15 The Ethical Formation of Teacher Identity:
Pre-service Teachers in Hong Kong

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ABSTRACT: *An increasing number of studies have been carried out on teacher identities, but few have explored how individuals can enact their ethical agency to construct alternative teacher identities. Informed by Clarke's framework of ethical self-formation that utilizes Foucault's four axes of ethics, this study investigated the understanding of teacher and teaching profession among a group of pre-service teachers in Hong Kong and their discursive determination in identity construction. In-depth interviews were employed for data collection. The findings indicate that teacher identities are contingent and constructed, and that the notion of the ethico-politics of teacher identity opens up scope for moving beyond the narrowing of focus on particular meanings of teaching and enables the teachers to build ethical agency for identity reformation and reconstruction.*

Introduction

The field of education has witnessed growing interest in the notion of identity. In a sense, learning to teach is framed in terms of the development of teaching identity rather than the acquisition of skills and techniques, where identity refers to an individual's knowledge of themselves and others' recognition of them (Danielewicz, 2001). A growing body of literature on teacher education has employed the concept of identity, which includes studies on teachers' professional identity formation, studies on the identification of characteristics of teachers' professional identity, and studies in which professional identity was (re)presented by teachers' stories, as summarized in the overview of the recent research on teacher identity by Beijaard, Meijer, and Verloop (2004).

Cross (2006) argues that a focus on teacher identity deepens and extends the understanding of who teachers are and what teaching is. Identities are formed and constructed through continuous negotiation, discussion, and justification (MacLure, 1993), which implies that they are both given and achieved, and that agency exists within the social process of becoming teachers. The relationship between the personal dimension and the social dimension in teacher identity formation has attracted research attention (e.g., White & Ding, 2008). Implicit in the recognition that identities are formed at the nexus of the individual and the social is the idea that identity involves both self-reflection and social recognition, which are essential to "any substantive account of ethical life" (Butler, 2005, p. 49). Within the inevitably social process of becoming a teacher, there is a potential site of agency, where individual teachers reflect on alternative ways of how they have lived, and appropriate other possible elements from alternatives to how they actually live to form identities. This implies the necessity to explore the space for individuals to exercise their ethico-political agency in identity formation.

The main thrust of this study is to investigate the extent to which individual teachers could act ethically in an identity-forming process partially determined by social discourses and cultural convention. Following works by researchers such as Peters (2003), Zembylas (2003a, 2003b, 2007), Zembylas and Fendler (2007), and Clarke (2009), who apply Foucault's (1983, 1985)

ethical work in educational theory and practice, and employing Clarke's framework for ethical self-formation, this study investigates how a group of pre-service teachers understand teaching and explores how teachers can exercise their professional agency to maximize their potential for development and growth by constructing their teacher identities differently. The paper begins by outlining a framework for analyzing teacher identity and understanding the interplay between the individual and the social. The findings are then presented and discussed.

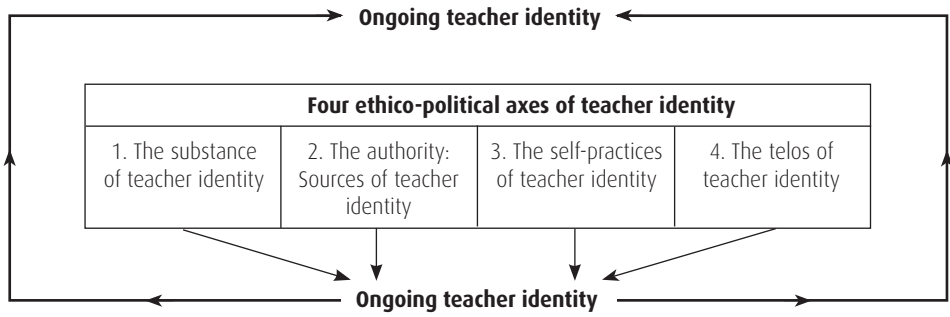**A diagram for doing identity work**

Commenting on the interplay between the individual and the social in identity formation, Marsh (2003, p. 8) indicates that, by "patching together the fragments of the discourses" to which people are exposed, they are constantly fashioning and refashioning their identities. Although the fashioning and refashioning of identities is somewhat a process of being positioned in the pre-existing and ongoing social conversations, individuals, as agentive beings, are able to search new linguistic and social resources to resist the positions that are unfavorable (Pavlenko & Blackledge, 2004).Thus, identities are formed and constructed in continuous negotiation, discussion and justification (MacLure, 1993), which implies that identities are both given and achieved and that a space of agency exists within the social process of becoming teachers.

