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Free Teacher Education Policy Implementation in China

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Abstract

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In 2007 the Chinese central government implemented the Free Teacher Education Policy (FTEP), which offered qualifying students admission to prestigious national universities, four years of free tuition, room and board, and a stipend in exchange for a commitment to teach in their home province for ten years; the first two of those years in a rural area. The policy is being piloted at six national universities under the direct supervision of the Ministry of Education. This single-case qualitative study investigated the perceptions of frontline administrators, student service providers, and faculty, who are responsible for implementing the policy or are working directly with FTEP students, on implementing FTEP at their university. After initial challenges with implementing FTEP, results indicate that implementing FTEP has reestablished the university's role as a nationally prominent teacher-training university; has spurred the development of a new student-centered teaching model at university level; and because of FTEP revision by the Ministry of Education has allowed the university to create a new graduate program for FTEP graduates.

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Chapter One

Introduction

When Deng Xiaoping began opening the doors of The People's Republic of China to the outside world in 1978, one of his goals was to allow certain regions of the country to prosper first through piloting a market-based economic system with Chinese characteristics, as a way of breaking the economic ice for the rest of the country. As a result of these open door economic policies, China has experienced unprecedented, double-digit economic growth over the last 30 years, and these initial forays into a market-based economy in designated regions have become the norm in the entire country. Accompanying this loosening of centralized economic control has been a relaxing of the restrictions on citizens' movement around the country. In part, this was to allow for a steady stream of cheap, unskilled and skilled workers to sustain the burgeoning economy. And as various regions of the country benefitted from improved economic conditions, so have their populations, giving rise to an urban middle class capable of devoting a large portion of its family income to its children's education.

At its heart, driving this unprecedented growth in these economically flourishing regions is the largest and most highly educated workforce China has ever known. As such, skilled and unskilled workers from more impoverished areas have been drawn to these thriving urban areas, because of the availability of work. The influx of workers into these more prosperous urban regions has left some rural areas with fewer highly educated teachers (Paine, L., & Fang, Y., 2007). In addition, the central government has loosened its restrictions on its residency registration (i.e., *hukou*), which requires one to work in one's home region unless granted government permission to work elsewhere, and this has allowed people to look for work in other regions. Also, this has also allowed college graduates, those from more impoverished areas and

others, to not only look for work in more prosperous areas in their home province, but in other provinces as well.

These conditions have proven challenging for China's central government, because while their loosening of economic control has led to unprecedented economic growth, it has also led to challenges in keeping credentialed teachers in the poorest rural areas. As a result, the Chinese central government has begun to attack this problem head-on by creating a policy designed to place highly qualified teachers in rural primary and middle schools beginning in autumn 2011. In my single-case investigation I take a critical look at perspectives of frontline (i.e., those who are deciding how to implement the Free Teacher Education Policy, or FTEP, at the university, college, or department level, or who are teaching or working closely with FTEP students) administrators, student services providers, and faculty on the implementation of this policy at one university.

A Brief Historical Context

To provide a historical context for this investigation I will first provide a brief overview of teacher production and preparation in China since 1949, divided into two periods; 1949-1978 and 1978-Present.

The period 1949-1978 was marked by strictly planned and centrally controlled social and economic systems. This had a significant impact on education, because before 1949, for example, college students could choose among a variety of majors and career paths. Then after graduation they could look for work in an area of the country they preferred. Starting in 1949 students entering college were provided a much more limited number of majors from which to choose, and after graduation were assigned a place to work, according to the need for their expertise to

fulfill a predetermined production target in a particular sector. According to Taylor (1981), “there were apparently few problems in persuading applicants to register for (engineering or medicine), which were considered to offer lucrative rewards upon graduation. But there is abundant evidence that teacher training was an unpopular field of study, owing to the limited career opportunities it offered” (p. 98). Taylor also cited how because of a teaching career’s low pay and low prestige, “in July 1952 only 5 percent registered teacher training as their first preference” (p. 104) for specialized postsecondary training.

Then in 1952, a national college entrance examination was introduced, “which all candidates throughout the country took on the same days, at the same time, and in the same sequence” (Pepper, 1996, p. 179). The ultimate goal of this unified system “was to match the number of first-year students enrolled each year in different specialties with the number of employees that would be needed two to four years hence, as decreed by the national economic plan” (Pepper, p. 179). This attempt to match teacher demand with teacher production led to even greater discontent among teachers (Kwong, 1979; Hayhoe, 1989), particularly in the poorest and most remote areas (Pepper, 1996), because inevitably some teachers were sent to impoverished areas where teachers found harsh living conditions, no nearby access to roads or public transportation, limited teaching facilities, and few opportunities for other work.

