1500 words were deleted from the original text. In the original text, they were placed at the beginning of the novel and described "my" two unpleasant experiences of watching opera after moving to work in Beijing. There is a sharp contrast between these two experiences as a grown-up in the city and the one "I" had as a child in the country, which implies multiple perspectives or layers to interpret this novel (n/d, 2006).

However, "Village Opera" appears in Textbook 1 as the first reading of Unit 3: "Customs and Habits" (*minsu fengqing*). According to the brief unit introduction, "Village Opera" is a text with a focus on "folk culture" (*minsu wenhua*) or "traditional culture" (*chuantong wenhua*) (Hong, 2006d, p. 89), and the purpose of learning this text is to "have a deeper sense of folk culture." As seen from the selection and framing of "Village Opera," students do not seem to be encouraged to read the text from various perspectives by taking the socio-historical context of the time into account.

Items for "Explore and Exercise:" Promoting an aesthetic view of the words and the world

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home place. This novel is designed in the unit of "Learn to Read" for intensive reading in the 9th grade Chinese textbook.

[174] I learned the same version in middle school but did not know it was abridged.

The section of "Explore and Exercise" embodies what the textbook designers believe are important for students to learn from and based on the text. As observed from the five items designed for "Village Opera," students are expected to take the role of appreciating the text and applying its features to their own oral communication and writing. For example, Item Three asks students to describe an experience of "being in a picture (*tuhua*)" based on Lu Xun's portrait "full of poetic charms" (Hong, 2006d, p. 101) at several places in the text.

In this set of textbooks, the personal pronoun "you" is usually employed in the "Explore and Exercise" section, which indicates the designers' attempt to dialogue with students and engage them in learning. There is no exception for the items attached to "Village Opera." However, not much space seems available for students to read the text and generate a perspective of their own. It is assumed that each student's reading experience with the text will be "purely aesthetic" (McLaughlin & DeVoogd, 2004, p. 52). It is also assumed that students' experiences with local custom and culture are completely positive. For instance, Item Two asks the following leading questions: "Say how the following sentences express the customs and morals (*minfeng*) of Pingqiao Village. Could you please use several sentences to write up the *good* customs and morals of your hometown (*jiaxiang*)" (Hong, 2006d, p. 100, italic added)?

Further, of the three excerpts provided in Item Two, one is as follows:

> I again nodded and said: "Very good."
> Unexpectedly[175] Grandpa Liuyi was very appreciative, raised his thumb, and said proudly: "This is really *only a person who is from the big town (da shizhen) and has*

[175] It's unexpected to me because "my" dear friends and "I" stole horsebeans from his land on the previous night. "My" expectation was that he would be mad at me.

read books can know what is what[176]...I will also send some to our *gunainai*[177] for a try today." (Hong, 2006d, p. 101, italic added)

The abbreviated part, connoted by "..." above, is "My bean seeds were chosen one by one. *Country people don't know what good is and what bad is (buzhi haodai)*, and say that my beans cannot be compared with that of others" (Hong, 2006d, p. 100, italic added). To match the positive tone of the local customs and morals set in Item Two, the textbook writers cut Grandpa Liuyi's negative comment, namely, "Country people don't know what good is and what bad is" on the village from the excerpt.

Going back to the theme of "Village Opera," it is framed as "folk culture" or "traditional culture." As the writing is titled "Village Opera," one may wonder: What role does "village opera" play in this writing? Is it "village opera" that the textbook designers consider as "folk culture" or/and anything else? What did Lu Xun intend to convey by writing about "my" childhood experience of watching village opera? None of these questions around "village opera" is considered for discussion in the section of "Explore and Exercise." The emphasis of these designers is upon appreciating the beauty of the writing.

The term "village opera" is only mentioned by the designers in the first footnote: "Village opera, an opera played at the Welcome-God Ceremony (*ying shen sai hui*) in the countryside of some areas during spring and autumn at old times (*jiushi*), was used to thank God and pray for happiness, and usually performed in a temple or open field (*yewai*)" (Hong, 2006d, p. 90). It reads as if village opera does not exist any longer. If the designers perceive village opera as (part of) folk culture and if this unit is designed to

[176] That is, to know the horse beans I grow taste great
[177] Here it means "my" mom, or a married-out daughter of this village.

help students form a deep understanding of this, one topic for discussion could be the change in folk culture. Again, this is not listed in the tasks given around "Village Opera" or any other reading texts of this unit.[178]

To sum up, Lu Xun's "Village Opera" is a reading with some complexity and depth. However, as seen from its selection and organization in Textbook 1, students are not intended to read this piece this way. In playing down the socio-historical context in which Lu Xun composed "Village Opera," pre-determining its theme, and erasing part of the original version, the textbook designers simplify this reading and direct students to apprehend it from one stance and in a decontextualized way. Followed the reading are the questions asked to guide student learning. It is noticeable that the textbook designers fully concentrate on the aesthetic aspects of this writing and lead students to read the words this way. Students are also led to adopt this aesthetic point of view to see their own world.

In Other Sections of the Textbooks: Mixed Messages on Whether to Attend to Rural Contexts

In the two textbooks, 12 writing themes altogether are arranged. They cover both what to write and how. "Observe and write about the characteristics of a scene" and "Incorporate both the lyric (*shuqing*) and argumentation (*yilun*) into narration (*xushi*)" show a respective example of each category. In each unit, besides revising writing based on certain requirements, students are usually expected to complete two compositions around specific topics (*mingti zuowen*) and to practice writing after school. In some units,

[178] This does not reflect the goal that the compilers themselves articulate about this unit: "Reading these texts, integrated with investigation, you will have a deeper sense of folk culture" (Hong, 2006d, p. 90).

it is also intended that students do practical writing (*yingyongwen xiezuo*), such as write an announcement, make a reading plan, or compose a letter of appreciation.

As seen from the assignments given for required compositions, after-school practice, and practical writing, students are overall encouraged to write about their daily life, including the school, the family, and the neighborhood. In most cases neutral topics are presented for writing. For example, students are often asked to observe things and people and to document their feelings and thoughts. If the title of a composition is prescribed, it usually highlights beautiful, happy, or up-and-coming aspects of people and life. This can be easily identified from titles such as "the Beautiful Moment," "I Love Summer," and "The Happy World of the Three."

These designers seem to have cast some attention on different backgrounds of students when giving writing assignments. As observed from "the Interesting Story at _____," "Friendship in _____," "I_____ that time," and "Applause for _____," some blank space in some titles is left for students to fill in before writing. Students are allowed to choose a place, a feeling, or an issue that fits them to write about. When announcing the first two titles (of the four presented), the designers also create several scenarios for students to consider. A rural scenario is particularly mentioned in each assignment.[179] Further, in a task given for after-school practice, students are suggested to collect folk songs (*minge*), ballads (*minyao*), and folk slangs (*minyan*). This recognizes local knowledge and provides rural students with a chance to understand local tradition and culture.

[179] They are respectively concerned with a breeding farm and a rural village.

However, this is not to suggest that these designers have given enough attention to different contexts in which students learn writing. Several writing tasks are presented showing a lack of thoughtfulness toward (some of) rural students. For instance, for after-school practice, Unit 4 of Textbook 1 asks students to "go to the suburb (*jiaoqu*)," observe "a creek, a hill, or a forest...," and write a diary about the view (Hong, 2006d, p. 149). These words are composed based on the assumption that students come from urban areas. Take a writing assignment on tourism for another example. A paragraph of Unit 4 in Textbook 3 says: "Have you ever been out for a tour (*lvyou*)? Which famous beauty spot (*fengjing mingsheng*) has left you with the deepest impression? Write a travel article and name it by yourself" (Hong, 2005, p. 151). No particular thought is given to students who lack travel experience, especially those from poor rural families.

Apart from the assignments, the designers offer a description of the writing topic in each unit. The description is short and has about three paragraphs. Although one or several reading texts of the unit are drawn upon as explanatory to illustrate the theme, the description is usually abstract. There is a lack of specific scaffolding of how to develop writing (G. Zhou, 2007). Criteria for assessment are not clearly stated either.

In each textbook there are three topics on oral communication and three practice activities. They are presented alternately and include two parts: a brief description and one or several tasks. Around an oral communication topic, there is usually a case illustrated in the description and several (2-4) scenarios depicted in the tasks. Compared to that in the section on writing, rural contexts are less considered in oral communication and practice activities.

Concerning oral communication, of the six topics presented in Textbook 1 and 3, one, namely, "Attend to the subject and occasion of communication and use civilized and appropriate language," leaves obvious space for students from diverse backgrounds to consider their own communication settings. [180] In the short description of the very theme, the case of how to ask an old lady who has never been to school if her husband is still alive in a census is referred to. Meanwhile, the two scenarios set in the subsequent assignments are somewhat rural-insensitive. One asks the student to call a TV station and request a song for mom's 40th birthday; and the other entails inviting a classmate to a space exhibit on the weekend. Both scenarios look disconnected from the life of (some of) the rural students.

As for other cases and scenarios raised in the section on oral communication, most of them are distant from rural life. Only in the topic "If I am a tour guide" is a country-compatible scenario given, that is, to ask students to introduce a new scene in their hometown. Associated with this is that the designers give minimal assistance in helping students to improve oral communication based on their real circumstances (Jingling Chen, 2008).

Regarding practice activities, as some teacher researchers (e.g., D. Jiang, 2004; Y. Tao, 2006) have pointed out, plenty of them are divorced from rural reality and give no special considerations to rural schools that are short of books and other supplies. For example, the description of the activity "Walk into the Library" starts with the following sentences: "the library – high bookshelves and crowded books. It is the place to store

[180] The other five topics are "Speak purposefully and attractively, and be good at making others moved," "Turn down (other's request) tactfully," and "Gestures and expressions always matter," "Be a toastmaster" and "If I am a tour guide."

books and is the world to learn. The numerous books reflect the history of human society and the achievement of human civilization" (Hong, 2006d, p. 121).[181] Such a statement evinces no sensitivity to the fact that some rural schools do not even have a library and that plenty of rural students have never been to a library. No advice on how to process activities like these in such situations is provided either.

In short, putting the writing, oral communication, and practice activity sections of the two textbooks together, I see mixed messages about representing the countryside. In describing themes and giving assignments on writing and oral communication, the designers seem to have paid some attention to students in rural contexts. Meanwhile, there are expressions that may make (some of) the rural students feel excluded. As far as practice activity goes, these designers' efforts to incorporate or accommodate to rural contexts are not observable. Further, the three parts of Textbooks 1 and 3 share one thing in common. That is, not enough modeling is available in them. This may place rural students at a disadvantage due to the paucity of educational resources appropriate to their realities.

The Countryside in the Teaching Guides

In the teaching guides, content is structured in direct correspondence with that of the textbooks. Such a structure is textbook-centered, indicating the high authority of textbooks and the compilers' assumption that textbooks play a central role in lesson planning and instruction. Each unit includes the sections of "unit breakdown, about

[181] "I love literature," "Mock a science and technology press release," "Develop an activity on patriotic education," "An interesting and collective audiovisual event," and "Design by yourself" are the other five practice activities planned in Textbook 1 and 3.

reading, about writing, about oral communication or practice activity" (the Compiling Team, 2006, p. 2).

Apart from outlining the main teaching goals of the unit in reading, writing, and oral communication or practice activity, the unit breakdown suggests the number of class periods[182] for each part. Adding these up, I find that teachers are expected to spend 104, 36, 6-7, and 8-10 lessons, respectively, on reading, writing, oral communication, and practice activity. This demonstrates the dominant position of reading in Chinese education.

The Countryside in "About Reading"

Associated with each reading text are "inserted notes, text synopsis, reference answers to 'Explore and Exercise' items (no "Explore and Exercise" for "Read Aloud and Appreciate"), supplementary materials, and teaching suggestions" (the Compiling Team, 2006, p. 2).

General Impression: The Countryside Primarily Mentioned in the "Text Synopsis"

Despite its name, "text synopsis" is the key component of "About Reading" and occupies about half of the space. It is usually organized around a certain structure, that is, "divide the reading into several parts first, and then analyze paragraphs one by one. In the part of paragraph analysis, (the compilers) first generalize the meaning of a paragraph, and then give a detailed explanation of this paragraph" (Z. Guo, May 18, 2006, p.?). Such

[182] 45 minutes per period or lesson.

a structure implies a traditional view of reading, that is, reading as comprehension through decoding and recoding.

As "About Reading" is extremely text-centered, the countryside is primarily shown in the "Text Synopsis," or more precisely, in the interpretation of the corresponding part of the reading. Below is an example of how the countryside is involved in the "Text Synopsis."

> "Points of dim light" not only suggests (the existence of) rain but obviously carries the mark of that time. At that time in such a backward agricultural society, there was no electricity in the countryside at all. Every house had a dim light. Looked across the fine drizzle, there presented dim rays of light. "Points" subliminally echoes the subsequent words "Their houses, sparsely located." The camera moves to the countryside and presents a country view. All the writing around the passerby and the peasant is developed grounded in spring rain. In "strolling leisurely, holding an umbrella," "leisurely" indicates the tranquility; (as seen from) "wearing a straw-cloak and a bamboo-hat," the image is outlined neatly, not only carrying the local feature of south Yangzi but fitting the specific circumstance of being in the rain. While the previous sentence writes about the serenity at rainy night, this sentence focuses on the activity in the daytime. There is not only a static scene but also a dynamic one. The next sentence goes back to write about the still view. Both tranquility and viability stand out in the image. The houses were "sparely located," which shows the characteristic of the village at the time. The two words "stand still" are used most wonderfully. They convey a quiet and peaceful atmosphere in the spring rain. Such quiet beauty powerfully embellishes the charming of being immersed in the spring rain. It successfully writes out a state that is wonderful but hard to express. (Hong, 2006b, p. 243)

Obviously, these compilers care about the linguistic and cognitive dimensions of reading (Kucer, 2001). Their emphasis is placed upon the detailed explanation of how specific language is applied to convey certain meaning. If following the direct explanation approach to reading instruction, teachers are likely to rip a text apart (Ye, 2001).

Further, although little information about when and how Zhu Ziqing composed "Spring" is offered in the student textbook, in the above paragraph the teaching guide compilers draw on the historical context, truthfully or untruthfully, to comprehend the writing. As a result, the countryside in the "old" society is characterized as "backward," as well as "peaceful/charming."

The Countryside in the Teacher Version of "Village Opera"

To match the analysis on the selection and organization of "Village Opera" in the student textbook, in what follows I take a look at how "Village Opera" (and accordingly the countryside) is discussed in Guide 1.

In the "Text Synopsis:" A traditional view of reading and the countryside as an "Other" Idealized World

Echoing what I have described above, in the "Text Synopsis" of "Village Opera," the compilers consider each paragraph of the text in exhausting detail. For example, the reasons why Pingqiao Village was "my" paradise and the twists and the turns that "I" experienced before leaving to watch the village opera are dissected one by one. Meanwhile, the compilers elaborate on what term or word is specifically used to serve what purpose. Here is a small example:

> First, ("I" am) "given special treatment" here. One embodiment is that many kids at "my" age "accompany me to play." "Guests of a family are almost that of the public" shows the hospitability of peasants in Pingqiao Village. The second embodiment is that the crayfish they caught are "usually given to me to eat." This indicates the simplicity and hospitability of rural kids. (Hong, 2006b, p. 168)

Two other interconnected features are marked in the "Text Synopsis." First, the compilers tend to understand the text as a closed or self-contained system (Gee, 2001), and readers as "passive recipients of (the detailed) information in the text" (Dole, Duffy, Roehler, & Pearson, 1991, p. 241). It is assumed that "Meaning resides in the text itself, and the goal of the reader is to (identify, comprehend, and) reproduce that meaning" (Dole, Duffy, Roehler, & Pearson, 1991, p. 241). Second, as some teacher researchers (e.g., Ye, 2001) have commented on teaching guides in general, no words are present to point out the weakness of "Village Opera" or to suggest a critical reading of the text (such as from the perspective of rural kids or adults). The "Text Synopsis" is intended to tell teachers what to appreciate when reading and teaching "Village Opera."

Further, I see a divergence between the teaching guide and the student textbook in framing "Village Opera." In Guide 1, putting the "folk culture" theme aside, the compilers re-position "Village Opera" as a work to recall "the beautiful past in childhood" and to express "the simplicity (*chunpo*) and loveliness (*keai*) of laboring (*laodong*) people" (Hong, 2006b, p. 159). Correspondingly, they are listed as "important teaching and learning points" (*xiaoxue zhongdian*) in writing content. The "Text Synopsis" concludes "Village Opera" with:

> To sum up, the author used his brushwork with deep feelings to write about the life experience of taking a boat to watch village opera one night during "my" visit in Pingqiao Village at about 11, portray a group of rural juvenile friends, represent the noble qualities of laboring people such as being unsophisticated, kind, friendly, and selfless, display a poetic childhood life picture in the free countryside, and express the author's deep feelings for laboring people and yearning for beautiful life. (Hong, 2006b, pp. 170-171)

Both the theme summary and the "important teaching and learning points" are made from the perspective of the outsider (the author or the main character "I" in the text). In doing so, the countryside is positioned as an "Other" world. Also, it is obvious that the compilers tend to simplify and perfect this world. They draw upon little historical or social background to make the points, which adds the timeless component to this idealized image of the countryside.

In the "Supplementary Materials:" The disposition to avoid controversy

In the section of "Supplementary Materials," the removed part of the original edition, that is, "my" experience of watching opera in Beijing as a grown-up, is revealed in the form of a quote. In this quote, two interpretations about why Lu Xun wrote this part are described. It is primarily considered as a writing strategy adopted to project "my" love for village opera. The other interpretation, classified as "extended," does not appear until the end of the paragraph: "[this part] reflects the difference between Beijing life and that in a water village of south Yangzi from one side. Obviously, the author feels for the latter" (Hong, 2006b, p. 174).

As seen from this quote, the compilers regard the deleted content as trivial for students to understand what Lu Xun attempts to express through "Village Opera." Meanwhile, the second explanation suggests that the compilers tend to render Lu Xun's dislike for watching opera in Beijing as personal. They desire to stay away from controversy, and ignore explaining "my" contrasting experiences of watching opera at different places from a socio-historical point of view or/and by comparing "Village Opera" with other pieces in the same story collection.

In the "Explore and Exercise" Section: The diversity of students overlooked

Following the five "Explore and Exercise" items are "reference answers" (and a few brief tips for instruction). As a result, the activity of describing an experience of "being in a picture" in Item Three is re-interpreted as asking "each student to carefully recall the past experiences of going to a scenic spot for visiting and sightseeing (*fengjingqu canguan liulan*)" and "to select the most wonderful one" for presenting (Hong, 2006b, p. 172). This is a narrow explanation of the original task, which, again, overlooks the fact that some students have little travel experience.

In the "Instruction Suggestions:" An inauthentic approach to student inquiry

Of all the "About Reading" sections around "Village Opera," "Instructional Suggestions," which includes eight brief ones, is placed last. It is one page and a half long, that is, about 1/8 of the length of all the other sections put together. While subject matter is the concentration of all the other sections, "Instructional Suggestions" speaks specifically to teaching. Such an arrangement appears to show that subject matter stands in a much higher position than pedagogy in the mind of the teaching guide compilers.

The first suggestion points to the background information of students. It is abstract and short: "Introduce students to the new text based on their existing life, make them feel approachable, and activate students' desire to learn actively and enthusiastically" (Hong, 2006b, p. 177). This is the only place where students' prior knowledge and experience are referred to. It reads as if prior knowledge and experience are only valuable in the sense of getting students to the reading text.

At first glance, students' perspectives are given prominence in the suggestions. Suggestion Three asks teachers to lead student discussion and employ the wisdom of the group to figure out the main content of "Village Opera." Suggestion Seven invites students to summarize the text in terms of content, form, and language by means of discussion. Suggestion Six encourages teachers to ask for students' understandings of the main features in the text. In Suggestion Five, to match the curriculum expectation of distinguishing realistic work from fiction, "Is the 'I' in 'Village Opera' Lu Xun himself?" is designed as the "difficult" (Hong, 2006b, p. 178) question for students to discuss in class.

Nevertheless, all the answers are given and look fixed. (Half of the words in this section are presented as "reference answers.") In the so-called "reference answers," little space seems open for students to voice their own experience and, accordingly, to interact with the text. For example, the reference answer to Suggestion Six reads:

> Country kids headed by Shuangxi are adorable and worthy of praise. They are kids innocent and active, young and naughty but not short of wisdom and intelligence. They are enthusiastic and honest, generous and selfless. They love laboring and can labor. From them (we can) see the personalities and virtues of country kids. The "I" in the text is a kid loving country life and loving laboring people. He gets harmoniously with country kids. Due to their influence, he shares thoughts with them. He loves the free world of the countryside. (Hong, 2006b, p. 178)

The question proposed in Suggestion Five could provide students with a good opportunity to explore the complicated relationship between the real countryside Lu Xun experienced as a child and the somewhat ideal countryside he created for the main character "I" as an adult in Beijing. However, the answer offered seems simplistic and to block students from doing so.

> This text is a novel. So, although sharing some similarities with teenaged Lu Xun, the "I" in the text can not be equated with himself. Lu Xun's grandparents on mom's side lived in Qiao'an Village in Lu Town, Shaoxing, Zhejiang. The background information written in the text was not completely about Anqiao Village either. It was transferred to "Pingqiao Village" after some artistic processing. (Hong, 2006b, p. 178)

In a nutshell, a traditional view of reading is prominent in the teaching guide. The compilers see reading as "basically a matter of decoding a series of written symbols into their ... equivalents in the quest for making sense of the text" (Nunan, 1991; cited in Vaezi, 2006). They also tend to believe that "meaning exists in the printed page" (McCarthy, 1999; cited in Vaezi, 2006), and the main responsibility of a reader is to find it and take it in. Within this framework, in the teaching guide these compilers present an authoritative and detailed reading of each text in the hope that teachers will get it and pass it on to students. While doing so, they fail to engage teachers in reading (Ball & Cohen, 1996) or to consider alternative ways of reading.

Besides, I see the presence of manipulation and arbitrariness in the teaching guide. In the "Text Synopsis," Lu Xun's "Village Opera" is basically read with little consideration for socio-historical contexts, which helps reproduce an eternal idealized image of the countryside. As observed from the quote on the abridged part of the original "Village Opera," the compilers tend to minimize their involvement in controversial issues and overlook their value in promoting students/teachers to learn about and engage in the complexities of the world. These compilers look arbitrary in defining the theme of "Village Opera." In the relevant statements of the new theme, the countryside is positioned as a world outside of that of students.

Compared to "what to teach," "how to teach" is much less emphasized in the teaching guide. Further, in the limited description of "how to teach," students are considered but far from enough. Along with the text-centered approach to reading instruction, the compilers tend to overlook student background and experience and the diversity of students. They take student experience into account for introducing the text but not for the entire process or for the result of reading the text. Students are not truly encouraged to interact with the text or take a stance on the text based on where they are from and what they have experienced. As a result, the countryside is, again, crystallized as an "Other" world, a world that is alien to students.

The Countryside in Other Sections of the Teaching Guides

"About Writing"

Besides what is presented in the student version, "About Writing" of each unit includes three components: "a summary of the short writing description, solutions to the writing assignments and hints, and writing sample(s) and brief comments" (the Compiling Team, 2006, p. 2).

The implicit revision of the textbook and an arbitrary attitude toward student diversity

I have previously stated that the textbook designers did not seem to take rural students into consideration when giving two writing assignments. In the Guides, some explanation is given to each. On the assignment of writing an observation diary, it is stated in Guide 1 that "As the ellipsis tells us, the content for observation can go beyond

'a creek,' 'a hill,' and 'a forest.' Students can pick a view for observation based on their own circumstances" (Hong, 2006b, p. 296). On the tourist piece, it is also specified in Guide 3 that "If you haven't been out for a tour, just write a scene in your hometown" (Hong, 2006a, p. 336).

The teaching guide compilers are reinterpreting the two assignments by somehow distorting the original meaning. In helping (some) teachers cope with the two assignments, they revise the textbooks without pointing out their problem in design. Further, juxtaposing this with the part I have presented in "About Reading," I see the arbitrariness of the compilers in deciding whether to attend to the diversity of students or not.

Student writing samples used to uplift the authority of teachers and reinforce the postcard image of the countryside

In the student textbooks, no writing samples except those reading texts arranged in the unit are presented. Distinct from this, in each unit of the teaching guides, there is one or two writing samples suited to the assigned topics and created by those at the same age as the students. Altogether, 18 samples are offered to teachers (not students) for reference. It looks as if these teaching guide compilers attempt to uplift teachers' authority in teaching writing by letting them have access to and have control of these materials.

Of the 18 student writing samples, only three are country-themed, and they are all placed in Guide 3. The first one is a writing outline on "Summer Time in the Country" (Hong, 2006a, p. 154). The other two are full texts, respectively called "the Evening

Scene of My hometown" (Hong, 2006a, p. 338) and "Autumn" (Hong, 2006a, p. 417). Corresponding to the theme highlighted in the textbooks, the three samples concentrate on creatures (cicadas, ducks, pigs, and dogs), crops (rice, corns, nappa cabbage, cantaloupes, string beans, and tomatoes), or/and children and adults to paint a postcard image of the countryside, that is, the countryside is always beautiful, whether it is vibrant, peaceful, or fruitful.

"About Oral Communication" and "About Practice Activity:" Continually overlooking rural contexts

"About Oral Communication" consists "knowledge and skill introduction, understanding the assigned oral communication topic, and a lesson plan" (the Compiling Team, 2006, p. 2). Nothing about the countryside is described. In some units some supplementary exercises are provided. Scenarios are involved, such as how a son intelligently reminded his father to go to see a movie early and how a sales person in a shopping mall tactfully rejected a customer's request to return a washed suit. But still, there are no rural-relevant scenarios.

My reading of "About Practice Activity" shows that there are few suggestions about how teachers in poorly-supplied schools, which is often the case for rural schools, should develop these activities. By contrast, on several occasions special considerations are provided for teachers in well-supplied schools. For instance, around the topic "Walk into the library," the designers make it clear that "At schools that develop fast in education modernization and have advantages in facilities, teachers should put the emphasis on introducing the computer search system in advanced libraries" (Hong, 2006b, p. 229).

To conclude, this section examines the countryside in the writing, oral communication, and practice activity parts of the teaching guides. In "About Writing," the designers re-interpret two writing assignments to make them more accommodating. Samples of student writing are also provided to enrich teachers' repertory in teaching writing. Only a few of the selected samples focus on the countryside, and they all hold on to a postcard image of the countryside. That is, the countryside is a world associated with beauty, harmony, and good harvest. Regarding the parts of oral communication and practice activity, I see a continuous pattern of neglecting rural situations and accordingly lack of special support for rural schoolteachers in pedagogy.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I have described and interpreted the two middle-school Chinese textbooks and the two accompanying teaching guides that the Program gave to student teachers in order to identify the image of the countryside and the consideration of rural students and teaching in these texts. In my analysis, besides reading, I have also paid attention to the writing, oral communication, and practice activity components of the artifacts.

As seen from both the number of reading texts arranged in the student textbooks and the number of lessons suggested for reading instruction in the teaching guides, there is no doubt that reading occupies a dominant position in Chinese education. In accordance with this, the countryside is mostly involved in the readings selected into the textbooks. But overall, the country-related works are under represented, accounting for a very low

percentage of the total number. Even more, it is rare to find a piece that focuses on the countryside or endows rural characters and life with depth.

In terms of theme, the tendency of the textbook designers to construct a postcard image of the countryside is obvious. They focus attention on the natural environment and local customs to feature the charming aspects of the countryside. By contrast, no efforts are seen to reveal the complexity of rural society and the position of rural people in the current social order. This echoes the basic requirement of the MOE for reading selection, namely, "Beautiful in both writing and content" (*wenzhi jianmei*) (2001b). It also coincides with Liu's (2005) finding that issues of "social disparities, social tensions, and ideological crises" (p. 258) are excluded from textbooks. In order to underline the ever-lasting beauty of the countryside, the designers use the strategies of omitting the year or the social context in which a work was produced, presenting the section that fits the designed theme only and separating it from the rest of the writing, and deliberately cutting the "unpleasant" description off the original work.

To maintain students' attention to aesthetic aspects of a selected reading in learning, the textbook designers adopt some strategies for this. A good illustration is the framing and organization of Lu Xun's "Village Opera." In the context of deleting the content that may generate controversy (and multiple readings of the text) and ignoring the socio-historical background in which Lu Xun composed "Village Opera," the designers implicitly ask students to read the text (and thus understand the countryside) from the stance of the main character "I" – a country visitor. Perspectives of rural kids and adults in the text are ignored.

Meanwhile, the designers lead students to consider the countryside only in an aesthetic fashion. They intentionally abbreviate the negative remark from a rural character in the text. Also, as seen from the "Explore and Exercise" items, students are expected to appreciate the beauty of this writing and understand things and people accordingly. Real-life issues, such as the fate of village opera and the current life and culture of rural residents/students, fail to be recognized for discussion.

Concerning the reading section of the teaching guides, the main intent of the compilers is to help teachers understand each text. As seen from the "Text Synopsis," the compilers take a traditional approach to reading. They tend to look at the meaning of a text as fixed and free of different interpretations of readers. In the "Text Synopsis," they directly and thoroughly explain the meaning and the aesthetic features of the text to teachers based on language decoding. As a result, teachers are positioned as passive in reading, and what to teach as prescribed, which does not reflect the compilers' articulation to promote autonomy among teachers in the introduction at all. [183]

Compared to teachers, students in the teaching guide are rhetorically granted more freedom to explore the text, which is aligned with the new curriculum standard's attention to inquiry learning (the MOE, 2001b). Teachers are encouraged to activate students' interest in the text based on their prior experience. Teachers are also recommended to employ discussion and collect students' perspectives on the text.

[183] In highlighting cognitive and linguistic aspects of a reading text, the compilers seem to overlook the teaching and learning of reading strategies – an important area for students to improve reading (Dole, Duffy, Roehler, & Pearson, 1991).

Even so, the compilers look inauthentic and superficial in promoting this interactive approach to reading. The purpose of drawing upon students' life experience is to get them to the text. Student background does not seem valued in the process of reading or any other practices associated with this. Although discussion among students is encouraged, the answer to the discussion question is prescribed. Little space is truly allowed for students to interact with the text and form a stance of their own based on their background and experience.

In the reading section of the teaching guides, the countryside is mostly represented in the corresponding part of the "Text Synopsis." When interpreting a text, the compilers tend to promote a simplistic view of the countryside. In "Village Opera," they generalize the countryside as an eternal perfect world. To this end, unpleasant statements about the countryside (from both Lu Xun and other rural characters presented in the story collection *Calls to Arms*) are ignored. The compilers also fail to take the abridged content seriously and to consider the author's description of the countryside in relation to "my" experience in Beijing. Further, as seen from how the designers redefine the theme of the text and what they suggest teachers do in instruction, the countryside is basically assumed as a world of which students are not part. In doing so, they impose a uniform understanding of students and position the countryside as an alien "Other."

In both the student textbooks and the teaching guides, much more importance is placed on writing than oral communication and practice activity. Writing looks better developed as well. Students are encouraged to write about their daily life – and not surprisingly, from a positive perspective. In the student textbooks I see an inconsistent

representation of the countryside. While a rural scenario is mentioned in two writing assignments, the designers fail to consider (some) rural students in two other tasks. Also, students are expected to follow the "classic" readings presented in the textbooks to write. No specific scaffolding on how to develop a composition or writing samples from their own age are provided.

In the writing section of the teaching guides, the compilers remedy the two assignments without pointing out the problem. Yet, comparing this to how they interpret the assignment of describing a view related to "Village Opera," I sense that they arbitrarily decide whether to consider (some) rural students or not. In addition, these compilers provide teachers with a series of writing samples from those who are about the same age as the students. In these samples, the countryside is again under-represented. The few rural-related writings consistently characterize the countryside as naturally beautiful and harmonious, thus reinforcing a postcard impression of the countryside.

As some teachers and scholars have remarked (e.g., Jingling Chen, 2008), oral communication and practice activity are at an early phase of development in Chinese education. As the themes, cases, and scenarios involved in both the student textbooks and the teaching guides suggest, the designers fail to take rural contexts into account. Little practical guidance and support is offered to either students or teachers who face the shortage of educational supplies and the like.

In conclusion, my analysis of the four Chinese artifacts suggests that the countryside has very limited representation in both subject matter and pedagogy. In terms of the former, the number of times when the countryside is mentioned or elaborated on is low.

In the limited opportunities provided, a romanticized image of the countryside tends to be highlighted, and from the perspective of an outsider. As far as pedagogy goes, rural students and teachers are either ignored (especially in oral communication and practice activity) or expected to understand the countryside as outsiders in a misleadingly one-sided fashion (in reading and writing) by putting their direct experiences aside.

With such a representation of the countryside in the intended curriculum, how did prospective teachers enact it in student teaching? How did college supervisors respond to the curriculum and supervise student teaching? I will investigate these questions in the next two chapters.

CHAPTER 9

THE COUNTRYSIDE IN THE COLLEGE SUPERVISION OF STUDENT TEACHING

Introduction

The importance of university supervisors in preparing future teachers was once challenged (Bowman, 1979) but immediately confirmed (Zimpher, deVoss, & Nott, 1980) in the English literature. In the ideal situation they are expected to play multiple roles (Fredidus, 2002). "The supervisor is the watchdog for the completion of university requirements during student teaching, the facilitator of relationships among students, teachers, and principal, and the personal confidante of anyone in the triad who chooses to confide" (Zimpher, deVoss, & Nott, 1980, p. 14). More importantly, they, along with collaborating teachers, assist student teachers to "explore teaching analytically and experimentally" (Stones, 1987, p. 77).

However, in reality, research (e.g., Richardson-Koehler, 1988) has found that collaborating teachers are the primary influence of student teachers in field experience. The involvement of university faculty remains to be improved (e.g., Beck & Kosnik, 2002). They have very limited contact and communication with student teachers and field schools. Several reasons have been proposed to explain this. Constrained by time, faculty members tend to focus on research and publishing. Low priority is given to teaching, especially field instruction. They also have more confidence in doing research than in mentoring student teachers.

Meanwhile, university supervisors interpret their work differently and prefer varied approaches to student teaching supervision (Slick, 1998b, 1997; Zeichner & Tabachnick, 1982). Some position themselves as "gatekeepers" or "overseers" of the university and take the main responsibility of evaluating student teachers (Slick, 1997). Following a traditional model, they are more concerned with technical and procedural aspects of teaching. Some see themselves more as "advisors" and "facilitators," and attempt to assist student teachers based on their needs and characteristics. Others seek social change and draw the attention of student teachers to the links between their classroom experience and broader social issues. Zeichner and Tabachnick (1982) call the supervision styles of the three types of supervisors technical-instrumental, personal growth-centered, and critical, respectively.

The past several decades have seen considerable efforts to contextualize (the study of) college supervision. For example, when looking at the supervisory discourses between university supervisors and student teachers during post-observation conferences, Zeichner, Liston, Mahlios, and Gomez (1988) consider the difference of two programs in orientation (one is traditional-craft oriented and the other highlights inquiry). Besides supervisory conferences, other occasions on which university supervisors operate (such as the university campus-based seminars) may exist. Therefore, there is the need to examine the behaviors and beliefs of supervisors in different contexts (Zeichner & Tabachnick, 1982).

In the past several decades, there also has been a constant call for a re-consideration of the role of university supervisors (e.g., Slick, 1998a; Valencia, Martin, Place, &

Grossman, 2009). As a response, teacher education programs in the US. have been adopting the term "field instructors" to address "college supervisors."[184] The intent behind the name change is to go beyond evaluation and other more conventional mentoring practices (such as providing technical advice and emotional support) to emphasize the "educative mentoring" (Feiman-Nemser, 2001) of the college (-assigned) staff on student teachers in the field.

In Chinese, college supervisors and collaborating teachers, indeed, share the same name, that is, "*zhidao laoshi*" (guidance teachers). It is not rare to see that an author keeps vague about which group of guidance teachers s/he focuses on in an article (e.g., X. Tang & Long, 2008) or assumes that the two groups take on the same responsibility for mentoring student teachers (e.g., Xie, 2008). Meanwhile, in the past ten years some articles have been published on college supervisors.

Of these publications, some are concerned with the problems around the placement of college supervisors in recent years. It has been noted that teacher education programs have more student teachers to place for teaching practice than before due to the expansion of recruitment. They tend to send young faculty members to supervise those student teachers who are placed to schools in groups (M. Zhang, 2007; T. Zhang & Zhao, 2007). Sometimes more student teachers (at different sites) are given to a supervisor than s/he can handle, and the placement is done in a casual manner (Y. Zhu & Yang, 2001). Due to time and energy constraints and the lack of teaching experience at the k-12 level, the support that these faculty members give to student teachers is poor in both quantity and

[184] For example, in the teacher education program at MSU, those faculty members and graduate students who supervise student teaching are addressed as "field instructors."

quality. The supervision of those who take their student teaching alone is considered in none of these articles.

A good number of articles (e.g., C. Liu, 2001; Xue, 2008; M. Yu & Cao, 2006; Y. Zhang, 1998) offer a normative description of the role of college supervisors. Although college supervisors are expected to play the role of negotiators, managers, advisors, and evaluators, the attention of these articles is on the procedural and technical aspects of supervising. The broader contexts of college supervision are generally missing or neglected.

The writing of Xue (2008) is one of the few, if not the only one, that concerns student teaching in the rural setting (of western China). In the article he describes what a college supervisor should do to ensure a decent living environment for student teachers in the field and to ease their anxiety and discomfort partly caused by the poor living condition and the lack of entertainment activities. He also lists a series of things that can be done by the college supervisor to improve student teachers' skills in teaching. The account is basically normative and simplistic.

Overall, my literature review suggests that no field work has been seriously conducted to document the support that college supervisors provide to student teachers in different contexts, to identify the features of the support, and to examine their possible impact on student teachers in learning to teach. Inspired by the related English literature, in this chapter I intend to shed light on this area by exploring the following questions: 1) To what extent were the supervisors of the program involved in student teaching? 2) What role did these college supervisors play in what contexts? 3) What type of

discourse(s) stood out in their supervision? 4) How was the countryside touched upon in their supervision?

