

Free Teacher Education in China

A Study on Free Teacher Education Program

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Abstract

The supply and quality of teachers are the keys to the development of education. Teacher education is an important part of social education system. Chinese government have practiced free teacher education program in 2007 to improve teacher education.

The purpose of this study is to present an overview of free teacher education in China. The contents, reasons and goals of free teacher education are illustrated in this study to analyze this new education program. Quantitative research method is employed in this study. Questionnaires are delivered to students to get their attitudes toward teaching and free teacher education program.

The findings show that free teacher education have received many positive effects as expectations. Both teacher education and education equity are enhanced by free teacher education. However, there are still some issues in this new education program. State and governments should take measures to improve free teacher education. Some discussions and suggestions about free teacher education are presented in the end to better teacher education.

Key words: free teacher education program, teacher education, education equity

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Table of Content

ABSTACT.....	II
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.....	III
LIST OF TABLES.....	VI
LIST OF FIGURES.....	VII
ABBREVIATIONS.....	VIII
Chapter 1 Introduction.....	1
1.1 Introduction.....	1
1.2 Reasons and background for the study	1
1.2.1 Reasons.....	1
1.2.2 Background for the study	2
1.3 Purposes of the study	4
1.4 Research questions and methods	4
1.4.1 Research questions	4
1.4.2 Research methods.....	6
1.5 Delimitation of the study.....	6
1.6 Organization of the thesis.....	7
Chapter 2 Theoretical framework	8
2.1 Introduction	8
2.2 Teacher education	8
2.2.1 Teacher quality	9
2.2.2 Teacher shortage and surplus	11
2.2.3 Teacher status	12
2.2.4 Gender issue in teacher education.....	13
2.3 Education equity.....	15
2.4 Tuition fee	17
2.5 The conceptual framework.....	19
2.6 Summary	20
Chapter 3 Overview of teacher education in China	21
3.1 Introduction.....	21
3.2 Overview of teacher education in China.....	21
3.2.1 General situation of Chinese teacher education	21
3.2.2 Main issues in Chinese teacher education.....	24
3.3 Evolution of tuition fee in teacher education in China	29
3.3.1 Tuition fee system in pre-1949 China	29
3.3.2 Tuition fee system in new China.....	31
3.3.3 Tuition fee system in new period	34
3.4 Summary	40
Chapter 4 Methodology.....	41
4.1 Introduction	41
4.2 Research designs and methods.....	41
4.2.1 Research questions	41
4.2.2 Research designs	42
4.2.3 Research methods.....	42

4.3 Sampling.....	43
4.3.1 Research site.....	43
4.3.2 Populations of sampling.....	44
4.3.3 Sampling responses.....	44
4.4 Methods for data collection.....	45
4.4.1 Questionnaire.....	45
4.4.2 Secondary analysis of official statistics.....	46
4.5 Methods for data analysis.....	46
4.6 Ethical concerns, validity and reliability.....	48
4.6.1 Ethical concerns.....	48
4.6.2 Validity and Reliability.....	48
4.7 Limitation.....	49
4.8 Summary.....	49
Chapter 5 Data analysis and findings.....	51
5.1 Introduction.....	51
5.2 Students information.....	51
5.2.1 Overview of enrollment in free teacher education.....	51
5.2.2 Family background analysis.....	52
5.3 Students' attitudes.....	55
5.3.1 Students' attitudes towards teaching profession.....	55
5.3.2 Students' attitudes towards free tuition fee policy in teacher education.....	58
5.4 Attitudes comparison between students with different backgrounds.....	66
5.4.1 Gender-related issues.....	66
5.4.2 Areas-related issues.....	68
5.5 Summary.....	72
Chapter 6 Conclusions and Recommendations.....	73
6.1 Introduction.....	73
6.2 Summary of findings.....	73
6.2.1 Social-economic status of students in free teacher education.....	73
6.2.2 Attitudes to teaching.....	74
6.2.3 Attitudes towards free teacher education.....	74
6.2.4 Attitudes comparison.....	75
6.3 Conclusions.....	75
6.4 Discussion.....	77
6.4.1 Recommendations.....	77
6.4.2 Implications for further research.....	80
6.5 Summary.....	80
REFERENCES.....	81
APPENDIX.....	88

List of Tables

Table 1.1 Frameworks of Research Questions

Table 2.1 Qualifications for Chinese teachers in 1994

Table 2.2 Ranking of occupational prestige among eight occupations

Table 2.3 Percentage of female and male in different education position

Table 3.1 Basic Statistics of Specialized Teacher Training Schools in 2004

Table 3.2 Number of full-time teachers in schools in 2006

Table 3.3 Normal colleges and universities and their enrollments, 1998, 2001, and 2003

Table 3.4 Percentage of female full-time teachers in different types' schools

Table 3.5 The yearly income of those who work in different fields

Table 4.1 Differences between quantitative and qualitative research methods

Table 4.2 Information of survey respondents

Table 4.3 Structure of questionnaires

Table 4.4 Approach taken to measure variables of students' background

Table 4.5 Approach taken to explore students' attitudes about teacher education

Table 5.1 General information about enrollment in free teacher education in 2007

Table 5.2 Female and male students' attitudes on becoming an excellent teacher

Table 5.3 Female and male students' attitudes on staying in teacher education

Table 5.4 Different universities students' attitudes on area they want to teach

Table 5.5 Different universities students' attitudes on their campus life

Table 5.6 Different universities students' attitudes on the main problem for teaching in rural areas two years

Table 5.7 Different university students' attitudes on they cannot get further education in ten years after their graduation

List of Figures

Figure 2.1 The relationships among free tuition fee policy in teacher education, education equity and teacher education

Figure 3.1 Tuition fee become a burden

Figure 4.1 The structure of research method in the study

Figure 5.1 Percentage of female and male students in sampling

Figure 5.2 The annual family income of sampling

Figure 5.3 The percentage of students from urban and rural areas

Figure 5.4 The reasons why students have chosen to teach

Figure 5.5 Students' attitudes on whether they will become a good teacher

Figure 5.6 Students' attitudes on whether they will become a lifelong teacher

Figure 5.7 The area students prefer to teach

Figure 5.8 The reasons why students have chosen free teacher education

Figure 5.9 How much students know about free teacher education

Figure 5.10 Are students satisfied with their life in normal university

Figure 5.11 Whether students will stay in teacher education if other subjects are free

Figure 5.12 The main problem for working in rural areas two years

Figure 5.13 Students' attitudes on paying for penalty if they break contract

Figure 5.14 Students' attitudes on they cannot get further education in ten years

Figure 5.15 Students' opinions on whether free teacher education can improve social morals of teacher honor

Figure 5.16 Different reasons for choosing to be a teacher between genders

Abbreviations

BBS—Bulletin Board System

BNU—Beijing Normal University

MoE—Ministry of Education

OECD—Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development

PRC—the People's Republic of China

SNU—Shaanxi Normal University

SPSS—Statistic Program for Social Science

UK—United Kingdom

UNESCO—United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization

Chapter 1 Introduction

1.1 Introduction

The main purposes of this chapter are to a) present the reasons for doing this thesis and a brief background to the study, b) introduce the main research questions and methods, c) indicate the purposes and delimitations of this study, and d) outline the organization of the study.

1.2 Reasons and background for the study

1.2.1 Reasons

China with the largest population in the world has the largest challenge to educate all the people. Teachers, as the designers of the human soul, play an important role in the Chinese education system. High quality teachers are guarantees for education progress. Therefore, teacher education is an important part of Chinese education system. The Chinese teacher education, historically, once influenced by American and Japanese teacher education models, came under Soviet hegemony in the period of 1949-1960s (Guo, 2005: 150). In the last 50 years, the governments at different levels have given priorities and great cares to teacher education. China has established a teacher education system to meets the needs of basic education of different types and at different levels.¹ This system fits the specific Chinese situation and serves for basic education. Indeed, Chinese teacher education makes remarkable achievement nowadays. However, it is not an easy task to develop and improve teacher education in such a huge country.

Different from past when Chinese teacher education had learned more from other experienced countries, now Chinese governments explore new ways to develop

¹ From http://www.edu.cn/introduction5_1399/20060323/t20060323_4026.shtml

teacher education in accordance with the specific situation. Recently, in 2007, Ministry of Education (MoE) established free teacher education program in six normal universities.² This program is also called free tuition fee policy in teacher education which means students don't need pay tuition fee for their study. In other words, students in these six normal universities can receive teacher training program for free. When this education program was declared, it attracted much attention from educators, students, teachers and parents. What are the reasons and goals for this new program? Can it achieve its goals and benefit for the development of teacher education? These are the main reasons for writing this thesis. Furthermore, some suggestions are given to this program and teacher education for the better development in the future.

1.2.2 Background for the study

Chinese teacher education originated from the end of Qing Dynasty. Sheng Xuanhuai founded Nanyang Teacher College in Shanghai in 1897 which was considered the outset of Chinese teacher education (Yang and Wang, 2007). Chinese teacher education didn't charge tuition fee until the reform of Chinese higher education system. The Chinese higher education began to charge tuition fee in 1989. Teacher education was still free at that time, and further, students in normal universities received subsidies from government. In 1997, when higher education tuition fee policy implemented across the country, teacher education attempted to charge tuition fee gradually.

From 1997 to 2007, tuition fee system existed for ten years in teacher education. At the beginning, it is pretty sure that this system was up to national condition and lightened fiscal burden on state. However, some problems appeared as the time went by. Charging tuition fee from students, normal university lost their advantage to

² Normal universities are universities to train teachers. It used to be a term used by many countries but annulled in the 1930s and China still uses this term referring to the teacher education.

recruit students. With same tuition fee, students will choose popular majors not teacher education. The status of teacher education has been threatened. Furthermore, although tuition fee in teacher education is lower than higher education, it is still a heavy burden on many families with low income. Some students have to give up the opportunity for their further study in teacher education which cumpers the progress of education equity. Tuition fee system cannot meet the demand of teacher education, even, is an obstacle for development of education.

Wen Jiabao, the premier of State Department, had a government report in March of 2007 and pointed out that free teacher education program would be implemented in the normal universities which are under direct administration of MoE³. That means the free tuition fee policy, existing for a long time in Chinese teacher education, will re-emerge.

Six normal universities are selected as pilots to carry out free teacher education program the first year. The main contents of this program are as follow:

- a) During the four years of university, the students in teacher education are free for study and accommodation, and also can get subsidies from government.
- b) Students should promise and sign the contract that they will engage in primary and secondary education at least ten years after they finish study in universities.
- c) Students who work in urban areas should first offer service in rural area for two years.⁴

The purposes of free teacher education program are to foster a number of excellent teachers; to form social atmosphere of teaching honors and to encourage more and more students to become lifelong educators.⁵

³ Six normal universities in China are under direct administration of MoE, which means they can get more financial support from the government.

⁴ From <http://www.moe.edu.cn/edoas/website18/97/info28397.htm>

⁵ From <http://www.moe.edu.cn/edoas/website18/97/info28397.htm>

1.3 Purposes of the study

The purpose of this research is to delve into reasons of free teacher education program including both overt and covert reasons, and then the focus turns to the goals of this program which are to foster a number of excellent teachers; to form social atmosphere of teaching honors and to encourage more and more students to become lifelong educators. The research will discuss these issues in detail and try to evaluate whether this program can achieve its goals. There is still another purpose of the thesis which is try to give some tentative suggestions to this program and expresses expectations to teacher education in the future.

1.4 Research questions and methods

1.4.1 Research questions

As mentioned above, there are some issues existing in teacher education for a while. Any new education policy should be supposed to contribute itself to the development of education. Free tuition fee policy, for the development of teacher education and education equity, is a significant policy in new period. Resuming of free teacher education is not a simple comeback of history but a brand-new reform with specific background and reasons. The new program will be tested through practicing. The assumption in this thesis is that free teacher education can achieve its goals and make some significant influences on teacher education in some extent. To test this assumption, the following questions will act as lines for the development of this thesis. Each of the questions is followed by an assumption. In the progress of this thesis, the assumptions will be tested through the analysis of collected data and secondary data.

Table 1.1 Frameworks of Research Questions



There are three main research questions pictured in table 1.1 which are:

1. What are the reasons for the free teacher education program?

The assumption to this question is that besides the reasons mentioned in this new program there are still deeper and hidden reasons for free teacher education.

2. What are the goals of the free teacher education, and can they be achieved?

It is assumed that this new program can achieve its goals as the expectations and makes some positive impacts on teacher education in some extend.

3. Is there any hidden problems existing in free teacher education program, and how to improve it?

As a new education program, free teacher education, certainly, has room to improve.

The assumption to this question is that there are some covert problems in this new program, and can be improved in the future.

1.4.2 Research methods

Quantitative research methods are mainly employed in this study in order to answer the core questions. Questionnaire is the most common way to gather quantitative data (Sheyvens & Storey, 2003). The questionnaires are delivered to the students in free teacher education and get their attitudes about this new education program. Besides, other accessible secondary data including literatures in the library and reliable data in website are also collected to get the general situation of teacher education in China nowadays. Statistics Program for Social Science (SPSS)—a widely used computer software for social science quantitative analysis—has been utilized in this thesis to analysis the data. How the research methods are designed and the data are analyzed will be presented in chapter four and five.

1.5 Delimitation of the study

Time delimitation

Free teacher education program was established in 2007 in the six normal universities around the whole country. The first passels of students who are free to teacher education still haven't graduated yet. Their attitudes towards the new education policy and teacher education may be changed when they face the job choice. It will be more or less influence the accuracy of research results.

The actual effects of free teacher education can be proofed completely only after the first students graduation in 2011. However, students' attitudes can also reflect the effects of free teacher education in some extent. The conclusion from this is reasonable and valid. Furthermore, the conclusion can be seen as an assumption for further study in future.

Location delimitation

There are more than two hundreds normal universities across the whole China. It is impossible to give a picture of teacher education based on all normal universities. Consequently, this thesis mainly focuses on the normal universities in medium-sized and big cities where things are changing faster than those in towns and villages. Especially, normal universities directly under the government of MoE are given the priority.

Literature delimitation

As mentioned above, the free tuition fee policy is a newest education policy established in China in 2007. The first graduates benefit from the new policy will not finish their study until 2010. Therefore, not many researchers in China have studied this topic so far. It is difficult to find much available reference in either China or the other part of the world.

1.6 Organization of the thesis

This thesis is organized as follow: The first chapter outlines the reasons, background, purposes, delimitations and organization of the thesis. Chapter two mainly focuses on theoretical issues and conceptual framework used in the thesis. Chapter three is an overview of Chinese teacher education including development of tuition fee policy in teacher education and modern teacher education in China. The next chapter—chapter four, is a description of research and data collection methods applied in the thesis. The fifth chapter is a presentation of the data analysis and makes some discussions about the results from the analysis. The whole thesis ends up with the sixth chapter which gives conclusions and tentative suggestions.

Chapter 2 Theoretical framework

2.1 Introduction

The study is mainly about a new tuition fee policy in Chinese teacher education. As mentioned in previous chapter, the purpose of this policy is for the development of both education equity and teacher education. This chapter deals with the theoretical issues and conceptual framework relevant to the study. Three key words: teacher education, education equity and tuition fee will be illustrated in this chapter to make clear concepts employed in this thesis. Following this is the outline of the conceptual framework of the study.

2.2 Teacher education

Teachers are the most important resource in schools and make a vital impact on development of the whole society. Without enough and qualified teachers, it is hard to reach education demand and target. Teacher education is supposed to foster teachers both in quantity and quality. According to a report from United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) (2002), teacher education is likely to include four elements: improving the general educational background of teachers; increasing their knowledge and understanding of the subjects they are to teach; understanding of children and learning; and the development of practical skills and competences.

Actually, it is not an easy job to define the concepts of teacher education. Many factors should be taken into account. To make these concepts clear, a few major issues included in teacher education are highlighted in this section.

2.2.1 Teacher quality

Teachers are at the center of the educational process and without good teachers all other innovations are doomed to failure... (Altbach, 1987). No one can deny the importance of teacher quality. Enough teachers with high quality are the guarantee of any education progress.

What qualifications does a person need to become a teacher? The answers are multiple and depend on the country and the time period in which it is asked. Teacher certification and licensure can be considered as the core of the answers (Scannell, M.M. and Scannell, D.P., 1995). According to Scannell's theory, "licensure" refers to quality control exercised by states, while "certification" refers to quality control exercised by peer review (Scannell, M.M. and Scannell, D.P., 1995:566). Some countries require different levels or types of education for different levels of schools; other countries require the same level of education for all the teachers. Some countries require teachers have to pass certification and licensure examination before being licensed or certified but others do not (Holmes, 1983).

