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Comparing motivations of pre-service and beginning teachers in China: impact of culture and experience

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ABSTRACT

The study examines beginning teachers' and pre-service teachers' motivation to teach in China. Data are drawn from questionnaires completed by 107 beginning teachers (full-time teachers with fewer than six years' working experience) and 122 pre-service teachers, and semi-structured interviews with 19 of them. The respondents all emphasised social influences, personal utility value, and social utility value, and all viewed the teaching profession as a career high in demands but low in returns. However, pre-service teachers showed higher motivation than beginning teachers, except for items regarding intrinsic value, fall-back careers, and teaching ability. This study suggests a 'culture-motivation' framework for understanding teachers' motivation in China.

Introduction

Many studies have examined pre-service teachers' motivation to teach, due to growing concerns over teacher attrition. Social influences and extrinsic, intrinsic, and altruistic motivations have been widely reported in extant studies as factors influencing pre-service teachers' profession entry motivations (Heinz 2015).

After the turn of the millennium, 'a comprehensive and coherent model' – the Factor Influence Teaching-Choice (FIT-Choice) scales – was developed by Richardson and Watt 'to guide systematic investigation into the question of why people choose a teaching career' (Richardson and Watt 2006). The FIT-Choice Scale guides investigations into the factors influencing pre-service teachers' choice to teach. Socialisation influences, antecedent socialisation, and perceptions of previous experiences are presented in the first part of the model, followed by an examination of the context in which the choice of a teaching career was made, combining such constructs as perceived task demands versus returns, teacher's self-perceptions of abilities, values, and fall-back career options (Watt and Richardson 2007).

In the past two decades, the FIT-Choice scale has been used to survey pre-service teachers' motivations to teach, not only in Australia but also in numerous international contexts, including Western nations like the United States, Sweden, and Ireland, and Eastern nations like China (Lin et al. 2012; Bergmark et al. 2018). Most studies employing

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the FIT-Choice scale in Australia, North America, and Europe reported intrinsic and altruistic motivations and intentions were important factors in pre-service teachers' desire to teach (Heinz 2013). In contrast, several studies on teachers' profession entry motivation in such non-Western socio-cultural contexts as China (Su et al. 2001; Lin et al. 2012) and Turkey (Kilinç, Watt, and Richardson 2012) reported extrinsic values were more important to those choosing a teaching career. Similar studies of career decision-making based on social learning theory (Chapman 1984) have highlighted the interaction of social and cultural factors with teachers' beliefs about their roles; other studies in different cultural contexts have also, using the FIT-Choice scale, highlighted the importance of examining social-cultural factors (Heinz 2015).

In the last two decades, several studies have applied the FIT-Choice scale to China and reported that extrinsic reasons, such as financial supports and social status, along with social influences (Lin et al. 2012; Guo and Sun 2018) and teacher education programme qualities influence Chinese pre-service teachers' entry motivation (Song, Wang, and Zhang 2018). Moreover, they found Chinese pre-service teachers perceived teaching as a career with high demands (An et al., 2020).

However, most of these studies have applied the FIT-Choice scale to student teachers, with few examining the changes in teachers' entry motivation at the beginning of their careers to examine social influences and their temporal development of motivations, which is a complex process. As new entrants into the teaching profession, these teachers have the opportunity to examine how their original entry motivation is affected by the various challenges they face at the beginning of their career (Jones and Youngs 2012). Extant studies have noted the tensions between pre-service teachers' aspirations and the realities of teaching and suggested that teachers leave the profession when their teaching motivations cannot be realised (Manuel and Hughes 2006).

Additionally, Mainland China is an interesting case through which to explore teachers' entry motivation changes. On one hand, it has long had a paternalistic understanding of teachers, highlighting their important role in society and emphasising that society must respect teachers and value education (Carr 1993), which are important factors attracting Chinese to the teaching profession. On the other hand, its 1978 economic reform led to rapid social transitions that changed teachers from high-status professionals to service providers, challenging teachers' motivation to teach (Ye, Song, and Li 2018). Transition from pre-service teacher to beginning teacher status required Chinese teachers to travel between the conflicting understandings of teachers' role caused by the rapid social transition to develop their motivation.