Research Data and Collection

Before heading for the field, student teachers in the Program rehearsed teaching in groups of about ten during the week of September 9-14, 2007. One college supervisor was assigned to each group. Each student teacher did one or two "trial lessons[185]" (*shijiang*) in front of her/his peers. I observed four groups, totaling 19 trial lessons in four classrooms. The four groups covered student teachers from three classes (Class 1, 6, and 7), and four supervisors with different academic interests (see Table 32 below).

Table 32: College Supervisors Considered in This Study

College Supervisors	Major	Lessons Observed
Mr. Wang	Ancient Chinese	5 (trial)
Mr. Chen	Modern Chinese literature	5 (trial)
Ms. Li	Mandarin Chinese	5 (trial)
Mr. Mao	Modern and Contemporary Chinese Literature	4 (trial)
Dr. Yao	Chinese Teaching	22 (talk)
Mr. Ma	Journalism	8 (talk)
Mr. Xie	Ancient Chinese	10 (talk) 15 (report)

After the student teachers finished teaching practice and went back to college in mid-November, they were grouped to do "talk lesson" (*shuoke*) and "report lesson" (*huibao jiangke*) on two continuous weekends with the presence of a supervisor. The purposes that the program set for the two weekends were slightly different. While

[185] "Trial lessons," "talk lessons," and "report lessons" are explained in greater detail in the next section.

expecting student teachers to demonstrate what they had learned from the field on the weekend of 17-18 November[186], the program considered the next weekend as part of the preparation for the upcoming teaching evaluation from both the province and the State. Even though, the student teachers perceived their work on the two weekends as the same, that is, to complete the post-student teaching evaluation. For this reason, I take their practice on both weekends as part of student teaching.

On the two weekends, I followed my two focal participants – Jiang and Jing – to observe lessons. More specifically, on the day of the November 17th, I sat in on Jiang's section and observed 22 talk lessons. All the students in this group were from Class 1. There were two sessions, about three hours in the morning and four hours in the afternoon. Dr. Yao was the instructor who supervised the group. For the weekend of 24-25 November, 15 student teachers and Mr. Ma were re-assigned to Jiang's group. For some reason, Mr. Ma only asked students to do "talk lesson." I listened to eight talk lessons in Jiang's section. Regarding Jing' group, Mr. Xie was the supervisor and all the students came from Class 7 except for Qiang. Qiang was from Class 6. There, I observed 10 talk lessons and 15 report lessons.

All the 74 lessons were given in the classrooms of the main building. Although varying in size, these classrooms were all equipped with a desktop computer and a projector. In each classroom, desks and chairs were immovable, and were set up in rows facing toward the blackboard and the podium. The supervisor usually sat in a first-row seat, while the student teachers scattered in the classroom keeping some distance from the supervisor. Each student teacher went to the podium and delivered his or her lesson there.

[186] Saturday and Sunday. In China, people have the habit of considering both days as weekend days.

These lessons varied in length, ranging from 10 minutes to half an hour. When observing a lesson (and providing feedback), the supervisors had an evaluation form on hand. While trial lessons and report lessons were rated based on the same criteria (East Teachers College, 2007), a separate form was used to assess talk lessons (the Department of Chinese, 2004). The two forms, created respectively by the College and the Department, were distributed to student teachers by the Program in the expectation that student teachers would hand them to college supervisors when necessary. Therefore, it can be said that the two forms are the basis on which college supervisors interacted with student teachers.

Besides observing lessons and corresponding supervision at East Teachers College, I collected data on college supervision of student teaching in the field. I followed Mr. Mao to observe a student teacher's classroom teaching and his guidance on the site. My observations of Jiang's and Jing's student teaching in the field also helped me make sense of the role that college supervisors truly played. Further, in the interviews I had with student teachers later, implicitly or explicitly, they mentioned of their encounters with college supervisors.

College Supervision Before and After Student Teaching

The Two Forms: Teaching as Solo Performance and Supervisors as Evaluators

Despite different names and having been arranged at different stages of student teaching, "trial lessons" and "report lessons" share the same characteristics as micro-teaching in the western context. However, I am also aware that the two English terms

don't quite capture the meaning of "*jiang*" in "*shijiang*" and "*huibao jiangke*." In Chinese, "*jiang*" is a verb and signifies "tell" or "lecture." The use of this word seems to show that the College perceives the teacher as "the source and provider of information" (Feiman-Nemser & Remillard, 1996, p. 70), and teaching as transmitting knowledge from the teacher to students. It is assumed that "Students wait like empty vessels to be filled and teachers do the filling. Teachers tell students what they need to know and students listen and learn (that is, memorize) what they have been told" (Feiman-Nemser & Remillard, 1996, p. 70). In the evaluation with about 100 characters, the word "*jiang*" appears eight times.

Further, the criteria adopted to evaluate "trial lessons" and "report lessons" were strikingly brief and general. Five areas (namely, teaching content, teaching method, mandarin speaking, work attitude, and teaching plan and blackboard writing) are presented for grading. The weight attached to each area is 30%, 30%, 15%, 15%, and 10%, respectively.

"*Shuoke*" (talk about a lesson) emerged in some schools of Henan province as a form of teaching research activity in the late 1980s, and is now widely spread across China for both pre-service and in-service teacher education. It is commonly recognized as a labor- and time- efficient way for (student) teachers to develop and articulate their thinking about teaching (Jianzhao Cao, 2006). For student teachers in this Program, "*shuoke*" entails describing how they will approach a lesson and explaining "why" within about 10 minutes in front of peers and a college supervisor.

As listed on the department evaluation form (2006), student teachers are expected to present a lesson from four aspects - teaching text, teaching method, learning method, and teaching process – in sequence. In the order of importance based on the attached scores, there are teaching process (40), teaching text (25), teaching method (10), and learning method (10). Besides, in the category of "Others" (15), student teachers are evaluated in language use, blackboard writing, and non-verbal communication. In the 21 concrete items on the evaluation form, the word "students" appears twice as a collective group.[187]

Although "trial lessons" are arranged before pre-service teachers enter the field, "report lessons" take place after they are back from the field, and "talk lessons" highlight the monologue of teachers (Jianzhao Cao, 2006), they resemble each other in the sense that no real students are expected to be present. Behind the two evaluation forms, the view of teaching as solo performance, more or less, stands. Teaching is primarily considered from the perspectives of teachers, or to be precise, their knowledge, skills, and dispositions. Such a view of teaching fails to put students and their learning in the central place of classroom teaching (Jianzhao Cao, 2006), or to consider the diverse background of students. Further, it overlooks the interactive nature of teaching and the complexities and uncertainties of such teaching (Feiman-Nemser & Remillard, 1996, p. 76) in the real classroom. As a consequence, it underestimates the role of the teacher as a decision-maker in various situations that occur in the classroom.

As for the relationship between college supervisors and student teachers, as the two evaluation forms indicate, college superiors are first expected to serve as evaluators

[187] It was stated that learning method should be employed in alignment with "the current level of students" and help "promote the skills and qualities of students" (the Department of Chinese, 2007).

rather than as consultants or the like to student teachers. In other words, the relationship prescribed between the two groups is evaluative. Moreover, according to the two forms, college supervisors are assumed to take the role of evaluators in pre- and post- student teaching. What about in the process of student teaching? To my knowledge, there is no specific regulation in this[188], which seems to suggest the program's neglect of the process of student teaching and to foreshadow the scarce presence of field instruction in student teaching.

Patterns Identified from the Observed Lessons: Teaching as Technical Work

Although most of the lessons I observed addressed different content, they left me with a strong impression of similarity. These lessons were similar to each other in multiple senses.

First, all the lessons were developed around a reading text out of a Chinese textbook. This shows that textbooks, indeed, play a central role for student teachers in teaching practice. Further, there is a shared but unspoken understanding among student teachers that teaching Chinese, by and large, means teaching reading (texts).

Second, the same procedures were followed to teach or talk about a lesson. For trial and report lessons, all student teachers adopted the following steps: introduce the reading text, examine if students had mastered the new or difficult words or phrases in the reading, comprehend the text, expand or extend the understanding of the reading,

[188] In the college's student teaching plan, it is generally mentioned that college supervisors should collaborate with school teachers to mentor student teachers.

summarize the lesson, and give the assignment. The focus was on intensively studying the text through decoding and recoding.

All the talk lessons were carried out consistent with the requirements set forth on the evaluation form. In the part of "talking about the textbook," the student teacher first introduced the reading and specified its significance in the textbook. Teaching objectives were then covered from three dimensions listed in the *Curriculum Standard* (the MOE, 2001b), namely, knowledge and ability, process and method, and attitude and value. On this basis the student teacher highlighted difficult and important teaching points. Following this was a brief statement of teaching methods and learning methods. The focus then switched to teaching process, in which the student teacher outlined the major issues to be addressed in related lessons and the main steps to do so. All the talk lessons ended up with blackboard writing.

Third, in terms of technology use, most of the student teachers created and presented their PowerPoint slides (*kejian*). The content displayed on the slides was alike and corresponded to the teaching steps described above. Added to the content were usually photos, graphs, and an audio version of the text. These PowerPoint slides served the purposes of presentation. Except for PowerPoint, no other multimedia tools or props were observed. Although the literal translation of "*kejian*" is "courseware," which includes various multimedia formats, the tendency for student teachers to simplify "courseware" as "PowerPoint slides" was obvious.

Fourth, plenty of delicately crafted passages were employed in most, if not all, of the lessons. The way they were delivered made me doubt that they originated from the

student teachers. They were either read or spoken stiffly. In those lessons that concentrated on the same reading but were given by different student teachers, the chance for the same or similar passages to be heard was high. Through Google and Baidu search, I found that these passages were available on the internet as well. To download a lesson plan and deliver it in front of their group with or without slight modification appeared common among the student teachers. In this case, it was doubtful that these student teachers had an authentic understanding of the reading text and the stated pedagogy. The fact that they seldom incorporated personal experiences and feelings into teaching increased my level of doubt.

The fifth aspect concerned the enacted pedagogy. It was true that student interest and inquiry learning were included in most, if not all, of the talk lessons. However, since these lessons were expressed in the form of soliloquy and often in an affected literary style, it was difficult to say if the idea of inquiry learning was authentic to these student teachers. Different from this, in trial or report lessons, pretending that her/his peers were students, student teachers usually spent some time interacting with them. In these interactions there were clear patterns. Student teachers were apt to go through a lesson by asking numerous questions and calling on students to answer one by one. Further, the questions were asked around the knowledge points listed in the text synopsis part of the teaching reference. Those who were called on tended to browse the related part and read it out to the class.

Last but not least, there were few substantial differences between the pre- and post-student teaching lessons. I noted the pre-and post- difference in text selection. While all

the lessons given before student teaching were based on a reading from Textbook 1 or 3, the texts focused on in some talk or report lessons came out of other textbooks at the middle or high school level. I was also aware that after they were back from the field some student teachers looked more confident about teaching and sounded more vibrant and relaxed. Meanwhile, in terms of subject matter and pedagogy, I have to say that I did not see obvious growth or change.

The patterns described above were not isolated. They came together to present a picture of teaching as technical or industrial work (versus profession) (Luke, 2004). With the influence of the pre-packaged curriculum (which was represented by the textbook and the teaching guide) (Crawford, 2004), the wide access to internet, and the training[189] and the regulation of the teacher preparation program, these student teachers seemed to have formulated a tendency to deskill themselves (Ginsburg, 1986; Kanpol, 1998). They didn't make much attempt to develop their own curriculum or form their own understanding of the prescribed curriculum. Their effort was put on copying the available teaching materials and delivering the related knowledge to students. When "consuming" (Luke, 2004) the existing curricular commodities, they did not display much higher-order thinking, such as using the method of comparison to see and resolve the discrepancy between their stated and implemented pedagogy.

The Countryside in the Observed Lessons: A World Apart from Student(s) (Teachers)

[189] For example, my observations on the *Secondary Chinese Teaching Methods* course given by different instructors suggested that they all highlighted PowerPoint making as the most important skill to learn for student teachers. As we shall see, this aspect was also underscored in the college instructors' supervision of student teachers on the lessons of three types.

As Table 33 below shows, of the 74 observed lessons 24 dealt with a rural-relevant reading. The ratio was about one-third. Of the 24 lessons, there were half in which the term "the countryside" or the like existed. In addition, the countryside was slightly mentioned in a non-rural focused lesson, to which I shall go back soon. Altogether, the countryside was present in about 17.6% of the lessons observed.

Seven texts were covered in the 12 lessons aforementioned. They were "Village Opera," "A Look Back in My Zodiac Year," "Summer," "Laoshan Sector," "Hometown" (*Guxiang*), "A Year of Good Harvest" (*Duoshou le sanwu dou*), and "The Evidence of This Life" (*Jinsheng jinshi de zhengju*). Compared to the first four pieces which I have introduced in the previous chapter, a more complicated and in-depth portrait of the countryside is drawn in the remaining three.

Table 33: Rural-Relevant Readings Identified from the Observed Lessons

	Focal Text	Trial Lesson #	Talk Lesson #	Report Lesson #	The Countryside?
1.	Village Opera	2	1		Yes
2.	A Look Back in My Zodiac Year		1	1	
3.	Summer			1	
4.	Laoshan Sector	1			
5.	Hometown		2		
6.	A Year of Good Harvest			1	
7.	The Evidence of this Life		1	1	
8.	Dragon Boat Festival	1	5		No
9.	Spring	1		2	
10.	Ji'nan Winter	1	2		
Total		6/19	12/39	6/16	

As I have stated in a footnote of Chapter 8, Lu Xun's "Hometown," a novel published in 1921, portrays the depressing and dreary life of the countryside and reveals the vulgar or numb mentality of the country people at the time (Hong, 2006c, pp. 50-66). "A Year of Good Harvest," a short story by Ye Shengtao in 1933, makes a vivid account of how rural society went bankrupt due to the combined influence of the imperialist powers and the internal compradors (Hong, 2006c, pp. 84-94). The two rural "classics" are placed in the ninth grade textbook in the unit of "Learning to Read."

"The Evidence of This Life" (2001) is a reading of the unit called "Where is the Home Place?" in the first high school Chinese textbook (F. Ding & Yang, 2006, pp. 67-70). In this essay, Liu Liangcheng poetically recounts his experiences in a Xinjiang village where he lived for decades. While doing so, he demonstrates the deep anxiety that he will forget the life he had there and his life will thus become nihilistic.

In what follows I describe the representation of the countryside in these lessons. Overall, what are presented below are illustrations of the general patterns aforementioned.

In most cases the countryside was addressed in a detached manner. The de facto objective of these lessons was to cover the textbook content based on the teaching reference book and the like. To this aim, none of the student teachers disclosed their own experience or observation around the countryside, nor inspired students to do so.

For example, Fang's trial lesson was on "Village Opera," or more precisely, "my" experiences before getting Zhao Village to watch opera. She positioned this lesson as the second out of the three on this reading. In the lesson that lasted half an hour, there was no

substance that went beyond the text. No prior experience and knowledge of the students and the teacher were recognized (to help understand the text). No questions or opinions were asked or made based on their real-life experience.

For Ning, there was at least one moment at which she could (invite students to) say something about the local countryside. She gave a report lesson on "The Front" (*Qianfang*) (1996) that was placed next to "The Evidence of This Life" in the same unit. Although no content explicit about the countryside is present in "the Front," the author, Cao Wenxuan, lived in a rural village of northern Jiangsu for about 20 years before moving to work in Beijing. Ning pointed this out by reading a paragraph she put on a PowerPoint slide without emotions.

There were two cases in which the student teacher appeared to avoid the expressions that denoted the countryside. Stories in both "Village Opera" and "The Evidence of This Life" took place in a rural village setting. Yet, when giving their respective lessons, Li and Qiang replaced the countryside with the hometown. Throughout her trial lesson on "Village Opera," Li did not use the term "the countryside" or the like. Qiang only mentioned it when introducing the author of "The Evidence of This Life." [190]

> Liu Liangcheng is an essay writer unique in theme and style. By delicately describing the countryside in the northwest, his numerous works represent the rarely-seen humanistic care for the countryside and for people at the bottom, excavate the meaning of daily life in the countryside, and reflect upon the tension between tradition and modernity in the process of modernization. He is honored as

[190] I chatted a few minutes with Qiang after his lessons. He came from a rural village of East Prefecture. He did not consider "The Evidence of This life" as a country piece. In his view, it is about a person's hometown. In other words, to him "hometown" was an abstract concept without specific location. He did not have particular feelings for "The Evidence of This Life." It was his collaborating teacher who asked him to teach this text.

> the last essay writer and country philosopher of the 21st century. (Qiang, Nov. 25, 2007)

He read this paragraph from a PowerPoint slide to students, and the exact expression appears in several online lesson plans.

Speaking of borrowing without acknowledgement, the phenomenon was severe. It existed in each of the 12 lessons. All the main statements about the countryside can be identified as intact from the web. For example, the words Fang used to summarize her trial lesson came completely from an internet source.

> The writing describes the freshness of the night view in South Yangzi, shows how fast the little friends were boating, and makes "my" strong desire to watch the village opera stand out. In combining the scenery with the emotions, this expresses the author's love for the countryside. (Fang, Sept. 11, 2007)

To get ready for a lesson, some student teachers (such as Shen) mingled several lesson plans they found online by keeping the main propositions, paraphrasing some passages, and omitting others. Others employed a single lesson plan they identified on the internet with or without modification. In the cases of Qiang and Tang – the girl who reported a lesson on "A Year of Good Harvest," most of the sentences they spoke in their lesson were directly drawn from an online lesson plan.

In terms of pedagogy, as has been aforementioned, it was common to see that in the talk lesson a student teacher stressed the importance of independent learning and student inquiry. For instance, on "Hometown" Chen stated that

> In the process of teaching I think I should take the teacher as the guide (*zhudao*) and students as the main body (*zhuti*). The teacher will guide students on how to actively learn the text and master the knowledge. Therefore, I will first let students learn and think by themselves and provoke their interest. Then around certain topics (I will) let

> students think and give their own opinions through the method of comparing. In this process students will think about, analyze, and solve the problems through independent thinking and small group discussion, and improve their knowledge and skills. (Chen, Nov. 17, 2007)

Despite statements like this, in the trial or report lessons that allowed interactions with students[191], besides lecturing, the primary pedagogy that the student teachers adopted was to call on students and ask them to answer questions.

For example, within the 30 minutes, Fang asked more than 60 questions. Of these questions, half were alternative questions, such as "yes or no?" ("*shi bu shi?*") and "true or false?" ("*dui bu dui?*"). They were intended to keep the attention of students on the reading. The other half were asked based on the Text Synopsis in the teaching reference, and required that students identify certain phrases or sentences from the text. "Who can read the sentence that describes what 'I' saw?"[192] was one example.

In the trial and report lessons, the two teaching guides served as essential sources. Student teachers either based on them to frame questions or referred to them for answers. For example, on the several short paragraphs describing the encounter between the Yao family and the Red Army in "Laoshan Sector," Jie repeatedly asked questions about the term "in the light of the habit" ("*zhaozhe xiguan*") and the sentence structure "no matter…no matter…as long as…nobody didn't." The purpose was to emphasize that, different from the warlords, the Red Army fought for the little people and was deeply supported by them, a point underlined in the related Text Synopsis. Students who were called upon basically read the words presented in the teaching guide.

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[191] In some cases, to save time the college supervisors asked the student teachers to cut off the part of interacting with students.

[192] Throughout the lesson, Fang used the main character "I" and the author in an exchangeable manner.

In summary, associated with the notion of knowledge as authoritative and incontestable and teaching as technical work, these student teachers showed signs of adopting a de-humanizing pedagogy (Freire, 2003). Focusing on transmitting the prescribed or existing curriculum, they failed to respect their own experience and understanding of the countryside. Putting it aside, in their lesson they presented the countryside as a world that other people wrote about but existed apart from themselves. School teaching and learning were seen, by and large, as separated from life experience. They looked submissive to the authority of the existing knowledge and ignored looking at the countryside with their own eyes and minds or/and speaking out about it.

In the Supervision of the Observed Lessons: The Dominance of Technical Discourse and a Withdrawn Stance toward Field Instruction

The seven instructors differed in the attitude they brought to supervision. Mr. Wang looked humble and devoted, and tried to provoke the enthusiasm of the student teachers in teaching. Ms. Li appeared bored and was playing with her hair. Mr. Mao commented on the first two lessons and turned silent to the rest. Mr. Chen and Dr. Yao, two people who had a reputation in the department for their broad knowledge and insights, remained authoritative throughout. While Mr. Ma looked more engaged in the second round of talk (and report) lessons, Mr. Shen took it more as a task to complete and positioned himself as a bystander.

In their supervision on these lessons, four instructors chose to convey only their own perspective, and three others (Mr. Wang, Mr. Ma, and Mr. Xie) asked for peer input. Further, the contexts in which the three did so were slightly different. While Mr. Wang

acted on his own initiative, Mr. Ma and Mr. Xie were asked by the College to do this. With the latest notice from the province and the State that peer assessment would be part of their evaluation, the College specified the requirement for the second round of lesson talking and reporting.

In terms of implementation, Mr. Wang's suggestion did not come across. In both Mr. Ma's and Mr. Xie's sessions, peer involvement was executed in a formalistic manner. Who would comment on whose lesson was pre-appointed by the supervisors based on the student teacher list they had on hand. What was said about a lesson was, in most cases, superficial and strictly confined to the criteria listed on the evaluation form. Dialogue among the student teachers rarely existed.

Concerning the supervisors' responses to these lessons, I see several striking similarities. Emphasizing teaching behaviors, the college supervisors all conveyed the message that student teachers should put their main energy into the improvement of basic skills and techniques, such as PowerPoint slide making, blackboard writing, the use of mandarin Chinese, and presence (i.e., if the teacher looked nervous). Also, the supervisory style they preferred was direct and prescriptive (Zaborik, 1988).

Dr. Yao's supervision was a case in point. With the notion that "to have a PowerPoint file is the indicator of modernized teaching" (Nov. 17, 2007), he set evaluating student teachers' ability to create PowerPoint slides as one of the three goals for his talk lesson sessions.[193] The first thing he saw about a lesson was usually the

[193] Dr. Yao began his talk lesson session with a purpose statement. The overall objective was evaluative, and contained three sub ones. Besides evaluating student teachers ability in technology use, he wanted to correct the score for student teaching, especially that of those who experienced teaching individually. It was

PowerPoint. For example, finding that Jiang (was the only person who) did not have a PowerPoint file for the talk lesson, Dr. Yao remarked, "You do need to have a PowerPoint file, even if you borrow another person's and modify a little bit. ...Without a PowerPoint file, your talk lesson will be the worst for sure...This is what I care most about." He also paid close attention to a PowerPoint slide from various angles, such as the background image and color, the character size, and the numbers of characters.

The second thing that caught Dr. Yao's attention was blackboard writing. He checked if the writing was clear, beautiful, and appropriate in size, amount, structure, and the like. For most of the time, he directly responded with words like "Blackboard writing cannot be sometimes horizontal and sometimes vertical. It is not symmetrically placed either." There were cases in which Dr. Yao spoke with a somewhat sarcastic tone. For example, on Chen's "Hometown" talk lesson he said, "Is the blackboard writing good to look at? Is it pleasant to eyes?" In addition, wrong characters or punctuation marks meant a great deal to Dr. Yao. Once he challenged a student teacher with a series of questions: "Should a line be used to write the author under the text title? Is a line needed? What does a line do?"

Take Mr. Ma for another example. He was a professional speaker and instructor in the Journalism Program. Besides PowerPoint slides and blackboard writing, associated with his strength Mr. Ma highlighted verbal and non-verbal language communication. He encouraged the student teachers to pronounce each word carefully, speak with rising and

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believed that schools usually gave student teachers of this type a higher grade than they deserved. Another objective was to categorize student teachers for the purpose of training them for the evaluations from both the province and the State. Although clarifying that "no comments on talk lessons are suggested by the College. The purpose is to grade you" (Nov. 17, 2007), Dr. Yao gave his opinions on most of the lessons.

falling pitch, move around the podium, and the like by lecturing and illustrating. Seeing the group was all girls, Mr. Ma recommended they practice elegance through dresses, make-up, and manners. For example, he repeatedly asked the student teachers to lift their chin up 15°.

From the perspective of substance, Zeichner and Liston (1985) divide supervision into several major categories that included curriculum and materials and context. In terms of curriculum and materials, none of the supervisors challenged the student teachers' textbook-centered approach to Chinese education or the practice of reducing Chinese instruction to teaching reading texts. Of these supervisors, only Dr. Yao mentioned a nuanced understanding of the reading texts in current textbooks. At the end of the session, he acknowledged that some were selected hastily and could not be called "classic" or "exemplary" in quality. On this basis he suggested that student teachers treat these texts appropriately by using them as "materials" for students to review or further work on.

Meanwhile, there was slight variation in emphasis among these instructors when looking at the teaching of a reading text. For example, Mr. Wang believed the importance of engaging students through the title of a text. The term "explain (a text) by lecturing" ("*jiangjie*") (Sept. 10, 2007) appeared frequently in the comments of Ms. Li. Both Mr. Chen and Dr. Yao highlighted an accurate understanding of the theme of a text. Dr. Yao also cared if important or difficult teaching points were appropriately addressed in a lesson.

Concerning the "context" category in Zeichner and Liston's (1985) framework, three instructors (Mr. Chen, Dr. Yao, and Mr. Ma) did provide their respective group

with a glimpse of the teaching reality. As the session approached its end, Mr. Chen became critical of current Chinese (teacher) education. He complained that Chinese teaching had been worsening for decades with several waves of reform, and (future) teachers nowadays were only better than those before in mandarin speaking. Recounting the wonderful experience he had as a schoolteacher with his colleagues, Dr. Yao sighed that nowadays the teaching research group was running superficially. Teachers were insincere to each other in giving comments and suggestions. Mr. Ma told the anecdote that his sister was the best Chinese teacher at East High School but never won the first place in a teaching competition. He explained this with "Height is needed to win the first place in a competition" (Nov. 24, 2007). However, none of them gave a framework-based analysis of the phenomenon or invited the student teachers to do so. They did not offer their group any advice for change either. One may say that they were complicit in asking the student teachers to accept undesirable or unjust practice.

Another issue worth mentioning is how they perceived (their relationship with) school(teacher)s. In the lesson rehearsals, all the supervisors expressed their full reliance on schoolteachers or host schools to help student teachers learn to teach in the field. Mr. Mao began his session with the statement "We are rather distant from real classroom teaching in elementary and secondary schools. I can only talk about stratagems on paper (*zhishang tanbing*). School teachers understand the textbook perfectly" (Sept. 11, 2009). In the case of Mr. Chen, after making the point that his group rehearsed their lesson "not to practice to be a teacher but to complete the task," he suggested that they

> Go to the secondary school and adapt to the school in teaching direction and emphasis…to observe lessons as many as possible, to be apprentice of different

> teachers and learn from them as much as possible. Enter the role of teaching soon and become a good teacher. (Sept. 11, 2007)

By contrast, in the sessions on lesson talking or/and reporting, field practice was a rarely mentioned topic. None of the supervisors showed interest in (debriefing) the experiences of student teachers in the field. Then, not surprisingly, school(teacher)s were not discussed in these post-student teaching sessions.

The reactions of these supervisors toward school(teacher)s before and after the student teaching seemed to indicate a withdrawn stance toward field instruction. They expected schoolteachers to be the primary learning source for student teachers in the field. Their involvement in school(teacher)s' mentoring of student teachers was low. These supervisors did not seem to care about what happened to student teachers in the field either. The host school and the college were viewed more as two separate places to prepare future teachers (Beck & Kosnik, 2002). After student teachers were back from the field, their experiences were little drawn upon by these supervisors to promote their further development in learning to teach.

In short, although these college supervisors varied in attitude and what to look for about a lesson, some common characteristics were observed in their supervision of student teachers. Ignoring or failing to elicit peer response to a lesson, they tended to express their own points of view in a straightforward manner. In their supervision, they underscored the micro and technical aspects of teaching and valued the development of student teachers in these aspects. With student teachers' text(book)-centered approach to literacy/reading instruction, few advised them to use published textbooks (and other available curriculum materials) with a critical mind.

Further, the feelings that these supervisors had about school(teacher)s were fixed. They were unhappy about some school practices but failed to analyze them or propose anything constructive. On the other hand, they trusted the experience and ability of schoolteachers in teaching and expected student teachers to learn from them uncritically. These supervisors also tended to free themselves from the process of student teaching or teaching student teachers based on related experience.

In the Supervision of the Observed Lessons: The Countryside as Literary and a Pitiful Attitude toward (Student) Teaching in Rural Schools

In the feedback of these supervisors, neither rural students nor teaching in rural contexts was directly represented. Maybe due to the pseudo nature of these teaching situations, the actions, thoughts, and products of students as a whole were rarely discussed. Along with the fact that none of the supervisors talked about teaching in rural contexts, when explaining his concentration on PowerPoint slides, Mr. Mao assumed that "Now every elementary or secondary school teacher is provided with a computer" (Sept. 11, 2007).

On a lesson that addressed a rural-relevant reading, the supervisors were likely to mention the countryside. Of the seven supervisors, three (Mr. Wang, Mr. Chen, and Dr. Yao) used the term "the countryside" when responding to a lesson on Lu Xun's "Village Opera" or "Hometown." They framed related words around how to teach or understand the text, which signaled their unspoken stance that reading was about reading the literal text and reading instruction meant teaching students the text. As a result, the countryside they mentioned was the one in the text but not in real life.

About Li's trial lesson on "Village Opera," Mr. Wang suggested that she engage students through the title.

> Is it only about the village opera? Is the village opera one type of opera? ...Why isn't it called "sing an opera" (*changxi*) or "perform an opera" (*yanxi*)? We are in East. What we have is Huai Opera, Beijing Opera, or anything else? What on earth is village opera? We need to make clear what village opera is. (Mr. Wang, Sept. 10, 2007)

Noting that Fang focused on the mastery of fragmented facts in her trial lesson on "Village Opera," Mr. Chen presented his way of approaching the lesson. He would highlight three aspects, namely, what was written, how it was written, and why so. Mr. Chen stressed that it was after having living in an urban family valuing Confucian ritualistic-moral elements for long that Lu Xun felt "fresh" about "the primitive, natural, and wild countryside." He also slightly compared the home place in "Village Opera" with that in "Hometown."

In the talk lesson around "Hometown," Ying presented her teaching goals in the dimension of "Attitude and Value" as

> (Help students) understand Lu Xun's sympathy for the laboring people, determination to change the old world, and desire to build the new life; provoke the strong wish of students to love China, love life, and strive to build the socialist society ideologically. (Chen, Nov. 17, 2007)

This was a paragraph fully borrowed from the teaching guide. To this Dr. Yao responded: "(The mentality of Runtu and Yang Ersao) was first caused by the material poverty. The problem did not first lie in the ideological layer."

As I have stated in the last section, Dr. Yao and Mr. Chen attended to the theme of a text in their guidance. About the theme of "Village Opera," they indeed understood in a

way that was different from the textbook and the teaching guide. Refusing Shen's expression of "Village Opera" as a piece on tradition and custom in her talk lesson, Dr. Yao positioned it as a reminiscence of country life. After hearing Fang's lesson, Mr. Chen commented that both "Village Opera" and "Hometown" "emotionally present (Lu Xun's) yearning and nostalgia for his home place." Meanwhile, neither of them articulated their stance by referring to any source.

There are two things worth pointing out about the supervisory feedback described above. First, it was obvious that the three supervisors had an authentic (and deep) understanding of the texts "Village Opera" and "Hometown." In the case of Mr. Chen, he understood the author's love for the countryside in "Village Opera" in a contextualized manner and from a comparative perspective. Second, they presented their opinions on "Village Opera" or/and "Hometown" without reference to the textbook or the teacher's guide. It sounded as if they were not familiar with the frame of the two texts in the official curriculum. Without the specification that different perspectives existed on how to understand "Village Opera" and "Hometown," they were likely to confuse student teachers.[194] Also, without a discussion or debate around these perspectives and how to use various curriculum materials, student teachers might end up taking the college supervisors' understandings as personal and accepting the official statements.

Of the three supervisors, Dr. Yao spoke of the countryside with the highest frequency. This was in part due to the fact that he grew up in a rural village and taught at a middle school in East, which he defined as rural, for several years. He was also the only college instructor/supervisor I met in the field who, once in a while, incorporated his

[194] Meng expressed her confusion about this during the interview.

understanding of the countryside into teaching/supervision. In his supervision of the talk lessons this happened once.

Shen expressed "to guide students to experience the cultural life of the South Yangzi" (Nov. 17, 2007) – a point prevalent among the internet lesson plans – as one of the teaching goals for "Opera Village." Dr. Yao contended that students would not be able to "experience" but "make sense of" the life there. Here was his illustration:

> It is like ordinary people (*laobaixing*) who want to be an emperor. The first one says that if I am an emperor I will eat red-cooked pork every day. The second one puts that if I am an emperor all the excrement and urine will not be used by others. I will use it in my own land. If a person is distant from this, his/her imagination will be funny and ridiculous. (Dr. Yao, Nov. 17, 2007)

The case Dr. Yao drew upon to make his argument was how ancient country people thought and acted.[195] The portrait of these people was negative. Meanwhile, as this case and other cases described above showed, Dr. Yao tended to present himself as an authority. He spoke about the countryside, whether it was in the literary texts or not, in a fixed and final form, and left little space for conservation or debate. Student teachers were put in the position of passively listening (and silently accepting).

Although Dr. Yao said nothing about teaching in rural contexts during his sessions, there was one incident that showed his attitude toward this. He concluded his thoughts on Shen's lesson with

> Your basic skills (in teaching) are good, but I think you gave the lesson in an old fashion. … It is unacceptable that you consider this lesson as the second one on

[195] Current rural people and their life were unmentioned in their supervision. Only when telling stories about his family, Mr. Ma stated that his father, "a loyal CCP cadre," annually gave relief to country relatives.

'Village Opera' ... You must comb through a text within a lesson... (personal communication, Nov. 17, 2007)

Immediately after Shen walked back to her seat, as she, Dr. Yao, and I were sitting close to each other, we had the following conversation:

Dr. Yao: Did you student teach in a town(ship) middle school?
Wu: Really?
Shen: Yes.
Dr. Yao: The way you gave the lesson was out of date. The lesson was given in a too old fashion. This is how a lesson is given at a township school.
Wu: Did you plan (the lesson) by yourself or pulled it from a website?
Dr. Yao: (Simultaneously) It is just the popular way to give a lesson in town(ship) middle schools.
Wu: Really?
Dr. Yao: I suspect.
Shen: I observed that (my mentor) teacher gave this lesson.
Dr. Yao: (cut in) Yes! It is like what I said.
Shen: I based on her thought to ...
Dr. Yao: (cut in) especially when student teaching in a town(ship) middle school. It (this way of teaching) is very popular in some schools.
Wu: How can you tell this at first sight?
Dr. Yao: ...I can tell at first sight. (You) cannot find a job in the city (*zai chengli*) based on a lesson like this. You actually have the potential. It is such a pity (*tai kexi le*)! (Personal communication, Nov. 17, 2007)

Dr. Yao made the direct association between how Shen taught the lesson and where she practiced teaching. It was assumed that "out-of-date" pedagogies exist in rural schools but not in urban ones. Based on one lesson, he felt sorry for Shen about her gloomy future, that is, not being able to teach in a city school. Behind the sympathy was the perception that every student teacher should first consider teaching in the urban area, and it is unfortunate or embarrassing for a person to teach in a rural school. In addition, Dr. Yao was so eager to claim he was right that he did not show any concern about Shen's justification and feelings.

To summarize, the countryside had a very limited representation in the supervision of these lessons. Some supervisors spoke of the countryside when commenting on a lesson focusing on a rural-themed reading. In most of the related cases, their statement reflected the countryside in the literary text but not in real life. They presented an authentic understanding of the text and a contextualized notion of the countryside described in the text. Meanwhile, concentrating on their own perspective, they did not seem aware of the existence of multiple (and conflicting) views of a text in different sources and therefore missed the opportunity to advise student teachers on how to deal with situations like this.

Besides curriculum and materials, students and contexts of teaching were another two substantive dimensions of supervisory discourses (Zeichner & Liston, 1985). In terms of the former, the observed supervisors tended to present students as a single group, and paid no special attention to students with rural backgrounds. About contexts of teaching, as I have presented in the previous section, it was mentioned in a general sense. Teaching in rural contexts was little discussed in their supervision.

Of the college supervisors, Dr. Yao was the only one who employed his rural knowledge to supervise student teachers. However, taking an authoritative approach, he did not present any attempt to engage student teachers in any conversation about the countryside. Meanwhile, a small incident that occurred during his session indicated that he devalued the practice of rural schools and the idea of teaching in rural contexts.

College Supervision in the Field

In the above I wrote about lessons of three types. As I have indicated, these lessons and corresponding comments were given either prior to or after student teaching. How was the college supervision provided in the field? How was the countryside considered in field supervision? In this section I draw upon both my observations and my interview data to explore these questions.

In what follows I present two cases of college supervision in the field. One is about Mr. Mao and the other has to do with Dr. Yao. Both of them were honored as "Excellent Guidance Teacher" by the College for their supervision of student teaching in fall 2007.

When I arrived at East Teachers College, a group of student leaders were already teaching at East Biology and Engineering School – a vocational high school on the outskirt of East City. Mr. Mao was the college faculty assigned to supervise their teaching practice. On the September 14th, I visited the school with him and observed a fourth-period lesson that Wen gave to a class of freshmen. It took Mr. Mao and me about 30 minutes to motorcycle from East Teachers College to East Biology and Engineering School. Although called "the outskirt of East City," this area was quite country-like. I saw plenty of farming land and houses around. The school looked distinct from the surroundings due to its buildings of five floors or so.

The classroom we visited was on the first floor. There were about 50 students in the classroom, and only about three were female. Most of these students came from villages and were enrolled in mechanical engineering. The desks and chairs were arranged in rows. Besides Mr. Mao and me, Mei – another student teacher at the school – observed the lesson.

The lesson Wen gave was on the reading "Qian Xuesen: the Pride of the Chinese" (*Qian Xuesen: zhongguo ren de jiaoao*). Having taught this class for a week, Wen appeared composed. This lesson was distinctive in several ways. First, she was literally teaching students the reading. No connections between the text and student background were made. Second, she kept asking students to take notes by using sentences like "Write it (a new term) down! What if it shows up in an exam? ... Do not say that you don't know (how to write it) when you are taking an exam." This delivered the message that the purpose of learning Chinese was to pass exams, and the responsibility of a student was to take notes and memorize information. Third, she talked in a hard and harsh manner, which sounded as if she was constantly berating students.

