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Chinese Novice Teachers' Perception of Professional Agency

- A study through the lens of the perspectives on novice teachers' perception professional
agency in Finland

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Abstract

This study examined the perception of professional agency among Chinese novice teachers via the lens of perspectives in Finland (Eteläpelto et al., 2015) in order to get a global grasp of the issue. The study topics are as follows: (1) How do novice Chinese teachers view their professional agency in work, and what do they regard to be the primary restrictions and resources? (2) How do Chinese novice teachers view their professional agency in the renegotiation of their identities, and what do they view as the most significant restrictions and resources (Eteläpelto et al., 2015)? The study was conducted in semi-structured interviews and used qualitative research methodology and a model derived from the results of prior research (Eteläpelto et al., 2015). Two Finnish and seven Chinese primary school teachers within five years of experience were interviewed and content analysis was applied to the data. The outcomes of the study indicated that novice Chinese teachers had little agency in the workplace and a strong need to renegotiate their professional identities. In contrast to Finnish teachers, Chinese novice teachers lacked competence in embracing student-centred educational strategies. Both Chinese and Finnish teachers demonstrated a lack of agency in social management of classroom, particularly in terms of student behaviour and social-emotional well-being. Inappropriate parental participation was a highlighted constraint to Chinese novice teachers' agency. In contrast to Finland, the hierarchical working culture in China hindered teachers' agency to contribute to the professional community. In addition, Chinese teachers must renegotiate their identity because of the test-based educational system and the complexities of school life, resulting in value conflicts when they entered the classroom. The research recommends communication and collaboration between the two nations in teacher education with the aspects of student-centred pedagogy and inclusive education.

Key words: Chinese novice teachers' perception of professional agency, teacher education, cross-cultural perspective

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1 Introduction

1.1 Background and Purpose

My research interest came from my own experience as a novice teacher in China. According to study (Gavish & Friedman, 2010), early career teachers experience high levels of burnout in their first years of teaching, and their inability to solve pedagogically and socially challenging student situations has a significant impact on their capacity for adaptation and transformation in the school environment (Heikonen et al., 2017).

As a primary school English teacher, I completed my bachelor's degree in a Teacher Education Program in China and then I worked in a primary school after four years of study in the profession. Even though I had internship experience in my previous study, the internship showed a big gap of my theory study and real-school situation, and I hadn't had enough time to understand the schoolwork before attending the official working life. I struggled during my first years of teaching. The pressure from work in teaching, classroom management, administration, parent contact, and so forth made me frequently questioned my decision to become a teacher and I had to lower my expectations in the profession. To look into the research, teachers' self-efficacy, which pertains to teachers' belief in their own capabilities, skills, pedagogy, and the establishment of a learning school environment within the restrictions of limited resources, is investigated in teachers in China (Barni et al., 2019; Huang et al., 2020). These views are affected by cultural norms, the educational situation, the academic success of pupils, and their traits (Barni et al., 2019; Chan, 2008; Liu et al., 2022). Understanding self-efficacy is essential for fostering the professional growth and well-being of Chinese educators. However, these self-efficacy studies are unable to provide a broader perspective to study and support teachers' professional identities and a sense of ownership over their work, especially for beginner teachers who are in a crucial transitional period of professional development. Professional agency encompasses a larger range of skills, attitudes, and traits that enable educators to exercise autonomy, take initiative, and build their own professional paths (Eteläpelto et al., 2013). It seems to give more room to understand the novice teachers. Therefore, it is essential to do study on the professional agency of starting teachers. My interest lies in Chinese novice teachers' perception of their professional agency, looking for the most important constrains and resources so as to assist them in adjusting to the profession more effectively during their first few years of practice. To look for more

perspective about novice teachers' professional agency, I started to study Finnish education system and teacher education.

Finnish educational system has earned increasing attention in global education due to its remarkable achievement on the international assessment- PISA tests(Sahlberg, 2011). People admit that the success is due to the outstanding quality of Finnish teachers and Finnish teacher education.(Hökkä & Eteläpelto, 2014; Sahlberg, 2011; Simola, 2005; Tirri, 2014). Finnish primary school teachers are required to possess a master's degree, which qualifies them to operate as primary school instructors or future education researchers. In the course of five to six years of academic study, student teachers develop a variety of professional skills and engage in short teaching practicums in schools (Tirri, 2014).This curriculum has created highly qualified, self-reflective, and independent instructors(Toom et al., 2010). Exemplary educational accomplishments have fostered an environment of trust in the teacher within the academic context of teacher education. Moreover, extremely few external appraisals exist (Adams-Budde et al., 2012; Lavonen, 2016). With such autonomy and university-level professionalism in teacher education, one could anticipate that instructors have a strong sense of professional agency, which promotes teachers' work-related learning, devotion, and well-being.(Hökkä & Vähäsantanen, 2014; Parker, n.d.). However, Eteläpelto et al., (2015) demonstrates that despite the fact that novice teachers show a strong feeling of agency while executing and designing pedagogical strategies in the classroom, their notion of agency declines dramatically when it comes to regulating the classroom's social dynamics. In addition, a significant proportion of early-career teachers are in the process of renegotiating their professional identities, which means reassessing their fundamental principles and values as professionals.

The study(Eteläpelto et al., 2015b) has made me realize that teachers, especially novice teachers, may share similar concerns in practicing their professional agency no matter how comprehensive or different the systems are. As reported in OECD (2019), younger and less-experienced teachers in Finland and China are more likely to be dissatisfied with their career because of disadvantaged children, low academic achievement, and students with behavioural difficulties. Those shared factors seem closely related to novice teachers' professional agency in two countries. However, there are still less research specifically focusing on novice teachers' professional agency in Finland. The exist study(Eteläpelto et al., 2015) was conducted eight years ago and there has been no follow-up studies about it. So, whether the results still apply to current novice teachers in Finland needs to be confirmed. But the

perspectives on novice teachers' professional agency in this study (Eteläpelto et al., 2015) may provide a good framework for studying this specific topic in different contexts other than Finland. In the meanwhile, there is few previous study about Chinese novice teachers' perception of professional agency and a framework is needed to gain a holistic understanding on it. In addition, in the context of internationalization of education, there is an increasing Finnish- Chinese cooperation in the field of education especially in teacher training (Cai et al., n.d.; Jin-Muranen et al., 2012). But very few studies have been taken to thoroughly understand the different contexts for teachers in those two countries(Peng et al., 2023). So, studying Chinese novice teachers' perception of professional agency through the lens perspectives on novice teachers' professional agency in Finland seems a good way to gain understanding of not only novice teachers in China, but also the different contexts in the two countries in a more comprehensive way. It thus intends to add to a discourse on how to support beginning teachers in China and provide a source for future communication between the two counties.

1.2 Structure

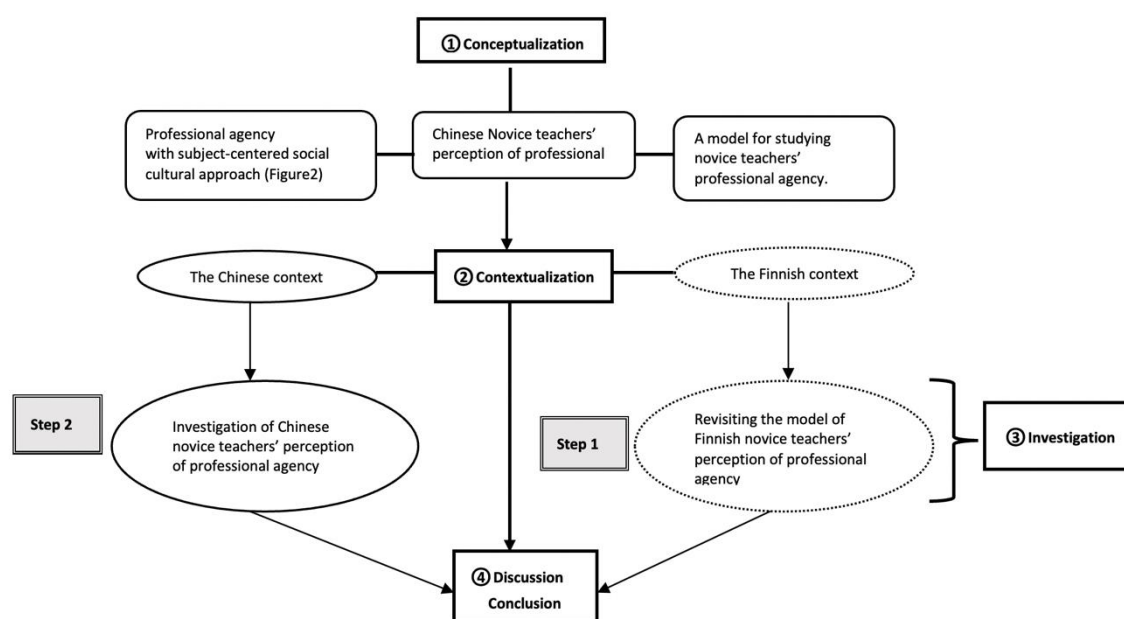


Figure 1. Structure of the research modified from (Phillips& Schweisfurth, 2014, p.119)

As demonstrated in Figure 1, the structure of this study includes the comparative components in it because the perspectives used for studying Chinese teachers' agency are from the study

in Finland (Eteläpelto et al., 2015) and the purpose of this study is to look at the Chinese novice teachers' agency through the lens of perspectives on that in Finland.

In the first phase of conceptualization, the concept of professional agency with a subject-centred social perspective and a model drawn from Eteläpelto et al. (2015) will be presented. After that, the research gap for this study will be examined. (In section 2.1)

The second phase is contextualization, which entails describing the situation that led to the aforementioned notions in Finnish and Chinese settings. In this procedure, the historical and social cultural characteristics of the two local educational environments are compared. (In section 2.2)

The study of the research questions is undertaken in two stages during the third phase (In section 3, 4, and 5):

- (1) Revisiting the model of novice teachers' perceptions of professional agency in Finland
- (2) Investigation of Chinese novice teachers' perceptions of professional agency

In the last phase, the results from Finnish teachers will be combined with previous research (Eteläpelto et al., 2015) to reflect the results from Chinese teachers so as to gain a deeper knowledge of the professional agency of Chinese novice teachers, as well as the resources and limits that impact their agency. (In section 6)

2 Theoretical Framework

2.1 Novice teachers' professional agency

2.1.1 Professional agency with subject-centred social cultural approach

Professional agency encompasses the core concept that professionals or employees are actively involved and possess the autonomy to exert influence, advocate for their interests, and make informed decisions regarding their work and professional identities (Eteläpelto et al., 2013, 2014, 2015).

There are multidisciplinary theoretical approaches to the study of professional agency. The emphasis put on social and economic structures and their impact on human behavior, as well as the degree of individual agency within these systems, has been the most controversial and polarizing subject among academics about the methods (Hitlin & Elder, 2007). Social-cultural theory views professional agency as relationally produced across social systems, cultural norms, and individuals (Lipponen & Kumpulainen, 2011). This indicates that human ideas, thoughts, and actions are constantly expressed and realized within certain sociocultural and material constraints and resources. However, studies (Billett, 2011; Eteläpelto et al., 2013, 2014) argued that the main focus on the social resources and constraints associated with professional agency had overlooked the distinctive human life experience to comprehend work practices and identities at work (Billett, 2011; Eteläpelto et al., 2013, 2014). This idea is consistent with Archer (2003) who stated that agency also differed across subjects, and between various phases of their life course. So, a subject-centered social-cultural approach is needed to examine professional agency (Eteläpelto, 2008; Eteläpelto et al., 2015). Under this approach, the socio-cultural perspective on professional agency is primarily concerned with the resources provided by technical and social tools and circumstances, whereas the subject-centered perspective focuses on the processes by which subjects construct and actively negotiate their identity position at work, as well as how they exercise agency and subjectivity at work.

In conclusion, the subject-centered sociocultural approach to professional agency at work means that agency may be conceptualized and analyzed as follows (see Figure 2):

(i) Professional people or organizations display agency when they make decisions, adopt positions, and have an effect on their job or professional identity; (ii) A person's agency is strongly related to their professional identity, including their ethical and professional

commitments, ambitions, and motives; (iii) Individual experiences, skills, and expertise serve as resources for professional agencies; (iv) Within certain sociocultural and material conditions, agency is both restrained and enhanced by those conditions; (v) both the individual and social entities are important in understanding professional agency and are mutually constitutive; (vi) Professional agency is essential for the development of one's work, the cultivation of creativity, ongoing learning, and the adaptation to changing work practices. Professional agency is essential for the development of one's work, the fostering of creativity, professional growth, and the adaptation to shifting working conditions (Eteläpelto et al., 2013, 2014, 2015).

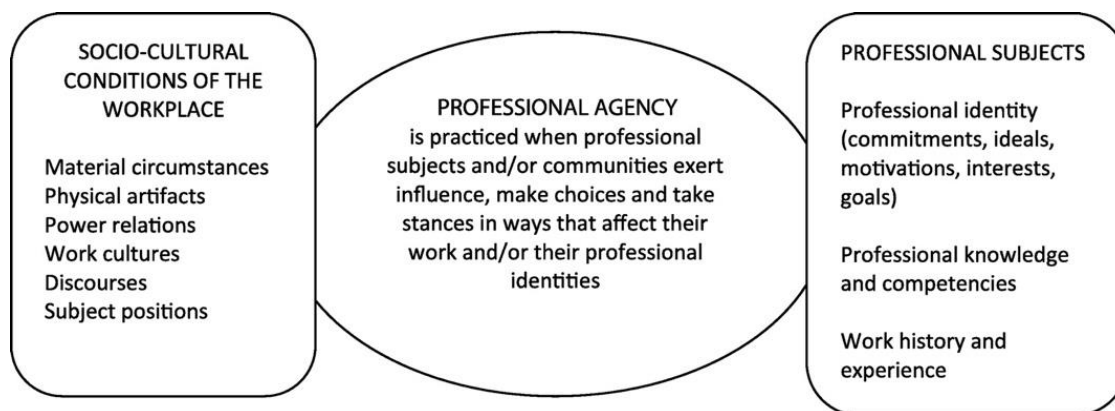


Figure 2. Understanding of professional agency within a subject-centred sociocultural framework derived from Eteläpelto et al. (2013, 2015)

2.1.2 Model to study novice teachers' professional agency

Based on the subjective centered social-cultural approach to professional agency, Eteläpelto et al. (2015) developed a model in their result which demonstrated novice teachers' professional agency comprises in Finland. It includes two components: the ability to exert influence on one's work at the individual, community, and organizational levels, and the development and expression of a professional identity as shown in Figure 3. According to Eteläpelto et al. (2013), it is essential to consider both individual and sociocultural circumstances while analyzing professional agency.

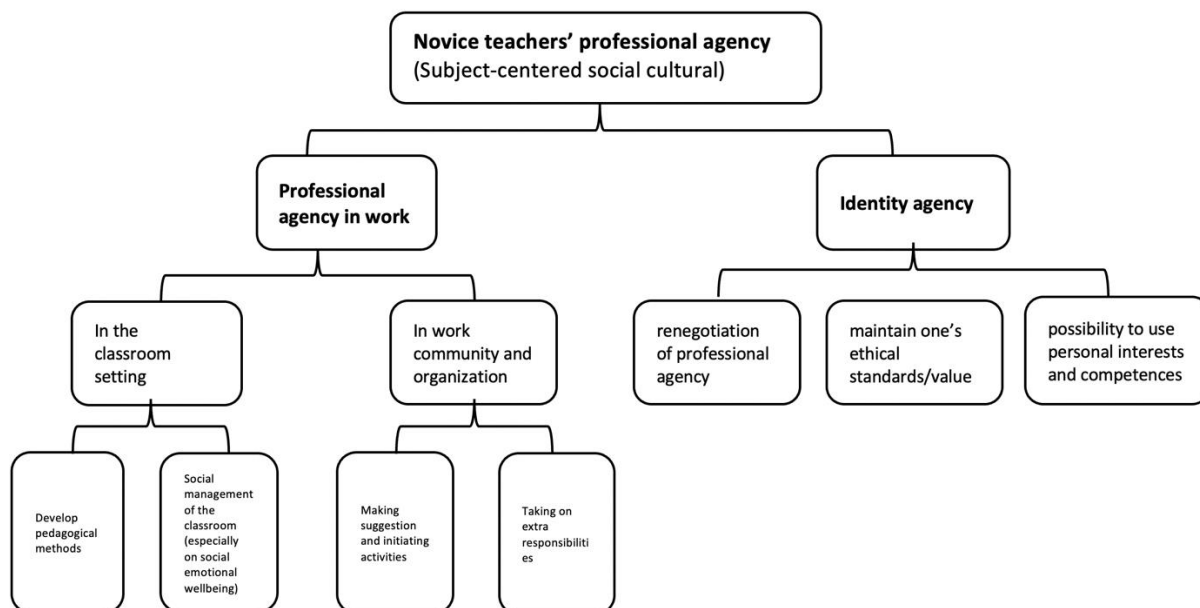


Figure 3. Model of understanding of novice teachers' professional agency derived from Eteläpelto et al. (2015)

In this model, the first component, as Eteläpelto et al. (2015) note that “novice teachers’ professional in work includes two levels: one is in classroom setting and the other is in work community and organization. In classroom setting, the agency includes two aspects of developing pedagogical methods and social management of classroom. In community and organization level, the agency includes making suggestions to change and initiating activities as well as taking on extra responsibilities. Further, as the second component, novice teachers’ identity agency includes three perspectives of renegotiation of professional ideals, maintenance of ethical standards/value, and possibilities to use personal interests and competences”. (See Figure 3)

2.1.2.1 Novice teachers' professional agency in work

Firstly, Eteläpelto et al. (2015) suggests that teachers have an impact over their work within the setting of the classroom, which includes the development of pedagogical techniques as well as the social management of the classroom. Firstly, teachers demonstrate their professional agency by their pedagogical and instructional practices, decision-making, and professional growth. In addition, they might negotiate and implement core instructional techniques, apply new ideas, and advance their work as a part of this growth (Priestley et al., 2015; Vähäsantanen et al., 2008, 2009). Thus, it may seem that teachers' agency lasts only when they make decisions based on their own professional aims and interests, take

responsibility for their own learning, and actively seek out chances to improve their practices.(Hargreaves, 2000; Vähäsantanen et al., 2009). Meanwhile curriculum, professional duties, school norms, school leadership, and materials and social resources have been recognized as social factors that may support or restrict the teaching practice of teachers (Lasky, 2005; Priestley et al., 2015b; Vähäsantanen et al., 2009). Other factors like a lack of public acknowledgment and professional recognition as well as inadequate collaboration and supportive tools may also diminish novice teachers' professional agency(Gavish & Friedman, 2010).Besides the personal pedagogical practices, a socio-cultural perspective on teachers' agency in social management of classroom is also heightened in several research(Evertson & Weinstein, 2006; Korpershoek et al., 2016; Wubbels et al., 2014). According to (Evertson & Weinstein, 2006), in the teaching profession, classroom management emphasizes the teacher's role in fostering students' academic, social-emotional, and self-regulation skills. In addition, recent studies(Eteläpelto et al., 2015; Heikonen et al., 2016; Soini et al., 2015) places additional emphasis on the significance of the learning environment's quality, specifically its social and emotional aspects, as a potent indicator of early-career teachers' development of professional agency.

In addition to the classroom setting, teachers' influence on the work community and organizations is regarded as part of their professional agency in the workplace.(Eteläpelto et al., 2015). It claims that when teachers have strong agency in their community and organization, they will actively negotiate and renegotiate the terms and substance of their own work and have an effect on community and organizational problems by taking charge and engaging in school growth.(Eteläpelto et al., 2015). This includes the capacity to renegotiate and question the administration's choices, for instance.(Vähäsantanen et al., 2008). In addition, a number of factors impact the development of teacher professional agency in the work community and organization. The autonomy and support that teachers receive from their peers and superiors is a crucial factor. Teachers who have more autonomy and support are more likely to acquire a sense of agency and embrace responsibility for their own and the organization's development (Hargreaves & O'Connor, 2017). The policy and cultural context in which educators' function is a further essential factor. Teachers who work in an atmosphere that stresses hierarchy and uniformity are less likely to acquire and exercise autonomy than teachers who work in an environment that emphasizes egalitarianism and support teacher autonomy (Louws et al., 2020).