Since identity is a matter of arguing for oneself (MacLure, 1993), the creation of identity becomes an ethical imperative (O'Leary, 2002). Thinking identity in relation to ethics and histories requires a diagram which can provide a plane of understanding of historically specific forms of truth, power and subjectivity (Prozorov, 2007). Clarke (2009) has translated Foucault's (1983, 1985) four aspects of axes of the relationship to oneself into identity in terms of the substance of teacher identity, the authority sources of teacher identity, the self-practices of teacher identity, and the endpoint of teacher identity, as illustrated in Figure 1.

The first axis refers to the substance of teacher identity, concerning "what part of myself pertains to teaching and what forms of subjectivity constitute—or what forms do I use to constitute—my teaching self" (Clarke, 2009, p. 190). The second axis is the authority-sources of teacher identity, concerning "why I should cultivate certain attitudes, beliefs and behaviors and what sources of discursive authority I recognize as a teacher" (p. 191). The third axis is about the techniques and practices used to shape and fashion the teaching selves. The fourth axis concerns the goal or purpose of being a teacher.

Employing the diagram for doing identity work, this study recognizes individuals as agents who are able to create and change things with their pre-positioning in social events and who continuously develop a sense of self in their engagement with the world (Archer, 2000; Clarke, 2008). Incorporating the influence of social factors as well as individual creativity and agency, this study understands teacher identity formation as a combination of past experiences, present activities and future expectations which are "continuously being renegotiated through social

Figure 1: A diagram for doing "identity work" (adapted from Clarke, 2009, p. 191)

Ongoing teacher identity

Four ethico-political axes of teacher identity			
1. The substance of teacher identity	2. The authority: Sources of teacher identity	3. The self-practices of teacher identity	4. The telos of teacher identity

Ongoing teacher identity

interaction" (Miller Marsh, 2003, p. 6). This article seeks to understand a group of pre-serve teachers' identity formation from a political and ethical perspective. It aims to examine how teacher identities have been constructed in particular ways and explore to what extent the effort taken to look into one's own history can enable teachers to think and construct their identities differently.

More specifically, the following questions will addressed: How are the professional identities of pre-service teachers in a teacher education institution in Hong Kong produced? What are the possible ways of constructing teacher identities?

The study

Participants

As the only teacher education institution in Hong Kong, the Hong Kong Institute of Education (hereafter the Institute) offers four-year Bachelor of Education degree programmes. Most students at the Institute intend to become either primary or secondary school teachers. The participants were 12 year-one students from the English and Chinese Departments. Table 1 summarizes the profile of the participants. The names are all pseudonyms.

Interviews were employed for data collection. There were two rounds of individual interviews at an interval of two months, each of which lasted about one hour. The first interview was focused on the students' teaching identity development, and the second one on confirmation and clarification of the preliminary findings emanating from a preliminary analysis of data from the earlier interview. The interviews were semi-structured with open-ended questions (see Appendix 1) to elicit their understanding of teaching and their teaching experiences. A mixture of English, Mandarin Chinese and Cantonese was used for interviewing the participants. Data extracts in Chinese in this article were translated into English.

Data analysis

This study's data analysis was a gradually evolving process in which the data, theoretical framework, coded categories and research questions were constantly evaluated, re-evaluated and reformulated in order to construct the themes and patterns that potentially answer the research questions (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). In this sense, these themes represent "indigenous concepts" (Patton, 2001) initiated by the participants. The theoretical framework was grounded in the data rather than imposed or pre-determined.

As recurring patterns that seemed relevant to addressing the research questions were identified, categories were developed, informed by both the data and theoretical framework outlined above.