Licensure and certification, actually, are the criteria of teacher quality. However, different countries employ different criteria. In many developing countries, the problem is how to attract prospective teachers and educate them to meet minimal standards (Scannell, M.M. and Scannell, D.P., 1995). Table 2.1 indicates the criteria for academic qualification in China in 1994. However, even in the same country, the criteria are different in different periods. Compared with the criteria in 1994, the criteria nowadays in China have been changed a lot. The most obvious different is that teachers have to at least get a bachelor degree whichever level they teach. This change is reasonable and positive. High quality education requires high quality teaching force, while, high quality teachers can also improve the development of education.

Generally, diploma has a positive relationship with teacher quality. The higher diploma they get the more qualified they are. Nevertheless, teacher quality means not only teachers' education background, but their professional competence, their passion and ethics for this profession (Hu, 2008).

Table 2.1 Qualifications for Chinese teachers in 1994

Level	Educational origin	Institution	Qualification	Job destination
4	Graduates from universities and colleges	Normal university (post-graduate)	Master and doctor degree	University and college
3	Graduates from senior secondary school	Normal universities and colleges (undergraduate)	Bachelor degree	Senior secondary school
2	Graduates from senior secondary school	Junior colleges	Diploma	Junior secondary school
1	Graduates from junior secondary school	Secondary normal schools	Certificate	Primary school and kindergarten

Sources: Compiled from Lewin et al (1994:101)

2.2.2 Teacher shortage and surplus

The teaching force is growing and changing in a number of important respects. Teacher demand has been increasing since the mid 1980s as a result of increasing birth rates and immigration, declining pupil-teacher ratios, and increasing turnover of teachers (Darling-Hammond and Cobb, 1996). Apparently, increase in demand and declines in supply have created shortage in a number of countries and areas.

The problem of shortage exists in both teachers and those who prepare to teach. For the teachers, the outflow from teaching to other profession has become acute. According to Lewin et al (1994), there are two kinds of outflow—the ‘actual’ outflow and the potential outflow. The former one means teachers left their teaching positions for other jobs. The second type of outflow, ‘potential outflow’, is the teachers who want to leave teaching. The reasons for school teachers leaving or want to leave teaching are in term of low salaries, low status and the shortage of housing (Li, 2004). For the students in teacher education, many of them prepare to teach but never enter this field. Darling-Hammond and Cobb (1996) pointed out that there are some reasons for this problem: some have trouble finding a job in the areas where they live and want to work; some have prepared to teach in fields where there is an oversupply of teachers; some have prepared to teach in mathematics or science but find the alternative jobs in business and some have prepared to teach as a kind of insurance while pursuing other possible career opportunities.

Reasons for the shortage of teachers, as Darling-Hammond and Cobb (1996:25) illustrates, is: “salaries lower than those earned by similarly educated professionals, a flat career structure, few opportunities for advancement, and relatively poor working conditions. These problems are more severe in low-wealth districts, where shortages are also more severe.”

Teacher shortages have happened in many countries especially in undeveloped areas. This undersupply of teachers can be addressed by requiring teachers to teach outside their field, increasing class sizes or canceling some subjects (Watson and Hatton 1995). Furthermore, many unqualified teachers may be hired as the result of teacher shortage. Anyway, teacher shortages have a terrible impact on both education development and teacher education.

In addition, a number of studies have shown that surplus and shortage of teachers can exist within a country simultaneously due to the differences in income and working conditions (Murnane, 1995). It is true that people would rather stay in the areas with more work opportunities and good payment than undeveloped areas. Both individual and schools are influenced by the oversupply of teachers.

Economic development, a rise in teacher resignations and a surge in the school population can quickly turn today's surplus into tomorrow's shortage. The shifts between shortage and surplus have become a characteristic of teacher labor market in much of the world (Watson and Hatton, 1995). Both shortage and surplus of teachers are caused by imbalance between demand and supply. Different teaching forces in different areas make a diverse education development between those areas which is to the disadvantage of education equity. A balance between demand and supply in teaching force is an ideal situation of teacher education. However, it seems there is a long way to go.

2.2.3 Teacher status

Social status of teaching refers to the relative standing of teaching as an occupation in a hierarchy of all occupation (Hoyle, 1995:58). Teaching was once in a high social status and quite a lot of people would like to become teachers, which seems to have changed nowadays. Table 2.2 indicates how student teachers have ranked different

occupations. We can see that, in student teachers' eyes, teacher ranks the sixth among eight occupations and just higher than journalist and accountant.

Table 2.2 Ranking of occupational prestige among eight occupations

Occupation	Number	Minimum	Maximum	Mean
Doctor	145	1.00	8.00	5.5448
Civil servant	145	1.00	8.00	5.3172
Lawyer	145	1.00	8.00	5.1862
Engineer	145	1.00	8.00	5.1724
Architect	145	1.00	8.00	4.6069
Teacher	145	1.00	8.00	4.0897
Journalist	145	1.00	8.00	3.3586
Accountant	145	1.00	8.00	2.7655

Sources: Compiled from Hu (2008:46)

Two factors can be taken into account for declining of teachers' social status. First, it notes that professions with a relatively low proportion of women (e.g. medicine and law) enjoy a higher occupational prestige than those with a relatively high proportion of women (e.g. teaching and nursing) (Hoyle, 1995). Second, economic status has a positive relationship with people's social status. Teaching, as a low income profession is in a relatively low social status compared with other occupations which offer high income.

In a word, social status of teachers is in a disadvantageous position. Declining of teachers' social status directly leads to a decrease in quantity and quality of teachers.

2.2.4 Gender issue in teacher education

There is a considerable gender imbalance in teaching profession throughout the vast majority of the world. Teaching, especially primary teaching is almost always

constructed as feminized (Thornton and Bricheno, 2006). It might be a difficult choice for young men to enter into highly feminized occupations. Table 2.34 shows percentage of females in education position. Clearly, women outnumber men in education at the chalk face, but not when it comes to educational leadership. These gender differences also exist in teacher preparation institutions. It is a common phenomenon in teacher education institutions that there are much fewer male students than female students.

Table 2.3 Percentage of female and male in different education position

	Female	Male
Education assistants	93%	7%
Education sector employees	72%	28%
Secondary school teachers	54%	46%
Secondary school heads	31%	69%
Education collage principles	27%	73%
University vice-chancellors	15%	85%

Sources: Compiled from Thornton and Bricheno (2006:33)

Some gender stereotypes come from peers, family, or even, via teachers themselves and the careers services influence young people’s career choices (Thornton and Bricheno, 2006). Mills (2005) summarizes the most common reasons why men don’t teach which relate to the low status of teachers:

“...poor wages in relation to the work performed; limited career pate for those not seeking administrative roles; the labeling of male primary school teachers as homosexual or not ‘real men’; the current media spotlight on allegations of child abuse; the fear of being labeled a pedophile.” (Mills, 2005:5).

Gender imbalance in teaching workforce is a problem in some extent. The first is the issue of equality in the labor market. It is undesirable for social equality that any

occupation, like primary teaching, is dominated by one gender. The second concern is about the socialization of pupils. Drudy et al. (2005) have pointed out that both female and male pupils benefit from a representation of both genders on a school staff. Furthermore, hidden curriculum of schooling becomes another problem. According to table 2.4 above, teaching profession and its management structures in the schools are highly gender-differentiated. What are students learning from male—female power relationship?

It is very common in most countries that women are dominant in first and second level teaching although not in management. Obviously, these gender imbalance has a bad impact on teacher education, education equality and students progress.

2.3 Education equity

In modern societies, all human beings are considered to be free, having equal legal and political rights and equal dignity. Education equity is one of the basic embodiments of social equity. Education is associated with development of both individual and society. Education equity is one of the most powerful levers available to make society more equitable. Equity in education has two dimensions. The first is fairness, which implies ensuring that personal and social circumstances—for example gender, socio-economic status or ethnic origin—should not be an obstacle for people to achieve educational potential. The second is inclusion, which implies ensuring a basic minimum standard of education for all—for example that everyone should be able to read, write and do simple arithmetic (Field et al. 2007). In this thesis, equity in education mainly refers to the first dimension, which is, educational and learning environment in which individuals can consider options and make choices based on their abilities and talents, not on the basis of stereotypes, biased expectations or discrimination (Opheim, 2004). In other words, everyone has the right to get education opportunities regardless of gender, ethnicity, race or social status.

Education equity emphasizes both equity in opportunities and equity in educational outcome. Equity in education is thus not only a question of opportunities provided by the education system, but it also concerns the actual results of performances of different groups of students through the education system (Opheim, 2004). There are individual differences between students as well as differences in learning resources they may have obtained through their family and environment. These kinds of differences in individual and family resources may affect the students' perception of the education system and the need for information. It is well known that socio-economic background, place of residence, ethnic background and gender are used as indicators of differences between students. Analyzing equity in education involves studying access, participation, achievement and educational outcomes among students with different characteristics (Opheim, 2004).

Socio-economic background of students such as family income, parents' education degree and parents' vocation are important factors in influencing students' school and learning outcomes. Differences by socio-economic group remain a major focus of attention in education equity. Healy and Istance (2001:203) indicated that different social groups have unequal access to learning opportunities or endowments of human, financial and cultural capital, the outcomes for students from disadvantaged backgrounds can be significantly influenced.

Regional equality is also a part of education equity. Differences between urban and rural areas in actual conditions of teaching, resources, class size, etc., can vary widely (Healy and Istance, 2001). Generally, students in rural areas have less education opportunities compared with those in urban areas.

Gender equity and relates goals can be thought of as working to enhance the aspirations, achievement, talents, and interests of all students independent of their

gender (New Pioneers, 1975). According to UNESCO report⁶, gender equality is central in all efforts to advance human development. Achieving gender-equality is one of UNESCO's top priorities. To improve gender equity, many processes had been made to give girls equal education rights as boys and even give girls priority to access education. Inequality between girls and boys has diminished rapidly in terms of access, opportunities, achievement and attainment (Hutmacher, 2001).

Achieving education equity is the goal of education development. Equity in education is stated either in international agreement or in various national laws. For example, Education Law of the People's Republic of China (PRC) states that "all citizens, regardless of ethnic group, race, sex, age, occupation, property status or religious belief, enjoy equal educational opportunities according to law" (MoE, 1999). Despite the progress made towards education equity, major inequities of access, opportunities, achievement and attainment remain among students from different socio-economic, racial and gender backgrounds. Education inequity has emerged as a global concern, which troubles China as well.

2.4 Tuition fee

Nowadays, in most countries in the world except those with high social welfare, students have to pay tuition fee for their higher education. The concept of cost-sharing theory can be seen as advent of tuition fee. Johnstore first presented concept of cost-sharing with a presumption that the costs of higher education are borne by some combination of four aspects: government or taxpayer, parents, students and philanthropists (Johnstore, 2004). Cost-sharing as a governmental policy generally refers to a shift of costs of higher education from government or taxpayers to parents and students (Johnstore, 2004). Cost-sharing is especially thought as tuition fee to cover part of the costs of instruction. On the other hand, it can also take the form of

⁶ From <http://www.unesco.org/en/beirut/special-themes/gender-equality/>

user charges to cover more of the costs of accommodation, food and other expenses of student living. However in whatever form to forms, cost-sharing is practicing throughout the world at the start of the 21st century.

The relationship between cost-sharing and education equity is complicated and have been an issue for a long time. Without tuition fee, government can only offer few opportunity of higher education for students because of weak fiscal power (Gong, 2009). Sharing public education resource by few people is opposite for the purpose of education equity. Who benefit from higher education should bear the costs is the core of cost-sharing. Under this construction, more students have the chance to accept higher education and distribution of public education resource in society would be equitable. Furthermore, when students pay, they have a say in higher education which they 'purchase' (Cheng, 1997). To higher education itself, it tries to become more efficient to provide what students are likely to want—which is good for development of higher education. However, on the other hand, the costs of higher education are a burden for students of low income or otherwise isolated backgrounds. Dropping out from schools because of lower payment ability harms education equity progress.

Cost-sharing (or tuition fee) started in 1980s in China and operated across the country in 1993 (Cheng, 1997). The introduction of cost-sharing apparently lessened the burden on government, but at the same time, aroused much worry among parents particularly those who have poor payment ability or in rural areas (Cheng, 1997). Most policy-makers believe that cost-sharing is the direction for reform in higher education. However the fast increase of tuition fee has exceeded payment ability of most students and their families in rural areas. Relationship between supply and demand in higher education and students' payment ability should be taken into account when tuition fee standard is established (Gong, 2009). Also, governments have to offer student assistance and loan in order to lighten burden of students and parents.

2.5 The conceptual framework

The main research target in this thesis is free teacher education program. As mentioned above, the relationship between tuition fee and education equity is complicated. The setting of tuition fee in higher education should be reasonable and rational. In the Chinese context, students are supposed to pay 25% of entire education cost. However, in fact, tuition fee charged from students and their family is much more than this criterion.⁷ The large increase of tuition fee exceeds students' payment ability and finally leads to education inequity.

On the other hand, one of the goals of free teacher education is to recruit more excellent students to become teachers. There are assumptions that both quantity and quality of teachers will improve and teacher status will rise accordingly. Finally, teacher education will get better development.

The relationships among free teacher education program, education equity and teacher education is illustrated in figure 2.1. The assumptions in this study is free teacher education program will have positive impact on teacher education and education equity. Furthermore, four dimensions in teacher education—teacher quantity, teacher quality, teacher status and gender issues can be affected relatively.

⁷ From <http://www.chinafruit.com/c/b1/0701/33344.htm>

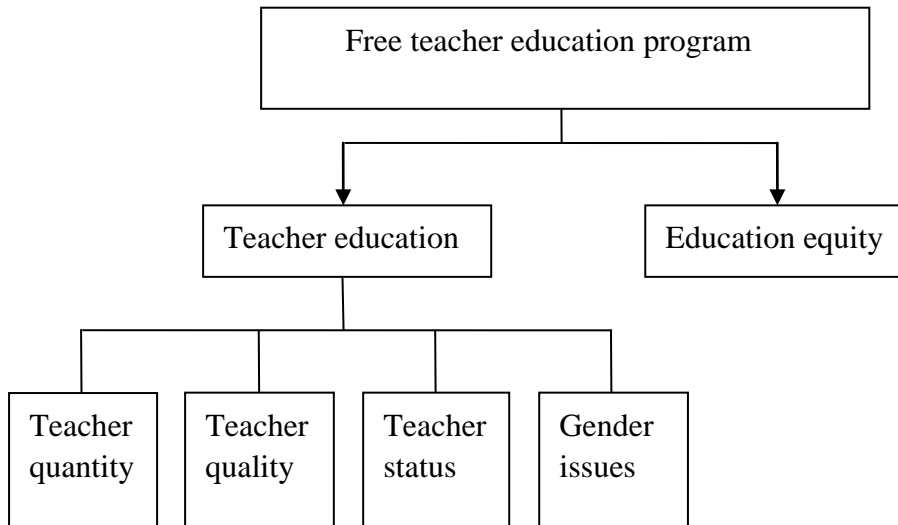


Figure 2.1The relationships among free teacher education program, education equity and teacher education

2.6 Summary

Teacher education makes an important role in social education. It is a universal knowledge that teacher education should be given more attentions and priorities. Nevertheless, teacher education is in a dissatisfactory situation in many countries nowadays. Meanwhile, education inequity has happened in some fields in different dimensions. Free teacher education program is to improve both teacher education and education equity. Next chapter offers background information about teacher education and tuition fee policy in China.

Chapter 3 Overview of teacher education in China

3.1 Introduction

This chapter is mainly about the overview of teacher education in China and tuition fee policy in this field. It begins with status quo of teacher education in China including a picture of teacher education nowadays and some arguments. Then it is to provide a historical review of progress of tuition fee policy in Chinese teacher education and the main focus is especially given to the newest free tuition fee policy which was implemented in 2007.

3.2 Overview of teacher education in China

Chinese teacher education has a century of history since Qing⁸ government first founded Nanyang teacher collage in Shanghai in 1897. In the last 50 years' of development since the founding of the PRC, the governments at different levels have given priorities and great cares to teacher education. Specially, teacher education in China has entered into a new stage of development since the policy of reform and opening-up was adopted in 1978. As the reforms are improved gradually, great development and remarkable achievements have been made in teacher education.

3.2.1 General situation of Chinese teacher education

Teacher education in China is composed by two parts that are pre-service education and in-service training (Lewin et al, 1994: 100). Pre-service teacher education comprise of three stages, four-year teacher training institutions including normal universities and colleges, three-year teacher training colleges and secondary teacher training schools, which charge with the preparation of teacher for different level of schooling (Paine

⁸ Qing (1616—1911) is the last feudal dynast in China.

and Fang, 2007: 180). These three different levels train respectively teachers for senior secondary school, junior secondary schools and primary schools. Aiming to improve the capacity of the general teaching force, China established the first in-service training system in 1976. The in-service training system is organized in some different levels with a close correspondence to the type and level of school teachers. Like pre-service teacher education system, the in-service training system makes significant contributions to preparing qualified teachers for education.

