

Being an English Language Teaching Assistant in China: Understanding the Identity Evolution of Early-Career English Teacher in Private Tutoring Schools

Authors : Zhou Congling

Abstract : The integration of private tutoring has emerged as an indispensable facet in the acquisition of language proficiency beyond formal educational settings. Notably, there has been a discernible surge in the demand for private English tutoring, specifically geared towards the preparation for internationally recognized gatekeeping examinations, such as IELTS, TOEFL, GMAT, and GRE. This trajectory has engendered an escalating need for English Language Teaching Assistants (ELTAs) operating within the realm of Private Tutoring Schools (PTSs). The objective of this study is to unravel the intricate process by which these ELTAs formulate their professional identities in the nascent stages of their careers as English educators, as well as to delineate their perceptions regarding their professional trajectories. The construct of language teacher identity is inherently multifaceted, shaped by an amalgamation of individual, societal, and cultural determinants, exerting a profound influence on how language educators navigate their professional responsibilities. This investigation seeks to scrutinize the experiential and influential factors that mold the identities of ELTAs in PTSs, particularly post the culmination of their language-oriented academic programs. Employing a qualitative narrative inquiry approach, this study aims to delve into the nuanced understanding of how ELTAs conceptualize their professional identities and envision their future roles. The research methodology involves purposeful sampling and the conduct of in-depth, semi-structured interviews with ten participants. Data analysis will be conducted utilizing Barkhuizen's Short Story Analysis, a method designed to explore a three-dimensional narrative space, elucidating the intricate interplay of personal experiences and societal contexts in shaping the identities of ELTAs. The anticipated outcomes of this study are poised to contribute substantively to a holistic comprehension of ELTA identity formation, holding practical implications for diverse stakeholders within the private tutoring sector. This research endeavors to furnish insights into strategies for the retention of ELTAs and the enhancement of overall service quality within PTSs.

Keywords : China, English language teacher, narrative inquiry, private tutoring school, teacher identity

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