After the class was over, Mr. Mao talked to (Wen, Mei, and) me outside of the classroom for several minutes. Meanwhile, some students were still around, curiously looking at us. In this context, Mr. Mao stated that Wen did a decent job in classroom management and attributed this to "the effect of a beautiful woman" (personal communication, Sept. 14, 2007). By "the effect of a beautiful woman," he meant Wen was good-looking and could attract the attention of students. He went further to say that "Students admitted to vocational schools were the worst in middle schools. They don't know how to learn. ...The main way to manage students here is to suppress (*ya*)" (personal communication, Sept. 14, 2007). "You are right" (personal communication, Sept. 14, 2007), Wen and Mei chimed in.

Noting that Mr. Mao discussed nothing about the lesson with Wen and Mei, after saying goodbye to them I asked: "Will you debrief the lesson with Wen another time?"

He responded: "It is not necessary. Teaching in schools like this is casual (*suiyi de*). ...In schools like this, academic courses are not valued. Students don't want to learn" (personal communication, Sept. 14, 2007).

Before leaving the campus, Mr. Mao gave me a brief tour. In front of the teacher's office building, I asked if he wanted to go inside and meet the collaborating teachers of these student teachers. Again, he said that "It is not necessary. They are all wriggling out (of teaching) (*hunhun de*). They don't prepare lessons and just go to a classroom with a textbook" (personal communication, Sept. 14, 2007).

As I have mentioned in a previous chapter, Mr. Mao was also the college supervisor of a group of student teachers placed in Spring County. Three of my interview participants (Chen, Zhong, and Jing) came from this group, but none spoke of his supervision during the interviews. They automatically interpreted my expression of "guidance teacher" as their collaborating teacher. With my specification, they all argued that their encounters with Mr. Mao were minimal. Chen and Zhong only acknowledged that it was Mr. Mao who sent them to Spring County High School. As for Jing, during her six-week student teaching at Spring County Middle School, Mr. Mao visited her once – in the late afternoon of the October 23rd.[196] The visit lasted "two minutes," during which he "had polite greetings and asked how my student teaching was going" (Jing, personal communication, Dec. 5, 2007). After two minutes' general talk with Jing and her collaborating teacher, he left for the Dean's Office and had a word with the Dean on a student teaching-unrelated matter. He "did not come back later on. That was it" (Jing, personal communication, Dec. 5, 2007).

[196] According to Jing, he arrived looking for me.

In the case of Dr. Yao, although asking his student teachers at East Middle School to text him if they had any lessons that they wanted him to observe, he ended up only observing a lesson given by Meng.[197] According to Meng, the reason that Dr. Yao went to observe her lesson was somewhat casual. One day on the campus of East Middle School, he ran into Meng and her collaborating teacher Xu. Informed by Ms. Xu that Meng would give a lesson on "A Look Back in my Zodiac Year" the next day and noting that Ms. Xu was "the pride of East Teachers College" (Meng, personal communication, Dec. 5, 2007), Dr. Yao decided to observe this lesson.

Although recommended by Dr. Yao as an "Excellent Student Teacher" to the department later[198], Meng disliked his post-observation feedback. "I was criticized heavily. I did not cry at the time, but I knew that I was in low spirits" (Meng, personal communication, Dec. 5, 2007). Meng also remembered that he used the contemptuous term "*cainiao*" ("rookie" or literally "horrible person")[199] (personal communication, Dec. 5, 2007) to address her.

The main criticism by Dr. Yao concerned the important teaching point of this lesson. He disliked the fact that Meng set combing out the series of activities that the author had around the Spring Festival as the main teaching point. In his view, the significance should be attached to how the author made the transition from describing one thing to another, a point unmentioned in both the textbook and the teaching reference. Again, he adopted an

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[197] While teaching at East Teachers College, Dr. Yao was doing his post-doctoral work at a widely-known university.

[198] Meng believed that Dr. Yao did so "for the face of my mentor teacher" (personal communication, Dec. 5, 2007).

[199] "*Cainiao*" is a popular term on the internet. It originates from Taiwan and can be literally translated as "horrible person."

authoritative style, which hindered Meng from dialoguing with him on this matter. Meanwhile, Meng was not convinced by his point of view. "I was confused about what I should teach if I didn't teach the text. I didn't talk back. I didn't dare to talk back to a master figure (*dashiji de renwu*)" (Meng, personal communication, Dec 5, 2007).[200]

Both the difference and the similarity can be recognized in terms of the context in which Mr. Mao and Dr. Yao carried out the work of college supervision. It was obvious that the schools they visited were different. For Mr. Mao, they were a secondary vocational school and two county schools. Dr. Yao was appointed as the college supervisor of the so-called best middle school in the region of East. The similarity rested in the fact that the schools they went to were those where the program collectively placed student teachers. These schools were either close to the College or "exemplary" city/county schools. No college supervisors were arranged or truly visited those schools which student teachers individually chose for their teaching practice and half of which were located in a rural setting.

Meanwhile, the energy and commitment that Mr. Mao and Dr. Yao showed in field instruction was low, which did not reflect their title of "Excellent Guidance Teacher" at all. They made very few school visits. The student teachers they gave attention to were few. The support they provided with one or several "lucky" student teachers was extremely limited, if not counterproductive. They had little communication with the host school (including the student teacher's collaborating teacher) as well. On the way back

[200] Although addressing Dr. Yao as "a master figure," Meng told me an anecdote about how the teacher at East Middle School saw him. Soon after he left the teacher's office, one of the teachers asked Meng: "Why was he here? I know him. He was a year ahead of me at East Teachers College." After Meng explained that Dr. Yao was an associate professor in secondary Chinese teaching method and he came here to "evaluate my lesson" (*pingke*), the teacher responded: "How much can he understand secondary school teaching?"

from the vocational school, Mr. Mao even announced that "Being a college supervisor is not to guide student teachers but to complete the task" (personal communication, Sept. 14, 2007). The standard he set to "complete the task" was notably undemanding. He did not seem to care about the quality of his school visit. What mattered was the fact that he paid the visit.

Mr. Mao seemed to act in accordance with the status of the host school. He showed respect for the teaching practices of the teachers at the two model county schools and trusted their ability to mentor student teachers. On this basis he took a non-participating stance. During his one or two brief visits, he did not visit any classrooms. What he did was to greet the student teachers and their collaborating teachers on behalf of the college.

At East Biology and Engineering School, Mr. Mao acted differently, or to be precise, in a highly unprofessional manner. In Wen's lesson the banking concept of education (Freire, 2003) was prominent. She understood students as "containers" and "receptacles" to be "filled" for the purpose of exams and treated them in a dehumanizing fashion. Mr. Mao did not point out the problem, but praised her on an unprofessional basis. He also looked down upon the teachers at the school and disrespected the students, of which the majority were rural in origin. His reactions were primarily based on the stereotypical view that vocational schools were inferior to regular academic ones.

As seen from Dr. Yao's behavior at East Middle School, he once more interpreted his role of college supervisor as an authoritative critic of Chinese teaching. At the post-observation meeting, he seemed to care too much about his own perspective and disregarded the understandings and feelings of the student teacher. The thought of a

college supervisor as facilitator or co-teacher, which tended to treat the student teacher more humanely, did not seem to occur to him.

Going beyond the two cases, the interview data suggest that the college supervision of student teachers in the field was basically non-existent. For example, Meng voiced that "I felt that we were under foster care (*fangyang*) during the period of student teaching. Few (college instructors) would go and see us. Even if they paid us a visit, they did it in a formalistic manner, I think" (personal communication, Dec. 5, 2007). Jing shared the same opinion:

> Most of the student teachers believe that it is just formalistic for the college to send guidance teachers. They don't do anything real. It is already nice if they are conscientious enough to pay you a visit, show some care, and waffle some words. (Personal communication, Dec. 5, 2007)

Through the college's practice of preferring city (and county) schools for student teacher placements and assigning supervisors to schools of this type, some students sensed the politics of place. For example, Meng was fully aware that

> Why did college instructors, like Dr. Yao, go and observe lessons at East Middle School and the like? Why didn't they go and observe a lesson at the school where Jiang practiced teaching? They didn't even contact Jiang's host school … If you go home and find a school for student teaching by yourself, the college will basically do nothing for you. When time comes, you need to turn in the materials, such as the evaluation from the collaborating teacher and your lesson observation notes. That is that. That is basically that. (Personal communication, Dec. 5, 2007)

Responding to Jiang's case mentioned above, I remember that Mr. Mao gave me a call and asked about my data collection on the night after he paid the visit to Jing. I was at Phoenix Middle School, observing Jiang's student teaching. I reported Jiang's status to him, but he did not seem to care. He stated that Spring County High School was under

the pressure to manage student teachers for its premium on teaching quality. The good news was that the student teachers had started giving lessons. After I informed him that Jiang had taught about 10 lessons, he responded: "Town (ship) schools are certainly different (in treating student teachers). Student teachers are what teachers at town(ship) schools wish for" (personal communication, Oct. 23, 2007). By this he meant that town(ship) schoolteachers cared little about teaching and mentoring but looked forward to having student teachers substitute for them. Without consulting those rural school student teachers, Mr. Mao took it for granted that rural school teachers are lazy and irresponsible.

In a nutshell, during the period of student teaching the college supervisors played a very restricted role. As a whole, they stayed out of touch with student teachers and their host schools. They appeared to lack the understanding of college supervision as professional practice and ill prepared in both concepts and skills to mentor student teachers. They were also likely to treat teachers and students at a school narrowly based on the social standing of the school. Meanwhile, the College placed few student teachers collectively into rural schools and provided those who took their teaching practice individually with no college supervisors. Rural schools were excluded from student teaching and accordingly college supervision as a result of the notion of student teaching as learning from the master and the devalued image/status of rural school(teacher)s.

Conclusion

In this chapter I have focused on the support that the Program offered around student teaching to identify the discourse(s) of college supervision and the representation of the

countryside. I have done this by dividing student teaching into three stages (before, during, and after) and considering both the college and the host school as the place where supervision was carried out. I have also studied the related college and department policies to see their assumptions about (teaching and) college supervisors and possible influences on practice.

On the college campus, supervision took place around lessons of three types. That is, supervised lesson rehearsal and lesson reporting/talking were respectively arranged before student teachers left for the field and after they were back from the field. On the related evaluation forms, certain understandings of teaching and the role of college supervisors were favored. The form employed to evaluate "trial lessons" and "report lessons" highlighted the concept of teaching as telling, which tended to assume the ignorant and passive position of students (and a single way to teach). Within this form and the form used to evaluate "talk lessons," the notion of teaching as solo performance was embedded. Associated with this was the neglect of the interactive and complex nature of teaching. Further, the evaluative role of college supervisors was prescribed on both forms.

Seeing no substantial differences between the pre- and post- student teaching lessons, I assembled them to analyze their distinctive features. I found that student teachers taught Chinese mechanically around the mandated curriculum (represented by the textbook, the teaching reference, and the curriculum standard) and other existing curriculum materials. Demonstrating little effort to develop their own curriculum or form/articulate their

authentic understanding of the readings in the textbook, they tended to view teaching as technical work, that is, delivering the official (and existing) knowledge to students.

In accord with the general patterns identified above, in these lessons student teachers were likely to mention the countryside only when the focal reading was country-themed (and, in one case, when the author came from the countryside). In the related lessons, following an impersonal approach, they portrayed the countryside as a world that authors wrote about (or originated from) but existed apart from themselves. If not avoiding the use of the countryside, student teachers addressed it in a detached manner. They did not draw on any real-life experience with the countryside to understand the text. No statements about the countryside were made in their own words either.

About the supervision provided around these lessons, although with different attitudes and emphases, the college instructors overall preferred a direct and authoritative style and offered little space for dialogue with student teachers. They all placed their considerable weight behind the technical aspects of teaching, such as PowerPoint making and blackboard writing. In terms of curriculum and materials in general, these college instructors neglected to teach student teachers how to make use of them with an open and critical mind. They also tended to describe the unpleasant reality of teaching without analysis or proposal for change. Meanwhile, seeing the host school as a place separate from the college to prepare future teachers, they implied a tendency to stay away from student teachers' learning in the field.

In the supervision of a college instructor, the term of the countryside usually appeared when the lesson was on a rural-themed text. That is, like student teachers, the

college instructors, in most cases, perceived the countryside as a literary presence. They were different from student teachers in the sense of having their own understanding of the text and making sense of the countryside represented in a reading in a contextualized manner. In the meantime, they missed the opportunity to teach student teachers how to face multiple and conflicting interpretations of a text. In their supervision, no particular attention was given to students with different backgrounds and teaching in various contexts. A small incident that happened in Dr. Yao's session suggested he looked down upon practices of rural schools and the idea of teaching in a rural school.

Shifting from the college to the host school, my research data show that the presence of college supervision in the field was scarce, which tallied with the stance the college instructors hinted at when supervising the lessons of three types. In their very few appearances, the college supervisors were likely to act unprofessionally, superficially, or self-importantly, depending on the social status of the school. Meanwhile, as the student teaching plan of the college suggested, no college instructors contacted the schools that accepted individual student teachers. Few rural schools, if not none, were reached by the college for purposes of student teaching.

To conclude, my observation and interview data suggest that the college instructors had minimal involvement in student teachers' practice in the field. The reasons for this were numerous, but this can be in part explained by their understanding of the host school as a place separate from the college to educate future teachers, and student teaching as a traditional apprenticeship. In their supervision of the pre- and post- student teaching lessons, the college instructors highlighted the technical-instrumental discourse, and

tended to be direct and prescriptive in style. Associated with these two characteristics was the weak presence of a humanizing and empowering pedagogy, which overall matched the tone that the two evaluation forms defined around teaching and college supervision.

About the representation of the countryside, it was clear that student teachers in rural schools were excluded from consideration for college supervision. Embedded within the practice was the college (instructors)' lack of understanding of teaching as situated practice, indifference to rural education, and/or disrespect for teachers in rural schools. The two presented cases show that in the field the college supervisor either lacked respect for students with rural backgrounds or presented rural life as the one in the textbook. In their supervision of those lessons, some college instructors talked about the countryside in the textbook. But few of them paid attention to the one in real life, including rural students and teaching in rural contexts.

After reading this chapter, you may wonder: What does it mean to learn to teach in rural contexts? How do rural school student teachers conceptualize and respond to the contexts? In the following two chapters I will present two case studies to explore these questions.

CHAPTER 10

LEARNING TO TEACH IN A RURAL CONTEXT: JING'S CASE

Introduction

Nowadays it is widely accepted that field experience is "indispensable" (the College's Student Teaching Lead Group, 2007) to student teachers in professional growth, as East Teachers College articulates in the plan for student teaching. This does not mean that experience is inherently beneficial (Zeichner, 1980) or educative (Johnston, 1994; Zeichner, 1990). To know the nature and quality of the experience, one needs to see "what takes places during the experience itself" (Tabacbnick & Zeichner, 1985, p. 22; Zeichner, 1980, p. 46).

In the field a number of sources may exist to influence the pre-service teacher (Friebus, 1977). Besides the mentor teacher and the college supervisor, other teachers at site, students, family and relatives, peers, and the like may serve as significant others for the student teacher. Learning opportunities may occur at different locations, such as the classroom, the office, and the conference room. It is necessary for a study to take an ecological perspective (Zeichner, 1884) and to consider the possible impact of various factors on field experience.

School teachers go through a series of stages to socialize themselves into the profession. Student teaching is a significant one (Hoy & Woolfolk, 1990). In terms of substance of socialization, Kelchtermans and Ballet (2002) have reminded us that most

research has focused on issues around classroom teaching and neglected the micro-politics of the school, that is, "the strategies and tactics used by individuals and groups in an organization to further their interests" (p. 107). Explicit attention needs to be given to the latter and their meaning for and influence on the student teacher's thinking and action.

Student teachers may respond to school practices differently in the field. Numerous studies (see e.g., Goodman, 1988; Zeichner & Gore, 1990) have reported that student teachers tend to "fit into" the practices identified in their field placements and not to challenge them or to work for change. There are also studies (e.g., Goodman, 1988) showing that some student teachers are capable of thinking critically and acting strategically for change. Therefore, student teachers are able to control the direction of their socialization. It is inadequate to take a "social puppet" (Zeichner, 1980, p. 52) view of teacher socialization. To specify the socialization role of student teaching, we need to attend to "the complex set of interactions that exist among program features, dimensions of school contexts and individual classrooms as setting for learning to teach and the characteristics and dispositions that individual students bring to the experience" (Zeichner & Gore, 1990, p. 20).

With regard to program features, both the general climate of the university or college and the character of academic courses (in general education, specialization, and teacher preparation) are suggested to be taken into account (Zeichner & Gore, 1990). Concerning the Program under this study, as seen from the announcement about the 2007 *Summer Social Practice*, East Teachers College was politically conservative and self-interested in engaging in rural development. A comprehensive look at the program's

formal curricula in Chapter 3 shows that they tended to reinforce current power relations and place-based inequalities even though contradictory discourses of the countryside were presented.

In terms of teacher preparation, echoing what Segall (2002) argues in *Disturbing Practice*, a particular version was highlighted in the program studied here. The faculty members seemed to have, explicitly or implicitly, stressed the message of "liberal individualism" (Dale, 1977; cited in Zeichner & Gore, 1990, p. 19) to student teachers. A traditional view of learning to teach was prevalent in the arrangements for student teaching. Field instruction from the college was basically non-existent. In the limited support provided by the program on the college campus, the "how" aspects of teaching stood out. Acquiescence and conformity seemed to be encouraged in the exclusion of considering "why" (Zeichner & Tabacbnick, 1981) and the overall authoritative tone that the college supervisors took.

Within these program contexts, how and what did individual student teachers learn in rural contexts? To be specific, how were rural contexts embodied in the host school? How did the student teacher respond to the contexts and related school practices? What did (not) the student teacher learn from the field and what might account for the result? Acknowledging that few studies have been published in Chinese on this topic, in this chapter I focus on Jing to explore these questions.

Research Data and Collection

As mentioned in Chapter 2, the fact Jing was studying in the Program was the main reason I decided to explore the curricula of this program. Her existence made my entry to the program feasible. On the College campus, Jing was, indeed, the person I constantly interacted with. Nevertheless, I have to admit that I first considered her only as a back-up participant for studying the student teaching experience.

I had known long before I entered East Teachers College that Jing would student teach in Spring County Middle School. As pointed out in Chapter 7, she chose this particular school due to a family connection, that is, Mr. Guan, the school principal, was her uncle on the father's side. The decision was made for purposes of both future employment and learning to teach. For her parents, it was more about employment. They were well aware that "it will be VERY VERY difficult to transfer from a township school to a city school" (personal communication, Dec. 4, 2007) and "trouble-saving to go and directly teach in a city school by spending 40,000-50,000 Yuan in networking' (personal communication, Sept. 12, 2007).

Given that most village schools in Jiangsu were consolidated to town(ship) schools and Northern Jiangsu was the least economically developed part of Jiangsu, my initial plan was to observe student teaching in a town(ship) school of Northern Jiangsu. However, as I have shown in Chapter 7, not many student teachers chose to truly practice teach in this context. I was not able to find Jiang, a student teacher who fit this category, until late September. When keeping searching for the "ideal" student teacher, I accompanied Jiang to Spring County Middle School.

In other words, Jing was chosen for convenience. I did experience the convenience of collecting data on her student teaching. I was familiar with Jing's educational and other background information. Since I was a long-time acquaintance of Jing's family and the family had a pretty close relationship with the principal, I had a very easy entry to the school. During my two-week stay at the school, I had the freedom to observe whatever Jing was doing. She also shared her thoughts with me immediately. As you shall see, the teachers, the students, and Jing seemed relaxed in front of me. My presence did not affect the way they acted and spoke – at least not in a noticeable manner.

I conducted a two-hour interview with Jing around student teaching in an empty classroom of East Teachers College in early December. Although having an interview protocol on hand, both of us allowed spontaneous conversations to flow. We were both laid-back over a cup of bubble tea. The interview was audio-taped and I paid Jing to do the transcription. I was also able to make a copy of all the student teaching materials before she submitted them to the program. These materials include school investigation report, student teaching self-summary, lesson plans, *Classroom Observation Notebook*, and *Head Teacher Work Notebook.*

I decided to write about Jing's field experiences out of the consideration of the unique position of county schools. As described in Chapter 7, while Jing's family defined Spring County Middle School as a city/urban school, the college faculty members were hesitant to say so in some cases. It seemed worth exploring the actual situation of a county school. Even if Spring County Middle School was an urban school, it might be meaningful to study how the countryside was (not) represented there.

Before entering Spring County Middle School, both Jing and her parents described students of this school as those from urban "families with fame and prestige" and teachers as "all experienced and capable" (personal communication, Dec. 4, 2007). However, my observation at Spring County Middle School suggested that more rural contexts were embedded within this school than the family had expected, a point I shall develop in the next section.

This chapter is written based on three data sources: observation notes, interview transcripts, and artifacts. Before going to a detailed description and interpretation of Jing's field experiences, I want to point out the limitation of the data, as well as the organization and focus of this chapter. I only stayed with Jing at Spring County Middle School for two weeks, during which she did not plan or give any lessons. I do not know exactly how she worked with the mentor teacher or taught in classroom. The information Jing provided in this regard may not quite capture what happened in the field. Therefore, the emphasis is placed on how she understood the support of the mentor teacher and her own teaching practices.

When I was with Jing, she was primarily observing and making sense of the various practices in the community. As we shall see, these practices were not limited to classroom teaching. Most of them concerned school culture and its politics, including the daily life of students and teachers, student-teacher and parent-teacher interaction, testing culture, and teacher collaboration. On each topic, I cover what I (and Jing) observed, what she told me in the field, what she wrote into the student teaching materials, and what she said in the interview, besides my own interpretation.

Background to Jing's Student Teaching

Introducing Jing

As described in Chapter 5 and 6, Jing had her early childhood at a village of Spring County, and the family settled down in Xi Town after she entered the township elementary school. Jing's father owned a Volkswagen car and used it to provide driving service for local business people and officials. Her mother was an experienced quality inspector at the township cotton purchase company. In this town both were considered as well paid for their jobs.

Jing's parents invested heavily in her education. In Jing's middle and high years, they spent a lot of energy and money for her to get a "better" education.[201] Since she got admitted to the Program at East Teachers College[202], they had been thinking about her employment and doing their best to pave the way. Jing understood how much her parents had done for her and was always grateful. At the same time, she felt sorry that she could not perform better in exams as payback.

Jing was unhappy with her own school experience. Especially in middle and high schools, teachers taught to exams and always held themselves aloof. They had few interactions with students but buried students in cramming and drilling for exams. When preparing for the trial lesson on "Dragon Boat Festival," she told me that "Because of my

[201] They often visited school to know Jing's academic performance. Sometimes they went to school with gifts or red envelopes for teachers' particular attention on her. During spring and summer breaks if possible they would arrange tutors for her. During her senior year in high school, in order to provide a separate and quiet environment for her to cram for the NCEE they rent a room close to campus. That year her mother spent most of the time cooking and cleaning for her. For Jing to enter a decent high school and then college, they paid a decent amount of money as sponsorship fee as well.

[202] Jing stuck to her dream of becoming a teacher, even though her dad preferred to have her choose a major from which she could earn more in the future.

own educational experience, I value an equal teacher-student relationship and interactions with students" (personal communication, Sept. 8, 2007).

When giving the trial lesson the next day, Jing looked relaxed. However, she implemented the lesson that lasted 20 minutes or so by focusing on fragmented facts and following the traditional question-and-answer format. She posed the group a good number of questions based on the points mentioned in the teaching guide and solicited "standard answers" from them. On the spot Mr. Wang, the assigned supervisor, praised her for the relaxed voice and provided no suggestions for further improvement. Jing was pleased with the lesson and didn't come up with any points for reflection either.

In Jing's account, the college instructors she had had did not care about the teacher-student interaction either. My observations at East Teachers College provided some evidence in support of her statement. For example, in the afternoon of the September 6th, I accompanied her to the *Introduction to Linguistics* course. It was surprising to find that the interaction between the instructor Ms. Kong and the students was practically non-existent. Ms. Kong was reading her lecture notes.[203] Sometimes she repeated her points with the assumption that the class was taking notes. Many students felt bored and put their head down on the desk.

I whispered to ask Jing about her thoughts on Ms. Kong's teaching. She was quick to respond that "It is absolutely horrible. The teacher is talking and we are listening. Both

[203] The main points that Ms. Kong read included "Language was created in a society without class;" "It was produced together by all the people and is used by all the people;" "Language has no class nature and doesn't serve a particular class;" and "Everybody is equal in front of language" (personal communication, Sept. 6, 2007).

feel tired. How boring!" With my followed-up question "How would you teach?," she responded that

> I would ask a question and divide students into groups for a discussion. I would ask students to take the floor (*zhudong quan*) and let them talk. The education I have received is rigid (*shiban*), and I will not let my students have the same one. (Personal communication, Sept. 6, 2007)

Before Jing was dismissed for student teaching, she and I were wandering on the campus of East Teachers College. I saw a half-body statue of Xingzhi Tao – a phenomenal Chinese scholar and activist in rural (teacher) education for social change and democracy in the 1920s and 1930s.[204] It was also not unusual to find his well-known remarks on the walls of the classrooms. When I asked about her familiarity with this person, Jing gave a firm "No" answer. After I briefly introduced and showed my respect for his work, she expressed that "I understand you and support (your work in rural education). But this does not mean that I need to go in for rural education" (personal communication, Sept. 10, 2007).

Some complexity was presented in Jing's background luggage. The high involvement of parents in her education and employment might enable Jing to focus on self interest and to take a conservative or indifferent stance toward the practices of the host school and the possible rural contexts. It might also direct her attention to parental involvement in the field. Associated with her unpleasant educational experience, Jing had the potential for resistance and change. She placed the greatest importance on the understanding of and interaction with students. She paid attention to instruction but lacked the repertoire of strategies or ability to put them into use. I observed little positive

[204] Tao's main ideas about rural (teacher) education are introduced in Chapter 1.

impact of the college course work on her teaching rehearsal. She did not seem to have any concerns about subject matter either.

Entering Spring County Middle School

Spring County Middle School, re-opened in 2000, was located in the downtown area of Spring County. It was a branch of Spring County High School, reportedly, the best high school in the county. Different from other middle schools in the downtown area, Spring County Middle School recruited students county-wide and asked most of the families to pay extra 30, 000 Yuan for the three year education with the promise that they would all go to Spring County High School after graduation.[205]

In the early morning of the September 17th, putting their work aside, Jing's parents drove her to Spring County Middle School. They stayed there for most of the day to help Jing. Half of the time was spent waiting for the school to arrange the accommodation. While waiting, they kept exhorting Jing to be "industrious" and "smooth and slick" (personal communication, Sept, 17, 2007) and win the favor of the teachers, as well as being "assertive. Never say something ambiguous to students" (personal communication, Sept. 17, 2007). Jing nodded her head.

Finally, the service department offered Jing a lower bunk bed in a close-to-abandoned dorm close to the school entrance, at which two students were already privileged to use the other bunk for an after-lunch nap. The cement floor was bumpy and humid. Next to the dorm was the public restroom, stinky. While setting the bed for Jing,

[205] Of the more than 1000 students recruited every year, only the first 150 who topped the entrance exam did not need to provide the sponsorship fee.

her mom reminded her to be tolerant of the environment. (Later, Jing also only used the room for the after-lunch nap.)

For lunch Principal Guan arranged a feast in a separate room of the school cafeteria. Besides Jing's family, Principal Guan invited the grade leaders (*nianji zhuren*), the school dean of instruction (*jiaodao zhuren*), and a head of the county education bureau.[206] The purpose was to introduce Jing to all the "leaders" (*lingdao*) (personal communication, Sept. 17, 2007). Jing was quiet most of the time during lunch, and her parents were busy toasting the leaders and asking them to take good care of Jing.

With Principal Guan's arrangement Teacher Xiang became Jing's mentor teacher. Teacher Xiang was teaching Chinese to Classes 3 and 4 of the seventh grade, and serving as the head teacher of Class 3. She grew up in a village and held an associate's degree from East Teachers College. Before moving to Spring County Middle School, she taught at a township middle school for four years as both Chinese teacher and head teacher.

According to Teacher Xiang, during the first several years, due to the competition from other schools, the majority of students at Spring County Middle School were recruited from rich town(ship) and village families and most of teachers were transferred from town(ship) schools. These teachers were disparaged by colleagues at other schools in the downtown area as "country bumpkins" (*xiangba lao*) (personal communication, Sept. 18, 2007). This address had lost its notoriety thanks to the school's continuous outstanding performance on the High School Entrance Exam. Among the students admitted to Spring County Middle School in fall 2007, about half shared the rural

[206] The county education bureau organizes the search of teachers every year and has the final say in who to hire for each school.

background. Of these rural students, there were some whose parents were migrant workers in big cities, such as Shanghai and Suzhou.

In the seventh grade, there were 15 classes, all placed in a fourth-floor building. Each classroom was crowded with about 60 students. In Teacher Xiang's class – Class 3, half of the students were from either the town(ship) or the village and living on campus. 10 students reported that their parents were farmers (*nongmin*). Meanwhile, there were more than 10 students whose family had their own car, a message that Jing texted me with excitement the day after I arrived at Phoenix Middle School to observe Jiang's student teaching.

The head teachers of Classes 1-6 shared an office on a corner of the third floor. They were two Chinese teachers (Xiang and Shan), one math teacher (Dong), and three English teachers (including Sheng). Although the school dean of instruction proposed that Jing move a student desk from an empty fabricated building to an office on the fourth floor, Jing added a bench to Teacher Xiang's desk. She did not want to miss any learning opportunities that Teacher Xiang might offer her.

As suggested above, Jing entered Spring County Middle School in a grand manner. The interest of getting her a permanent job there pushed her parents to please the school administrators as much as they could. They expected Jing to do the same to the teachers she would encounter during student teaching. Because of this, Jing was likely to keep quiet about the undesirable practices of this school and even avoid deep or critical thinking about them. It was also possible that she would explore teaching in the field more from the perspective of the teachers than that of the students.

This school seemed to have more connections with the countryside than Jing and her family had thought. Her students were diverse in background. This also seemed to be the case with the teachers. How Jing would respond to them and their life and practices is a focus of the coming sections.

Learning a Custodial Approach to Student Control

On the "Bitter" Life of Students and Teachers

As mentioned previously, during my stay at Spring County Middle School what Jing primarily did was observing. She was required by Principal Guan to follow Teacher Xiang from the beginning to the end of a day. A day for Jing and Teacher Xiang (and any other head teachers at this school) was long. They got to school at 6am to supervise the early morning exercise and then the early morning reading of the boarding students. After another half-an-hour morning reading that included all the students, they went to the playground and oversaw the morning exercise. When the four morning lessons were over, they lined up the students to the cafeteria and watched the students to eat. They went to the dorm after lunch and pushed the students for a nap. After another four lessons in the afternoon, they, again, went back to the classroom and organized the students for dinner. At night, Jing and Teacher Xiang also monitored the students' two self-study sessions (one hour for each), and then followed them to the dorm to check if they would quiet down at 9:20pm.

As head teacher, Teacher Xiang and Jing needed to stay alert. What their students did would be reported on the "Daily Class Evaluation" blackboard of the first floor. A

minor misconduct, such as talking in a loud voice or running in the corridor, if caught by the teacher or the student who was on the checking duty, meant one or several points off the class grade. The head teacher would, accordingly, be fined. For example, one day while Teacher Xiang was at a teacher's meeting, Jing led Class 3 to the cafeteria for lunch. Although neither Jing nor I noticed that two students were chatting while waiting for food, the seventh grade leader took three points off Class 3.

That night after finding the loss of three points, Teacher Xiang took a stern tone with the class:

> A month has passed. I need to re-evaluate you. This month was for you to adjust to the life here. You should be used to. You need to accommodate yourself to the environment. There is no way that the environment will adjust to you! (Personal communication, Sept. 24, 2007)

Opening the composition books on Teacher Xiang's and Teacher Shan's desk, both Jing and I found that students' complaints about school life were plentiful. They described this type of life as military. Only several minutes were given for them to have a meal in the cafeteria. If feeling hesitant for a second about what to order, they would be reprimanded by service people. At night they needed to go to the bed within 20 minutes after they were released from the classroom. The school shower room was open for two short periods of time a week. When the time came, a lot of boarding students poured into the room. Some could not even finish washing their hair before the time was up or the water ran out. More importantly, there were teachers who watched everything they did. Few opportunities were provided for them to interact with peers. Classes were arranged in on Saturdays and Sunday mornings, and they had only half a day free every week. They could only visit home once a month for two days.

In the office, the head teachers were also complaining about the "bitter" life of both the students and themselves. One day, Teacher Shan sighed

> Nowadays students pull a long face (*choumei kulian*) and it looks as if they are bearing a deep grudge (*shenchou dahen*) against someone...(Jing: They are having a bitter life.) The principal doesn't even allow us to discuss (it). A teacher once said that the school was like the secret service agency in the Ming Dynasty (*mingchao donggongcang*) and was sharply rebuked by the principal. (Personal communication, Sept. 21, 2007)

The secret agency in the Ming Dynasty was notorious in history for their relentless cruelty in suppressing the slightest manifestation of liberal thought. What Teacher Shan said echoed Jing's reminder that Principal Guan was well-known in the county for "suppressing" ("*ya*") (personal communication, Sept. 18, 2007) students and teachers in school management. The excellent performance of students in various county- or city-organized examinations had reinforced his belief in this method.

Teacher Sheng followed Teacher Shan: "At this school, teachers and students only have 'required acts' (*guiding dongzuo*). (There are) no 'optional acts' (*zixuan dongzuo*), not to say 'creative acts' (*chuangxin dongzuo*)." "Each part of my body is resisting! My back is in pain...," Teacher Shan continued. Teacher Shan joined: "My legs cannot move after a day's work."

Another morning after entering the office, Teacher Sheng said that many students were yawning during the first lesson of the day and then asked "Do middle school students have to live such a bitter life" (personal communication, Sept. 24, 2007)? Teacher Xiang took the turn: "Students in my class even begged me: 'Teacher, please let

us chat for a second! We don't even a chance to chat with each other.'' Teacher Sheng went on:

> Students are right. They are not allowed to talk when having a meal and in the dorm. Where can they find the time to talk? ... But the State wants students to study bitterly (*kuxue*) too. This way the society will be stable and easy to manage. (Personal communication, Sept. 24, 2007)

Afterwards, Teacher Sheng shifted to admire the "easy" (*qingsong*) (personal communication, Sept. 24, 2007) life of teachers in Southern Jiangsu: They get to work at 8am and go home at 5pm, and activities (as opposed to tests) are usually in place for the fourth period in the afternoon. While suggesting that the MOE should send people "down" (personal communication, Sept. 4, 2007) to investigate and forbid overtime work of both students and teachers, Teacher Sheng stressed that "Northern Jiangsu is poor, and schooling is the only way for students to get out. Rural parents are particularly fond of this model of schooling (that is, to have teachers and students invest all their time and energy in)" (personal communication, Sept. 24, 2007).

Student control can be understood as a continuum with custodial at one end and humanistic at the other (see e.g., Hoy & Woolfolk, 1990). Apparently, the custodial model was adopted at Spring County Middle School. The school was concerned with the maintaining of order and took punitive measures to achieve this by equating good discipline with good teaching and good academic performance. Students were living in a prison-like environment constantly under the watchful eye of teachers and peers. While having sympathy for students and complaining about the principal, these head teachers appeared to have followed the custodial ideology in practice and accepted the hierarchical student-teacher relationship (for the sake of efficacy, face, and money). In the case of

Teacher Xiang, she did not attempt to understand the context in which the misbehavior happened but imposed the rule that everyone should conform to the surrounding environment.

Teacher Sheng's remarks about student life were particularly thought-provoking. He was insightful to point out the connection between schooling and social control. He explained the difference between Southern Jiangsu and Northern Jiangsu in schooling from an economic perspective. While attributing the rigid schooling in Northern Jiangsu to the preference of rural parents, he resorted to the State for solution. The agency of teachers was left out of consideration.

Jing was a committed student teacher in the sense of following the same work schedule as Teacher Xiang and making no complaints. When I was in the field, she sighed that nowadays middle school students were having an even more bitter life than she did. By contrast, in the interview she didn't bring up any topics on the life of teachers and students at Spring County Middle School.

In the student teaching materials submitted to the College, Jing described teachers as "the best of the county" (investigation report, 2007, p. 5; self-summary, 2007, p. 2). The daily schedule was repeatedly presented to praise their "sacrifice" (*fengxian*) (investigation report, 2007, p. 5; self-summary, 2007, p. 1, 2). Through these teachers who "work diligently, try hard, and never complain" (investigation report, 2007, p. 1), Jing announced that she learned "what is true sacrifice, what is true giving" (investigation report, 2007, p. 5; self-summary, 2007, p. 2), "what is selflessness, what is tolerance, and what is forgiveness" (self-report, 2007, p. 2). Apart from teachers, Jing characterized

students as "respectful, diligent, and hard-working with a strong sense of group honor" (investigation report, 2007, p. 5) and "lovely, innocent, and kind" (self-report, 2007, p. 2).

It looked as if Jing had taken the dreadful school life for granted and adjusted to internalize the de-humanistic approach to student management as a result of the field experience. In the related reports, she didn't provide any social or critical analysis of the school life but a superficial and distorted praise of both teachers and students from the single moral dimension. Teachers, in particular, were positioned stereotypically as " self-sacrificing, kind, overworked ... and holding an unlimited reservoir of patience" (Britzman, 2003, p. 28).