Table 3.1 shows that, in 2004, there were 188 general higher education institutions in China with an enrollment of 1,673,200 students. Four-year programs are offered to train senior secondary school teachers; 2-year or 3 year programs are mainly to train teachers for junior secondary schools. The specialties are as follows: Pedagogy, Pre-school Education, Special Education, Psychology, Educational Technology, Chinese Language and Literature, Languages and Literature of Minority Nationalities, Ideological and Political Education, History, English, Russian, Japanese, Mathematics and applied Mathematics, Computer Science, Physics, Chemistry, Biology, Geography, Music, Fine Arts and Physical Education.⁹

Table 3.1 Basic Statistics of Specialized Teacher Training Schools in 2004

	Schools	Enrollments	Freshmen	Graduates
Normal universities and colleges	188	1673200	551700	325300
Secondary teacher training schools	317	317300	101300	101800
Educational institutes	103	326400	123800	76500
In-service teacher training schools	1703	182000	80200	69900

Sources: http://www.edu.cn/lista_553/20060323/t20060323_156223.shtml

⁹ From

http://www.edu.cn/introduction5_1399/20060323/t20060323_4028.shtml

In the past, normal schools and universities were the only institutes to have the right to provide pre-service teacher education. Now things have changed. Since normal universities cannot bring up adequate teachers with high quality to meet the need of social development, some non-teacher-training universities began to establish education institute for teacher education. Meanwhile, normal universities began to offer non-teacher-training program. After offering teacher-training program in non-teacher-training universities, teacher education system in China has made a great change.

Students in normal university have to intern in a secondary school before graduation. During the period of internship, students can learn a lot from experienced teachers and get a score for their performance. The State Council promulgated Regulations on Teachers Qualification in December 12th, 1995, in which the standards for recruiting teachers are strictly regulated and teachers must have certificates before taking their jobs. Ministry of education implemented teacher qualification system in 2001 which is much more mature compared with the 1995's. Normal university students can get the teacher qualification directly upon their graduation and persons in the society and graduates of other specialties have to pass exam on pedagogy, psychology, oral exam of standard Chinese to get the teacher qualification if they would like to be a teacher. 19,636,300 teachers in 31 provinces of China have got teacher qualification by 2007.¹⁰ In 2004, there were 9.1 million full-time teachers in the nine-year compulsory education system and contribute themselves to the basic education (Paine and Fang, 2007: 173).

This thesis mainly focuses on the pre-service teacher education especially on the four-year teacher training institutions which are also called normal university in China.

¹⁰ from

http://www.jyb.com.cn/xwzx/gnjy/zxbd/t20080417_155487.htm

3.2.2 Main issues in Chinese teacher education

Quantity and quality of teachers, gender imbalance and tuition fee are taken to present main issues in teacher education.

Teacher Quantity.

Teacher quantity and quality are the vital factors for the development of education. Whether having enough qualified teachers to educate all is still a main issue in many countries especially in developing countries. According to a research from UNESCO, pupil-teacher ratios in primary and secondary schools in developing countries is twice as much as developed countries' which can illustrate that there is still a huge shortage of teachers in developing countries (UNESCO, 2006).

China has been successful in expanding in higher education since 1999. The rapid increase of enrollment requires much more education resource including schoolhouses, equipment and teachers etc. However, there exists a notable disparity between education demand and government investment which results in shortage of teachers in some education field. Meanwhile, tuition and other fees collected from students is the main avenue to settle this problem and received remarkable effect.

Table 3.2 Number of full-time teachers in schools in 2006

Schools of all types and levels	Full-time teachers
Higher Education	1,179,168
Secondary Education	5,670,834
Primary Education	5,628,904
Correctional work-study Education	1,603
Special Education	33,396
Pre-school Education	776,491

Sources: Compile from MoE (2006)

Table 3.2 illustrates the number of full-time teachers in different level schools in 2006. Although the number of full-time teachers across the country is over 13 millions, the shortage of teachers in some field and areas still cannot be ignored. Two phenomena can reflect the shortage of teachers. First, the number of students in normal universities reduced year by year. Table 3.3 clearly suggests that fewer students were enrolled in normal universities in 2003 compared to 1998. Second, many qualified teachers quit the profession for other jobs.

Table 3.3 Normal colleges and universities and their enrollments, 1998, 2001, and 2003

Year	1998	2001	2003
Number of institutes	229	210	188
Enrollment	1,693,000	1,350,383	1,673,200

Sources: Compiled from Hu (2008:32)

The reasons why many able people will either choose not to teach or leave the teaching job are complicated. Li, former Chinese vice Premier, pointed out that many teachers quit teaching and turn to other jobs and enrollment in teachers' colleges and universities drop due to the low social status, meager pay and poor housing... (Li, 2004).

Furthermore, many studies have found that surplus and shortage of teachers exist in the same country at the same time due to the geographic difference in income and working condition (Yang, 2009). It is true in China. Western and rural regions, as the underdeveloped areas, are hard to attract qualified teachers because of hard working and living conditions. Quite a lot would rather stay in urban areas than teach in rural areas even if there are surplus teachers in urban areas.

Teacher Quality.

The effectiveness of any education depends on the quality of its teaching force (Cleverley, 1991:248). No one can ignore the importance of the quality and quantity of teachers. It is universal that the educational background is the most important thing to say whether the teacher is qualified or not. Different countries with different cultural background employ different criteria.

As mentioned above, pre-service teacher educations in China consist of three forms—four-year teacher training institutions including normal universities and colleges, three-year teacher training colleges and secondary teacher training schools, which meet the need of basic teacher education in some extent. However, most developed countries require elementary teacher at least with a four-year university education and secondary teacher a master degree recently. Compared with these countries and areas, Chinese teachers still have a lower diploma. A new standard for teacher qualifications established by Ministry of Education is that all secondary teachers by 2010 will at least have a four-year university education and, where conditions permit; elementary teachers will have at least three years of collages (Paine and Fang, 2007:182). That requires the traditional three levels normal education system transform into two levels even only one level in the future. Traditional normal education structure first changed in big cities and developed areas, for instance, Beijing¹¹ stopped secondary teacher training school education and set up elementary education institute in normal university in 1999.¹² It is true that the quality of teachers have a positive relationship with teachers' diplomas. The higher diplomas they get the higher qualities they have. Enhancing degrees of elementary and secondary teachers to four-year normal university or higher levels fits into the requirement of teacher professional development.

¹¹ Beijing is the capital of China.

¹² From: <http://www.edu.cn/20030519/3085008.shtml>

Nowadays, the competitions between universities become fiercer and fiercer. Each of them wants to recruit more students and get more money from the government. The result of this competition is that non-teacher-training universities began to establish education institute for teacher education while normal universities began to offer non-teacher-training program. Some western countries, like America and Germany, implemented the policy that permits non-teacher-training universities set up teacher program and made remarkable effect. To China, there exist two different voices. On the one hand, this kind of change can bring more teachers and it is good for the basic education. On the other, as some educators argued, teacher training quality might well be weakened because normal universities began to offer non-teacher-training programs and ignored their historical strength in teacher education (Paine and Fang, 2007:182).

To enhance the teacher quality, the State Council promulgated Regulations on Teachers Qualification in December 12th, 1995, in which teachers must have certificates before taking their jobs. For the development of education, the teachers should be qualified at least academically. The data from MoE shows that the percentage of teachers with required academic qualifications have increased year by year since 1999 (MoE, 2005). However, there are still quite a number of unqualified teachers. Besides, this so-called teacher qualification is mostly relevant to the education degree which the teachers get. Other factors in teaching such as passions, sense of responsibilities, and ethics are not taken into the consideration. If put all of these into the account, the percentage of teachers with required qualification will drop down.

Imbalance in teacher education.

Teaching is a highly gendered profession, both historically and currently (Riddell et al. 2005). Teachers used to be considered as a woman domination career. It is a universal problem that in many countries especially for basic education—lack of male teachers. In China, this imbalance in gender is a common phenomenon.

Table 3.4 Percentage of female full-time teachers in different types' schools

Schools of different types	Percentage of female full-time teachers
Higher Education	44.18%
Secondary Education	44.19%
Primary Education	55.23%
Pre-school Education Institutions	98.13%

Sources: Compiled from MoE (2006)

Table 3.4 indicates the percentage of full-time female teachers in schools. It is clear that there are more female teachers than male in primary and pre-school education. However, it is the average percentage across the country and in many areas the percentage of female teachers in basic education is over 70% (Zhou, 2007). Obviously, gender imbalance in teachers has a negative impact on growing up of students. Normal universities cannot attract enough male students should be the reason of gender imbalance in teachers. Furthermore, the male students in teach-training programs mainly major in computer and gymnastics and few of them choose subjects like Chinese and English. Therefore, percentage of female teachers in these subjects is much higher than the average level. To the schools, having balance proportion of male and female teachers is an ideal situation. Realistically, it needs a long way to go.

There exists another imbalance in teacher education—areas diversity. For higher income and better working condition, people usually flow from rural to urban areas, underdeveloped to developed areas. It is very common in many careers including teachers. In some urban areas, the number of teachers greatly exceeds the demand. For instance, Yueyang Road primary school, as a “key” school¹³ in TianJin, just needs three or four new teachers every year. Meanwhile, some areas especially in western and rural areas are lack of teachers and teachers in these areas usually teach

¹³ Key schools are those who have the priority to choose better students and have more financial input from the government.

more than two subjects at the same time. Even if there are surplus teachers in urban areas, people still choose to stay there and wouldn't like to teach in rural areas. Imbalance teachers' proportion in different areas hinders the development of education in both urban and rural areas.

Tuition fee.

When higher education and teacher education began to charge tuition fee to students, it has been a big issue in Chinese education till nowadays. It once lightened the burden on the state and received remarkable effect. However, the current level of tuition fee has exceeded the payment ability of most of the residents and become a heavy burden for most families especially in rural area in China (Huang, 2005:58). Based on this situation, Chinese government made many improvements on tuition fee system to meet the demand of education. It will be illustrated exhaustively in the next section.

3.3 Evolution of tuition fee in teacher education in China

Not having enough teachers, students were free to go to normal university and also obtained subsidies from Chinese government before 1997. And then, with impact of cost-share principle, teacher education began to charge tuition fee to students. Recently, in 2007, Ministry of Education established a policy that normal university resumes free tuition fee system gradually and six universities are selected as a pilot at the first year. To sum up, tuition fee system in teacher education changed and adjusted throughout the history.

3.3.1 Tuition fee system in pre-1949 China

Respecting teachers is Chinese traditional virtue. No one can deny the importance of teachers in the development of education. There is no professional teacher education institution in China until the end of Qing Dynasty. In 1897, NanYang normal collage

founded in Shanghai is considered as the beginning of Chinese teacher education. It is free for the students and also offer subsidy. The main funding source is donation from merchants. Not having too much experience, Chinese teacher education, historically, once influenced by Japanese and American teacher education models at that time (Guo, 2005: 150).

Under Japanese model (1902-1922)

Imperial University of Beijing is founded in 1898. After 4 years, in 1902, Qing government set up teacher education institution in Imperial University of Beijing which is the origin of Beijing Normal University (Li, 2008). The first teacher education system is promulgated in 1904 named Gui-mao educational system. The main content is: students is free for education and get subsidy from government, furthermore, they have to work in education field at least six years after graduation. It is quite clear that free tuition fee system was established in teacher education at the beginning of foundation of Chinese teacher education.

Based on Gui-mao educational system, Chinses government made a series of educational system in 1912. Free tuition fee system is still employed in teacher education. Meanwhile, students for teacher education are divided into three groups—government-supporting students, half-self-funding students and self-funding students. Government-supporting students get subsidy from government for accommodation; half-self-funding students should pay half of accommodation fees and self-funding students are responsible for all accommodation fees. All the students in three groups are free for tuition fees.

Under American model (1922-1947)

Chinese teacher education was changed from Japanese model to American model in 1922 when Beiyang government employed Renwu educational system. Teacher education was no longer considered as an independent system. Normal schools were combined by multiversity and tuition fee system changed as well. Students in teacher

education had to pay for all they needed in study including both tuition and accommodation fees, even, they should pay deposit for enrollment. As a result, teacher education lost the superiority to attract students. Apparently, charging tuition fee to students could not follow national conditions and made a negative impact on teacher education. The development of teacher education slowed down during this period.

For the better development of teacher education, independent teacher education system and free tuition fee system resumed during the national government period. However, China was in chaos at that time. Everything was in great mess and education was not an exception. Government had no ability to support students in teacher education and it was hard for students to find a job after their graduation.

3.3.2 Tuition fee system in new China

After founding of New China, teacher education learned much more from Soviet Russia model. Free tuition fee system continued working that period. Besides, government offered scholarship to students and also made work distribution for graduates. Under this educational system, many excellent but from low-income family students choose to be teachers.

Since the Reform and Opening-up policies, a series of effective improvement took place in teacher education. In July 1985, the State Council adopted the decision that scholarship to students should be divided into three levels. 5 percent of the students got the first-class scholarship—400RMB¹⁴ per year; 10 percent got the second-class scholarship—350RMB per year and the rest got the third-class scholarship which is 300RMB per year (Li, 2008). However, the scholarship cannot support the cost of students because of the fast development of economy.

¹⁴ RMB is Chinese currency unit. 1 RMB≈0.146 U.S. dollars

Economy has been growing rapidly since 1978, but the fiscal revenue growth rate is not consistent with economic development. The decline of fiscal revenue restricts investment of government on higher education. Meanwhile, Chinese higher education has been expanding very quickly during the past two decades. Since financial crisis of higher education has become universal, the policy of cost-sharing by individual has been implemented in many countries during the past 20 years. China also chose to implement the cost-sharing policy while the financial capacity of the government was weakened. That means funding sources in higher education system have been changed from single government spending to the sharing of costs by state, the public, school, parents, and other individuals. In 1989, a document called “Decision of Requiring Tuition and Accommodation Fee in the Regular Higher Education Institution” issued by national education committee announced that students should pay tuition fee (Brandenburg and Zhu, 2007: 22). However, teacher education was still free at that time, and further, students in normal universities received financial help from government. In 1997, when higher education tuition fee system implemented all over the country, teacher education began to charge tuition fee gradually.

Tuition fee system in teacher education not only followed cost-sharing theory of higher education, but also changed the structure and trend of normal university (Yang and Wang, 2007). First of all, charging in teacher education means reduction of investment by the government in this field. Since research capacities of normal education are in lower levels compared with other higher education, a number of normal universities started to set up non-teacher-training specialties in order to attract more students to increase economic interest. The aim of normal universities is no more foster teacher but develop them to be comprehensive universities. A mass of normal universities being comprehensive universities leads to decline of status of teacher education. Furthermore, normal universities cannot attract excellent students after implement of tuition fee system. With the same tuition fee, students would choose popular majors rather than teacher education. Even if they select teacher education, a number of them will not engage in education field upon graduation.

These measures, leading to the decrease of teaching quality, will have bad influence towards teacher education.

Talking about the amount of tuition fee, most universities received about 200 RMB from per student per year in 1989. And then tuition fee increased rapidly year by year and reached to more than 5000 RMB for one student per year in 2007, which is almost 25 times more. Empirical analysis shows that the current level of higher education tuition has exceeded the payment ability of most of the residents. Although the state provides a series of financial measures, such as work-study funds, students' loans and scholarships, to prevent dropout for financial reasons, the tuition fees are still heavy burdens for most families especially in rural area in China (Huang, 2005:58). Although tuition fee in teacher education is much lower than that of other higher education, the fast increase of tuition fee in teacher education, however, is also a controversial issue in educational field. Figure3.1 shows that the increasing tuition fee is like a heavy burden on the families. Some students cannot get education opportunities due to their poor ability of payment, which is an obstacle of education equity progress.



Figure 3.1 Tuition fee become a burden

Source: <http://www.chinafruit.com/c/b1/0701/33344.htm>

Certainly, tuition fee system in teacher education meets the demand of educational development and reduces fiscal stress of government. Nevertheless, it is undeniable that tuition fee system cumpers development of teacher education in some extent, and especially it has a negative influence on education equity. Therefore, free tuition fee system in teacher education returned to the campus recently for the development of teacher education and education equity.

3.3.3 Tuition fee system in new period

To develop teacher education and education equity, a new policy called “free tuition fee policy” was practiced to teacher education in 2007. Six normal universities, Beijing Normal University, East China Normal University, Northeast Normal University, Huazhong Normal University, Shaanxi Normal University and Southwest University are selected as pilots to carry out free teacher education program first year. The main contents of free teacher education program are as follow:

- a) During the four years of study, students are free for both study and accommodation, and also can get subsidies from government.
- b) Students make the contract with university before they enrollment which guarantee that they will work in primary and secondary education field at least 10 years after they finish their study. If they break the contract, they have to give back fee that they received from government and also pay for penalty.
- c) Students who will work in urban areas should first offer service in rural area for two years.
- d) Normally, students cannot get master degree during contract period.

