

Improving Educational Evaluation & Quality in China

改进中国教育评价和质量

Exploring Teacher Quality Issues in China

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Introduction

- Improving education quality is a major goal of countries worldwide
- The role of teachers in promoting quality in education
- Previous research suggesting most of the general features of an effective school prevalent in the international literature are readily existent in the school system in China
- China 2008 national inspection reporting significant gaps in teacher quality of compulsory education
- In 2009 National People's Congress, the Premier Wen Jiabao emphasised promote fairness in education as well as improve the quality of teachers

(UN, 1989; Cheng & Wong, 1996; UNESCO, 2004; Leu & Price-Rom, 2006; ONEI, 2008; NPC, 2009)

Aims and Methods of the IEEQC Project 1

To enhance understanding of the complex nature of school effectiveness in China and how local context may play a key role in determining definitions of educational effectiveness and quality

IEEQC Study 1: qualitative study exploring stakeholder views about the nature of educational quality, experiences of school evaluation and self evaluation and issues of local context and priorities (and sustainable capacity building) in relation to educational evaluation and quality in China

Methodology and Data – study 1

Regions:

- 3 cities (1 western, 1 north and 1 eastern LEA)

Samples:

- national level policy makers
- local LEA policy makers
- 12 Headteachers, 27 teachers and 33 students from 8 senior secondary schools

Method:

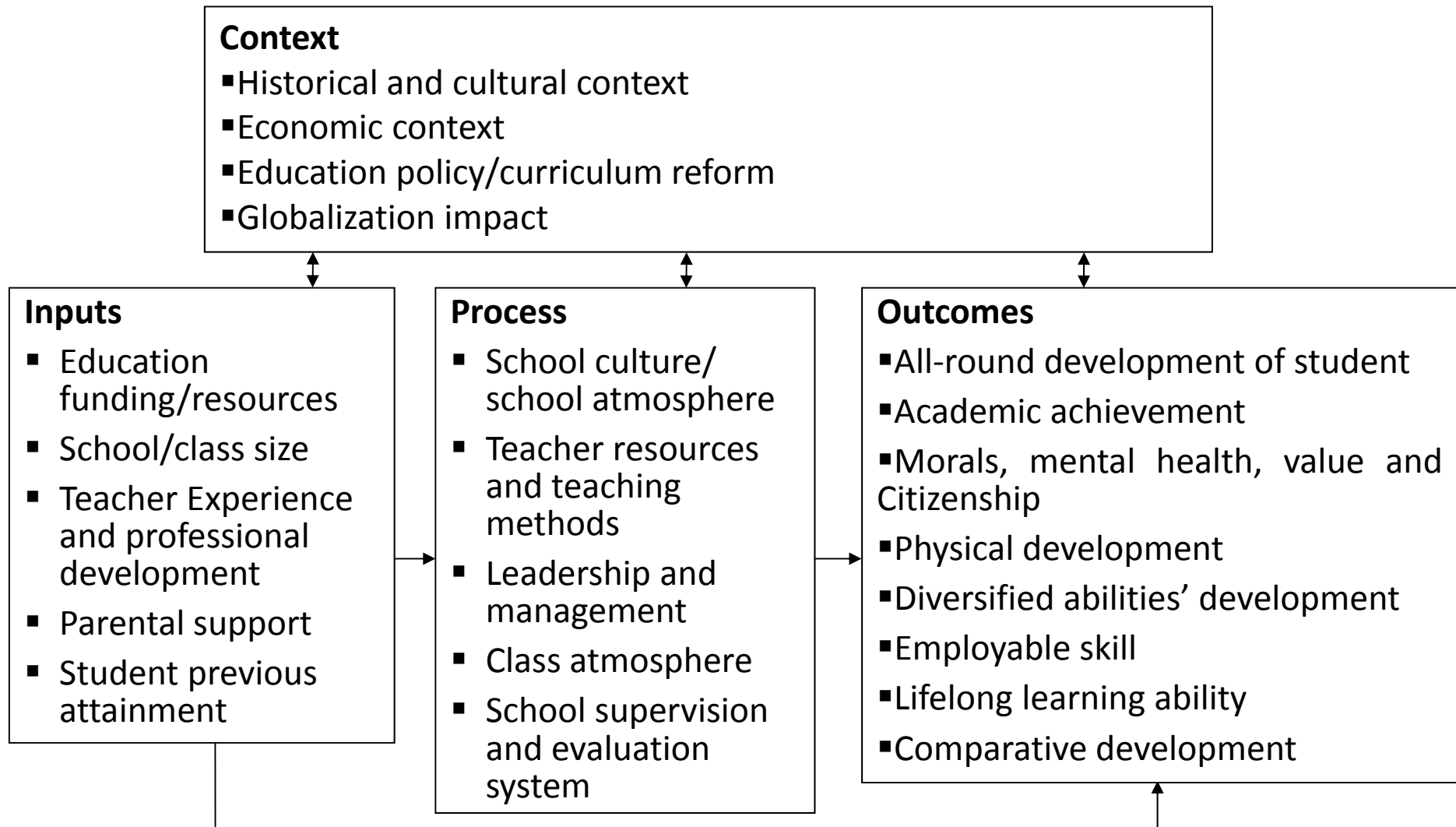
- Interviews and focus groups

Research Findings

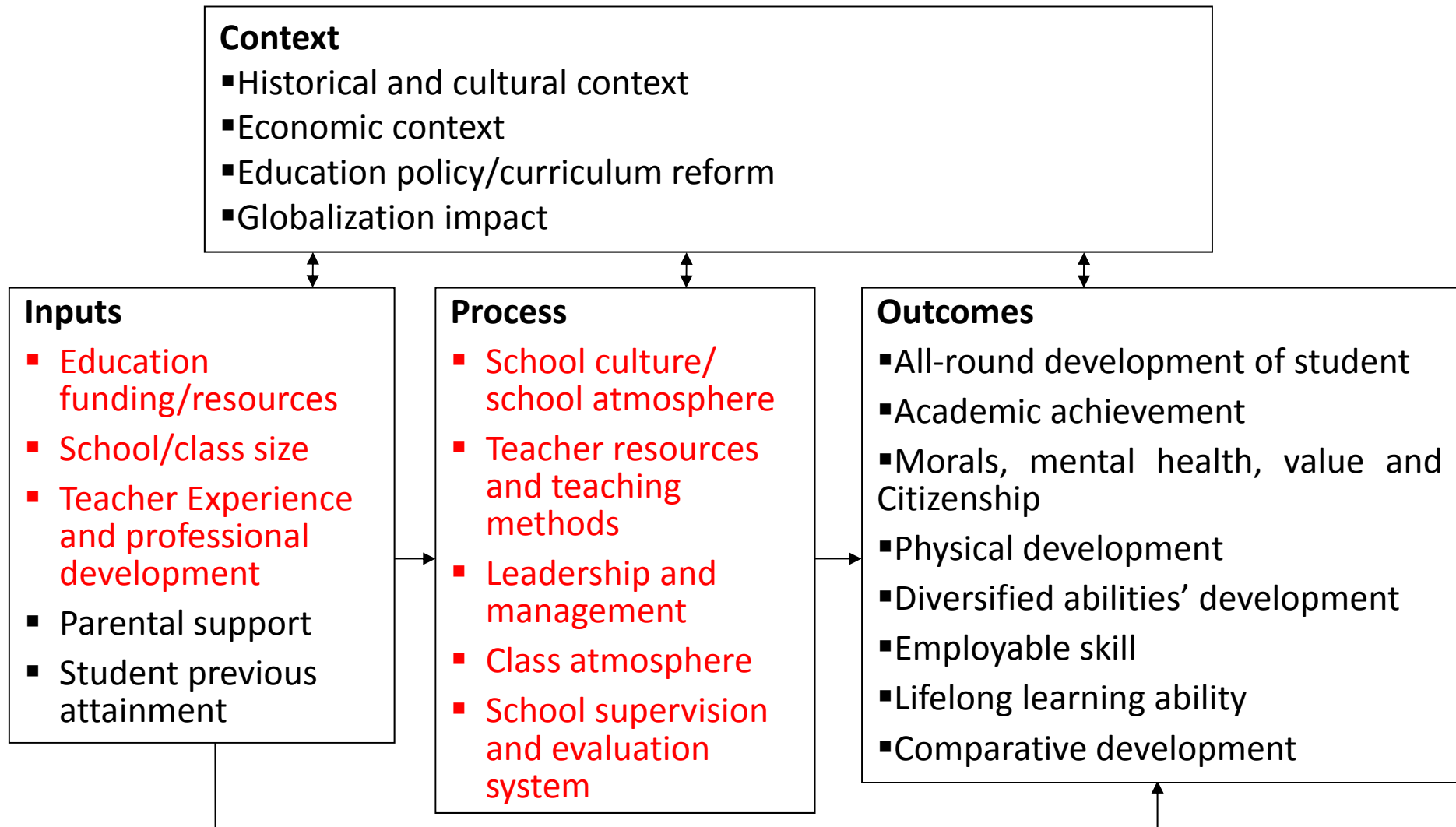
Research Question 1

What are the views and experiences of key stakeholders in relation to the nature of education quality, values and priorities and the impact of local context on educational outcomes?