All in all, as Eteläpelto et al. (2015) suggests, to comprehend teachers' sense of professional agency from a holistic perspective and to describe its development in their work, it is necessary to examine their perception of agency at the individual, community, and organizational levels. In addition, from the perspective of a subject-centred sociocultural approach, the teachers' professional identity and its renegotiation are intrinsically linked to their sense of agency, thereby expanding our understanding of the role of teachers' personhood and subjectivity in the social environment.

2.1.2.2 Novice teachers' identity agency

In the broader literature, there exist multiple definitions for teachers' professional identity. In teaching and teacher education, the notion of professional identity is implemented in a variety of ways. Several studies have connected professional identity to teachers' self-concepts or self-perceptions (Beijaard et al., 2000; Ni, 2006; Ruohotie-Lyhty, 2013; Volkmann & Anderson, 1998). It has been argued that these perceptions or self-representations significantly impact teachers' instructional practices, professional growth, and their perspectives on educational reforms (Volkmann & Anderson, 1998). Other research on professional identity has examined teachers' roles, either independently or in relation to other concepts. Additionally, concepts such as reflection or self-evaluation, which are integral to the development of professional identity, have also been explored (Kerby, 1991). Furthermore, professional identity encompasses not just the impact of others' perceptions and expectations, but also incorporates widely accepted ideals of what constitutes knowledge and skills for teachers. It extends to what teachers personally value in their professional practice and lives, drawing from their practical experiences and personal backgrounds (Tickle, 2001). Both aspects of professional identity are closely interconnected, although researchers have emphasized them in distinct ways. Subsequent studies have revealed that teacher professional identity is a multifaceted concept that encompasses various dimensions. These dimensions include the teacher's present professional ideals, which encompass their beliefs about teaching and student learning, as well as their goals, interests, values, ethical standards, commitments, and future aspirations (Beijaard et al., 2004; Lasky, 2005b; Vähäsantanen et al., 2008b; Van Veen & Slegers, 2009). Beijaard et al. (2000) also investigated the acquisition and utilization of subject matter knowledge, pedagogical knowledge, and didactic knowledge that educators are expected to possess. Identities are not inherently fixed or inherently fragmented; rather, they can exhibit varying degrees of stability based on teachers' capacity to navigate and manage their identities in diverse educational environments (Maclure, 1993).

The elements of professional identity, including ideals, interests, and objectives, are linked to a sense of professional agency, and the re-evaluation of these elements signifies the active exercise of agency (Day & Kington, 2008; Eteläpelto et al., 2015a; Ketelaar et al., 2012). Recent research has highlighted notable variations in individuals' work behaviours influenced by their professional identities. Consequently, strong organizational norms and expectations can significantly constrain the possibilities of aligning work practices with specific types of identities (Ketelaar et al., 2012; Vähäsantanen et al., 2008; Van Veen & Slegers, 2009). To further explain, the professional identity of teachers is substantially constrained by external expectations and pressures imposed by various stakeholders, including school administrators, politicians, parents, and students. These expectations and demands may diverge from teachers' personal ideals, values, and ethical standards, creating a discrepancy between their perceived professional identity and the actual reality they experience (Beauchamp & Thomas, 2009). Moreover, the dominant discourse surrounding teaching and education also acts as a constraint on teachers' professional identities. This discourse can shape teachers' perceptions of their roles and responsibilities, limiting the scope of their professional identity. For instance, the emphasis on standardized testing and accountability measures may promote a narrow and rigid view of teaching that contradicts instructors' individual values and ethical standards (Beauchamp & Thomas, 2009). Likewise, the focus on teacher effectiveness and performance can create external validation and pressure, leading to a potential loss of teachers' autonomy and identity (Hargreaves, 2000).

Nonetheless, the renegotiation of professional identities is not solely influenced by social cultural conditions and behaviours. The personal and professional backgrounds of teachers, as well as their pre-service training, also play a significant role in shaping the stability or instability of their professional identities, particularly during their initial year of teaching (Flores & Day, 2006). Furthermore, teachers' internal attitudes and corresponding behaviours also facilitate the transitions and sustenance of their professional identities (Hargreaves, 2000). For instance, educators who hold inadequate beliefs regarding their own skills may undermine their professional identity (Hargreaves, 2000). This belief in teachers' competence to succeed was conceptualized as self-efficacy (Bandura, 1978). Agency encompasses not only teachers' beliefs in their capabilities but also their ability to take proactive actions, make choices, and exert control over their professional development and practice (Bandura, 1978, 2008). As individuals engage in actions that align with their sense of agency and experience success, their self-efficacy beliefs are reinforced (Bandura, 1978, 2008). Within this study, it

focuses on novice teachers who are in the transitional period of their professional development, studying their identity agency may also reflect on their self-efficacy and provide a comprehensive and holistic picture of their development and professional journey.

So, in conclusion, within subject-centred social cultural approach, in this study, I assume Eteläpelto et al. (2015) has provided a well-rounded model to study novice teacher's professional agency (see Figure 3). Novice teachers' professional agency is theorized and characterized as consisting of two components, impact on one's work (at the individual, community, and organizational levels) and professional identity. Among them, individual and societal resources and constraints will also be explored and analysed to understand teachers' professional agency in a more comprehensive way (Eteläpelto et al., 2015). However, it is uncertain if these viewpoints still apply to new teachers in Finland after eight years because there has been no follow-up research. This study will re-examine the model and might provide fresh insights on it. Thus, the terms in the model regarding to the aspects of professional agency (Eteläpelto et al., 2015) will be cited through this study.

2.1.3 Chinese novice teachers' professional agency

When it comes to the Chinese context, teacher agency is a relatively new concept recently and there is a shortage of study on teacher professional agency within the Chinese educational system. The only few studies conducted about teachers' professional agency have concentrated English teachers' agency in higher education (Wang, 2018; Tao & Gu, 2016; Gao et al., 2018). Studies also shows that teaching experience, educational technology, educational background, and school administration are the primary determinants of teachers' agency (Zhang & Shen, 2012; Wang, 2010). Another study indicated that the motivation agency of English teachers in China's migrant areas was low, mostly due to shortcomings in educational background, work environment, and school assistance. The study advised that educational institutions provide additional assistance and resources for English teachers in immigrant regions in order to enhance their professional growth and teaching quality (Wang, 2018).

However, there are a larger number of studies of teachers' self-efficacy that examine teacher agency from related viewpoints (Yu & Luo, 2000a; Li & Liu, 2000; Huang & Wang, 2005). As was previously said, teachers' self-efficacy beliefs impact their motivation, effort, and resiliency in the face of adversity (Keogh et al., 2012). Research indicates that teachers with more self-efficacy are more likely to set higher objectives, persevere in the face of failures,

and apply successful instructional practices (Barni et al., 2019). It is strongly correlated with student achievement, student engagement, educators' enthusiasm for teaching, principals' evaluation of teachers' competency, and teachers' classroom management abilities, which was a key determinant in teachers' teaching effectiveness. significantly connected with student accomplishment, student interest, educators' passion to teach, principals' appraisal of teachers' competence, and teachers' classroom management skills which is a major factor in teachers' teaching effectiveness (Yu & Luo, 2000; Li & Liu, 2000; Xin et al., 1994).

However, self-efficacy tends to emphasize task-specific beliefs and may not reflect for larger contextual elements and professional decision-making processes. Professional agency comprises a broader variety of abilities, attitudes, and characteristics that enable educators to exercise autonomy, take initiative, and design their professional pathways (Liyuan et al., 2022; Toom et al., 2015). It includes the capacity to negotiate complicated educational situations, participate in reflective activities, adapt to changes, and impact results.

Professional agency recognizes the dynamic character of education and highlights teachers' active activities throughout their careers (Toom et al., 2015). As they start the teaching profession, novice teachers face several obstacles and changes throughout the period of transition. While self-efficacy influences their confidence and instructional effectiveness, professional agency provides a broader lens through which to analyze their professional development during this crucial phase. Investigating agency would give a structure to understand beginner teachers and develop their professional identities and sense of control over their practice.

It also helps to navigate internal and external contextual factors such as teachers' pedagogical competence, school system, curriculum, principal's role and others which exerts influence on novice teacher's professional agency (Eteläpelto et al., 2015). However, there is a lack of studies focusing on novice teachers' professional agency in China. Therefore, a comprehensive examination of beginner teachers' professional agency in China is essential for identifying their needs and giving insights for the future study. In addition, as the globalization of education in China grows, so does Finnish- Chinese collaboration in the sphere of education, particularly in teacher training (Cai et al., n.d.; Jin-Muranen et al., 2012a). However, relatively few research has been conducted to understand the contexts in the two countries (Peng et al., 2023). So, in this study, Chinese novice teachers' professional agency will be studied through the lens of the perspectives on novice teachers' agency in Finland which is demonstrated as a model (see Figure 3)

2.2 Educational Context in China and Finland

2.2.1 Education in China and Finland

2.2.1.1 The development of educational system

China and Finland have prioritized education in their respective national development goals (Adams-Budde et al., 2012; J. Li & Xue, n.d.). In recent years, both nations have adopted considerable reforms to improve the quality and accessibility of their educational systems (Adams-Budde et al., 2012; J. Li & Xue, n.d.).

China's education system has undergone massive statewide reforms since the early 1980s, along with the country's remarkable economic growth and profound social transformation (Nanzhao et al., n.d.). China's educational system consists of three years of preschool education, six years of primary education, three years of secondary school education, and three years of upper secondary school education leading to either the college admission test or vocational school education. China's obligatory education spans grades 1 through 9 and is free of charge (Nanzhao et al., n.d.). At the national and municipal levels, a system has been developed to analyze, monitor, and recognize the proper implementation of compulsory education. There are 2-year vocational-technical institutions and 4-year colleges giving bachelor's degrees in higher education. Then there are universities with various foci (comprehensive, language-specific, teacher training, etc.) that provide bachelor's, master's, and doctoral degrees. The majority of teacher education programs are provided in four-year colleges and universities, and students with a bachelor's degree in education or a related subject field passing the teacher certificate exam will become qualified teachers (Nanzhao et al., n.d.).

During the 1970s in Finland, new comprehensive school systems were constructed to ensure that all children, regardless of their socioeconomic background, attended the mandatory 9-year basic education administered by the government (Sahlberg, 2011). Then, a year of pre-primary education was added to the preceding nine years of obligatory education (Sahlberg, 2011). Since 2021, the obligatory education has additionally included a three-year program of general and vocational upper secondary education and training. General upper secondary education leads to the matriculation test and occupational certification. Higher education is comprised of two primary categories, universities and universities of applied science, which provide a variety of bachelor's, master's, and doctoral degree programs. The majority of teacher preparation programs are offered by educational faculties that need a master's degree (Adams-Budde et al., 2012; Sahlberg, 2011).

One of the main principles of Finnish education is equity and equality (Niemi, 2021; Risku & Pulkkinen, 2016). To guarantee that every student in Finland receives a high-quality education, schools are almost completely funded and administered by municipalities so that school resources are reasonably evenly distributed across Finland (Ustun & Eryılmaz, 2018). In contrast to Finland, the Chinese government promotes the free market in education, supervises the expansion of privately-owned schools, and embraces a variety of educational approaches. All sectors of society are encouraged to sponsor various schools, with government-run public schools as the primary component, therefore both public and private schools are expanding simultaneously (Nanzhao et al., n.d.). Also, as a result of the globalization of education, international schools that follow an international curriculum and prepare students for study abroad have also increased in China's major cities (Nanzhao et al., n.d.). The competitive market model in education has widened regional economic disparities, and educational resources are unequal from west to east and rural to urban regions.

2.2.1.2 The management of Education

In China, education management is centralized and maintains a top-down system, despite frequent mentions of decentralization and local autonomy in the administration (Shengnan & Hallinger, 2021). It is linked to the historical and sociocultural factors of China that have evolved over thousands of years, including the influence of dynastic rule and Confucian philosophy. Confucianism emphasized the importance of social harmony and fostered a sense of unity through practices such as filial piety, which involved showing respect towards parents, elders, and authorities. These traditional values were utilized as ideological tools to uphold authority and the hierarchical social structure throughout history (Gu, 2006). Compared to the egalitarian culture of the West, Chinese management culture is still more hierarchical today (Lockett, n.d.). In the current educational administration system, the Ministry of Education, which operates under the central authority of the State Council, is responsible for drafting general education programs and implementing significant policies. Basic education is made available at the provincial, municipal, and county levels. A thorough framework has been built at both the national and local levels to analyze, monitor, and acknowledge the effective implementation and quality of basic education in schools (Zhou, 2014). Principals and other supervisors supervise the teaching staff (Zhou, 2014).

In Finland, starting from the 1990s, there has been a shift in the approach influenced by neoliberalism and the global social trend of globalization. This shift has led to a reduction in

the state's intervention in the domestic economy and a loosening of regulations on business and property. As a result, the education system has experienced changes where local administrations and schools have been granted significant autonomy (Adams-Budde et al., 2012). In the education system, the role of the municipal board of education has transformed into more of a service provider rather than a higher governing authority for schools. Its involvement in monitoring and evaluating the quality of education has significantly diminished (Risku et al., 2014). Schools that possess a significant level of independence engage in a range of internal self-assessment activities, including student self-assessment, teacher self-assessment, and assessments of school culture conducted by principals and other administrative staff (Hendrickson, n.d.).

As part of educational administration, cultural elements can strongly impact school leadership (Dimmock & Walker, 2002). In Chinese schools, the style of leadership is characterized by a strong hierarchical structure that places a high premium on authority and academic accomplishment, with the principal seen as the final decision-maker on significant policies and procedures. This leadership approach also highlights discipline as an essential component (Law, 2013; Y. Li, 2010). In contrast, leadership in Finnish schools follows a more egalitarian approach that emphasizes collaboration and empowerment. The leaders in Finnish schools prioritize values such as transparency, honesty, and openness, encouraging active participation from all teachers and staff members (Saarivirta & Kumpulainen, 2016). Furthermore, the leadership model in Finnish schools embraces a horizontal organizational structure that gives less importance to formal titles and prioritizes informal communication and collaboration (Halász, 2014).

2.2.1.3 The basic curriculum reform

The curriculum changes in the two countries both aim to improve the quality of education and prepare students for the challenges of the twenty-first century (Law, 2014; Pietarinen et al., 2016). Beginning in the 21st century, Chinese educational curriculum reform has been impacted by western constructivism educational theory (Law, 2014). In the past, the curriculum primarily emphasized discipline-specific knowledge without considering equal opportunities for all children. However, with the implementation of the reform guideline, the new curriculum prioritizes holistic development, encompassing not only intellectual growth but also physical well-being, emotional intelligence, aesthetic appreciation, personal accountability, and spiritual values (Law, 2014; Nanzhao et al., n.d.). The objective of the

reform is to shift from a knowledge-focused approach to an interdisciplinary and learner-centered approach that highlights three key aspects: knowledge, skills, and attitudes/emotions (Nanzhao et al., n.d.). The increased focus on placing students at the center of education also necessitates new standards for teachers. The recognition of the significance of practical competence and the expectation of lifelong learning represents a notable departure from the conventional interpretation of teacher professionalism. These changes align more closely with the prevailing understanding of teacher professionalism observed in "advanced industrialized countries" in Western contexts (Law, 2014; Zhu, 2007). However, the efficacy of the new curriculum reform and classroom implementation by teachers is still up for debate (Law, 2014; Zhu, 2007).

The Finnish curriculum has undergone several revisions. In contrast to the Chinese curriculum, which places emphasis on knowledge and skills, the Finnish curriculum reform since 2014 has integrated a forward-looking and global outlook for students (Reimers Editor, n.d., 2020). The fundamental concepts of an engaged learner, cross-cutting competencies, integrated teaching, a school as a learning community, and sustainable lifestyles signify an approach that prioritizes the learner, embraces interdisciplinary learning, fosters holistic development, and encourages collaboration. This approach is designed to equip students with the necessary skills and capabilities to navigate future challenges and complexities (Haapaniemi et al., 2020).

2.2.1.4 Key features of education

Since the announcement of the 2018 Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) results, the high test scores of two distinct educational systems have been highlighted and they also have a number of distinguishing characteristics (Qian, 2020).

Chinese education is characterized by a strong emphasis on community responsibility and a competitive examination system that focuses on performance (Gu, 2006). As scholar pointed out, it is deeply rooted in the social cultural context (Gu, 2006). In the historical context of China, the teachings of Confucian ideology emphasized the importance of social harmony and interconnectedness. When applied to the realm of education, the aim is to shape individuals in a manner that cultivates constructive relationships with others and enables them to make meaningful contributions to society as a cohesive whole (Gu, 2006). In the past, only privileged elites had access to an education based on Confucian ideals, which served to perpetuate the entrenched customs and hierarchical structure of feudal society. Apart from this

collective goal, examination orientation is another distinct feature. The Civil Examination System was implemented to select people from diverse socioeconomic origins, allowing for upward social mobility and the changing of one's society position, especially in the context of becoming government officials (Gu, 2006). The enduring tradition of valuing examinations has evolved in modern education as the "Gaokao," a nationwide examination used for university admissions. Regarded as a fair and unquestionable route to success, students are encouraged to dedicate themselves and seek additional tutoring to enhance their competitiveness in the exam (Löfstedt, 1980; Ross & Wang, 2014).

Western culture, in contrast to Chinese collectivism, promotes individuality and equality, respecting individual independence, freedom, and creativity, and pushing individuals to achieve self-actualization (Niu, 2007). Drawing from this social and cultural context, Finnish education prioritizes the personal development of individuals and lifelong learning, rather than fostering a culture of competition and comparison (Sahlberg, 2007). In Finland, only the matriculation examination at the completion of upper secondary exists as a nationwide test (Kupiainen et al., 2016; Leontjev, 2022). In contrast, the Finnish educational system prioritizes formative evaluation and student self-assessment above outcome-based assessment. The major objective is to help pupils develop the ability to learn (National Curriculum, 2004). Furthermore, the Finnish education system advocates for equality and individualization. Through child-centered teaching approaches, acknowledging the unique qualities of each student, and supporting their holistic growth, the system prioritizes enabling every individual to achieve their maximum potential (National Curriculum, 2004).

2.2.1.5 Inclusive Education

Based on the principles of Western liberal democracy that prioritize individualism, Finland places significant importance on student welfare and special education. These areas receive considerable attention and are treated with utmost seriousness within the Finnish education system (Halinen & Järvinen, 2008a; Xu et al., 2018). Inclusionary education is a fundamental element of the Finnish education system, renowned for its exceptional equity and excellence (Tarr et al., 2012). As per the Finnish National Agency for Education, the principles of inclusive education are rooted in the belief that every student is entitled to personalized education and support tailored to their specific needs and abilities. The focus lies in creating a learning environment that is inclusive, supportive, and adaptable to cater to the diverse requirements of all students (Halinen & Järvinen, 2008; Tarr et al., 2012). Support is offered

to pupils with a variety of requirements, including learning challenges, social-emotional skills, behavior concerns, and neuropsychiatric disorders, and is seen as a normal part of life from the start (Takala et al., 2009). Almost a quarter of all pupils get special education on a part-time basis (Halinen & Järvinen, 2008). Three tiers of support, namely general support, intensified support, and special support, to cater to the varying needs of students. (Chong, 2016; Halinen & Järvinen, 2008). A constructive and solution-oriented approach is adopted, prioritizing support within the regular classroom setting through flexible grouping and personalized guidance. Additional support is provided after school through remedial lesson groups, homework clubs, and individual tutoring. Various differentiation strategies, such as adapted materials, seating arrangements, daily routines, and time modifications, are implemented to meet the diverse needs of students (Chong, 2016; Halinen & Järvinen, 2008). To assist students with neuropsychiatric challenges, a variety of tools such as manipulatives, aids, and specialized devices are employed. Personal assistants and full-time special education services are also made available as required (Chong, 2016; Halinen & Järvinen, 2008). Teachers, teaching assistants and multi-professional teams including school social workers, school psychologists, and school nurses collaborate to provide support to students (Chong, 2016; Halinen & Järvinen, 2008b; Takala et al., 2009). Research has shown that inclusive education in Finland has led to positive outcomes for students with disabilities and special needs, including improved academic performance, increased social skills, and greater confidence and self-esteem (Adams-Budde et al., 2012; Sahlberg, 2011). However, challenges remain in ensuring that all students receive the support they need to succeed, and there is ongoing work to further develop and improve inclusive education practices in Finland (Moberg et al., 2019; Saloviita, 2017).