The purpose of free teacher education, as Premier Wen said, is to foster a number of excellent teachers; to form social atmosphere of teaching honors and encourage more and more students to become lifelong educators. The reasons for this education program, as the report of MoE said, are for development of teacher education and education equity.

Education equity, as a part of social equity, is receiving more and more attention from scholars and educators. It is generally accepted that enjoying an equal education opportunity is a basic human right (Zhang, 2007: 537). However, in China, many facts such as government policy differences, diversity in resource storage and many other historic reasons across different regions, especially between eastern and western regions, lead to greater disparity in economic development which finally results in greater disparity in education equity across regions (Zhang, 2007: 542). Although government increases investment in rural area to developing education, the improvement of education equity does not mean much. Disparity in education equity between rural and urban area extended unceasingly after implement of charge fee system in higher education. The fast increase of tuition fee in higher education has exceeded the payment ability of families in rural areas. Some statistics show that before 1960, the population ratio between rural and urban area is 2:8, the ratio of undergraduates is 3:7. While the present population ratio between rural and urban is 3:7, but the ratio of undergraduates is 7:3. That means more and more students in rural areas drop out for their low payment ability. If the condition cannot be changed, it is impossible for them to avoid the vicious circle of “poverty—no education—more severe poverty” (Zhang, 2007: 542). If students in rural areas cannot change their occupation positions through education attainment, it is not good for the improvement of social classes in China.

Resuming of free teacher education is good news for the students in poverty areas especially rural and western areas. On the one hand, students with the poor ability of payment can get the opportunity of teacher education which benefit for their own progress; on the other hand, they will come back to develop education of their regions when they graduate from normal university which can enhance the level of primary and secondary teaching in rural areas.

There should be another important reason for free teacher education which is lack of primary and secondary teachers in China especially in rural and western areas. There are some problems existing in primary and secondary education which are:

- Shortage of teachers. There are still not enough teachers in many areas of China especially in rural and western areas which lead to the teachers in these areas should teach more than two subjects at one time and some special subjects, such as music, foreign language, art and physical education cannot get development. Even, in some areas, the students in different grades are taught in one class together because of lack of teachers.
- Low quality. For the better education, parents usually choose key-schools for their children and they have to pay more money to get the opportunity of enrollment. Actually, choosing key-schools means select teachers with high quality. More and more parents prefer their children to key-schools however much they have to pay, it shows that there is still lack of teacher with high quality in China.
- Teacher outflow. With the imbalance of economic development, teachers have an obvious flow from rural to urban areas, underdeveloped to developed areas and ordinary to key schools. Students don't consider teaching as their first choice when they are finding jobs. If they have another chance, they will quit from education field.
- Lack of respect. Respecting teacher is traditional virtue. In fact, more and more teachers found it was hard to receive respect from their students. Indeed, there exist some unscrupulous teachers who are unworthy of the respects. Nevertheless, the truest reason for this phenomenon is: it is still lack of ethos of respecting teaching profession in the society.
- Gender imbalance. The imbalance between male and female teachers is a globe issues. Not only in China, this phenomenon is existing in many countries in the

world. Gender imbalance in teachers, obviously, makes a negative impact on the teacher education and student development.

All the problems mentioned above are caused by the low status of teachers. And the low status and attraction of teaching can be attributed to low salaries, deterioration in access to medical services and the difficulties of finding a spouse (Lewin et al, 1994).

Low salaries: The average salaries of teachers generally rank below the middle of the country's major professional occupations. The strike initiated by British teachers happened the other day against low payment shows that lower salary of teachers is a universal issue.¹⁵ Table 3.5 indicates that compared with other occupations, income of teachers have a lower level and is only one third of computer-related sectors'. Although Teacher Law prescribes that the level of teachers' income should at least no less than government servants', there are still a number of teachers can't get their wage to afford their live.

Table 3.5 The yearly income of those who work in different fields

Year	Non-business institutions	Governments	Computer-Related sectors	Financial sector	teachers
2004	16,489	17,869	44,780	26,982	16,277
2005	18,720	20,828	52,710	32,228	18,470

Key: unit: Chinese currency RMB.

Source: compiled from National Bureau of Statistics of China (2006)

Medical services: In China, some employees are asked to pay the money for their medical care once the expenses exceed a maximum amount. In order to ease the

¹⁵ From <http://campus.chinaren.com/20080425/n256511418.shtml>

shortage of education funding, more and more schools adopted this new policy which cause dissatisfaction from teachers. The teachers complain that they often cannot get reimbursement even though they have obtained necessary medical care receipts (Lewin et al., 1994:110).

The spouse: If young people are reluctant to become a teacher they are even more reluctant to marry a teacher! And young male teachers are in a more helpless condition than females. Even rural females are unwilling to choose teachers as husbands because the low income and social status. Therefore, there are many young teachers especially in rural areas face the problem that they are difficult to find a marriage partner (Lewin et al., 1994:111).

To change the situation of teachers' shortage, the point is to enhance status of teachers and pose an ethos of respecting teaching profession in China, which is also the purpose of free teacher education program. The purpose of free tuition fee policy, as Premier Wen said, is to foster a number of excellent teachers; to form social atmosphere of teaching honors and encourage more and more students to become lifelong educators.

Free teacher education program resuming in teacher education is a significant reform of teacher education. Nobody can deny its positive impact on teacher education progress and development of education equity. However, as a trial program, there exist some debates in it.

- a) The program points out that students will have to serve in rural areas two years and engage themselves in primary and secondary education for at least ten years after they finish the study and also indicates that if the students break the contract, they should give back tuition fee, accommodation fee, subsidies and penalty to state. However, there is still lack of relevant system to guarantee well-off implement of this program. The State invests nearly 50,000 RMB on per student for four years. There exists an assumption that students get an opportunity to have

a better job in other field or go abroad after they graduate and they refuse to return the fees. The governments have a large investment on teacher education but cannot receive any effect, and, that would cause enormous economic loss of state.

- b) Some data indicates that the average grade of students in free teacher education is higher than those in key higher universities, which means normal universities want to absorb more excellent students through free teacher education program.¹⁶ However, some different voice exists about this issue and declares that free teacher education is actually considered as an attraction for penniless students not excellent students. Currently, government provides a series of financial measures, such as work-study funds, students' loans and scholarships, to prevent dropout for financial reasons. Ministry of Education and university also offers economic assistance to help poor students finish their studies favorably. Therefore, excellent students can choose other majors which they like and finish school with the help of government. In this case, free teacher education does not mean so much for them.

On the other side, most students in rural areas want to change their life and acquire achievement through higher education. To be simple, they want to depart from rural areas (Yang and Wang, 2007). According to this new program, students from rural areas will go back to the countryside after finishing their higher education. Therefore, the poor students, in order to change their situation and develop well, also have a cautious attitude to choose teacher education.

Because of the reasons mentioned above, teacher education would be in an embarrassing situation, which is, excellent students won't choose teacher education unless they really cannot afford tuition fee of other higher education.

¹⁶ From <http://edu.people.com.cn/GB/6240455.html>

The purpose of absorbing more outstanding students in education field will not be successful as expected.

- c) An important reason for implementing free teacher education program is shortage of primary and secondary teachers especially in rural and western areas which has been illustrated in earlier section. The state encourages more students contribute themselves to western education in order to make up the shortfall of teaching in those areas. Students will work in western areas for two years after they graduate which can enhance teachers' quantity in some extent. However, without any experience of teaching, the new graduates can hardly make a positive progress in teaching in just two years. Two years later, the new teachers will take the place of the old ones. This kind of alternation between the old and the new will disturb original didactic orders.

3.4 Summary

Teacher education in China has made a remarkable development during the last 30 years and is much more mature than ever. Nevertheless, a number of problems still exist in this field and cannot be ignored.

Free teacher education program, as a significant reform in teacher education, is receiving many attractions from schools, teachers, students and educators. If this new program goes well, more universities will implement this program in the near future. However, whether this program can achieve its goals and make teacher education a better development are still unknown for many educators. These issues will be objectively illustrated in the following chapters.

Chapter 4 Methodology

4.1 Introduction

This chapter is mainly about research and data collection and analysis methods applied in this thesis. It begins with the introduction of research designs and methods employed in the study and the reasons for using them. Quantitative research method is used in the study to answer research questions. Following this is how the sampling is selected and achieved. After that there is an illustration about methods for both data collection and analysis. The chapter ends with ethical concerns as well as validity and reliability.

4.2 Research designs and methods

4.2.1 Research questions

No research questions or poorly formulated research questions will lead to poor research (Bryman, 2004:31). Presenting research questions clearly is crucial for research design.

The study aims at:

1. Analyzing the reasons and goals of free teacher education in China.
2. Evaluating whether this program can achieve its goals.
3. Bringing out some tentative suggestions to this new program.

In order to achieve the goals, three main questions will be raised to guide the study:

4. What are the reasons for free teacher education?
5. What are the goals of the program, and can it be achieved?
6. Is there any hidden problem existing in this program, and how to improve it?

4.2.2 Research designs

A research design provides a framework for the data collection and analysis. Bryman(2004) presented five different research designs—experimental design; cross-sectional or survey design; longitudinal design; case study design and comparative design for different research purpose.

In this thesis, cross-sectional design is used. The concept of cross-sectional design is defined by Bryman (2004:41)

“ A cross-sectional design entails the collection of data on more than one case (usually quite a lot more than one) and at a single point in time in order to collect a body of quantitative or quantifiable data in connection with two or more variables (usually many more than two), which are then examined to detect patterns of association”.

This type of study utilizes different groups of people who differ in the variables of interest, but share other characteristics such as socioeconomic status, educational background and ethnicity. It is employed in the thesis to get the opinions about free teacher education of two groups—Beijing Normal University students and Shaanxi Normal University students.

4.2.3 Research methods

A research method is simply a technique for collecting data (Bryman, 2004:27). There are two different research methods – quantitative research method and qualitative research method. Quantitative research can be construed as a research strategy that emphasizes quantification in the collection and analysis of data while qualitative research can be constructed as a re research strategy that usually emphasizes words rather than quantification in the collection and analysis of data (Bryman, 2004). Table 4.1 indicates the differences between quantitative and qualitative research method in three areas. Obviously, quantitative research method is more objective compared with

qualitative research method which matches this research purpose well. Therefore, quantitative method is used as the main research method in this thesis in order to answer the core questions in research.

Table 4.1 Differences between quantitative and qualitative research methods

	Quantitative	Qualitative
Connection between theory and research	<i>Deductive; testing of theory</i>	Inductive; generation of theory
Epistemological orientation	Natural science model, in particular positivism	Interpretivism
Ontological orientation	Objectivism	Constructionism

Sources: Compiled from Bryman (2004: 20)

4.3 Sampling

4.3.1 Research site

Students enjoying free teacher education from Beijing Normal University (BNU) and Shaanxi Normal University (SNU) are selected as targets in this study. Both of these two universities are under direct administration of MoE and implement free teacher education program in 2007.

BUN is located in Beijing, capital of China. It is the most famous normal university in China and can enroll students from all over the country. While SNU is located in Xi'an, a big ancient city situated in the west of China. It can enroll students across China too. However, the majority of the students there are from Shaanxi province or other western areas.

There are two reasons for choosing these two normal universities. First, free teacher education program was implemented in these two normal universities at the same time in 2007. Second, both economic and education levels in western areas are relatively low compared with other regions in China. While students in BNU will have more work opportunities after graduation. It is an assumption that students from western areas will be more affected by free teacher education program, and the attitudes towards free teacher education between students from these two normal universities should be different. Therefore, BNU and SNU are selected to become targets in this study.

4.3.2 Populations of sampling

As mentioned above, students from BNU and SNU are the populations of sampling. Both of students from these two universities are sophomore and study in free teacher education program. The reason for the population choice is that these students were freshmen in 2007 when free teacher education program was announced. In other words, these students first benefited from free teacher education. In addition, they are familiar with free teacher education program and have expectations about future because they have already studied and lived in university for more than one year.

4.3.3 Sampling responses

A random sampling is employed in this thesis. To specify the study, 80 students are chosen respectively from the two normal universities at random. A total number of 160 students would involve in this study to answer the questionnaire. As table 4.2 shows, there are total 150 students who have participated in this survey and the overall response rate is 150/160 or 94%. It is at a satisfactory level.

Table 4.2 Information of survey respondents

Name of university	Number of respondents	Non-response	% of total respondents
Beijing Normal University	73	7	48.7
Shaanxi Normal University	77	3	51.3
Total	150	10	100.0

4.4 Methods for data collection

4.4.1 Questionnaire

In this thesis, questionnaire is the main method for data collection. Questionnaire is a good way of collecting certain types of information quickly and cheaply (Bell, 1987). All data gathering instruments should be piloted to test how long it takes recipients to complete them, to check that all the questions and instructions are clear. For this study, the questionnaire is first piloted through internet. The questionnaire was posted on Bulletin Board System (BBS) of some normal universities to get feedback of the students. Their responses help to revise the questionnaires ready for the main distribution. Questionnaires were mostly delivered by hand to students by the researcher herself. Each student was given about 15 minutes to answer the questionnaires. Because this survey is done in China, the questionnaires are in Chinese and then translated into English.

The questionnaires are designed into two parts (see table 4.3). The first part is about social backgrounds of the students. The second part is to get the attitudes towards teaching profession and free teacher education program from students.

Table 4.3 Structure of questionnaires

Part one: backgrounds	Part two: general attitudes
Gender	About teaching profession
Name of university	
Areas	About free teacher education program
Family income	

4.4.2 Secondary analysis of official statistics

Secondary analysis of official statistics—that is, as Bryman(2004) presented, data collected by government departments in the course of their work or for statistical purpose. High quality and saving of cost and time are the advantages of secondary analysis. In this study, some secondary data collected by education organizations are employed to get an overall picture about general situation of students in free teacher education program in 2007.

4.5 Methods for data analysis

In the thesis, the data from the questionnaire and secondary data from education organization are analyzed with SPSS. Frequency table and Bar chart are used to describe students' backgrounds and attitudes towards teaching profession and free teacher education program. The variables listed in Table 4.4 have been investigated in terms of students' background. Four factors are taken into consideration to explore students' social backgrounds.

Table 4.4 Approach taken to measure variables of students' background

Variables	Observed(questions)	Coding
University	Which university students come from	0. Beijing Normal University 1. Shaanxi Normal University
Gender	Sex of the students	0. female 1. male
Income	What is your family annual income?	0. below 20,000 1. 20,001-50,000 2. 50.001-100.000 3. 100,000 above
Areas	Where are you from?	0. urban areas 1. rural areas

Variables listed in table 4.5 show the second part of questionnaire. Several questions are related to getting students attitudes' about teaching profession and free teacher education program.

Table 4.5 Approach taken to explore students' attitudes about teacher education

Variables	Observed(questions)	Coding
Reasons	What is your main reason for choosing to be a teacher?	0. a stable job 1. my dream 2. high income 3. others
Good teacher	Will you become an excellent teacher?	0. yes 1. no 2. not sure
Life-long teacher	Will you choose teacher as your lifelong profession?	0. yes 1. no 2. not sure
Teaching area	Which area you want to teach upon your graduation?	0. big city 1. small city 2. countryside 3. it doesn't matter
Reason	Why you choose free teacher education?	0. my dream 1. economic reason 2. employment security and stability 3. others
Acquaintance	Do you acquaint free tuition fee policy in teacher education	0. very much 1. not so much 2. a little 3. not at all
Satisfaction	Are you satisfied with your life in normal university?	0. yes 1. ok 2. no 3. not at all
Stay in teacher education	Will you study in teacher education if other subjects are free too?	0. yes 1. no 2. not sure
Trouble	Which of the followings trouble you the most for working in rural areas two years upon your graduation?	0. living conditions 1. teaching conditions 2. marriage 3. career development for future

Penalty	Students who break contract should give back the entire tuition fee and pay for penalty. What is your opinion about this?	0. it is quite reasonable 1. it is reasonable 2. it is not reasonable 3. it is not reasonable at all
Further education	Students cannot get further education in ten years after their graduation. What is your opinion about this?	0. it is quite reasonable 1. it is reasonable 2. it is not reasonable 3. it is not reasonable at all
Teacher honor	Whether free teacher education can improve social morals of teacher honor?	0. yes 1. probably 2. no 3. not at all

4.6 Ethical concerns, validity and reliability

4.6.1 Ethical concerns

Ethical issues arise at a variety of stages in social research. Four ethical principles—harm to participants, informed consent, invasion of privacy and deception in social research are defined by Diener and Crandall (1978). It is important to note that the research should not only have no negative implications on the participants, but also have potential to favour the participants (Sheyvens & Storey, 2003:141).