On Being "Tough" on Students

Although sympathizing with students' "bitter" life in the office, when with them Teacher Xiang did not reveal it. She held the belief that a "good" (head) teacher needed to be strict with students, especially at the beginning of a semester. In the context of Chinese teaching, for instance, after asking Class 4 to write down the names of "the eight great masters from Dang and Song Dynasty" from memory, seeing surprised faces and then hearing the whispering among the students, she harshly said

> Some of you seem to feel surprised. I have told you to memorize them! Now you are talking. Why didn't you read them in the morning reading? ...No sound! ...You are still talking!!! ....This shows that you don't take the initiative to learn enough, not to take study seriously enough, not...enough...not...enough. (Personal communication, Sept. 25, 2007)

When grading students' work, Teacher Xiang also specifically told Jing that

> You need to be tough (*hen*) on students at the beginning, even if you might need to smile to them a little bit later. Otherwise, they will be mischievous in class and affect the efficiency of a lesson. If you smile at them first, it will certainly not be useful, especially to those who are from the town(ship) schools. They are naughty. There are three students called "three swordsmen" in our class. They are not afraid of their parents, not to say us. They have their own ideas and don't want to be watched. If you are tough, they will know to behave well. (Personal communication, Sept. 24, 2007)

Teacher Xiang was trying to establish norms for behavior in classroom, but the way she approached it did not seem democratic or humanistic. In accordance with my earlier description in this section, Teacher Xiang emphasized efficiency and adopted an authoritarian approach (Hoy & Woolfolk, 1990) to student control by acting "tough." She tended to distrust students, especially those from the countryside, and to perceive them as people who must be controlled. She was also apt to take their misbehavior as personal affront and to address it in an unpleasant and angry manner. She, apparently, considered this way as the most effective way to make students "behave well."

The strategy Teacher Xiang employed to mentor Jing in this area was nothing but direct. She not only showed but told Jing how to be "tough" on students. In doing so, she took the risk of excluding Jing from considering other ways of establishing classroom norms and interacting with students. In fact, being "tough" left Jing with the deepest impression about her mentoring. In the interview Jing recalled that "The thing Teacher Xiang told me most is that if you are a teacher you need to be tough on students at the beginning. She said that you cannot smile at them. This is the most important thing" (personal communication, Dec. 4, 2007).

Due to her identity as a student teacher and the perception that the students were well-behaved, Jing did not practice the strategy of being "tough" in the field.[207] But it was hard to say that she would not implement this in the future as a "real" teacher. She appeared to be pushed toward the belief that a "good" teacher needs to be "tough." Being "tough" was a common practice of the teachers at Spring County Middle School, and Jing did not show a slight intent on challenging it or comparing it to her belief in student-teacher communication prior to the student teaching.

Learning to Distinguish between Rural and Urban Parents/Students

On Parents, Capital, and Teacher Responses

There was no doubt that parents of this school cared about education. In the morning of the September 18th, the sky was gray and thick. Before organizing the students for lunch, Teacher Xiang announced that a typhoon would pass through this county and school would be canceled for two days. It was required that their parents come to school and pick them up from the classroom by certain time that afternoon. All the parents came on time, no matter how far they lived away from the school or how busy they were. It appeared some hurried from either a construction site or a field.

Money was, in fact, a hot topic of conversation in the office. The head teachers often complained about their low income. According to the information that Jing received from her uncle and other teachers, the monthly income of a regular teacher at Spring County Middle School was over 3000 Yuan, that is, twice as much as that of those teachers at

[207] Jing visited the school and interacted with some students several months before the student teaching. From the visit she gained the impression that students at the school were well-mannered and easy to communicate with.

town(ship) schools. The head teacher would earn 10,000 Yuan more every year. Jing couldn't understand why these teachers were still unhappy with their income, but felt it inappropriate to ask.

The extra income did not come from the school but parents. Because of this, these head teachers cared about the economic status of parents. Often in the office they talked about how many parents in their class had recently "paid their respects," that is, sending them cash or/and inviting them to a big meal.[208] Every time Teacher Sheng, the head teacher of Class 4, would grumble to Teacher Xiang that "You will have much more oil-water (*youshui*) than me this year" and that

> (When visiting school,) the parents of Class 3 wear suit and tie and look decently-leveled (*you dangci*). More than three-fifths of my class are from the countryside. Their parents look as if they are just back from the cotton field. (Personal communication, Oct. 3, 2007)

or

> The rural parents sent their kids here and haven't made a call. They are picking cotton in the field. On the street you see them carrying a basket in the crook of their arm. When coming to school, they go to a random classroom and ask "Is our Nan (a nickname) in your class?" (Personal communication, Oct. 6, 2007)

At Spring County Middle School, Jing showed curiosity in teacher-parent relationship. She told me that the (head) teachers enjoyed making use of the connections and resources of parents. Teacher Sheng voiced his discontent that too many rural students were placed in Class 4, but did not mention that one parent (Mr. Bao) in Class 4

[208] My observation was that parents preferred coming to see the head teacher at night. Some of them set the time and the place of a meal with the head teacher and asked her/him to inform teachers of other core subjects. (The head teacher usually taught a core subject.) Others handed the head teacher a red envelope and asked her/him to give the rest to other teachers in core subjects. Usually more money was put in the envelope for the head teacher. Once, the principal even called on behalf of the parents of a student in Class 3 to invite Teacher Xiang and several other teachers for dinner.

was the head of a big township-located pesticide production company and had investment in real estate in the downtown area of the county. He had asked Mr. Bao to find him a good apartment and to sell it to him with a decent discount.

One day, over lunch Jing was informed by Qi – one of her neighbors who was studying in the eighth grade – that "At the beginning of a semester, when the head teacher asks us to provide information about our parents' occupations, some of us put down 'farmer' even though our parents are not" (personal communication, Sept. 21, 2007). The intention was to avoid the greedy thoughts and acts of the head teacher and other teachers, such as expecting parents to give gifts or invite them for feasts, and asking for other favors from parents. After knowing Teacher Sheng's case from another teacher, Jing commented that "It IS possible that those students whose parents are not farmers report that they are" (personal communication, Oct. 2, 2007)!

I observed some complexity in Teacher Xiang's treatment of students and their parents as well. On the one hand, she was friendly to each parent who visited school for whatever reason. On the other hand, Jing and I observed that she gave more chances for those students whose parents "paid their respects" to perform in class. For instance, in Class 4 she frequently asked Mr. Bao's son to answer questions and talked to him in a softer tone.

In the later interview, Jing mentioned that she was impressed by the frequent teacher-parent communication at Spring County Middle School. When I encouraged her to think about the conversations that the head teachers had around parents by citing one of Teacher Sheng's statements, she justified that "He is just straightforward... He does

not have problems with rural students. I feel he was just talking about the behavior of parents" (personal communication, Dec. 4, 2007). Afterwards, she switched to argue that teachers did not treat rural parents and urban ones differently. Her evidence was that these teachers were also criticizing some behavior of urban parents in the office.

According to a literature review done by Hanafin and Lynch (2002), parental involvement in schools can be "a multi-faceted and complex business" (p. 37) and in different situations parents may (be expected to) play different roles. In the context of Spring County Middle School, the dominant discourse of parental involvement appeared to be that parents entertain teachers with lavish meals and give them generous gifts ("*qingke songli*"). Teachers looked forward to materialized appreciation from individual parents for their professional work and requests for extra care about individual students. Embedded within the expectation might be the understanding that they were experts in teaching and did not need the involvement of parents in deciding what and how to teach students. In other words, teachers in general assumed a controlling position when interacting with parents. This supports Lasky's (2000) argument that teacher-parent interactions are "inextricably interconnected with elements of status and power" (p. 856).

"Social class influences the nature of parental involvement" (Hanafin & Lynch, 2002, p. 38). Teachers' perceptions of parents are also affected by social class (Crozier, 1997; cited in Lasky, 2000, p. 844). In the case of Spring County Middle School, as observed by Teacher Sheng, non-rural parents enjoyed higher socio-economic status and had a much better chance to visit school and network with teachers. Rural parents were unfamiliar with school environment and did not "pay their respects to" teachers. It was

obvious that Teacher Sheng favored the former and took advantage of them. He had a low opinion of rural parents in cultural capital, that is, their appearance, behavior, and language. Considering Teacher Sheng's argument that schooling in Northern Jiangsu was rigid because of rural parents, one may say that he was blaming rural parents for both lack of involvement and over-involvement (Nakagawa, 2000).

In terms of impact, as seen from the case of Teacher Xiang, the parental involvement mode highlighted at Spring County Middle School was "empowering the powerful" (Crozier, 1997). It might be also reinforcing teachers' desire for money and other types of capital. Qi's words suggested that some students were strategically responding to the unethical practices of teachers. The strategy, somewhat ironically, was to fake a "farmer" identify for their parents. It was assumed that no resources from rural parents could be made use of by teachers.

Jing's change of interest in parent-teacher interaction or relationship was intriguing. She appeared to experience a change in identity. She first positioned herself as an outsider who was eager to teach in this school and to understand the benefits of teachers there from different sources. Later on, she started seeing the parent-teacher interaction more as a teacher in this community. As a person who might benefit from this model of parental involvement in the future, she didn't seem to want to talk about the hidden politics or ethical issues. She didn't seem to have the tool for analysis this either.

In addition, Jing wrote about her observations of a working-class parent in the investigation report. She noted that Qian's father "was full of mud, simply dressed, short and small, and dark-skinned with a safety helmet on" (investigation report, 2007, p. 3)

when showing up to take Qian home for a monthly break. "He is obviously a construction worker and hurried from a construction site," Jing wrote. Another time he walked in to hand Qian some money (as living expenses). Jing described that after he left she saw tears in Qian's eyes. She interpreted the tears as Qian being "grateful" and "motivated" with the thought "I must try hard to study with labor and diligence, and pay the industrious parents back one day" by "standing out among others (*churen toudi*)" (investigation report, 2007, p. 3) in mind.

These observations, to some degree, added complexity to Jing's understanding of parents and their involvement. She was aware that the working-class parent was doing his best to support his child's education. Maybe with the memory of what her parents did for her coming back, she felt sympathetic to the parent and the student. She viewed the hardship of the parent as the enormous motivation for the student to "study with labor and diligence." Meanwhile, it was noticeable that she considered the value of schooling as instrumental, namely, helping the student achieve social mobility and improve the living condition of the family.

On Rural and Urban Students

Knowing my interest in rural education, in the office the rural-originated teachers volunteered their understanding of rural students with Jing and me. Teacher Xiang maintained that rural students were better at basic living skills (such as cleaning the floor and washing clothes) but much weaker in language expression (personal communication, Sept. 18, 2007). Few rural students would be selected for campus broadcasting. This had to with the fact that few extracurricular activities in this area were arranged in their

town(ship) elementary school. Despite the differences, urban and rural students would become the same. Teachers would teach them the same content and set "exactly the same requirement" (personal communication, Oct. 6, 2007) for them.

Although upset with the situation that he could not economically benefit much from rural students, Teacher Sheng admitted that in Class 4 the students who had performed well in the "weekly exam exercise" ("*zhouzhou lian*"), a subject I shall go to in the next section, were mostly those from the countryside (personal communication, Oct. 3, 2007). Also, he contended that there was not much difference among teachers in teaching. It was students who decided the "fate" (*minyun*) of teachers. If students were smart or/and from rich families, the class would rank high on the exam or/and the teacher would receive more "respects" from parents.

Teacher Dong held that rural students were "honest, polite, and easy to manage" (personal communication, Sept. 17, 2007). Further, rural students were good at mathematics, while urban students were knowledgeable and strong in speaking and writing. The majority of his students who had won various math competitions were from the countryside.

Paine (1990) divides (student) teachers' orientation toward student diversity into four categories: individual, categorical, contextual, and pedagogical. As described above, all the three teachers had a tendency to understand the difference of students categorically, that is, based on where they came from. In their statements, Teacher Sheng and Teacher Dong did not present much thinking about how rural students were constructed to be good at (math) exams or what criteria they did (not) use to say so. Teacher Xiang

recognized that the difference was socially constructed but did not seem to believe in differentiated instruction. On a positive note, they did not portray rural students in a completely negative light.

Jing self-reported that she "had a great many interactions" (personal communication, Dec. 4, 2007) with students at Spring County Middle School. She utilized three occasions – recesses, evening self-study sessions, and physical education sessions – to understand Class 3 as a student teacher learning about the work of head teacher. She knew that most of the students were admitted to this school with the sponsorship fee and therefore "from (economically) decent families." She also wrote in the *Head Teacher Work Notebook* that "Some students are from single-parent families, and there are some others whose parents live far away" (2007, p. 84).

According to Jing herself, she treated students as complete individuals when interacting with them. "I did not care about where (s)he was from, not at all" (personal communication, Dec. 4, 2007). She went further to illustrate that a student came from a village school but was performing well at Spring County Middle School. A girl was from the "down township" but "extremely hard-working, extremely smart, and extremely lovely" (personal communication, Dec. 4, 2007). A boy, whose father was a "regular farmer" "thin and simply dressed," was "active, brave, and smart" (2007, p. 4), Jing put in her investigation report.

As a student teacher in Chinese, Jing had the impression that Class 4 was "duller" (*chenmen*) (personal communication, Dec. 4, 2007) than Class 3. She attributed this to the fact that the proportion of rural students in Class 4 was higher and rural students were

generally shyer and quieter than urban students. But she sensed that the students overall were "easy to talk with" (personal communication, Dec. 4, 2007). After she took the initiative to talk with those quiet/rural students after class for several times, they were willing to respond to her questions in class. Cheered by the change, she wrote that "a teacher can change students" (2007, p. 2) in her student teaching self-summary.

As seen above, despite the self-claim Jing displayed both the individual and categorical orientation toward student difference. She acknowledged the group difference between rural and urban students on the one hand, and described students primarily based on individual qualities on the other. In fact, after Teacher Dong expressed his perception of rural and urban students, Jing added that "Rural students are plain and innocent (*laoshi bajiao*), and urban ones are lively and cheerful (*huopo*)" (personal communication, Sept. 17, 2007). Comparing this to what she stated in the later interview, one may also say that the field experience, to some degree, shook up her stereotypical understanding of rural students.

Jing's confidence in teaching seemed to be boosted by the behavioral change of quiet/rural students. Meanwhile, it needs to be pointed out that the statement "a teacher can change students" was not made based on a solid analysis and sounded simplistic and even native. The students Jing mentioned were either high-achievers or receptive to her initiatives. One may wonder how she would interpret and handle "difficult" cases at this specific school or another school in more diverse contexts. Another question worth asking is: How would she incorporate the background of rural students into teaching besides encouraging them to answer questions? I will address this in a later section.

Learning to Teach to the Test

As implied previously, students at Spring County Middle School were paper-and-pencil tested on core subjects every week. For the seventh graders, the core subjects were English, mathematics, and Chinese. Students of the entire grade – over 1000 students – would be ranked based on the score summed up from that of different subjects. Although the weekly exam was said to get students familiar with "formal" kinds of examinations (the monthly exam, the mid-term exam, the end-of-semester exam, and ultimately the high school entrance exam), the school seemed to make a big deal about it.

Outside the building of the seventh graders, there were red honor boards with golden words, reading "Words from the Number One Scholar (*zhuangyuan jiyu*)" (with a big photo of the student on), "the List of Students Who Excelled (*youxiuzhe*) in the Fifth-Week Exam," and "the List of Students Who Topped (*youshengzhe*) the Fifth-Week Exam." During the recesses they were surrounded by students. With this Teacher Xiang commented that the school was now more humane in the sense of not publicizing the scores and ranks of all the students. But for those who were placed at the bottom of the rank order, she would still inform them of the result.

In the afternoon of the October 3rd, in the fourth period Jing substituted for a teacher to supervise the weekly English exam in Class 8. She was surprised to see that half of the class was cheating ("*chao*"). In the extreme, throughout the period a girl was looking for answers from peers and learning materials at hand. Jing tried to stop her but the girl would not listen. After turning in the test, a student asked "Were you able to cheat

today?" "No. The teacher was standing by me," another student sighed. After hearing Jing's observation, Teacher Xiang remarked

> Students are tested every week and under great pressure. How can this lead to the benign development of students? The scores are ranked. If (the class) does poorly, the teachers will be criticized (by the school administrators). We will ask parents to (come to) school (for a conversation)...Classes 3 and 4 are Ok in testing atmosphere but are not well rated...These students who cheat in the exam do not listen carefully in class. (Personal communication, Oct. 3, 2007)

There was a tradition called "group planning" ("*jiti beike*") at Spring County Middle School. The nine Chinese teachers of the seventh grade met twice a week to discuss the unit plan that one of them drafted and other teaching issues. At both meetings that Jing and I audited in the week of the October 3rd, the teachers' attention on testing was intense. Besides the weekly exam, the teachers recommended handing out worksheets with items in the formats (such as multiple-choice questions in identifying the wrong punctuation mark, character, and explanation of a word) that were in "formal" examinations for students to practice. Seeing that Teacher Xiang listed a series of Lu Xun's works in the lesson plan for "Village Opera," Teacher Hou, the group leader, stated that several of them hadn't appeared in any "formal" exams for long and should be omitted in teaching.

Teacher Hou laid down some rules for scoring as well. All the decoding of words and terms should be graded in a way that strictly complied with the textbook. No characters were allowed to be missed or added. It was wrong for a student to put down the name of a character in a foreign literary piece different from that presented in the textbook even though the pronunciations were similar. Teacher Hou reasoned

> No matter what we say now (about how to grade), what is the most important is (how grading is done in) the High School Entrance Exam. Our teachers will not be

> the people who grade the exam. Those teachers who do the grading will NOT consider your answer that is slightly different from the textbook! (Personal communication, Oct. 3, 2007)

After both meetings, Jing stated that Spring County Middle School obviously took a test-centered approach to teaching. Because of the test-centered approach, the teaching of Chinese became so "ossified," which was "pathetic" (personal communication, Oct. 3, 2007). In the meantime, she maintained that there was nothing that teachers could do about this. This was just an institutional environment that beginning teachers needed to adjust to.

Jing's investigation report also covered the topic of testing. She wrote that the weekly exam was a "big feature" of Spring County Middle School.

> Through the weekly exam, teachers know the learning of students in time, and students can reflect too. Teachers send a reminder to those who perform unsteadily, and contact parents in time to discuss the recent situation of the kids if necessary. For those who perform poorly, teachers make use of after-school time and sometimes give up the only rest time – Sunday afternoon – to come to school and tutor them. (Investigation report, 2007, p. 2)

Jing also described that after each monthly exam, the school would organize all the teachers for analysis and self-reflection, which was carried out based on a statistical table in which the average score, the percentage of students who excelled (*youxiulu*), and the percentage of students who passed (*jigelu*) of each class in each core subject are presented. Besides the school-level meeting for teachers, both teachers and students were asked to self-reflect through grade-level student gathering, subject teaching research group meeting, head teacher group meeting, and class-wide meeting. Jing described this to illuminate that "The school has a sound administration system" (investigation report, 2007, p. 5).

In China, high-stakes testing has been an essential environment in which teachers, especially secondary school teachers, work for decades. At Spring Middle School the craze for testing was phenomenal. Symbols of the Imperial Examination, such as red boards and golden words, were inherited. The results of each exam, including the weekly exam, were treated as "high-stakes," that is, "used to make inferences, decisions, or descriptions about" (Madaus, 1988, p. 34) students and teachers related to their learning or teaching. They, in the form of numbers and statistics, were seen as the primary, if not the only, arbiter to evaluate both students and teachers. As stated by Teacher Xiang, within this context both students and teachers were under stress.

Teachers displayed a clear tendency to teach to the test. The group planning meetings indicated that they based on the previous questions in the High School Entrance exam to decide what to teach or not. They paid close attention to the form and format of the questions on the "formal" tests and attempted to prepare students to meet the demands (Madaus, 1988). The high-stakes High School Entrance Exam also had an impact on these teachers in grading. The emphasis was placed on grammar correctness and the absolute obedience of students. In other word, testing was distorted as "the end of instruction" as opposed to "a tool of instruction" (Madaus, 1988, p. 45).

Teachers appeared to understand, to some extent, that the "measurement-driven education" (Popham, 1981; cited in Madaus, 1988) was problematic. Teacher Xiang was aware that some students were cheating to get a decent score and this might hurt their development in the long run. However, in an environment highlighting testing and

accountability, they chose to teach to the test, that is, to comply with the notion of test results as the major goal of schooling.

As mentioned in the background introduction, associated with testing Jing herself had unpleasant experiences of schooling. The college curriculum didn't seem to do anything for her to address them in a critical and constructive manner. Teachers' response to testing at Spring County Middle School helped her take a passive stance. As a result of the field experience, she perceived "teaching to the test" as inevitable for her as a future teacher. The cheating incident in Class 8 could have served as a critical moment for Jing to explore what might account for the cheating, what she could do with students of this kind based on what considerations, and what would be the cons and pros. Yet it turned out to be a missed opportunity.

In the report to the college, Jing chose to one-sidedly applaud the practices of the teachers, the students, and the school around testing as if nothing was troubling her. It read as though she perceived good teachers, good students, and good schools as those who emphasized test scores and made their best efforts to improve them. She did not raise any concerns about the construction of test items and their validity. No thinking was given to if the test results matched students' performance in higher-order thinking and real-life problem solving. She did not wonder if it was reasonable to take the connection between the test result of students and the ability of a teacher in teaching as direct or if there were other authentic ways to assess students either.

Learning Different/limited Ways to Teach Chinese

On the Change of Teacher Hou

On her first day at the host school, Jing, accompanied by Teacher Xiang, observed Teacher Hou's review lesson on a weekly test. Teacher Hou went over the items on the test and highlighted responding strategies, such as correctly understanding the requirement of each item before answering. She used to teach at Xi Township Middle School, the school from which Jing graduated. What Jing learnt most from the review lesson was that Teacher Hou had changed after leaving the township school. She was "rigid" (*aiban*) and "dawdling away her time," but now became "brisk" (personal communication, Sept. 17, 2007).[209] The very first classroom observation reinforced her thought of not teaching in a town(ship) school.

On the Difference between Public and Regular Lessons

Spring County Middle School had a community-of-practice tradition called "Three Lessons and A Review" ("*sanke yiping*"). Every week, around a reading text three teachers were arranged to give a lesson. These lessons were taught in a separate multi-media room and open to all teachers. Following the lessons was a review meeting.

The reading chosen for the week of the September 25th was Shen Fu's "Amusing Anecdotes in Childhood" (*youshi jiqu*). It was in the textbook for the seventh graders. In

[209] I did recognize that Teacher Hou was adept in switching her tone among relaxed, witty, serious, and austere. Also, she now and then used the local dialect to (re-)engage students. Speaking of language, in most cases teachers and students at Spring County Middle School spoke mandarin. There were signs on campus that read "Please speak mandarin." Meanwhile, I did find that in the office the head teachers preferred the local dialect to talk to a student severely about something s/he had done wrong. Teacher Xiang did the same in the classroom. After Teacher Dong confessed that when rebuking students he had to switch to the local dialect, Teacher Xiang echoed: "Me too. It just doesn't feel enough to criticize them in mandarin" (personal communication, Sept. 22, 2007). These observations support Fuller's (1991) argument that sometimes teachers resort to local language to maintain control and authority in school.

the piece written in classical Chinese, Shen Fu presents his close observation of small creatures (such as mosquitoes, ants, and toads) in the summer backyard as a little kid, which leaves considerable space for teachers and students to talk about their own childhood.

The three teachers, in fact, did this in their public lessons. With the assistance of well-crafted PowerPoint slides, they inserted students' childhood stories into the teaching of the text. Some time was allocated at either the beginning or the end of the class for students to share life experiences. A teacher also mentioned that he used the spikes of cattail (*pubang*) to scare off mosquitoes when he was little living in the countryside. Both the teachers and the students were excited and expressive, and the lessons went smooth at a speedy pace.

Immediately after observing two of the three public lessons, Teacher Xiang went to teach the same text in Class 4. She taught the students how to make sense of the classical Chinese text by treating it as a reading comprehension text on a test. "You need to listen carefully! If you only follow your own bent (*zizuo zhuzhang*), your performance in the Chinese exam will not necessarily be improved" (personal communication, Sept. 25, 2007), Teacher Xiang said in a strict voice. In the lesson she placed emphasis on reading and decoding, and did not refer to any childhood stories of hers or her students.

From the fact that no multi-media tools (except for TV) were installed in regular classrooms and students were taken to the multi-media room for public lessons, Jing learned that "It is not a good idea to over-expose students to multi-media" (investigation report, 2007, p. 2), and multi-media could distract students from learning. She maintained

that teachers at Spring County Middle School did a good job of engaging students by occasionally using multi-media.

Jing was impressed by the high engagement of the students in the public lessons. Nevertheless, she failed to contrast the public lessons with the regular lessons, including the one that Teacher Xiang gave. While the public lessons were "performed" (G. Wang, 2003) in the multi-media room to embody the requirements of the *New Curriculum Standard*, in the regular classroom Teacher Xiang taught the lesson to the test in an imposing manner. In other words, Jing missed the opportunity to identify the respective features of the public lessons and the regular lesson and to think about the conflicting messages that these two types of lessons delivered about the purpose of teaching and learning Chinese.

On an Innovative and Authentic Way to Teach Chinese

In the morning of the October 6th, accompanied by Teacher Xiang, Jing and I observed a lesson that Teacher Shan gave in Class 5. "The Cell of a Great Person" (*weiren xibao*), the focus of the lesson, is defined as a reading for skimming in the textbook. It is one of the few pieces in current textbooks that reflect the life and the thought of the teenage student, and documents the journey of a boy called Jiali to explore what constitutes a great person. After a series of incidents, he realizes that greatness lies in our attitudes and actions toward daily-life issues.

Teacher Shan began the lesson with a dictation ("*moxie*") to examine the preview of the students around the text. Seeing that the class was divided into two groups in how to

write a character in an idiom, she asked them to research on this after class. Also, she said to the students that "'If you believe all that written in the book, it is better to have no book.' All that written in the textbook is not necessarily right" (personal communication, Oct. 6, 2007).

As head teacher of Class 5, Teacher Shan first reminded them to stop at a red light in a humorous way. Then, she led students to "The Cell of a Great Person" by asking if Jiali would run through the red light and why (not). She did not let the students study the reading one paragraph by another, but invited them to discuss in small group and later in the entire class around the main question "In your mind what kind of people are great people?." Students were in high spirits to voice their opinions, as seen from sentences such as "I don't agree with you" and "Can I say something here?" Teacher Shan acted as facilitator to summarize their points and encourage them to think about alternative perspectives.

As described above, Teacher Shan followed the textbook in a creative and authentic way. When asking the students to master the new or difficult words in the reading, she encouraged them to keep open-minded about the textbook. Based on the understanding that "The Cell of a Great Person" was an easy-to-read piece and the topic "What constitutes a great person?" was an interest of students at Jiali's age, she did not spend the time decoding the text but asked for responses of Class 4 to the subject. This was an authentic and engaging task for the students. It gave the students a valuable opportunity to connect the school curriculum with their real life, to develop high-order thinking skills,

and to practice their listening and speaking skills. It also invited students to learn from and with peers.

Jing was amazed at the "liveliness and humorousness" of the lesson, as shown in her *Classroom Observation Notebook*. Meanwhile, she commented that Teacher Xiang

> deviated (her teaching) from the textbook content. That in a Chinese lesson the teacher needs to speak flexibly (*huo*) and students need to learn flexibly (*huo*) doesn't mean that the teacher breaks away from the textbook and speak carelessly (*luanshuo*). (S)he needs to tell and explain (*jiangshu*) the text and can't talk casually. (Oct. 6, 2007)

Maybe this was the first time that Jing observed a discussion lesson. She could not see the connection between the class discussion that Teacher Shan developed and the content of the reading. Also, she probably believed that Chinese lessons should be given directly and explicitly around the textbook. Then, in Jing's view, where should "flexibility" be embodied in the teaching and learning of Chinese? I shall reveal this in a later part of this section.

On Teacher Xiang's Mentoring

Teacher Xiang carried out the mentor's duty by having Jing observe her classroom teaching.[210] As a result, in both her *Classroom Observation Notebook* and my interview, Jing was of the opinion that Teacher Xiang was "a little flexible in the frame of being rigid" (*shilimian daidian huo*) (personal communication, Dec. 4, 2007) in teaching Chinese.

[210] Teacher Xiang also accompanied Jing to observe other teachers' lessons. But no discussion was arranged after each observation.

By "being rigid," Jing meant that for most of the time Teacher Xiang followed a single template to teach, that is, asking the students to read the text and then to summarize the main points. "She asked the students questions, but few volunteered to answer. She either called on the students to answer or often said 'You should raise your hand. Raise your hand!' with a worried look" (personal communication, Dec. 4, 2007). Jing also noticed that

> She was not that passionate either...I wanted to sleep in the back after observing some of her lessons. There was nothing (worth listening). Those lessons I observed were the same from the beginning to the end, nothing changed, nothing improved, and nothing new to look at. Later I had no desire to observe. She was teaching, and I was (in the back) writing my own stuff. (Personal communication, Dec. 4, 2007)

Jing thought that Teacher Xiang was "a little flexible" based on the observation that "once in a while she did not analyze a text one paragraph after another with the students. She found a cut-in point (*qieru dian*) and developed (her teaching) around the point. This showed she was improving" (personal communication, Dec. 4, 2007).

Regarding the guidance from Teacher Xiang in teaching Chinese, Jing recalled

> She told me that now Chinese is not taught as rigidly as before. She told me, as you know, after the release of the new teaching outline[211], students are not required to read and analyze (the text) word for word...now you don't need to follow the prescribed steps (*anbu jiuban*). You can do whatever you want to. Now you need to be very flexible, you know, very flexible...She told me to learn more about the current teaching model...not to teach in a too rigid way. She told me not to be rigid, you know, not to follow the prescribed steps. She said I can teach in whatever way I like. What is important is to be flexible. But about how to be flexible exactly, she did not say. ...She said that nowadays Chinese is the easiest to teach. She said it is the easiest subject to teach. The textbook (content) is little presented in the final exam. You can teach whatever you want to. ... A lot of extracurricular knowledge is presented in the recent exams, which needs the build-up of students on a daily base. ...She did not give much guidance on teaching. (Personal communication, Dec. 4, 2007)

[211] Here it means the *New Curriculum Standard.*

Both my observations and Jing's revealed that Teacher Xiang had a very limited repertoire of teaching strategies. She taught primarily using the question-and-answer method and was having the problem of engaging students. Meanwhile, she was probably under the pressure to teach "flexibly" to meet the requirements of the *New Curriculum Standard* and the new changes of the high-stakes exams. Maybe associated with the notion of mentor teacher as expert with authority, she did not talk about the struggle with Jing.

In terms of mentoring, Teacher Xiang tended not to discuss or explore her own teaching practices with Jing. This might have to do with her lack of confidence in teaching or/and the belief that teachers are self-made or a person learns to teach not by analyzing experience but by possessing experience (Britzman, 2003, p. 173). As a response, although articulating critiques of Teacher Xiang's lessons in private, Jing remained quiet in front of her.

Teacher Xiang did inform Jing about the recent contextual changes in teaching and generally "told" her that she could go beyond the "prescribed steps" to be "flexible" or to teach in "whatever way" she desired. Although Teacher Xiang described Chinese as "the easiest" subject to teach, teaching "flexibly" maintained an abstract concept for her. She was unable to present different types of activities or models of instruction for Jing. She did not show the desire to explore them with Jing either.

During the two months at Spring County Middle School, Jing gave 16 lessons on four reading texts. (Two lessons were given around each reading, and the same lessons were taught in Classes 3 and 4.) According to Jing, on the lesson plans that she wrote

based on the template used for group planning, Teacher Xiang sometimes asked her to add one or several important knowledge points. At other times, Teacher Xiang suggested that she attend to the teaching procedure by specifying when to focus on what, such as when to analyze an important sentence. About post-observation feedback, Jing said that there was "not much. And her points of analysis lied in details" (personal communication, Dec. 4, 2007). If Jing missed a knowledge point, Teacher Xiang would tell her where she could make it up in the next lesson.

Overall, Jing sensed that Teacher Xiang's help with these lessons was "inadequate" (personal communication, Dec. 4, 2007). If Jing's description was accurate, it can also be argued that Teacher Xiang tended to provide practical and technical support (in "what" and "how") for the novice. She cared about the coverage of knowledge points and the procedure of teaching. By contrast, little attention was given to explore "the underlying theories and ideas on which they are based" (Franke & Dahlgren, 1996, p. 627). In addition, the focus of Teacher Xiang was on "here and now" as opposed to the long-term or sustainable development of Jing in learning to teach Chinese.

On Jing's Teaching Practices

As mentioned above, all the 16 lessons Jing gave during student teaching were on reading. My observation showed that at Spring County Middle School the primary place where the countryside resided was student composition. In writing, some students presented their connections with the countryside. Urban students described that they "went down to the countryside" fishing or visiting (with their relatives or friends) and had a great time (such as enjoying the fresh air or playing around the hogpen). Rural students

wrote that at home they helped the family farm (by such as picking cotton) and learned the hardship of laboring. Therefore, in not formally practice teaching writing, Jing might have missed some opportunities to discuss with students about the countryside.

In Jing's memory, what she taught in the field didn't concern the countryside. "I taught in the general sense and around the textbook. I taught around the knowledge points presented in the textbook" (personal communication, Dec. 4, 2007). When teaching, she gave some attention to those quiet rural students by asking them to answer questions. She felt that "they were thinking, they were thinking. They were just a little shy and didn't dare to raise their hand" (personal communication, Dec.4, 2007). It sounded more like a mini portrayal of her teaching practices in the field. The mandated curriculum dominated her teaching. When transmitting the prescribed knowledge points, she slightly considered the individual characteristics of students.

Jing believed that she was reflective of her own teaching and "found some problems out" (personal communication, Dec. 4, 2007). She was excited to share two examples with me. One was she realized that she only wrote the text title and the author on the blackboard after finishing a lesson on "A Look Back in My Zodiac Year." "According to the teaching guide, the ten things (that the author wrote) must be presented on the blackboard, must be presented on the blackboard" (personal communication, Dec. 4, 2007). This example seemed to suggest that she was mechanically following the suggested curriculum.

The other example had to with how Jing ended the same lesson. She invited the students to share with each other about how they celebrated the Chinese New Year.[212] From the simple and similar responses that the students gave, Jing reflected that she could have re-phrased her question and asked "How does your family prepare for the Chinese New Year?" This question would allow the students to come up with diverse responses. For example, rural families would make steamed (stuffed) buns, while people living in the urban area would buy rather than make them from scratch. "From a student's response you will see whether (s)he is from the village, the town(ship), or the county...what situation the family is in...and how harmonious the family is" (personal communication, Dec. 4, 2007), she anticipated. This was one of the few, if not the only place, where I saw her reasoning sincerely about a teaching decision and giving divergent thinking and place-responsive pedagogy a try.

In Class 3, I once chatted with Sen, a boy coming from a village in the northwest of the county. He seemed to understand little about his home place, including the meaning of its name and its history. Drawing on this incident, I asked Jing in the interview if we could ask students to research their home place and write up a small report. She responded that "This will be too difficult for little kids like the seventh graders." I went beyond my regular role as a bystander to challenge her. "Isn't it the case that now we highlight inquiry learning (*tanjiuxing xuexi*)? Where is that represented in our Chinese?" "In class a teacher asks a question and then students discuss with those who sit next to them...to find the answer from the textbook...Sometimes students don't discuss at all. They are chatting" (personal communication, Dec. 4, 2007), she continued.

[212] "Expanding the text" is a step commonly used to end the teaching of a new text in China. During this period of time students are encouraged to apply what learned from the text to express their life.

To address the question raised at the end of the part "On Rural and Urban Students," I tend to argue that Jing did not take the immediate worlds of the students into account when planning and implementing her lessons. She "had a great many interactions" (personal communication, Dec. 4, 2007) with the students in the field, but apparently preferred to teach them prescribed knowledge.

As a response to the question asked in an earlier part of this section, Jing did not know how to embody "flexibility" in Chinese teaching, and did not demonstrate much desire to explore either. She sensed the limitation of Teacher Xiang's teaching, but did not make the effort to turn this into a learning opportunity for herself. She excused herself from exploring different ways of teaching on the basis that Teacher Xiang and most of other teachers were not doing this. She did not see that Teacher Shan modeled for her but dismissed her teaching as "deviating from the textbook content."

Jing seemed to have come full circle at this point. She disliked the education she had, and wanted change in education. Prior to her student teaching, Jing made the wish that she would have students "take the floor" and learn through discussion. In the field she seemed to have completely forgotten about it. As a result of the student teaching experience, it became more likely that she would teach as she was taught.

Learning Contrived Collegiality

Going back to Teacher Shan, in the office she shared with us about how her writing lesson on "Joyous Childhood" went (personal communication, Oct. 4, 2007). Noting that students came up with few interesting stories about their childhood, she described hers to

inspire them. Teacher Shan grew up in a country house that was surrounded by water from three sides. She looked forward to riding the buffalo with his handsome nephew who always wore a pair of white gloves, but every time was scared to cry in water. She once picked up a load of firewood with a big water snake in, and at another time she mistook a snake for her trouser belt. She seemed to have endless childhood memories that took place in a country setting. Hearing her graphic descriptions with heavy local accent, students laughed to tears. Jing and I did too.

Admitting that writing has been put more and more weight in the High School Entrance Exam and the College Entrance Exam in recent years, Teacher Shan paid particular attention to this area in teaching. Teacher Shan asked students to spend some time every day collecting the phrases and sentences that impressed them. Knowing that students were having a dreadful school life, every time they were back from home, she asked them to write about their observation and demeanor at home. Although peer review was not mentioned in the textbook until the eighth grade, she encouraged students to read each other's writing and offer feedback. Unfortunately, for some of her practices in teaching (writing) Teacher Shan was shunted aside by colleagues.

At group planning meetings, Teacher Shan was often the target of criticism. For example, at the meeting in the morning of the October 3rd, to prepare for various evaluations from the school, the county, and the prefecture, Teacher Hou, the group leader, directed the teachers to "unify" (*tongyi*) the distribution of writing assignments. After realizing that Teacher Shan had asked students to write much more than expected and to comment on each other's writing, other teachers reacted that "It is only you who

are energetic!," "It is you who does not do the same as others do!," "Who told you to let your students write (that much)?," "We need to unify our after-school writing exercises too!," or "Students cannot grade each other's writing until the eighth grade" (personal communication, Oct. 3, 2007)!

What Andy Hargreaves calls "contrived collegiality" (2000) appeared to exist in this teacher community. The words that Teacher Shan's colleagues used were either accusatory or directive, and left little room for dialogue or negotiation. This version of collegiality, taken in the form of group planning, did not seem to promote respect for autonomy, difference, creativity, or reflective/critical thinking. Instead, it became a means to regulate and control teachers' thinking and action. It highlighted homogeneity and uniformity with the assumption that teachers should starkly follow the existing bureaucracy to make teaching decisions. The irony lies in that Jing described group planning as one of the major reasons "the school I student taught is the best middle school in the county" in her investigation report. In this regard she made no critiques.

