



Universiteit
Leiden
The Netherlands

Teachers' teaching and learning motivation in China

Zhang, X.

Citation

Zhang, X. (2021, July 6). *Teachers' teaching and learning motivation in China*. ICLON PhD Dissertation Series. Retrieved from <https://hdl.handle.net/1887/3195071>

Version: Publisher's Version

License: [Licence agreement concerning inclusion of doctoral thesis in the Institutional Repository of the University of Leiden](#)

Downloaded from: <https://hdl.handle.net/1887/3195071>

Note: To cite this publication please use the final published version (if applicable).

Cover Page



Universiteit Leiden



The handle <https://hdl.handle.net/1887/3195071> holds various files of this Leiden University dissertation.

Author: Zhang, X.

Title: Teachers' teaching and learning motivation in China

Issue Date: 2021-07-06

Summary

Teaching is important, teaching quality is considered to be of the most important predictors of students' success at schools (Scherer et al., 2016; Thoonen et al., 2011). As a consequence, teachers today are well-advised to initiate and sustain professional learning activities. However, teachers' continuous learning is not self-evident, motivation for learning is one of the most important psychological factors that determines learning behaviour of teachers (Wal, Van den Beemt, A., Martens, R. L., & Den Brok, P. J., 2016). Several studies have reported that teachers' autonomous motivation to learn is a basic condition for teacher learning performance and professional development (Shulman & Shulman, 2009). However, in practical terms, teachers differ in their motivations for learning. Some teachers may implement professional learning activities with considerable energy and persistence, whereas others are reluctant to participate. In this research project, we focus on a specific professional development programme, the NBE. The purpose of NBE is to provide professional development for Chinese teachers in primary schools, and they are encouraged to develop a new pedagogy that fosters students' active learning and critical thinking abilities and improve their teaching quality (Yuhua & Jiacheng, 2013). This research project intends to explore the effects of NBE on teaching quality after a period of time. And try to relate teaching quality to their learning motivation in the NBE. Finally, to better stimulate teachers' learning motivation and improve their learning performance, there is a need to explore the factors which are important for teachers' learning motivation. Understanding these questions could offer insights to policy-makers and practitioners in teacher education regarding how to improve their motivation and teaching quality. The research project that comprise studies are reported in Chapters 2-5. An outline of each study is described below.

In Chapter 2, we first explore how students and supervisors evaluate teaching quality, the following research questions as addressed: *1. What is the relationship between supervisors' and students' evaluations of instructional quality? 2. What are the evaluation criteria used by supervisors and students?* To answer these questions, 20 teachers from 12 primary schools in Shanghai participated in this project and then the quality of their teaching was awarded by 10 supervisors and 497 students. Mix methods were used to explore students' and supervisors' evaluations of teaching .

Our results indicate that students were more positive than supervisors. Students rated most of their teachers as good quality instructors, whereas supervisors held the opinion that the majority of teachers had a relatively low level. Our result also indicated that students and supervisors use different quality criteria, and focus on different aspects of instructional quality. It was concluded that the scores of the evaluation of instructional quality will differ substantially depending on which method is used.

In Chapter 3, we explore the effect of NBE on teachers' teaching, the following research questions as addressed: *1. Do teachers improve their teaching quality as evaluated by their students during participation in the NBE program? 2. How are teacher characteristics, school working conditions and principal's transformational leadership related to the changes in teaching quality?* To answer these questions, two waves of questionnaire data were collected. The first questionnaire (T1) was administered in October 2017, and the second (T2) in April 2018. 375 teachers from 12 primary schools in Shanghai who were active in the PD program participated in this study. A paired-samples t-test was carried out for two teaching quality scales together at two different times to test whether the change was significant. Then step-wise regression analyses were performed to assess the relationship between teacher personal factors, working conditions and principal transformational leadership, on the one hand, and changes in teaching quality, on the other hand.

Results of regression analyses indicate that teachers generally receive higher scores on teaching quality after the program than before. Three factors are significantly and negatively related to the changes in quality: teachers' educational level, the extent to which teachers feel emotional pressure in their profession, and the support from their school principal. Implications for school leaders and policymakers are discussed.

In Chapter 4, we focus on the relationship between teachers' learning motivation and learning performance. The study aimed to explore the impact of teachers' learning motivation, as well as other personal and environmental factors on teaching practices. It sought for the answer to this question: *1. How are working conditions, school leadership, and teacher psychology factors related to students' perceptions of teaching? 2. Do teacher psychology factors mediate the relationship between working conditions, principal leadership, and students' perceptions of teaching?* To answer these questions, 419 teachers and 11705 students from 12 primary schools in Shanghai were chosen randomly in this study. Structural equation modelling was

performed to explore the relationship between teachers' personal factors, working conditions and teaching quality.