The period from 1978-Present was initially marked by a shift toward a market-based economy and a decentralization of power from the central to the provincial and local governments. Prior to 1978 “The state money typically covered a school’s construction costs, operating expenses, salaries for a few of its teachers, and by the mid-1970s a small subsidy for the remainder of a school’s teaching staff, most of whom were hired locally” (Pepper, 1990, p. 76.) However, after 1978 a more formalized model for financing teachers created a support

system “for *minban*, or people-managed, teachers and schools, which are distinct from *gongban*, or state-managed, teachers and schools” (Hannum et al., 2007, p.4). (*Minban* teachers are now called *daike*, or substitute teachers.)

As a result of the central government shifting more funding responsibility to the communities in which the schools were located, some areas benefited because they were able to raise funds due to newly established local businesses and industry, while other areas with limited resources for generating income independently were disadvantaged. Therefore, according to Paine and Fang (2007) “...market pressures have encouraged many experienced and qualified teachers in rural counties and townships to migrate to urban communities or leave teaching for good” (ibid.). Nearly 20 years earlier Hayhoe also noted that, “The importance of greater central and provincial government funding for poor rural schools [was] stressed, since decentralization and self-reliance [had] allowed poor and remote areas to fall increasingly behind” (1989, p. 164).

In 1997 the Chinese government again initiated steps to decentralize its control over higher education institutions. And again, over the following decade, fewer and fewer graduates from normal universities chose to teach in rural China for reasons such as low pay, poor living conditions, and few opportunities for promotion. In fact, recent studies have investigated the roots of educational inequality within different rural areas and reveal that some are still relying on *daike* teachers to staff local schools (Chan and Harrell, 2009; Postiglione, 2007).

These ongoing challenges with providing quality education to the poor rural areas compelled Chinese Party General Secretary Hu Jintao and Premier Wen Jiabao to initiate the FTET in 2007. This policy is designed to provide more teachers in rural areas beginning in 2011, and seems to shift some of the power to do so back into the hands of the central government. And it is this recentralization of control for providing teachers to rural areas that is the focus of

my investigation.

Structure of Dissertation

In chapter two I will explore the background of teacher production and preparation in China since 1949 in greater detail, how China's move toward a market-based economy has influenced teacher education graduates' job choices, and how the central government has reduced education costs for the poor.

In chapter three I will introduce my single case-study research method and will describe why I chose Southwest University (SWU)—one of only six Chinese universities mandated to pilot this 2007 FTEP—for my single case. In addition, I will discuss why I chose a qualitative study to explore my research questions, and how I decided which subjects to interview.

In chapter four I will share my analysis and provide my initial findings and themes that emerged from them, as well as some additional findings.

In chapter five I will summarize my findings along with broad implications for their meaning.

Chapter Two

In this chapter I explore the historical background of teacher production and preparation in China since 1949 in greater detail, which will include discussions of how the move toward a market-based economy compelled fewer teacher education graduates to look for teaching positions in rural areas, and how the Hu Jintao—Wen Jiabao administration has taken steps to reduce the cost of education for the poorest families in rural areas. In chapter two I will also introduce how I am drawing on Scott's (2008) and Tierney's (2008) work on organizational theory and culture to provide a conceptual framework for my investigation.

A Brief Overview of Teacher Production and Preparation in China since 1949

Education has been a means by which Chinese citizens have ascended social and political ladders for generations. Then “In 1898, the Chinese government officially established the Metropolitan University in Beijing (predecessor of Peking University), symbolizing the start of modern Chinese higher education” (Min, 1997, p. 38). Certainly, a number of major events have influenced how teacher production and preparation have evolved in China since that time; however, I will focus here on those events and influences that occurred from 1949 to 1978 and from 1978 to the present.