Research Findings – initial framework



Research Findings – initial framework



The Quality of Teaching Force

“...the quality of teachers includes their personality, knowledge, teaching approaches, spirit, and etcetera. All these are features of an effective school. Another thing is management, which follows people everywhere. It should be rigorous” (387-394, Lea3Sch1HTC)

“The nature of quality of teaching should be that every student entering the school can make progress based on their starting point and be able to gain development to different extent” (16-30, Lea1Sch2T123; 9, Lea3 sch4HTA)

Context

Historical/political/cultural issues – Confucianism, collectivism & socialism:

“Chinese teachers are working hard. This is due to the influence of Confucian civilization in East Asia... this good tradition... where families emphasize children’s knowledge and education, and teachers are committed to their profession” (57-61, Lea2Sch2HT)

“The proverb ‘excellent learning leads to a prosperous official career’ has been rooted deeply in people’s minds over 2000 years. Even though some words of the proverb might be changed, the essence of the slogan remains the same” (497-499, NPM1)

Context

Economic context – intensive competition and employment pressure in labor market, so families paying more attention to their children’s examination results:

“...the competition is intensive in the labor market. More and more highly educated workers are demanded... new industry needs more skillful and creative workers” (NPM4)

“China has a large population and employment stress is great. That is to say, the higher educational qualification, the more opportunities and the more choices for a job. In other words, the basic purpose for students is to pass examinations in order to go to senior high school, to university, including also master or PhD” (52-54, Lea3Sch1HTB)

Context

National /Local education policy/curriculum reform – focusing on strengthening the all-around development of students:

“We are doing that now actually. The 8th curriculum reform of basic education in China began from 2000 and tried to change teaching materials and approaches to improve students’ thinking ability, creative ability, studying ability, problem solving ability and practical ability... In fact, I believe as long as we persist in working hard, the current situation [that students often have] high scores but low ability will change”
(188-194, Lea1LPM5)

Context

Compulsory education – indicating a big improvement in educational equality of China:

“We have spent over 20 years planning free 9-year compulsory education but the goal of free and compulsory education was not realized until two years ago. We have made 9-year compulsory education available nationwide, realized the goal of access to education for all and made a big stride in educational equality” (24-26, NPM3)

Context

Global impact – a big negative impact of the Internet and some medias on students' development suggesting also an impact on the context of teachers work:

“All these indicate that social ideas affect the students, and make students see some bad things. The Internet has a very large impact on school. Once students fall into it, they could not go out of it” (285-290, Lea3Sch1TC)

“Social atmosphere and environment have the greatest impact on students... For example, the Internet, and other cultural influences from the mass media, which to some degree have greater [negative] impact on students than the school can manage” (115-123, Lea2Sch1HT)

Inputs – education funding and resources

Insufficient funding of senior high schools resulting in considerable large class sizes and some schools in debt:

“Now the large-class problem is quite serious and more than a half of classes all round China are large classes. However good my school is, it could not survive and runs smoothly without investment” (236-244, NPM2)

“As far as I know, this school ...is operating in the red ...the government is only responsible for paying teachers’ salary. As to the development and construction of the school, it hasn’t got the capability to take that responsibility yet... Therefore, funding is a very critical factor to the development of the school” (150-156, Lea3LPM11)

Inputs – education funding and resources

Unbalanced regional teacher distribution; structural vacancies for rural teachers; big gaps in teacher quality and salary between rural and urban schools:

“There are structural vacancies for teachers ...Most of the teachers are teaching language and math while there are no teachers teaching music, sports and art. The problem of structural vacancies is very serious” (313-315, NPM3)

“...the teachers’ basic pay can be guaranteed... But the pays are big different, especially between rural and urban areas. And it is even bigger within a county” (246-247, NPM2)

“...good teachers left for better schools” (29-32, Lea2LPM8)

“...there is still a huge teacher quality gap between areas across the nation ..high quality teachers have better practice in delivering national curriculum as compared with low quality teachers” (NPMY)

Inputs – teacher experiences and professional development

Teacher professional development given the priority – lack of opportunities for teachers in some schools in western areas:

“Our teachers should have professional development... It is one of our priorities” (57-58, HTC)

“...in X district, teachers receive weekly professional training, which provides teachers guidance for their teaching ...training includes various aspects such as ICT, educational concepts, and teaching practice” (334-346, Lea2Sch2T)