Therefore, the goal of this study is to investigate the teaching motivations of not only pre-service teachers (full-time BEd students) but also of beginning teachers (full-time teachers working in Grades 1–12 teaching various school subjects and having fewer than six years' working experience), in the context of China, by comparing pre-service and beginning teachers to explore the motivation development process. Such a comparison has important implications for both teacher education programme improvement and new teacher retention. In the following sections, this article first reviews the Chinese context and then describes the study's design and implementation. The major patterns of its findings are presented next, after which some possible explanations for these findings

are proposed. Finally, this article concludes by presenting a framework for understanding pre-service and beginning teachers' motivation in China.

The Chinese culture and context

Culture can be defined as 'a group's common beliefs including shared traditions, language, styles, values and agreement about norms for living' (Williams, 2011). In China, three aspects of Chinese culture stand out, in terms of influencing Chinese teacher motivation.

Firstly, as Spradlin and Parsons (2008) pointed out, culture defines one's thinking and behaviour. China has a long-standing paternalistic tradition of respecting teachers, affording them positive social influence and high social status that influences their entry motivations. As Confucian philosopher Xun Zi suggested, 'if a country is to prosper, it must respect and value teachers' (Zhu 2014). Teachers were believed to give birth to one's mind, just as one's ancestors gave birth to one's body. In ancient times, the teacher was listed among the five 'gods' (the heaven, the land, the emperor, the ancestor, and the teacher) worshipped by the Chinese people (Qin 2014). Famous scholars/educators such as Confucius developed China's s*hi dao chuan tong* – a traditional way of doing education and of being a teacher. This tradition places high work motivation demands on teachers as being passionate about research and study, being lifelong learners, and loving the teaching profession. In sum, while they suffered during the early days of the People's Republic of China (PRC), teachers are highly respected and viewed as knowledgeable authorities in China today. They are generally ranked above corporate managers and mid-level military officers, hold an important role in society, and often shoulder heavy responsibilities for the nation's educational mobilisation.

Secondly, social policies were made to attract people to teaching and maintain their motivation to teach. In the PRC, existing disparities in income can be explained by such variables as work unit sector and rank, job category and scale, political power, and age and seniority, all of which measure the main dimensions of one's socialist hierarchical status (Bian 2002). The teaching profession is considered in-system sector career, featuring high social status, career security, good welfare provision, etc., making it an 'iron rice bowl' and attractive to job seekers. On the other hand, since the 1990s, China has tightened its control over and imposed very high expectations for teacher motivation, in a series of policies on teacher professional ethics, teacher certification, and professional ranking (Paine and Fang 2006). Among these policies, the *Ten Norms for Middle and Primary School Teachers in the New Era* (Ministry of Education 2018) made clear requirements to teacher motivation: be diligent at work, be willing to dedicate yourself.

Thirdly, the social transitions following the 1978 economic reform have challenged teacher motivation and commitment in China. In 1978, China adopted a market economy, which called for a general opening-up of the country to external, particularly Western influences. The social transitions have brought about changes to respecting teacher tradition. Scholars have reported that, against the background of China's emerging market economy, parents increasingly view teachers as service providers, rather than unchallengeable authorities. Moreover, Chinese policy shifts resulted in a massive wave of

urbanisation through internal migration, which overturned traditional family dynamics and increased stress levels among youths in schools, thus complicating teachers' ability to deal with students and parents (e.g., Ye 2016).

This study

Therefore, this study investigates pre-service and beginning teachers' entry motivation. A mixed methodology approach was adopted for a cohort of pre-service teachers and a cohort of beginning teachers.

The first data collection method, a questionnaire consisting of 27 items based on the FIT-Choice scale (Richardson and Watt 2006) and some questions adapted from Lin et al.'s questionnaire (2012), was used to assess pre-service teachers and beginning teachers' entry motivations. Additionally, personal/school information – such as proportion of migrant students, work hours, etc. – were included in beginning teachers' survey, while the recruitment track to the S University was included in the pre-service teacher survey.