Teacher Shan did not hide her discontent with the practices of the school as other teachers did. For this reason she had been frequently invited to the principal's office for a "conversation." According to Jing, Teacher Xiang, as a friend, often advised Teacher Shan "not to care about things too much" and "take them easy" (personal communication, Dec. 4, 2007). Perceiving herself not as a "law-abider" ("*anfen ren*") but a "person with ideals" (*you lixiang de ren*) (personal communication, Oct. 5, 2007), Teacher Shan was holding on to her own style. Meanwhile, she was considering moving to teach in a school of Southern Jiangsu. She heard that teachers there were enjoying more autonomy.

When speaking of Teacher Shan in my interview, Jing remarked that

> She is under pressure. Maybe the pressure is high. Only she knows…She always does things against the rule, and others follow the rule to work. Those who follow the rule are the majority and certainly have a problem with her… She likes talking and is resentful about the various phenomena in the school. (Personal communication, Dec. 4, 2007)

While having some sympathy for Teacher Shan, Jing seemed to take "the rule" as given and incontestable and thus a compliant stance. A big virtue she thought that she should learn from Teacher Xiang was to "have a big tolerance" (*tebie nengren*) (personal communication, Dec. 4, 2007) for things around. Again, a "good" teacher was described as tolerant and self-sacrificing.

Schooling and Rural Development: Jing's Perception

In the interview, Jing argued that in actuality education in urban schools contributed little to the development of the countryside.

> The countryside is little mentioned. Teachers and schools do not have the consciousness, and do not teach students anything related to the countryside. They do not have the consciousness for sure. If they had, they would have incorporated (the countryside) into teaching. Then, the students they educate, I mean those who are good (in academics), will probably continue developing in the city. As for those kids who are relatively weaker or poor, they will probably not go back to the countryside in the future either. They will not think about going back to the countryside and serving the countryside. For sure they still want to think about how to make their own life a little bit better. (Personal communication, Dec. 4, 2007)

As pointed out in Chapter 6, Jing also claimed that since she would teach in a county school promoting rural development would not be her business. The future of the countryside would not concern her, the students she would teach, and the teachers she would work with. When teaching in a county school, the thing she might do related to the

countryside was to teach urban kids some basic plants after school. She was under the impression that some could not even distinguish Chinese chives from wheat.

Jing went to assert that the development of the countryside "is after all the business of rural people themselves" (personal communication, Dec. 4, 2007). Thinking for a second, she added that it could be the work of those who are "born to be fond of the countryside," those business people who see "the business opportunities the countryside will bring them," and those agriculture college graduates who are "crazy about agriculture" (personal communication, Dec. 4, 2007). "Although there are not many people (of these types), they can develop the countryside well" (personal communication, Dec. 4, 2007), she concluded.

Seeing that those students in rural/township schools "will be the main force for rural development" (personal communication, Dec. 4, 2007), Jing suggested that teachers there raise their awareness of the countryside through after-school or between-classes conservations. "When chatting, (teachers can) tell them some problems existing in the countryside and what are the solutions. (Teachers) can discuss with them" (Personal communication, Dec. 4, 2007). Sometimes in writing students can write about parents' life in the countryside and use parents' hardship to motivate themselves.

But when asked about the purpose of education for rural school students, Jing put that

> To be straightforward, it is to pass the exam and enter a good school. In the future, as people say, (they) can rise head and shoulders above others (*churen toudi*) and turn out successful (*you chuxi*). ... (Wu: To pass the exam and enter a good school? What is a good school?) For example, a key point high school and then a key point

university, a well-known university. Then their parents will feel proud to talk about them. (Personal communication, Dec. 4, 2007)

I challenged her: "It looks as if you are setting the goal for those so-called students strong in academics. How about those in the middle or not ideal?" She responded

> For them the purpose of schooling is probably to learn more knowledge. Perhaps this will help them in the future when they enter the society. Of course, they do not know that the knowledge will be helpful for them in the future in the society. But I believe, I believe that they still want to learn, learn more ... (Wu: What do you mean by knowledge?) I mean the knowledge in the textbook. It can only be the knowledge in the textbook. Isn't it? (Personal communication, Dec. 4, 2007)

The ideology of individualism was permanent in Jing's above statements. She conveyed the strong message that individuals were self-interested and the purpose of schooling was instrumental, that is, to help them raise their social status through testing. The mainstream reality of schooling appeared to have constrained her from thinking about any alternatives. The actuality that the countryside was little addressed in urban schools was used implicitly as a justification for or legitimized her thought of not incorporating rural issues into her future teaching.

Jing placed the responsibility of attending to the countryside on rural/township school teachers with thinking that rural development "is after all the business of rural people themselves" or students there "will be the main force for rural development." Even with the thought, she seemed to believe that people who cared about the countryside and its development were either self-made or driven by self-interest. She also tended to hold that rural issues could not enter formal classroom teaching. They should be primarily considered for extracurricular activities.

Understanding that using schooling as a ladder to "social mobility" (Labaree, 1997) was prevalent in current rural schools, Jing articulated her belief that the same textbook knowledge should be taught to students regardless of their background. She appeared to support the "banking" model of education (Freire, 2003), a model that views the teacher as the transmitter of fixed, given, and universal knowledge and students as objects of assistance. In this model, students' experience and creativity are devalued, and learning takes place mostly in the form of passively absorbing information.

Jing assumed that the social and economic capital her family had would allow her to end up having a permanent job at Spring County Middle School and to stay away from rural schools. The irony is that this wish has not come true as of this writing. She was placed by the county education bureau to the elementary school in a remote town. She has been struggling with all the main issues considered in this chapter, especially with motivating students to learn and the teacher-principal relationship, which deserves another in-depth study. The family is working hard to transfer her to a county school.

Conclusion

From the case of Spring County Middle School, I see schooling as an institution (Boli, Ramirez, & Meyer, 1985). The curriculum in use demonstrated a high level of homogeneity. It was planned and delivered in close alignment with the textbook and the High School Entrance Exam. Bureaucracy had a strong presence at the school too. The hierarchy among the state, the local education bureau, the school administrator, the teacher, the parent, and the student was manifest. The school had a series of procedures and regulations in place to govern the conduct and behavior of both students and teachers.

Teachers also tended to adopt the authoritative style to maintain order and discipline in classroom.

At Spring County Middle School, I also observed the school as a "selectively coupled organization" (Fuller, 1991, p. 74). As stated in a curriculum reform promotion book (2002) with the head of the Basic Education Division, the MOE, as general editor, the State intends to achieve the integration of nation building and individual development through schooling. Yet, my field observations indicated that the importance the school attached to both in daily practice did not seem essential. To gain or maintain social credibility and economic resources, the school was trying means to ensure the high admission rate of graduates to key-point high schools each year. So were the teachers.

Somewhat contradictory to the centralized, unified, and bureaucratic nature of the schooling system, in the 2001 curriculum reform, the MOE (2002) highlights, among others, the respect and appreciation of teachers for students; the independent, inquiry, and collaborative learning of students; and the connection of school curriculum with local and daily life. As seen from the custodial approach to student control, the limited use of various teaching strategies in regular classroom, and the difference between public lessons and regular ones, most of the teachers I observed at Spring County Middle School were ritually following the curriculum reform. An obvious example is that Teacher Xiang, Jing's mentor, disconnected the statement of "teaching flexibily" from her actual behavior in classroom.

Teaching is much more complicated than teaching the curriculum. It involves interaction with the student, the administrator, the parent, and the colleague. Teachers at

Spring County Middle School seemed to have produced a dominant norm in term of how to interact with each of these groups. While authority and hierarchy was taken for granted in the interaction with the first three groups, homogeneity and uniformity seemed to be highlighted in collegial collaboration. An exception I found in the field was that Teacher Shan was challenging these norms but facing difficulties.

As seen from the origin of both teachers and students, Spring County Middle School was rural relevant. While acknowledging the possible background difference between rural and urban students, teachers had faith that the unified curriculum and standardized testing provided both groups with fair and equal opportunities. This held true even though the countryside was not or only slightly represented in the curriculum. Teachers were likely to use the test score as the primary criterion for teachers to evaluate students, even though they knew this might harm students in the long term.

In contrast with this, some teachers, like Teacher Sheng, appeared to care about the background of parents. They distinguished rural parents from urban ones based on appearance, language, and behavior, and tended to look down upon the former. These teachers might dislike rural parents for not financially benefiting much from them or blame them for current unpleasant schooling situation. They were also likely to deliver the message that the significance of schooling for rural kids was to gain a social status that their parents did not enjoy. "Rural" was considered as a word with negative meaning attached to.

Jing went to student teach at Spring County Middle School, carrying the following complex and sometimes contradictory characteristics. She was unhappy about her own

schooling experience associated with testing and restricted teacher-student interaction, and desired to become a teacher with the general thought of improving the schooling of her future students. Despite the wish to employ innovative strategies, such as discussion, to teach, she did not demonstrate any deep understanding of them. Further, she did not think that she would teach in a rural/township school. With the idea of tying student teaching to employment, through personal connections she went to Spring County Middle School.

My observation showed that prior to student teaching Jing perceived (student) teaching in a narrow sense. She was mainly preparing for the field experience by studying the textbook and the teaching guide distributed by the Program. (This was the case for most of, if not all, the student teachers I interacted with in the field.) She understood the importance of getting across students but felt relieved after visiting Spring County Middle School several months before the student teaching and knowing that students there were easy to communicate with. The thing she did not prepare for was the micro-politics of schooling.

"Teachers who participate on the technical aspects of teaching or maintaining a narrow view of what teaching and being a teacher entails, are likely to be ill-prepared to do other than maintain the status quo" (Cole & Knowles, 1993, p. 470). The clear pattern emerges from the collected data is that Jing was conforming to the dominant practices of Spring County Middle School. Maybe because her earlier ideal image of teaching was weak and abstract, she did not seem to struggle much to put it aside, which is in contrast with what such scholars as Britzman (2003) argue about their research participants. The

thought of finding a permanent job at the host school might also have played its part in diminishing her struggle.

Jing's acceptance of the dominant discourse at Spring County Middle School was multi-dimensional. Like teachers there, even though sympathizing with the "bitter" life and heavy testing burden of students, she took these as constraints of schooling she had to accommodate herself to. She learned the rule of following the majority when working with colleagues, even if this meant she needed to give up her own opinion and practice. From what happened to other teachers, she also saw the necessity of complying with the authority, including the principal and other administrators.

I cannot argue that Jing was passively accepting the way things were at Spring County Middle School, though. She had the opportunities to observe Teacher Shan's classroom teaching practices, encounters with colleagues in group planning, and discussions around teaching and school organization in the office. I believe that Teacher Shan was seeking autonomy for teaching with the risk of being excluded by both school colleagues and administrators. She was working to integrate individual development with the test-driven curriculum by connecting classroom teaching with personal experience and daily life, and adopting those teaching strategies that value the true thoughts and feelings of students. While recognizing that Teacher Shan's approaches were "lively," Jing did not feel motivated to experiment with them during student teaching.

Jing chose to comply not only with the school's organizational practices but with the mentor teacher's conventional classroom teaching practices. If her response toward the former leaned to "internalized adjustment," the latter was close to "strategic compliance"

(Lacey, 1977). She realized that Teacher Xiang's teaching was unitary and boring. Possibly, associated with the notion of "student teaching as an apprenticeship" which, to some degree, assumes the obedient position of the student teacher at the host school, she did not strategically discuss it with Teacher Xiang but retained private reservation. As a consequence, she did not practice any teaching methods that were different from the mentor's.

"Prospective teachers are indeed agents of choice ... However, their choices ... are not innocent. That is, they are implicated in, and in many ways determined by, the context of a teacher education program that makes those particular choices possible, even probable" (Segall, 2002, p. 5). Although Jing rarely referred to the course work she took from the Program, I can still see its connection with her field experience in multiple ways.

The narrow and technical view of (student) teaching was also identified in student teaching evaluation forms and the feedback that college supervisors provided on trial lessons. Although I did not report on the implementation of such courses as *Foundations of Education* and *Secondary Chinese Teaching Methods* in this dissertation, the impression I had from classroom observations was that instructors did little "to prepare teachers to examine their own perspectives and their origins, as well as the contexts in which they will work and teach do likewise" (Cole & Knowles, 1993, p. 470).

While the instructors of *Secondary Chinese Teaching Methods* focused on demonstrating how to teach a reading by following certain steps, those of *Foundations of Education*, *Modern and Contemporary Chinese Literature*, *Ancient Chinese Literature*, and *Introduction to Linguistics* – the course mentioned at the beginning of this chapter

placed their emphasis on lecturing. Embedded within the practice were also the assumptions that knowledge was sacred, prescribed, and context-free and that the role of a teacher was to deliver the knowledge to students. The modeling that these college instructors provided in discussion and other teaching strategies was scarce, if not missing. Whether the instructors and the student teachers recognized or not, the banking model of education was passed down.

One can also argue that Jing's student teaching was designed and structured in a way that limited her choice in the field. As discussed in the previous several chapters, consistent with the (conflicting) discourses of the college as the place to learn educational/teaching theory, the student teacher as the person who fills in the gap between theory and practice through student teaching, and student teaching as a traditional apprenticeship in both the planned and enacted curricula of student teaching, college instructors basically withdrew themselves from field experience. There was no person from the College who helped Jing examine her thinking around the complexity of schooling and negotiate with the mentor about trying different teaching strategies in classroom. The fact that the mentor teacher was appointed by the principal and Jing wanted to end up teaching at this particular school further limited her range of choice.

Jing summarized her life of student teaching as "following the students and following the teacher" (personal communication, Dec. 4, 2007). The verb "follow" captured the defining image of her student teaching. Through the student teaching, in general she seemed to "learn 'the system' and how to work within it" (Cole & Knowles, 1993, p. 470). Accepting school practices as "the limits of what is possible" (Goodman,

1988, p. 22), she laid stress on individual qualities of being a teacher, such as making sacrifices, being tolerant, and working hard, in the materials submitted to the Program. The school system or practices were left unexamined and unchallenged.

With this said and given her plan of avoiding the township/rural school, it seemed inevitable to see that Jing neglected to consider the rural in (student) teaching except for teaching urban students some plants commonly seen in the countryside and, possibly, using the hard life of rural parents as a means to stimulate rural students to study harder and perform better on the high-stakes exams. While noting some group difference between rural and urban students, she showed a tendency to explain the academic performance of a student from individual characteristics, which echoed the high popularity of courses of psychology in the teacher education program and many others in China. She seemed to have forgotten her own experience that she studied hard in secondary school but struggled to pass various exams, not to say provide a critical appraisal of it.

Many factors seemed to have contributed to Jing's distance from rural education. As described in Chapter 6, in her understanding, rural schools were poorly resourced with facilities, teachers, and students. Rural schoolteachers were not paid as well as those in urban schools were for the government policy, the limited capital of parents, and the like. Although the College and the Department cast attention to the countryside in "*san xia xiang*" and the Program focused on rural (literacy) education in the 2007 summer social practice for the 2004 cohort, student teachers, including Jing, saw the formalistic nature of their implementation. The message of staying away from rural schools was hidden in

the placement of the College/Department/Program in student teaching. Course instructors were also likely to, explicitly or implicitly, delivered the message in their teaching, considering the individual mobility of future teachers (and, possibly, the social reputation of the College). Teacher Hou's change in teaching attitude and method after leaving her home middle school strengthened Jing's decision not to teach in a rural school. The observation that few teachers incorporated rural-relevant content into classroom teaching served as a justification for her too.

In summary, despite my wish to observe the contrary, my description and analysis of Jing's case suggests that student teaching was primarily a process for her to fit into the dominant practices of the school, including those rural-relevant. She demonstrated agency in deciding what to accept or reject. However, it was noticeable that the alternatives that the teacher education program offered her were limited, if not absent. I saw the correspondence between her response to the school context and practice and the teacher education she received in college, especially the design and structure of student teaching, even though she might not acknowledge any function that the college played in her student teaching.

CHAPTER 11

LEARNING TO TEACH IN A RURAL CONTEXT: JIANG'S CASE

Introduction

In the last chapter, I have presented Jing's field experience at Spring County Middle School. I argue that the bureaucratic structure and performance of this school was manifest and for Jing the field experience was a process of "bureaucratic socialization" (Hoy & Rees, 1977). Jing strengthened her bureaucratic orientation toward teaching, including a tendency to conform to the authority and accept the existing dominant practices, as a result of the student teaching. This orientation was developed not only consistent with her motivation to find a job at this particular school but with the narrow and technical view of (student) teaching embodied in the college coursework, especially in the design and implementation of student teaching.

Although the school had a decent proportion of students and teachers with rural background, associated with the practice of teaching/learning to the test based on the unified curriculum, the countryside had only a slight and superficial representation in classroom. Noting some group difference between rural and urban students, teachers tended to value their performance on the exam and attribute the difference to individual qualities. In the office, teachers discussed the difference of rural and urban parents in school involvement for material benefit of themselves. Jing internalized these norms and furthered her distance from rural education through the field experience, which coincided

with the prevalence of individualistic ideology in teacher education, a point made by Jiang in Chapter 6.

The irony is that Jing entered a remote township elementary school to teach after graduation, for which she was obviously not prepared. She has been struggling at the school in multiple senses, which shows that learning to teach is a continuous and contextualized process of "becoming." As Jing student taught at a county school, one may wonder about the similarity and difference of her field experience and that of a person who practiced teaching in a "traditional" rural community. Sharing the questions posed at the beginning of Chapter 11, this chapter focuses on Jiang to describe and analyze her student teaching at Phoenix Middle School, a township school in Rong County. As mentioned in Chapter 5, Jiang, a student in Class 1 of the 2004 cohort, came from an economically poor rural family in a prefecture north to East and had four younger siblings.

As I have suggested in Chapters 7 and 9, the College, overall, ignored those individual student teachers who went to practice teaching in rural/town(ship) schools. Jiang chose Phoenix by herself, which meant the College left her to her own devices and she did not even formally have a field instructor. The College expected her (and all other senior student teachers) to stay at a school practicing teaching between mid-September and mid-November. It was also expected that she return to the college with a series of materials for submission, including lesson plans, *Classroom Observation Notebook*, *Head Teacher Work Notebook*, a school investigation report, a self-summary of student

teaching, three student teaching status forms filled out by both the student teacher and the mentor teacher, and the final evaluation from the mentor teacher.

As a large body of research in English (see e.g., Bruckerhoff & Carlson, 1995) has shown that "loneliness" is an important word to characterize student teaching, especially when the student teacher is in an isolated environment and no support comes from the college, in the field I paid particular attention to Jiang's her (change in) feelings on, attitude toward, and engagement in student teaching. Compared to the last chapter, this chapter will present more about these aspects.

Here is how I organize this chapter. After describing how I entered Phoenix and collected data, I will provide background information on the school. I will develop Jiang's field experience around the following aspects: learning to cope with the unpleasant living condition, learning (not) to concentrate on student teaching, (not) learning about the students and classroom management, (not) learning about the school as a site of complexity, and (not) learning about the local community, and learning different/limited ways to teach Chinese.

A reminder I want to make here is that this chapter writes in great detail about the school and the community, considering the richness they possessed. This chapter is the only place in the dissertation where I can provide a concrete and contextualized account of a school and the community it belongs to.

Research Data and Collection

As noted in Chapter 7, I started looking for student teachers who would practice teach at town(ship) schools in northern Jiangsu long before I arrived at East Teachers College in fall 2007. I was not able to find one before the entire cohort was dismissed for student teaching. Of the student teachers I contacted in late September after I received the placement lists from four classes, Jiang seemed to be one of the few who fit the criteria I set.[213]

According to the placement list of Class 1, Jiang was student teaching at Phoenix Middle School in Rong County. Over the phone I learned that her boyfriend Gang, a native of Rong County, was working as a "village official" in Fan Township and found the school for her. She was learning to teach in an eighth-grade classroom. Her mentor Teacher Hang, appointed by Principal Song, was the vice principal of the school in teaching.

Jiang also mentioned that the school would be closed for a week to celebrate the National Day. This was the first time I heard of a secondary school in northern Jiangsu that did not offer students classes during the National Day. At Spring County Middle School students were released for two days. Classes were arranged for the remaining five days. What kind of school was Phoenix? I was intrigued.

I imagined Jiang as a perfect research participant until she revealed that she was also studying for the GRE in ancient Chinese literature. I wondered if she was using the school as camouflage to prepare for the exam, and texted her about this several days

[213] Gao was at a township high school close to the downtown area of Rong County, East Prefecture. She would welcome me to study her student teaching experience, but was worried that nothing interesting or distinctive would come out of my observations. In her eyes, the teachers were cramming the students for the NCEE.

later.[214] The message she texted back relieved me partially, "I am here student teaching. I am not sure about my GRE score. I want to learn a little more through the student teaching" (personal communication, Oct. 1, 2007).

The time conflict between student teaching and preparing for the GRE or various employment exams has been widely recognized as a factor to adversely affect the engagement of student teachers in the field (see e.g., Luo, 2005). While having a hunch that Jiang was placing priority on studying for the exam, I felt relieved to know that she had not completely disregarded the student teaching. Considering Jiang as the best available candidate for the study, I said goodbye to Jing at Spring County Middle School in the early morning of the October 7th, and took a bus to East City and then changed to another bus to Rong County. At noon I met Jiang and her boyfriend Gang at Rong County Long-Distance Bus Station.

I followed them two to three places in the downtown area of Rong County. They all looked like country places in Spring County to me. We had lunch at the place of Gang's grandparents.[215] The kitchen was separated from the main house. In front of the house was a fenced yard. Vegetables were planted everywhere inside and outside the yard. Peas were placed on a big plate for drying. Gang's mom was the doorkeeper of a company. Corn was lying on the ground in front of the gate room. The family hand picked the corn

[214] I took the direct approach because I preferred to study the field experience of a "regular" student teacher, that is, a student teacher who desired to be a (rural school) teacher. Also, I asked Jiang this question directly with the background information that some student teachers were taking advantage of rural schools to engage in other non-teaching related activities, such as to prepare for the GRE or the Civic Servant Exam.
[215] To thank Gang's family for their hospitality, I went to a vending stand on the nearby street and bought some fruits for them. However, I was surprised to see that Gang ended up taking all the fruits, as well as the peanuts that the grandparents steamed, to Fan. While packing, he explained, "There is nothing to buy in Fan" (personal communication, Oct. 7, 2007).

from the field several days ago. They also had a two-floor house in the north of the downtown area. In front of the house were Chinese chives and various green vegetables.

In the late afternoon we got on a bus to Fan. The bus was covered with dust and looked worn inside. Besides 10 or so sofa seats, long and short wooden stools were put in the space available. Several riders walked into the bus with bags of fish nets and buoys. After about 10 minutes' driving, the bus left the county area and entered a country road made of cement. The road was narrow and could hardly fit two cars. Both sides of the road were poplar trees. Houses were sparsely located along the way with chicken, ducks, or/and geese walking around. The land looked barren and plants were few and scattered. Whenever a new rider joined us, I saw people making room for him/her.

On the way to Fan, I chatted with Liu, a middle-aged lady sitting next to me. She was back from visiting her son studying at Rong County High School. She kindly gave me a brief introduction to the local place. The cement road didn't exist until 2005, and was built based on a poverty relief project of the Jiangsu government. The soil was not ideal for crops, and the county government had been encouraging farmers to grow trees and pigs. According to her, local people, especially those in Fan, were poor. Parents cared more about making money than children's education; and plenty of students dropped out of middle school and became migrant workers, that is, to leave their home place and work seasonally or annually in (big) cities as construction workers, waitresses, or the like.

I felt uncertain about if this school would allow me to stay and observe Jiang's student teaching. I still remembered that in Mr. Jia's office at East Teachers College two

of his colleagues said to me, "Even if the student teacher is happy to have you, the school will not necessarily like your presence" (personal communication, Sept. 26, 2007). Early next morning I met Teacher Hang and Principal Song to ask for their permission to enter the field. I framed my study as an attempt to understand what local teachers colleges can better prepare teachers toward the realities of rural schools. Seeing that I graduated from a well-known normal university in China and was currently studying as a doctoral student in the US, they distinguished me from those journalists involved in secret inquiries. Articulating that rural schools deserved more research attention they had received, the two principals accepted my request.[216]

In the field, all the administrators and the teachers showed extreme support for my work. They were of the opinion that I was in the countryside "eating bitterness (*chiku*)" and that I could be a potential resource to develop Phoenix and enhance its social reputation.[217] It was their responsibility to do their best to host me.[218] I was allowed to

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[216] It was visible that the two principals wanted me to express in my dissertation that Phoenix was actively involved in the preparation of future teachers. In a report written to the county education network in late October, Mr. Song highlighted that Phoenix was collaborating with MSU on how to improve the quality of pre-service teacher education and that I was impressed by their teaching and learning reform, a point I shall go to in this chapter.

[217] "You are here eating bitterness" was a sentence that the administrators and the teachers frequently used to greet me.

[218] My accommodation was arranged within an hour. Later I was told by other teachers that the school provided me with the best dorm on campus. The room was next to and the same size as Jiang's. But it was divided into two small ones, one for work and the other for sleep. A desk, several chairs, and a double-sized bed were included. The school, indeed, did much more than offering me a room. They bought me brand new bedding items (cotton-padded mattress, sheets, and quilt), personal care items (toothbrush, toothpaste, washcloth, scented soap, and washbowls), and other daily-used stuff (water bucket, and broom) without asking me first. In the morning I saw two pieces of broken glass on the window facing the girl students' dorm, when I returned in the late afternoon they were already fixed. A new curtain was also put on. Besides housing, I was invited to join other teachers in the school cafeteria for meals. As discussed in Chapter 2, I am fully aware that the school treated me this nicely taking my two major identities and career potential into consideration. They, more or less, had the wish that I would pay them back by "helping the school" in the future. I feel honored to know the school through the study and very grateful for they did for me. It would be my pleasure to renew the friendship and collaborate with the school on projects such as school development and preparing teachers for rural schools one day.

follow Jiang and observe whatever she was part of. I was also free to talk with any person I wanted to and to keep or make a copy of any materials that interested me.[219]

Jiang initially felt nervous about my presence at Phoenix (personal communication, Oct. 18, 2007). But seeing that I was accompanying her in an environment unfamiliar to her, she got used to my presence pretty soon. "We are friends," she put about ten days after I arrived at Phoenix. As I will report later in this chapter, as time went on, she felt more committed to student teaching by putting her books on the GRE aside.

Whether I should push Jiang to concentrate on student teaching was an ethical dilemma I faced constantly in the field. I did not want to see that she failed the GRE due to her participation in this study. That she missed the opportunities to learn to teach at Phoenix was also the last thing I wished to see. I admit that I did not choose to be a non-participatory observer. As mentioned in Chapter 2, to some degree, but not completely, I played the role of her field instructor.

As will be described below, initially Jiang showed no interest in getting to know the town and local villages. A trip to a market triggered her enthusiasm. Afterwards, we made several field trips and observations together and she seemed to enjoy them very much, which could be partially explained by the fact that she was interested in ancient

[219] Even though the principals had their own agenda in having me study this school's role in preparing Jiang as a future teacher, they did not prescribe what I should (not) observe in the field. Teacher Huang, a physics teacher and vice principal, even said to me, "Take your writing seriously and truthfully present rural education. Rural education is not as modernized as some people say" (personal communication, Oct. 7, 2007).

Chinese literature and had high appreciation of the idyllic pastoral life of Tian Yuanming, an influential country poet in Song Dynasty.[220]

In my dorm after we were back from observing some plants on campus, she said, "If I cannot pass this year, I will take the exam next year. I feel happy to be with you. I did not feel this way when with others. I always felt quite bored (*men de*)" (personal communication, Oct. 22, 2007). I was away from Jiang for two days.[221] Upon my return, she came to my dorm and commented, "You brought me opportunities. Without your existence I did not enjoy doing what Teacher Hang asked me to do" (personal communication, Oct. 31, 2007).

After going back to the college in middle November, Jiang re-shifted her attention to the GRE. Although busy with her preparation, she was willing to spare four chunks of time, about 10 hours altogether, to share her sense of the field experience and the college curriculum in relation to the countryside. In these conversations she was relaxed, engaged, sincere, and articulate. I was, truly, overjoyed to see this, given her generally half-hearted attitude toward student teaching, a topic I shall address soon. I audio-taped the four parts of the interview.

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[220] She wrote on Tian's life and thought in her essay submitted as part of the requirement for a bachelor's degree.

[221] I went back to Spring County to see Jing. Also, I thought about taking a bus to a neighbor county to visit a student teacher called Fei. He was learning to teach at a town(ship) school. I gave up this idea for reasons of logistics later. About Fei, when I first contacted him, he was at home undecided about if and when to student teach at the township school. Fei reported to the school on the October 15th, about one month after the College dismissed the senior students for field experience. After reading the consent form I emailed him, he texted me, "I feel that what you want to study has nothing to do with the school I am student teaching at. This school is still in the downtown area of the county. There is the possibility that these students' grandparents are farming at home. But most of their parents are doing business outside (the countryside). So, the word 'rural' is unlikely to be mentioned in their learning life. It is even less likely for teachers to teach (about the countryside)" (personal communication, Oct. 18, 2007).

In addition to the notes I wrote down on a daily basis and the interview transcript that I paid one of Jiang's roommates to do, the data presented in this chapter includes artifacts. I quote passages from Jiang's school investigation report, self-summary of student teaching, *Classroom Observation Notebook*, *Head Teacher Work Notebook*, and student teaching status forms, as well as the compositions of her students.

Situating Phoenix Middle School

There was one main street in the downtown area of Fan, that is, about 50 meters away from Phoenix. It was shorter than one mile. There were two-storey houses on both sides. Most of the first floors were used for business, selling fruit, fish, noodles, or other daily-used items. In front of these houses, there was corn drying on the ground. Some corn was placed on the main road too. Too often, two kids were seen in front of a house. One was a baby held by mom, and the other, about several years older, was playing with the corn or a toy.[222]

Phoenix, opened in 1958, was the only middle school in Fan Township. It was named after a local peasant hero who died in the Liberation War. Compared to other middle schools I had been to, the landscape of this school looked more country-like. Weeds were seen everywhere. Several farmers were flipping the corn on the cement basketball court or the dirt playground. A couple of hens walked freely in the front yard of the two-stored girls' dorm. They belonged to Teacher Hang and his wife who was supervising the boarding girls. Those teachers living on campus had soybeans, sweet

[222] The One Child Policy did not seem to be working in this area. During my stay at Phoenix, Teacher Hang's sister-in-law gave birth to her second child at his house. Her first child, a boy, was a seventh grader at this school.

tomatoes, sponge cucumber, winter melon, and many others around their houses. Long, a boy from Jiang's class, was seen turning up soil for his head teacher in a late afternoon. Two sides of the campus were bound by river. Across the rivers were village houses and fields.

Nearly 1000 students were currently enrolled at Phoenix. There were six classes in each grade, about 50 students in one classroom. They were placed in three two-floor buildings based on grade level. This school had about 65 teachers. Most of them graduated from teachers' schools. According to Teacher Hang, the school was facing the severe problem of recruiting and retaining highly-credentialed teachers. There were teachers who held a valid teaching certificate for elementary education but had been teaching in this school for years.

The teacher's building was located at the center of the school and had three floors. Principal Song had his own office on the second floor. Next to his was the one that Teacher Hang shared with three other vice principals. Both rooms were furnished with big and comfortable desks and chairs in dark brown. Barreled drinking water, a newspaper shelf, a desktop computer, and a printer were provided. Jiang was arranged to use a desk in a math teacher office on the same floor. This office had eight regular khaki desks and benches. Policy texts, such as "Requirements for Teachers to Plan Lessons," "The System for Loving Students," and "Eight Rules of Teacher Morality," were posted on the walls of all the offices.

In all the classrooms I visited, the lime on the walls was depositing and the floor was uneven and rough. The fluorescent lamps on the ceiling were rusty. Each classroom had a

blackboard in the back with specials written on it. In the eighth and ninth grade classrooms, the desks and chairs were placed in rows facing the teacher. Principal Song was introducing a new model of learning and teaching with the seventh graders, a topic I will develop later. These classrooms had blackboards on the four walls and students sit in groups.

Phoenix Middle School seemed to have craze for quotes and slogans. They were the main decorations of the classrooms. For example, in Jiang's class, two side walls were covered with scrolls which read such as Guo Moruo's "Time is life, time is speed, and time is power," Li Dazhao's "Knowledge is the candle leading life to light and truth," and Lei Feng's "A nail (*dingzi*) has two advantages: one is to squeeze (*ji*) and the other is to dig (*zhuan*). We need to have the spirit of the nail, being good at squeezing and digging."[223] Above the front blackboard was "Clean up (your study) lesson by lesson, day by day, week by week, and month by month" (*tangtang qing, riri qing, zhouzhou qing, yueyu eqing*).[224] There were also famous quotes framed and hung on the walkway outside of the classroom.

Numerous quotes and slogans, in different fonts, sizes, and colors and with different backgrounds, occupied the school's public space. They were painted on the walls, hung in the air, or dug into the ground. "Study for the rise of China," "Be civil and harmonious, scientific and democratic, and health and safe," "Be ashamed of being stupid and ignorant and be proud to worship science," "Don't waste your daytime and youth will

[223] In the ninth-grade classroom I first visited, there were Einstein's "Science is never-ending, and it is an eternal mystery;" Zhang Heng's "Life lies in diligence, and no gains without inquiry;" Li Shizhen's "Explore the myth of the universe and reach the extreme of the possible;" and "There is no end in the sea of study but diligence can get us there; there is a mountain of books but strong will can help us climb."
[224] This slogan was imported from Siyang Secondary School in Taizhou, Jiangsu.

never come again," "Dare to compare with the strong, to climb toward the high, to compete with the brave, and to race with the fast," and "Read one hundred times, and the common meaning will present automatically" were just a few examples.

In middle October, Principal Song and Teacher Xu, a female vice principal who shared the office with Teacher Hang, created another 30 slogans and added them to the campus.[225] This time slogans were developed with the theme of student learning and development. They included "The steadiest method is independent learning (*zizhu xuexi*) and the most effective means is collaboration," "A classroom stands out for the interaction and the independent development (*zizhu fazhan*) of students," "Learn easily (*qingsong*) and grow happily (*kuaile*)," "Have a relaxing (*qisong*) environment and a lively (*huoyue*) atmosphere," "Open the classroom and let students participate," "There is no wrong or right in classroom, to dare to speak is the best," and "Enter the classroom with full confidence, and leave the classroom in high spirits." Meanwhile, there were sentences such as "Cherish time to study hard, and grow everyday," "The root of knowledge is bitter, but its fruit is sweet," "Keep an ambitious goal, and read books, fat or thin, for ten years," "The true learning is to integrate the whole heart into the books," and "Go through hardship without regret, and the time to achieve through learning will come."

[225] Principal Song also asked Jiang and me to engage in this project. Although both of us disliked seeing too many slogans on campus, we took the task. [I did remind Principal Song of the possible consequence of having too many slogans, but he insisted on having more. Further to this, he said to me, "It is your time to contribute to the school" (personal communication, Oct. 19, 2007).] Jiang and I spent about half an hour working together to come up with eight slogans focusing on reading, independent thinking, caring for the surroundings, democratic participation, and the like. To highlight the participation of Jiang in the task, I asked her to copy out the ones we drafted. Principal Song did not seem happy to see them and rendered Jiang's handwriting as my unwillingness to help the school.

In front of the ninth-grade building, "the Vow for the High School Entrance Exam" was inscribed into a stone. It read,

> Break through the mountain of books and sail through the sea of knowledge, and set the dream free through fighting; dig the potential and sharpen the will, and determine the victory in the High School Entrance Exam based on strength. I use warm blood, diligence, wisdom, and sweat to make youth shine in 100 days.

There were a couple of information boards on campus. The most notable section was called "Good News" (*xibao*). Reports like a graduate of this school was admitted to a well-known university were presented on several pieces of red paper in hand-written calligraphy. Another piece of paper listed the 30 students who were recruited to Rong County High School or other noted high schools as a result of their outstanding performance in the 2007 High School Entrance Exam. It was underlined that this was history in the making and the school was therefore awarded the "Teaching Quality Improvement Prize" by the county education bureau.

Before I went to Phoenix Middle School, Jiang told me that students there were not tracked, which turned out to be inaccurate. Students here were tracked in a more implicit manner than other schools I had visited. In the seventh and eighth grades, there was one class on the "fast" ("*qianghua*") track. To "enhance the competitiveness of the students" (Teacher Hang, personal communication, Oct. 8, 2007), two classes in the ninth grade were tracked as "fast."[226] To the outsiders, the school did not describe the four classes as "fast" but as a class of "boarding" students.[227] All the students in the four classes were

[226] Another thing worth mentioning was that a handful of the lowest-achieving students were inserted into the four "boarding" classes. This was a response to the new practice of the county education bureau to count the rate of the students who scored lowest (*zhongfen difen lu*) to evaluate the teaching quality of each school (Teacher Hang, personal communication, Oct. 9, 2007).

[227] Students themselves were aware of the track they were on. According to a composition that the eighth

required to live on campus and to spend one more hour self-studying in the classroom at night. [228]

Seventh- and eighth- grade students here stayed at school every day about the same time as their counterparts at Spring County Middle School did. But their life was different from the latter in several obvious ways. They did not have weekly exams. After lunch they were asked to return to the classroom and study for an hour with the supervision of a teacher. They did not have any classes on weekends. For boarding students, 24 students were crowded in one room, and every two shared a bed slightly bigger than a single-sized one. The hygiene condition of the dorm was appalling. They did not order food in the school cafeteria. Food was placed on the table, and they walked in to eat. It appeared that head teachers did not pay much attention to their dorm life either.

According to the teachers I met on the playground after dinner, the local country life was much better than before. Kids did not need to worry about food or clothing.[229] The growing trend was for parents to live in cities as migrant workers and let grandparents take care of their kids. These left-behind students were more likely to present serious behavior and academic problems, as their grandparents tended to spoil them. "They are causing troubles (*reshi shengfei*)" (personal communication, Nov. 1, 2007), a middle-aged male teacher shared with me.

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graders wrote, "class grouping" (*fenban*) was made openly through a grade-level student meeting during the first week of the fall semester. The list of students for each class was announced at the meeting.