1949 to 1978

According to Orleans (1961), “When the Communists took over the mainland in 1949, they inherited a country with an immense population of whom over 80 percent were illiterate” (p. 5). Therefore, besides keeping the country unified under the Communist-led government, three of the regime's next challenges were to produce more engineers, teachers, and doctors to aid in

its burgeoning development plans (Taylor, 1981). Regarding teacher production, educating more of its citizens at all levels led leaders to mobilize enough resources and personnel “to increase enrollment in primary schools by some 60 million and in institutes of higher education by some 500 percent” (Orleans, 1961, p. 5) within a decade. However, this massive expansion of education had its repercussions, one being an emphasis on the quantity of teachers over the quality of their educational preparation (Hawkins, 1990; Orleans, 1961; Pepper, 1996; Taylor, 1981).

In these early years, to become a primary school teacher one needed only to complete two years of a “specialized” junior secondary school.

The secondary schools in China are divided into the general and the specialized. The general (sometimes translated as ‘ordinary’) secondary schools are essentially academic in character and consist of three-year junior and three-year senior schools, or a total of six years. The specialized secondary schools are subdivided into normal, or teachers’, schools and vocational schools. Theoretically, both are divided into the lower and higher levels of 3 years each. Actually, the structure is not that precise: Depending on the particular course and school (sic), the term of study may fluctuate anywhere from 2 to 6 years. (Orleans, 1961, p. 34)

But while this teacher education structure did allow for the rapid production of new teachers for the masses, it also meant for the new primary school teachers, who may have been as young as 14 that they were going to enter a career that offered few if any opportunities for advancement. Teaching at such a young age may have presented other challenges as well. “In China,” describes Postiglione (2007), “primary school age is usually seven to 12 years, but in rural Tibet, children begin primary school later and some graduate at about 17 years of age” (p. 105). And in a more

extreme case, Unger (2009) explains how in one poor rural village “. . . each year only one grade of children was now taught, and the school’s only teacher advanced from grade one to grade six with this one group of students. All other children have had to hike to another village for their schooling, or else wait for the local school’s six-year school-grade cycle to be repeated” (p. 155). Beyond primary school, if one wanted to become a junior middle school teacher one was supposed to complete at least two years of normal school, have experience teaching in a primary school, and be at least fifteen years old (Orleans, 1961).

Although the new leadership had been busy recruiting, training, and placing increasing numbers of primary and middle school teachers, this did not make these tasks any easier at the postsecondary level, as noted by Taylor (1981) above. And, even if students did choose teacher training as a field, that was no guarantee that after graduation they would follow through with that choice. In fact, encouraging graduates to accept their work assignments was another of the challenges the central government faced in providing enough teachers for the nation (Kwong, 1979; Orleans, 1961; Pepper, 1996; Taylor, 1981). And by 1960, for example, “It was recognized that parents play a decisive role in bringing up the young, and they were exhorted to encourage their children to read enlightening books, or to prepare them to accept work assignments after graduation” (Kwong, 1979, pgs. 123-124).

Intensifying this challenge was an understanding that “Although candidates theoretically have a choice of schools and specializations, they must ‘indicate their desire to subordinate themselves to planned distribution’”; plans that “for the 1954-55 school year, 37.42 percent of the entrants were to go into engineering, 6.34 percent into science, and 2.17 percent into finance and economics” (Orleans, 1961, p. 62). On graduating, college students were then given job assignments according to their area of expertise, but not necessarily according to their interests.

The students from the most prestigious national universities would be placed in central government positions in major cities in the east, and those from the top provincial colleges and universities earned positions in the largest cities within the same province. Then in 1952 the national college entrance examination was initiated in 1952 as a way to more accurately match college students' career paths with the country's anticipated needs (Pepper, 1996).

Due to the push to increase the supply of teachers at all levels and in all geographic areas, even the primary and secondary teachers for the poorest rural areas of the country, the central government was concerned that some state personnel needs would go unmet if students were left to choose the majors and careers they most desired. China had significantly increased teacher-training enrollments from 12,039 in 1949 to 137,561 in 1965 (Hayhoe, 1989, p. 35), but shortages remained nonetheless, especially in the poorest rural areas. In an attempt to move more educational resources from the east coast and large cities, where they were primarily concentrated, the government also physically moved institutions between 1949 and 1953. This resulted in "hinterland" teacher training institutes growing from 7 to 18 and "the proportion of students in the coastal region [falling] from 61.49 to 55.9 percent, while in the hinterland it rose from 38.6 to 44.1 percent" (Taylor, 1981, p. 97). Thus, this two-pronged enrollment and job appointment plan was intended to close the gap between national occupational needs and academic and technical training.