S University, a large and nationally respected teacher education university located in Shanghai, China, was selected as the case, due to its nation-wide recruitment of pre-service and in-service teachers to its various teacher education programmes. The questionnaire was first issued at a summer education programme (a voluntary programme that prepares participants for part-time MEd studies) for beginning teachers held at S University in Shanghai in August 2018. This study defined beginning teachers as full-time primary and middle school teachers of various school subjects with fewer than six years' teaching experience, for several reasons. First, the first three years of a teacher's career is widely viewed as the beginning stage of their professional development (Huberman, 1989). However, Chinese literature reports that teachers view their first five years as the beginning stage (Ye and Zhou 2020). Some studies have highlighted the need to extend this beginning stage, arguing that Chinese teachers receive too little teaching practice training (Xia 2018). Researchers directly distributed 125 questionnaires – one for each teacher enrolled in the programme – of which 107 completed questionnaires were later collected. Next, the questionnaire was randomly issued to full-time first-year pre-service teachers in various majors at S University in June 2019 (122 returned; a return rate of above 90%; see Table 1). This study included first-year pre-service teachers because they had a clear memory of their entry motivation and had not yet established a teaching career. In China, BEd students are generally recruited from senior middle school graduates and enrolled in a four-year programme, with the first year mainly focusing on subject knowledge before starting teacher education courses and teaching practice.

A pilot version of the questionnaire, sent to two previous graduates from the summer programme and two from the BEd programme before being administered to the study participants, suggested respondents could clearly understand the questionnaire items and could finish the questionnaire within around 15 minutes. [Table 1 about here]

The second data collection method was follow-up semi-structured interviews. Interviews allowed for greater depth of data collection on such issues as interviewees' acknowledged strongest motivators and beginning teachers' motivation changes, and helped compensate for the limitations of using a scale designed for universal use. Eleven beginning teachers and eight first-year pre-service teachers who participated in the survey were randomly selected (while balancing female and male participants and various

Table 1. Questionnaire respondents' personal information.

Beginning teachers ($N = 107$)							
Gender		**Class head teacher**		**Classes every week**			
Male	Female	Yes	No	<10	10–15	16–20	
8.3%	90.7%	35.2%	63.0%	15.7%	55.6%	12.0%	
Grades							
primary		Junior middle	High school	Missing			
14.7%		22.0%	21.1%	38.5%			
Teaching experience							
1 year		2 year	3 year	4 year	5 year		
48.1%		7.4%	20.4%	9.3%	13.0%		
Subject							
Chinese		Maths	English	Geography	Chemistry		
18.5%		13.9%	37.0%	8.3%	8.3%		
Biology		Politics	History				
4.6%		2.8%	3.7%				
First year pre-service teachers ($N = 122$)							
Gender			**Recruitment track to S University**				
Male		Female	1st choice	2nd choice	Adjustment		
44.3%		55.7%	85.2%	10.7%	3.3%		
Subject							
Chinese		Maths	Physics	Politics			
26.1%		31.1%	23.0%	19.7%			

subject backgrounds) and interviewed, with each interview lasting around 60 minutes (see Appendix).

The questionnaire data were analysed with Mplus and SPSS software. The questionnaire included 19 Likert-style items on teaching motivations, with possible responses ranging from 1 (not at all important) to 7 (extremely important). Perceptions about teaching consisted of eight items, with possible responses ranging from 1 (not at all) to 7 (extremely). In this study, the reliabilities of all sub-scales ranged from .63 to .85 for the beginning teacher sample and from .67 to .85 for the pre-service teacher sample. Most of the Cronbach's α coefficients were acceptable.

The qualitative data collected from the interview (coded beginning teachers as B01, B02, etc., coded pre-service teachers as P01, P2, etc.) were subjected to thematic analysis (Braun and Clarke 2006). Themes were classified into a set of categories based on entry motivation. These data were used to respond to the research question and to supplement and clarify the quantitative findings. The data were collected between August 2018 and December 2019. While one of this article's authors teaches at S University and her position allowed her to access the study's participants, no participants were drawn from any of her courses. All participants consented to the research, all were protected and their identities held in the strictest confidence. Because all beginning teachers were selected from a single summer education programme, the sample of participants was small and their subject backgrounds unbalanced, and there was a large number of female participants, this study makes no attempt to generalise its findings.

Major questionnaire findings

Confirmatory factor analysis

The questionnaire data were handled and prepared in R and the analyses conducted in Mplus. Nineteen observed seven-point Likert scale items were used to build one latent variable MOT (motivation to teach), while eight items were used to build another latent variable, PERCEPTION. First, we checked measurement invariance for both latent variables; specifically, a multiple-group confirmatory factor analysis (MGCFA) was carried out to test the measurement invariance of the two constructs between beginning teachers (GROUP1) and pre-service teachers (GROUP2). Adopting the criteria |Δ CFI| ≤ 0.01 and |Δ RMSEA| ≤ 0.01 (Rutkowski and Rutkowski 2013), metric invariance (|Δ CFI| = 0.005 and |Δ RMSEA| = 0.002) was established. Factor loadings and measurement errors from the MGCFA per sample are presented in Table 2.