On the other hand, China, deeply rooted in a socialist political system and guided by collectivist values, has witnessed rapid economic development. The country has also been influenced by Western ideas of inclusive education. In response, China has implemented its own special education model called "LRC" (Learning in Regular Classroom). This model has been in place for three decades and aims to integrate students with disabilities into mainstream schools (Deng & Poon-Mcbrayer, 2012; Xu et al., 2018). The study by Xu et al., (2018) emphasizes the importance of special schools, special classrooms, and the Learning Resource Center (LRC) as the principal bodies responsible for providing special education services. It highlights that students with mental retardation, visual disabilities, and hearing impairments have access to education in regular classes. After three decades, the effectiveness

of the LRC model in China remains a topic of debate. Mainstream schools often prioritize the preparation of high-performing students for examinations, while showing a preference for transferring "problematic" students to special schools (Deng & Poon-Mcbrayer, 2012; Xu et al., 2018). As a result, the LRC approach has not brought about comprehensive changes within the regular education system towards inclusivity and accommodating diversity. Furthermore, the limited resources and coordination between the special and regular education systems have hindered the role of special schools as a supportive backbone (Alduais & Deng, 2022; Xu et al., 2018).

2.2.2 Teachers in China and Finland

In both nations, teaching is seen as a respected profession that has maintained its social standing (OECD, 2019). In Chinese culture, teachers have traditionally been held in high regard. In ancient China, together with the sky, earth, emperor, and ancestors, instructors were recognized as one of the five deities venerated in the country. Influential academics and teachers such as Confucius created the precept "Respect teacher and respect knowledge" in China, which became a standard approach to education and teaching. This attitude stresses that teachers should have a great passion for study and learning, a commitment to lifelong learning, and a real love for the teaching profession (W. Ye et al., 2021a). Even in present times, teaching continues to be a profession held in high regard, offering job stability, attractive benefits, and a promising career trajectory for individuals seeking employment (W. Ye et al., 2021a). From the national, district, school, and family levels, the Finnish society places a great deal of trust in the professionalism of educators. As a result, there are few external assessment mechanisms to measure teachers' performance, allowing instructors to operate independently and exhibit considerable autonomy in their professional endeavors (Adams-Budde et al., 2012; Niemi, 2015; Sahlberg, 2011). Due to China's enormous population and unequal regional economic growth, however, teacher education and qualification in China are highly diverse and complex (Shi & Englert, 2010). To comprehend the distinction, it is useful to discuss the development of teacher preparation in China.

2.2.2.1 The development of teacher education and qualification in China

In the past, teacher education in China was administered via a three-tiered, single-purpose "normal" system in which normal schools, normal colleges, and normal universities trained instructors for elementary, middle, and high schools (Zhou, 2014). National teacher training

universities were established in six pivotal locations, and a structured hierarchy based on knowledge and teacher status was formed (Zhou, 2014). Elementary school and preschool teachers had the lowest salaries among the teaching profession. Nonetheless, beginning in the 1980s, the expanding education system demanded an increase in the quantity and quality of educators. In response, the government introduced a diversification policy in 1999, allowing colleges and institutions without teacher training programs to join in the teacher preparation system (Zhou, 2014). In 2012, a thorough reform of teacher training program curricula was implemented, embracing a variety of components including subject knowledge, educational knowledge, school curriculum, pedagogy, practicum, and general education (Shi & Englert, 2010; J. Ye et al., 2019). In addition, the state adopted uniform directions for both teacher preparation and in-service training, integrating a mandated teaching practicum into the curriculum for teacher preparation. These guidelines require student teachers to complete a minimum of 18 weeks of teaching practicum, under the guidance and supervision of experienced teachers (Shi & Englert, 2010; Zhou, 2014).

Nevertheless, despite the expansion of teacher training programs, there remained a shortage of qualified teachers in various fields to meet the growing demand (Shi & Englert, 2010). In order to ensure the competence of aspiring teachers, a teacher qualification system was implemented. This system incorporates a teacher licensure examination that assesses candidates' understanding of fundamental educational concepts and psychology through a written test. Additionally, applicants are interviewed and required to provide a brief teaching demonstration (Zhou, 2014). In addition, professional standards were developed in three important areas, including teacher ethics, professional knowledge, and professional competence. These criteria serve as guidelines for upholding ethical conduct, ensuring a firm foundation of subject matter understanding, and evaluating instructors' overall professional qualities (Shi & Englert, 2010). Nevertheless, the introduction of the teacher certification examination system has sparked concerns regarding the perceived worth of professional teacher education programs (Shi & Englert, 2010). A re-registration system was then created to evaluate the teaching performance of in-service teachers every five years and teacher education students every six years. This method emphasizes the significance of responsibility in the education field (Nanzhao et al., n.d.; Shi & Englert, 2010; Zhou, 2014).

To promote accountability, a teacher evaluation system connected to a salary structure based on performance was developed (Shi & Englert, 2010; J. Ye et al., 2019; Zhou, 2014b). Teachers are assessed and granted various titles and higher salaries based on their teaching

proficiency, as demonstrated through their demonstration lessons and the average grades of their students(Shi & Englert, 2010; J. Ye et al., 2019). Additional factors considered include the educational attainment level, years of experience, work ethics, and commitment to the school (Shi & Englert, 2010; J. Ye et al., 2019). Furthermore, additional aspects like their interactions with colleagues and parents, attitudes towards students, and engagement in the school's research projects and publications have been included as criteria(Shi & Englert, 2010; J. Ye et al., 2019) .

2.2.2.2 Primary school teachers

The roles and responsibilities of primary school teachers in Finland and China differ in several aspects. Subject knowledge and subject identity are the most important components of teacher education and professional development programs in China (Zhou, 2014). Primary school teachers in China tend to specialize in particular disciplines. They are subject teachers that specialize in teaching a certain subject, such as science, language, or mathematics. They could have the options to instruct various classes and work with different student groups for each subject. In addition, Chinese primary school instructors have the opportunity to take the responsibility of being a class supervisor, which entails daily class management, discipline monitoring, and activity coordination (Zhou, 2014). On the contrary, In Finland, primary school teachers often teach multiple subjects and have a multifaceted classroom role. They are responsible for designing and presenting classes in a variety of disciplines, monitoring student progress, and providing students with specialized help. Throughout the school year, they frequently work closely with the same group of pupils, building strong teacher-student ties(Adams-Budde et al., 2012; Niemi, 2015).

3 Research Questions

The main research questions this study will investigate is about Chinese novice teachers' professional agency.

R1: How do beginner Chinese teachers perceive their professional agency in their work, including (a) developing pedagogical methods and social management of classroom in classroom setting (Eteläpelto et al., 2015); (b) influencing working community and organization by making suggestions, initiating activities and taking responsibilities on activities (Eteläpelto et al., 2015). And what constraints and resources have the greatest influence on this sense of agency(Eteläpelto et al., 2015)?

R2: How do Chinese novice teachers perceive their perception of agency in the development and renegotiation of their professional identities in relation to (a) renegotiation of professional ideals; (b) maintenance of their ethical standards/values; (c) Possibilities to use personal interest and competences (Eteläpelto et al., 2015). And what constrains and resources have the greatest impact on this sense of agency(Eteläpelto et al., 2015).

However, to answer the main question, firstly, there is a need to revisit the model which came from the result of previous research (Eteläpelto et al., 2015) so as to reassure its effectiveness by far.

R3: Does the results (Eteläpelto et al., 2015) of Finnish novice teachers' perception of professional agency still apply in Finnish context now?

4 Methods

This research used qualitative method borrowed from previous research(Eteläpelto et al., 2015) and was conducted by semi-structured interview with nine novice teachers from China and Finland. First, an experimental, limited content-wise pre-study was conducted with two Finnish teachers, followed by the main study with seven Chinese teachers. The entire study used a mostly deductive and partially inductive methodology. The interview was transcribed and coded using NVivo using a theory-driven codebook, with slight data-driven modifications. A content analysis method was used for data analysis. The data from Finnish teachers was analysed firstly to revisit the model derived from prior research eight years ago (Eteläpelto et al., 2015) and the result would be present in the next result part. The remaining data from Chinese teachers was then analysed via the lens of Finnish novice teachers' professional agency to illustrate Chinese novice teachers' professional agency. In addition, the whole interview data from the pre-study with Finnish teachers would be combined with the article(Eteläpelto et al., 2015) in order to more comprehensively reflect the results from the Chinese context in the lateral discussion part.

4.1 Participant

The sample in this study included nine participants who are fully(formally) qualified primary school-level teachers with 1-5 years of teaching experience, respectively seven in China and two in Finland. They were consented to participate the interview by signing a consent form. (See Appendix-Table 5)

4.1.1 Finnish teachers

The two Finnish teachers were found at my internship school and through a mutual acquaintance. One teacher has worked for 1.5 years in Helsinki, while the other has 5 years of experience teaching in various cities in Finland. They both earned master's degrees from the class teacher programs at the University of Helsinki and the University of Turku, respectively. The Finnish teachers' backgrounds were most aligned with the samples in the previous study(Eteläpelto et al., 2015) to revisit the model and prove its effectiveness by far.

4.1.2 Chinese teachers

The seven Chinese primary school teachers were contacted by my former colleagues. With the exception of one Chinese subject teacher, they are all elementary school English teachers in China. The teachers (all women) ranged in age from 25 to 36. Three of them (including the Chinese teacher) have worked in public schools, two of the three were in the suburbs of Baotou, a third-tier city in Inner Mongolia, and third was in the suburb of Shanghai, a metropolitan city. As for the other four teachers, two of them have worked in or near Shanghai in private international schools. Two of these teachers have shifted to different private international schools since beginning their careers as educators. Out of the seven teachers, four of them hold a bachelor's degree in a subject-related field, but just two of these four have completed a teacher education program with pedagogical training. As for the other teachers, three of them hold research-oriented master's degrees respectively in English language, tourism management, and educational psychology, while their bachelor's degrees are English subject-related. Every teacher has the subject-teaching certification. Teachers from teacher training programs were qualified through their degree, whilst teachers from other disciplines obtained their certification by passing the national teacher certification examination. Thus, these multiple pathways demonstrate the complexity of China's teacher selection and education system.

4.2 Instrument

A semi-structured interview form with opened-end questions presenting different aspects of agency was developed from the finding of previous research (Eteläpelto et al., 2015) as a tool. The perceived constrains and resources mentioned previous in the finding (Eteläpelto et al., 2015) were listed besides each theme question and were used as reminders of follow-up open-ended questions to make sure the comprehensive understanding of novice teachers' professional agency. Also, the interview form was piloted with three other novice teachers (two of them are from China, one from Finland and they were not accounted as the formal participants in this study) and modified slightly to be used in the formal interviews in this study. (See Appendix-Table 3)

4.3 Data collection

The data was collected through interviews conducted by me. All of the interviews were performed informally through zoom meeting and were recorded as audio files. Firstly, two Finnish novice teachers were interviewed in English to revisit the model and results of the previous study (Eteläpelto et al., 2015) and then seven novice Chinese teachers were interviewed in Chinese to discuss their opinion of teachers' professional agency. Each interview lasted between 1.5 and 2.5 hours. During the interview, semi-structured open-ended interview questions were generally used to direct the interview under different aspects. Teachers were invited to openly talk about their studies, careers, lives, and related opinions in response to these topics. In relation to each aspect, respondents were asked what factors had helped them and what had impeded them from performing as desired. A checklist was created as a reminder for teachers who did not spontaneously discuss the covered issues. Meanwhile, new aspects relating to the discussion emerged, and spontaneous follow-up questions were produced to investigate the new scenarios. Teachers were also encouraged to provide more examples to clarify the issues. The objective of this study was to obtain a comprehensive and complex understanding of the novice teachers' professional experiences, as well as their contextual and personal dimensions, emphasizing the richness of qualitative over quantitative data.

4.4 Data Analysis

All the interviews were conducted and recorded through zoom and then word-for-word transcribed. The individual interview transcript ranged between 18 and 30 pages, while the whole interview materials amounted to 300 pages (Times New Roman font 12, line spacing 1.5). Data was analysed using conceptual content analysis (Neuendorf, 2017), and this entails classifying and evaluating textual material methodically based on the thematic codebook derived from the study model, the steps of content analysis of this research was presented as follows.

Step 1: Acquaintance with the data

I initially read each interview transcript twice to familiarize myself with the facts and obtain a comprehensive comprehension of the material.

Step 2: Identify units of analysis.

Significant sections of the text relevant to the study topics were recognized as units of analysis. Participants' perceptions of their professional agency at work and identity agency are included.

Step 3: Using a coding scheme

The units of analysis were classified using a coding scheme. This study primarily employed a deductive coding strategy with a structured coding scheme - the model (see figure 3) constructed based on the result of prior research (Eteläpelto et al., 2015). However, flexibility was also taken into account such that the preceding categories can be modified throughout the coding procedure. The subtheme "social management of classroom: social-emotional well-being" was modified to "social management of classroom: behavior and social-emotional well-being" In addition, coding rules for text-to-code translation were created at this stage. The coding scheme is presented in Appendix-Table 4.

Step 4: Applying the coding scheme

NVivo was used to apply the coding system to the data, allowing for quick classification and retrieval.

Step 5: analyzing the data

The data was evaluated by summarizing the existence of each code and investigating their correlations. The final evaluation of perceived agency was based on the quantity of content relating to restrictions for professional agency. The analysis demonstrated two themes and seven subthemes connected to the professional agency of the participants.

Step 6: interpreting the data

Within the context of the study questions and pertinent literature, the findings were interpreted in the following section. The findings were presented in the form of themes and subthemes, supported by the quotes from participants.

Overall, content analysis was applied to this research and new insights was generated into participants' experiences and perceptions. The results would contribute to the understanding of novice teachers' professional agency.

4.5 Justification

The validation of the instrument for interview and quotes in the thesis

Sperber (2004) highlights a critical weakness of using translation in cross-cultural research, as the subtle meaning and intent of the original items can easily be lost in the process of translation leading to poor validity of the research. The translator may also fail to consider the context, resulting in terms that are not understood as expected by the respondents. In this regard, back-translation was conducted to ensure the validity. The semi-structured interview form was translated into Chinese by me firstly and then a second Chinese researcher who are fluent in English translated the Chinese back to English, then we compared the result, and the agreement of the translation was more than 90%, the disagreement was discussed and adjusted. Similarly, the quotes in Chinese presented in the thesis was firstly translated into English by me, then the second Chinese researcher translated them back to Chinese and the two Chinese versions were compared and reached high agreement so that the English quotes translated from Chinese could be presented accurately.

The validity and reliability of the coding

To maintain consistency and transparency throughout the coding process, a coding rule for the translation of text into code was formulated and implemented. Consistent adherence to the translation standards ensures the integrity of the coding process. The accuracy of the coding was verified by a second coder, the same Chinese researcher in the field of education who is proficient in English as was described earlier. I initially randomly picked 25% of the interviews (three participants out of nine, two of them are Chinese teachers and one Finnish teacher). The selected sections were then transcribed into a word document. Inside the paper, Chinese teaches' transcripts are written in Chinese, whereas Finnish teacher transcripts are written in English. Firstly, I coded the one Finnish teacher' transcript. After that, for transcripts from two Chinese teachers, I initially translated the Chinese transcripts into English and coded them. Then, I transmitted a coding instruction for the Coder II. The Coder II repeated my procedure for the second round of coding. Then, we had a discussion to compare the consistency of our coding. In addition, to reduce the validity loss due by translation, the translation and the codes were compared and found to be in great agreement. The inter-coder reliability was determined to be between 77% and 86%. Through discussion, differences in coding and translation were addressed.

5 Results

5.1 Novice teachers' perception of professional agency in China

5.1.1 Perceived professional agency in work

Based on the model from (Eteläpelto et al., 2015), the perception of agency among Chinese novice teachers was explored first in the classroom, where they performed as accountable teachers, and then in their work communities and work organizations. The results were as following.

5.1.1.1 Perceived agency in classroom context

In China, novice teachers had little agency over the development of pedagogical approaches, and agency of the social management of the classroom in terms of individual behaviour and social emotional well-being is either weak or non-existent.

Developing pedagogical methods

Firstly, all of the teachers (7/7) showed insufficient agency in developing pedagogical methods and practice new ideas. And one educator experienced a comparable rise in agency as a result of a shift in school and increased experience. All (7/7) teachers thought they lacked adequate knowledge in creating and innovating teaching methods, with additional limitations posed by students' performance pressure (7/7), uniform teaching content (7/7), insufficient mentor assistance and little collaboration with fellows because of the competitions between peers (4/7). Those factors significantly constrained their agency in this pedagogical regard. For example, sometimes even teachers had the agency for innovating teaching methods, they had to give up their thoughts because students' test results should be first considered. Some teachers noted the following:

我自己觉得我在教学上的经验和能力是有限的，还不足以发展和创新教学法
(教师 5-公立)

I believe that my teaching experience and skill are insufficient to develop and innovate educational techniques. (Teacher 5-Public School)

学校还是很重视考试成绩的，有一次考试，我我带的那个班，平均分比别的班级差了五分，虽然我不太在意，但是老师们之间有对比，校长也找我谈话，然后我还挺有压力的，觉得能把成绩提高就好了，教学法上创新好像也

没什么用，有趣的学习对快速提升成绩效果不大。更多想的是用什么办法提高学生成绩。（教师 6-公立）

The school still focus on test scores very much; there was a test before, and the average score of my class was five points lower than that of other classes; although I do do not care too much about this, there was a comparison between the teachers, and the principal also approached me to discuss about it; consequently, I was quite stressed; while it is important to be able to improve the results, I do not believe that pedagogical innovation is particularly applicable in this situation because making class fun cannot improve students score fast. I would rather think what the most suitable way is to improve their scores in the test. (Teacher 6 – Public School)

在课堂教学方面，我的自主性是不太高的。学校是鼓励我们去有自己的教学特色，鼓励教学创新，但是现实情况是有限的。我们的教材都是有统一框架的，每周学习的内容也是一致的，而且很多，也有考试压力。另一方面也要考虑到学生和家长对成绩的需求，不能太自由。（教师 3-私立）

Regarding classroom instruction, my autonomy is limited. The school encourages us to have our own teaching styles and to innovate in the classroom, but the reality is more constrained. We have a standard framework for all of our teaching materials, we study the same topic each week and there is much content, moreover, there is exam pressure. Additionally, it is essential to consider the concerns of children and parents for their exam scores. (Teacher 3-Private School)

我自己刚教书，教学能力有限和对学生的了解都有限，我很需要所在的团队可以有有经验的老师来指导我，可能我慢慢就会运用和创新了。但是这里并没有提供这样有效的支持。老师们要不就太忙，或者是因为竞争的缘故不愿意帮忙。虽然我们有集体备课，但是好像确定完完上课内容就没有其他什么指导了，很难从中学到什么。（教师 1-私立）

My teaching abilities and knowledge of pupils are limited, as I am new to the profession. I need knowledgeable teachers on my team so that I may gradually apply and develop some methods. But there was no such effective help here and everyone is either busy, or not willing to help because there is some competition between teachers. Although there was group lesson preparation, there appeared to be no additional guidance about how to teach after the class's subject was established, making it difficult to learn anything. (Teacher 1-Private School)

In China, novice teachers from public schools felt pedagogically incompetent when conducting student-centred approaches for the new curriculum reform, and their agency was primarily constrained by the school's strict rules for teaching, as well as the lengthy and complicated administrative procedures in teachers' pedagogical decision-making.