In this thesis, informed consent and privacy of participants should be taken into account as the main ethical concerns. Through this study, the data collected for research are treated confidentially. All participants have been informed with the purpose and process of the research prior to their involvement, and their privacy are delicately handled

4.6.2 Validity and Reliability

Reliability¹⁷, replication¹⁸ and validity¹⁹ are presented as criteria for assessing the quality of social research (Bryman, 2004). According to cross-sectional research, the

¹⁷ Reliability is concerned with the question of whether the results of a study are repeatable.

issues of reliability are relating to the quality of the measures that are employed to tap the concepts in which the researcher is interested (Bryman, 2004:43). In this thesis, questionnaires as the main data collection method are objective and effective. Internal validity²⁰ is likely weak in cross-sectional research. However it not a big problem in this study, because only what needs to know is the students' attitudes towards free teacher education program not a causal inferences from that. External validity²¹ is strong in some extent because of random sampling.

4.7 Limitation

There are some limitations in this study especially in generalization. First, the results from questionnaires present the attitudes and opinions of students who are from two normal universities. However, there are about two hundreds normal universities in China. Second, both of the normal universities selected are located in big cities. Whether the results of research can generalize to other areas and other normal universities of China is problematic.

4.8 Summary

¹⁸ Replication happens that researchers choose to replicate the findings of others.

¹⁹ Validity is concerned with the integrity of the conclusions that are generated from a piece of research.

²⁰ Internal validity is concerned with the question of whether a conclusion that incorporates a causal relationship between two or more variables.

²¹ External validity is concerned with the question of whether the results of a study can be generalized beyond the specific research context.

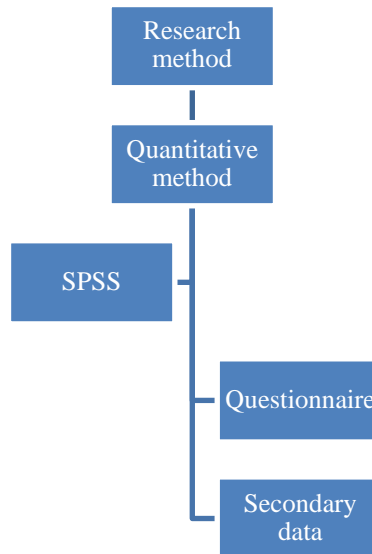


Figure 4.1 The structure of research method in the study

As figure 4.1 shows, quantitative method is mainly employed in this study. Questionnaires and secondary data are the two data collection methods used in this paper. The populations of sampling of questionnaires are the students from Beijing Normal University and Shaanxi Normal University. SPSS program is utilized to analyze the data which from questionnaires. Next chapter presents results and findings through data analysis.

Chapter 5 Data analysis and findings

5.1 Introduction

This chapter presents data analysis and findings. It is divided into three parts: a) general information about the first students in free teacher education and background of sampling populations, b) students' attitudes towards teaching profession and free teacher education program, c) attitudes comparison between students with different backgrounds. The main focus is given to students' attitudes about free teacher education program in Chinese teacher education.

5.2 Students information

5.2.1 Overview of enrollment in free teacher education

Free teacher education program was implemented in China in 2007. Six universities--Beijing Normal University, East China Normal University, Northeast Normal University, Huazhong Normal University, Shaanxi Normal University and Southwest University, all of which are under direct administration of MoE, carried out this new education policy first and received significant effects. Guan Peijun—Director of MoE pointed out that 10,933 students across the country were recruited by free teacher education program in the first year. Furthermore, both quantities and qualities of students had been enhanced.²²

Table 5.1 shows general information about the first students in free teacher education. There are 60.2% students from rural areas and the percentages of male students are 38.7%. The percentages of both rural students and male students increased than before²³ which benefit for improvement of teachers' construction. Western areas, as

²² From http://www.jyb.cn/zs/gxzs/ptgxzs/zszx/t20070828_108474.htm

²³ From http://www.jyb.cn/zs/gxzs/ptgxzs/zszx/t20070828_108474.htm

undeveloped areas, have lower economic and education levels compared with other areas in China. 90.8% students recruited by free teacher education are from middle and western areas, which show governments give more priorities to these areas. It meets the requirement of education equity.

Table 5.1 General information about enrollment in free teacher education in 2007

	Rural areas	Urban areas	Female	Male	Middle and western areas	Other areas
Percentage	60.2%	39.8%	61.3%	38.7%	90.8%	9.2%
	100%		100%		100%	
Total	N= 10,933					

Resource: from http://www.jyb.cn/zs/gxzs/ptgxzs/zszx/t20070828_108474.htm

5.2.2 Family background analysis

150 students from Beijing Normal University and ShaanXi Normal University participate in this survey study. The first part of questionnaire is background information of these students. Three factors—gender, family income and family location are taken into consideration.

In many schools especially in primary and secondary schools, teaching is a female-dominant occupation. Balance in proportion of female and male teachers in teaching market is an ideal situation for teaching. Seen from figure 5.1, about 37% of the students are male and much less than female students. According to secondary data, the percentage of male students in free teacher education in 2007 is 38.7%. The number of male students has a significant increase although the gap between female and male

students in teacher education is still huge. The analysis result from sampling is consistent with the general situation about first students in free teacher education.

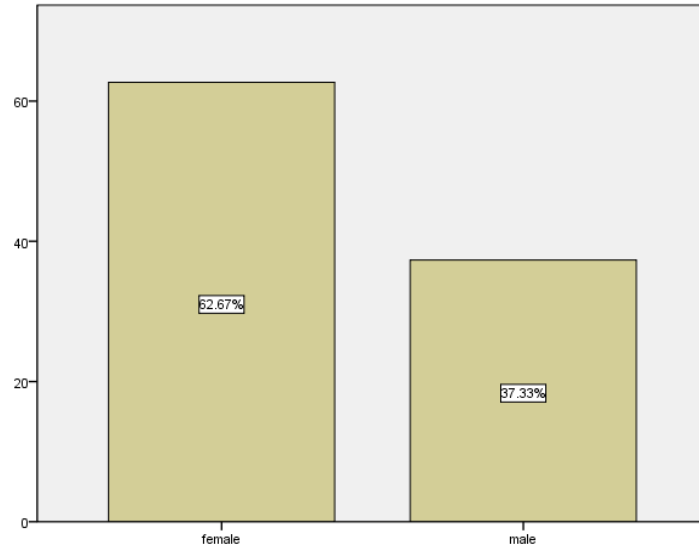


Figure 5.1 Percentage of female and male students in sampling N=150

In China, the disparity in individual income is widening. Family income, as an important part of social-economic status, is one of determinants on students' access to higher education (Huang, 2005).

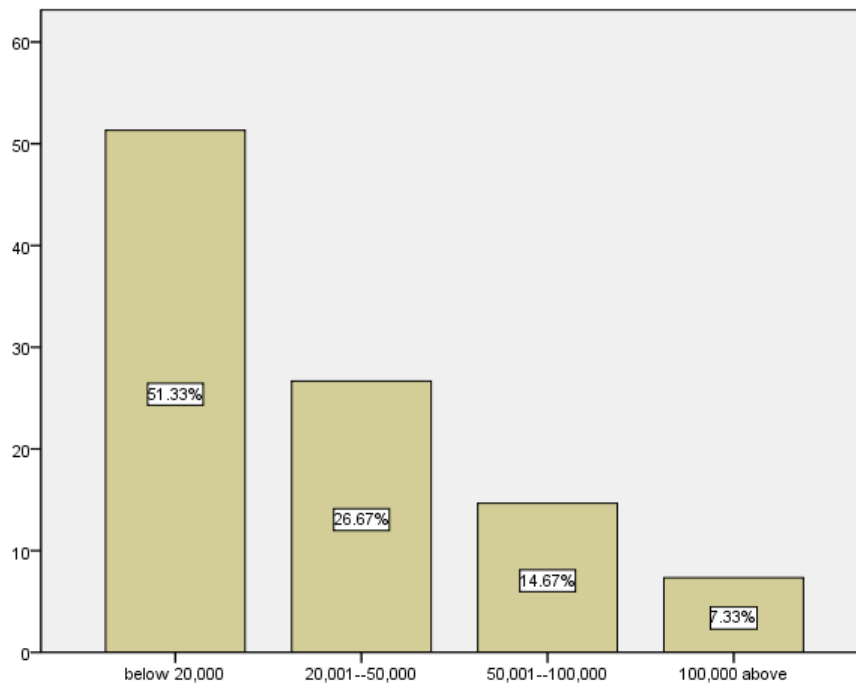


Figure 5.2 The annual family income of sampling N=150

Figure 5.2 has clearly indicated that more than half of the students (51.33%) are from low-income family. About 40% students in total are from families with annual income around 20,001-50,000 and 50,001-100,000 which can be seen as students from middle-income families. And only 7.33% students' families have higher annual income (100,000 and above). This data analysis shows students with disadvantage social-economic background are affected by free teacher education a lot.

Generally, students from rural areas have less education opportunities compared with students from urban areas. To develop education, governments should invest more in rural areas and give more priorities to these areas.

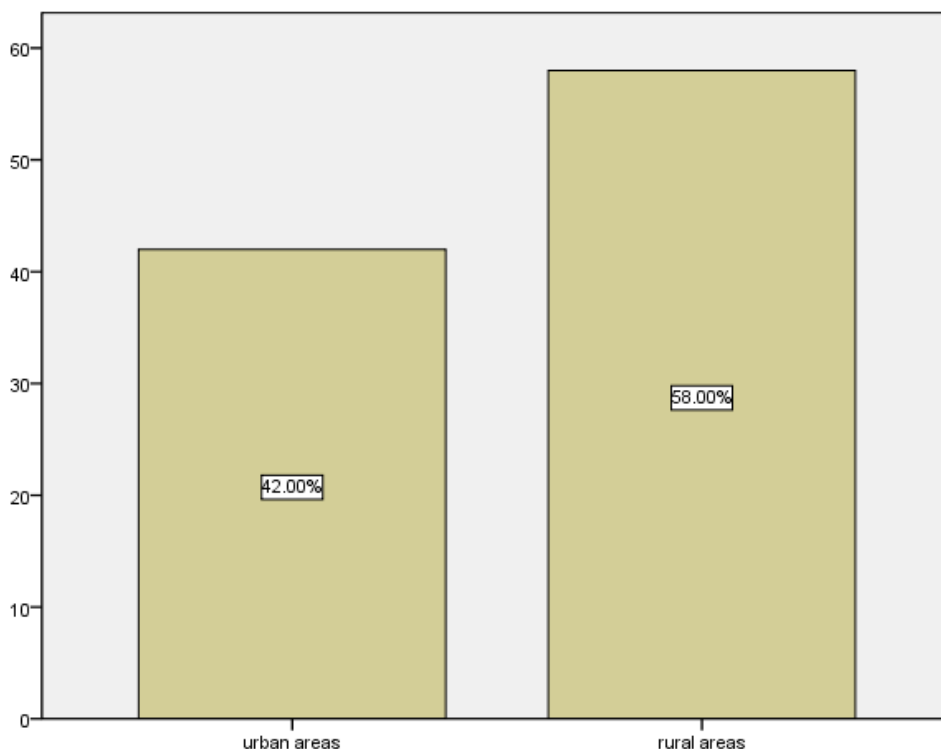


Figure 5.3 The percentage of students from urban and rural areas N=150

Indicated in figure 5.3, 58% students are from rural areas and 42% come from urban areas. Many more students from rural areas are recruited in free teacher education program. It is good for both individual and regional development. And the result from the data is also consistent with general situation of students in free teacher education in 2007.

5.3 Students' attitudes

5.3.1 Students' attitudes towards teaching profession

This part is mainly about students' general opinion about teaching profession. The first question is why they have chosen to be teachers. Four options—"teaching is my dream, a stable job, income and other reasons" are given to choose from.

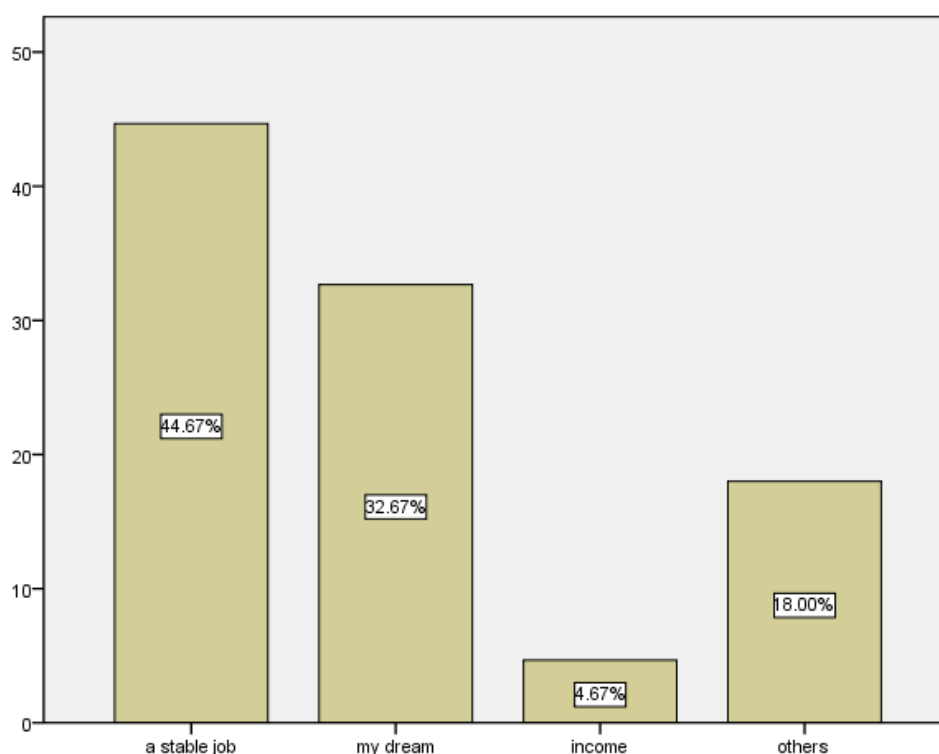
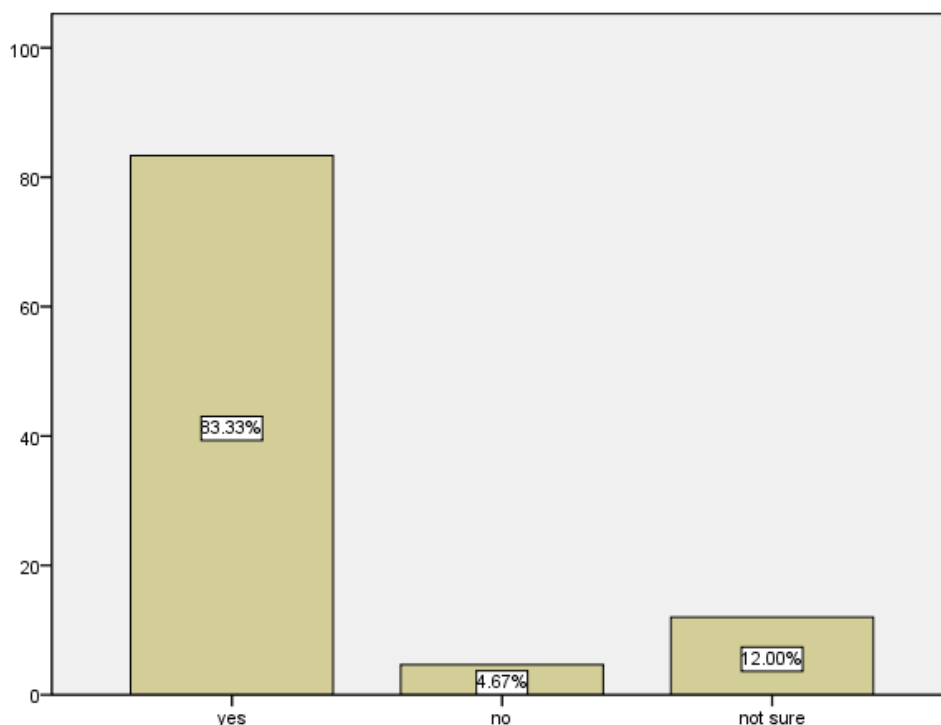


Figure 5.4 The reasons why students have chosen to teach N=150

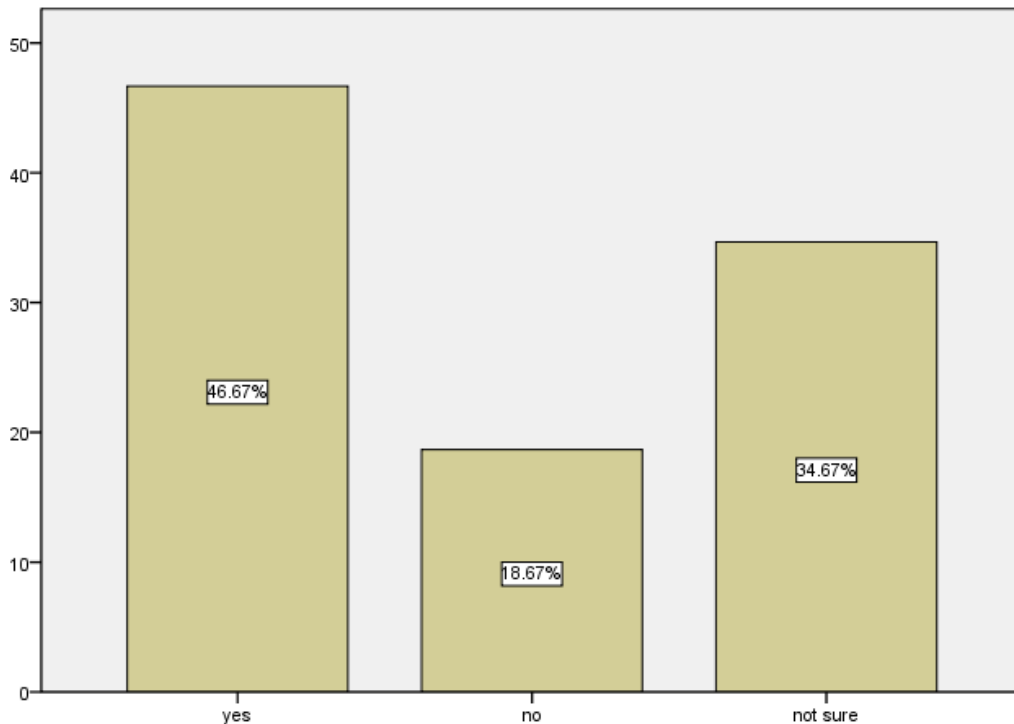
Seen from figure 5.4, the most frequently chosen reasons are among "teaching is a stable job and my dream". About 45% of the students have considered teaching as a stable job. This result can show that in China stability is an important determinant when it comes to career choice. About 33% of the participants have claimed that teaching is their dream. Only about 5% have claimed that they choose teaching because of income which indicates that incomes of teachers are still not satisfactory. 18% of the students have given "other reasons". The most frequently "others" are: teaching has holidays, their parents are teachers and teaching is an easy job.