Table 1: Participants

Name	Gender	Department
Aeron	Male	English
Alex	Male	English
Maggie	Female	Chinese
Penny	Female	English
Sam	Male	Chinese
Lulu	Female	English
Xin	Female	English
Tian	Female	English
Shi	Male	Chinese
Gan	Female	Chinese
Qiang	Female	English
Zhou	Female	English

Examples of the categories were "subjectivity in constructing teacher identity" and "practising teacher identity", which were associated with 'the substance of teacher identity' and 'self-practice of teacher identity' in Clarke's (2009) framework. Alternative explanations were then searched for to test the emerging understanding across cases.

Findings

The substance of teacher identity

The student teachers identified a variety of forms of subjectivity that they used to constitute their teaching selves, including character, passion towards teaching, subject knowledge, communication skill and teaching strategy, and rational mind. In the following three excerpts, the students see teaching as most concerned with character:

> *Extract 1*
> Zhou: I have great confidence that I will become a good teacher because I am a very observant person. Although I don't appear to be very active and very talkative, I like to observe the surroundings. This will help me capture what students want and like. I think students like a teacher who is sensitive to their needs and who is inquisitive and always likes to explore new things. (Jan 10th, 2010, translated from Chinese)

> *Extract 2*
> Lulu: I don't think I am a suitable person for teaching because I get anxious easily and lose my temper. The students won't like me. I think a teacher should provide guidance to the students and if the teacher loses patience when students misbehave, he/she will become a negative model for the students to follow. The teachers play a key role in influencing students' character and value development. I think a teacher should be the type of person who has a very stable character. (Jan 12th, 2010, translated from Chinese)

> *Extract 3*
> Qiang: I am an active, extroverted and talkative person. I think my character offers a big advantage for teaching because the students like a young teacher who can always create a lively learning environment for them. (Jan 15th, 2010, translated from Chinese)

All the three students seem to be concerned about whether students will recognize them as a good teacher. Because identity is relational, this is a crucial aspect of the substance of any teacher's identity. However, at the same time, they limit the potential options for working on this aspect of their practice by basing their teaching capacity on their "characters", which they see as unchangeable and unchanging. For example, Zhou and Qiang could explore what they could do more besides "observing the students and being inquisitive", and "being active, extroverted and talkative", Lulu might re-establish her teaching confidence if she explores further how a professional relationship with the students can be set up by viewing providing a fair and effective teaching as the basis of being liked by the students (Furlong & Maynard, 1995).

It is found that some students rush to the conclusion that teaching is not a suitable profession to them because of value conflicts. Shi is representative of this view:

> *Extract 4*
> Shi: I don't think teaching is a suitable job for me because I think teachers should concentrate on knowledge transfer. But in Hong Kong, teachers have to spend a lot of energy and time on classroom discipline. Maybe I will work for a company after graduation. Maybe I should work in other places where teachers don't need to care too much about discipline. (Jan 9th, 2010, translated from Chinese)

Shi wants to change profession or to teach in other places than Hong Kong because she thinks classroom management is time-consuming and teachers should focus exclusively on knowledge transfer. It seems that, endowing teaching with a narrow meaning, Shi limits her potential in

developing a comprehensive teaching capacity. She also sees good classroom discipline as a condition for effective teaching, but ignores the fact that the latter can lead to the former.

The following excerpts indicate that the constitution of the teaching self is more complicated than those previously stated,

> *Extract 5*
> Sam: In Hong Kong, becoming a good teacher is complicated because the society, the parents and students all have high demands on us and the students here are not easy to deal with. First you must be very professional, and you mush have great knowledge in the subject. It's very important. Second thing is about your pedagogy, your teaching skills. Because teaching is not individual work; it's interaction about others. You have to know how to interact with others. Third thing is that I think teaching is not just about knowledge, and a teacher should first of all be a good person. Fourth, if you are irrational, then you cannot perform very well in teaching. (Jan 7th, 2010)

Sam thinks that subject knowledge, interactive skills, moral quality and a rational mind all construct a teaching self. Sam emphasizes that becoming a good teacher is not an easy process in Hong Kong, where "the society, the parents and students all have high demands" on teachers and the students are "difficult to handle". Sam then uses legitimating strategies (Fairclough, 2003) to justify the substances of a teaching self by explaining their utility. The above excerpt reflects that identity formation entails the practices of self-reflection and social recognition.