One lingering problem, however, was the difficulty to force students to enroll into programs that did not match their preferences. "In 1953," for example, "the most popular subjects were mechanical and radio engineering, telecommunications, and medicine. [One of] the fields that did not receive enough voluntary applications to fill the available vacancies included" teacher training (Pepper, 1996, p. 180). Taylor (1981) cites an example to illustrate the nature of

how these teacher shortages occur:

...in 1955 a total of 5,965 students were to be enrolled in institutions in the North-West Area but only 6,456 registered for examination. As only 3,621 were considered suitable for entry, that area was left 2,344 short of its quota. In contrast, the East China Area's quota was 26,575 for the same year in which 56,599 applicants registered; the enrolment examination produced 36,621 acceptable candidates, 10,046 more than necessary. (p. 97)

These geographical disparities were compounded by the fact that the national education budget was not large enough to equally support the demands of each educational area to the same extent each year. Thus, "In 1955 there was a decrease in the funds allocated for higher and secondary education and no increase . . . for primary education. The year 1956 saw a radical drop in the money allotted for primary education and a proportional increase . . . for higher education." And "during some years more money was spent to construct and expand vocational schools at the expense of normal schools and secondary general schools" (Orleans, 1961, p. 14).

Then 1958 ushered in The Great Leap Forward (Hawkins, 1990; Hayhoe, 1989; Orleans, 1961; Pepper, 1996; Taylor, 1981), which was the regime's vigorous attempt to boost nationwide production in all areas including the production of teachers to train the specialists to carry out this plan. "The reforms of 1958," Taylor (1981) goes on to describe, "...were also a reflection of changing jurisdiction over higher education." And "To cater further to local needs and decrease the flow of candidates between regions, the principle of 'accepting talent according to area' was adopted. This meant . . . that a candidate would register for a local institution in the area where he lived" (p. 123). Certainly, due to the Great Leap Forward, "Education was extended to great numbers, but the emphasis on quantity led to a corresponding neglect of quality" (Orleans, 1961, p. 18).

Within two years of implementing the Great Leap Forward, concerns about reduced teacher quality became widespread and attempts had begun to correct it. Around the country new teachers were linked with senior teacher mentors, senior teachers guided groups of new teachers in lesson planning and preparation, and “teachers in the middle schools were to devote no less than three units of their time per week . . . to meetings” (Kwong, 1979, p. 121). This kind of mentoring and guidance was streamlined, because “As for the organization of knowledge, clear boundaries between specializations were maintained through the teaching plan, the teaching outline, and the textbook” (Hayhoe, 1989, p. 34). Hayhoe also cites how “The teaching outline ordered the knowledge content of each course, arranging the subject material to be transmitted according to the structure of the discipline and according to Marxist-Leninist theory” (p. 34). Teacher education, like all other educational specializations, “. . . had several teaching and research groups . . . responsible for different levels and types of courses within the teaching plan. The research carried out by these groups largely consisted of investigation into methods for transmitting authoritatively defined knowledge as effectively as possible” (Hayhoe, p.34). Therefore, all three of these (i.e., teaching plan, teaching outline, and textbook) were developed by one of these teaching and research groups and the “Teachers were thus the transmitters of authoritative knowledge which had been determined elsewhere” (Hayhoe, p. 34).

Cultural Revolution 1966-1976: Rapid Increase in Teacher Production Impacts Teacher Quality

Between 1966 and 1976 “China experienced the ‘Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution,’ a far-reaching and chaotic social movement that brought a radical agenda to the forefront of politics and educational policy making. In 1966, Mao Zedong proclaimed the start of a new

educational era in which political recommendation and class background became the primary means of determining progress through the education system (Unger 1984)” (as cited in Hannum, Park, & Cheng, 2007, p. 2). As the Cultural Revolution began, the preparation and production of teachers was impacted by the fact that “Vocational and technical schools were shut down, and, for the first six years, so were secondary teacher training schools (Tsang 2000, as cited in Hannum et al., 2007, p.2).