“...high expectations for teachers, and many young teachers cannot adapt to the expectations. Professional training is urgently needed. However, the training system fails to delivery due to lack of personnel” (293-322, Lea1Sch2HT)

“Some teachers in small and remote schools have very limited professional knowledge” (150-168, Lea1Sch2S D)

Process – teacher resources and teaching methods

Team work – specific time and place to meet for research and lesson preparation, which is helpful to improve students performance:

“...schools have to focus on teacher quality and team work as this will influence student learning” (387-394, Lea3Sch1HTC)

“If a class is very effective and energetic... I think the teacher team must be very, very communicative and collaborative... In addition, the teachers must reach a high level in terms of teaching method and professional level so that they can teach the class well” (352-377, Lea3Sch1HTA)

Process – teacher resources and teaching methods

Differential teaching and student-centred based:

“I think the general characteristic [of quality teaching], to my understanding, is to teach students in accordance of their aptitude ...in order for every student to be improving, [teachers] needs to find different ways of teaching for each student ...and this requires teachers’ great effort to do so...” (391-393, Lea2Sch2S)

“Development of different levels of students should be a focus of teaching” (383-384, Lea1LPM6)

“Schools are a place for incubation and development of talents. Therefore, ‘people’ are important ...have to be student centred...” (387-394, Lea3Sch1HTC)

Process – teacher resources and teaching methods

The importance of new teaching concepts and methods:

“How to motivate students? The fundamental is that teachers change their ideas and teaching methods” (416-418, NPM2)

“...the teaching concept of the school should be a comparatively new one. A range of relatively outdated concept and methodology used to teaching would have no good effect” (198-199, TD).

“both teachers and headteachers should have vision... If teachers and headteachers only keep an eye on academic achievements, then their students have no hope” (573-574, Lea3 Sch3 SB)

Process – teacher resources and teaching methods

The importance of ethics and responsibility

“My ideal senior secondary school has good performance ...For one thing, most important is teaching staff ...I think a good teacher not only needs have a high teaching level, but also have teaching ethics which I think is particularly important” (402-409, Lea2Sch2S)

“...all the staff have good work ethics, which we call sense of responsibility...” (418-455, Lea2Sch2HT)

“...teachers’ professional ethics are required clearly” (155-156, Lea1LPM6)

Process – teacher resources and teaching methods

Teaching support from other schools and newly teachers:

“Now the governments advocate a system of teachers moving to rural areas, which means that teacher resources from the developed areas are moved to support relatively poor areas...”
(139-140, Lea3Sch1HTB)

“...the establishment of the teacher aid system, that is, for the university graduates, if you want to stay in the city, you must go to rural areas to teach for a few years. In addition governments of developed regions must send some teachers to the less developed regions. But this teaching system provide only a short-term, temporary solution” (142-153, Lea3Sch1 HTA)

Process – leadership and management

School management as well as class management:

“... Another crucial point is management. Management is the main thing. Right now, we advocate management to be standardized, precise and scientific” (214-216, Lea3PM10)

“...the most important aspect of an effective school is management. If there is excellent management, then teacher quality would naturally improve. The management is the primary factor” (195-196, Lea3Sch4TA)

“...teachers need to handle something beyond teaching [in class]” (510-512, Lea2Sch1T B)

Process – school and class atmosphere

Establishing equal relationship as well as convincing students with teaching:

“That is to say, don’t think students come to the school and like being told [exactly what to do], leaving them with a feeling that you are always right ...It is equal relationship. I feel, if so, you will be in a good mood and can make huge progress... I think it hardly study well in the constrained context” (516-522, SB)

“Firstly, your teaching needs to be approved by students... In fact, schools need to encourage teachers to develop various talents. Of course, this has to be based on their profound professional performance...” (510-512 , Lea2Sch1T B)

“...such as school ethos...including the influences of teachers [on this aspect]...” (189-197, Lea1Sch1S)

Process – teacher evaluation and self-evaluation

Use of a set of quantified measures:

“...if the college entrance exams are negated, the people cannot accept this, because this is the only system that people trust... a kind of evaluation criteria” (232-281, Lea2Sch2HT)

“Now we have a quantified evaluation scale for the teacher evaluation, which comprises of teaching workload, moral performance, publications, open classes, research projects, etc.” (193-197, Lea3Sch1 HT B)

“...including planning, teaching process, teaching methods and teachers’ commitment to teaching... teachers’ research and further learning” (175-180, LPM2)

“...the ultimate goal of evaluation is to pursue the university admission rate, the only criterion” (182-186, Lea3Sch1HTA)