The authority sources of teacher identity

A variety of issues are identified by the students that are concerned with the issues of why teachers should cultivate certain beliefs, attitudes and behaviors and what authority the teacher should assume. Below the two excerpts represent two extremes of the student teachers' view on the authority sources of teacher identity:

> *Extract 6*
> Aeron: Well, actually I think the teachers should consider what the students need, because teachers not only teach, as I said before, teachers not only teach students how to get the knowledge, but also the moral value. If we're cool about the students that we don't consider their needs, they may perform very badly. I mean they may not consider other person's position when they grow up. So I think for teachers, they should consider the students' needs before they have punished them, before they scold them. It is our responsibility as teachers to understand students' levels and give them the opportunity to soar. In HK, if you are too harsh to students, they will see you as their enemies and sometimes even refuse to learn. (Jan 9th, 2010)

> *Extract 7*
> Qiang: I think teachers should have the capacity to guide their students because the students are still too young to judge what are good or bad. Students in HK usually have serious discipline problems. The class time is limited and if we give too much freedom to the students, there will be no time for real teaching. I don't identify with this point because I think teachers should have some control over students and students should respect the teachers. (Jan 15th, 2010, translated from Chinese)

Aeron places value on the discourse of teaching as sacrifice and thinks that teachers should always see things from the student's perspective, which is reflected in his attempt to consider students' needs first and give them opportunity to express their ideas and explore new things. In contrast, Qiang sees the authority of teacher identity as lying in teachers' capacity to take control over students and provide sufficient guidance. However, the hard division between being considerate and taking control may limit their exploration of effective teaching. Both argue that their teaching beliefs are grounded in the teaching context of Hong Kong, which reflects that the social shapes individuals in different ways and that different people tend to have different

interpretations of the surrounding. The need for a balance between these two extremes is expressed by another student teacher:

> *Extract 8*
> Sam: teachers should have space for the students. Teachers should have freedom for them to develop their own style, but on the other hand, teachers need to give them instructions, because if you didn't have guidance for them, you don't have obedience in the class, and students will not have a clear way for them to go, and it is still very confused for themselves. So it's very difficult for you to balance. A balanced attitude will ensure effective learning and teaching. So probably learning how to balance will be a long journey for young teachers. (Jan 7th, 2010)

In Sam's text, some assumed values and operating presuppositions, which are indicators of the sources of authority he draws on, can be found. Explicit modal statements are employed to frame the requirements he stipulates for teachers, such as "teachers should…" and "teachers need to… ". To rationalize these requirements, Samuel refers to the utility of the stipulated attitudes and behaviors: "A balanced attitude will ensure effective learning and teaching".

A number of students advocate continuous learning and improvement, and justify them on the basis of narratives about the rapid update of knowledge in the information age and the importance of teachers' global vision. For example,

> *Extract 9*
> Gan: Teachers should keep on learning new technologies, be alert to the social news, and always ready to change. Your interests and vision should not be only focused in what is happening in Hong Kong, but you should have a wider vision. This way you can have real discussion and sharing with the students and only when they regard you as an up-to-date person, will they be willing to share their real feelings. We should try to lesson the generation gap. (Jan 28th, 2010, translated from Chinese)

> *Extract 10*
> Zhou: Teachers need to go to more places to experience different cultures. This way they won't be biased in teaching and will guide students in making judgement by themselves and help students develop their own values. (Jan 10th, 2010, translated from Chinese)

The legitimating strategy Gan utilizes to justify subjection to the behavioral requirement is rationalization. He explains the utility of these behaviors: "This way you can have real discussion and sharing with the students and only when they regard you as an up-to-date person, will they be willing to share their real feelings." A similar strategy is adopted by Zhou, as she advocates "a more tolerant attitude towards different cultures" which, she argues, may lead to an unbiased view in teaching.