[228] There were some non-fast students who boarded on campus too. They were not asked to study for the extra one hour.

[229] I did note that some boarding students did not wash their own clothes but paid Teacher Hang's wife to do so. Mrs. Hang charged one Yuan for each coat.

My observations on this at Phoenix were limited. I did observe that an old lady came to the teacher's building one afternoon and asked for her granddaughter. She stopped by each office and asked where her granddaughter was. The girl was not boarding on campus but had not been home for a week. The grandma did not know the girl's full name or which class the girl was in. With the guess that the girl ran away with her boyfriend or was out looking for her parents or a job for herself, no teachers seemed willing to give the grandma a hand. This small incident left me with a general impression that teachers there were not yet up to the emerging challenge of educating those students who were living separate from their parents or working with grandparents to educate students.[230]

Learning to Cope with the Unpleasant Living Condition

On the night before I left for Rong County, Jiang texted to remind me, "The condition there (at Phoenix) is truly not good (*shizai buhao*). You need to get yourself ready psychologically" (personal communication, Oct. 6, 2007)! Immediately after we met at the bus station, she expressed her strongest feeling about Phoenix, "I did not want to stay there student teaching when I first got to the school. The condition is too bad (*taicha*). Every time I come to the place of Gang's parents, I don't want to go back" (personal communication, Oct. 7, 2007)!

[230] Both my observation and my talk with Teacher Hang showed that it was rare for parents to go to school and discuss children's academic performance with teachers. (Sometimes I saw that a parent went to the student dorm and leave his/her kid a quilt or/and other daily-used items.) Inviting teachers to a meal and giving them a gift were also unusual. Teachers did not seem to have any expectations in this area either.

That day after one hour and a half on the bus, Jiang and I reached her dorm in the dark. Teacher Bai, a seventh-grade English teacher, was sharing the room with her.[231] The four walls were dark and the cement floor was full of dents and scratches. Desks, chairs, and other items were messily placed. Electronic wires and other cords were hanging along the ceiling. Jiang's quilt felt wet and smelled fusty after several days of no use. A piece of glass on the window was broken. The wind was blowing in, and the room was chilly. Jiang used a large-size notebook to block up.

The next day the wind changed direction. On the door there were big cracks between planks of wood. The cold wind was blowing in through the cracks. Jiang was trying to stick a big poster to the door. After several unsuccessful attempts, she lamented, "Every time I think of this, I feel angry. The condition is so bad (*zheme cha*). No wonder nobody wants to come here and teach" (personal communication, Oct. 8, 2007)! She also declared that she would never consider this school for teaching after graduation. "If I go to teach in a town(ship) school, I hope it will be the school I graduated from" (personal communication, Oct. 8, 2007).

In the later interview, Jiang reported another incident. One day before the National Day break, classes were cancelled as a typhoon was approaching. After washing clothes in her dorm, Jiang walked by Mrs. Hang's water-boiling room to hang them for drying on the clothesline in front of the girls' dorm.[232] The wind became stronger and blew the clothes onto the ground. The door to Mrs. Hang's place was locked. Looking at her

[231] Teacher Bai was in her late 20s. She had her family in the downtown area of Rong County. She usually came to school Monday morning and left to see her family Thursday afternoon. Her father was reported to be one of the richest people in the county. According to other teachers, for this reason Principal Song treated her favorably.

[232] Mrs. Hang used the room to boil water and sell it to students by thermo.

clothes in the rain and seeing them as herself, she was "extremely upset" and asked herself, "Why did I come to this place" (personal communication, Nov. 22, 2007)?

Tap water came for about an hour every morning. Jiang calculated the time to pick up a bucket of water for everyday use. She bought a heat faster to cook water for drinking and washing face, but it was truly inconvenient to wash hair or take a shower. Fortunately, with the introduction of her roommate – Teacher Bai, she was able to take showers and wash clothes at several teachers' houses.

Although the teachers' houses looked tiny and torn outside, they were, somewhat surprisingly, spacious and decently decorated inside.[233] They were also equipped with internet and solar water heater. One day, on the way to the public restroom[234], we went by a teacher's front yard and saw various flowers blossoming. Jiang reacted, "It is pretty good (to live) here too. The house is spacious and (I) can grow flowers and plants. There is sufficient time for rest on weekends" (personal communication, Oct. 11, 2007). She "felt better (about the living condition) afterwards" (personal communication, Nov. 22, 2007).

Jiang appreciated Phoenix for the free board and lodging:

> I went from the outside. They provided a place for me to live in. It was kind of them to do this. I should have prepared (lodging) by myself and given them board wages.

[233] A house was usually made of two big rooms (a living room and a bedroom) and two small rooms (a kitchen and a shower room). Two houses were surrounded by walls to form a yard with a gate.
[234] The public restroom was about 50 meters away from Jiang's dorm, and had no light sources. At night Jiang used her cell phone light to guide herself. The restroom was not hygiene-proof either. It smelled moldy. Toilet paper, worms, and weeds were everywhere. In front of the restroom was a river covered with trash.

> But they did not mention this. I think this school is quite hospitable. (Personal communication, Nov. 22, 2007)[235]

In the interview, Jiang also stated that she would not refuse to teach at this school due to the poor lodging conditions. "If I can only work there, I may not take the dorm they provide. I may arrange my accommodation by myself" (Jiang, personal communication, Nov. 22, 2007).

Even though Jiang grew up in a rural village and held that Phoenix was not that different from the schools she had attended before college in terms of physical environment (personal communication, Nov. 22, 2007), undesirable living condition was the most visible challenge she faced in student teaching. She dealt with this on a daily basis without any support from the college. This added an extra layer of sensitivity, vulnerability, and loneliness to her student teaching.

To some degree, the kindness of the schoolteachers (and my companion) eased Jiang's sense of vulnerability and loneliness. She started looking at the bright side of teaching at Phoenix. However, the brightness was considered not from teaching itself but associated with her ideal of having an idyllic life close to nature. It also needs pointing out that the hospitality of the school did not offset her concern about the "bad" living condition. As seen from the phrase "If I can only work there," going to teach at a school like Phoenix was at the bottom of her choice list.[236]

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[235] The meals that the cafeteria provided for the teachers were not bad. In the morning a dish, porridge, and steamed stuffed bun or the like were offered. For lunch and dinner there were usually two dishes, one soup, and steamed rice. Jiang was also given some money for the Mid-Autumn Festival as other teachers were.

[236] Mr. Wan, the person in charge of the cafeteria, asked Jiang over lunch if she would be interested in teaching at Phoenix. Jiang was silent. Mr. Wan continued: "You should try those schools south to Rong. Or at least you should go to teach at a school in the downtown area of Rong County" (personal communication, Oct. 15, 2007).

Learning (Not) to Concentrate on Student Teaching

According to Jiang, not taking student teaching seriously was a common attitude among the students from the Program. She reflected in the interview that "At the beginning when I heard the two words 'student teaching,' I did not know what to feel. Others say that student teaching is learning while having fun (*wan*) and doodling away (*hun*) the time" (personal communication, Nov. 22, 2007). After clarifying by "others" she meant "those previous student teachers," Jiang continued,

> They say that after you get to the school, the (mentor) teacher will not let you teach. You will follow the teacher to listen to several lessons. Then, you will finish the student teaching by giving two lessons in a slipshod manner (*mama huhu*). (Personal communication, Nov. 22, 2007)

This contributed to her low expectations for student teaching.

> Don't feel nervous when talking in class and know how to teach it when given a text. When I read a text, I know what it talks about but don't know how to teach if asked to teach it to students. (Personal communication, Nov. 22, 2007)

Teaching was also narrowly perceived as transmitting the textbook knowledge to students.

Jiang's original plan was to learn to teach from her favorite teacher in middle or high school. When asked if she would focus on studying for the GRE if she had gone to her home place, she said,

> I would place emphasis on student teaching. ...I want to prepare for the exam too. I feel now that the only way-out for me is to take the GRE. But student teaching is another kind of experience. There will be an interview (for the entrance exam) too. (Personal communication, Nov. 22, 2007).

Jiang seemed to truly want to student teach and prepare for the high-stakes exam simultaneously. Further, if juxtaposing this statement with others she had previously

made, one may argue that she, apparently, prioritized joining a graduate program over teaching, or even considered the former as her "only way-out." (Now looking back, I realize that she never independently claimed that she desired to become a schoolteacher. Our related conversations were grounded on "if and then" scenarios.) She went to student teach with the perception that it would offer her opportunities to speak and accordingly prepare herself for the oral part of the GRE. This may explain from another angle why her expectations for student teaching were low and narrow.

Below was Jiang's account of her student teaching before I joined her:

> Usually I did not eat after getting up. After I got up I went to Teacher Hang's office and checked if he would have a lesson to give. If yes, I would follow him and observe his lesson. After listening to a lesson, he would ask me to write feedback on the lesson. Sometimes he let me do lesson planning, write a lesson plan. At the beginning I did not know how to plan a lesson. I went to him and asked questions about lesson planning. He gave some suggestions, and I went to plan the lesson by myself. After finishing planning a lesson, if there wasn't anything I would read my own books (for the GRE)! (Personal communication, Nov. 22, 2007)

If the description was accurate, Jiang's actual behavior in the field matched her expressed expectations for student teaching. She was learning to teach in a narrow and passive manner. She was focusing on the micro aspects of teaching, or to be precise, learning from Teacher Hang on how to plan and teach a lesson. Besides, she did not seem to act on her own initiative but received tasks from Teacher Hang.

My field observation in the first several days supported Jiang's self statement. She did not look enthusiastic about student teaching. She did not interact much with the Chinese teachers on the first floor or the math teachers in her office. She was quietly sitting at her desk, either writing a lesson plan or studying for the GRE. Sometimes she

went to check if Teacher Hang had a lesson for her to observe. She was not formally learning about classroom management with a head teacher.[237] She did not appear to know much about the school or the students in Class 4. No efforts in this regard were observed either. It was evident that she was detaching herself from the social and professional contexts of the school (S. Y. F. Tang, 2003).

A monthly exam was scheduled the day after the students returned to school from the National Day break. While they were taking the Chinese exam in the morning, Teacher Hang came to Jiang's office, chatting with us. When I asked if Jiang would partake in grading tonight, he said, "Does she want to? If yes, sure." We turned eyes to Jiang. Her response was lukewarm, "If I am asked to grade, then I will" (*gai jiu gai bei*) (personal communication, Oct. 9, 2007).

According to Jiang herself, my presence urged her to "completely place emphasis on student teaching" (personal communication, Nov. 22, 2007). She recalled,

> Before your arrival, I sometimes took the books (for the GRE) to the office...After you arrived I studied (those books) very little. ... I felt that the stuff I needed to learn was a lot, a lot. There was a lot, a lot stuff I did not understand. Because you asked questions and I did not know how to answer, I wanted to know and then started taking student teaching seriously. (Personal communication, Nov. 22, 2007)

Jiang's sense of change in attitude toward student teaching suggested the necessity of having a college instructor in the field with her. The field instructor could enhance her involvement by simply asking her questions or providing her opportunities to think (differently).

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[237] I understand that classroom management is not separable from classroom teaching. Yet, in China there is still a tendency to perceive classroom management narrowly as part of what a head teacher does, as seen from the distinction that the College made in the design of student teaching between learning to teach a subject and learning to manage a class through the work of head teacher.

(Not) Learning about the Students and Classroom Management

Jiang's class was on the "regular" (*pingxing ban*) track. There were 49 students, 25 of whom were girls. All had their families in the villages. Most of them came from low socio-economic status families with two or more kids. The majority of their parents were farmers or local workers. A couple of parents were out-of-town labors, truck drivers, or small business owners. For various reasons some students were living with their grandparents.

I did not obtain the above student information from Jiang.[238] Despite the self-claim that she became a conscientious student teacher after I joined her at Phoenix, Jiang did not show much improvement in understanding the students.[239] She rarely interacted with them unless she was giving a lesson or was asked to supervise the class for a teacher at night. When with me, she seldom talked about the students.

In the interview, Jiang attributed her limited interaction with the students partially to the mentor teacher. According to herself, she wanted to join Teacher Hang in his evening self-study sessions (*wanzixi*). However, she was under the impression that "He probably wanted to prepare students for the next-day lesson at night and didn't seem to like having me follow him" (personal communication, Nov. 22, 2007). Jiang was referring to the incident she and I experienced. We went to Teacher Hang's session without informing him beforehand. He was reinforcing and supplementing Jiang's teaching that day with the

[238] At the end of Jiang's student teaching, I asked Teacher He, the head teacher of Class 4, if I could get a copy of the student background sheet from her. She did not seem to have one. That night she went to the classroom and asked the students to write their background information on a piece of paper for me.
[239] She reported in the student teaching self-summary that she "went deep into the class and extensively contacted the students" (2007, p. 2).

students. He also asked the class to preview the lesson Jiang was to teach the next day. The preview was so comprehensive that it almost covered all the points she would teach.

Jiang did not assume any responsibilities of a head teacher either. She did not supervise the morning reading/exercise or participate in the class meeting. She missed the meetings that the school arranged for the head teachers. Several times I suggested that she talk to Teacher Hang about the head teacher part of student teaching. Although saying "yes" every time, she gave no follow-up. I also asked Teacher Hang in private to make the arrangement, and he said "Ok." But no actions were taken.

In the interview, Jiang explained that as Teacher Hang was not a head teacher she forgot about this part of student teaching at the outset. She chose not to practice this part later considering the notoriety of Class 4's head teacher.[240] This class was ranked lowest in each subject on the monthly exam. Teacher Hang believed that this was caused, to a large extent, by the "irresponsibility" (personal communication, Nov. 22, 2007) of the head teacher. Teacher Hang's argument withdrew her from thinking about undertaking any head teacher duties in Class 4.[241]

The several paragraphs above point to one issue. That is, Jiang felt vulnerable as a student teacher due to role ambiguity, lack of decision-making power, and perceived lack of control. As summarized by Fives, Hamman, and Olivarez (2007), the student teacher often has an ambiguous role in the classroom of the mentor teacher and feels constrained

[240] Jiang's lacking spirit for learning to be a head teacher may also have to do with the impact of her boyfriend Gang. Once Gang argued that "Some are born to have the ability to manage and rule, and others are not. The key to be a head teacher is to suppress students" (personal communication, Nov. 2, 2007). He seemed to be under the impression that Jiang was too soft to belong to the former category.

[241] After the student teaching was over, she recognized that it was unwise to "equate classroom work with this person (the head teacher)" (personal communication, Nov. 22, 2007).

by the decisions made by the mentor teacher. The student teacher does not have much control over her or his work environment. This may be especially true in China, considering role and attendance status have a tradition of being very significant. As far as Jiang was concerned, her half-hearted attitude toward student teaching and non-aggressive personality exacerbated the situation. So did Mr. Hang's misconception that the teacher student should avoiding working with an "irresponsible" head teacher and the lack of intervention from the college.

In the materials Jiang submitted to the Department, *Head Teacher Work Notebook* was missing. She left it blank. In the student teaching self-summary, she reported that she did all the work that a head teacher was expected to do. She also wrote,

> In my heart, I always felt that I did not have any power. Further, I would be gone in two months, and would not cause any threat (*goucheng weixi*) to them. Therefore, at the beginning of the student teaching, I always tried to become integrated (*dacheng yipian*) with the students, and kept one eye open and the other eye closed. However, I forgot how naughty (*wanlie*) these kids were by nature. They would consider your tolerance as weakness, and cross the line more and more. It was harder and harder to manage (*guan*) them afterward. (Self-summary, 2007, p. 1)

These words seemed to reveal Jiang's true feeling. As a student teacher learning to teach in other teacher's classroom, she lacked a sense of independence and power. She did not feel that she was a "real" teacher or the class was hers. She did not feel obligated to or responsible for the class either. She held that the students were "naughty" and needed to be "threatened" by a "real" teacher with authority. Being friends with them would not help her "manage" them but motivate them to further test her limit. What made the situation worse could be that she was isolated and no field instructor was available to support her and challenge her thinking.

Jiang said the above words based on her contacts with Class 4 at several nights. All the encounters spoke to one problem, that is, she was ill-prepared to handle issues relating to classroom management. She obviously lacked a diverse understanding of students' interests and needs and a repertoire of strategies to interact with them. The response she had toward student misbehavior was simplistic, negative, and inflexible.

On the night of the October 9th, while the teachers were grading the Chinese and English exams, Jiang went to check the class with my suggestion. After passing several quiet classes, we got to Class 4. It was in chaos. The desks and the benches were in disorder, and the students were chatting aloud. On my advice Jiang started to act her role as a (head) teacher. After the students put the desks and the benches in original order, she asked them to calm down and study for the next-day mathematics exam. The students were quiet for a moment, and then started talking.[242] Jiang said "Do not speak!" several times and the students repeated their response.[243] Two days later, Jiang substituted for Teacher Hang and asked the students to reflect upon their performance on the monthly exam as he suggested on a piece of paper. The situation got worse. She raised her voice to shout, "DO NOT SPEAK, EVYERONE!" But her statement appeared to have no impact.

From the night of the October 11th, Jiang did learn that some students might be poor in academic performance but were unique in certain areas. For example, Qing approached

[242] Some students did not seem to know how to study. They opened a book, stared at it, and looked bored after a moment.

[243] The situation turned better when the grade leader came and a student called Qing volunteered to stand behind the teacher desk and oversee the class. The teacher leader told Jiang that the work of head teacher was an art. The key was to underst students and let them "admire you from the heart" (personal communication, Oct. 9, 2007). A female could be a good head teacher too. Although promising on the spot that she would try, she did little to improve the situation.

her and told her that he loved sports and was once selected by a professional team to play basketball. Also, believing that the weak leadership of the "class cadres" (*banganbu*) contributed to the poor performance of the class in the monthly exam, he aspired to recommend himself as the new class president. Bai showed Jiang (and me) a great number of well-crafted pencil drawings. She was planning to learn dancing after middle school. While recognizing that "Few teachers care about these students and pay attention to them," Jiang contended that "They need to live (in the society) relying on their own thoughts and ways" (personal communication, Nov. 17, 2007). Put another way, what school teachers could do to prepare them for their future was minimal.

One night about a week before Jiang finished her student teaching, for a family issue Teacher Hang could not be present for his self-study session. Jiang went to supervise the class. According to her later description, the students could not stop talking to each other. She tried "both big and small talks" (*da daoli and xiao daoli*) (personal communication, Nov. 7, 2007) to calm them down. But nothing worked. She felt frustrated, "I want to leave (this place) sooner. I do not want to see this group of students any more" (personal communication, Nov. 7, 2007).

In the interview, when asked if she would consider being the head teacher of a class like Class 4 in the future, Jiang answered "yes" but continued, "I prefer to teach in a high school and like high school students more. They are easier to communicate with. They are more receptive to things you say. Middle school students like playing more, as they are young" (personal communication, Nov. 22, 2007). She assumed that high school students were easy to teach for their maturity, which was somewhat naïve and failed to

consider another set of difficulties she might face when teaching them. To avoid challenges or "difficult" students seemed to be the main stance she took on classroom management.

Learning about the School as a Site of Complexity

As suggested in both Chapter 1 and 10, the school is a site of complexity. Besides classroom teaching, the student teacher is confronted with the micro-politics of the host school or a series of complex relationships. Jiang's field experience was not an exception, even though she tried to withdraw herself from the complexity. What she encountered at Phoenix reflected what Kelchtermans and Ballet (2002) call "cultural-ideological" and "socio-professional" aspects of the school's micro-politics, which concerned the conflicting messages that Principal Song sent around schooling and the nuanced attitudes of teachers toward teaching, as well as the complicated principal-teacher, teacher-teacher, and student-teacher relationship.

Before going into details of this matter, connecting to what I have described in the section of "Situating Phoenix Middle School," I want to point out that the school as a site of complexity was visually embodied in the main campus decorations – quotes and slogans. As they were produced with the leadership of Principal Song, a brief analysis of them will also help us make sense of the complex thoughts he had for schooling.

Although the use of quotes and slogans is not a phenomenon unique to China, it certainly has a long and rich history in China (W. Zhu, 2008). There appeared little doubt that Phoenix inherited the tradition. "The (quotes and) slogans a group uses to evoke

specific responses may provide us with an index of the group's norms, values, and conceptual rationale for its claims" (Stewart, Smith, and Denton, 1995, 403; cited in X. Lu, 2004, pp. 51-52). Phoenix presented a large number of quotes and slogans originating from different times, with the obvious intention of mobilizing students to study hard in school.

The message that Phoenix conveyed through those quotes and slogans about learning was, indeed, complicated. In the first patch, the significance of individual attitude and effort toward learning were highlighted. Those slogans recently added to the campus gave attention to "independent," "cooperative," and "happy" learning. The emphasis was placed on the initiative and participation of students as both individuals and groups in a friendly classroom environment. Meanwhile, the two patches of quotes and slogans were similar in that both tended to understand knowledge as given.

Different purposes of schooling were also embedded within various artifacts placed on campus. In the first patch of quotes and slogans, the notion of schooling both as an approach to state building and as a means to individual enlightenment stood out. The vow in front of the ninth-grade building and the "Good News" boards suggested the existence of another purpose of learning, that is, to pass the High School Entrance Exam and enter a "key-point" high school. It was, in practice, framed at Phoenix as the most important goal.

As Seen from the Principal

Principal Song, who had taught history for nearly 30 years, was optimistic about the future of rural schools.[244] He ascertained that the investment of the Jiangsu government in rural education had been remarkable in the past several years. There had been projects such as "Three New and One Light" (*sanxin yiliang*), "Connect All Schools" (*xiaoxiao tong*), and "Four that Form a Complete Set" (*si peitao*).[245] Also, the county education bureau had been creating opportunities for rural school principals to learn new concepts of teaching and learning. A trip to Qin School, a well-known rural school in a nearby province, in early September was a case in point.

This trip triggered Principal Song's enthusiasm for a reform at Phoenix. He was amazed that within several years the principal of Qin School turned the "remote and isolated" (personal communication, Oct. 16, 2007) rural school from the lowest-performing school of the county into one of the best. He was also amazed to see that students there were confident, expressive, "very cheerful, and very relaxed" (personal communication, Oct. 16, 2007). They were "liberated and free" (personal communication, Oct. 16, 2007).

Principal Song described classes in Qin School as student-centered or "in the hands of students" (personal communication, Oct. 15, 2007). The teacher spoke about 15 minutes at maximum in a 45-mintue lesson. Students mainly learned by and among themselves (around the textbook). At this school there were three types of lessons: self-study, demonstration, and review. After a class period of independent study and group

[244] He became a history teacher after graduating from high school.
[245] These projects were aimed to equip rural schools with new desks, benches, computers, books, sport goods, and the like. However, my observation told me that these new resources were not being used at Phoenix by the students. During my stay, the computer room and the library were not open to them.

work, students presented their learning results on the blackboard or in other forms. The teacher played the role of a facilitator.

With the back-up from the county education bureau, Principal Song was introducing the Qin Model to the school at a fleeting speed. Teaching videos from Qin School were played at the teachers' meeting on the Sunday night after he was back from the visit. The six seventh-grade classrooms were re-arranged and re-decorated in a week. Slogans that reflected the teaching and learning ideas at Qin School were produced and placed to all corners of the campus. Officials from the county education bureau were soon invited to visit the new classrooms and observe the new lessons. It was Principal Song's firm belief that "Reform may lead to failure, but it will not work if there is no change" (personal communication, Oct. 16, 2007).

The responses of other administrators and the teachers were diverse toward the Qin Model. Teacher Wang, the vice principal in campus service, voiced that "If the entire country is learning the Qin Model, we will see hope for China" (personal communication, Oct. 15, 2007). Seeing that the essence of this model was to engage students, Teacher Xu and Teacher Huang, another two vice principals, believed that some teachers in Phoenix did a better job. The problem was that Principal Song did not appreciate or promote their practice for some reason.

In the office and cafeteria, some teachers held that it was not thoroughly planned-out to try on this model based on a few observed or videotaped demonstration lessons. Teachers should be sent to Qin School to learn for a certain amount of time, and attention of observation should be placed on how to organize a self-study lesson and lead

classroom discussion. Others told me that Principal Song knew little about teaching and learning and was doing the reform to impress the county education bureau. However, few teachers were willing to share their true thoughts with Principal Song. "Teachers only say good things (about the Qin Model)" (personal communication, Oct. 31, 2007), Teacher Xu was frank with me.

Although including "True education is a heart-to-heart activity" and "Be people-oriented and life-focused" to the second patch of slogans, Principal Song did not seem to have enacted the essence in his communication with the teachers. During my stay at Phoenix, plenty of teachers came to me and complained about him. One common complaint was that the principal "had no teachers in mind" (personal communication, Nov. 4, 2007) in thinking and action. The teachers were asked to supervise after-lunch and evening self-study sessions, but had not been paid for their work for over a year. An English teacher in the ninth-grade vomited a lot of blood in a classroom and was sent to the local hospital. At the teachers' meeting, Principal Song did not express his care or concern but used brutal words to indicate that the teacher should have overcame the small sickness. Another big complaint was that Principal Song always put on an expression that said "I know everything" (personal communication, Nov. 4, 2007). The teachers were not invited to participate in any decision-making process.

Despite the intention to place students in the center of the reform and the self-claim that students were his motivation to explore teaching, Principal Song's understanding of students seemed to echo the statement that teachers in the Chinese context tend to discuss students "in groups or categories" (J. Wang, Strong, & Odell, 2004, p. 805). Students

were basically a group concept in his words. He did not seem to know much about individual students. Meanwhile, there was evidence to suggest his indifference to the students, or at least to a certain group of students. The English teacher did not return to teach until two weeks later. During this period of time, no substitutes were arranged for his two classes on the "regular" track. Several students from the two classes went to the teacher's building every day to check if somebody could solve the problem (personal communication, Oct. 22, 2007). Because of the tone set by Principal Song at the teacher's meeting, few teachers or administrators offered to help but asked them to talk to the principal directly. The students could not find the principal.

One of the students who approached Jiang and me for help was Liu. Liu informed us that she came from a rural family in extreme poverty. Her mom was deaf and had difficulty in saving money. Her dad used to be "lazy" (personal communication, Nov. 7, 2007) but was changing after seeing the hardship she was having at school. Her older sister ran away with a classmate in middle school. At home she had a five-year-old brother to take care of. She usually had no or little lunch and dinner, and felt hungry constantly. Her academic performance was good enough to enter a "fast"-tracked class. Her family could not afford to have her board on campus, and she gave up the opportunity. No tuition waiver or financial support was offered from the school.[246]

Jiang praised Principal Song for his courage to experiment with a new way of teaching and learning. Although acknowledging the value of the Qin Model, she believed that

[246] Some teachers reported that the principal kept the tuition funds that the school should distribute to over 200 students from poor families.

> It is not necessary to completely follow others. As some teachers have said, this model was adopted in Qin School under a unique circumstance, that is, teachers there could not teach. They (Phoenix) have several really good teachers. Why let the students act wild (*hunao*)? I felt that sometimes the students were acting wild. (Personal communication, Nov. 22, 2007)

On how the two ninth-grade classes were treated, Jiang commented, "If (they were) the key-point classes, there might be no substitute for the first lesson. But the school would certainly arrange a substitute starting from the second lesson on" (personal communication, Oct. 23, 2007). In the school investigation report, she further exclaimed, "No matter how a school cares about those students who will enter key-point high schools, (it) cannot throw two classes away. How the issue is addressed concerns the future of a good number of students" (2007, p. 3).

Jiang seemed to have gained some sense of the school as a site of complexity through the student teaching. She ended up her investigation report with

> A family is a miniature of the society, not to say a school. It must be complicated. It is also normal to have arguments. The society is like this. It is unavoidable for a school in the society to be like this. As a school, the base to educate the future of the country, the emphasis should be placed on students. Only this can live up to the title of "school." As a whole, Phoenix Middle School is moving toward the reform and is brave to take and absorb new stuff. This is the defining feature of this school. Hope that this school will pay more attention to the status of the teachers and the growth of the students, as well as the external factors. (2007, p. 3)

Meanwhile, Jiang agreed that for the principal the most important thing was to improve the performance of the school in the High School Entrance Exam. "Only when this school has a good performance will students come to the school" (personal communication, Nov. 22, 2007). She further explained by "good performance" she meant that a good number of students were admitted to the key-point high schools.

> In the society (the school) is mostly evaluated based on the rate of students who go to the key-point high schools. If parents see that a school has a lot of graduates (to go to the key-point high schools), they will consider sending their kids (to the school). This is the reality. (Personal communication, Nov. 22, 2007)

As Seen from the Teachers

At Phoenix, coupled with the tracking practice, different teaching attitudes existed among the teachers. Those who were teaching the two "fast"-tracked ninth-grade classes were highly engaged. They were working long hours every day in hope that their students would perform well in the High School Entrance Exam. None of them approached me to complain about the principal's leadership.

Some of those who were confident about their teaching ability but placed to teach "regular" classes thought and acted differently. Take Teacher Zhu for example. According to Teacher Huang and other teachers at the school, she used to be enthusiastic about teaching Chinese and maintain a close relationship with students. She even organized students for field trips on weekends. She also won awards in teaching competitions at different levels. Since she was assigned to two "regular" classes, she had been "irresponsible" (personal communication, Oct. 30, 2007). She sat in the back of the classroom reading a book and let students learn by themselves. Only when an exam was approaching would she engage students in preparation, according to herself (personal communication, Nov. 4, 2007).

In Jiang's eyes, the majority of the teachers were "not considering it (teaching) as their business, or placing it in the center of their life. It is a job on the side or something they do at their spare time" (personal communication, Nov. 22, 2007). Her roommate

Teacher Bai asked her to cover an evening session in order to play mahjong with several other teachers (personal communication, Oct. 10, 2007). Several times she saw that Teacher Bai left for mahjong after lunch and did not return until mid night (personal communication, Oct. 30, 2007). Although she was not trained to teach middle school mathematics, Teacher He, the head teacher of Class 4, asked if she could cover several mathematics lessons. To play mahjong, Teacher He also asked her to oversee the evening self-study session.

Jiang was also informed that Teacher Qu was an outstanding Chinese teacher. For several years, she was not given a class on the "fast" track to teach. She became obsessed with mahjong. Things did not turn around until she started going to the local church and was given the chance to teach the high-tracked eighth-grade class. Despite this, she was unhappy that she was not teaching the ninth grade. She disliked various practices of Principal Song and had not talked with him for quite a while.

In the school investigation report, Jiang cited Teacher Qu's expression that "Phoenix is a saline and alkaline land (*yanjian di*) at which teachers can not grow. But soon after they go out, they will become backbone teachers (*gugan jiaoshi*) at other schools" (2007, p. 3). Following this, she remarked that "(I) don't know if this is the misfortune of Phoenix or the big fortunate of the society" (2007, p. 3).

On the relationship of the teachers with the principal, Jiang pointed out the disrespect of the principal for the teachers on the one hand. "As a leader with vision, he should value teachers with ability, be considerate and kind to people of talent, and care about the teacher and staff" (investigation report, 2007, p. 2). On the other hand, she

acknowledged that it was not easy for the principal to lead a group of teachers who took teaching as their "job on the side." "As an outsider, I would say that the teachers should be more devoted to teaching. But if I were a teacher there, probably I would also complain about the principal" (personal communication, Nov. 22, 2007), she concluded.

In the school investigation report, Jiang also recalled that in her early days of the student teaching she felt the school was "in harmony and solidarity" (2007, p. 2). As time went by, she began to note that the collegial relationship there was "problematic."

> Take the Chinese team for example. Few teachers are truly friends to each other. Since ancient time literate people have had the bad habit of scorning each other (*wenren xiangqing*). This is also a tradition of China. This tradition is carried forward here. Everybody puts their self interest in the first place. (School investigation report, 2007, p. 2)

A few teachers also offered Jiang tips on how to deal with the complexity in the future. For example, Teacher Zhu suggested that as a new teacher she should "do your own work and do a good job in your own classroom. Be strict with yourself and have some achievement to your credit. ...The most important thing is to have your students perform well on the exams" (personal communication, Nov. 4, 2007). Jiang nodded her head. However, after going back to her dorm, she expressed, "The collegial relationship here is too complex. I don't want to work immediately. I will concentrate on taking the GRE" (personal communication, Nov. 4, 2007).

As illustrated above, micro-politics was an important part of Jiang's student teaching experience. Through the student teaching, she went beyond the "front stage" to the "back stage" and got to see a snapshot of the micro-political realities of the school. The principal conveyed contradictory signals about how to understand students and teachers

and their learning and teaching. The attitudes of teachers toward teaching were nuanced associated with the type of class they were teaching. "A strong climate of mistrust, conflict, suspicion and gossip" (Kelchtermans & Ballet, 2002, p. 115) seemed to exist among them too.

As observed from Jiang's language use, the college's preparation for future teachers in this regard was limited, if not present at all. The discourse she drew on to understand the school's complexity tended to be commonsensical. She noted the conflict of interests between and within the principal and the teachers without consciously referring to any professional knowledge in this area. Although having a more balanced view of the two groups, she lacked a broad repertoire of strategies and tactics to "establish, safeguard or restore desirable working conditions" (Kelchtermans & Ballet, 2002, p. 117). In part due to her status as a student teacher, she felt vulnerable and powerless. She chose to avoid the teaching profession first.

(Not) Learning about the Local Community

At the outset, Jiang was uninterested in going beyond the main street of Fan. When I first proposed that we take a look at Hao Village where Gang was placed to work, she answered, "It is far away from the school and there is no transportation to get there" (personal communication, Oct. 8, 2007). This village was about 2 miles away from Phoenix, and took about 20 minutes to bicycle there.

That night when Jiang and I were walking on the playground after dinner, Gang joined us. I suggested that he accompany Jiang and me to Hao Village at his

convenience.[247] Jiang was surprised to hear her own name, "I need to go there too" (personal communication, Oct. 10, 2007)? I followed, "It is rare for you to find a rural school to student teach. Why not make use of the opportunity to know its surroundings" (personal communication, Oct. 10, 2007)? Gang also joked, "Please go. I cannot say for sure that I will not build a three-room house in that village to live there" (personal communication, Oct. 10, 2007). Finally, Jiang nodded her head but turned to Gang, "If so, you will live there by yourself" (personal communication, Oct. 10, 2007).

Jiang started taking an interest in the local community a week later. According to the teachers, the local market was fully active on certain days every month. On these days people poured into the market and bought groceries, and it looked as if they were celebrating a festival. As I had no experience in "catching a fair" (*ganji*), I planned to take a look. After breakfast on the morning of the October 17th, Jiang voluntarily joined me to the market.

At the market Jiang was amazed by the scale and the diversity of items. She also enjoyed observing such as tiny chickens were sticking together in a basket to keep warm, an old couple were collaborating to make fried bread sticks, and a handicapped mid-aged man was repairing shoes for customers with a big smile on face. That night in Teacher Hang's office, with excitement she uploaded some photos we took to share with her college peers online. "I never thought that it could be so fun to catch a fair. My hometown also has the tradition of catching a fair but I was never interested. … A person

[247] It turned out that with the title "village official" he was not working in the village. He was serving as a support person in the township government. He had been to the village several times for certain issues with other officials from the township government, but had "never truly looked at the village" (personal communication, Oct. 10, 2007). His explanation was that the township government did not provide him with a bicycle. Meanwhile, he was willing to find a time to take us there.

sometimes needs a new outside source to get inspired" (personal communication, Oct. 17, 2007), she reflected.

After lunch, seeing that Teacher Hang did not arrange any work for Jiang, I decided to take another field trip. She, again, expressed the interest to join me. We borrowed two bicycles from two teachers. After exploring the Fan Culture Station[248], we headed to Hao Village. Jiang was excited throughout the trip, and used my camera to take photos of things such as rice paddies, poplar trees, strange plants, and the sunset.

Two observations left Jiang with a deep impression. First, right after entering the village, we saw the Christian church that Teacher Qu usually went to. Two ladies, who were flipping corn in front of the church, kindly opened the door and gave us a tour. The church was built six years ago based on donations from local residents. Both ladies were extremely proud of the church that could hold several hundred people. They could not read but converted to Christianity in the early 1980s. This church would be packed with local residents on Sunday mornings, according to them.

Second, diagonally across from the church, there was a two-room house with the words "the Benevolent Housing Project" (*aixin anju gongcheng*) on the front wall. Mr. Wang, a disabled veteran who served in the Liberation War and the War to Resist America and Assist Korea, was living in this house with his wife. He showed us the artifacts he had kept in a handkerchief for about half a century. Speaking of their current life, Mrs. Wang had tears in eyes. One of their grandchildren was in his early twenties

[248] According to Gang, the Fan Culture Station had been reported at the provincial level as a model in promoting the development of rural culture. It was new, including a fitness room, a Chinese chess room, a theatre, and the like. But all the rooms were locked. Jiang and I could not find any staff members.

and lost his leg in a motorcycle accident. The maker of the accident ran away. To save money to make his grandchild walk again, the old couple hadn't had any meat or tofu for a year.

Jiang shared the trip experience with her boyfriend Gang. Sympathizing with the situation of Mr. and Mrs. Wang, she asked him to pay them a visit with gifts. Gang responded that she was just "having fun" (*wan*) (personal communication, Oct. 19, 2007) to visit the village, taking photos and talking with local residents. It was "naïve" (personal communication, Oct. 19, 2007) to even consider him visiting the couple.

> What if the village committee finds out? ....In the interview for the Civic Servant Exam, the interviewer said to me, "Rural issues are complicated. What you learned in college from the textbook is good but not applicable. You must maintain congruence with the village CCP branch and the like." (Gang, personal communication, Oct. 19, 2007)

With Gang's participation, Jiang and I had another trip to the township nursery home for the aged on the afternoon of the November 2nd. On the way back, we saw a good number of slogans pasted on telegraph poles. They were brush-written on red paper around the upcoming township-wide election of people's representatives. They read such as "Elect representatives for people and people choose people's representatives," "Achieve (the goal that) people rule and make decisions and do well in the election of people's representatives," "Strengthen the construction of grassroots democracy and politics, and do well in the election of people's representatives," and "Fully promote democracy and manage affairs according to law," to just name a few. Seeming these slogans, Gang mentioned lightly that the decision to keep all the representatives previously assigned/elected had already been made by the township government.

