

Education in the Asia-Pacific Region:
Issues, Concerns and Prospects 19

Pattie Yuk Yee Luk-Fong

Teachers' Identities and Life Choices

Issues of Globalisation and Localisation



ASIA-PACIFIC EDUCATIONAL
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Springer

Teachers' Identities and Life Choices

EDUCATION IN THE ASIA-PACIFIC REGION: ISSUES, CONCERNS AND PROSPECTS

Volume 19

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Pattie, Yuk Yee, Luk-Fong

Teachers' Identities and Life Choices

Issues of Globalisation and Localisation

 Springer

Pattie, Yuk Yee, Luk-Fong
Department of Special Education and Counselling
The Hong Kong Institute of Education
Tai Po, Hong Kong, People's Republic of China

ISBN 978-981-4021-80-7 ISBN 978-981-4021-81-4 (eBook)
DOI 10.1007/978-981-4021-81-4
Springer Dordrecht Heidelberg New York London

Library of Congress Control Number: 2012950606

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Foreword

I cannot think of many books that raise the big issues of our times in relation to ordinary teacher's lives. This is a book that should be read by teachers, teacher educators, principals, policymakers and government agencies in many countries because it is about the changing way teachers experience their work and the relationship between work and other aspects of their lives. Moreover, it also raises fundamental questions about how all our lives are shifting with stronger global interactivity, policy borrowing and changes to our work settings, wherever we are located.

Dr. Luk-Fong's project is set in Hong Kong, a fascinating place, which itself has undergone significant shifts since 1997, when British governance was resumed by China. In locating her study in Hong Kong, Dr. Luk-Fong, with her close study of teachers' lives and work, foregrounds how shifts that appear 'external' are lived out in daily life. For those not from Hong Kong, or the wider Chinese diaspora, Luk-Fong's work also helps the reader to understand the intimate ways that the Confucian traditions are being challenged by greater interactions across cultures, policies and governance traditions, with alterations in school practice that are intensely personal in requiring shifts in identity and relations with children. These interactions at many levels make us all 'hybrid' people, working in hybrid institutions, not essentially from a single isolated tradition. With scholarly writing in English continuing to dominate, it is critical that European and North American scholars and settings do not dominate. In this book, teachers from many parts of the world will recognise both the specificity of the Hong Kong setting and areas in which we share.

Worldwide, the teaching profession is under intense scrutiny – governments develop 'speed policy' requiring changes, with schools and teachers increasingly under surveillance to be accountable for their compliance with these multiple changes. This book helps to unpack how different teachers experience such changes, with an interesting lens in many chapters on how gender plays into this experience. How primary teachers experience their masculinities and femininities in Chap. 5 offers a detailed exploration of the changes to the gender order which are part of both educational reform and wider societal shifts. Husband-wife relationships, the place of the child in the family, extended family shifts and questions of power negotiated at home and at school are all brought out through unpacking teachers' narratives.

Relations between older and younger generations of teachers are also explored, a key issue facing the ageing teaching force in my own country, Australia.

Despite dealing with such weighty issues, with significant consequences for the educational professionals involved, this book is really accessible. Each chapter reads well on its own, but the cumulative story is most effective in helping to unpack the issues of work, gender, identity, globalisation and school reform. Discussions of globalisation in Chap. 2, for example, not only deal with major explanations and debates in the literature but also bring to bear the Chinese concept of *yin-yang* to examine issues of hybridity, linking to questions of ‘border crossing’ more common in North American discussions. This chapter will be helpful for those teachers undertaking further study or those concerned with the speed and rate of change in their own site, putting such problems into a global perspective that helps to make sense of the new and emerging issues in educational sites, especially schools. The chapter which gives a rationale for looking at life stories and the importance of narratives to understand complex change is similarly useful. Narrative methods provide a means to explore globalisation ‘from below’. Interacting with the multiple stories presented in this book gave me many opportunities for reflexive work in my own context – I commend it to readers across the world.

Victoria University, Melbourne

Marie Brennan

Series Editors' Introduction

This important, highly readable and interesting book is about teachers' identities and life choices, an essential topic for twenty-first-century schools. Owing to its 'East meets West' contexts in culture, family and education, Hong Kong was chosen as a case study to help better understand the main issues concerning teachers' identities and life choices related to globalisation and localisation.

This book documents Hong Kong Chinese teachers' changing identities in the last half century when many female teachers entered the workplace. Using 70 personal narratives (20 from primary school female teachers, 20 from primary male teachers and 30 from secondary female and male teachers), this book not only provides evidence of the continuity and changes of the Confucian self and the cardinal relationships in teachers' lives and identities but also reveals the considerable contradictions, ambivalence and tensions felt by teachers as they navigate between the inner realm of home and the outer realm of work, in the construction and the reconstruction of their subjectivities.