谈到课堂教学方法的话，我已知的教学法很难适应现在的新课程改革的要求，要按照新的课程要求发展以学生为中心教学法的话，还是很困难。需要更多学习（教师 5）

When it comes to classroom teaching methods, my teaching methods are difficult to adapt to the current requirements of the new curriculum reform. Furthermore, it is still very difficult to develop student-centred teaching methods that meet the requirements of the new curriculum reform. I still need to learn more (Teacher 5)

不像以前所在国际学校，老师都鼓励有自己的特色，而且教材比较有深度和广度，我们会讨论，也会做自己的材料。但是到这边来发现公办学校都是循规蹈矩的。一般学校都有一个上课体系，教学内容，教学进度，教学流程，教学方法都是规定好的，特别是公开课的时候，专家比如教研主任告诉你怎么做，你就怎么做，有时候你想做些创新的教学活动，提出来的时候，学校不怎么会支持，会说我们需要考虑各种因素，开会去研究为校长意见不可行。所以我现在基本上也不太会说有什么自己的想法。（教师 6）

Unlike the international schools I used to attend, where the different teachership was somehow encouraged and the material is more in-depth and broader, we would discuss and have to develop some compensating materials. However, when I came here, I found there are so many rules. We have a structured system for teaching, content, schedule, teaching procedure and methods especially in demonstration class. When school specialists such as the director of teaching and research tell you what to do, you simply just follow their instructions. Sometimes, when you want to do something unique, the school will be unsupportive, stating that they need to evaluate several variables and have a meeting with principal to see if it is practical. So, in the end, I just give up. (Teacher 6)

In addition to inexperienced teachers' lack of grasp of the curriculum reform's stated requirements and the number of regulations and limits imposed by public schools on teaching, there was an enormous amount of extra work that prevents them from practice their agency in pedagogical development. They had to prioritize endless the administration work and students' homework correction over their teaching job and especially for novice teachers who needed more time to prepare and reflect for their teaching. The following shows:

我觉得学校也很缺行政人员，比如没人去帮我们去印卷子，然后很多杂事都要亲力亲为。这些事情牺牲掉了我们备课的时间，真的希望有时间去备课，因材施教，但是确实没时间。学校是有很多负责部门，比如教学，德育，管理，大队辅导员，但是各个负责部门的工作任务不明确，最后很多事情都会汇集到我们教师这里。而且学校检查多，教育局每次来检查，我们要做很多准备，上公开课，或者准备一些检查需要的资料这些事情都需要时间。然后我们一天基本都是做这些杂事，填表开会然后很少一部分时间是去备课，上课。感觉填表开会正是事，教学是附属品。（教师 7）

I think the school also lacks staffs, for example there is no one to help us print the standard test papers when it comes to examination period, and we must go to the office to ask for the print right. These issues sacrifice a great deal of our time for lesson planning, and I wish I had the time to prepare the lessons in a better way. We have a lot of meetings and fill out a lot of documents every day. The school has several responsible departments for teaching, moral education, administration, and others; nevertheless, the tasks of each responsible department are unclear, and their tasks are often assigned for us. Also, school inspections require extensive preparation, and it takes time to prepare for open courses and paper materials for it. I spent hours to doing that paperwork and attending meetings with very little time spent for lessons. It appears that filling out paperwork and attending meetings are the primary responsibilities, whereas teaching is secondary. It is quite hard especially I don't really have much teaching experience (Teacher 7)

每天上完课要批改很多作业。每天作业量大到比如说是昨天晚上布置的作业，然后今天收起来，老师基本上就要批改完当天所有的作业，并且发下去，让他们盯着每一个人全部订正好，但是学生的错误多，即使订正两遍、三遍、四遍错误还是特别多。所以你每天基本上给他们判作业，根本没有时间想其他的事情。（教师6）

There is a lot of homework to correct after class each day. There's a lot of homework every day to the point that. For example, if the homework was assigned last night, and the teacher collect them the other day and basically has to correct all of them the same day and give back to them. After that we have to keep an eye on each student to correct it, but the students make a lot of mistakes, and even if they revise it twice, three times, four times the mistakes are still particularly numerous. So, you're basically grading their homework every day and you don't have time to think about anything else like how to teach. (Teacher 6)

All of the teachers (7/7) also identified challenging kids and reluctant parents as a restriction. However, the situations for the two groups of teachers from public schools and private international schools were significantly different.

Three out of seven public school teachers believed that the large number of underprivileged children with learning disabilities and the big size of their classes impeded their agency to implement innovative teaching strategies. To be more specific, the majority of students in the school attended by the participants were from disadvantaged families with migration or rural background and as a result, they appeared to have more learning difficulties in terms of their knowledge, attitudes, habits, and academic performance. The absence of parental assistance exacerbated the problem. While those issues brought by their home situation were hard to be addressed in class and had made the pedagogical innovation difficult to be applied. Two teachers described the circumstances as follows:

我所属小学是郊区小学，像公立学校一般的班容量是 40-45 个孩子，开展活动已经很困难了。虽然公立学校的孩子从整体上来讲比国际学校孩子更加遵守纪律，但是我现在的学生在学习上有更多困难。在郊区，学生大多是外来打工人口的孩子，从小就家长的关心比较少，从学习态度和方法上来讲非常有挑战性。很容易产生自卑、退缩的心里。而且你说话他们也很难听懂，所以在教学上很难。（教师 6-公立）

My elementary school is a suburban elementary school. A typical class size in a public school is around 40-45 students, and it is already very difficult to organize activities. Students in public school are more disciplined comparing the international school I was working for, but students in my class now have much more difficulty in learning. In suburb place, and most of my students are children of migrant workers from other provinces. They have grown up with less parental care and are very challenging in terms of learning attitude and approach. They are unconfident, not interested in learning and very easy to give up. It's hard for them to understand what you say, not mention the creative teaching methods. (Teacher 6-Public School)

在教学上还有一个困难就是学生的能力太弱。我在的那个小学是在郊区，学生 80% 大多是外来务工人员或者是周边农村来的孩子，和我之前实习的市里面的孩子相比，学习能力和眼界都差好多。而且父母受教育程度也不提高，数学语文还可以配合一下，英语方面很难。有的孩子，父母常年在外地工作，孩子只能和爷爷奶奶住在一起，留听读的作业需要用到手机，但是老人都不会用手机，孩子的英语输入量不够，在课上听不懂，跟不上教学进度，更别说参与小组活动之类的。（教师 7-公立）

Another difficulty in teaching practice is that the students are quite challenging in academic performance. The elementary school I am working in the suburbs, and 80% of the students were mostly migrant workers or children from the nearby rural places with less parents' support. Compared with my previous students in a urban school during my internship, their learning ability and knowledge are left behind very much. One reason is that the parents are not well educated, so they might be able to work with math and Chinese with children, but English is difficult. For some other children, whose parents work outside the province all the time, they are left with their grandparents, and they need to use their cell phones for English listening and reading assignments, but the elderly do not know how to use their cell phones. It is very difficult to make them understand, and I was doing my internship in a public school in urban area, the students understand so much more and it is easier to do something I want. (Teacher 7-Public School)

In contrast to the impact of students and parents in public schools, many novice international private school teachers (4/7) felt pedagogically incapable of differentiating instruction to accommodate students' unique learning requirements. In addition, parents in international schools might have higher and different expectations for teachers' instruction, and their interference makes it more difficult for beginner instructors to create instructional strategies.

Moreover, even there were half less students in international schools than public schools, however, the strong individualism and disruptive behaviour of international school kids, which differed from the more disciplined children in public schools, made inexperienced teachers feel incapable of classroom control. they lacked the ability to consider pedagogical progress in this situation.

如果我想在课堂上用一些创新的教学设计，和有深入的讨论，但可能只会带动部分能力强的学生参与，他们会主动思考。而剩下一部分能力较弱的学生更加喜欢被动学习，不会参与，他们的需求不同，我很难去想出好的教学方式去适应他们的需求。（教师 2-私立）

If I wish to employ an innovative teaching strategy in the classroom and have in-depth conversations, it may only motivate the most capable pupils to engage and think critically. And the remainder of the less capable pupils choose passive learning and will not participate. Their demands vary, and it is difficult for me to think of an effective teaching method to meet their different needs. (Teacher 2-Private School)

我觉得最大的挑战可能就是家长。我没有很多经验去创新教学法，有的家长可能会就是他自身学历比较高，他对教育和教学是有一定想法，他会质疑我的方式。有时候我确实想出一些新的方式，也去用，但是另外的家长会觉得学生在课堂上太放松了，影响学习成绩。我真的很困惑，自己该怎么做才能满足他们的需求。（教师 4-私立）

I believe that the parents pose the greatest difficulty. I do not have a great deal of experience innovating teaching techniques, and some parents may be highly educated and have specific beliefs about education and teaching, so they may criticize my approach. Sometimes I come up with new methods and implement them, but other parents may feel that students are too relaxed in my class, which affects their academic performance. I am sometimes really confused about what I should do to make them satisfied. (Teacher 4-Private School)

我觉得国际学校的孩子太活跃了，我的班级里一般只有 18-22 个孩子，但他们思维活跃，很好动经常在课堂上打断我。不听讲。我觉得自己在管理他们行为的能力上有限，上课好像更多考虑的是这个课堂管理方面，而不是去想怎么教。（教师 3-私立）

I feel like international school kids are so active. Even there were only 18-22 pupils in my previous, they're thinking big, they're hyperactive, and they ask a lot of questions and often interrupt me during teaching and not listening. I feel limited in my ability to manage their behaviour, and I seem to be thinking more about how to control them rather than about how to teach it. (Teacher 3-Private School)

Due to personal incompetence and difficult external limitations across a variety of school types, it appeared that novice teachers in China had little agency in developing instructional strategies as part of their teaching practice. However, one international private school teacher and two public school instructors were more optimistic about their pedagogical learning and development. All of them said that the one-on-one mentoring and principal-supported in-service teacher trainings had helped them to build their pedagogical agency in the classroom. And the increased experience had improved the situation.

我作为新老师入职是有师傅的。她给我很多帮助，包含教育专业素养，教学方式，还有课堂管理。她也会去听我的课，给我评课，我觉得帮助很大。校长也比较有想法，会联系校外资源，请外面的专家老师来培训，比如剑桥老师的培训，讲了一些方法，比较适合国际学校的孩子，我觉得对我运用教学法还是很有用的。（教师 2-私立）

I started as a new teacher with a mentor. She gave me a lot of help in terms of professionalism, teaching style, and classroom management. She would also listen to my classes and evaluate them, which I found very helpful. The principal was also very thoughtful and would contact outside resources and invite outside experts to come for training, such as the Cambridge teacher's training. There are some methods that are suitable for international school children, and it helps me to develop pedagogy in class. (Teacher 2 - Private)

校长刚开始的第一个月没让我直接带班，而是给我安排了一个师傅，让我跟着她学习，我得到了一些指导。校长给老师们买一些有关新课标培训的网课，然后让老师们去学习和思考。学校还会每周举行一次新教师听课之反思，去听有经验老师的课，然后要去思考和讨论。他还在学校组织读书分享的活动去促进新教师学习。虽然说这些培训内容运用到现实教学里还比较困难，但是还是会帮助我在发展教学法上思考。（教师 5-公立学校）

The principal didn't ask me to take a class for the first month at the beginning but assigned me a mentor and I follow her and learn from her. The principal bought us some online lessons for the teachers about the new curriculum training to learn. The school also holds a weekly reflection session for new teachers to listen to the lessons of experienced teachers, and then to reflect and discuss. He also organizes reading and sharing activities in the school to promote new teachers' learning. Although it is still difficult to apply these training contents to real life teaching, it still helps me to think about how to develop my pedagogy. (Teacher 5-Public School)

So, novice instructors from China in this study had very little agency in the choice, application, and development of pedagogical techniques inside their classrooms because of internal and external constraints. Even the difference between the public and private school systems played a significant role. For instance, diversified teaching was not promoted in

public schools due to the system's rigidity and uniformity, as well as inexperienced teachers' excessive administrative and grading responsibilities. In addition, even though they possessed agency, the lengthy and complex pedagogical decision-making method prevented them from using it. In contrast, international private schools provided beginner educators with greater liberty in pedagogical growth. However, the increased autonomy granted to novice instructors had no real affect since teachers in both school systems lacked pedagogical knowledge and expertise. Novice teachers in public schools were concerned about their inadequate pedagogical understanding in light of the new curriculum reform. However, teachers in private international schools struggled to match the special pedagogical standards of international education for example the students' more diverse learning needs. The emphasis on students' academic achievement was the primary constraint imposed on novice teachers to develop pedagogy in both school systems, although it appeared that participants in public schools were under greater examination pressure and influenced by also principal's opinion. For other external constraints, students and parents were all challenges, and novice teachers felt incompetent to differentiate their teaching techniques, albeit in various situations. Novice teachers in public school had little agency in develop pedagogy for underprivileged students from migration and rural backgrounds with learning difficulties, and the absence of parental support made it worse. Whereas novice teachers in international schools found it challenging to meet the diverse learning needs from students and requirements from parents in the pedagogical practice. Also, the classroom managements in terms of students' behaviour in international school has challenged teachers' teaching agency a lot compared to teachers in public school. The lack of collaboration and assistance from colleagues is also a constraint for most beginning educators. In contrast, the initiative of the principle and the level of assistance provided by mentors might be valuable support for new teachers who were building their agency in pedagogical development.

Social management of the classroom

Two factors arose in terms of the teacher's agency in social classroom management. The majority of beginning teachers (5/7) and all private school instructors (4/4) viewed pupils' lack of self-discipline and behavioural issues as a restraint on their classroom management agency. In addition, this behaviour issue hinders teachers' instruction and whole class performance. They believed parental participation was both a resource and a limitation. The majority of public-school teachers (2/3) were not conscious of their agency in dealing with students' the social and emotional well-being, and just one teacher reported that some

students struggled to cope with stress and exam failure. The majority of instructors (3/4) at private schools were aware that emotional well-being is a problem. One teacher stated that students might have different social and emotional problems that were generated at home, but when they got to school, novice teachers lacked the agency to address the issue due to a lack of school attention, insufficient professional aid, and teachers' limited personal time and energy. These considerations prevented them from exercising agency in this respect. One teacher stated as follows:

像二年级有个孩子家长离异了，这个孩子很敏感，情绪起伏大。因为孩子大多数时间在学校，所以需要老师去开导和多专注她。然后作为班主任，我是关注到了，但我真的是没空去管。学校里也没有专业的心理老师来辅导。只能任由发展。我觉得国内这一块还是挺缺失的，就是没有很好地把学生个体的问题解决掉，然后对我来讲，我觉得有点不好受，但是学校层面就是学生个人问题是学生家庭的事你不要多管，也并没有想要去关注和解决这些问题。(教师 2-私立)

For instance, in the second grade, there is a child whose parents are divorced and who is extremely sensitive and prone to emotional swings. Since the child spends most of her time in school, teachers are supposed to devote greater attention to her. But as a teacher and class supervisor, I did realize the problem, but I do not have the time and energy to address the situation. The school also lacks a professional psychologist for counseling. Therefore, I must leave it there. I believe that this is the missing element of education, since we do not concentrate on fixing the difficulties of individual kids, and as a result, I feel a bit guilty. From the school's perspective, they hope you do not complicate matters because individual problem is from their family and school does not really want to pay attention to or resolve these issues (Teacher 2-Private Schools)

So, on both the private and public-school systems, novice teachers had little agency on classroom management in terms of student behaviour; nevertheless, their agency on individual's social and emotional well-being was not generally acknowledged and is similarly limited.

In conclusion, novice teachers from both public and private schools in China had weak agency in classroom setting which includes developing pedagogical methods and social management of classroom. And with regard to the social management of the classroom, teachers' low agency was most evident in students' misbehaviour, while the social well-being of individuals had less effect and consideration.

5.1.1.2 Perceived agency in work community and organization

When it came to Chinese teachers' perceived agency in work community and organization, the study showed that they had very weak or non-existent agency in the two perspectives of making suggestions and imitating activates as well as taking on extra responsibilities for shared activities.

Making suggestions and initiating activities

When teachers were asked about their perception of professional agency in making suggestions to change, to initiate or to join in shared activities, all (7/7) of them indicated negative response towards. Most novice teachers (5/7) thought they were just the most ordinary teachers and did not think that they could be the person who could make suggestions to initiate activities or change something to influence school. One teacher considered the lack of ability, school hierarchy and seniority as constrains. It appeared that beginner teachers, who could recommend change, would have few opportunities to do so, and if "elders" and others in positions of authority were unwilling to propose change, nothing would ever be presented.

到4月份，我到学校才满三年，因为我在学校还是一个新老师，我对自己发起活动的的能力不自信。还有人家在这里工作七八年的老师，包括组长，包括小组长，都没有发起我有什么能力去做呢？学校里是有一个层级的，大家都很明白这个道理。我觉得它不是一个可以自由去发起活动的地方。（教师2-私立）

By April, I have only been at the school for three years, and because I was still a new teacher at the school, I was not confident in my ability to initiate activities. There are other teachers who have been here for seven or eight years, including group leaders, who have not initiated before me, how I can do that. There is a hierarchy in the school, and everyone understands this very well. I don't think it's a place where you can freely go and initiate activities. (Teacher 2-Private)

The majority of teachers acknowledged that, for most activities and decisions, they only got information from higher-ups, then conducted them. Very few schools might have asked teachers for their viewpoint in a superficial way, but they would not have taken it seriously. According to one teacher, even when schools needed suggestions, they only considered the advice of senior teachers since teachers in schools were often recognized and valued by seniority, whereas inexperienced teachers advise was often ignored. One teacher from private schools intended to employ an agency to make some suggestions, but ultimately gave up due to a complex interpersonal interaction. Another teacher had the same idea and wanted to use

the agency indirectly through others, but also withdrew due to the lack of supporting colleagues. They described the scenarios as follows:

我刚来学校的时候，确实有很多想法，在去年的年级团队里我提了很多关于课程活动各方面的意见，后来导致跟当时的组长有产生了一些矛盾，搞得人际关系很复杂，对我自己很不利。今年我就是在组里不再提任何意见，有什么决定我就说好的，我去执行。（教师 3-私立）

When I firstly came to this school, I did make many suggestions about the curriculum activities in my team, which later led to some conflicts with the team leader at that time and the relationship got quite complicated and had some negative influence on myself. This year I just avoid giving any more opinions in the group, I would rather say yes to any decision and then implement it. (Teacher 3 - Private)

我不是主导型人格，但我是一个很好的配合者和执行者。我也是有很多自己的想法的，但是我不可能直接去和领导讲，我希望能得到团队里有经验的老师的指导，或者他把我的声音传达给上面，然后可能就会照顾到老师的需求。但是团队里并没有这样愿意提供帮助的人。我觉得我就是勉强让自己去合群，但其实没有什么归属感。（教师 1-私立）

I don't have a dominant personality, but I am a good follower and executer. I do have a lot of my own ideas, but I can't go directly to the leader. I would like to get guidance from an experienced teacher in the team or he or she can give the voice to the top and then they maybe take care of the teacher's needs. But there are no supper people who are willing to help in team. I think I just try to fit in the team but there is really no sense of belonging. (Teacher 1-Private School)

One teacher who had previously worked in a variety of private international schools suggested that the principals' responsiveness to new ideas might also impact how the novice teachers' voice could be heard. If the principal was more adaptable, he or she would be more inclined to seek teachers' feedback and make minor adjustments within the context of an activity or decision. Nevertheless, they were viewed as constraints in general.

Taking on extra responsibilities in activities

The second aspect of perceived agency at the level of the work community and organization is the extent to which teachers can take more responsibility for shared activities. Regarding this, the majority of teachers (5/7) did not believe they had ever done so. Even if opportunities existed, people were unwilling to accept more duties for various reasons. The greatest impediment was the excessive workload, which left inexperienced instructors with neither energy nor time to consider additional tasks. Additionally, one instructor believed that

moderation was essential in the workplace, since being overly involved may negatively impact relationships, so they would rather to be a quiet person who just took what they were assigned to do. In addition, this agency was also limited or dependant on the advantages teachers would receive for their own professional growth. One teacher from a private school noted that taking on more responsibilities enriched her own teaching experience and added some highlights to her own profile for the future. It demonstrated that one aspect of agency in the work community might also help the other agency in professional development. However, all public-school teachers said that they saw little value for their professional growth, as the ranking of seniority made it no difference whether they took on additional or fewer tasks. In this situation, there were no incentives for them to develop their agency.