Jiang and I also visited Chong Village on the November 3rd (Saturday). Long, a student in Class 4, came from this village and served as our guide. He sat alone in the last row of the class and was usually quiet. His test scores suggested that he was poor in academics. He came to my door in the early morning, and spent the whole day with us. When with us, he was not shy. He was a responsible guide, showing us around and telling us what he knew about the community.

The first place we went to was Long's living place. It was clean and well-organized. Both his parents and older brother were outside working as migrant workers throughout the year. He was left at home to live with his grandparents. His grandparents were hospitable and treated us with big and sweet kakis they picked from the trees in the yard. They, like most of the local residents, were making a living on raising pigs, polygonum multiflorum (*heshouwu*), and other crops.

Big red flowers, which I had never seen, were blooming in front of a house. Long told us they were called "yam flowers" (*sanyu hua*) by local people. The house was new and huge but made of straw and chopped mud. We thought the family was poor and couldn't afford one made of bricks and cement. It turned out that the house owner, who served as village accountant before retirement, favored the house made of straw and mud. In his eyes, it was warm in winter and cool in summer. It was also solid and could last longer than a regular brick-made house. Afterwards, we saw plenty of houses like this.

Jiang and I were enthusiastic about everything we saw. She had a particular curiosity about local plants, and seemed to know a lot about them as well.[249] Gang joined us in this

[249] Since I evoked her interest in the local community, she had been studying various plants around. Once

trip too. His understanding in this regard seemed to be very limited. He even confused the rape plant (*youcai*) with radish. It was also easy for him to get bored with a place. We wrapped up the trip sooner than I expected.

Standing behind Jiang's indifference to the local community during the initial phrase of the student teaching was the assumption that the education of kids was independent of their family and community. This, more or less, indicated the overlook of the college's preparation for prospective teachers in this area. Jiang gradually developed an interest in exploring the local community, which illustrated the point that the attention/excitement of the student teacher on/with the local place could be fostered. It, once again, suggested the significance of having a field instructor who valued contextualized teaching and an inquiry approach to teacher education to support the student teacher.

Although the time Jiang and I spent in the local community was short and the observations we made were superficial, it was noticeable that in the community there were rich natural, cultural, economical, and political resources that teachers could tap to boost the engagement of students in school and to build their connection with the local community. In addition, during those trips the primary perspective that Jiang took to look at the community remained personal and pristine. Her boyfriend, more or less, played the role of prohibiting her from further exploring the community or involving in local issues in a proactive manner.

Aligned with my influence in the field, Jiang spoke of local knowledge and culture from the perspective of teaching in the later interview. "After you came I felt that there

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she took some red fruits to my dorm and asked what they were.

was actually a lot, a lot of stuff in the countryside. Students took it for granted. But later we went to take a look and felt it was particularly fresh and novel (*xinqi*)" (personal communication, Nov. 22, 2007). When asked about the value of the "freshness and novelty," she continued, "If considered from teaching, it is to let students understand more about the countryside, the place they live. Maybe we can let students learn something from it, such as the local culture and issues around daily life" (personal communication, Nov. 22, 2007). Did she embody this in her student teaching? The following section concerns this question.

Learning Different/Limited Ways to Teach Chinese

On Teacher Hang's Teaching and Mentoring

Teacher Hang, Jiang's mentor, had been teaching Chinese there for about 25 years. In the first 20 years, he always taught a graduating class. He was a "subject leader" (*xueke daitouren*) of the county and "researcher" (*yanjiuyuan*) of three town(ship) schools located in the same area. In the meantime, he was preparing for the Textbook and Pedagogy Exam (*jiaocai jiaofa kaoshi*) to be provided by the county education bureau. Every teacher over 50 years old was asked to take the exam.

In the words of Teacher Hang, new ways of teaching were prominent. After observing a Chinese lesson in a key-point ninth-grade class, he highly appraised it as the teacher did not lecture but proposed several questions for the students to think and respond. "She is an excellent teacher. She likes exploring teaching… She is fostering the students' courage to speak" (personal communication, Oct. 8, 2007), he said to Jiang and

me. When with Jiang, he always highlighted the necessity of having students learn in an "independent, inquiry and collaborative" manner, the importance of classroom discussion, and the inseparability of Chinese and other subjects in social studies, among others.

Nevertheless, what I observed in real classroom was that Teacher Hang took a conventional approach to teach Chinese. He tended to treat each reading in the textbook, whether it is "intensive," "extensive," or "special topic" in design, the same and to spend a great number of time decoding the language, structure, and content. In almost all the lessons I observed, he used discussion. But it was usually the case that he asked a question and gave the students in groups several minutes to identify the answer from the textbook and read it aloud. Minimal time was allocated for authentic thinking and expression.

Teacher Hang did not seem to have high expectations of the students either. Several readings were arranged in the textbook around the Great Wall, one of the "special topics." He taught the first one as an "intensive" reading and ignored others. When asked my feedback on the lesson, I suggested that we provide the students with some photos or other materials on the Great Wall or/and choose another teaching strategy (such as let the students explore and report their understanding of the Great Wall in class) to better embody the characteristics of a "special learning topic." He responded with "Even if with photos, the students could only gain some visual impression" and "There is nothing the students can talk about (the Great Wall)" (personal communication, Oct. 18, 2007).[250]

[250] I followed, "It takes time (for the students to formulate and express their authentic thoughts). But it would be just fine if the students could say one or two sentences" (personal communication, Oct. 18, 2007). Jiang ended the conversation with "The students may feel the same about the Great Wall" (personal

Another example had to do with student work on "The Parent's Heart" (*fumu de xin*). After going through the structure, plot, and language use with the students, Teacher Hang finished the lesson by asking them to continue writing (*xuxie*) the story. All the students wrote that the family of six would live a decent life with the support of the rich lady or by working hard on their own, which did not reflect a sense of sadness that the author painted throughout. I was curious enough to ask if the students should continue the story considering the defining characteristic of the text/author. Here was his response: "It is already good for the students to add a few sentences (to the story). How can they think that much" (personal communication, Nov. 1, 2007)? He did not scrutinize his teaching to realize that the writing feature of the text/author was unmentioned.

Teacher Hang appeared to know the local community well. He listed the villages of Fan Township for me in no time. When I showed interest in the story of the local hero Phoenix, he quickly handed (Jiang and) me a piece of material. In teaching, Teacher Hang, to some degree, considered local knowledge and culture as well. A series of activities on patriotic education were arranged at the end of a unit. On "A Plan for Patriotic Education," he requested that the students write about their plan of visiting the home village of the revolutionary hero.

However, the plans that the students submitted were basically the same. It was said that they would first visit the "district (*qu*) library" to look for relevant information. There was no district in the area, and the students copied it from the sample provided in the textbook. Teacher Hang took no actions to correct them. On his advice, the students also wrote that they would visit the village committee and talk with the village head

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communication, Oct. 18, 2007).

about the hero, which assumed that there was only one (official) version of the story. Further, following the plan there should be activity implementation. Teacher Hang put in the lesson plan that the class would organize the materials they collected from the visit, host a meeting on "Martyr Phoenix in my Mind," and write a report on the activities they had on patriotic education. But none of these happened in actuality.

Teacher Hang took his work of mentoring Jiang seriously. For each lesson to be taught by Jiang, he requested a complete plan and provided his feedback. The feedback concerned a lesson's important and difficult teaching points, teaching procedure, the mark of time for each teaching section, design of blackboard writing, and the like. For Jiang's reference, he also offered his own lesson plan book. He suggested that Jiang write a reflective summary after observing or teaching a lesson. More importantly, for most of the lessons that Jiang gave, he held a post-observation conference that lasted about 30 minutes.

Teacher Hang's meeting with Jiang after a lesson observation shared several characteristics. Although starting with open questions such as "What do you feel about the lesson?," "What are you happy with?," and "What do you feel confused about?" (personal communication, Oct. 11, 2007), he tended to dominate the conversation and take a direct approach to advise Jiang. He provided comprehensive feedback, covering blackboard writing, time distribution to each teaching section, the transition between sections, teacher/student-student interaction, the degree to which Jiang showed familiarity with the text, and how she dealt with a specific student or issue. The meeting

was usually organized. He first praised Jiang on several points, switched to focus on suggestions for further improvement, and concluded with encouraging words.

Compared with Jing's mentor at Spring County Middle School, Teacher Hang at Phoenix was much more experienced in mentoring the student teacher. The advice he gave Jiang was more systematic and detailed. Meanwhile, although coming from two schools in different social status categories and probably having different understandings and expectations of their students, the two mentor teachers resembled each other in that both revealed a stark contrast between conceptualizing and practicing Chinese education. Although underlining flexible/new ways of teaching in their mentoring, they bored their respective student teacher with a single/traditional teaching model. Neither was successful in implementing discussion in classroom.

Indeed, Jiang started feeling bored with student teaching at the end of October.

> (I) feel that it is just so so (*jiu name hui shi*) to teach. It is repetitive to plan a lesson, give a lesson, and grade (student) work.[251] In class (I) pay attention to unfamiliar words and terms, blackboard writing, discussion, and time control … I felt fresh about teaching at the beginning. After learning a little bit, I feel it is just so so. I don't know how to change the format. It looks as if there is no alternative. When giving a class, (I should) introduce (the text to students), examine students' preparation (for the class), and then start the real lesson. In the middle I must have students discuss something. Then I summarize and give classroom work. It is no fun (*meijing*) to have this type of class. No wonder will teachers burn out. (I) want to find another way of teaching, but cannot find (it). (Personal communication, Oct. 31, 2007)

As plainly expressed in the quotation above, Teacher Hang's modeling and mentoring pushed Jiang to further simplify teaching and understand it in a narrow and

[251] Jiang did not grade any student work. Teacher Hang even graded the work that she gave in class. (Jiang wanted to but found that he had already completed the grading.) After finishing grading, he usually asked her to take a look.

technical sense. It read as if she only considered teaching at the micro-procedural level. When I asked about Teacher Hang's guidance in the interview, the first and foremost thing that came to her mind was also teaching procedure. [252] "First introduce, then exam students' preparation, then talk about (*jiang*) the text, then give a summary, and finally provide classroom work (*ketang zuoye*)" (personal communication, Nov. 22, 2007). From this perspective she described teaching as "just so so."

Jiang's statement above also suggested that during student teaching she had already started the process of burning out. "...it seems strange to consider student-teachers to be experiencing this kind of stress. Student-teachers however, may be vulnerable to the experience of burnout symptoms as they are new to the profession and may have few or limited coping strategies on which to draw" (Fives, Hamman, & Olivarez, 2007, p. 918). In Jiang's case, she got fed up with the procedural way of teaching after about a month of practice. It was "no fun," but she could not find any alternatives. Besides the "repetitive" instructional practice, she was also, consciously or unconsciously, bothered by her ambiguous role in the class and the challenge she was facing in classroom management.

Overall, Jiang sensed that Teacher Hang "spoke a lot about theory and didn't use much. It was like talking about stratagems on paper (*zhishang tanbing*)" (personal communication, Nov. 22, 2007). For example, "I felt that he had discussion for

[252] Jiang also remembered that Teacher Hang asked her to study the textbook and practice blackboard writing. The former supports Wang's (2001) argument that with the influence of mandate curriculum Chinese mentors, generally, highlighted the importance of studying the textbook when interacting with novices. As for the latter, Jiang's handwriting did not seem to live up to the expectation of both Teacher Hang and his students. During the first several weeks of her student teaching, while she was writing on the blackboard, some students were laughing over their sleeves. Several students even wrote about this in their composition on "A _____ Lesson." For example, one put that "The characters that Jiang hand writes are not like what a Chinese teacher does. There is a world of difference between her writing and our Chinese teacher's."

discussion's sake" and "the students did not know how to discuss or where the discussion would go" (personal communication, Nov. 22, 2007). If student teaching again, she "would not look for a mentor teacher like Teacher Hang ... They are conventional and don't like extending or introducing new stuff to the classroom. Their way of teaching is traditional too. ... He is after all about the age of my father (and it is not that easy for me to express my ideas)" (personal communication, Nov. 22, 2007).

On the Innovative Ways to Teach

In the field, Teacher Hang was the most important but not the only person for Jiang to learn from. Most of the teachers at the school gave Jiang advice on how to become a teacher. For instance, Teacher Huang advised that a beginning teacher should speak aloud, be passionate about teaching, and be responsible for students (personal communication, Oct. 7, 2007). Teacher Xu suggested that she observe Teacher Qu's writing lesson (personal communication, Oct. 31, 2007). According to the materials Jiang handed to the Department, besides Teacher Hang two other teachers had an impact on her.

One was Principal Song. On the afternoon of the October 16th, instead of observing a public lesson, he went to sit in on Jiang's writing lesson on "At the Weekend" and "I Love ____Season." Immediately after the observation, he met Teacher Hang, Jiang, and me in his office to debrief the lesson. In alignment with his advocate for the Qin Model, the main point that Principal Song made was that the lesson should be organized in a way to encourage the students to speak about "the beautiful, the positive, and the upward

experience and feeling" (personal communication, Oct. 16, 2007).[253] "Rural children are afraid to talk and don't have much to talk about either" (personal communication, Oct. 16, 2007) but the two topics happened to be what the students were familiar with. Focusing on student speaking in the lesson would "create a good classroom environment" and "motivate the students (to learn)" (personal communication, Oct. 16, 2007). In a report to the Department, Jiang repeated Principal Song's suggestion and continued that "This will fully embody the speaking purpose of Chinese, and enhance students' ability to express orally and in writing simultaneously" (Student Teaching Status Report, Oct. 25, 2007).

The other was Teacher Qu. Although she was teaching the same grade as Teacher Hang, for some reason Jiang and I did not meet her until a public lesson arranged at the end of October. This lesson and two others that Teacher Qu gave, to some extent, pulled Jiang back from boredom. Teacher Qu "is good at leading and introducing the stuff that particularly interests students to classroom" (personal communication, Nov. 22, 2007). In the lesson on "The Parent's Heart," she placed emphasis on how the author wrote the text instead of the plot itself (personal communication, Nov. 1, 2007). When teaching "Two Ancient Poems," she added a popular song and several other poems to make the theme more apparent (personal communication, Oct. 31, 2007).

In all the three lessons Jiang and I observed, Teacher Qu valued the thinking and expression of her students. Around "The Parent's Heart," she invited the students to debate about if the couple in poverty should give away one of their kids to a wealthy lady.

[253] Phoenix was similar to Spring County Middle School in that writing was the primary place for the students to write about their life, including rural realities. For example, in the writing section of the monthly exam, students were asked to write an essay with title prescribed as "It is Good to Have a Home." A student wrote that one of his neighbors committed suicide by drinking a bottle of pesticide. Another student stated that her family favored her younger brother and she was living with grandparents.

With her suggestion, the class also devoted the Chinese self-study session every Monday to sharing and appreciating the compositions/works they had recently read. The session was facilitated by the student themselves.[254]

Both Teacher Qu's teaching and Principal Song's mentoring provided powerful examples against the stereotypical assumption that the Program made in placing student teachers, that is, rural school teachers could not teach or mentor. However, as will be presented below, I did not observe any influence of the two teachers, Teacher Qu in particular, on Jiang's teaching practices in the field. With different attitudes towards the innovative way of teaching identified from the host school, neither she nor Jing expressed the desire to experiment with it in their respective classroom. I was slightly disappointed but not surprised to see this. After all, it was rare for them to observe a lesson that was given in a non-traditional way.

On Jiang's Teaching Practices

Before I joined her, Jiang had taught two lessons in Class 4. Following her second lesson, Teacher Hang asked the students to write a composition on "A ____ Lesson."[255] Many students wrote about Jiang's. The students were impressed by her mandarin Chinese[256], but tended to think negatively about her teaching. The biggest problem that

[254] She also said to Jiang and me in private, "Luckily we have only one 'fast' class in the eighth grade. Otherwise, I could never be able to do this" (personal communication, Nov. 4, 2007).
[255] Jiang substituted the lesson for him, which meant he did not observe her second lesson.
[256] For example, a student surnamed Xu wrote that "Teacher Jiang speaks differently from us, the country people. She speaks mandarin, and the language we speak, if described in the country language, has the big sweet tomato accent (*da sanyu qiang*). Once Teacher Jiang asked me something three or four times in a row, and I couldn't understand a sentence. I was confused too. Why am I a country person?" It read as if the student was blaming himself for not speaking mandarin well. Later at Teacher Qu's brother's house, I found that this place abounded with sweet tomatoes and local people used "big sweet tomatoes" to describe themselves.

many students pointed out was Jiang's lack of passion for teaching. To illustrate, a student surnamed Wang contended that "It was too boring. It was given in a way that did not interest me at all. Teacher Jiang's lesson had no humor, no fun at all. There was no smiley face. No sound and no color (*wusheng wuse*)."

While I was at Phoenix, Jiang taught six lessons, four on reading and two others on writing. About the major problem that the students identified, she did not take any visible measures to solve it.[257] She spoke softly and flatly most of the time in classroom. (Sometimes I could hear clearly what the teacher in the next room was saying.) Noting that the students were chatting aloud, she would raise her voice to shout at them. Chances for this were high when Teacher Hang was absent.

About her general sense of the student teaching, Jiang put, "It was OK. For others student teaching may be just a form, but for me it appeared not to be this way. I learned plenty of stuff" (personal communication, Nov. 22, 2007). While acknowledging that the most difficult part was to "position self as a teacher" as opposed to a "college student" (personal communication, Nov. 22, 2007), she reflected,

> I had better be confident. After all those students are students. They need you to teach them a lot and you have learned much more than they have. … You are also much bigger than them. Then it is not necessary to be too anxious in front of them. (Personal communication, Nov. 22, 2007)

Jiang was certain that she learned how to plan a lesson through the student teaching. I was under the impression that she planned the lessons based on the teaching guide I described in Chapter 8 and another reference book she bought. Not much authenticity or

[257] The students' written responses to her teaching did not seem to upset her. I audio-taped several of her lessons for her to listen to. She did not seem to realize the problem either.

creativity was involved. She did not return to other sources such as college coursework, research papers, and online lesson plans for inspirations.

With regard to classroom teaching, although recognizing that she was more "casual" (*shuiyi*) when giving the last several lessons, Jiang did not feel satisfied (personal communication, Nov. 22, 2007).

> Maybe I was able to teach through a lesson. But there were a lot of incoherent places. Especially when I got to the middle part, my brain all of sudden went empty and I did not know what to say. I took a look at the lesson plan on the table and taught whatever I saw. Maybe it is because I did not have a structural understanding of the lesson. (Personal communication, Nov. 22, 2007)

Both Teacher Hang and I observed her progress in offering the students feedback. A case in point was that she asked Zheng, one of the underachievers in Class 4, to read a paragraph of "Yanzi Goes to the Chu Kingdom" (*Yanzi Shichu*) in the first lesson I observed. Her subsequent response was so mean that it hurt the enthusiasm of the students for the class and the students were quiet and hesitant to answer her questions during the rest of the lesson.[258] She sighed immediately after the class, "I could not even continue at the end, feeling the class was extremely dull (*chenmen*)" (personal communication, Oct. 11, 2007). With our reminder, in the next class she fixed the accident by asking Zheng to read again and responding to him with praise, "Quite good. You read fluently, especially when you..." (personal communication, Oct. 12, 2007). I also noted that she was getting better in re-directing the students. After two students reported several similar slogans on protecting the Great Wall, she said to the class: "Let's see if there are any different or unique ones" (personal communication, Nov. 19, 2007).

[258] According to Teacher Hang, that day in the morning reading session he mobilized the students to keep high spirits for the coming lesson as a doctoral student from the US would observe the class (personal communication, Oct. 11, 2007).

To answer the question posed at the end of the last section, although enjoying exploring the local community with me, Jiang had never incorporated her field observations into classroom teaching or provided any opportunities for the students to talk about the local in classroom. Here was her explanation:

> I would love to insert something else into classroom teaching, such as the things that I experienced before or happened in history. I like sharing those with students. But when you and Teacher Hang were there, there was no way that I could say these things (Personal communication, Nov. 22, 2007).

Jiang was of the opinion that local and personal knowledge should not be part of classroom knowledge especially when there were outside observers. My interpretation was that she had learned this from her "apprenticeship of observation" (Lortie, 2003). Such observations could be easily found at Phoenix. In the cafeteria, I always heard the teachers talking about local issues. For example, while having breakfast on the October 11th, they were sharing the news that a village in Fan was under fast development and the female village head, who shared the same name as another revolutionary hero in the area, had been recently elected to attend the people's representative convention at the prefecture level. The construction of the county port and the industrial district would also help develop Fan. Meanwhile, they were concerned that these developments would lead to a decrease in Fan population and consequently the student source of Phoenix. Also with enthusiasm, they asked about Jiang's hometown. In sharp contrast with this, in the observed classrooms, I rarely, if not never, saw any teachers speaking about or discussing local issues with their students.

In addition, like Teacher Hang she taught issues around an item far away in an abstract manner. For example, she carried over his teaching and taught the students to

write two slogans and a plan to protect the Great Wall. (Teacher Hang was not there observing the lesson for a family issue.) The problem surfaced the students' discussion was obvious, that is, the Great Wall was an abstract concept for them. They did not know any specific problems facing the Great Wall and had no clue as to how to protect it accordingly. Even with my reminder, Jiang stuck to Teacher Jiang's lesson plan and highlighted the format but not the content of a plan (personal communication, Oct. 19, 2007).

Teacher Hang often said to Jiang that teaching should be undertaken based on "the situation of student learning" (*xueqing*). However, since he never specified what he meant by the term, Jiang was still unsure about its meaning after the practicum. Despite this, she maintained in the interview that due to time and test pressures "I feel it is hard to teach students in classroom in accordance with their aptitude (*yincai shijiao*), considering their situation, or in a responsive way" (personal communication, Nov. 22, 2007).

This echoed her reflection in the field that "I wanted to ask underachievers questions, but find that it is very difficult to do so in class" (personal communication, Oct. 31, 2007). On the whole, after the student teaching, she believed that a teacher could not control or respond to the difference of students but basically teach them the same content. "A teacher can give what s/he can teach to students and how much it is received is a personal issue of students" (personal communication, Nov. 22, 2007), she argued.

It was out of question that the field experience helped Jiang learn to teach Chinese in such as planning a lesson, responding to students, and building a sense of confidence in teaching. Meanwhile, her lived/felt experience confirms Britzman's (2003) argument that

teachers are "shaped by their work as well as shaping their work" (p. 25). The available prevailing or hidden discourses, such as peers were inclined not to take student teaching seriously, other forms of knowledge than textbook should not enter classroom, and new ways of teaching were often talked about but not acted upon, appeared to have served as Jiang's justifications for not challenging existing patterns or committing herself to working for change. As a consequence of the student teaching, like Jing, Jiang showed the disposition to embrace the banking model of education (Freire, 2003).

Conclusion

In this chapter, based on the observational, interview, and artifact data, I have gone to great lengths to present Jiang's student teaching at Phoenix Middle School, a rural community-based school. Overall, I sense that rich opportunities of learning to teach were embedded within the school and the local community but Jiang missed many plenty of them for structural, contextual, and personal reasons. With a sense of isolation, vulnerability, and powerlessness, through the field experience, she learned the procedural aspects of classroom teaching and developed a tendency to shy away from the micro-politics of the school and thus the profession of teaching.

Phoenix revealed itself as a site of complexity. As embodied in the large number of quotes and slogans on campus, the school was confronted with contested purposes of schooling. Besides educating students based on the two explicit goals of the state in schooling, namely, for the renaissance of the nation (at least rhetorically) and the development of individuals, the school was striving to send more graduates to key-point

high schools every year and enhance its credibility and acceptance in the local society.[259] Within the purposes, giving attention to on-going issues of the local community appeared negligible.

Accompanied by the contested purposes of schooling was Principal Song's discrepancy between and within his perception of learning and teaching and treatment of students and teachers. Implicit in his adoption of the Qin Model in Phoenix was his faith in the capability and potential of individual students to learn and grow. Somewhat contradictory to this, it appeared that he understood students as groups and tended to ignore those on the low track. In contrast with the expression of education as heart-to-heart exchange, he did not seem to fully respect teachers and engage them in the process of decision-making either.

Teachers at Phoenix also sent Jiang mixed signals about how to be a teacher in this particular context. While teachers of high-track classes, especially in the ninth grade, were working hard to raise the test scores of their students, others chose to get by or consider teaching as "a job on the side or something they do at their spare time" in Jiang's term. Meanwhile, almost all the teachers told Jiang not to get distracted as a beginning teacher but concentrate on her own classroom teaching. Although these teachers provided incredible support to Jiang during her student teaching, especially in

[259] After I finished collecting data at Phoenix, I contacted Principal Song and Teacher Hang several times. The first thing they mentioned was that the students performed well on the exam arranged in the middle or at the end of the term by the three schools in the same area or by the entire county.

improving her living condition, both my and her observation suggested the existence of mistrust and conflict among them, especially in the Chinese team.[260]

Based on the structure of student teaching, one can somewhat predict Jiang's later experience in the field. An extremely narrow and micro- understanding of teaching permeated the various evaluation forms distributed by the Program (and her *Secondary Chinese Methods* course[261]). The College overlooked the cases in which student teachers chose to practice teaching alone in the name of collectively placing seniors, and the Department/Program picked up the unwritten rule and did not arrange any field instructors for this type of student teachers. For personal reasons Jiang picked Phoenix and was left by the Program to sink or swim.

The reasons why Jiang chose the school made her field experience even more predictable. Gang, her boyfriend, found the school through an acquaintance as it was close to his working place and he could see her frequently. Neither Gang nor Jiang knew any teachers from the school before the student teaching. This increased the chance that she merely "borrowed" a class from a teacher she did not know to practice teaching (and took Gang's opinion on learning to teach). And it turned out that the teacher did not completely "own" the class and she had no clear understanding of what student teaching entailed either. She, more or less, planned to use the school as an umbrella to study for the GRE, which made her engagement in student teaching further likely to be low.

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[260] I did not describe any teaching research activities organized by the Chinese team in the chapter. There were a few every week but my sense is that they were done perfunctorily. Teachers did not seem to be engaged and the feedback they gave on public lessons tended to lack depth.

[261] It was given by Dr. Yao and I observed several sessions. He gave the course in a way consistent with the feedback he gave to the talk and report lessons later. For details please see Chapter 9.

Jiang did position herself as a "borrower" in the field, especially before I joined her. Besides the dorm, the condition of which she felt frustrated about but had to cope with, she borrowed a desk in the teacher's building and Teacher Hang's Chinese class for some lessons. She, to some extent, confined herself to these places during certain periods of time, studying for the GRE, preparing for a lesson plan, or/and listening to or giving a lesson. The interaction she initiated with the school and local community was limited, not to say in a socio-professional sense. As seen from the fact that she missed the activities other teachers attended, she did not consider herself as a full member of this school or understand learning to teach in a broad sense.

From Jiang's mentor teacher, I also saw complex thoughts on learning to teach. Teacher Hang, obviously, took his job as mentor teacher seriously. He accompanied Jiang to observe classroom teaching of other teachers. He taught her to plan, deliver, and comment on a lesson in a systematic manner. Meanwhile, his view of learning to teach seemed to be narrow. He did not have Jiang grade the monthly exam and the work that she gave to the class. He did seem to consider it as necessary for Jiang to learn about classroom management.[262] He knew that Jiang and me took several field trips but never asked about them, which, more or less, assumed their irrelevance to teaching.

More importantly, like Jing's mentor, Teacher Hang decoupled his statement about teaching from action. When advising Jiang, aligned with the new curriculum, he attached great importance to student-initiated learning and classroom discussion, among others.

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[262] Almost every time before Jiang taught a lesson, he would remind that students present their best side. He also led the students to do a lot of preparation. All these actions demonstrated that he took Jiang more as a short-term visitor than a person learning about various scenarios that a teacher might face in the classroom and the school. He might also have the concern that Jiang's involvement in every aspect of the class would further negatively affect the performance of the students on the coming exam.

Yet, in his own classroom teaching, he showed a tendency to cover the textbook and to use discussion in a superficial way. Jiang learned the procedure or "routinized practice" (Tuinamuana, 2009) of teaching from him and soon felt bored. Associated with the boredom and other negative feelings, she presented some evidence of burning out during student teaching.

The field trips Jiang and I took told us that the local community was rich in natural, economic, cultural, and political resources for teaching. It was observable that the community was experiencing enormous changes in these regards. The teachers looked enthusiastic about local issues outside classroom but few chose to discuss them in class. In keeping with this and years of apprenticeship of observation in school, Jiang did not take anything she observed in the local community into her classroom practice. Principal Song's suggestion of connecting the characteristics of rural students with classroom teaching and Teacher Qu's modeling on valuing students' ideas and thoughts remained to be seen in her future teaching. As of this writing, she is teaching at a remote township high school in Rong County.[263]

[263] Jiang's score on the GRE was not high enough for Nanjing Normal University. She was re-located to a university in Xinjiang. As it was far away from Jiangsu, she gave the opportunity up. The school she teaches is about one hour and a half's bus drive away from Gang's home place. She visits Gang's home place once a week.

CHAPTER 12

TEACHER EDUCATION, THE POLITICS OF (DIS)ENGAGEMENT, AND THE COUNTRYSIDE

In "Public Purpose and the Preparation of Teachers for Rural Schools," Theobald and Howley (1998) lament the role that universities have played in educating future rural teachers in the context of the US. It is argued that, under the influence of discourses such as urbanization, industrialization, and now globalization, teacher education programs have long undertaken a cosmopolitan stance to prepare teachers for rural communities. Consistent with the mainstream ideology that rural communities should progress "to safeguard the global economic dominion of the US political economy" (Theobald & Howley, 1998, p. 153), they tend to see the standards of world-class cities as universal and place rural education in a constant position of lagging behind and needing to catch up. With a focus on technical rationality, teacher education has rarely appreciated rural-responsive pedagogy or discussed and confronted rural issues from perspectives of sustainability, social justice, and democracy. Rural schooling has long been a device to prepare human capital for elsewhere and further exacerbated the condition of rural communities.

I know that there are enormous differences in context between the US and China, but do worry that the similar, if not much worse, situation is happening in China and will continue. While Theobald and Howley (1998) discuss teacher education in a general sense, this dissertation has taken an ecological approach and focused on the 2004 cohort of the Chinese Teacher Preparation Program in the Department of Chinese at East

Teachers College to explore teacher education curriculum in both policy and practice, as well as its possible impact on individual student teachers.

As outlined in Chapter 1, this dissertation consists of three major sections. In Chapter 3, I look at several required courses in general education, subject matter, and subject-specific pedagogy to understand the countryside in the planned curricula created by a variety of bodies. While Chapters 4-6 concentrate on *Summer Social Practice*, the Program's only course in which the countryside had a prominent presence, Chapters 7-11 are devoted to what has been widely perceived as an essential component of learning to teach – *Student Teaching*. In both cases, I consider the evolving of the curriculum to examine the portrait of the countryside and the possible influence that the curriculum may have had on future teachers.

A Summary of the Patterns Identified: A Pedagogy of Disengagement

In brief, based on a detailed description and analysis, this study argues that, given conflicting images and attitudes, the teacher preparation curriculum tended to position the countryside as "Other" and reinforce the student teachers' neglect of or disengagement from the countryside. It presents rather an alarming picture of how the Party-State, the textbook writers, the College, the Department, the Program, the faculty, and the student teachers worked together, consciously or unconsciously, to reproduce place-based inequality.

In the teacher education curriculum, the discourse of the Party-State on the countryside was explicitly presented in the "Basic Teaching Requirements" for the

Political Courses and the annual "*san xia xiang*" announcement. Through these texts, different divisions of the central state provided a historical account of the Party-State's discourse on the countryside. While recognizing the peasantry as the "main" or "reliable" force for nation building in the political or economic sense, the Party-State described rural residents as politically, culturally, or economically backward. Meanwhile, to maintain the legitimacy of the CCP and promote the construction of the nation-state was the point reiterated in these texts.

As a response to the "three-rural issues," the central state had presented a renewed interest in calling for college students to engage in summer "*san xia xiang*" program. However, a close reading of the 2007 announcement suggests that the very program encouraged related organizations to (re-)legitimate the hierarchy of place by distinguishing the countryside as a lowly Other, to prioritize the interests of the nation-state in and thus an exogenous approach to rural development, and to renew the loyalty and accountability of college students to the Party-State. Echoing the argument made by Fuller (1991), this study finds that "*san xia xiang*" served as a mechanism for the Party-State to regain its legitimacy and popularity by signaling progress in the countryside. Hidden in the signal was also the message that the countryside remained a major obstacle for national development.

As Bringle and Hatcher (2000) have contended, "institutionalization of service learning is a multifaceted construct defined by the work and goals of" (p. 275) various stakeholders. Beyond rhetorical statement and promotion, the central government appeared to have done little. In this context, from the perspective of institutional theory

(Meyer & Scott, 1992), it was not surprising to see that related organizations and individuals answered the institutional call but in a ceremonial and perfunctory manner. "*San xia xiang*" turned into a drama of performing care to the countryside.

The province and the College claimed that they were fully engaged, but further examination shows that they made "a public relations effort to promote the appearance of a 'service-minded' institution" (Holland, 1997, p.?). While accepting the assumptions of the central state on "*san xia xiang*" and upholding its decision to serve the countryside, the province and the College employed strategies, such as diluting the concept of the countryside and renaming or repacking the existing activities, to decouple themselves from the commitment. In addition to expressing loyalty to the Party-State, they also took advantage of the summer social practice program to serve their own interests. While the province promoted their recently issued policies, the College used the program as a means to evidence its excellence in teaching for two critical evaluations and in preparing students for employment.

The Department's 2007 summer social practice was inherently contradictory. Of the teams that it organized in the name of "*san xia xiang*," only one was geared to ordinary rural communities. Although the team had "serving the new countryside" in the title, my reading of the related report suggests that in the field this team tended to speak for the Party-State, devalue rural residents, and ignore their voice, agency, and potential. In the guidance plan for the 2004 cohort, the Department invited them to care about rural (literacy) education but implicitly confined their perspective to that of the intellectual as opposed to that of the future practitioner. It also appeared that the Department

encouraged the student teachers to posit themselves as outside of rural education and rural places.

Sensing the formalistic or performative nature of engagement in summer social practice at both the college and department levels, the students acted out care for the countryside by fabricating evidence for or/and plagiarizing their homework, which was consistent with the low expectation (and engagement) of the faculty in this regard. This was particularly ironic to see, granted that over half of the student teachers came from villages and town(ship)s in Jiangsu. From the way in which summer social practice homework was distributed and assessed, among others, teacher candidates saw through this course and recognized its low status. They considered it as a "form without meaning or use" to themselves or a task they had to cope with by copying something at the last minute.

It followed that summer social practice – the only rural-themed course in the program – not only failed to create a transformative effect on the student teachers in their perception of and relationship to the countryside, but actively promoted bias, cynicism, and detachment. They took an uncritical attitude toward the premises of summer social practice, and the course consequently reinforced a stereotypical view of rural places. This course boosted the popularity of selective cynicism among the student teachers, that is, increased the possibility of them trusting the Party-State and questioning the local practice. It also helped the student teachers to further separate their own personal rural experience from the educational one for career considerations.

As Danahue (2000) and Kahne and Westheimer (1996), among others, have pointed out, the political dimension of service learning is often overlooked in practice and research. This study suggests the omnipresent politics of "*san xia xiang*," an institutionalized service learning program, in its design and implementation at multiple levels. In the name of care and change, "*san xia xiang*" operated to achieve social control and maintain unequal power relations. Without challenging the unjust structure and providing any "substantive, meaningful, and long-term solutions" for rural communities, it worked to "perpetuate and reinforce dominant deficit perspectives of" (Butin, 2003, p. 1682) the countryside under the guise of benevolent volunteerism. The countryside became marginalized and blurred under the spotlight, in addition to being objectified and looked down upon.

Another thing is worth noting about the "*san xia xiang*" program. That is, even though the central state wished to make it an integral part of college education and the College accommodated to raise its course status, the program stood alone as a top-down "extra or add-on assignment or duty" (Holland, 1997, p.?). The College did not seem to have "a widely-held view of service in the mission" (Holland, 1997, p.?), even though "preparing teachers for rural schools," sometimes, appeared in its mission statement. As presented in the preceding chapters, service learning was not used as an element of any other courses. The College's rhetoric of students devoting themselves to the countryside in "*san xia xiang*" also formed a sharp contrast to the cold shoulder it turned to rural schools in the arrangement of student teaching.

For Ginsburg and Clift (1990), there are two major types of curriculum: the official/stated and the hidden. While the former is equivalent to the planned curriculum, the latter roughly covers the implemented and perceived curriculum presented in this dissertation. They define the hidden curriculum as

> the content of messages 'that are transmitted to students through the underlying structure of meaning in both the formal content as well as the social relations' (Giroux & Penna, 1983, p. 102) of teacher education programs beyond that conveyed in the stated curriculum. (p. 451)[264]

They remind us of "the potential for contradictions within both the hidden curriculum and the official curriculum" (p. 459), not only between the two. There are also cases in which we see reinforcement of messages between and within the two curricula. Messages sometimes are complex and blur the clear-cut distinction between contradiction and supplementation. They look contradictory but supplement each other.

In two sets of subject matter materials examined in this study, extreme images of the countryside were depicted. The department *Modern and Contemporary Chinese Literature* curriculum gave most attention to the literary works that monolithically described peasants as victims of the "old" system with backward characteristics or/and idealist heroes under the leadership of the CCP, and encouraged an uncritical reading of these texts. In the school textbooks distributed to the student teachers, a postcard image of the countryside was painted through strategies such as de-contextualization and de-temporalization. There was also a tendency to promote a positive and optimistic reading of the words and the world.

[264] Different meanings have been attached to the term "hidden curriculum." For a survey of the meanings, please read Kentli (2009) and others.

When it came to subject-specific pedagogy, the official curriculum tended to ignore teaching and learning in rural contexts, as well as describe the countryside in a simplistic manner. In the textbook used for the *Chinese Teaching Methods* course, the literary texts that reflected the countryside in modern revolutionary periods were drawn on to implement the ideological and political education of the Party-State. Few works pointed to contemporary rural realities. In the name of seeing teaching as universal and context-free, those writers offered teaching examples biased toward urban settings. In the teaching guides that accompanied the school textbooks, the countryside was simplified as an eternal, perfect, but alien "Other." The consideration of rural contexts in Chinese teaching and learning was inconsistent.