Teachers' identities and life choices are found to be fluid, complex, hybrid and multifaceted. Contrary to an essentialist approach to identity and culture, teachers' stories show that their identities and life choices are hardly free choices at all but are often part and parcel of the culture and contexts in which they were embedded.

This book also provides glimpses of how education reforms, as a neocapitalist discourse (global) in the workplace, interact with Confucian cultural traditions (local), creating new hybrid practices (as well as problems, possibilities or both) in the school and in the daily lives of teachers. This book uses post-colonial or post-structuralist discourses of globalisation as hybridisation, together with Chinese concepts of the Confucian self and cardinal relationships and the Taoist thought of *yin-yang* as a conceptual framework for the investigation.

This is a significant book because it offers new insights into both the conceptualisation and methodology relating to the study of teachers' identities, life choices, work and stress. In understanding identities and life choices, this book advocates a third way, a hybrid, 'both-and' rather than 'either-or' approach, which involves border crossing and the de-learning of stereotypes beyond East and West, female and male, local and global, home and work, teaching the subject and teaching the

whole person and education for marks and education for learning. It argues the case for integrating and looking for options which suit the history and contexts of the place, as well as an awareness of identities and life choices, as ongoing negotiation projects. It breaks new ground by making available contextually specific Chinese data to the international audience and draws implications to identity, work, work-life balance and gender equity in education for the next generation.

Hong Kong
Tokyo
22 June 2012

Rupert Maclean
Ryo Watanabe

Acknowledgements

My first and foremost thanks are to Prof. Marie Brennan, who was my doctorate supervisor and the coinvestigator in the first stage (on female primary school teachers) of the research project on changing gender identities of Hong Kong teachers¹ (2004–2009). She has spent endless hours in discussing and conceptualising the main ideas of this book with me. I visited her twice in Adelaide. The first time was in 2009 to conceptualise on the book project and the second time as a visiting scholar during my sabbatical leave to the University of South Australia to work on a joint research project of the Hong Kong Institute of Education with the University of South Australia on ‘Teachers’ Work, Identities and Work-Life Interface’ in 2011. I am grateful to the University of South Australia for making my visit to the university possible. There, I was able to meet and work out the interview schedules with the Australian research team members, Dr Lew Zipin and Dr Zheng Lin, and to discuss and debate with them. I am also thankful to the Faculty of Education and the Centre of Work + Life in South Australia University for providing resources and pioneering thoughts in the field of work-life balance. In this book, I have put together my doctorate work on competing Chinese and Western cultures in ‘self and other relationships’, my research projects on changing gender identities of Chinese teachers and the research project on ‘Teachers’ Work, Identities and Work-Life Interface’. I am most grateful to Prof. Brennan, who has worked very closely with me for the last 10 years, providing me mentorship and support in every possible way. I deeply appreciate her living example as a scholar, for her generosity of time and care even to an extent of offering me accommodation to stay at her home during my first visit to Adelaide. I have enjoyed every moment spent with her in academic discussions as well as in deep personal encounters which has enlightened my thoughts and enriched my life tremendously. Indeed, the crossover between the personal and professional that I experienced with her was authentic and powerful, echoing the different stories that bear witness to crossovers between East and West, male and female and work and home in this book. Without Prof. Brennan’s unfailing support,

¹ Details of the project can be obtained on page 5 of Chap. 1.

this book would not have been possible. I invited Prof. Brennan to be the co-author of this book; she declined by saying, 'No, this is your book!' I am deeply touched by this teacher-and-friend's generosity.

The idea of writing this book came to me some three years ago. I was first prompted to write this book by Prof. Christine Halse who exclaimed every time she read the Hong Kong teachers' stories, 'These stories are fascinating, people in the West would love to read about them'. Professor Halse was then a visiting scholar to the Hong Kong Institute of Education for a few consecutive years. Every time she came, I discussed with her some data from the research project on changing gender identities of Hong Kong Chinese teachers and issues related to gender and education, as I was then an active member of the Gender Matters Interest Group in the Hong Kong Institute of Education. Professor Halse subsequently referred me to Prof. Rupert Maclean, a chair professor of the Institute's Department of International Education and Lifelong Learning and the director of the Centre for Lifelong Learning Research and Development. Professor Maclean then connected me to Springer to have this book published in the series Education in the Asia-Pacific Region: Issues, Concerns and Prospects. My heartfelt thanks go to Prof. Halse, who has continuously acted as a mentor in my journey into the gender and education area, to Prof. Maclean, who has kindly guided and supported me throughout my working on this book and to the Springer publication team who has given me helpful support during the whole publication process.