We then conducted confirmatory factor analysis with maximum likelihood estimator to fit the same model into the two groups, separately. Overall, the data fit the models adequately; χ^2 (351, N = 107) = 1630.729, P = 0.000, CFI = .905, RMSEA = .065 (CI: .050 □ .078) for the beginning teacher sample; χ^2 (273, N = 122) = 460.424, P = 0.000, CFI = .907, RMSEA = .075 (CI: .044□.051) for the pre-service teacher sample.

Table 2. Factor loading for beginning and pre-service teachers' entry motivation.

Latent variable GROUP1 /GROUP2	Item	Item	Factor loading GROUP1/ GROUP2	Measurement Errors GROUP1/ GROUP2
Motivation to teach	A1	I like teaching	1/1	0/0
0.829/1.068	A2	Teaching is a stable job	0.78/0.69	0.16/0.09
	A3	Cultivate next generation	1.08/0.79	0.16/0.10
	A4	Teachers had stable growth	0.61/0.83	0.17/0.11
	A5	To work with children	0.89/1.03	0.11/0.11
	A6	Flexible time	0.80/0.91	0.22/0.13
	A7	Good learning experience	0.63/0.86	0.14/0.11
	A9	Summer & winter vacation	0.90/0.66	0.18/0.10
	A10	Social equity	0.81/1.07	0.19/0.13
	A11	Serve society	1.13/0.75	0.18/0.11
	A14	Contribute to society	1.08/0.86	0.18/0.10
	A15	Work day not long	0.66/0.49	0.21/0.16
	A16	Work environment good	1.04/0.91	0.18/0.11
	A17	Simple work relation	0.98/0.85	0.18/0.12
	A19	Not clear my career choice	−0.65/-0.68	0.24/0.17
	A20	Teacher is not my most wanted career	−0.16/-0.94	0.24/0.17
	A24	Confident in teaching	0.48/0.65	0.12/0.09
	A25	good teachers	0.39/0.38	0.11/0.08
	A26	Good teaching skills	0.85/0.51	0.16/0.11
Perception	A21	High morality requirement	1/1	0/0
0.151/0.306	A22	Required to work hard	1.31/0.68	0.30/0.12
	A23	Required to lifelong learning	1.06/0.61	0.26/0.10
	A8	Stable income	1.91/1.11	0.55/0.22
	A12	Social respect	3.13/1.39	0.78/0.28
	A13	Good for my own kid's education	2.83/1.76	0.70/0.30
	A18	To leave teaching	−0.93/-0.51	0.56/0.31
	A27	Social distrust	0.32/-0.81	0.20/0.29

Underlined items, $p > 0.05$

Comparing beginning teacher and pre-service teacher samples' entry motivations

Generally, both beginning and pre-service teachers had high entry motivation but low fall-back career motivation. The highest-rated motivations common for both beginning and pre-service teachers were within prior learning experience (e.g., I had good teachers, beginning teacher $M = 6.42$, pre-service teacher $M = 6.45$); social utility value (Cultivate next generation, beginning teacher, $M = 5.73$, pre-service teacher $M = 6.07$); and personal utility (Stable job, beginning teacher $M = 5.92$, pre-service teacher $M = 6.12$). The two lowest-rated motivations common to both beginning and pre-service teachers were within fall-back career (e.g., Teaching was not my most wanted career-choice, beginning teacher $M = 3.84$, pre-service teacher $M = 3.39$).

In general, pre-service teachers had higher motivation than the beginning teacher sample, except for items related to intrinsic value, fall-back career, and teaching ability. Table 3 shows the significant differences in the two cohorts' entry motivations.

Additionally, participants generally perceived teaching as a career with high demands and low returns; however, pre-service teachers generally had a more positive perception of teaching being a career choice than did beginning teachers.

Table 3. Mean value of beginning and pre-service teachers' motivations and perceptions of teaching career choice satisfaction.