To sum up, the participant teachers think they had very little agency in their work community and organization in terms of making suggestions and taking on extra responsibilities. Novice teachers' lack of ability and school hierarchy hindered their awareness of making suggestions and initiating activities and they were usually passive receivers of school decisions and activities. And even some teachers have the awareness, the complicated workplace relationship and lack of supportive team dimmished their desire for contribution. Principals were considered as a limited resource or constrains in most cases. On the other hand, teacher agency in taking on extra responsibilities was also limited by many factors like moderate workplace cultural, seniority ranking, insufficient time and energy. The perceived benefits of personal development could be resource or restriction to this agency.

To sum up, in terms of making proposals and taking on additional tasks, the participant instructors felt they had very little agency on their workplace community and organization. The incompetence and school hierarchy of inexperienced teachers prevented them from offering proposals and initiating activities, and they were usually passive receivers of school policies and activities. Even several teachers were aware of their agency and tried to practice it, the complex nature of their working relationships and the absence of a supporting team hindered their motivation to contribute. Their agency was reversed back. Depending on their characterizations, principals might be either a limited resource or a restriction, although in the majority of situations they operated as constraint. On the other hand, there were other issues, such as a moderate workplace culture, seniority ranking, and insufficient time and energy, hindered teachers' ability to assume more duties and practice their agency. The perceived benefits of personal growth may be a resource for this agency development.

5.1.2 Perceived identity agency

The findings indicated that, when entering the school for the first time, novice teachers in China had to renegotiate the professional principles they had received during their pre-service education or preparation for the teacher qualification certificate test. In addition, they found it incredibly challenging to uphold their ethical ideals or values, nevertheless they did not give. In addition, many acknowledged that their personal interests and skills were difficult to apply to their career. However, the situation steadily improved as they gained more expertise.

5.1.2.1 Renegotiation of professional ideals

In terms of renegotiation of professional ideals, all teachers (7/7) demonstrated that they had to renegotiate their beliefs during their first few years of teaching. Many (5/7) of them reported that, within the first few months of school, they noticed the conflicts between their prior ideals about teaching and learning and reality and fought to keep some of them but almost gave up. However, some instructors (2/7) first came close to abandoning their ideas, but despite many difficulties, they still tried to maintain some. In all cases, novice teachers who had completed either a university-level professional teacher program or a qualification examination agreed that the initial phases of being a schoolteacher were quite rocky and that their professional ideals derived from their educational background had to be re-evaluated due to internal and external constraints. Teachers' lack of pedagogical knowledge and abilities is one of the most significant internal limitations. According to teachers (3/4) from professional teacher training programs, the teacher program did not give adequate pedagogical study and practical school experience, resulting in a significant gap between theory and practice when they came to real school to teach. They believed that what they learned about students' learning and teaching from university-taught theory was too far from the chaotic classroom environment and difficult to implement. And they would have no time to consider how the theories would be applied in the classroom.

我本科师范教育中，大多数都是一些理论课比如教育学，心理学和教育心理学。就是很少有实践的课程，除了大四的教学法。实习只有在最后一个学期3个月，但那个时候第一次接触学校和学生，每天都很忙，根本没时间去想教学法，还有一些理论相关的知识和现实很遥远。现在实际教学的情况更复杂，教学上思考就更困难，理论上的知识也难运用。（教师7-公立）

In my undergraduate teacher education, most of the classes were about theory such as educational management, educational psychology, and others. There were very little practical courses, except on pedagogical course in my senior year. The

internship was only in the last semester for 3 months, but at that time, I got to know school and students for the first time, and every day was hectic. So, I didn't have time to think about pedagogy and some theory I've learnt in my study was far from what was taught in university. And the real teaching situation is more complicated in my school now, I feel it is very difficult to think about pedagogy and all the theories in the book. (Teacher 7 – Public school)

For teachers (4/4) who only hold a teacher qualification certificate with a subject-related university degree, they reported that their subject knowledge was too detached from curriculum in school context and that they lacked pedagogical knowledge in real school life because the only book study in their qualification test lacked practice.

我本科和研究生都是英文专业，学的很深，但因为我现在教的是小学生，学校教材非常简单，感觉我学的并没有什么用。准备教师资格证考试的时候是读过教育学相关的一些书，但考试是考试而已，在现实的教学中感觉用处不大。（教师 1-私立）

I majored in English in both my undergraduate and graduate studies and they are quite academic and deep, but since I am teaching elementary school students and the public-school materials are very simple, I don't feel that what I have learned is very useful. I did read books about education when I was preparing for my teacher certification exam, but I don't feel that they are helpful in the real world of teaching either. (Teacher 1-Private school)

Excessive workload, endless school administration, lack of support, and lack of recognition and respect from school, parents, and society were additional unanticipated external constraints mentioned by novice teachers that undermined their professional ideals. The following limitations were underlined in particular by teachers. Teachers at private schools emphasized that communication with parents might be the most demanding and second most difficult responsibility after teaching every day and frequently, they were placed in a highly vulnerable position and being judged by parents.

我感觉每天的工作都如履薄冰。在做每一个决定之前，都要考虑家长的反应。有时候我觉得学校不是在教育学生，而是在服务家长，我很怀疑我是教师的身份，我是一个教育者还是家长的服务员。（教师 3-私立）

I feel I'm walking on the ice every day; I need to consider parents' reaction before every decision I make, sometimes I think the school is not to educate students, but to serve for parents. I sometimes question my identity as a teacher, whether I'm an educator or I'm just a servant for parents. (Teacher 3- Private Schools)

In addition to the untrust of parents, the lack of recognition and respect from school, and society causes novice teachers to doubt their professional ideals. The seniority of the school's culture had granted all professional development possibilities to the most experienced

teachers. However, beginner teachers who lacked experience and had a larger need for those opportunities appeared to receive few of these opportunities. In addition, the societal disdain for elementary teachers This made it more difficult for beginning teachers to reevaluate their identity in their early years of teaching. Two teachers reported the following:

学校里有什么好的机会都是优先老教师，好的培训机会，公开课，各种奖大多都先轮他们，新老师永远都是排在最后，这挺打击我想当一个好老师的想法的，觉得自己的理想在一点点被磨灭。(教师 7—公立)

Once there are good opportunities, school will give the priority to senior teachers. For example, good training opportunities, demonstration classes, various awards are mostly given to them first, new teachers are always behind. This has diminished my desire to be a good teacher, I think my ideal is being worn out little by little. (Teacher 7 – Public School)

社会上大家总觉得小学老师工作轻松，稳定，而且教小孩子，简单，用不着太高文凭，但现实并不是那样的。你很难让他们理解你。(教师 6- 公立)

People in society always think that elementary school teachers have a relaxing and stable job, and they only teach small kids, that is easy. But the reality is not like that. It's hard to make them understand your work. (Teacher 6 – Public School)

Two teachers who were able to renegotiate their professional identities in a more positive way viewed high-quality training opportunities, mentorship in the workplace, and a growth mindset as resources to support this adjustment in light of all the constraints that result in teachers' great need in renegotiating their professional identities.

Therefore, inexperienced teachers in China face several internal and external obstacles that needed them to renegotiate their professional identities.

5.1.2.2 Maintain ethical standards/values

The need for reassessment of identity was also evident in the replies of teachers on their own values or ethical standards. All (7/7) respondents reported that they had been in a number of extremely challenging circumstances in which they struggled to not give up their own values or ethical standards even it was extremely hard. However, this value conflict had diminished their identity agency. The greatest constraint to act in accordance with their values was their inability to ensure that every child receives a quality education and meet their individual educational requirements. While the standardized testing system was in contradiction with the personal values of teachers.

我觉得当老师的价值是让每个孩子都能获得好的教育，我希望自己可以让他们享受学习的乐趣，但是我现在每天教书都是为了考试，排名，逼着他们做卷考试，他们不快乐。我常常很自责，觉得自己并不能为它们改变什么。

（教师 1-公立）

I think my value of being a teacher is to make every child get good education, I hope I can make them enjoy the learning. But now I am teaching for examination, ranking, forcing them to write papers for examinations, and they are unhappy. I feel guilty often and I could not really change something for them. (Teacher 1 – public School)

Aside from standardized testing, in each of these interview settings, teachers felt they should do more for each child, but their energy and time had been sapped by a massive increase in workload, and they also lacked the skills and resources to assist the students. This has also led to a significant value conflict among beginning educators. As one teacher described:

在这个学校的期间，感觉每天工作量非常大，没有很多时间去备课，没有很多的时间真正去帮助学生。班里的学困生很多，他们需要更多的帮助，但是我的精力是真的有限，所以我也就处于一种自己很愧疚的状态。（教师 6-公立）

During my time at this school, I feel like I have a very heavy workload every day and don't have a lot of time to prepare lessons or really help students. There are a lot of students in the class struggling with their study, and they need more help, but my energy is really limited, so I am in a state where I feel very guilty about myself. (Teacher 6-Public School)

In addition to the inability to address students' learning needs, two teachers highlighted students' special needs as well as certain social and emotional needs. The passive response of parents and the absence of professional support made novice teachers feel increasingly helpless in their efforts to maintain their value. Two teachers said the following:

班上有个孩子可能智商有问题，上课一直睡觉，学习成绩也一直是班上最后一名。我试着去帮助他，但在课堂上有限。我想联系家长协助，但因为家长离异，孩子被奶奶照顾，奶奶年纪大，很难来学校，后来我继续联系家长，家长就直接和我说，你放弃这个孩子吧，我当时非常无力（教师 5-公立）

There was a child in the class who might have an IQ problem, he was in all the classes sleeping, and always ranked the last. I tried to help him in the classroom, but it was very limited. So, I tried to contact the parents to assist, but because the parents were divorced, the child was being taken care of by his grandmother, who was old and had a hard time coming to school. Then I continued to contact the parents, and they just told me directly, "Give up on this child". I felt quite helpless but there was no choice. (Teacher 5 – Public school)

我作为老师的价值观是嗯就是尽量帮助每一个孩子，让他们快乐学习，但我现在发现，去全面帮助每个孩子是需要很多人去配合的，不单单是学科教师，比如其他专业心理老师，家庭，只靠自身的能力是非常有限的。（教师2-私立）

My value as a teacher is to try to help each child and make them enjoy learning but I find that supporting each child requires many people to work together, not only a subject teacher, but also other professional psychology teachers, families, and me personally, is very limited. (Teacher 2 – Private School)

Overall, beginner educators in China battled a great deal to preserve an ethical standard or value, yet the vast majority of them did not give up. Educational system based on standardized testing and enormous workload faced external limits. The internal restraints were a lack of competencies on the part of teachers, limited time and energy, and a hefty workload. Inadequate family and professional resources exacerbated the novice teachers' internal conflicts with regard to their values.

5.1.2.3 Possibilities to use personal interests and competences

Similarly, instructors still felt a lack of agency with regard to the third aspect of identify agency: the ability to utilize personal interests and skills. Some (2/7) educators believed that their own skills and interests were not supported in the majority of instances. They found parental involvement, an exam-focused curriculum, and unsupportive principals to be the most significant constraints. Many (3/7) of the seven novice teachers said that they were still finding their work-related skills and passions. Moreover, a minority (2/7) of students reported that they had acquired more skills as a result of their growing experiences, and that they now felt more capable of utilizing their passions in the classroom, albeit in a limited capacity. And they believed that technology and proper training were the most important resources.

In conclusion, when beginning teachers entered the school environment, they were forced to re-evaluate their professional values. This included renegotiating their professional ideals in light of their diverse educational backgrounds. There were internal and external restraints, such as a lack of pedagogical knowledge and abilities, inadequate pre-service education, a standardized testing system, work overload, and a lack of recognition and respect from the school, parents, and society. It emphasized the significance of high-quality training opportunities, mentorship, and a development mentality in assisting beginner instructors in maintaining their professional identity. In addition, many had encountered difficulties in adhering to their own values or ethical standards. Due to the test-based educational system

and other complex school circumstances, teachers were unable to address every student's educational needs. Teachers reported a desire to do more for their students, but lacked the skills, energy, time, and resources, such as parental and professional support, to do so. Some teachers were worried about the children's special and social-emotional needs; they had encountered significant value conflicts in this setting. Similarly, there were still many external restrictions on the use of personal competencies and interests, and many novice teachers are still in the process of discovering them. However, it appeared that teachers would gain more of this ability as their experiences, training, and the prevalence of technology development.

The summary of the results about Chinese novice teachers' professional agency will be presented in Section 5.3.

5.2 Revisiting the model on novice teachers' perception of professional agency in Finland

Through a reevaluation of the model, it was found that the model is still applicable today, since Finnish novice teachers continue to have the similar perception of professional agency as in prior research (Eteläpelto et al., 2015) demonstrated eight years ago. However, a few disparities were also seen, which might reflect a possible sample bias in the previous study (Eteläpelto et al., 2015) or the emergence of new circumstances in recent years. The details will be found in the following description.

Beginner teachers in Finland have a great deal of agency in developing their teaching methods and implementing new approaches. In accordance with Eteläpelto et al. (2015), schools encourage various teacherships. They viewed the internal element of their personal knowledge, interests, and competencies as one of the most important resources, along with other external resources such as the collaboration of colleagues, the positive school environment, and the adaptability of subject scheduling. The flexibility of subject scheduling gave teachers room to adjust and choose the most suitable approaches for students. Also, teachers had more opportunities to collaborate with their colleagues when they were doing transdisciplinary projects. As one teacher describes:

Yeah, yeah. I feel like. That's maybe one of the best things of this work. We were taught to have autonomy in our teaching and school supports different teachership. Everyone is different. I can use my own competence; choose the way I like and subject I want to teach. For example, I feel like my kids are too. The students are too tired to continue the math. I can change it to art lesson and continue the math tomorrow. Yeah, it's very flexible. We also have various

projects connecting different subjects in one semester and we teachers use our own creativity and our own strength to work together and make it happen.
(Teacher 9-Finland)

This preliminary investigation revealed, however, that the presence of students with special learning needs, behavioural difficulties, or social emotional challenges posed one of the most significant impediments to the operation of teachers' agency in pedagogical development. This also significantly affected teachers' agency in social classroom management. In a prior study, only the management of students' social and emotional wellbeing was emphasized, and teachers were reported to have limited energy and time as well as competence and tools to assist those students. The management of students' unique learning requirements and behaviour were not included in previous finding (Eteläpelto et al., 2015) but were highlighted in this study. This might imply a shortage of information in the prior study (Eteläpelto et al., 2015). In addition, a novice teacher emphasized that the increasing social and emotional issues of pupils after Covid had increased teachers' burdens, even there were professional support but and the insufficient of further assistance from a multidisciplinary team and adults severely hampered the agency.

After COVID, there has been a lot of increasing social emotional challenges in students. Uh, kind of decrease in student well-being. The students I have now in third grade, they left school and studied at home in the first grade, so they got less chance of practice being a friend, it is a weird situation. They need more help now, but we do not have enough adults helping with the situation, this is quite stressful for me. (Teacher 9-Finland)

Because some kids, they are not ready for the kind of behavior that school expects. If the disruptive behavior between the activity, so it doesn't really help with the class. So, these kinds of issues, I still have no idea how to really solve them, because many methods are tried, but if the kids are not ready, would need to offer something more than a big group of students who have different needs. This I think this is also not related to the teacher or the school, but it's related to the kids. They are in different stages of development and different skills. Yes, I think all the schools have one special education teacher, but if there is only one and there are around 100 kids, or the teacher come once a week for one day in small school. It's not enough. For the kids, and I do have assistance here for the student learning, but she is not in every lesson, and she still cannot go to everybody at the same time. Yeah, so, it's really hard. (Teacher 8-Finland)

An additional result worthy of discussion is that the situation may be rather different for resource teachers, since one of my interviewees spent the first two years of her classroom teaching career in various schools as a resource teacher. Due to the instability, resource teachers had fewer opportunities to exercise agency in teaching techniques, as noted. They

had limited time to familiarize themselves with the curriculum and pupils in advance and to acquire instructional materials. Even if individual teachers had the flexibility to create different ways to teach, their agency was still greatly constrained by the instability. This result had revealed the possible sample bias in the previous study and questioned the generalization of the previous study (Eteläpelto et al., 2015).

However, in general, the result validated the finding in Eteläpelto et al. (2015)'s study: in classroom setting, novice teachers from Finland had a high agency in developing their pedagogical methods because of the personal competence, flexible subject scheduling and close collaboration between teachers, even difficult students with special learning needs challenged this agency sometimes. However, their agency in social management of classroom in terms of students' social emotional well-being is quite weak especially after Covid. And what wasn't mentioned by Eteläpelto et al. (2015) was students' special learning needs and behavior problems, which also diminished teachers' agency in the social management of classroom.

Moving to the agency in the work community and organization, the same outcome was seen in the interview as in the previous study (Eteläpelto et al., 2015). In general, Finnish beginner teachers had high agency when it came to making good suggestions and initiating activities, but there are exceptions. The characteristics and management of the principal played a significant role. If the principal was open and encouraging, teachers were more likely to provide suggestions. However, if the principal was traditional and out-of-date, teachers' agency decreased as well. As one teacher said:

I changed schools before, it really depends on the principal. If the principals are doing the right things, encourage teachers to give ideas and open to suggestions, I can easily give ideas. But if the principals keep silent and do not want to make change, I don't even try to change or introduce something new because they might also struggle. (Teacher 8-Finland)

In addition to the principal's involvement, which was emphasized in earlier research (Eteläpelto et al., 2015), the school size emerged as a new influencing element. The large size would make it difficult for beginner teachers to be heard and have an impact, but the smaller school size would strengthen bonds between teachers and make it simpler for novice teachers to offer advice and contribute to the work community. This additional information might imply sample bias in prior research. As one instructor explained:

Currently I'm working in a quite small school. We have 30 teachers here and we have a teacher's room where everyone can fit in. We are always there together, easy to really get to know each other. I'm young and new but everyone is welcoming and helpful. Also easier for me to suggest things and we have very open communication. But I. Last year, when I was in the other school and there are around 80 teachers, I had very different feelings there. I didn't know everyone and we neither have common discussions, and I feel we are really apart, I cannot really influence. Like what we do here. So yeah it. (Teacher9- Finland)

And for the other aspect of taking extra responsibilities for shared activities, the results were agreed in the prior study (Eteläpelto et al., 2015). Teachers agreed that there were always possibilities to do so, but it relied on the time and energy of beginner teachers, who were already overburdened with their own class work. However, when they gained expertise, the circumstance would improve.

So, to sum up, the result validated the finding in Eteläpelto et al. (2015)'s study: Finnish teachers had sufficient agency in contributing to the work community and organizations, although the situation depended on the characteristics of the principals, the teachers' energy and time, and the teachers' motivation. The new factor this study showed was the school size could also be considered as a factor affecting this agency.

As for identity agency, similar to Eteläpelto et al. (2015), the findings reaffirmed that the majority of novice teachers must renegotiate their professional ideals when they entered the classroom, with the discrepancy between theory and practice and the limited knowledge of students serving as the primary constraints. In addition, teachers felt their ethical standards/values were questioned when they were unable to meet the particular needs and social/emotional well-being of each pupil. Personal inadequacy in addressing these problems, a lack of multi-professional team assistance, and insufficient human resources were the primary limitations. In contrast, both teachers reported being able to utilize their interests and skills in their teaching profession. However, the response was questionable when applied to resource teachers due to the unpredictability of these teachers' situation.