The self-practices of teacher identity

In terms of the third axis concerning the practices or techniques the student teachers use to fashion or shape their teaching selves, they focus on classroom practices, peer sharing, seeking guidance from critical friends, reflective journaling and engaging in professional learning. For example,

> *Extract 11*
> Aeron: Actually before this semester, I didn't have the chance to teach in school, and I don't know how a teacher would be like in the class. And I found that in the school, in the classroom, you need to do many things. For example, you need to not only teach the stuff that you're required to teach, but also you need to control the students so that they don't scream aloud and run around. But also you need to consider the personal problems or the academic problems. I think I need to learn through teaching. (Jan 9th, 2010)

Aeron points out that teaching and learning constitute two important practices a teacher should use to shape the teaching self. A similar idea is expressed by Lulu:

Extract 12
Lulu: Every time after the teaching practicum, I will reflect on the aspects of my teaching that need improvement, and learn how to make my teaching better. So teaching can help us identify the problems and learning can enable us to solve them. (Jan 12th, translated from Chinese)

It seems that the self-practices can open space for an awareness of the contingency and constructedness of teachers' knowledge and professionalism (Clarke, 2009). As Zhou and Shi say:

Extract 13
Zhou: My past experiences tell me that one's understanding of teaching is not stable, but has always been evolving and changing. When I have new teaching experiences and new knowledge inputs, I will reconsider the teaching techniques I used before and redesign them for future use. (Jan 10th, 2010, translated from Chinese)

Extract 14
Shi: I think we can video-record our classroom teaching from time to time and write reflective journals. We can share feelings and perceptions, and exchange ideas with friends or colleagues. The most important thing is everyday practice. (Jan 9th, 2010, translated from Chinese)

The various techniques the students use, like teaching and learning, seeking advice from more experienced colleagues and reflecting on incidents in the classroom are practices of self-formation. Such practices are important because what they entail is a matter "of capturing the already-said, of reassembling what one could hear or read, and this for an end that is nothing less than the constitution of the self" (Foucault, 1997c, p. 237).

Why the choice of teaching profession?

In terms of the ultimate goal or purpose in teaching, insights are gained from the students' comments' about why they want to be a teacher. The students' understanding of the ultimate goal in choosing the teaching profession varies, from the oft-cited notion of making a difference to the students' lives, to a more practical attitude like financial security. Li and Lulu are representative of those who take a practical view towards teaching:

Extract 15
Tian: The teaching job attracts me because I don't need to get involved in something complicated in the society and I can work in a simple environment. (Jan 8th, 2010)

Extract 16
Lulu: This job is very stable. I can be a teacher for 30 years and lead a quiet and peaceful life. But I won't feel bored because I always have new students coming each year. I will can enjoy a sense of achievement in teaching others and live meaningfully. (Jan 12th, translated from Chinese)

Here, the purpose of teaching is constructed in terms of life stability, where teaching provides a desirable work environment and a relatively stable employment. Their views of the telos of teaching seems to have little connection with teaching itself, but focuses on what life style teaching can provide them. They would benefit from reconstructing their understanding of the profession and exploring other aspects of teaching. Below is another individually oriented perspective on teaching:

Extract 17
Sam: I love teaching because I like performance before others and I imagine the classroom is just like a stage for me. (Jan 7th, 2010)

From the students' comments, we can also find that the meanings of teaching are constructed from their past experiences. For example,

Extract 18
Maggie: The English teachers I had in primary and secondary schools are not professional enough so I want to become an English teacher in the future in order to contribute to the society. (Jan 14th, 2010)

In contrast to the above excerpts, the following comments are more concerned with the social aspects of teaching. A discourse of altruism can be found:

Extract 19
Xin: I think a teacher can enlighten people and make them become a real person, a person useful to the society. So I think this is a good profession. (Jan 12th, 2010)

Extract 20
Penny: I think this is a great job. If you could help a rude or irresponsible student become a very useful person, you will have a great sense of achievement. (Jan 5th, 2010)

Extract 21
Aeron: I will try to help students get high scores in examinations, to enter good universities, have good jobs, and lead happy lives. (Jan 9th, 2010)

These represent a fairly conservative value that schooling reproduces and endorses accepted social values. Aeron has a very exam-oriented attitude and he regards turning students into those with highly academic achievements as the goal of his teaching. He thinks that the conditions of "a happy life" are "high scores" in examinations, entering "good universities" and having "good jobs". His use of "high scores" and "happy life" may limit students' multiple choices in pursuing their desired lives. Penny and Xin appear to take the prevalent social values for granted and unproblematize the use of "rude", "irresponsible" and "useful", where they fail to realize that the social environment, the educational system or the school might partially cause the students' "unacceptable" behaviors.