	Beginning teachers		Pre-service teachers		
	M	SD	M	SD	Difference
Motivation for teaching					
Abilities					
Confident in Ability	6.16	1.02	5.63	1.06	0.53***
Mastery of good skills	5.64	1.41	4.84	1.24	0.81***
Personal utility value					
Time for family	4.32	1.96	5.03	1.57	−0.71***
Short work hour	3.38	1.87	4.08	1.76	−0.70***
Good work environment	4.52	1.53	5.40	1.28	−0.88***
Simple relation	4.64	1.57	5.31	1.43	−0.67***
Social utility value					
Next generation value	5.73	1.34	6.07	1.18	−0.34**
Enhance social equity	4.12	1.69	5.00	1.62	−0.88***
Serve the society	4.92	1.58	5.47	1.31	−0.55***
Make social contribution	5.15	1.52	5.80	1.97	−0.70***
Fall-back career					
Not my most wanted career	3.84	2.11	3.39	1.96	0.46*
Perceptions of teaching career choice satisfaction					
Task demand					
Require to work hard	6.25	0.96	6.46	0.95	−0.22*
Task return					
Stable income	5.54	1.47	5.78	1.12	−0.24*
Respected	4.57	1.73	5.55	1.40	−0.98***
My own kid's schooling	5.05	1.48	5.39	1.46	−0.34*
N/A					
Not satisfied with decision	4.32	2.00	3.89	1.88	0.43*
Social dissuasion	4.39	0.74	3.89	1.73	0.49**

*p < 0.05, **p < 0.01, ***p < 0.001, respectively

Major interview findings

The respecting teacher tradition and social stratification in China

Both beginning and student teachers reported their perceptions of Chinese tradition of respecting teachers. Firstly, the tradition attracted people to work in the profession; most interviewees highlighted that teaching is a sacred, highly respected job, with one suggesting that, 'Compared to my friends' career selections, in society, my future career, being a teacher is a respected job . . . ' (P01).

Secondly, the respecting teacher tradition, combined with China's social stratification of teaching as an in-system sector job, influenced students and parents. One BEd interviewee clearly stated 'teaching is a "iron rice bowl" which is very attractive to me' (P07). Interviewees suggested that parents' recommendations also explain their motivation to enter the teaching profession. One explained that, 'my parents view the teaching profession as a decent and stable job' (B03).

Good teachers in students' life motivated them to choose teaching

Both beginning and pre-service teachers reported their experiences with good teachers and their influence in their career decisions. Some pointed out that they received help from respected teachers that motived them to choose the teaching profession. One commented that, 'in my junior middle school years, I came across a good teacher, who changed my discouragement about studying, and I gradually got the idea of being a teacher in the future' (B04). One BEd interviewee described her motivation to teach by saying, 'in my hometown, teachers are the most knowledgeable people we meet in everyday life, they are people we adored to be' (P08).

BEd-level pre-service teachers reported their motivation to become teachers was by people who were important to them, such as teachers. Interviewed BEd-level pre-service teachers suggested their decision to enter a teacher education programme was due to the combined influences of parents, teachers, and their own performance in examinations; as one interviewee stated, 'my father discussed with my teacher, whom we trusted and was knowledgeable, and selected S University for me' (P04).

Pre-service teachers' limited contact with the teaching profession

First-year BEd students' perceptions of the teaching profession were mainly based on their observations of their primary and middle school teachers, from a student's standpoint. One suggested that, 'Once, I thought the teaching profession was the most relaxed career. They spend a lot of time not doing anything but looking at us to ensure we are not doing things not allowed' (P02). Another explained her entry motivation by saying, 'When I was young, I was eager for my mom to play with me during summer holidays, but she couldn't . . . but a teacher can [because they have summer holidays]' (P03).

Beginning teachers' entry motivation and career perception changed after work

Firstly, new teachers' initial entry motivations gradually changed from idealistic to realistic after starting work. Interviewees suggested that their previous perceptions of the teaching profession originated from a student's perspective and mainly influenced by the social discourse. However, after they started work, some acknowledged shaping a more realistic understanding based on their school culture. As one stated, 'previously, I wished to make a contribution to society, but when I met my students, many had problems learning . . . [so] I changed my goal to improving their performance in exams' (B09).