5.3 Summary of the result

5.3.1 Summary of Chinese novice teachers' perception of professional agency

In general, Chinese novice teachers' professional agency in workplace was weak. In classroom setting, they had weak agency in developing pedagogical methods and social management of classroom, particularly in terms of student behaviour and social-emotional

well-being. In addition, Chinese teachers must renegotiate their identify because of complicated school circumstances, resulting in value conflicts when they enter the classroom. Also, they still had less possibilities to use their personal competence and interests in teaching. The result is presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Novice teachers' perception of professional agency in China

Adjusted essential elements of professional agency among novice Chinese teachers, as well as the perceived constraints and resources (Eteläpelto et al., 2015)

Novice teachers' perception of professional agency in China			
Professional agency in the classroom context			
Components of agency	Perceived nature of agency	Perceived resources	Perceived constraints
Developing pedagogical methods	Weak and narrow	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mentors help • Training opportunities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Insufficient knowledge, competence in adjusting to new curriculum reform or differentiated teaching required in international schools • the lack of recognition and respect from school, parents and society • Standardized tests and students' performance, principals' opinion • Restricted curriculum, teaching content, rules • Insufficient cooperation with colleagues • Additional administration work and too much marking • Teachers' lack of time and energy • Large class size • Difficult students (unprivileged students with migration or rural background or students with behaviour problems) • Incorporative parents (be absent or interfere too much)

Novice teachers' perception of professional agency in China			
Social management of classroom, regarding to students' behaviour and social emotional well-being	Weak or not-built yet	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Teachers increasing experience 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Parents' participation Lack of school attention Lack of professional aid in psychology Lack of competence and tools Lack of energy and time
Professional agency in teachers' work community and organization			
Components of agency	Perceived nature of agency	Perceived resources	Perceived constraints
Making suggestions and initiating activities	Weak or non-existent	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Principals' openness 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lack of ability, School hierarchy Prioritization of Seniority Complicated interpersonal relationships in workplace Lack of supportive coworkers
Receiving and taking extra responsibilities for shared activities	Weak or non-existent	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Motivation for enriching personal experience 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lack of energy and time Relationship consideration Moderate principal in workplace Prioritization of seniority
Identity agency			
Components of agency	Perceived nature of agency	Perceived resources	Perceived constraints
Renegotiation of professional ideals	Strong need to practice agency	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> High-quality teacher training Mentor's guidance Teachers' perseverance and growth mindset 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lack of pedagogical knowledge and competence Discrepancy of theory and practice (knowledge of teaching and learning and students) Challenges in social management of classroom (students' behavior and social emotional wellbeing) Extra administration and other workload Parents interference Lack of recognition and respect of school, parents, and society Complicated school circumstances

Novice teachers' perception of professional agency in China			
Maintain one's own ethical standards/ value	Weak	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Teachers' perseverance 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Standardized testing system Lack of abilities, energy and time Lack of parents' assistance Lack of professional support Lack of cooperation with colleagues
Possibilities to use personal interests and competences at work	Weak but growing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Personal motivation Increasing experiences High-quality in-service training Use of technology 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lack of competence Exam-oriented curriculum Parents interference Unsupportive principals

5.3.2 Summary of revisiting the model on novice teachers' perception of professional agency in Finland

The result from the pre-study in this research showed that the model from Eteläpelto et al. (2015) about Finnish novice teachers' professional agency was still workable in this study even there were some differences which might be because of the sample bias in previous research or the situation changes during the eight years. The full interview could be combined with the article to reflect on Chinese teachers' professional agency in China in the discussion part. The results of the preliminary investigation of Finnish teachers' perceptions of professional agency are summarized in Table 2. It revealed the novice teachers' perceptions of their professional agency, as well as the internal and external variables that may facilitate or impede their agency.

Table 2. Novice teachers' perception of professional agency in Finland

Adjusted model and result of professional agency among beginner Finnish teachers, as well as the perceived constraints and resources (Eteläpelto et al., 2015). The contents with "..." were newly emerged factors in this study.

Novice teachers' perception of professional agency in Finland			
Professional agency in the classroom context			
Components of agency	Perceived nature of agency	Perceived resources	Perceived constraints
Developing pedagogical methods	Strong and comprehensive	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Personal interests, knowledge and competences Collaboration with colleagues 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Difficult pupils (with special learning needs, behavior control and social

Novice teachers' perception of professional agency in Finland			
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Flexible subject scheduling • School atmosphere 	emotional wellbeing needs) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • *Resource teachers' instability
*Social management of classroom, regarding to students' behavior and social emotional well-being	Weak	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Multiprofessional team • Covid's negative influence 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of professional aid in psychology • Lack of competence and tools • Lack of energy and time
Professional agency in work community and organization			
Components of agency	Perceived nature of agency	Perceived resources	Perceived constraints
Making suggestions and initiating activities	Strong, but varying across schools	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Principals' characteristics: encouraging and open • *Small school size and strong bounds of teachers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Principals' characteristics: conservative and outdated • *Big school size and loose connection between teachers
Taking on extra responsibilities	Strong	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased experience 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of time and energy
Identity agency			
Components of agency	Perceived nature of agency	Perceived resources	Perceived constraints
Renegotiation of professional ideals	Strong need to exercise agency	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teachers' patience in overcoming initial obstacles 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discrepancy of theory and practice (knowledge of teaching and learning and students) • Challenges in social management of classroom (students' behavior and social emotional wellbeing) • School circumstances
Maintain one's own ethical standards/ value	Weak	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Close collaboration with colleagues 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of abilities, energy and time • Lack of parents' assistance • Lack of professional support

Novice teachers' perception of professional agency in Finland			
Possibilities to use personal interests and competences at work	Strong and extensive	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Principal support	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• *Resource teachers' instability

6 Discussion

6.1 Reflection on novice teachers' perception of professional agency in China through the lens of the perspectives on novice teachers' professional agency in Finland

The results indicate that Chinese novice teachers have a hard time adjusting to school environments and face identity strain in their first years on the job. The finding provided evidence shown as constraints and resources for the weak agency among novice teachers in China. By combining the result from pre-study with current Finnish novice teachers and Eteläpelto et al. (2015)'s study, Chinese novice teachers' perception of professional agency will be discussed through comparison with the Finnish context, so as to have a more comprehensive understanding of it. The discussion consists of two parts, one is the professional agency in work and the other is the identity agency. It will further shed light on the future studies.

6.1.1 Perceived professional agency in work

The discussion of Chinese novice teachers' professional agency in work will be discussed from two perspectives, one is to compare their agency in classroom context, which consists of developing pedagogical methods and social management of classroom in students' behavior and social emotional wellbeing. The other is their agency in affecting their work community and organization.

6.1.1.1 Perceived agency in classroom context

Comparing novice teachers' agency in classroom context from the two countries, Chinese novice teachers seem have much lower agency in developing pedagogical methods than Finnish novice teachers. However, for teachers from both sides, difficult students in their learning, behaviour and social emotional well-being all put constraints on their agency in teaching and social management of class even the extent of influence for each constraint is different.

Developing pedagogical methods

The educational agency discrepancies in the two situations can be explained by the opposing internal and external factors. The personal knowledge, skills, and interests are seen as a

benefit for beginner teachers in Finland (Eteläpelto et al., 2015) although it appears to be the greatest obstacle for Chinese beginner teachers. Some instructors in China lack the confidence or skills to select or execute innovative pedagogical techniques, so restricting their ability to influence the development of educational practices. According to studies, teachers may only exercise agency if their teacher preparation education provides them with sufficient pedagogical instruments (Priestley et al., 2015; Vähäsantanen, 2015). It is not unexpected that Finnish novice teachers had greater agency because they are highly trained professionals who have completed a university-level pre-service teacher program and have a master's degree that encompasses five years of teaching study and practice. Their education based on research has prepared them with educational tools to improve their work. Therefore, they can be independent professionals with a great lot of autonomy over establishing instructional strategies, course materials, and evaluation (Adams-Budde et al., 2012; Lavonen, 2016; Niemi, 2015; Sahlberg, 2011). In contrast to Finland, the study doubts the efficacy of China's teacher education and qualifying systems, as has been claimed in earlier research (Shi & Englert, 2010; J. Ye et al., 2019). Integration of teacher education programs in non-teaching colleges and comprehensive universities, which lack a well-developed curriculum to support teacher education, is unhelpful in developing teacher quality. The fact that teaching is a multidimensional profession that requires educational theoretical knowledge and practical experience in pedagogy has been overlooked by allowing students from different fields to obtain teacher certification by passing the certification exam alone (Shi & Englert, 2010; J. Ye et al., 2019). Consequently, the qualification process may not completely ensure a teacher's ability to handle real-world teaching scenarios (Paine & Fang, 2006).

In addition, this study demonstrates that many beginner teachers struggle to build a student-centered approach. Novice teachers in public schools might lack confidence in their ability to satisfy the student-centered pedagogical criteria of curriculum reform, whereas novice teachers in private schools fail to differentiate instruction to suit the unique learning needs of their pupils. This aligns with previous studies that suggest the Chinese curriculum reform presents obstacles for new teachers. Teachers are required to transition from conventional, teacher-focused instruction to a student-centred method that promotes self-directed and engaged learning, values diversity among students, and cultivates an educational atmosphere that encourages active involvement (Nanzhao et al., n.d.). Unfortunately, teachers lack sufficient training to effectively implement the updated curriculum, compounded by the prevailing test-oriented mindset of teachers (Nanzhao et al., n.d.). The finding also gives

evidence that most Chinese participants especially in public schools considered improving students' test score as the starting point of applying teaching methods. Unlike Finnish teachers who placed a greater emphasis on students' unique learning needs, learning experience, and motivation for future learning when selecting and implementing pedagogical techniques, Chinese teachers' embedded test-oriented mindset hasn't been changed. In this way, the study suggests the significance of professionalizing teacher education and teacher selection in China, as well as the necessity of enhancing the student-centred pedagogical abilities and changing mindset of novice teachers.

Although the insufficient pedagogical competence was an indispensable constraint for novice teachers in China, however, there were still some Chinese novice teachers were reported to have the self-efficacy to try novel ways, but they lacked the agency to implement the ideas. It shows that only studying teachers' self-efficacy beliefs in pedagogical development might overlook the external social context while studying agency reveal the complexity of novice teacher's situation better (Barni et al., 2019; Liyuan et al., 2022; Toom et al., 2015). The external factors imposed includes the inflexible curriculum framework, the rigid rules in teaching set by school and outdated test-based system, according to this study. Particularly in public schools, novice teachers are requested to follow a uniform teaching structure and curriculum and had less freedom of choice in applying student centred approach. This result gives evidence from the other side that diversity in curriculum and scheduling provides opportunities to develop pedagogical agency of inexperienced teachers further (Eteläpelto et al., 2015; Priestley et al., 2015). Teachers from Finland give further examples, they may adjust curriculum and design transdisciplinary projects with a range of stakeholders within and outside the classroom, such as university professors, museum curators, etc (Eteläpelto et al., 2015). These activities need close teacher collaboration, and the majority of novice teachers in this research perceived this as an advantage for the development of their pedagogical practices. In this sense, teachers in Finland view the rigorous separation of content and teaching schedule as a hindrance to their agency to independently develop instructional strategies (Eteläpelto et al., 2015). This perspective emphasizes, once again, how difficult it is for Chinese beginner instructors to exercise autonomy in educational practices, given that the situation in China is reversed. The concept of student-centred, transdisciplinary curriculum reform in China does not appear to be suitable to the country's public school system.

In China, subject knowledge and subject identity remain the most essential components of teacher education and professional training programs. The examination system is designed according to the students' subject mastery. In the majority of elementary schools, where all teachers are subject experts, cross-disciplinary education is undeveloped (Zhou, 2014). So even some novice teachers have the self-efficacy to follow the curriculum reform, shifting from a discipline-based, knowledge-centered, single-method to an interdisciplinary, learner-centered, collaborative strategy, but the inflexible subject calendar and exam-focused system make implementation extremely challenging. In addition, the study reveals that teachers seldom collaborate and work together due to the competitive nature of test rankings between classes, and that inexperienced teachers cannot anticipate much assistance from their peers which was the opposite situation from Finnish teachers. Moreover, this research points out that novice teachers in the public school system had to cope with a great lot of administrative work and endless assignment grading, which drained their energy and time to an extreme extent, so removing their autonomy in pedagogical growth and those situations were not stressed among Finnish novice teachers. Therefore, it seems that teachers are more advanced than the system, however, Chinese novice teachers seem to be unable to develop their agency in this regard. This study implies that the implications of the new student-centred curriculum reform in public schools' systems require extensive internal and external considerations regarding not only the pedagogical preparation of teachers, but also the modification of the subject-centred and test-based school system. Also, it appears important to reduce the administrative and homework-correction responsibilities of beginning teachers. Only by those changes, novice teacher's agency in pedagogical development can be strengthened in public schools. In addition, this study shows that many international schools in China implement foreign curricula, which promotes greater flexibility in transdisciplinary teaching and learning. However, the school examination also restricts the agency of new teachers. It suggests that there might more communication in student-centred teacher training for Finland and China, however, to understand the difference of school systems is important.

Furthermore, rookie instructors in Finland highlighted the advantages of the school system's lack of severe standards and persistent requests for accountability (Eteläpelto et al., 2015). This element enables individuals to have a powerful sense of control in implementing their personal interests and unique abilities in teaching because the less regulation would remove the obstacles in teachers' pedagogical decision-making process and save time. We can observe the advantages of the Finnish education system, which enables educators to exercise

professional autonomy by utilizing the expertise acquired during their university teacher education program (Eteläpelto et al., 2015). The study reveals that there are more rules regarding teachers' teaching in China. Teachers' inventiveness about some teaching activities may be subject to a lengthy decision-making process by several school apartments, therefore diminishing teachers' agency in executing their own teaching interests.

In addition, the accountability manifested itself in the form of a performance-based salary structure connected to the effectiveness of teachers in raising pupils' test results. New teachers are placed in a challenging setting in which to exercise their agency. They desire to establish innovative ways, but in order to do so, they have to compromise students' performance, which may affect their own salaries and subject them to criticism by the principal as well.

Nonetheless, the principal may also fall under the control of the upper level of local government. There appears to be a dead end. As study (Z. Li et al., 2022) shows a performance-based salary structure was developed for the accountability system. In the system, the average test scores of the teachers' assigned class are a significant criterion used to assess teachers' performance. Teachers face pressure to ensure their students pass exams at both the school-set passing rate and the local government's "model school passing rate."

Additionally, both teachers and schools are under pressure to meet state-mandated targets and perform well in intra-school competition to qualify for better pay and resources (Z. Li et al., 2022). It also makes sense that this study shows that most Chinese principals act as a constraint who interfere with novice teachers' teaching practice by giving opinions on examination. Principal under the pressure of assessment may not put many efforts and make incentives to help teachers to implement student-centred improvement(Haiyan et al., 2016).

As OECD (2019) reported, the Chinese principals are stressed by the responsibility of student's achievement which did not apply to principals in Finland. In contrast, in Finland even the use of principal's power sometimes can also be a constrain for teacher practicing their agency in pedagogical development according to Eteläpelto et al. (2015). However, comparably, this study shows that principals are still independent from teachers using pedagogical approach. And they are mostly supporters, having no rights to interfere, or making judgements about teachers' teaching. Even the majority of principals in public schools act as a barrier to novice teachers' professional agency in student-centered pedagogical development, according to this study. However, there are exceptions in which principals initiate training opportunities to help novice teachers build or develop their professional agency. Even with this seemingly hopeless accountability structure, I assume there are still

opportunities not only for beginner teachers but also for principals to develop their agency. More complex factors need to be looked into in this aspect which may create opportunities for the future study.

Similarly, the challenging students challenge the initiative of inexperienced teachers from both nations as they build instructional strategies. However, it appears that they have distinct definitions of difficulty. The majority of Chinese public school novice teachers viewed underprivileged students from rural or migration backgrounds with learning difficulties as difficult students, whereas Finnish novice teachers viewed students with a broad spectrum of special learning, social emotional well-being, and behavioural needs as difficult students. According to OECD (2019), Chinese teachers view being accountable for student achievement to be a major cause of stress, whereas Finnish teachers consider adapting classes for students with special needs to be the most prominent source of stress. This disparity might be explained by the contrasting emphasis on exam performance and individual growth in the educational systems of the two nations. Chinese novice teachers felt that difficult students impeded their freedom to use pedagogy, whereas Finnish teachers feel that their pedagogy could not meet the needs of every difficult student. This different stand points demonstrate the different perspectives of teacher-centred and student-centred approaches in the two countries. In contrast to teachers in public schools, the data indicates that novice teachers in international schools share the same concern for satisfying the unique learning needs of each student as the Finnish novice teachers do when exercising their pedagogical agency. It suggests that western education, which emphasizes the development of the person, has a greater impact on international education. This shows that the Finnish student-centred approach may be more negotiable in international schools in China when future conversation between Finland and China is considered.

Social management of the classroom (behaviour and social-emotional wellbeing)

From the other aspect of agency in social management of classroom, even though previous finding (Eteläpelto et al., 2015) suggests that despite the fact that research-based academic teacher education offers Finnish teachers the flexibility to apply their competences, there is no assurance that these novice teachers would employ advanced pedagogical approaches in the classroom due to their limitations in the dimension of social management of classroom. This study gives more evidence for this theory, and it appears that both Finnish and Chinese teachers have poor agency in this respect, since the majority of novice teachers are challenged

by the students' behaviour. However, data appears that Finnish teachers might have less agency in the management of the social and emotional well-being of their pupils than Chinese teachers. Especially after covid, students who missed years of learning with peers in quarantine were found to have higher behaviour and social emotional well-being issues in Finland, placing a tremendous deal of strain on novice teachers exercising their agency in this respect. It may also be related to the fact that many Chinese teachers in this research appeared to focus more on the class's average performance than on these students' social and emotional needs, as well as schools. They believe that parents should take greater responsibility for these issues, and that their engagement is more significant. While Finnish educators believe they have this obligation, they lack the necessary skills and resources and see a shortage of multi-professional assistance and additional human resources as the most significant external constraints. The Chinese educational system emphasizes the attainment of collective goods, whereas the Finnish educational system emphasizes individual growth (Jin-Muranen et al., 2012). Additionally, the comparison emphasizes the equity of the Finnish educational system. Every child, regardless of family circumstances, should receive a quality education, and schools and teachers should be mainly responsible for their education. The social welfare system enabled the construction of three levels of inclusive education. Children get general assistance, enhanced support, and special help from the school and other social welfare-related departments (Halinen & Järvinen, 2008; Takala et al., 2009). Even Eteläpelto et al. (2015) shows that supporting system need to be developed further, Finland has still set a good example for the inclusive education system (Adams-Budde et al., 2012; Halinen & Järvinen, 2008).

In contrast, the situation in China is completely different. The involvement of the parents is one component that emerged from the data and was highlighted only in the Chinese setting. As a "double-edged sword," Chinese novice teachers expect the active participation and assistance of parents in their students' education and the performance of their jobs. From the study, we may conclude that parents may provide support for instructors; nevertheless, an over dependence on parental assistance might be problematic. Parents' too much interference or absence hinders novice teachers' agency in the pedagogical development and classroom management. And they appear to have less trust in teachers than previously. This demonstrates the contradiction in the Chinese tradition of honouring teachers (Gu, 2006). This can be explained by the fast societal changes brought about by the market-opening economic reforms of 1978 (W. Ye et al., 2021). The previous study (W. Ye et al., 2021) indicates that

Even teachers are highly valued by society; nevertheless, as a result of this societal shift, teachers have moved from recognized experts to service providers. This transformation has diminished teachers' authority and their ability to communicate with students and parents. This makes sense that novice teachers may be judged by not satisfying their parents' customers' needs. This scenario is exacerbated in international schools when parents are viewed as the primary source of funding for school growth. In addition, the national college entrance exam, Gaokao, which is the only way to achieve social class mobility, has caused tension between teachers and parents about students' education (W. Ye et al., 2021). With the prevalence of one-child policy before, parents put most of the hope of the family on their only child, they at the same time feel that their children's academic achievement is a reflection of their parenting abilities, they want their children to obtain a strong academic education from preparatory schools that prioritize test scores in core subjects. The inequalities between urban and rural schools, regions, and institutions have led to severe competition among parents and students for a limited number of slots at top-tier schools and colleges (W. Ye et al., 2021). This study provides evidence that parents put more expectations and requirements for teachers' to educate their "only child" for better scores. This places schools and teachers under great pressure to adopt new educational approaches and learning styles (Y. Li et al., 2019). On the other hand, this study also implies that parents' power has created the inequality of education because students who have poor family background become vulnerable in this educational system (Fu et al., 2017). Academic underachievement has been attributed to the lack of parents in the education of disadvantaged children, as indicated by the study's findings. This absence also severely restricts teachers' agency in their instructional practices. Compared to Finnish teachers, the study reveals that big class sizes and a lack of additional school support may also contribute to Chinese teachers' excessive dependency on their parents. Public schools in China have twice as many pupils as public schools in Finland, yet there are no teaching assistants or any school-provided assistance, making it hard for teachers to care for each child; the only resource they may have is the parents.