Process – teacher evaluation and self-evaluation

Evaluation carried out through various approaches:

“...students complete questionnaires about the management of teachers and examinations twice a year at the end of each term... the feedback will be enclosed in a envelop and given to related individual teachers” (254-257, Lea3Sch3T A)

“The feedback from the parents’ meeting each term will be integrated into other evaluations” (326-331, Lea3Sch3T B)“

“...this year for example. We [the LEA] will choose two subjects ... According to the exam results of a few randomly-chosen schools, we will find out which subject has reached the expected goal. This is not intended to assess a school or teachers, but to prove what efforts have been done to improve the teaching of the subjects” (89-96, Lea1LPM4)

Process – teacher evaluation and self-evaluation

Evaluation results linked to teachers' welfare:

“...part of teachers are not allowed to follow the same class [to the next year grade]. Why? Because their teaching quality is quite poor” (172-180, Lea3Sch2HT)

“...[evaluation results] all these are linked to a teacher's welfare...” (182-186, Lea3Sch1HTA)

Process – teacher evaluation and self-evaluation

Teachers formally or informally conducting self-evaluation to improve their practice:

“...to analyze the strengths and weaknesses of the past classes, to support and to discuss with each other. All these are done systematically. For example, in the case of lesson preparation group ...senior high year 3 math's teachers have to meet up once a week at a particular time and place. There is a chair to lead everyone in discussion ...the feedback is quite positive” (231-235, Lea1Sch2TB)

Process – teacher evaluation and self-evaluation

Teachers seeking more involvement in decision making:

“...as my understanding, the establishment of evaluation measures are first put forward by research institutions ...then piloting ...then issued by the authorities... teachers and schools may only act as executants or be evaluated ...but not involve in decision making” (69-72, Lea3Sch4TD)

“...we hope to have more autonomous rights. We ourselves manage the school and educate students... We surely require ourselves with the highest standard, and educate students to be excellent...” (355-360, Lea2Sch2T C)

Process – teacher evaluation and self-evaluation

The need of new evaluation approaches:

“Since we all have the interest to think about the educational quality and its evaluation... So first of all the governmental evaluation system has to be changed” (126-136, Lea1Sch1T B)

“...as a teacher... we are worried about how it [evaluation] can be done in scientific way in order to reflect the real situation...” (176-177, Lea3Sch4 TD)

“Our students show some features of high score but low ability aspect... I am thinking of whether we can do some research to reverse the situation into high score equivalent to high ability” (436-469, Lea1Sch1T A)

“I think it [value added] is comparatively feasible, because it genuinely reflects students’ progress...” (22, Lea3Sch3 SB)

Conclusion so far – study 1

- A broad range of student outcomes are seen as important aspects in defining educational quality, although the overwhelming focus in practise is on examination results - which in turn has an influence on teacher/teaching quality
- Also, context and cultural differences for example related to Confucius thinking (Cheng & Wong, 1996), curriculum reform, intensive competition in labour market and the fact that the rural-urban gap is much more of an issue in China than in some other countries such as UK (Teddlie & Liu, 2008) may mean that teacher quality may be defined somewhat differently to western countries
- Equity – efforts have been made to improve the situation of insufficient and regional uneven teacher resources and lack of professional training opportunities in western and poor areas

Conclusion so far – study 1

- Collective and collaborative team work, student-centre based teaching, innovative concepts and methods, ethics of teachers are all seen to contribute to improving student performance
- Look beyond teaching – class management, and equal relationship are important for promotion of teacher quality
- Teacher evaluation and self-evaluation – seemingly teachers are evaluated personally and professionally in all aspects, in particular, student academic achievement (ie raw scores). However, teachers apply self-evaluation to improve their practice and also ask for more involvement in decision making
- Innovative evaluation and feedback – more scientific, realistic and operational evaluation approaches (eg value added) and feedback evaluation results to teachers are needed for advancing teacher quality

China's National Plan for Medium and Long-term Education Reform and Development (2010-2020)

Part IV, Chapter XVII – strengthen teaching force (CPC, July 2010):

- to build a high quality teaching staff
- to reinforce ethics of teachers
- to improve professional level of teachers
- to improve the status and remuneration of teachers
- to strengthen teacher management system

Studies of the ITDEQC Project

Improving Teacher Development and Educational Quality in China (ITDEQC)

Study 1:

i) Interviews with stakeholders about teachers professional development and the relevance of professional learning communities in Chinese schools to enhance student outcomes

ii) Conducting teacher surveys

Thank you for listening!

Project website:

<http://ieeqc.bristol.ac.uk>