Secondly, after entering the profession, new teachers were burdened with heavy schedules for which they were not prepared. Interviewees who worked as homeroom teachers reported the long hours they spent in school. One commented that, 'in my school, homeroom teachers are required to arrive at class before 6:10 am . . . [and leave] for home after 21:50 pm' (B02). Those not working as homeroom teachers also complained about their tight schedule. One complained about the huge amount of time spent on online communication after school, lamenting that 'now, we have QQ, WeChat, we have better communication tools, while we teachers found that even late in the night we have to respond to students and parents' messages . . . ' (B11)

Thirdly, due to China's social transition, new teachers faced challenges in their school contexts (such as increased internal migration caused by significant wage disparities between urban and rural regions) they had not been prepared for in their previous education (e.g., Ye 2016). In this study, one interviewee from Shanghai commented 'Some students come from migrant families. Their parents are migrant workers, have lower education levels. They are always the most challenging students in my class and always have poor academic performance' (B04).

Some highlighted the importance of caring about migrant students and helping them with their problems. An interviewee from central China reported that,

> the majority of our students are migrant children. They are similar in that most are living with relatives like grandparents, with their parents working in other cities . . . We teachers have to play the role [their parents have not been able to fulfil] and care for them (B10).

Fourthly, beginning teachers reported their changing perceptions of teacher status after entering the profession, stating that 'previously, I viewed the teaching profession as a divine position, but after I start teaching, I found it is not; parents [can challenge teachers, and] continuously raise their demands/requirements to teachers' (B08). Interviewees like B05, who worked in private schools, pointed out that parents of private school students were more demanding than those whose children were in public schools. An interviewee even reported difficulties caused by parents, commenting that they 'not only not cooperate with me but also publicly challenge and curse me, which made my first two years in the teaching profession full of hurt and fear.' (S06)

Possible explanations and discussion

First, beginning and pre-service teachers alike reported that meeting good teachers in their prior learning experience, cultivating next-generation value, and personal social utility value were the strongest motivations for their choosing teaching as a career;

moreover, both groups similarly viewed teaching profession as a career that is high in demands and low in returns. These findings resonate with those of other studies, which have reported that student teachers perceived teaching as a high-demand, low-reward career (Richardson and Watt 2006), pre-service teachers saw their prior learning experiences as a positive influence (Watt and Richardson 2012), and Chinese teachers viewed extrinsic motivations as important (Su et al. 2001; Lin et al. 2012). However, they differ from studies that have reported intrinsic motivations as a primary career entry reason (Watt and Richardson 2007).

These similarities can be partly explained by the influence of common culture – specifically, the combined influence of paternalistic tradition, social stratification policies, and social transition in China. On the one hand, China's common culture provides positive perception of the teaching career. As reflected in this study, the teacher's role is considered respectable in society. It offers permanent, stable employment, higher social status, and better welfare provision, as shown in interview data, attracting people to work in the teaching profession. Moreover, the common culture influenced participants' entry motivation through important people like parents and teachers – two of the five gods in Confucian tradition (Qin 2014). Both teacher cohorts reported that their parents' and teachers' support and encouragement influenced their entry decisions. On the other hand, teachers in this study also reported the negative impacts of the common culture, including social transitions that made parents more demanding, the challenge of teaching migrant children, and decreased teacher status.

Second, beginning and pre-service teachers' differences in entry motivation and career perception can be explained by the two groups' different subcultures. Although members of a social group may share common values and/or traditions, subcultures exist within any social group (Spradlin and Parsons 2008). In this study, such subcultures include one's level of contact with teaching as a career and school culture. The BEd pre-service teachers in this study had no prior teaching experience, and their motivation to become teachers was more strongly influenced by such important people as parents and teachers, as well as public policy. Their view of the teaching profession was largely based on extrinsic factors, which can help explain their lower scores in intrinsic motivation and teaching ability items.

In contrast, the beginning teachers in this study had actual teaching experience, which allowed them to work with children and reflect on their intrinsic motivation. Beginning teachers' higher scores on fall-back career items, relative to bachelor pre-service teachers, can be explained as backlash against their beginning-year challenges and the school culture, for instance, they reported problems caused by migrant students, conflicts with students' families, etc., as revealed in the interviews. It should be noted that, while facing similar problems (such as internal migration), teachers worked in different subcultures highlighting different values. For example, an interviewee from Shanghai saw migrant students as their greatest challenge, while an interviewee from central China highlighted caring.