Some student teachers construct meanings in teaching as developing individual learners' agency in learning how to learn and pursuing a life that they want to lead. For example,

Extract 22
Maggie: The most meaningful part in teaching lies in its potential to develop students' interest in learning and equip them with the ability to learn, and make them become the persons who can advance the society. (Jan 14th, 2010)

Extract 23
Xin: I think the meaning of teaching is to help students become a person they want to be. Teachers can give the students some space and chance to think about their own lives, to plan their own future. Teachers can have big influences students in career choice, values, etc, but you can never change a person's life. You can only help students know they really want and chase their dreams. (Jan 12th, 2010)

Rather than reflecting a conservative model where schooling should produce socially accepted individuals, these comments reflect the student teachers' intent to regard students as free agents who are able to enact their own agency within the constraints and influences of the social context and to make choices and seek new possibilities of life.

Discussion
Through the lens of ethical re-formation (Clarke, 2009), the ways in which a group of student teachers understand being a teacher and the teaching profession is explored to see how teacher identities have been shaped and to explore possible ways of comprising them differently. Britzman

(1994, p. 72) argues the significance of recognizing the discursive constructedness of thinking in teacher education:

> Unless the narrations of practice are read through theories of discourse—that is, as representing particular ideological interests, orientations, communities and meanings, and as deploying relations of power—there remains the danger of viewing the teacher's practical knowledge as unencumbered by authoritative discourse and as unmediated by the relations of power and authority that work through every teaching and research practice.

The student teachers might be able to conduct a "historical ontology of [them]selves" (Foucault, 1997b, p. 318) if they explore the underlying reasons that can explain, and the influences that have shaped their particular understanding of their teachings selves, and thus become aware of other possibilities. However, this means they need to be ready to let go of an unchanging and stable identity and of any attainable perfection that can be held on to once attained (Clarke, 2009). Yet according to Butler (2005, p. 42), this is liberating, in that "suspending the demand for self-identity or, more particularly for complete coherence seems to me to counter a certain ethical violence, which demands that we manifest and maintain self-identity at all times and require that others do the same". Moreover, recognizing that identity is continuously renegotiated within specific contexts provides space for the possible retransformation of pedagogical practices through explorations of teaching and of others' ideas. A deterministic perspective on identity would be problematic and, instead, a critical approach that views identity as contingent and constructed is adopted in this study.

Recognizing the contingency of the history that comprises the diagram of the identity, as illustrated in Figure 1, provides the condition for exercising ethical agency. In terms of the axis concerning the substance of teacher identity, some students equate their teaching identity with their character which they deem as unchanging and fixed, which, in some cases, leads to student teachers' assertion that teaching is not a suitable job for them. This may also make them rely on their character in teaching too much, but neglect the fact that pedagogical practices require ongoing improvement so as to be adapted to different contexts and students. It is found that a rigid definition of teacher responsibility closes off the path to a teaching career. For example, Shi has decided to work in a company after graduation because she doesn't think teachers should take responsibility of managing classroom discipline, but should focus solely on knowledge transfer. It would be beneficial if she recognizes that it is not necessary to place the two responsibilities in opposition, and they can be mutually supporting. Her idea of teaching in a place other than Hong Kong shows how social discourses can influence teaching identity and reflects her attempts to locate herself in a new teaching context that will allow her to resist identities that position her in an undesirable way. However, she doesn't recognize that contextual change won't solve the problem, as, in the process of becoming a teacher, "identity is always deferred" and "never really, never yet, never absolutely 'there'" (MacLure, 2003, p. 131).

In terms of the second axis about the sources of authority for teacher identity, some student teachers held views like "teachers should always put students' needs at the first place", and "teachers should always have control over their students". We may find that their teaching identities are socially shaped because student teachers who hold these viewpoints emphasize that some students in Hong Kong are not obedient and classroom management is a big issue for Hong Kong teachers. Their stereotypical views set them up for potential frustration, as they will be challenged by changing contexts when they teach students in different grades, and with different learning orientations and motivations. Some participants, for example, Zhou and Gan, show a more developmental view of teacher identity by indicating that "teachers should be ready to change and alert to new things" and "be tolerant of distinct cultures". This may enable them to adapt quickly to the ever changing teaching conditions.