As for the management of students' social emotional wellbeing, this study shows that Chinese novice teachers' less attention on it does not mean that this management problem does not exist. Studies (Wang et al., 2017; Zheng & Zheng, 2015) indicate that the swift economic growth and societal reforms in China have significantly impacted children's educational and mental health experiences. These transformations encompass various factors, such as an intensely competitive educational system, heightened expectations placed on students from

single-child households, and a diminishing presence of traditional social support for rural left-behind children, whose parents migrate to large cities for employment and leave them in the care of grandparents or other extended family members. As a result, stress levels among school-aged children in China have increased significantly. Based on Finnish teachers' increased concern for their students' emotional well-being as a result of Covid, novice Chinese teachers in this study did not highlight this issue. However, the current study was unable to give more information on whether or not this issue exists and to what extent it does, which can be examined in future research consideration. The current study provides evidence that some novice teachers recognized that students struggled with mental issues resulting from the failure of examinations or the absence of families in rural areas, and teachers working in international schools recognized that students' social and emotional well-being issues may have been brought to school by students' families. However, insufficient knowledge and energy, as well as a lack of parents' cooperation, professional support have constrained teachers' agency to address this issue of classroom mismanagement. This finding is consistent with previous studies demonstrating that a substantial number of students who are at a greater risk of experiencing mental health issues suffer major difficulties in accessing professional psychological care. These barriers are mostly caused by the dearth of trained mental health service providers and the lack of effective care pathways (Zheng & Zheng, 2015). This study further reveals the urgency of building supporting systems for teachers to assisting students in their special needs in learning, behaviour, and social emotional well-being in China. The finding also suggests that Chinese novice teachers may need more communication tools to facilitate the communication with parents.

So, in general, we could see that Chinese novice teachers have weaker professional agency than Finnish novice teachers in classroom context due to complicated internal and external factors imposed by the system. From the comparison, insufficient pre-service teacher preparation in student-centred pedagogy, lack of knowledge and tools in students special learning needs and social-emotional wellbeing, lack of communication tools with parents and lack of external school supporting system are highlighted constraints in Chinese context. There appears to be an opportunity for enhanced communication and learning regarding teachers' pedagogical development and inclusive education training between the two countries. However, a more comprehensive understanding of the social and cultural aspects of the education system and teacher education system is required to foster a holistic approach.

6.1.1.2 Perceived agency in work community and organization

Compared to Finnish teachers, Chinese teachers have much weaker agency or have no agency to contribute the working community by making suggestions and initiation of activities.

Instead of recognizing active engagement in school development as teachers' rights and responsibilities in the Finnish setting, most Chinese novice teachers lack the capability and power to influence the decision of the higher level. They are usually passive receiver of school decisions. Moreover, the finding shows that even some teachers may have agency in the beginning to renegotiate and challenge the administrations' decisions, however, because of the ignorance of their suggestions and initiations from upper level of administration, they abandoned the notion of making contribution. Some teachers have the have idea and wanted to practice their agency indirectly through other colleagues but eventually give up because the unsupportive peers. This outcome is consistent with the view that the support teachers get from their peers and superiors would encourage them to acquire a sense of agency and accept responsibility for their own and the organization's growth(Hargreaves & O'Connor, 2017). Policy and cultural context also impact teachers' autonomy in organizational level(Louws et al., 2020). This study provides evidence for this assertion, as Chinese teachers in this study believed that being moderate and getting along with others were invisible cultural norms in their schools, and some of them believed that providing too much voice could lead to conflicts and negatively impact relationships with others. In addition, the importance of seniority impacts the motivation of new teachers to assume additional tasks and facilitates their professional growth. Beginner teachers believed it made no difference whether they took on more or less responsibilities. This situation has removed the motivation for their agency development. Also, it can be predicted that if seniors were passive receivers, nothing new would ever be suggested, which was detrimental to the development of both beginner teachers and schools over the long run. Compared to Finnish teachers, the cultural difference is more obvious. According to Hofstede (2011)'s culture dimension of power distance in workplace, compared to western nations, the power distance in China is rather large because the hierarchical structure plays an essential role. People in charge are supposed to be respected and obedient, while subordinates are expected to demonstrate deference. The hierarchy was derived from the ancient Confucian concept of social harmony and maintaining order via seniority and authority(Chao, 1990). However, Finnish work culture tends to be more egalitarian, with an organizational structure that lays less emphasis on official titles and more focus on informal communication and teamwork(Hofstede, 2011). It makes sense that

Finnish novice teachers have more autonomy and can influence in their workplaces better. Inexperienced educators in private international schools in this study also appeared to possess a somewhat greater sense of autonomy. This can be attributed to the influence of Western culture, which fosters a workplace environment with reduced hierarchical structures and less emphasis on seniority. Consequently, teachers exhibit a greater willingness to take additional responsibilities in order to enhance their professional growth in the long run.

However, except this cultural difference, novice teachers in both countries consider their agency is dependable on principals' characteristics and management even though the degree of impact varies. Finnish principals' characteristics seem to have a greater impact on novice teachers' agency in making an impact in their organizations than Chinese ones. In international surveys, Finnish principals appear as relatively independent actors (Alava et al., n.d.). As studies (Eteläpelto et al., 2015; Risku & Pulkkinen, 2016; Sahlberg, 2011) shows that Principals of Finnish schools have the ability to appoint new teachers, provide resources, serve as a mediator between school administrators and teachers, and are responsible for the school's overall management. If the principle is helpful, the novice teacher's growth of pedagogical techniques and participation in the work community are enhanced (Eteläpelto et al., 2015). While in China, even though the study (Haiyan et al., 2016) show most principals emphasis on student and teachers' discipline, obedience, and respect for authority because of the hierarchical structure, and at the same time they are also constrained by superiors. So, one could assume principals' personal characteristics and management style will not matter that much for teachers. However, this study shows that some principals especially in international schools with more open-mindedness and encourage new ideas could be a resource for novice teachers developing their agency in work community. There might be more complex variables existed to explain the contradiction which can be future explored in the future study. In addition to the role of principals, Finnish novice teachers in this study viewed small school size as an important resource for exercising their agency in community and organization. This may suggest that Chinese novice teachers' low agency in this dimension may also be a result of the typically large size of schools, despite the fact that this was not mentioned by Chinese participants in this study.

6.1.2 Perceived identity agency

According to study, a teacher's identity might be more or less stable based on their ability to manage their identities in a variety of school settings or developmental periods (Maclure,

1993). One may deduce from the data from this study that a novice teacher's identity agency is not stable, and no matter they were from Finland or China, they all had strong needs to renegotiate their professional ideal upon entering the classroom. For Chinese teachers, even the renegotiation is harder due to more complex external situations, most of them still do not give up. In terms of the preservation of ethical standards/values, they also face a difficult time owing to a number of factors but still try to maintain them. However, when it comes to opportunities to employ personal skills and interests, Finnish educators seem to have greater agency than Chinese teachers. In addition, these aspects of identity agency were linked to the novice teachers' professional agency in the classroom, which included pedagogical development and classroom management. And the prior discussion will be expanded upon in this part.

6.1.2.1 Renegotiation of professional ideal

As academics emphasize, professional identity includes not just personal perceptions and expectations of becoming a teacher, but also publicly recognized norms of teacher knowledge and abilities (Tickle, 2001). According to the research, both novice teachers in China and Finland had difficulties in influencing their teaching practices as they intended. This study highlights the necessity of novice teachers in both countries renegotiating their professional ideals in teachers' teaching and learning based on their everyday school experiences. This renegotiation concerned the pedagogy they were supposed to embrace, which demanded a reshaping of their ideals in response to the circumstances they experienced in their jobs (Eteläpelto et al., 2015). This study shows that the discrepancy of theory and practice is the main constrain for novice teachers from both countries even students' teachers all have practical training in the university-level teacher program. Similar to Finnish teachers (Eteläpelto et al., 2015), the study is consistent with prior research (Shi & Englert, 2010) indicating that Chinese novice teachers, who completed a comprehensive teacher training program, encountered challenges in translating the theoretical principles of learning and instruction into practical application during their initial teaching experiences. This difficulty arises from the realization that the ideals inferred from these theories may not seamlessly align with the demanding realities of the teaching environment. As a result, teachers might have been forced to abandon part of their attempts to apply their ideals and turn to more traditional models of instruction (Shi & Englert, 2010; J. Ye et al., 2019).

It seems that teachers in both countries need more high-quality practical experience to minimize the gap between the theory and practice. To compare the practical training period in both countries, Finnish student teachers need to conduct their practical pedagogical training in teacher training school for a shorter period in bachelor's degree and longer period in master 's degree and the lengths are depending on university's teacher program(Tirri, 2014). It usually takes up 27 ECTs out of the 60 ECT's pedagogical study(Tirri, 2014). During this period, student teachers are able to form their own conceptions of what makes successful teaching, as well as the best strategies for enhancing their instructional practices (Tirri, 2014). While in China, student teachers need to have one semester' internship, nearly 18 weeks at the second last semester of their bachelor's study (Zhou, 2014). However, this still doesn't guarantee teacher education programs sufficiently integrate theory and context as this study shows. According to Ye et al. (2021), the teacher training programs do not adequately illustrate the complexities of teaching and learning in the actual world. This disparity between the idealized teaching philosophy advocated by teacher preparation programs and the typical teaching techniques widespread in schools (such as placing an emphasis on test scores and instructional progress) is referred to as the "different experience." They are either not prepared in the teacher education about challenge of increased internal migration caused by the significant wage gap between urban and rural regions(W. Ye et al., 2021). As a result, like this study shows, many new teachers feel unprepared to deal with the realities of teaching, resulting in a variety of problems throughout their first year of teaching. In China, apart from student teachers who graduate from the professional teacher program, there are still large number of teachers who only pass the teacher certificate exam by limited theoretical book study in pedagogy and are not prepared with any pre-service pedagogical practice in school (W. Ye et al., 2018).This study provides proof that elementary school teachers might acquire a high level of subject competence which was far more than the basic subject knowledge that primary school students require. Novice teachers struggled to understand the difference without enough pedagogical training. So, one could imply that pedagogical knowledge and skills are required to narrow the vast gap between " ideal subject" and " reality subject".

Except the lack of subject matter knowledge within the school context, this study also reveals that those early year elementary school teachers faced numerous other challenges they did not anticipate prior to becoming teachers, such as students' differences, busy schedules, lack of teaching and classroom management skills, difficulties communicating with school leaders and parents, lack of time to adjust to their new status as teachers. They appear to question

about their teacher identity many times. This was consistent with the idea that teachers' self-perception may be questioned when they cannot comprehend unanticipated external influences (Ni, 2006). One could assume that teaching is impacted by complicated context no matter in Finland and China, and that teachers are part of a broader system, teacher education should focus a stronger emphasis on contextual concerns to better equip beginning teachers to renegotiate their values. Particularly in China, teacher certificate examinations system needs to take pedagogical learning and practice period in real school life into consideration.

Even though novice teachers in the two countries all face the reality to renegotiate their professional ideals because of the discrepancy of theory and practice, However, the study also shows novice teachers in China felt less empowered to shape their professional identity than their Finnish teachers but most of them still did not give up. One of the different constrain emerged from this study is the lack of recognition and respect from school, parents and society which contradicts with the fact that China has the culture and history of respecting teachers. While in Finland, the trust of teacher professions comes not only from the social culture foundation, but also from the research and practical expertise they get from the comprehensive teacher education (Eteläpelto et al., 2015; Sahlberg, 2011; Tirri, 2014). Compared to Finland, one might infer that this lack of recognition may also be due to society's distrust of teachers' professional competence and the effectiveness of teacher education and selection besides the transformation identity of service provider caused by societal change and competitive test-oriented educational (W. Ye et al., 2021). From this aspect, the study further highlights the urgency of improving the quality of teacher education and professionalization of the teacher certification process. Except the pre-service education, teachers' in-service training and developing opportunities also appears to be important in helping novice teacher renegotiate their identity in this study. However, in practice, particularly in China's public schools, beginner teachers lack school recognition and developmental opportunities because the distinctive Chinese social culture in seniority. This validated the notion that strong social culture suggestions from an organization might severely restrict working options and lead to identity change (Ketelaar et al., 2012). To be more specific, Chinese culture prioritizes seniority, the majority of opportunities would go to the experienced instructors first, limiting novice teachers access to these chances. This has resulted in the paradoxical phenomena that novice teachers with the greatest need for professional development opportunities are unable to obtain them, whilst those with less need always have access to them which limits novice teachers' chances to adjust their identity. This

problem must be modified to support novice teachers' identity shift throughout their early years of teaching.

However, the study also shows that teachers from both countries consider their internal increasing experience and perseverance in the initial stage helped them to survive the renegotiation process. Also, it seems teachers with growth mindset who consider the challenges as learning opportunities are more likely to renegotiate successfully. This finding provides the evidence that teachers' self-efficacy to overcome obstacles in transition period is also important, but investigation of agency gives a structure to understand beginner teachers and develop their professional identities among complex internal and external factors. The external help from in-service training and other developmental opportunities are crucial for this transition stage. This might also give ideas for the improvement of future pre-service teacher education and in-service teacher professional development for novice teachers.

6.1.2.2 Maintain ethical standards/value

In terms of maintaining their ethical standards/ values, novice teachers from both countries found it hard and this is bounded to their agency in social management of classroom. They all have the value of meeting every student's need even though the emphasis is different. In this study, novice Chinese teachers encounters severe value conflicts in a variety of settings, but they did not give up their value. Due to personal incompetence and a test-based school system, some novice teachers were unable to create a positive and happy learning environment for students. This gives evidence that the emphasis on standardized testing may conflict with teachers' personal values(Beauchamp & Thomas, 2009). Teachers from public schools have to prioritize meaningless school administrative and homework checking work, which conflicts with their belief of devoting their time to teaching and helping students to improve their academic performance. This is consistent with the claim that limits on performing one's responsibility might result in intense value conflicts (Beauchamp & Thomas, 2009). Also, this tension worsens when they are unable to support disadvantaged children and pupils with special needs due to their limited knowledge, time, and energy, as well as the absence of parental assistance(Beauchamp & Thomas, 2009). Similarly, Finnish novice teachers also express a feeling of powerlessness and guiltiness in providing adequate support for students' academic and behaviour and emotional needs of some students, including those with special needs. They are reported to lack external resources, such as a multi-professional team, and personal competencies made them ethically challenged (Eteläpelto et al., 2015).

This concern also apply to some Chinese novice teachers. As mentioned previously in this study, some novice Chinese teachers are also aware of children's social emotional wellbeing problems, and this caused value conflicts.

It further reveals that the prevalence inclusive education among teachers in Finland and the problems in the implementation of inclusive education (LRC) in China especially in teacher education. The finding is constant with previous studies (Xu & Cooper, 2022; Yu et al., 2011) that Particularly when it comes to providing individualized education and conducting differentiated teaching, Chinese educators display insufficient professional competence. In addition, they lack the practical abilities essential to tailor the curriculum and instructional approaches to the specific requirements of each student. In the LRC classroom, many teachers lack the skills needed to meet the needs of students with learning disabilities, attention deficit/hyperactivity disorder, autism spectrum disorder, and emotional or behaviour disorders, and other students with special educational needs(Yu et al., 2011). This becomes particularly crucial during the phases of identifying and assessing these students, formulating an individualized education plan, and securing the necessary resources to support their needs(Yu et al., 2011). This is largely because the bulk of teacher education programs do not include special education components. Moreover, the existing special teacher preparation programs tend to favour educational theory over practical application and teacher ability, resulting in the disproportionate placement of these instructors in special schools (Yu et al., 2011). In addition, it should be noted that in-service training and professional development programs for general education teachers in China's middle and western areas do not include any special education curriculum either(Xu & Cooper, 2022). While China has made progress in increasing the training of special educators and increasing the inclusion of students with disabilities, there is still a scarcity of paraprofessionals and associated support providers with proper training. This study also gives evidence that due to the big class sizes in China and the restricted availability of services such as physical and occupational therapy, as well as assistive technology, this shortage of specialists or teaching assistants to help classroom teachers is particularly severe (Xu & Cooper, 2022). As a result, a significant number of students with disabilities are neglected in these classrooms because teachers lack the time and experience to adequately help them. This circumstance creates barriers for children and families seeking access to high-quality, individualized treatment.(Xu et al., 2018; Xu & Cooper, 2022).

This study shows China needs to integrate the inclusive education into general teacher education to improve teachers' knowledge and tools in differentiated teaching and classroom management. Drawing parallels to the Finnish setting, it may be inferred that if novice instructors in both countries have sufficient competences in inclusive and special needs pedagogy, they would be able to gain good teaching experiences. Therefore, this positive reinforcement would assist individuals in upholding their values and aspirations over the long run (Eteläpelto et al., 2015). Eteläpelto et al. (2015) additionally emphasized the necessity of enhancing teacher programs to equip prospective educators with diverse opportunities to instruct students with special educational requirements. Finland has developed a large number of teacher education development projects with the primary goal of strengthening teachers' understanding and competency in the fields of special needs pedagogy, special education, and inclusive education (Naukkarinen, 2010). Also, one could imply from the Finnish context that good inclusive education needs multiple professionals' collaboration while China still has a long way to go. It seems there are learning opportunities for both countries in this regard.

6.1.2.3 Possibilities to use personal interests and competence

The study reveals that Chinese teachers seemed to have significantly less agency than Finnish teachers, and that this agency is tightly connected to their autonomy in pedagogical development. Due to inadequate pre-service education, it appears that Chinese novice teachers are still exploring and discovering their competency and interests in teaching. This agrees with the predictions of a previous study, which indicated that teachers with inadequate perceptions of their own capabilities and efficacy may have a weaker professional identity (Hargreaves, 2000). In addition, compared to Finnish novice teachers, they seemed to be exposed to a greater number of external constraints, such as an examination-based education system and parental influence. Therefore, enhancing teachers' abilities and self-assurance in the early stages of their careers is more essential if they are to overcome external problems and improve their identity agency. In addition, the findings imply that novice teachers in China should be provided with more high-quality in-service pedagogy training.

6.2 Limitation and Recommendations

While the present investigation yielded valuable results, it is important to acknowledge three specific limitations within this study, namely sampling constraints, content analysis

limitations, and reliance on a borrowed model. A more comprehensive explanation of these three aspects will now be provided.

The first limitation relates to the sample selection. When it comes to the complexity of the sample for Chinese participants, this study attempted to reach a compromise between two considerations: Firstly, try to remain consistent with the samples from (Eteläpelto et al., 2015)'s study in order to make the reflection more comparable; Secondly, try not to ignore the diversity of Chinese teachers and to demonstrate a certain degree of complexity. However, the sample was unable to comprehend the intricacy of Chinese teachers, which may impact the generalizability of the results of this study.