Conclusion

This study has explored similarities and differences in pre-service and beginning teachers' teaching motivation in China. Their similarities can be attributed to the combined

influences of common culture, while subcultures such as contact of the career and school subculture explained pre-service and beginning teachers' different entry motivations and career perceptions. In addition, this study supplements the extant literature by identifying a 'culture-motivation' model to understand the dynamics of beginning and pre-service teachers' motivation in Chinese context.

The extant studies see social-cultural factors as important external influences on teachers' motivation. In the FIT-Choice Scale, teachers' entry motivation is viewed as an individual decision based on the rational consideration of various aspects, including social influences (Richardson and Watt 2006). This 'culture-motivation' model first argues that social-cultural influences are an integral part of 'individual' teacher's motivation development. The shaping of teachers' entry motivations is context-related, and cannot be separated from the culture. As reflected in this study, the common culture constructed teachers' entry motivation via social influence and influenced their perceptions of teaching as a career and of its social and personal utility value – three different parts of the FIT-scale. Additionally, different components of common culture may combine or conflict to influence one's teaching entry motivation. For instance, in this study, China's paternalistic tradition and socialist stratification policies attracted people to teaching, while challenges brought about by social transition decreased their motivation. Some interviewees reported having difficulties due to parents' challenges, causing them to consider leaving the profession.

Second, this model notes the influences of subcultures, which partly explain teacher motivation development's complex nature. This study found that the extent to which motivation can be shaped depends not only on the common culture but also on subcultures; that is, the cultural standpoint(s) of the person(s) concerned. As reflected in this study, teachers' level of contact with the career and school subcultures. On the one hand, subcultures limit/enable common culture's influence on teachers' motivation, and influence the ways in which new teachers negotiate their motivation, thus helping to explain the complex teacher motivation. For example, beginning teachers had more contact with the career, accounting for their higher scores on intrinsic motivations. Meanwhile, the beginning teachers' challenges in their teaching due to social transitions changed their entry motivations and led to their having higher scores on fall-back career items, relative to pre-service teachers. On the other hand, subcultures pushed teachers away from reflecting on their entry motivation and towards highlighting certain work goals – such as improving students' academic performance in a school subculture where students performed poorly on exams, developing good relationships with students, caring about migrant students in a school subculture where most students are migrants and their parents worked far way, etc.

Some implications can be drawn from this study regarding promoting and sustaining teachers' motivation, which is a theme all countries are concerned about, regardless of cultural backgrounds. Firstly, given the important role culture plays in shaping teacher motivation, teacher education programmes should explicitly discuss cultural issues, not just targeting the common culture but also its subcultures. Teacher education programmes should provide formal and informal opportunities, such as early and frequent opportunities to contact frontline teachers, for pre-service teachers to experience the teaching profession early and to adapt to subcultures in different schools. Through such opportunities, teachers can learn about common culture and its positive impact on their motivation and discuss the influences of challenges brought by subcultures. Teacher

education programmes could also present teachers with dilemmas as opportunities to learn how to solve challenging situations in a changing society and develop their motivation in response to changing teaching and societal contexts.

Secondly, this study provides a cultural lens through which to understand teacher motivation development, and the subcultures that limit/facilitate common culture's influence on teachers' entry motivation and push teachers to highlight certain work goals that are important for maintaining their motivation (Butler 2012). Therefore, the interpretation of teachers' responses to entry motivation survey scales (e.g., FIT), should not be only judged by their scores, but their experience of culture and subcultures and the influence on their maintaining motivations. This cultural lens may help educational administrators and new teachers develop a deeper understanding of teachers' motivation change, formulate practical strategies, provide unique help to teachers of various backgrounds, and enhance the level of teacher motivation.

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APPENDIX I

INTERVIEW GUIDELINE FOR BEGINNING TEACHER
  1. Why do you want to be a teacher?
  2. Did you experience any changes in your motivation to teach after working in the teaching profession? If so, why?
  3. How did you view the teaching profession in your life as a student, and how do you view it now, as a teacher?
  4. What are the major challenges and successes you confront at your work?

APPENDIX II

INTERVIEW GUIDELINE FOR PRE-SERVICE TEACHER
  1. Why did you choose this teacher education programme in S University?
  2. Why do you want to be a teacher?
  3. How do you view the teaching profession?
  4. What if, after graduation, you fail to find a job in a good school?