High quality teachers are the guarantees for education development. To foster good teachers is one of the goals of teacher education. When asked the students whether they will work hard to become excellent teachers upon graduation, most students have given a positive answer. Seen from figure 5.5, around 83% of the participants have believed that they can become good teachers when they finish their study. Around 5% are not confident about becoming a good teacher and 12% of the students have chosen “not sure”. The conclusion from figure 5.5 is that most students in teacher education have confidence in becoming a good teacher.



**Figure 5.5 Students' attitudes on whether they will become a good teacher
N=150**

As mentioned in chapter 3, many teachers quit their job and turn to other professions. Teachers outflow is a common problem existing in both urban and rural areas. The number of teachers who leave teaching field is increasing year by year (MoE, 2005, 2006). Teaching is not taken as a life-long career by many people. Figure 5.5 shows positive answers to the question whether they will become a good teacher. However when it comes to the question whether they will become life-long teachers, the answers are not quite satisfying.



**Figure 5.6 Students' attitudes on whether they will become a lifelong teacher
N=150**

As shown in figure 5.6, less than half of the participants (46.67%) have given a positive answer that they will become a lifelong teacher. Around 19% of the participants have given a totally negative answer and 35% have chosen “not sure”. The analysis from figure 5.6 supports the conclusion that not many students have considered taking teaching as a life-long career which means many of the students will probably quit teaching when they have other choice. Also, if people don't take teaching as a life-long career, they will not take it seriously, which will have a negative impact on education development.

Teachers' income and welfare are various in different areas. Generally, teaching in big cities has a better salary and welfare than those in small cities. While both income and welfare are the lowest if people choose to teach in the countryside. Students in free teacher education are required to work in the countryside at least two years after their graduation. However, when asked where they prefer to teach, the answers are various.

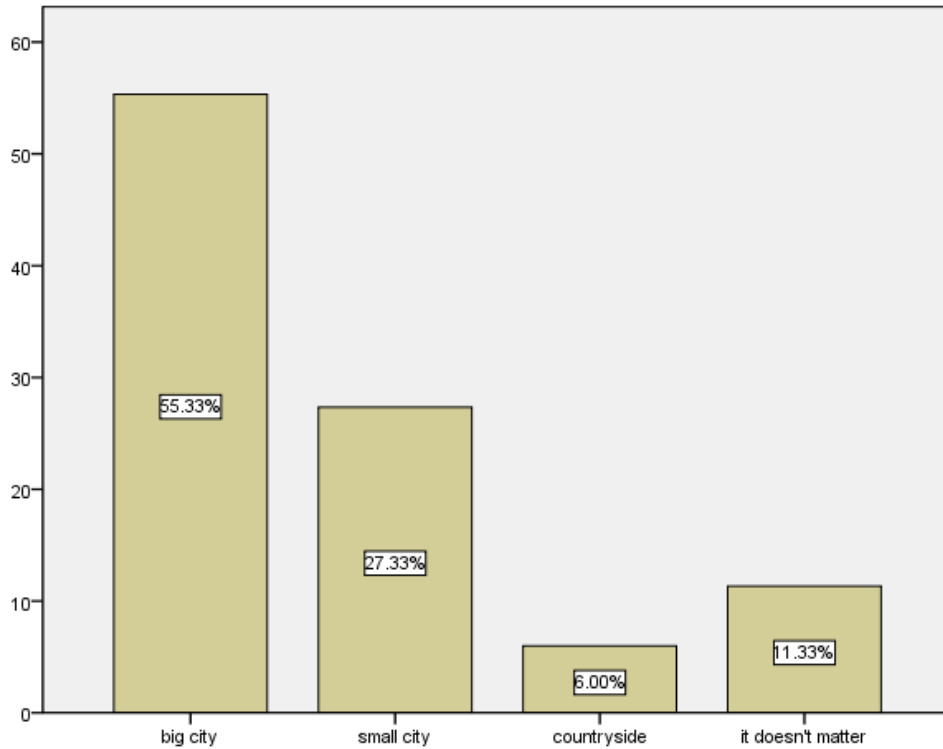


Figure 5.7 The area students prefer to teach N=150

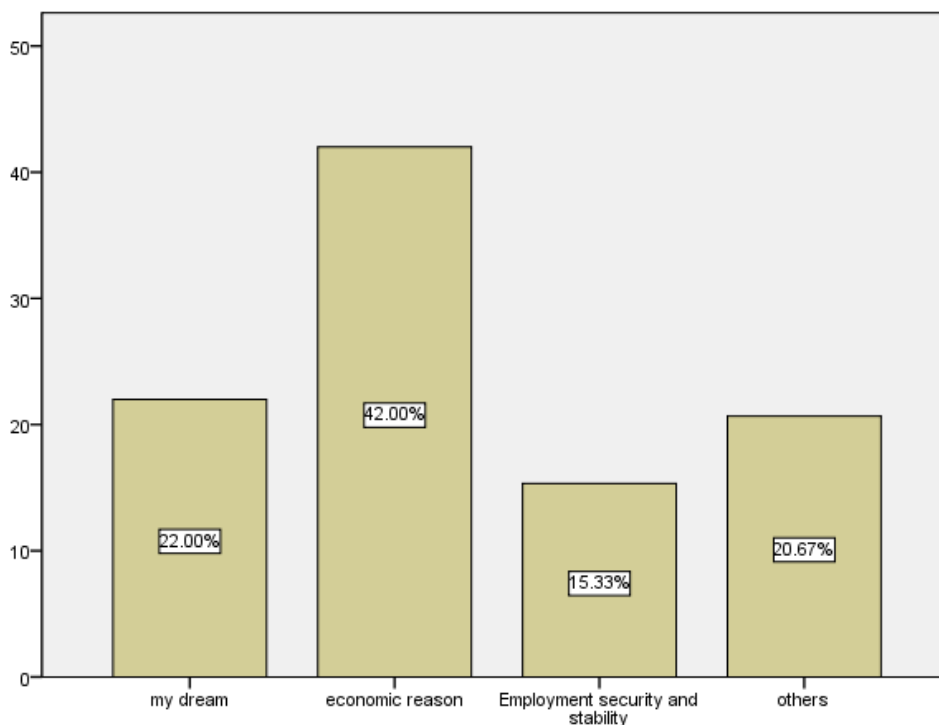
As shown in figure 5.7, more than half of the participants have chosen to teach in big city. Comparatively, only 6% of the participants would like to work in countryside. It is true that big city offers more opportunities and better income compared with small city and the countryside. That most of the students prefer to teach in big city is reasonable and acceptable. However, the students must work in the countryside at least two years according to free tuition fee policy. The issue is that people will not work hard in the countryside if they don't like to work there.

5.3.2 Students' attitudes towards free tuition fee policy in teacher education

As shown in early section, 10,933 students were recruited in free teacher education in 2007. They are the sampling targets for this study. When the questionnaires were distributed, the students had already been in the free teacher education for more than one year. They have quite a lot to say about free tuition fee policy in teacher education.

This part of the questionnaire focuses on the students' attitudes towards free teacher education.

In present China, students have varieties of universities to choose. To recruit more students in teacher education, free teacher education program was implemented in six normal universities in 2007. Students in free teacher education not only do not have to pay any tuition fee but also get subsidy from governments. However it should not be the only reason that students choose to study in teacher education. When asked why students have chosen to study in free teacher education, four options- “my dream”, “economic reason”, “employment security and stability” and “others” are given.



**Figure 5.8 The reasons why students have chosen free teacher education
N=150**

Figure 5.8 has clearly shown that the most frequently chosen reason is “economic reason”. 42% of the participants have chosen this option which indicates that free teacher education program is quite attractive for them. 22% of the participants state that teaching is their dream and around 15% claim teaching is a job with high security and stability. About 21% of the students have given other reasons for choosing free teacher

education, such as, “the choice is made to parents”, “I don’t know” and “the university is near my home”.

Illustrated in chapter three, the contents of free teacher education program refer to several aspects. When asked how much students know about free teacher education program, most of them have given positive answers. As shown in Figure 5.9, about 21% of the participants have claimed that they know this new program very well and 62% also acquaint about free teacher education program but not so much. Only around 5% of the students know nothing about this education program. This finding reveals that most of the students acquaint free teacher education program in some extent.

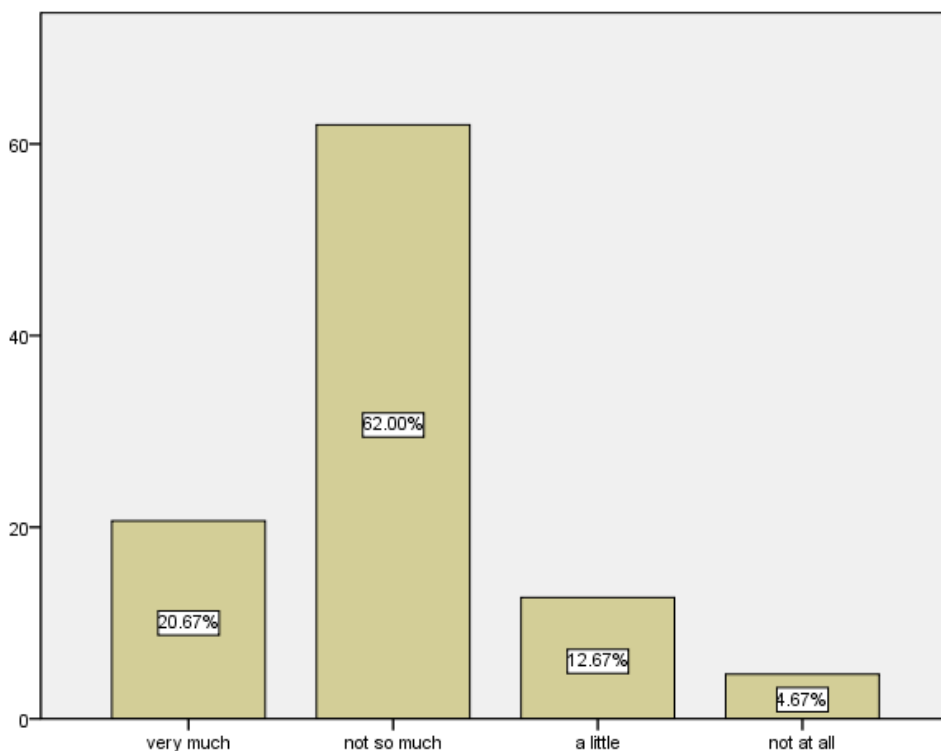


Figure 5.9 How much students know about free teacher education N=150

When this questionnaire is distributed, students had studied in normal university more than one year. This part is to get students’ attitudes about their campus life. The answer is given as follow. Seen from Figure 5.10, about 67% in total have stated that they are satisfied with their life in normal university. Furthermore, 6% of the participants have

claimed that their campus lives are perfect. However, there still one-third students are not satisfied with their life in normal university and about 5% feel very disappointed about their campus life. A conclusion can be reached from the result that free teacher education offers a favorable campus environment to the students but still there is room for further improvement.

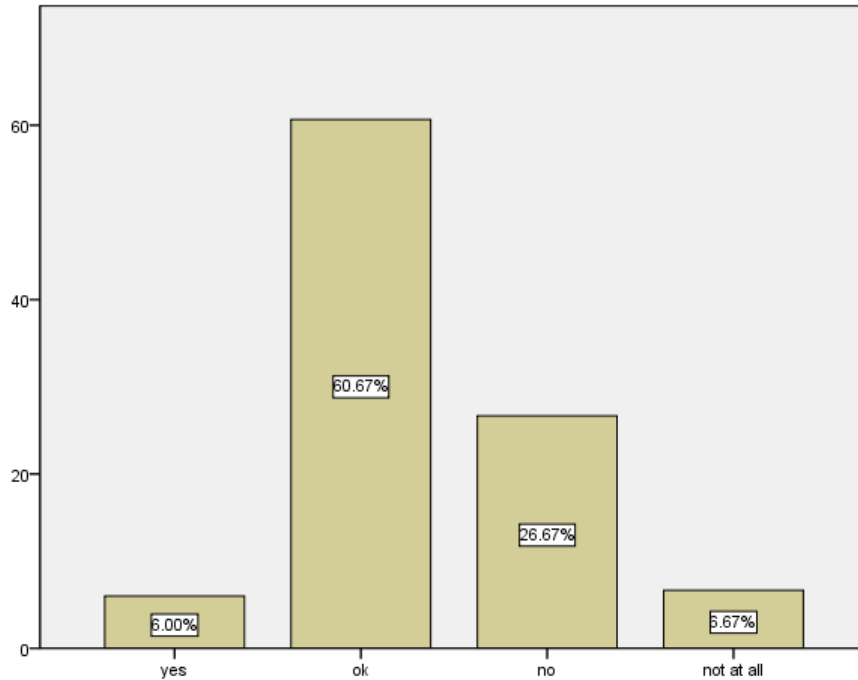


Figure 5.10 Are students satisfied with their life in normal university N=150

Historically, teacher education had received a lot of attention and priorities from governments. Nowadays, governments practice free teacher education program to attract more people. There remains a question whether students will choose teacher education if they don't need to pay tuition fee to all the subjects?