In terms of the third axis concerning the self-practices of teacher identity, the many practices shaping the student teachers' identify which include reflective journaling, peer sharing, seeking for critical comments, and so on, are essential for teacher identity transformation. These reflect an

awareness of the contingency and constructedness of teaching skill and knowledge and an open space for discourse of ongoing professional learning.

In terms of the forth axis with regards to the telos of teacher identity, some student teachers seem to employ a rather individualistic and singular perspective on teaching, as reflected in the comments like "teaching can provide a stage for me to perform before a group of audience", and "teaching can give me a simple work environment". The over-simplistic view they hold may lead to disillusionment since teaching means constant interaction with students and the outer surroundings so it is unlikely to find a really "simple" environment. The individualistic view on teaching is also presented in some student teachers' determination to turn "impolite" and "irresponsible" students into a person "valuable" to the society. A more socially oriented view of the causes of student behavior may help teachers ease their own burden of responsibility and "recognize new avenues for effective action", such as engaging in dialogue with colleagues or management about school policies (Clarke, 2009, p. 195). Moreover, some pre-service teachers aim to produce students who can get high scores in examinations. As in other Asian countries, HK students are assessed throughout their schooling (Ballard & Clanchy, 1991; Tang & Biggs, 1996). Examination scores have become an important, if not the only, measure for high school and university entrance. Therefore, the prevailing social standard for a good teacher is whether the students he/she teaches can achieve high scores. The students would benefit from considering filling a more complex and multi-faceted classroom role than simply following single-faceted social demands to help students achieve high scores.

As Clarke (2009) argues, teachers can be subjects in two senses, i.e., to the determination of others or their own. Teachers can be subject to a determination "which categorizes the individual, marks him by his own individuality, attracts him to his own identity, imposes a law or truth on him which he must recognize and which others have to recognize on him" (Foucault, 1982, p. 212). Alternatively, one can also strive "to develop and transform oneself, and to attain a certain mode of being" (Foucault, 1997a, p. 282). Being a teacher involves both senses and the latter sense may help one individual to move out of the "hard doctrines of truth and falsity, self and otherness, good and evil, rational and irrational, commonsense and absurdity" (Connolly, 2002, p. 173). The identity work thus requires us to not just look into ourselves though the socialized conscience, but to be aware that individuals are constituted as subjects and shaped by different economies of power.

Conclusion

This study has investigated a group of student teachers through the lens of a diagram of identity work developed by Clarke (2009). Tracing the historical development of teacher identities enables us to understand teacher identity in the following senses. Identity is constructed in the interaction between the individual and the social. Realizing the constructedness of identity helps one to let go of stereotypical views and to actively engage in the social and political practices of teaching. Furthermore, it involves an awareness of the inevitable ambiguity and contingency of any identity. Therefore, the notion of ethic-politics of teacher identity can be utilized to embrace various meanings of teaching and counter the tendency to narrow the aspects involved in teaching. The recognition of the teacher identities as contingent and constructed offers a rationale for the unsettling and deconstructive ethico-political identity work, and offers a way of moving beyond discussion that focuses on trying to define teacher identity as a theoretical concept. This paper, employing the framework of identity that draws on the later ethical work of Foucault, presents a deeper understanding of teacher identity and provides possibilities for identity reformation or reconstruction. More research on doing such identity work is thus worthwhile.

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Appendix 1: Interview Schedule

a. Can you talk about your experiences before you joined the programme? Like who you are and what you did.

b. How do you perceive teachers and the teaching profession? What are your perceptions of English language teachers and the English language teaching profession? How did you come to have such perceptions?

c. How does society view teachers? What do you think gives rise to these perceptions?

d. What are your expectations from taking this programme? What do you want to achieve by taking this programme?

e. What is a good/effective teacher in your mind? What is the role of teaching and what is the role of teacher?

f. How is the conception of 'good/effecitve teacher' formed in your mind? Would you please tell us some experiences that have influenced your conception? For example, do you have met some teachers who have influenced you in becoming a teacher?

g. What kind of teacher do you want to become ultimately? Why? How far away do you think you are from that ultimate goal? How would you work towards that ultimate goal?