The results indicate that self-efficacy seemed to be a powerful predictor for teaching practices. Support from colleagues, task autonomy, the leadership from the principal and academic supervisor also affected teachers' instruction via teachers' self-efficacy. This study shed light on Chinese teaching quality in relation to their background characteristics, personal factors, as well as environmental factors.

In Chapter 5, we conduct a study of the relationship between teachers' self-efficacy, beliefs about learning and their perceived work, and their learning motivation. The study aimed to answer the research question: *"How are factors at the personal and school levels related to teachers' motivation to participate in professional learning?"* To answer these questions, data were collected using a paper-and-pencil questionnaire. Participants included 472 teachers (90.1% females, 9.9% males) from 12 primary schools in Shanghai, China. Multivariate analyses of variance were performed with teacher characteristics and environmental factors as independent variables and the three motivation scales as dependent variables.

Results indicate that teachers' prior experience, self-efficacy in teaching, the conception of students' ability and their own ability (Fixed versus Dynamic Ability), emotional pressure and principal leadership are significantly positively related to teacher autonomous motivation for learning. And teacher conception of students' ability (Fixed versus Dynamic Ability), emotional pressure, and principal leadership showed a significant negative relationship with external regulation. Finally, only efficacy in teaching showed a significant positive relationship with introjected regulation.

In Chapter 6, we investigate the relationship between workplace conditions in schools and teachers' autonomous motivation to learn. The following research questions directed our study: 1. *Which workplace conditions are related to teachers' autonomous motivation to learn?* 2. *Which workplace conditions moderate the relationship between teachers' characteristics and their autonomous motivation to learn?* To answer these questions, a questionnaire was completed by 472 teachers from 13 primary schools in Shanghai. Multilevel regression analyses were performed with factors at level 1 and 2 as predictors of teachers' autonomous motivation.

The results indicate that perceived support from colleagues had a positive effect and perceived work pressure had a negative effect on teachers' autonomous motivation to learn. In addition, these two variables moderated the relationship between teaching experience and their task autonomy, on the one hand, and their autonomous motivation to learn, on the other hand, with stronger relationships with high collegial support and low work pressure. These findings can have implications for school leaders and policymakers to implement strategies that foster teacher learning motivation.

In Chapter 7, we provide summaries of the four studies, reflections, and the findings and discussions of each study. Additionally, practical implications and suggestions for further studies were also discussed.

First, unlike our expectations, our results indicate that teachers' learning motivation and their teaching quality are not interrelated. These findings were unexpected in the light of previous studies in the Western culture setting (Gan et al., 2018; Georgios Gorozidis & Papaioannou, 2014; Lam et al., 2010; Thoonen et al., 2011). One possible explanation could be explained by the cultural difference between Western countries and Eastern countries. The culture of Eastern countries places more emphasis on collectivism rather than individualism (Ho & Chiu, 1994). We presumed Chinese teachers place more emphasis on collectivism, they may be reluctant to offer straight and negative information about their learning motivation when they are pressed to participate in learning activities.

Second, we find that teachers' prior experience with learning activities, teaching experience, self-efficacy, conceptions of learning, work and emotional pressure, colleague support and principal leadership were all related to their motivation to participate in professional learning. In addition, colleague support and task autonomy moderated the relationship between teaching experience, and self-efficacy in classroom teaching, on the one hand, and their autonomous motivation to learn, on the other hand. This means that teachers' personal experiences and institutional and socio-cultural contexts can both influence learning motivation in professional learning activities (see e.g., Gan et al., 2018; Kwakman, 2003; W. Liu et al., 2018). Furthermore, it indicates that the relationship between teachers' characteristics and their learning motivation may vary across different workplaces with different conditions.

Third, we provide several practical implications for teacher professional learning

in schools. We presumed that policymakers should involve teachers' working conditions, and individual needs in setting the agenda for professional development programmes and provide individual and intellectual support within a safe learning climate. At the same time, it is not only policymakers who can improve the effectiveness of professional development programmes, but also teachers themselves, it is important for teachers to know that they could be beneficial for the overall learning activities. These measures may eventually lead to PD that are able to stimulate teachers' learning motivation and improve the quality of teaching.