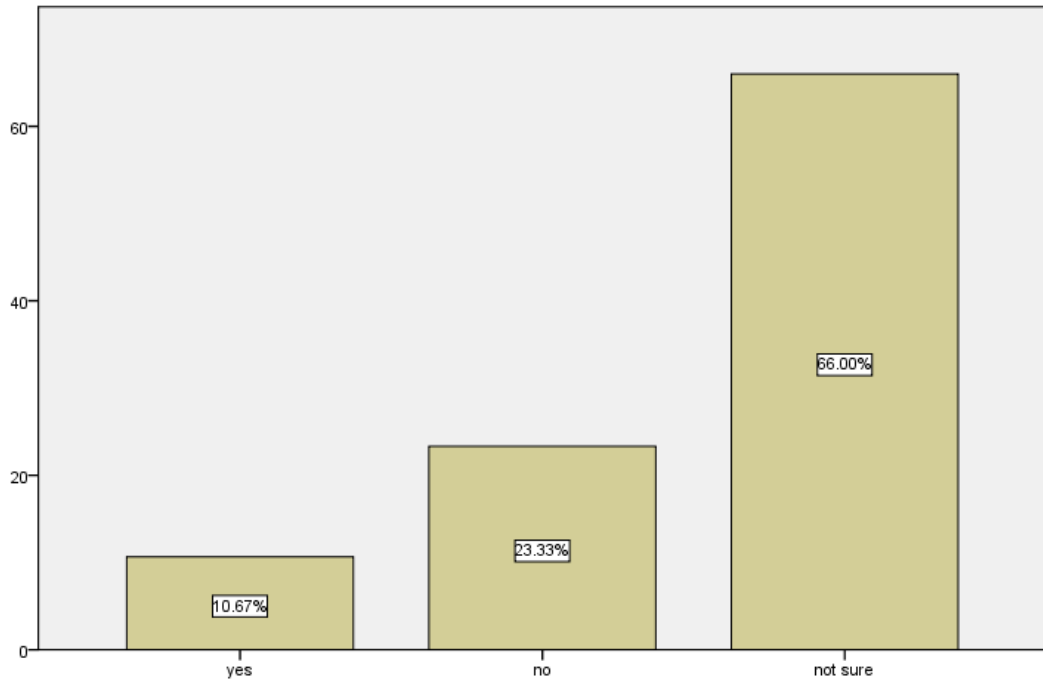


Figure 5.11 Whether students will stay in teacher education if other subjects are free N=150

The result can be seen from Figure 5.11, only about 11% of participants have given a positive answer that they will stay in teacher education if other subjects are free. 66% of the students are not sure about this question and 24% will leave teacher education to choose other universities. These answers are not quite satisfying. The conclusion from this analysis is without free tuition fee policy, teacher education has less attraction compared with other subjects.

According to free teacher education program, students should teach in rural areas at least two years upon their graduation. Rural areas as undeveloped areas, both living and teaching conditions are in a lower level. When asked what most troubles them when they teaching in rural areas, they have listed four factors (seen them in figure 5.12).

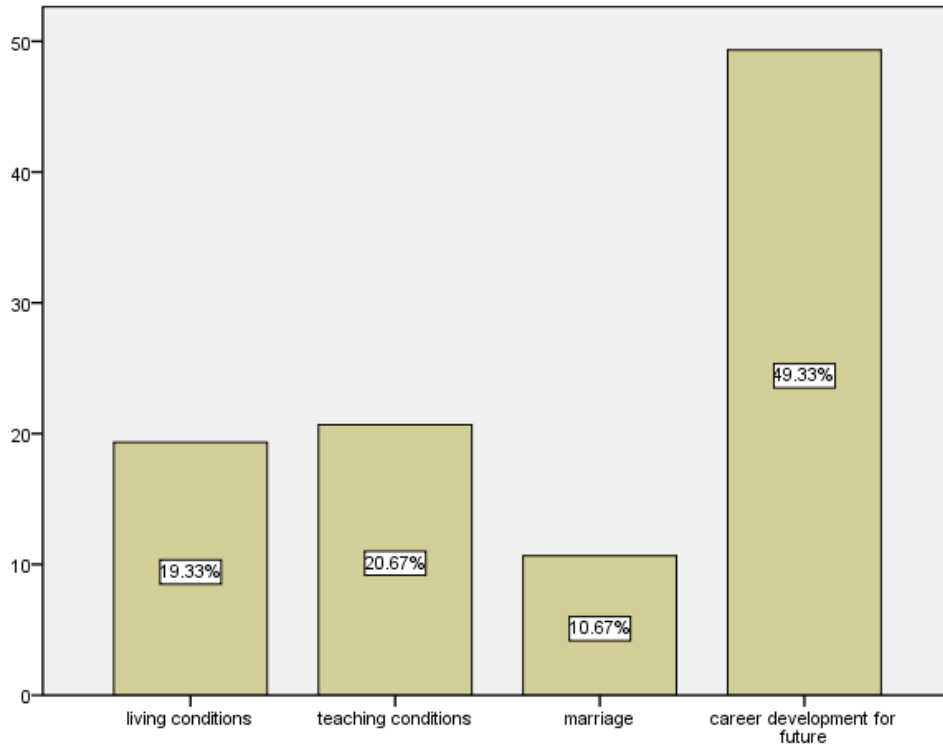


Figure 5.12 The main problem for working in rural areas two years N=150

As shown in figure 5.12, about half of the participants have stated that what worries them most is their career development for future. Almost the same percentages of students have chosen “living conditions” and “teaching conditions” as their answers, respectively 19.33% and 20.67%. Around 11% of the participants have claimed that the main problem for working in rural areas is their marriage. The finding from data can support the conclusion that students are not so confident about their working in rural areas and some problems trouble them a lot.

Students have to sign the contract with universities when they are recruited in free teacher education which guarantees that they will work in teaching field at least ten years. There is a provision that if students break contract, they should give back the entire tuition fee and also pay for penalty. This question is about students’ attitudes about this provision.

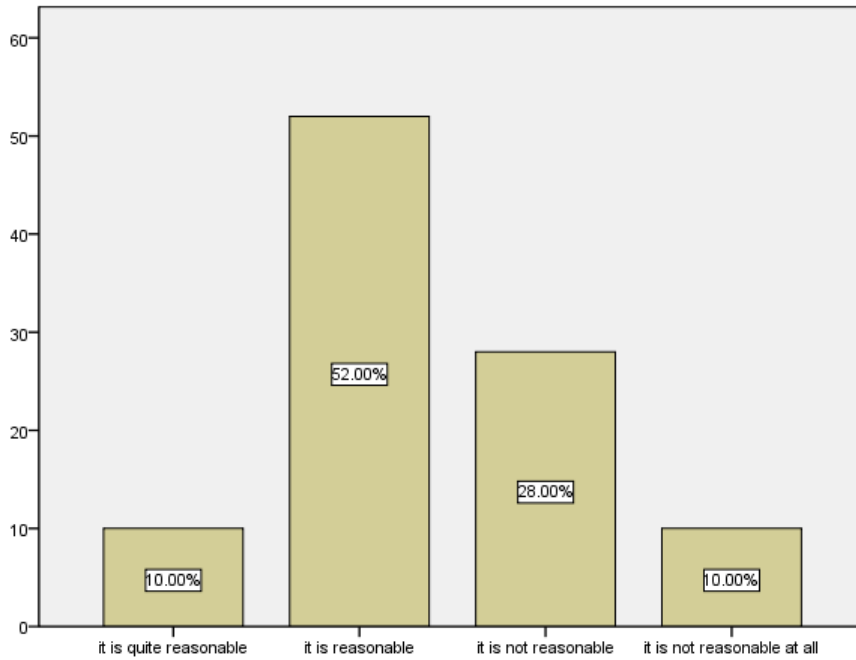
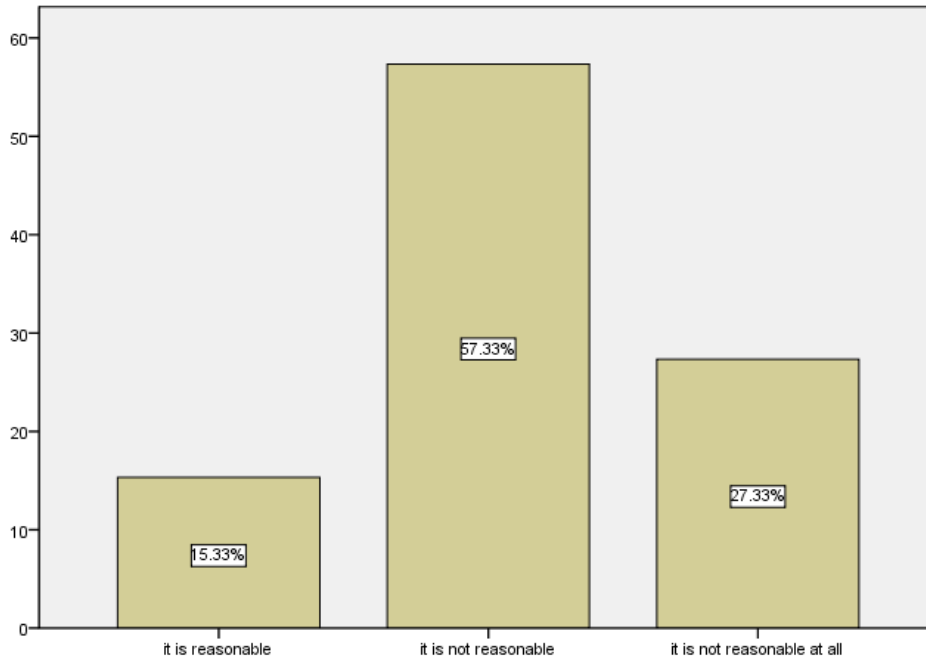


Figure 5.13 Students' attitudes on paying for penalty if they break contract
N=150

Suggested in figure 5.13, more than half of the participants think this provision is reasonable. And 10% of the students have given definitely positive answer to this question that is this provision is quite reasonable. However, more than one-third students think it is not reasonable to pay tuition fee and penalty if they break the contract. 10% of the participants have stated that this provision is not reasonable at all. To sum up, this provision is accepted by many students but it seems something can be done to better it.

Students in free teacher education must work in teaching field at least ten years after their graduation. It means they cannot get further education such as get master or higher education degree during the ten years. This rule of free teacher education program is to guarantee teaching quantity in education field. However, most of students' opinions on this rule are negative.



**Figure 5.14 Students' attitudes on they cannot get further education in ten years
N=150**

Indicated in figure 5.14, only 15% of the participants have stated that this rule is reasonable. All of the rest students think this rule is not reasonable, and about 27% of the participants have claimed that this rule is not reasonable at all. This negative result from data can be understood. Students' education right will be destroyed in some extent if they cannot get further education.

As mentioned in chapter three, one of the purposes of free teacher education is to form social atmosphere of teaching honors. Figure 5.15 shows students' opinions about this goal of free teacher education. About 80% of the participants have agreed that free teacher education can improve social morals of teaching honors. Only 20% have opposite opinions about this question. As a result, in most of students' eyes, teaching honors can be improved by free teacher education. In other words, most of students think this purpose of free teacher education can be achieved.

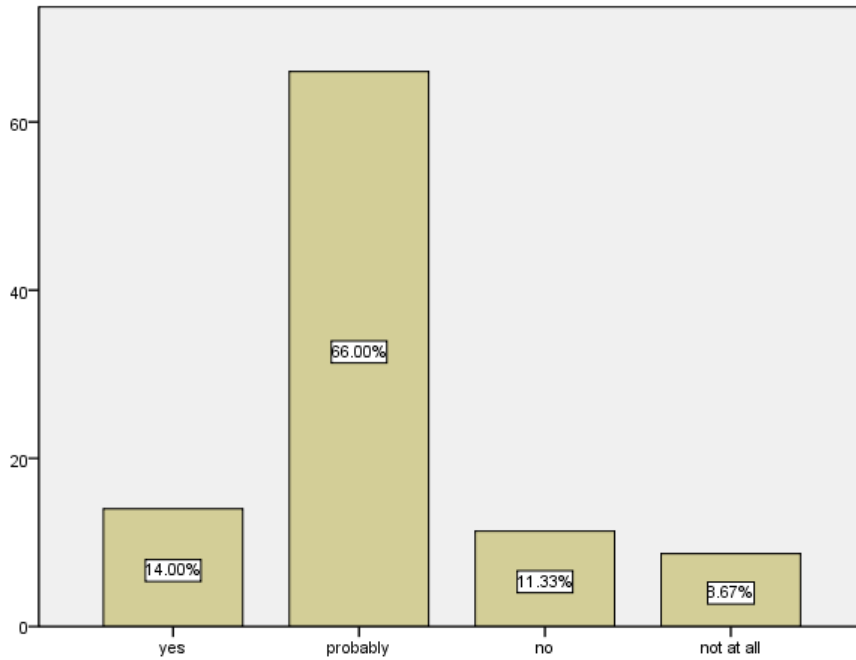


Figure 5.15 Students' opinions on whether free teacher education can improve social morals of teacher honor N=150

5.4 Attitudes comparison between students with different backgrounds

Increasing teachers especially in western and undeveloped areas is an important task of teacher education. As illustrated in chapter 4, there is an assumption that students from western and rural areas will be affected a lot by free teacher education. Generally, students in developed areas and big cities have more opportunities than students in undeveloped areas. That is the reason why Beijing Normal University and Shaanxi Normal University are selected as targets. Comparing attitudes about free teacher education between students from these two normal universities is benefit for understanding this new education program well. Also, through analysis, some opinions about free teacher education are different between female and male students. These two kinds of differences are presented in the following part.

5.4.1 Gender-related issues

Teaching is usually seen as a female-dominant profession by many people. Attitudes to teaching and free teacher education are different between female and male students. In

this study, attitude differences between genders mainly focus on three questions. Different attitudes towards these three questions between genders are illustrated as follows.

When asked the main reason for choosing to teach, female and male students have given different answers. As shown in Figure 5.16, more than half female students have stated that teaching is a stable job. This confirms that employment stability is an important determinant of girls' profession decision. The most frequently chosen reason by male students is "teaching is my dream". About 43% of male students have chosen this answer which can support the conclusion that personal interest influences boys more than girls when they are looking for jobs. Finally, about 29% of male students have given other reasons for their choice to be a teacher. These reasons mainly include "the choice is made by my parents", "teaching has holidays" and "others' suggestion". It is clear that male students are affected by others when they decide to be a teacher.

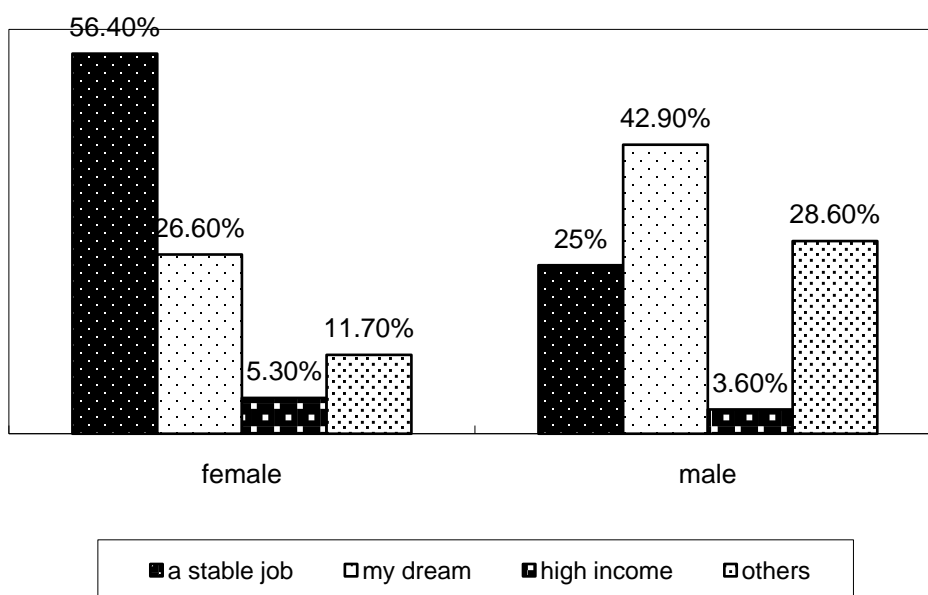


Figure 5.16 Different reasons for choosing to be a teacher between genders

When asked whether they can become an excellent teacher, female and male students' attitudes are different although most of the participants have given a positive answer. Table 5.2 has illustrated answers about this question from both female and male students. About 93% of female students have claimed that they can become a good

teacher which is a lot more than boys (67.9%). Around one-tenth of male students have given a negative answer that they cannot become an excellent teacher. This result presents the fact that female have more confidence and passion for teaching than male students.

Table 5.2 Female and male students' attitudes on becoming an excellent teacher

Will you become an excellent teacher				
	Yes	No	Not sure	Total
Female	92.6%	1.1%	6.4%	100.0%
Male	67.9%	10.7%	21.4%	100.0%
Total	83.3%	4.7%	12.0%	100.0%

Table 5.3 presents female and male students' responses to the question whether they will study in teacher education if other subjects are free. In general, female students have given more positive answers than male students. About half of the male students (51.8%) have stated that they will quit teacher education if other subjects are free. About 43% of male students have chosen "not sure" to this question. The result from data is not quite satisfying. To sum up, in students' eyes especially in male students' eyes, teacher education cannot attract them as other subjects in higher education.

Table 5.3 Female and male students' attitudes on staying in teacher education

Will you study in teacher education if other subject are free				
	Yes	No	Not sure	Total
Female	13.8%	6.4%	79.8%	100.0%
Male	5.4%	51.8%	42.9%	100.0%
Total	10.7%	23.3%	66.0%	100.0%

5.4.2 Areas-related issues

In present China, social and economic disparities between rural and urban areas, and between eastern and western regions are severe. Illustrated in chapter 4, students in Shaanxi Normal University (SNU) are mainly from western areas which are not quite

developed. Comparatively, students in Beijing Normal University (BNU) generally have better social-economic background and more opportunities than students from western areas. Students start on unequal footings depending on their socio-economic background, and they are not equal even though they have the same student status during their studies (Huang, 2005:128). This inequality exists in the ways they study and live on campus and has a strong influence on their expectations and attitudes towards education.