In contrast to the Finnish educational system, where the majority of schools are public and regional differences are negligible, there are various types of schools in China, including state public schools, private schools that include international schools, schools that adhere to the Chinese curriculum, and private language institutions. In addition to geographical differences such as rural, urban, and suburban areas, there are also province distinction. Due to the intricacy of the teacher qualifying system, teachers' educational backgrounds also vary greatly. Aside from that, there are many types of subject teachers and teachers who takes extra duties as a class supervisor. Due to the variety of school types, geographical variation, and the diversity of teachers' backgrounds, the situations of novice teachers may vary greatly. In this study, however, the samples are obtained by acquaintances, and the seven primary school teachers in China are from public schools in the suburbs and international private schools; with the exception of one Chinese teacher, the majority are English subject teachers. They may indicate some complexity of teachers, but not enough to give more comprehensive information regarding the professional agency of Chinese beginner teachers. In addition, because this study employed the lens of perspectives on the professional agency of Finnish novice teachers, two new Finnish teachers were interviewed and combined with 13 qualified teachers from a prior study. Therefore, 15 Finnish teachers were used to examine the professional agency for novice teachers in Finland. This also indicates the limited sample size of this study for Chinese teachers. This insufficient sample size may impact the generalizability of this study's findings. In this sense, future research must give greater emphasis to the intricacy of the samples.

The second limitation of this study stems from the content analysis methodology employed. This study used Eteläpelto et al. (2015)'s method, however, different from the thematic

analysis method used in the previous study, content analysis method was applied in this research. Because the method of evaluating novice teachers' perceptions of professional agency was not explicitly described in the theme analysis (Eteläpelto et al., 2015), and the sole provided detail indicates that the evaluation relied on the quantity of content and the scope of the interviewee's report, causing perplexity within this study. In this study, the number of limits and resources reported by novice teachers during interviews were manually counted and examined using content analysis to evaluate their perceptions. For instance, the "poor" concept of agency in pedagogical growth held by Chinese instructors was evaluated by the greater number of limitations than resources they stated, as well as the overall contextual content of the research. Due to the subjective and open-ended character of qualitative research, there are no statistical quantifiers that provide precise measurements of a phenomena, demonstrating the limitation of qualitative research. This imprecise assessment of agency perception may lead to inaccurate results and interpretation.

In addition to this issue of probable evaluation bias in content analysis, the method's reductive approach may also impact the outcome. Due to the fact that a huge quantity of complicated data needed to be processed in a short amount of time and within the limits of the framework, certain data that were deemed unimportant were eliminated, but they may have contributed to the outcome in other ways. For instance, inexperienced teachers in China highlighted how social media had a detrimental impact on students' social-emotional well-being and conduct, which produced indirect difficulties in their social classroom management. However, the data was decreased since the available information is limited and not immediately pertinent to the agency of teachers.

The third limitation is the model applied in this study. The model used in this study is directly borrowed from the result of previous study eight years ago (Eteläpelto et al., 2015). A pre-study would reveal that the prior model was inadequate due to a change in the present circumstances, sample bias, or a reduced data set. This may affect the accuracy of the research on the perceptions of inexperienced teachers in China. In addition, because the model was established within a Finnish environment, it may not be applicable to other cultural contexts, such as China. One may conclude from the findings of this investigation that distinction exists. However, the model is appropriate since the purpose of this study is to get an understanding of Chinese teachers' professional agency via the lens of novice teachers' perceptions of professional agency in Finland. If future research intends to get a deeper

knowledge of the agency of Chinese novice teachers exclusively in Chinese context, a contextual fit model is necessary to be investigated.

6.3 Implication and conclusion

The purpose of this study is to get a comprehensive understanding of how Chinese novice teachers perceive their professional agency via the perspective on it in Finland. Unlike typical comparative research, this study employs a notably different methodology to illustrate certain comparative viewpoints. Utilizing the model and methodologies derived from prior study conducted in Finland (Eteläpelto et al., 2015), this research's focus is on Chinese context, but the discussion is combined with Finnish context. In the research process, the study was mainly conducted by a qualitative analysis of open-ended interviews with seven Chinese novice teachers. In addition, an experimental content-wise limited pre-study was conducted with two novice teachers from Finland to serve as a revisiting of the model developed eight years ago (Eteläpelto et al., 2015), and the full interview data collected from the pre-study was combined with the article (Eteläpelto et al., 2015) to reflect the results from Chinese context.

Based on the findings of this study, it can be inferred that Chinese novice teachers have a low degree of agency in the workplace, which manifests itself at the levels of classroom and workplace community and organization, as well as individual professional identity. They lack agency in adopting, inventing educational approaches, and managing the classroom in terms of students' behavior and social-emotional wellbeing. In addition, their agency to contribute to the work community by offering advice, initiating activities, and taking additional duties is limited or nonexistent. Due to the complex constraints imposed by the test-based educational system and the intricacy of school life, teachers must renegotiate their professional identity established throughout their pre-service education experience when they attend schools for the first time in their early years. They also experience numerous challenging situations that contrast with their value of being a teacher, yet they strive to uphold this value anyway. The majority of Chinese novice teachers have limited agency on using their personal interests and teaching abilities. The most significant limitation identified by this research is the parents' influence on the agency of novice teachers. These findings suggest that there is an urgent need for the professionalization of pre-service and in-service teacher education, the transformation of a test-oriented school system to a student-centered system, the reduction of administrative work, and more support for novice teachers' communication with parents and professional development opportunities in the workplace. Moreover, In this study, Chinese principals from

diverse school systems play a complicated role in affecting novice teachers' professional agency, which could not be explained owing to the small sample size but may be explained in future research.

Drawn from the perception from novice teachers from Finland, we could see that different constraints and resources exist due to the difference on social cultural contexts in Chinese and Finnish education. The investigation reveals the two most notable distinctions. One is that Chinese teachers have far less agency in pedagogical growth, which is primarily hampered by the insufficiency of a student-centered approach, a test-oriented educational system, a school accountability system, and a substantial administrative burden. The second is that Chinese teachers have far less or no agency on their contributions to the workplace community and organization. Their agency is mostly constrained by the culture's emphasis on seniority and relationships. While in these two aspects, Finnish teachers had a great deal of agency, these limits were not manifested in the majority of cases, reflecting the social cultural difference. Despite these differences, teachers in both countries have a lack of agency in managing students' special learning needs, social emotional health, and behavioral issues. Even the supporting structure is highly distinct, as seen by the reliance of Chinese teachers on parental assistance and the requirement of Finnish teachers for multiprofessional help from the social welfare system. In addition, they have encountered several value conflicts when transitioning from university education to work, indicating an urgent need to renegotiate their professional identity in their early years. These similarities suggest a potential for dialogue between the two countries on teacher education, especially student-centered pedagogical training and inclusive education. However, more in-depth investigation needs to be conducted to further understand the context.

This study has contributed to the research on teacher education in China and Finland, but to different degrees. In the Chinese context, this is the first comprehensive investigation of novice Chinese teachers' perceptions of professional agency, which encompasses not only their professional agency at work but also their individual identity agency. It surpasses existing research on Chinese teachers' self-efficacy and adds new dimensions to the relatively few studies on teachers' agency in China. In addition, by applying the model from a previous study in Finland (Eteläpelto et al., 2015) and combining this article with a reflection on the Chinese context, this research adds a unique cross-cultural perspective to the understanding of how Chinese novice teachers perceive their professional agency. For studies in Finland, though limited to small samples, this research still updates and expands upon the earlier study

on Finnish novice teachers' professional agency conducted eight years ago (Eteläpelto et al., 2015) and demonstrates that there is still room for further research on this topic. After Covid, it appears that Finnish novice teachers have lower agency in the social management of the classroom, particularly with regard to students' social emotional well-being and behavioral issues; future research might be explored in this area. From a cross-cultural viewpoint, this study provides a more comprehensive picture of the educational contexts in the two countries and suggests potential communication opportunities even more in-depth study still need to be conducted.

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Table 3 Interview form 访谈表

The interview form is developed from the model in Eteläpelto et al. (2015)

Novice teachers' Professional Agency			
Professional agency in the classroom setting 课堂教学中的专业能动性			
The components of agency 能动性构成	Questions 问题	Resources 资源	Constrains 阻碍
Developing pedagogical practices and teaching methods 发展教学实践和教学方法	<p>What challenges do you have as a new classroom teacher? 作为一名新手教师，你在课堂中遇到什么挑战？</p> <p>How do you face the challenges? 你是如何应对这些挑战的？</p>	<p>Collaboration with colleagues 同事协作</p> <p>Stakeholders 外部支持</p> <p>Personal interests, knowledge, and competences 个人兴趣知识和能力</p> <p>The principals' support 校长支持</p> <p>Positive school atmosphere 积极的学校氛围</p> <p>In-service training, preservice training 在职培训，职前培训</p>	<p>Difficult pupils 困难学生</p> <p>The unsupportive principal and the rigid curriculum 校长不支持和课程僵化</p> <p>Lack of facilities 设施不足</p> <p>The limitation of teachers' time and energy 教师有限的时间和精力</p> <p>Strict division, and scheduling between subjects 严格的分科和学科之间时间安排</p> <p>teacher assessment 教师评估</p> <p>Examination, scores 考试和分数</p>

Novice teachers' Professional Agency			
Social management of the classroom (especially social emotional well-being) 课堂的社会管理（特别是学生的社会情绪健康管理）		Immediate help from colleagues 来自同事的及时帮助 Multi-professional team support 多专业化团队的支持	Lack of additional human resources 缺乏额外的人力资源 lack of psychological and other multi-professional support 缺乏心理学和其他多专业的支持 Parents' negative influence 家长的消极影响
Professional agency in teachers work community and organization 教师工作社区和组织中的专业能动性			
The components of agency 能动性构成	Questions 问题	Resources 资源	Constrains 阻碍
Making suggestions to change, initiate, or participate in shared activities 提出改变、发起或参与分享活动的建议	Can you contribute to your working community by giving suggestions and initiate activities? 你能通过提出建议和发起活动为你的工作社群做出贡献吗？	Principal characteristics: encouraging 校长鼓励的特征	Principal characteristics: strict management and conservative 校长管理严格思想保守 School hierarchy 学校的等级制度

Novice teachers' Professional Agency			
Receiving and taking on extra responsibilities for shared activities 额外接受和承担活动的责任	Can you take on extra responsibilities for your professional development in school? 你能为学校的专业发展承担额外的责任吗?	Increase in teachers' own capacity through work experience 教师自身能力随着工作经验增长的提高	Insufficiency in the teacher's own capacity and energy 教师自身能力和精力不足 Unsupportive principal 不支持的校长 Complicated relationships 复杂的人际关系 School hierarchy 学校等级制度
Identity agency			
教师自我认同的能动性			
The components of agency 能动性构成	Questions 问题	Resources 资源	Resources 资源
Renegotiation of professional ideals 对职业理想的重新审视	Have you changed your professional ideas after working in actual school? 在进入学校的工作岗位之后，你的专业理想有没有调整?	The teacher's patience in overcoming initial obstacles 教师在克服最初障碍是的耐心	Examination 考试 Challenges in the social management of the classroom 课堂社会管理方面的挑战 Insufficiency in the teacher's own capacity and energy 教师自身能力和精力的不足

Novice teachers' Professional Agency			
	<p>How do you face it? 你是如何面对这种调整的?</p>		<p>Discrepancies between theory and practice 理论和实践之间的差异</p> <p>External conditions and circumstances of school life 学校生活的外部条件和环境</p> <p>Educational evolution, changing policies 教育政策的改革</p>
<p>Maintain one's ethical standards/value 保持自己作为教师的道德标准/价值</p>	<p>What is your value of being a teacher and educator? 你作为一名教师和教育工作者的价值是什么?</p> <p>Do you have any value conflicts? 你有任何价值冲突吗?</p> <p>How you face it? 你是如何面对这种价值冲突的?</p>	<p>Close collaboration with colleagues 和同事的密切协作</p>	<p>Deficiencies in pupil's socioemotional well-being 学生在社会情感方面的缺失</p> <p>Lack of multi-professional support 缺乏多专业的支持</p> <p>Lack of competences and tools to support children's diverse needs 缺乏支持儿童不同需求的能力和工具</p> <p>Insufficient time to devote to challenging pupils 没有足够的时间投入到具有挑战性的学生身上</p> <p>Insufficient time and energy for fulling teacher duty 没有足够时间和精力完成教师的职责</p> <p>grade(exam), competition 考试和竞争</p>
<p>Possibilities to use personal interests and competences at work 在工作中运用个人兴趣和能力的可能性</p>	<p>Can your personal interests and competences can be well used and developed? 你在工作中个人兴趣和能力的是否能得到很好的利用和发展?</p>	<p>The principals' support 校长支持</p>	<p>Time and material resources 时间和物质资源</p> <p>Problems in classroom functioning 课堂运作中的问题</p>

Table 4 Coding scheme

Theme	Description	References Quotes
professional agency in work	The theme includes novice teachers' perception of professional agency from individual, community, and organizational levels. Details will be shown in sub-themes.	
professional agency in classroom setting	This is one aspects of agency in work for individual level, contains teachers' pedagogical agency and classroom management agency. Details will be shown in two categories below.	
develop pedagogical practices and teaching methods	This means teachers could develop pedagogical methods and practice new ideas in teaching. There are internal or external factors which could facilitate or hinder teachers practicing this agency. For example, difficult students, insufficient cooperation with fellows, lack of energy and time, examination pressure, parents' involvement, personal knowledge and interests, flexible curriculum etc.	<p><i>"I believe that my teaching experience and skill are insufficient to develop and innovate educational techniques." (Teacher 5-Public School)</i></p> <p><i>Regarding classroom instruction, my autonomy is limited. The school encourages us to have our own teaching styles and to innovate in the classroom, but the reality is more constrained. We have a standard framework for all of our teaching materials, we study the same topic each week and there is much content, moreover, there is exam pressure. Additionally, it is essential to consider the concerns of children and parents for their exam scores. (Teacher 3-Private School)</i></p> <p><i>My classroom in this school is much bigger than last year, so I can use the space to do many activities, last year it was too small, so I couldn't do anything like this hunting game. (Teacher 10-Finland)</i></p>
social management of classroom	This means teachers could manage students' behavior and social emotional well-being in class. There are internal or external factors which could facilitate or hinder teachers practicing this agency. For example: parents' involvement, lack of multi-professional team, personal incompetence etc.	<p><i>I feel like international school kids are so active. Even there were only 18-22 pupils in my previous, they're thinking big, they're hyperactive, and they ask a lot of questions and often interrupt me during teaching and not listening. I feel limited in my ability to manage their behavior; and I seem to be thinking more about how to control them rather than about how to teach it. (Teacher 3-</i></p>

Theme	Description	References Quotes
		<p><i>Private School)</i></p> <p><i>For instance, in the second grade, there is a child whose parents are divorced and who is extremely sensitive and prone to emotional swings. Since the child spends most of her time in school, teachers are supposed to devote greater attention to her. But as a teacher and class supervisor, I did realize the problem, but I do not have the time and energy to address the situation. (Teacher 2-Private Schools)</i></p>
professional agency in work community	This is the second aspects of agency in work from community and organizational level which consists of two parts: making suggestions and initiating activities; receiving and taking extra responsibilities. Details will be shown in the two categories below.	
making suggestions and initiating activities	This means teacher could make the voice and their voice can be heart to contribute the working community or development of the school. There are internal or external factors which could facilitate or hinder teachers practicing this agency. For example: lack of ability, school hierarchy, workplace relationship, etc.	<p><i>By April, I have only been at the school for three years, and because I was still a new teacher at the school, I was not confident in my ability to initiate activities. There are other teachers who have been here for seven or eight years, including group leaders, who have not initiated before me, how I can do that. There is a hierarchy in the school, and everyone understands this very well. I don't think it's a place where you can freely go and initiate activities. (Teacher 2-Private)</i></p>
Receiving and taking extra responsibilities	This means teacher can take extra work from school and develop themselves further. internal or external factors which could facilitate or hinder teachers practicing this agency. For example: lack of time and energy, workplace culture, etc.	<p><i>I don't think I would have the energy for the extra work, the classwork is already enough for me to consider. (Teacher 5-Public)</i></p> <p><i>I changed schools before, it really depends on the principal. If the principals are doing the right things, encourage teachers to give ideas and open to suggestions, I can easily give ideas. But if the principals keep silent, I</i></p>

Theme	Description	References Quotes
		<i>don't even try to change or introduce something new because they might also struggle. (Teacher 8-Finland)</i>
Identity agency	The identity agency includes the components of ideals, ethical standards, values and interests and the renegotiation of them. It includes three parts in this study. Details will be shown below.	
Renegotiation of professional ideals	This means teacher's professional ideals developed in the pre-serve education or the preparation of teacher qualification examination in teaching and learning might change or renegotiated after they enter real school. This change may be caused by the unexpected situation in school, difficult students, social management of classroom and other factors.	<p><i>I majored in English in both my undergraduate and graduate studies and they are quite academic and deep, but since I am teaching elementary school students and the public-school materials are very simple, I don't feel that what I have learned is very useful. I did read books about education when I was preparing for my teacher certification exam, but I don't feel that they are useful in the real world of teaching either. (Teacher 1-Private school)</i></p> <p><i>Once there are good opportunities, school will give the priority to senior teachers. For example, good training opportunities, demonstration classes, various awards are mostly given to them first, new teachers are always behind. This has diminished my desire to be a good teacher, I think my ideal is being worn out little by little. (Teacher 7 – Public School)</i></p>
Maintain ethical standards/ value	This means that teachers value of being an educator is to taking care of each students' needs and help them, this includes not only children' learning needs but also social-emotional development needs, etc. However, there are many factors like lack of professional support, lack of energy and time etc., which challenges their value and teacher feel helpless and guilty when they couldn't practice their value well and maintain it.	<p><i>During my time at this school, I feel like I have a very heavy workload every day and don't have a lot of time to prepare lessons or really help students. There are a lot of students in the class struggling with their study, and they need more help, but my energy is really limited, so I am in a state where I feel very guilty about myself. (Teacher 6-Public School)</i></p> <p><i>My value as a teacher is to try to help each child and make</i></p>

Theme	Description	References Quotes
		<i>them enjoy learning but I find that supporting each child requires many people to work together, not only a subject teacher, but also other professional psychology teachers, families, and me personally, is very limited. (Teacher 2 – Private School)</i>
Possibilities to use personal interests	This means that teacher could utilize their interests and competence in teaching. However, whether they have possibilities to do that still depends on the internal factors and whether there is sufficient external support.	<p><i>That's maybe one of the best things in this work. That you can really use your own competence and choose the way you like in any class. (Teacher 9-Filand)</i></p> <p><i>I especially like the idea of incorporating poetry into that journey. You can see the scenery and experience the poet's thoughts in that situation. I especially like this, but it just never happened because organizing such an event requires a lot of procedures and human and material resources, and the school wouldn't want to support it(Teacher 6-Public School)</i></p>

INFORMED CONSENT FORM

I, the undersigned, confirm that **(please initial boxes as appropriate)**:

Table 5 Interview constant form

1.	I have read and understood the information about the project, and it has been read to me.	
2.	I have been able to ask questions about the project and my participation and my questions have been answered to my satisfaction.	
3.	I understand that taking part in this study involves an interview lasting about 1-2 hours where audio/video record will be taken which will be transcribed as text later. Recording and transcribed data will be kept on a password protected device and be destroyed after the assessment work will have been finished, latest in August 2023.	
4.	I understand that taking part in the study has no potential risk or harm. During the interview I am free not to answer questions.	
5.	I understand I can withdraw from the study at any time without giving reasons and that I will not be penalised for withdrawing nor will I be questioned on why I have withdrawn.	
6.	I understand that the information I provide will only be used for a Master's level university thesis project.	
7.	I agree that my information can be quoted in the research study with pseudonyms, meaning the processing my personal data in a way that the data can no longer be connected to me without additional information. Any of my additional information will be carefully stored, separate from the personal data.	
8.	The procedures regarding confidentiality have been clearly explained (e.g., use of names, pseudonyms, anonymisation of data, etc.) to me.	
9.	I understand that personal information collected about me that can identify me, such as my name, or where I live, will not be shared beyond the study team.	
10.	Separate terms of consent for interviews of data collection have been explained and provided to me.	
11.	I consent to the audio/ video recording.	
12.	I understand that other researchers will have access to this data only if they agree to preserve the confidentiality of the data and if they agree to the terms I have specified in this form.	
13.	I voluntarily agree to participate in the project.	
14.	I know who to contact if I have any concerns about this research	

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Name of Participant

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Signature

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Date

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Name of Researcher

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Signature

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Date