My gratitude also goes to Prof. Fazal Rizvi, who spent time with me while passing by Hong Kong, discussing with me the concept of globalisation as hybridisation. He suggested that I should include a thorough literature review of the debates of globalisation as hybridisation in my book. This is incorporated in Chap. 2 of this book. His ideas of moral hybridities and cosmopolitan identities have influenced much of my thinking. My sincere thanks also go to Prof. Chan Kwok Bun who was then the chair professor of the Sociology Department of Baptist University. Professor Chan is a Chinese scholar who is an expert on hybridities in the sociology field. He shared with me all of his work on hybridities, invited me to engage in seminars on hybridities organised by his sociology department and networked me to other scholars working on hybridities. His work has inspired much of my thinking in this book, including Confucianism and hybridities in Chap. 4 and the need for de-learning stereotypes in Chap. 9.

My heartfelt thanks also go to Dr. Ching Leung Lung, Dr. Ping Ho Wong and Dr. Pik Lin Choi, my good friends and research team members of the second and third stages of the gender identities of Chinese teachers' research project. Not only had they helped in interviewing teachers, but also our endless discussions and debates have enriched my thinking and my life. My thanks also go to all the research assistants of the different stages of the project, including Ms. Tao Sau Wai, Ms. Yan Woon Yin, Ms. Chung Yin Chan, Ms. Wai Ying Lee, Mr. Yi Fei Wang and Mr. Kai Chun Fung. I would like to thank in particular Ms Tuen Yi Chiu, a former research assistant who also introduced me to Prof. Chan Kwok Bun. My greatest thanks are of course due to the 70 primary and secondary male and female teachers who participated in my research projects despite their very heavy workload at school and

commitments at home. These teachers' daily stories have taught me much; their stories of struggles and professionalism give direction and hope to the future of education in Hong Kong and elsewhere.

I would also like to thank the Hong Kong Institute of Education for the financial support of the greater part of my doctoral degree and the internal research grants for the three stages of the changing gender identities of Chinese teachers and the research project on 'Teachers' Work, Identities and Work-Life Interface'.

Many of the ideas of this book have been presented in international conferences and published in international journal articles and book chapters.

International Conference Presentations

- Lung, C. L., & Luk-Fong, P. Y. Y. (2009, July 1–4). *Doing masculinities in a hybrid Chinese cultural context: A tale of two secondary men teachers' struggles in Hong Kong*. Paper presented at the 14th Biennial Conference of International Study Association on teachers and teaching, Rovaniemi, Finland.
- Luk-Fong, P. Y. Y. (2006, November 28–30). *Narratives and teachers' identities*. Paper presented at the Asia-Pacific Education Research Association Conference 2006.
- Luk-Fong, P. Y. Y. (2008, July). *Primary school women teachers and work-life balance – A hybrid Hong Kong case*. Paper presented at the 13th symposium of International Association of Women Philosophers (IAPh), South Korea.
- Luk-Fong, P. Y. Y. (2008, September). *Exploring and understanding the Hong Kong Chinese hybrid selfhood—using life narratives*. Paper presented at international invitational workshop on exploring and understanding cultural geographies of selfhood: A life narrative approach, Brighton, England.
- Luk-Fong, P. Y. Y. (2008, December). *Secondary school teachers and family-work interface—a hybrid Hong Kong case*. Paper presented at international conference "Gender and Family in East Asia", Hong Kong.
- Luk-Fong, P. Y. Y. (2009, March). *Struggling with gender borders: Teachers' narratives of uncomfortable hybrids*. Paper presented at Gender and Education Association 7th international conference, London.
- Luk-Fong, P. Y. Y., Choi, P. L., Lung, C. L., & Wong, P. H. (2009, July 1–4). *Yin-Yang methodology in the study of teachers' gendered identities: issues and possibilities*. Paper presented at the 14th Biennial Conference of International Study Association on teachers and teaching, Rovaniemi, Finland.
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- Luk-Fong, P. Y. Y. (In print). Understanding the Chinese selfhood — Using life narratives. In Chan Kwok Bun (Ed.), *International handbook of Chinese families*. New York: Springer

This book has provided me a chance to synthesise the work I have done in the last 10 years. I would like to thank all the reviewers of the journal articles/book chapters and this book for their valuable suggestions.

Last but not least, I would like to thank my husband, Hing Sun, who has supported me in my career. He has given me the freedom to seek my ways so that together we can live out what we believe in. My thanks also go to my two sons, Wing Hong and Wing Hei, for pursuing their own life paths in a zealous manner so that my heart can be at ease to pursue my dream.

26 June, 2012

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