To develop western and rural areas, governments increase funding and give many priorities in these areas especially in education field. Free teacher education program also encourage students work in western and rural areas upon their graduation. There is an assumption that students from western areas have much to say about this program compared with students from developed areas. Students' attitudes about four aspects of teacher education are different between two normal universities.

When asked which area students would like to teach, more than half of the participants (55.3%) have chosen big city. Seen from table 5.4, most students prefer to teach in big and small city not in the countryside. However, seen the answer from the two universities respectively, students from BNU have higher requirement on teaching area than students from SNU. Only about 3% of BNU students would like to teach in the countryside which is much less than SNU student (9.1%). The conclusion can be reached from the data that different social-economic backgrounds strongly influence on students' expectations on working areas.

Table 5.4 Different universities students' attitudes on area they want to teach

		Which area you want to teach upon your graduation				
		Big city	Small city	Countryside	It doesn't matter	Total
Beijing University	Normal	63.0%	26%	2.7%	8.2%	100.0%
Shaanxi University	Normal	48.1%	28.6%	9.1%	14.3%	100.0%
Total		55.3%	27.3%	6.0%	11.3%	100.0%

As shown in table 5.5, most of the students from both BNU and SNU have given positive answers when asked about their life in normal university. However, about 42% of SNU students have claimed that they are not satisfied with their campus life. The percentages of this response in BNU students are much lower (around 25%). Both BNU and SNU practiced free teacher education program in 2007. However, the fact can be seen from the data that free teacher education developed unequally in these two normal universities. At least, in SNU students' eyes, free teacher education is not as good as that in BNU students' eyes.

Table 5.5 Different universities students' attitudes on their campus life

Are you satisfied with your life in normal university					
	Yes	Ok	No	Not at all	Total
Beijing Normal University	6.8%	68.5%	20.5%	4.1%	100.0%
Shaanxi Normal University	5.2%	53.2%	32.5%	9.1%	100.0%
Total	6.0%	60.7%	26.7%	6.7%	100.0%

Teaching in rural areas is not an easy job for many students especially for those who come from cities. Both living and teaching conditions are not quite satisfying. Students in free teacher education have to teach in rural areas for two years after finishing their study. Some problems for working there can be expected. In students' opinion, what worries them most? When being asked this question, different universities' students have given different answers. Indicated in table 5.6, the most significant differences between two universities' students' attitudes is half of the BNU students (58.9%) worried most about their career development while the percentage of SNU students who have chosen this answer is much less (40.3%). BNU students consider more about their career development in the future compared with SNU students.

Table 5.6 Different universities students' attitudes on the main problem for teaching in rural areas two years

Which of the followings most troubles you for working in rural areas in two years					
	Living conditions	Teaching conditions	Marriage	Career development	Total
Beijing Normal University	12.3%	16.4%	12.3%	58.9%	100.0%
Shaanxi Normal University	26%	24.7%	9.1%	40.3%	100.0%
Total	19.3%	20.7%	10.7%	49.3%	100.0%

This conclusion is also supported in table 5.7. Students in free teacher education must work in teaching field at least ten years. The students have no chance to get further education during the ten years. More than 90% of BNU students have stated that this rule is not reasonable. To SNU students, over 76% have given the same answer as BNU students and about 22% have stated this rule is reasonable. To sum up, BNU students attach great importance to their further education. In other words, compared with SNU students, BNU students think more about their personal development for future.

Table 5.7 Different university students' attitudes on they cannot get further education in ten years after their graduation

Students cannot get further education in ten years after their graduation.				
What is your opinion about this				
	It is reasonable	It is not reasonable	It is not reasonable at all	Total
Beijing Normal University	8.2%	60.3%	31.5%	100.0%
Shaanxi Normal University	22.1%	54.5%	23.4%	100.0%
Total	15.3%	57.3%	27.3%	100.0%

5.5 Summary

This chapter is mainly about students' attitudes towards teaching and free teacher education. The majority of students have given positive attitudes about free teacher education. However, they still have some confusion about this new education program. Quite a number of the students especially male students have stated that teaching is an unattractive job. Attitudes towards teaching and free teacher education are different by gender and areas. The result is that free teacher education will have different influence on students with different backgrounds. Chapter six summarizes the findings of this chapter and makes some tentative suggestions.

Chapter 6 Conclusions and Recommendations

6.1 Introduction

This chapter first summarizes the findings of the study. Then conclusions are presented based on the data analyzed. The discussions about recommendations for free teacher education and direction for further research are rendered in the end.

6.2 Summary of findings

Findings from data analyzed are drawn in four dimensions.

6.2.1 Social-economic status of students in free teacher education

In chapter five, the number of students recruited by free teacher education has been presented. Much more students than before are enrolled by free teacher education and all of them have higher scores. Quantity and quality of students in teacher education have been enhanced by free teacher education.

Both secondary data and sampling in chapter five show that most of students (over 90%) in free teacher education are from western and underdeveloped areas. More than half of the students are from rural areas and have low payment ability. All of these show that many students with disadvantageous social-economic backgrounds benefit from free teacher education. Furthermore, number of male students in free teacher education has an increase. More and more male students are attracted by teacher education. Although the gap between the numbers of female and male students in teacher education is still large, gender formation of teaching gets somewhat improved.

6.2.2 Attitudes to teaching

According to the data in chapter five, not many students are willing to become a teacher. Few of students have chosen to teach because of teaching income which indicates that income of teachers is in disadvantage situation. Most of the students have confidence that they can become a good teacher in the future. To this result, free teacher education really attracts many excellent students into teaching field which will have a positive impact on teachers' quantities and qualities.

However, students' attitudes towards becoming life-long teachers are not so optimistic. Not many students have considered teaching as their life-long profession. If they don't take teaching as a life-long career, they probably will not take it seriously and will quit teaching when they have other choice. At last, most of the students prefer to teach in big and small city not countryside. The assumption is that students will not work hard in rural areas after their graduation if they don't like work there.

6.2.3 Attitudes towards free teacher education

In chapter five, students' attitudes towards free teacher education have been presented. As a whole, students have given positive attitudes about free teacher education. A number of students are familiar with free teacher education and have a satisfactory experience in free teacher education. Most of the students in this study have agreed that free teacher education can improve social morals of teaching honors. All of these show that free teacher education have got quite a lot of attention from students and have a good beginning.

However, evidences are in support of the conclusion that teaching is not an attractive profession. One of the evidences is that many students choose teaching and teacher education because of economic reason. Students who cannot afford the relatively high tuition fee of other comprehensive universities will choose normal universities because of the low or free tuition fee. Another evidence for this statement is that only a few

students will stay in teacher education if other subjects are free. All these indicate that teaching in China is still in a disadvantageous situation. Although many students are recruited by free teacher education, whether they will stay in teaching field and become a life-long educators are still unknown.

Last but not least, quite a number of students still have some misgivings in free teacher education. One of the issues is stated in previous section that students cannot get further education during service period. Many students have a negative opinion about this and have claimed that it is not reasonable. Another issue is to work in rural areas for two years upon graduation. Poor living and teaching conditions are problems to the students who have no experience in rural areas. Furthermore, many students are concerned for their career development. Working in rural areas for two years have uncertain influence on students' career development in the future.

6.2.4 Attitudes comparison

The results from previous chapter also present that students with different backgrounds have different attitudes towards free teacher education. The different attitudes between female and male students mainly focus on teaching and teachers. Compared with female students, male students' attitudes to teaching are not so optimistic. Students from different normal university and areas have different attitudes about free teacher education. On the whole, students from SNU are more attracted by free teacher education than students from BNU. Also, to some extent, SNU students have adapted to free teacher education better than BNU students. In other words, students from western areas benefit more from free teacher education than students from other areas.

6.3 Conclusions

Free teacher education is for the development of teacher education and education equity. Through the research, following conclusions can be drawn.

Teacher education gets better developments

The purpose of free tuition fee policy are to foster a number of excellent teachers; to form social atmosphere of teaching honors and encourage more and more students to become lifelong educators. According to the results from previous chapter, these purposes can be achieved in some extent, and, teacher education gets further development relatively. Both quantity and quality of students in normal university have been improved with the development of free teacher education and will influence positively the quantity and quality of teachers. Gender formation in teacher education gets somewhat balanced. All of these indicate that free tuition fee policy have improved teacher education. However, teaching still has a lower status compared with other occupations. Free teacher education alone is not enough to change the disadvantageous situation of teaching. Teacher education needs further development by other measures.

Education equity has been improved

Indicated in chapter three, the current level of higher education tuition is a heavy burden for most families especially in rural areas in China. To prevent dropout from higher education, the state provides a series of measures. Free teacher education also offers study opportunities to the students who are excellent but with disadvantage economic backgrounds. These students can continue their study in teacher education for free and also get subsidies from government. Their education rights have been guaranteed and are no more economic burdens for their families.

Education development and teaching force are imbalance across the country. Because of low income and poor living conditions, the outflows of teachers from rural and western areas to relatively developed areas are surprisingly high. Without enough and qualified teachers, it is hard for these areas to fully develop education there. According to free teacher education, students will first offer service in rural area for two years if they want to teach in urban areas. A number of graduates with high academic quality will devote themselves to rural education. Both quantity and quality of teachers in rural

areas will be enhanced. Rural education will get more development and the gap between urban and rural educations will be narrowed.

Seen from these two aspects above, free teacher education offers education opportunities to the students who have disadvantageous social-economic backgrounds and also guarantee teaching force in rural areas. Both individual and underdeveloped areas benefit from free teacher education. Education equity gets improved relatively.

Free teacher education requires that students teach in primary and secondary education at least ten years after their graduation. Normally, students cannot get further education during these ten years. This measure is to make up shortage of teachers in primary and secondary education. However, students lose their further education opportunities. This prerequisite in free teacher education is most polemic and is an obstacle to education equity in some extent.

6.4 Discussion

6.4.1 Recommendations

Some implications can be drawn from this study, aiming to improve teacher education for future.

Enhance teachers' social status

There is still large shortage of teachers in primary and secondary education in China. How to increase both quantity and quality of teachers is not a simple task. Free teacher education, to some extent, can attract some students to teach in primary and secondary education. However, it is not enough. Some students, especially male students still have bias towards teaching and teacher education. Still many students choose to become teachers against their will. The reasons for these issues can be summarized that the social status and income of teachers both remain relatively. According to teacher laws of P.R.C, the average income of teachers will not lower, or even higher than that of

non-business institutions.²⁴ The fact is far from that. The state and government should pay more attention to enhance status of teachers and increase income of teachers. The government is supposed to improve the law of teachers to ensure teachers' welfare. One of the effective measures is to increase expenditure on education. Sufficient funding in education can be considered as the guarantee of teachers' income. Only when the social and economic status of teachers gets improved will students be willing to devote to education field and the ethos of teaching honor be established in society.

Expand free teacher education

Free teacher education is practiced in six normal universities the first year. All of these six normal universities are under direct administration of MoE. Except these, every province has their own normal universities. These local normal universities also have the requirement of free teacher education. Therefore, free teacher education should be expanded to local normal universities step by step. Both teacher education and education equity can be improved by this measure. On the one hand, expanding of free teacher education in local normal universities can attract more students to teaching field. Teachers' quantity and quality will increase relatively. On the other hand, if more normal universities practice free teacher education program, more students will benefit from it. Furthermore, there are much more rural and needy students in local normal universities than in key normal universities (Yu, 2008). More students with disadvantageous social-economic backgrounds can receive teacher education if more local normal universities implement free teacher education program. Students' education right will be guaranteed and education equity can be further improved.

The conclusion presented previously is that students from western areas are more attracted by free teacher education. Therefore, western normal universities should be given more priorities when expending free teacher education.

²⁴ From <http://www.moe.edu.cn/edoas/website18/level3.jsp?tablename=1110&infoid=12225>

Rural education reformation

For the imbalance of economic and education development, western and rural regions still have a large disparity in education compared with other areas. Free teacher education has some positive impact for sure on increasing both quantity and quality of teachers in these areas. However, students are uncertain about teaching in rural areas. Both living and teaching conditions are big problems for the students who come from urban areas. Furthermore, there will be frequent changes of teachers according to the contact, which is for sure not good for education development in rural areas.

Rural education needs reformation to attract and keep more teachers. It needs more help from the government and other donators. First, government should increase funding in these areas to make sure the salaries standard of teachers and try to better both living and teaching conditions. Besides, the communication between rural and urban areas should be improved. Furthermore, the government and education institution should offer more in-service education for the teachers in rural areas to enhance their teaching capacities (Yang and Wang, 2007).

Relative laws support and evaluation system

To guarantee free teacher education going well, relative laws are necessary. During study periods, students' education right needs support from relative laws, and at the same time the state interests should also be guaranteed by laws. According to free teacher education, students should return the fees and pay for penalty if they break the contract. The assumption is that students refuse to return fees when they break the contract. In this case, relative laws are vital to safeguard state economic interests. Anyway, with assistance of correlative laws, free teacher education can achieve its goals much easier and better.

Students' performance in school has positive relationship with their quality. Strengthening student evaluation is a worthwhile measure to undertake. The advantage of evaluation system is not only to help students achieve their fullest potential, but also

to improve teaching. Effective evaluation of student performance is necessary to guarantee students and teaching quality.

6.4.2 Implications for further research

The first students in free teacher education will graduate in 2011. The direct effect of free teacher education will be seen clearly then. The study in free teacher education can be developed. Further research can be focused more on contents of free teacher education. Which content of free teacher education is meaningful and can receive positive effect? Which is not? The result from this thesis, in that respect, indicates a promising path for on this important topic of Chinese educational policy.

6.5 Summary

Free teacher education has a long history in China. Currently the newly-resumed free teacher education program is especially important to students and teacher education. It is of great significance for the promotion of education equity and to re-cognition of teacher education. More and more youths devote themselves to education field and realize their own values. Teacher status and social ethos of teaching honor are somewhat improved. So far, it can be claimed that free teacher education has a good beginning and going well.

Meanwhile, some issues in free teacher education are polemic for education development. As a trial policy, there is room for further improvement in this free teacher education program. Furthermore, this new education program alone is not enough to develop teacher education. The progress of teacher education demands more supports and helps from governments, schools and individuals.

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Appendix

Questionnaires

Your response will be used in my master research program. As a result, your response is an indispensable part for the completion of my research. Your privacy will be well observed and your right for withdrawal from the research is guaranteed. Although there are two parts in the questionnaire, it won't take you more than 15 minutes to answer it.

Please put what you choose into the brackets and your answers on the blanks.

I. Personal information

() Gender A. Female B. Male

Name of university _____

What is your family annual income? () (in RMB)

- A. Below 20,000
- B. From 20,001 to 50,000
- C. From 50,001 to 100,000
- D. 100,000 above

Where are you from? ()

- A. Urban areas
- B. Rural areas

II. Multiple choices (please choose only one answer for each)

Part one: Attitudes towards teaching profession

() 1. What is your main reason for choosing to be a teacher?

- A. A stable job B. My dream
- C. Income D. Others, please specify: _____

() 2. Will you become an excellent teacher?

- A. Yes B. No C. Not sure

() 3. Will you choose teacher as your lifelong profession?

- A. Yes B. No C. Not sure

() 4. Which area you want to teach upon your graduation?

- A. Big city
- B. Small city
- C. Countryside
- D. It doesn't matter to me

Part two: Attitudes towards free teacher education

() 5. Why do you choose free teacher education?

- A. My dream
- B. Economic reason
- C. Employment security
- D. Others, please specify: _____

() 6. How much you know about free teacher education program?

- A. Very much B. Not so much
- C. A little D. Not at all

() 7. Are you satisfied with your life in normal university?

- A. Yes
- B. Ok
- C. No
- D. Not at all

() 8. Will you study in teacher education if other subjects are free too?

- A. Yes
- B. No
- C. Not sure

() 9. Which of the followings troubles you most for working in rural areas for two years upon your graduation?

- A. Living conditions
- B. Teaching conditions
- C. Marriage
- D. Career development for future

() 10. Students who break contract should give back the entire tuition fee and pay for penalty. What is your opinion about this?

- A. It is quite reasonable
- B. It is reasonable
- C. It is not reasonable
- D. It is not reasonable at all

() 11. Students cannot get further education in ten years after their graduation. What is your opinion about this?

- A. It is quite reasonable
- B. It is reasonable
- C. It is not reasonable
- D. It is not reasonable at all

() 12. Whether free teacher education can improve social morals of teacher honor?

- A. Yes
- B. Probably
- C. No
- D. Not at all