Compared to a varied representation of the countryside in other courses, the message conveyed in the design and implementation of student teaching was simple and clear, that is, avoiding or ignoring. Despite the College's rhetorical claim to prioritize teacher preparation for rural schools, the College, the Program, the faculty, and student teachers all tended to avoid rural placements for student teaching. With the understanding of student teaching as an apprenticeship and rural schools at the bottom of the school hierarchy, they did not see any value and significance of learning to teach in a rural context. Furthermore, the College and the Program/Department/faculty worked together to create a neglect of the student teachers who undertook their practica in rural schools. While the College implicitly ignored considering them for field instruction, the Program/Department/faculty stayed out of touch with them.

Concerning college supervisors, in general, associated with the notion of the host school as a separate place to educate future teachers, student teaching as a means to learn from master teachers, and other factors (such as logistics, lack of teaching experience at the K-12 level, and full teaching and research loads), they had minimal involvement with students in their field practice. In the supervision provided on the college campus, through several evaluation forms, these instructors highlighted the technical-instrumental discourse, and tended to be direct and prescriptive in style. Knowledge as "objective, absolute, and uncontroversial" (Ginsburg & Clift, 1990, p. 456), teaching as transmission or delivering a mandated curriculum, teachers as curriculum delivers/organizers instead of developers, and the relationship between teachers and students as hierarchical were assumptions underlying the practice.

These college instructors mentioned the countryside or similar terms only when a student teacher gave a lesson on a rural-themed reading. In other words, they primarily considered the countryside as a literary presence. They did not discuss anything around learning to teach in rural contexts. Nor did they volunteer to contact any students who chose to practice teaching in rural schools either. Embedded within these practices seemed to be their indifference to rural education and/or a lack of understanding of teaching as situated practice. Additionally, at those so-called non-rural schools, they appeared either to lack respect for students with rural background or present rural life as it is depicted in the school textbook.

Concerning the student teachers, their experiences of teaching practice included those on the college campus and at the host school. In the lessons they gave on the

college campus before and after the student teaching, the countryside was represented as confined to the textbook and as a world apart from themselves. This was obviously tied to the perception of teaching as technical work and the teacher as the transmitter of prescribed knowledge. Two case studies of learning to teach in rural contexts indicate that student teachers were inclined to resign themselves to the school reality and choose not to challenge it or work for change. The field experience further pushed them either to stay away from rural schools or to low prioritize the career of teaching.

At both host schools, the curriculum was "predetermined and highly routinized" (Goodman, 1985, p. 30), as well as being heavily test driven. For most of the time, I saw reading in practice not as "a wholistic activity that involved the child's imagination and his/her relationship to books, knowledge or language" but as "the summation of discrete phonics, comprehension, contextual and/or structural analysis skills" (Goodman, 1985, p. 31). In classroom teaching, teachers mentioned the countryside, once in a while, to support the learning of a reading text.

Both Jing and Jiang gave some lessons in line with textbooks, workbooks, and standardized tests and with a focus on the implementation of various "steps." Even though getting bored with it at some point of their student teaching, they did not deviate from the mechanistic sequence nor experiment with any innovative methods. The local context was not visible in their teaching practice. As Goodman (1985) puts it, "Questions of why and what to teach were taken for granted and seen as someone else's job" and the school curriculum "narrowed the range of teaching activities found in the practicum sites and, as a result, served as a powerful force for social control" (p. 30).

With this said, I do not mean the teaching approach that the student teachers were exposed to in the field was uniform. At each school, I observed that one teacher made efforts to insert daily-life experience and student thinking into the prescribed and test-driven curriculum through discussion and writing. Phoenix Middle School was also adopting a teaching model that claimed to value self-directed learning and group work. Regrettably, for their long "apprenticeship of observation" (Lortie, 2003) at the K-12 and college levels, the presumed hierarchical relationship between the mentor and the student teacher, and the absence of an alternative framing from the College, neither Jing nor Jiang expressed any interest in trying any unconventional methods in the field.

In both cases, the mentor teacher was assigned by the principal, which indicated the great importance that the school attached to the student teacher's field experience. It also suggested the principal's perception of a "good" teacher and possibly a "good" mentor teacher. Without doubt, both teachers were committed to the work of teaching and mentoring. However, beyond their differences (such as Mr. Hang being much more experienced), I saw that both presented a very limited repertoire of teaching strategies, which contradicted their stated belief in "flexible teaching" or classroom discussion. In their mentoring, technical and procedural aspects of teaching stood out.

My understanding is that in the field the two student teachers had much richer opportunities to learn about the micro-politics of the school concerning the relationship between and within administrators, teachers, parents, and students, compared to classroom teaching practice. As seen from the guidance that those college supervisors provided before the student teaching, this, closely linked to a narrow view of learning to

teach, was an area severely ignored in teacher education. Added to this was a general message that student teachers should accommodate themselves to the existing school environment. Under the circumstances, again, it came as no surprise that the two student teachers showed a tendency to accept the dominant practices of the host school.

Jing's school had a strong bureaucratic culture, and "bureaucratic socialization" (Hoy & Rees, 1977) was an appropriate term to characterize her student teaching. Considering her future employment and benefits at the school, compared to Jiang, she showed more willingness to assume an obedient attitude. Jiang chose to student teach at a school for non-teaching related reasons. She had little prior knowledge of or connection with this school, and felt more isolated, vulnerable, and powerless in the field. She developed a disposition to shy away from the micro-politics of the school and thus the profession of teaching. Neither made a noticeable effort to negotiate with the established structure for small changes.

To sum up, in the multi-faceted and -layered teacher education curricula, a vast array of agencies and individuals were involved in (re)producing certain images of and attitudes to the countryside. I see a myriad of contradictory images and attitudes in the curricula. Within the official curricula, a tendency to beautify the countryside in the middle school Chinese textbooks contrasted with the description of the countryside as backward in politics, culture, or/and economy in the guidelines for several political courses and in the textbooks for modern and contemporary Chinese literature. Within *Secondary Chinese Teaching Methods*, while the course textbook completely ignored the teaching and learning in rural contexts, the school textbooks and teaching guides paid

some but inconsistent attention to this aspect. The College's inattention to rural schools in student teaching contradicted its vow to "serve the countryside" in mission statement and summer social practice.

Besides conflicts[265], I also see consistency in play across the official curricula. There was a tendency for the planned curriculum of each course to provide a simple and single image of the countryside. A language of complexity and nuance hardly existed. They also tended to present the countryside as another world that college or school students were distant from. More importantly, these messages were expressed separately as unmistakable and uncontestable facts. Little space was allowed or given for negotiation or critical thinking. Although coming from different sources and having different levels of legitimacy and authority, the curriculum texts discussed in this dissertation shared the above similarities.

The curriculum texts alone "are surely important in and of themselves. They signify – through their content and form – particular constructions of reality, particular ways of selecting and organizing that vast universe of possible knowledge" (Apple, 1992, p. 5). From the texts I see two major contested tendencies toward the countryside: uglify vs. beautify, and involved vs. detached. They co-exist in the current official curricula. Meanwhile, as observed from the "*san xia xiang*" announcements and the recently published school textbooks and teaching guides, the educational system had formally paid some attention to the countryside in the context of "Building the Socialist New Countryside" and the new curriculum reform. In this sense, curriculum texts are not static

[265] One can also comment that these conflicts looked more like the usual curriculum compromises.

but evolve dynamically over time.[266] They are "are the simultaneous results of political, economic, and cultural activities, battles, and compromises" (Apple, 1992, p. 4).

Fuller (1991), among others, argues that the modern state utilizes schooling to expand national status and "the strengthening of local community…is far down the state's list of priorities" (p. 146). This study suggests a similar stance of the Party-State toward higher education, including teacher education. The message of students being loyal to the Party-State penetrated the entire official curricula. When the countryside was highlighted, it was often framed to serve the needs and interests of the Party-State, such as to stabilize the society, preserve its legitimacy and authority, and enhance its international competitiveness.

This dissertation supports the proposal that we must go beyond the planned curriculum to study the curriculum in use. As Parlett and Hamilton (1976) have succinctly expressed,

> Its constituent elements are emphasized or de-emphasized, expanded or truncated, as teachers, administrators, technicians, and students interpret and reinterpret the instructional system for their particular setting. In practice, objectives are commonly reordered, redefined, abandoned, or forgotten. The original "ideal" formulation ceases to be accurate, or indeed, of much relevance. (p. 145, cited in Zeichner, 1986, p. 10)

Compared to that in the planned curricula, the messages conveyed through the enacted curricula about the countryside were much more coherent. In the implementation of "*san xia xiang*," I note the actual detachment of the college from the countryside through the clear pattern of ritualization. In spite of much publicity, I did not find the

[266] Here it may be worth noting that the textbook edited by Qian and Xu (2000) was not used by the 2005 cohort.

wide involvement of the College/Department or any substantial activities in the countryside. "*San xia xiang*" appeared to be a tool for the College/Department to promote itself and maintain a good social image. Both the faculty and the student teacher viewed it as a top-down task or an image project of the College/Department, and tended to complete it in a careless manner. This detachment was best embodied in the later arrangement of student teaching. Rural schools were almost completely forgotten by the College, the Department, the Program, and the faculty. There were also cases in which student teachers took advantage of rural schools to pursue their interests irrelevant to teaching.

Such detachment from the countryside was not built in one day. It had to with the paradigm of teacher education expressed in both policy and practice. Paine (1995) points out that Chinese teacher education in the 1980s was faced with the dilemma of moving to technocratic or political directions. While the former defines the teacher as a technical expert whose authority lies in knowledge, the latter highlights the moral or political role of the teacher. As this study has demonstrated, the tension still exists. But compared to the 1980s, my sense is that the technocratic discourse has now gained more dominance. A tendency to deskill future teachers has appeared to be more severe.

Consistent with Tuinamuana's (2009) Fiji-based study, this dissertation finds the dominance of the technocratic paradigm in the focal teacher education program. A positivist view of knowledge flooded the texts used for general, academic, and professional education courses. There followed the proposition that the teacher transmit prescribed knowledge to the student, or rely on a banking model of education (Freire,

2003). As illustrated in the limited feedback offered to the student teachers before and after the field experience, this view was well carried out by the faculty.

With this view of knowledge, teacher education understated the importance of social context, which was best evidenced by the fact that teacher candidates were primarily evaluated in teaching practicum based on several micro-teaching lessons. A "reductionist and fragmentary" (Tuinamuana, 2009, p. 139) approach was taken to understand the process of learning to teach. There were assumptions in both the policy and practice of student teaching that "the university, or education college, provides the theory, skills and knowledge about teaching; the school provides the field setting where such knowledge is applied; and the beginning teacher provides the effort to integrate it all" (Tuinamuana, 2009, p. 139). Associated with these was the emphasis on the attitude and capability of individual student teachers in learning to teach. Even though I rarely saw any presence of educational theory in Jiang's field practice, both Principal Song and Teacher Hang at Phoenix Middle School apparently bought into the assumptions.

About the coursework at East Teachers College, these school actors made no critique. After reviewing Jiang's writing lesson, Principal Song said to her, "You have learned basic cultural knowledge and new (educational) theory. Now you need to go deep into classroom and climb over falls (*diepa gunda*). Make good practice and don't be afraid of failure" (personal communication, Oct. 16, 2007). Teacher Hang made a similar statement, "At the beginning (you) explore hard, don't be afraid of eating bitterness...will grow very soon...No pain no gain...You have theory in education and psychology in mind. Now it is time to practice in classroom" (personal communication, Oct. 11, 2007).

Both shared the view that the College was obligated to offer pre-service teachers theory and the school was the place to practice it.

Grounded in the technocratic paradigm, teacher education highlighted "routinised practice" (Tuinamuana, 2009). In the announcement of student teaching, the College focused attention on what student teachers needed to do and when. In (both the teaching methods course and) those trial, report, and talk lessons, teaching steps and other technical aspects of teaching (such as how to create a great ppt. file, how to write on the blackboard, and how to present yourself physically and orally, and which knowledge point to include) were emphasized. Mr. Mao (and many other faculty members, I believe) did not have high expectations for student teaching but considered it as another loop that teacher candidates needed to jump through. For this and other reasons, they also disengaged themselves from the field.

This dissertation also confirms the argument that the hidden curriculum or the curriculum in practice plays a core role in socializing future teachers (Ginsburg & Clift, 1990; Tuinamuana, 2009). Whether Jing and Jiang recognized it or not, their actions and thoughts in the field went along with the teacher education they received from the college.[267] Despite personal and contextual differences, their field experiences shared essential similarities. Both primarily took learning to teach at the host school as observing and giving some lessons based on the textbook. It was assumed that knowledge was out there and teaching was basically independent of local context. They did very little beyond

[267] When asked about the similarity and difference between what she learned from Phoenix and East Teachers College, Jiang was straightforward to put that "At East Teachers College I didn't learn any thing" (personal communication, Nov. 22, 2007). She acknowledged that she did not take courses such as *Secondary Chinese Teaching Methods* and *General Pedagogy* seriously. She did not seem to expect the college to improve much in preparing future teachers either.

learning about the routine of classroom teaching. Neither tried a teaching approach that was different from her mentor teacher's or felt the responsibility to change anything about the school and the local community. As Tuinamuana (2009) has noted,

> Where this type of techno-rational discourse is allowed to dominate, the student teacher will not feel empowered to change the type of practice that they are doing, even if they are, in theory at least, aware of what good practice might look like. (pp. 146-147)

The planned and enacted curricula of different courses placed together, despite the differences summarized above, I argue that they were inclined to teach pre-service teachers toward conformity, a disposition "in its adherence to the dictates of social convention, privileges routinized behavior over critical action" (Britzman, 2003, p. 46). Throughout the curricula, knowledge, including the part concerning the countryside, was presented as objective and universal truth that was external to student teachers. Student teachers were basically positioned as passive receptacles to absorb the knowledge. None of these courses appeared to promote authentic understanding or critical thinking. In turn, as Britzman (2003) puts it, "When knowledge is reduced to rigid directives that demand little else from the knower than acquiescence, knowers are bereft of their capacity to intervene in the world, and knowledge is expressed as static and immutable" (p. 46). This positivist view of knowledge normalized student teachers, and inhibited them from thinking and acting differently. In both summer social practice and field practice, they presented a tendency to conform.

Summer Social Practice and *Student Teaching* at East Teachers College shared essential commonalities in both policy and practice. Going beyond the surface, I observed a striking disengagement of the College, the Department, the Program, and the faculty

from the two courses. Disengagement assumes "imposition, patronization, paternalism, and cultural arrogance that results in ignorance (we ignore others' needs and persons) and presumption (we presume to know and understand others' needs and persons)" (Parsons & Frick, 2008, p. 34). They designed and implemented the two courses in a bureaucratic and technical manner. While prescribing their hierarchical relationship with the countryside and student teachers, they seemed to ignore or assume the needs of the two groups. With an emphasis on routine, they also used the two courses to their own advantage or to boast their excellence for approval from the higher-up and social recognition.

In my understanding, the teacher education curricula essentially taught prospective teachers about disengagement. The technocratic approach to teacher education, rooted in a scientific view of knowledge, led student teachers to a neglect of the context and complexity of teaching. It also fostered a feeling of powerlessness, thus a disposition toward conformity. Associated with the implicit and explicit messages of bureaucracy and individualism, while ritually or procedurally engaging in various tasks required for graduation, student teachers put energy into pursuing their individual self-interests, such as working to find a decently-paid job in a non-rural school or to enter a graduate program for further study.

A Call for the Development of a Pedagogy of Engagement

I admit that I have been struggling to strike a balance between the details and the big picture. Too often I dig into specifics of a course or a student teacher and neglect to see the forest beyond the trees. Despite this, the more I analyze and write about the data, the

heavier my heart becomes. With such a picture of how the teacher education curricula produced by various groups worked together to generally (re)produce the countryside as inferior other and thus a detached attitude, I truly do not know how much and how long it will take to move beyond the reproduction. I am curious about the continual socialization of Jing and Jiang in the rural contexts and the impact they have formed on students, with the concern that they would continue or exacerbate the cycle of reproduction.

Despite the concern, I did see some positive things in the field. At schools, there were teachers, like Teacher Shan and Teacher Qu, making efforts to attach authentic meaning to the learning of Chinese within the constrained system. Rural people and issues still had a presence in the writing of school students. In private life, student teachers appeared to maintain some connections with and a more balanced picture of the countryside. Meng, who is now teaching in a township high school, seemed to have developed a stable interest in observing and writing about the countryside. She, as well as several other student teachers, also demonstrated great intelligence in responding to my tough questions on summer social practice. By her own account, Jing gave deep and critical thoughts on some teaching decisions. Jiang's changes in the field make me believe in the possibility of change.

I am aware that this dissertation has revealed a lot about what the teacher education did not do, and has not focused on what it did intend to do or did achieve. In fact, to offer some balanced perspective, I want to highlight that the College, the Department, and the Program appeared to make great efforts to meet external requirements and raise the

employment rate of graduates. As seen from the program design[268] and curriculum implementation, subject matter and its delivery were the foci of the teacher preparation. The program put energy in providing student teachers with a deep and systematic knowledge of Chinese language and literature. The program also invested considerable amount of time and energy in training student teachers to think about and articulate the rationale behind their lesson plan and classroom teaching, as well as to apply technology to teaching. Based on my observations of the student teachers, however, I cannot provide evidence that the program had achieved what it intended to concentrate on.

From a critical point of view, essential changes need to be made to the current teacher education. This will be hard to do, considering the interdependence of teacher education with its broader social, cultural, and political contexts.[269] Although teacher educators are only one group of players involved in the field of teacher education and the following argument may not sound fair to teacher educators, I feel strongly that we must exercise much more agency to make room for institutional changes. Below are some points we must start working on.

The first thing we must acknowledge is "teacher education as cultural politics" (Giroux & McLaren, 1986). This study suggests that we cannot any longer pretend that teacher education is contextually or politically neutral. This field, embedded within the complex relationship between the state, schooling, and the society, necessarily involves a dynamic interplay between ideology and power. We must consciously attend to the

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[268] The program was located in the Department of Chinese as opposed to the College of Educational Science.

[269] It may be relatively easy for related agencies and individuals to pay more attention to the countryside in the planned curriculum and to remove the stereotypical understanding(s). What is desired is a planned curriculum that includes a more realistic and nuanced representation of the countryside.

ideological aspects of teacher education curriculum and their ethical and political implications.

The sense of disengagement at East was constructed, to a great extent, due to the technocratic approach to teacher education. Guided by a positivist view of knowledge, this approach gives prior considerations to procedure or technique, and ignores experiences and feelings of student teachers and "questions of purpose and substance, of value and interest" (Cornbleth, 1986, p. 7). Teacher education is reduced to training. To develop a pedagogy of engagement, we must "challenge teacher education as training" (Bullough & Gitlin, 1994).

To challenge the training model, we must humanize teacher education by dismissing our authoritative and dominant position to communicate with students and build an authentic and caring relationship with them. They are not empty vessels but meaning-makers. They join the teacher education program with their prior knowledge, experiences, and beliefs. As Bullough and Gitlin (1994) assert, after all, "teaching is a relationship, a way of being and relating to others, and not merely an expression of having mastered a set of delivery skills" (p. 72).

Our knowledge, skills, and dispositions in learning, teaching, and learning to teach (in rural contexts) are very likely to deeply affect them. We need to be particularly cautious about the messages we send, explicitly or implicitly, to them (Ginsburg & Clift, 1990). Before or while "teaching student teachers to reflect" (Zeichner & Liston, 1987)[270],

[270] According to the identification of Zeichner and Liu (2010), the practice of reflective teaching exists in China. With the influence of the Confucian tradition, it emphasizes the individual and practical dimensions of reflection. Meanwhile, "reflective teaching tends to be adopted more by school teachers than by teacher

we must take an inquiry stance (Cochran-Smith, 2003) to articulate, reflect upon, and challenge our own practices and assumptions standing behind. There is an urgent need for critique and dialogue in this area among teacher educators. Only this way can we open possibilities for change in teacher education.

As teachers of future teachers, we must re-conceptualize teachers as "transformative intellectuals" (Giroux, 1988) and take the role seriously. We need to embrace a socially constructed view of knowledge and empower (student) teachers to see learning to teach as a critically reflective process. We also need to "exhibit a preferential concern for the suffering and struggles of the disadvantaged and oppressed" (Giroux & McLaren, 1986, p. 215) and consider teachers as agents of social change. It is extremely important to engage student teachers in examining the social, cultural, political, and economic aspects of schooling and developing a discourse that combines a language of critique with a language of possibility.

Courses in the program shared the characteristics of being highly fragmented and technical. Teacher educators may consider the concept of critical service learning (Mitchell, 2007; Mitchell, 2008) and integrate it with courses such as *General Pedagogy* or *Foundations of Education* (Powell, Sobel, & Hess, 2001), *Secondary Chinese Teaching Methods* (Baldwin, Buchanan, & Rudisill, 2007), and *Student Teaching* (Wade, 1997) to have teacher candidates study rural students, families, schools, and communities. Through service learning projects, they will critically examine various aspects of (rural) schooling, and propose and try to implement positive changes (Grinberg & Goldfarb,

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education programs and teacher educators" (Zeichner & Liu, 2010, p. 79). My educational experiences and observations in China support these points.

1998). This needs to be carefully structured and modeled, with accompany of readings (on issues such as mandated curriculum, testing, parental involvement, and tracking), classroom discussions, and reflective memos. Student teachers should also use these projects to confront their own critical educational experiences.

As Cornbleth (1986) has shrewdly pointed out, "substantial reform of teacher education is not likely to come from national commission or formal organizational sources. Where reform occurs, the initiative will most likely be local and from within the organization" (p. 12). Reminded by Tuinamuana's (2009) writing, I note that the College I focused on in this study did not identify itself with any particular model and philosophy of teacher education. Students were only generally expected to go to the field with some educational theory. Under the circumstance, we may need to consider what Finn and Finn's (2007) call "teacher education with an attitude."

I understand the dilemma that the College had as to whether to truly position itself as a rural-teacher-education focused college. How a college labels itself is conditioned by many (contradictory) factors, such as institutional requirement, resource access, and social reputation. With the majority of student teachers coming from rural families and leaving to teach in rural schools or contexts, we may need to be honest with ourselves by openly discussing our concerns and underlying assumptions. The college serves the interests of the Party-State and those of its clients/customers in an increasingly market-driven society. In this context, we cannot disregard our responsibilities to local communities from the perspective of social justice.[271]

[271] See Cochran-Smith (2008), among others, for the concept of teacher education for social justice.

Another thing we must engage in is to break down the theory-practice duality by launching a real college-school partnership (Bruckerhoff & Carlson, 1995; Zimpher & Howey, 2005) in rural teacher preparation.[272] In the light of the fact that a high percentage of college instructors do not have any K-12 teaching experience, it is crucial for us to work hand in hand with rural schoolteachers to prepare future teachers in handling both the complexity of classroom teaching and the micro-politics of the school. But this should not be an excuse for college instructors to avoid the responsibility of mentoring student teachers in (rural) schools. Jing's and Jiang's experiences clearly tell us where a college instructor can work to enrich their student teaching in both quantity and quality. For these to happen, we need to re-conceptualize what constitutes a "good" teacher, a "good" mentor teacher, and a "good" site for student teaching (Zeichner, 2002). Training and support for both field instructors and mentor teachers (Borko & Mayfield, 1995) must be provided.

In the process of conceiving this chapter, I read a large body of literature on place-based education or pedagogy of place (Brooke, 2003; Gruenewald, 2003a; Gruenewald, 2003b; Smith, 2002; Theobald, 1997), especially on the experience of Australia in preparing teachers for rural contexts (Green & Reid, 2004; Mays & Lyons, 2006; McConaghy, 2002; Sharplin, 2001; Yarrow, Ballantyne, Hansford, Herschell, & Millwater, 1999). I planned to devote a big portion of this chapter to introducing the literature. However, when I get where I am in writing, surprisingly, I do not feel that this

[272] In the view of Principal Song and Teacher Hang, the main place where the College could work on was to have an instructor visit the field (personal communication, Oct. 16, 2007). When asked to record suggestions on the College's arrangement in student teaching and preparation of future teachers, Teacher Hang wrote, "In the future during the period of student teaching, if time and condition permit, please try to come and visit the host school. Take a look and listen to understand and master the working situation of the student teacher and the host school so that timely correction and advice can be made and work efficiency can be enhanced" (Feedback on Student Teaching, Nov. 8, 2007).

is a matter of great urgency. What is urgent is that we humanize teacher education and promote critical and reflective thinking in teacher education. Only this can we engage student teachers and build a ground to truly consider preparing teachers for rural contexts.

I am conscious that in this dissertation the major focus on my analysis has been deconstructing a pedagogy of disengaging student teachers from the countryside. By contrast, the suggestions I make above remain general and sketchy. The good thing is that I plan to devote my career to developing a pedagogy of engagement. I will continue my (action research) studies on understanding and empowering teacher educators, critical service learning, field instruction, college-school partnership, and place-based and social justice-oriented (teacher) education. This is just a beginning of a long journey.

APPENDICES

Appendix A: Interview Protocol for Student Teachers Who Practiced Teaching in Rural Schools

(The version prepared in late August 2007)

1. Please explain your social background and personal history.
2. What made you choose to practice teaching in a rural school?
3. What did you know about the countryside and rural education before the student teaching from your teacher preparation curriculum?
4. During the student teaching, what did you learn about the place, the school, and the students? How?
5. What role did the Program play in this process?
6. How do you perceive the significance of education for rural children and rural communities?
7. In your view, how do rural students learn Chinese from school?
8. Do you think you should teach rural students Chinese differently in both content and method? Why (and how?)
9. How would you comment on the planned and implemented curriculum of the Program in fostering your awareness of the countryside?
10. What would you say about the summer "Three Going down to the Countryside" social practice in your program?
11. Should a rural perspective be consciously considered by the Program in preparing future teachers? Why (and how?)
12. Will you consider teaching in rural contexts? Why (not)?

Appendix B: Interview Protocol for Jing

(Prepared in late November 2007)

Instruction: Thanks for agreeing to share your thoughts on your teacher education curriculum with me. You do not need to align yourself with the official or mainstream points of view. The key is to be real, to truly express your own thoughts.

1. Could you please briefly share your family background and educational experience with me? Is there anything rural related?
2. What made you choose the Program? Wanted to be a Chinese teacher?
3. Does the word "rural" or the like appear in your daily life?

4. What made you decide to student teach at Spring County Middle School? Did you think about practicing teaching at a rural school?
5. What was your life of student teaching like at Spring County? Please describe.
6. What was the guidance you received from the mentor teacher? What was her style? What do you think of her teaching and advice?
7. How was your interaction with your students? What do you think of these students?
8. Was your student teaching concerned with the rural in any sense (in such as classroom teaching, student-teacher interaction, and teacher-teacher interaction)?
9. What does the countryside look like in your eyes? How about rural education, including students, schools, teachers, and Chinese education?
10. In your view, what does rural education mean to rural students and rural development?
11. What have you noticed about the countryside in the Chinese textbooks for middle schoolers? Any comments on this?
12. If you were asked to teach Chinese at a rural school, would you teach the same as you did at Spring County Middle School? Why (not)?
13. Do you think that rural-relevant content can also be taught in urban schools? Why (not)? If yes, what can be considered?
14. If you could re-consider now, would you choose a rural school for student teaching? Why (or not)?
15. Would you consider teaching in a rural school in the future? Why (not)?
16. Do you remember anything from the political courses, such as *Introduction to Mao Zedong Thought*, *Introduction to Deng Xiaoping Theory*, and *Important Ideas on "Three Represents,"* about the countryside? What do you think of the content? How did the instructor teach it?
17. Any deep impressions about the countryside in *Ancient Chinese Literature* and *Modern and Contemporary Chinese Literature*? What do you think of the content? How did the instructor teach it?
18. Anything relevant to rural education in those educational courses, such as *General Pedagogy*, *Secondary Chinese Teaching Methods*, and preparation for student teaching? What do you think of the content? How did the instructor teach it?
19. Did any of your instructors express any thoughts about you going to (student) teach in a rural school? How do you understand this?
20. Did you read any course materials handed to you from the Program? Is the countryside expressed in those materials similar to or different from that delivered in your college classroom?
21. This year's summer social practice of your cohort was themed on rural Chinese education? What did you do and write for the homework? How do you make sense of the homework?
22. What do you know about college student social practice, especially "*san xia xiang*," in history, content, purpose, and organization? What did you do in the past several years for this? How do you see activities of this type?
23. Were there any other courses that you took in college concerned with rural issues? If yes, any content you can recall?
24. Do you think that the college curriculum has affected your understanding of the countryside, rural education, and Chinese education in a rural context in some way?

25. If the Program aimed to highlight the rural perspective in teacher education, would you agree? Why (not)? If yes, what content could be considered?
26. Any comments and suggestions on the interview?

Appendix C: Interview Protocol for Jiang

(Prepared in late November 2007)

Instruction: Thanks for agreeing to share your thoughts on your teacher education curriculum with me. You do not need to align yourself with the official or mainstream points of view. The key is to be real, to truly express your own thoughts.

Part I: Student Teaching

1. Could you please briefly share your family background and educational experience with me? Is there anything rural related?
2. What does your home place look like in ecology, economy, culture, and politics? Anything that leaves you with a deep impression?
3. What did rural students, schools, and teachers look like in your mind before you came to college? How do you perceive the meaning of schooling to rural kids at the time?
4. What made you choose the Program? Wanted to be a Chinese teacher?
5. Does the word "rural" appear in your daily life?
6. How did you understand "student teaching" before entering the field? What did you expect to learn from student teaching?
7. How did you find Phoenix? If your boyfriend had not been working in the township government, where would you have chosen to student teach? [Anything you want to say about his work as a "village official?"]
8. What did your boyfriend tell you about Phoenix before you went there? What did you (not) expect to learn from the school?
9. What was your sense of Phoenix (in school environment and culture and teachers' work and life) when you first got there?
10. What did you feel about those villages surrounding Phoenix before I joined you? Were they connected to you in any sense?
11. Were you happy with the accommodation provided by the school?
12. What was your life of student teaching like before I joined you?
13. Any changes in student teaching after I got to Phoenix? Did my arrival influence your student teaching?
14. What did you feel about his teaching after observing so many lessons from your mentor teacher? Is there anything you want to comment on?
15. What did you learn from observing other teachers' lessons and lesson reviews? Anything similar to or different from what you learned from your mentor teacher?
16. What do you think of the teaching reform in Phoenix or the Qin model?
17. What advice did Teacher Hang give in your student teaching? What areas were emphasized? What do you think of them?

18. Any similarities and differences between what you learned from the College and from Phoenix in learning to teach Chinese?
19. What would you say about your classroom teaching at Phoenix?
20. If you had a second chance, what areas would you put more emphasis on in the field?

Part II: College curriculum

21. Do you remember anything from the political courses, such as *Introduction to Mao Zedong Thought*, *Introduction to Deng Xiaoping Theory*, and *Important Ideas on "Three Represents,"* about the countryside? What do you think of the content? How did the instructor teach it?
22. Any deep impressions about the countryside in *Ancient Chinese Literature* and *Modern and Contemporary Chinese Literature*? What do you think of the content? How did the instructor teach it?
23. Anything relevant to rural education in those educational courses, such as *General Pedagogy*, *Secondary Chinese Teaching Methods*, and preparation for student teaching? What do you think of the content? How did the instructor teach it?
24. Did any of your instructors express any opinions on you going to (student) teach in a rural school? How do you understand this?
25. Did you read any course materials handed to you by the Program? Is the countryside expressed in those materials similar to or different from that delivered in your college classroom?
26. This year's summer social practice of your cohort was themed on rural Chinese education? What did you do and write for the homework? How do you make sense of the homework?
27. What do you know about college student summer/winter social practice, especially "*san xia xiang*," in history, content, purpose, and organization? What did you do in the past several years for this? How do you see activities of this type?
28. Were there any other courses that you took in college concerned with rural issues? If yes, any content you can recall?
29. What do you know about the "three rural issues" and rural education? Has the college education affected your thinking about them in some way?
30. Do you think that these courses have prepared you well to teach Chinese in a rural context? Why (not)?

Part III: Teaching Chinese in a Rural Context

31. What do you think of the purpose and significance of rural education? Is it connected with the development of the local community in some way?
32. What was your interaction with your students in the field? What do you know about them?
33. What does education mean to them, in your view?
34. What do you think of their learning in Chinese?
35. As a Chinese teacher, what and how do you think you should teach them? To what end?

36. Do you think you should pay attention to some characteristics of rural students in teaching? Why (not)?
37. Do you think you should pay attention to some circumstances of the school in teaching? Why (not)?
38. What have you noticed about the countryside in the Chinese textbooks for middle schoolers? Any comments on this?
39. Do you think that you need to integrate rural-relevant knowledge with classroom teaching? Why (not)?
40. Did you think it was necessary to visit and understand the surrounding villages before I went to join you at Phoenix? Why (not)?
41. We paid several visits to some villages. What do you think of these visits? Any new understandings of the countryside from the visits?
42. Do you think that local resources should be drawn upon to teach Chinese? Why (not)?
43. Would you encourage students to speak and write about the countryside? Why (not)?
44. Would you encourage students to speak and write about the issues existing in the countryside? Why (not)?
45. I note that in the field some students wrote about the countryside in their composition but the writing is not high quality. How do you make sense of the phenomenon? What would you do in this situation?
46. What do you think of your practice in connecting rural context with classroom teaching in the field?
47. What would you do differently in this area, if you student taught again?
48. Did you feel any struggle or discomfort when student teaching at Phoenix?
49. If you had a second chance, would you consider student teaching at a rural school again? Why (not)?
50. Would you consider teaching at a rural school in the future? Why (not)?
51. What would you say about the Program in preparing you to (student) teach in a rural school?
52. If you are asked to give suggestions for the Program's curriculum reform, what would you say?
53. Do you think it is necessary for the college curriculum to add or highlight a rural perspective? Why (not)?
54. Any comments and suggestions on the interview?

Appendix D/Table 34: Student Social Practice (Career Practice) Activity Registration and Evaluation Form (Summer 2007)

Name	Gender	Student ID
Department	Major	Birthplace
Family's Living Address		
Guiding Theory for Practice		
Purpose of the Practice Activity		
Practice Approach and Method		
Time		
Place		
Beneficiary of the Practice Activity		
Main Content of the Practice Activity		

Table 34 cont

Achievement and Attainment:

Self-Evaluation of the Content

Disadvantage:

Reflection upon the Practice

Approval and Feedback from the Practice Unit [at the Town(ship) Level and above]:

(Stamp)

Date: _____/_____/_____

Feedback from the Social Practice Guidance Teacher (the Career Planning Advisor):

Rank after Assessment: _____ Signature: _____

Date: _____/_____/_____

Feedback from the department's Student Social Practice Lead Group:

Rank after Evaluation: _____ (Stamp)

Date: _____/_____/_____

Feedback from East Teachers College's Student Social Practice Lead Group:

Rank after Evaluation: _____ (Stamp)

Date: _____/_____/_____

Notes:
1) Both assessment and evaluation include four ranks: excellent, pretty good, pass, and fail.
2) The form can be downloaded from *. Print on both sides by using A4 size paper after downloading. Fill in the form by using pen in black ink.

Appendix E/Table 35: Student Teaching Evaluation Form

(East Teachers College, 2007, p. 6)

Student name: _____	Student ID: _____	Department:_____		Host school: _____	
Period of student teaching	Month__ Date___ to Month__ Date___	Of which		Mentor teacher	
		Days for taking a leave: _____	Days for abandoning post: _____		
Class for student teaching		Subject to student teach		Had___ lessons altogether	
Items and weights	Items for evaluation			Marks	
				Full marks	Scores
Preparing the lesson and rehearse teaching 10%	1. Specify the teaching goal based on *the Outline*[273], earnestly study the textbook, write out a detailed and correct (*zhengque*) teaching plan, and get the teaching aid ready.			6	
	2. Earnestly rehearse teaching beforehand, teaching needs to suit the reality of students, and teaching competency (needs to) be constantly improved.			4	
Classroom teaching 55%	3. Earnestly and responsibly prepare for the lesson, lecture/explain the content in accordance with *the Outline* requirement, the basic concept needs to be lectured/explained correctly and scientifically, the teaching steps (need to be) tied naturally and closely, the distribution of teaching time (needs to be) reasonable, and complete teaching task on time.			15	

[273] It was shorted from *the Chinese Teaching Outline*, which was issued as a trial by the Commission of Education in 1992 and revised in 2000. It included three versions, for elementary schools, middle schools, and high schools, respectively. While the MOE (the new name for the Commission of Education since 1998) had published *the Chinese Curriculum Standard* in 2001 to replace *the Outline* as a response to the 2001 *Basic Education Curriculum Reform Outline (Trial)*, the College was still using the old one.

Table 35 Cont

	4. Teaching methods (are) flexible, lecture intensively and exercise extensively, and combine lecture and exercise, highlight the important, address details appropriately, create the situation for learning, stimulate students' interest, brighten classroom atmosphere, collaborate between the teacher and students, and communicate feelings harmoniously.	15
	5. Attend to basic knowledge and basic skills in teaching, foster students' ability in thinking, observation and analysis, and innovation, and apply new teaching principles and teaching methods to develop the intelligence of students.	10
	6. Speak mandarin correctly and fluently, use language to express clearly, vividly, and fluently, voice loud and clearly, and have rhythm. Have a good taste in appearance and teach naturally.	7
	7. On top of knowledge, think clearly in an organized way, have strong ability in meeting an emergency, and write on board eligibly and ascetically.	8
Extracurricular work 10%	8. Carefully grade (student) work, stick to guidance after class, and enthusiastically develop extracurricular activities.	10
Head teacher's work 25%	9. Love teaching work, care about and cherish students, the attitude toward student teaching (is) upright, humble, the teaching attitude (is) discreet, and insist on teaching (the book) to cultivate people and act as a teacher for people (*jiaoshu yuren, weiren shibiao*).	10
	10. Have certain ability in organization, work enthusiastically, earnestly, and responsibly as a head teacher, work in an organized way, and the teacher-student relationship is harmonious.	15
Comprehensive evaluation	Score _____ _____ Rank _____	Signature from the mentor teacher: _____ Stamp from the host school Year ____ Month ____ Date_____
Notes	1. Ranking standard: excellent – 90 and above; fair – 89-75; average – 74-60; poor – lower than 60. 2. The person who exhibited serious disciplinary behavior will be graded as fail.	

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