Many who were already highly educated were forced to leave their current positions and go to learn from peasants in rural areas, some “to backwater county towns or rural communes” (Pepper, 1996, p. 392). And when sent to the countryside, “The most common venue for all government cadres and college teachers,” says Pepper (1996), “was a ‘May Seventh Cadre School,’ usually a school-run farm or hastily converted labor reform correctional facility where the new arrivals did farm labor, swept their own floors, washed their own clothes, and devoted long hours to political study.” However, “elementary and secondary school teachers as a whole did not participate in such long-term mandatory farm labor” (p. 388). As such, Min (1997) claims the Cultural Revolution “set China’s socioeconomic and scientific development back about twenty years” (p. 37). Regarding higher education, while Min argues that “Universities and colleges were attacked as places disseminating bourgeois ideologies” (p. 39), Hannum et al. (2007) add that after its initial stoppage higher education “remained crippled throughout most of the 1970s,” although it “was reinvigorated as a means of supplying the high-quality personnel and scientific expertise needed for national development (ibid.)” (p. 5). But while much has been written about how lives were tragically altered during the Cultural Revolution, “Mao’s education revolution was unique not just in its destructive leveling at the top of the pyramid but also in expanding its mass base and especially in trying to reduce the rural handicaps” (Pepper, 1996, p.

426). This latter point is particularly significant given what Pepper calls “the inherited nonrural aversion to rural life” and therefore “the movement was unique in reversing the rural-to-urban drift from impoverished countryside to overcrowded cities typical of modernization generally” and led to an “urban-to-rural movement of historical dimensions” (p. 383). Also, it was at this time that state funds were authorized “to finance the new standard of one middle school per commune and to provide assistance (however limited) in financing virtually all brigade-run schools as well” (Pepper, p. 426). China attracted the attention of the international community due to this combination of intellectuals moving to rural areas and state-supported local schools, which may have at first appeared to be an approach to settle much consternation over the lack of adequate support for rural education; however, “Usually, even a prosperous commune could not staff a middle school from its own population. Nor could communes alone easily recruit such individuals, given the intellectual aversion to rural life, without the ‘coercive’ power of the state assignment mechanism” (Pepper, p. 429).

1978-Present: Push of Market Reforms Leads to Gaps in Access to Quality Education

Once Deng Xiaoping was chosen to lead the country, educational reform led to nationwide changes. One of these reforms changed the way teacher salaries were funded; a change that significantly impacted teacher production. Hannum et al. (2007) explain that

The *minban* teachers in general were less qualified than *gongban* teachers and the amount of local support for hiring such teachers undoubtedly varied across communities. Thus, although greater reliance on such teachers increased access to education, significant disparities remained in the quality of education. (p. 4)

As a result of the central government shifting more funding responsibility to the communities in

which the schools were located, some areas benefited because they were able to raise funds due to newly established local businesses and industry, while other areas with limited resources for generating income independently were disadvantaged. As a result, in order to fund local schools, one way

... was to divide education costs among all households in the brigade, whether they had children or not, and send the teachers out door-to-door to collect—which they did not like. The other way was to divide up costs only among those households with school-age children, which increased the dropout rates because many families could not afford the higher fees. (Pepper, 1990, p. 84)

Further compounding this dilemma was that in some cases teachers had not been paid for up to two years (Hawkins, 1992; Pepper, 1990). These added pressures on poor rural areas to fund local schools led to frustrations that compelled some to violence, which resulted in a “rash of peasant attacks against schools (over 300 cases of physical assaults against teachers and school property)” (Pepper, 1990, p. 86) in Hunan province alone.

Eventually, according to Hannum et al. (2007), the high fees paid by local households decreased as the government gradually phased out *minban* education in the name of quality upgrading, a process that was to be completed by the year 2000” (p. 5). But, by 2000 *minban* teachers had not been phased out and in 2007 still represented a substantial presence in the teaching force. According to Paine and Fang (2007)

... market pressures have encouraged many experienced and qualified teachers in rural counties and townships to migrate to urban communities or leave teaching for good. The severe shortage of teachers has forced these areas to find substitute teachers, also called out-of-quota *minban* teachers, to fill the void and meet the increasing demand for

secondary education. Even though the government has tried since the late 1980s to discourage the growth of *minban* teachers by converting experienced and qualified *minban* teachers into *gongban*, government-paid teachers, the number of substitute teachers in the rural areas is on the increase again, especially in the poor areas in the West and Southwest.

Given the high and increasing proportion of uncredentialed, and thus likely to be less qualified teachers in rural areas, rural schooling poses particular challenges for improving the teaching force. It is also in the rural areas that the problems of meeting the national standards for teacher qualifications, teacher salaries, and educational expenditure are the most acute. Because of these mounting problems facing education in poor rural areas it had become increasingly difficult to attract teachers into either primary or lower and higher middle school positions. Some rural areas also suffered from the “open market for college graduates” and the perception that “institutions need to prepare their students to compete for jobs after graduation” (Bai, 1997, p. 313), because these were designed to assist graduates in seeking out the jobs they most wanted (i.e., jobs in the highest paying regions and often in prominent cities). Then in 1988 “. . . many cities and suburban districts reported a sharp drop in applicants at the senior secondary level for the first time since 1976,” incomes for college educated teachers became lower than for those who had earned technical training, and “. . . new regulations announced in early 1988 [abolished] tuition-free higher education and guaranteed job assignments for college graduates” (Pepper, 1990, p. 125). Yet even though these challenges to educational funding were spreading to suburban and urban areas, “The importance of greater central and provincial government funding for poor rural schools [was] stressed, since decentralization and self-reliance [had] allowed poor and remote areas to fall increasingly behind” (Hayhoe, 1989, p164). Another policy change that resulted in

reduced teacher production was the abolition of

. . . the centralized system of enrollment whereby students [were] admitted to all institutions of higher learning throughout the country each year in accordance with a unified plan drawn up by the central and provincial governments, which stipulates in minute detail the number of students to be enrolled from each province, into each school, and into every academic major within it (Pepper, 1990, p. 155)

To be sure this rapid deregulation would not completely obliterate the majority of the nation's potential teachers, the State Education Commission designed two academic plans for college students in the 1988-89 academic year—guided and directed. Students in the guided plan “. . . will be responsible for their own tuition and living expenses and for repaying any loans incurred” (Pepper, 1990, p. 158) in exchange for the freedom to choose their own major and their own job once they graduate. Students in the directed plan “. . . will generally be exempt from paying tuition, and their other expenses will be largely state subsidized. But in return, they must agree to major in one of several unpopular specialties, enrollment plans for which are typically difficult to fill” (Pepper, 1990, p. 158). One of these “unpopular specialties” was teaching.

Concern about the dramatic regional differences seemed to be foreshadowed in 1981 by “the president of (Xi'an) Jiaotong (Communications) University [who] warned: ‘Mobility of human talent must be carried out under leadership and in a planned way. We must never encourage spontaneity Otherwise, the flow will be concentrated in the direction of Beijing and Shanghai and along the coast, which will not be beneficial to building our country’” (Pepper, 1990, p. 164). Likewise, at the end of her chapter section titled, “‘*Society's Needs' Revisited*”, Pepper summarizes how this ongoing dilemma between the educational needs in the poorest rural areas and the educational resources and jobs in urban areas was playing out in the late

1980s:

That China's institutions of higher learning are not currently doing a very good job of preparing students for life after graduation in Chinese society has thus become the 'new' conventional wisdom among university personnel today. The challenge, they accept, is 'to harmonize society's needs with the students' preferences.' But there seems little consensus about the underlying causes of these problems, or how best to solve them, or the extent to which the institutions themselves can be held responsible for doing so.

Although no one would admit it in so many words, China's universities found themselves in 1988 debating again the very same question they were forced to address under different circumstances during the 1966-76 decade, namely, how to adapt higher learning to China's needs. Then it was imposed from above by the dictates of Mao Zedong's class-based radicalism. In 1988, it was being enforced by the exigencies of the economic reform drive itself. Yet the challenge was much the same throughout, as it has been for most of this century. The crux of the problem is how to counteract the commonly acknowledged tendency of college-educated people 'to concentrate where culture is high,' in the big cities and coastal areas in the most socially rewarding jobs. The current brain drain abroad is only an extension of the same trend at home (or was, until the crackdown against the spring 1989 democracy movement created an additional political imperative). The dilemma, which many have deplored over the years but no one has ever successfully solved is how to redirect that trend in ways that are both acceptable to Chinese intellectuals themselves and beneficial to everyone else. (p. 166)

The trend of teacher education graduates seeking jobs ". . . in the big cities and coastal areas in the most socially rewarding job" continues today. In 1997 the Chinese government again

initiated steps to decentralize its control over higher education institutions. And again, over the following decade, fewer and fewer graduates from normal universities chose to teach in rural China. In one study Postiglione (2007) argues how “There is a gap between the quality of teaching at the village, township and county levels, with many villages still relying on *minban* teachers. Children who live in villages closer to the township school are advantaged, and children in households remote from village schools are less likely to attend school” (p. 111). And in Chan and Harrell’s (2009) study they explain that:

One of the more striking differences between key-point and village schools, other than enrollment numbers, is the percentage of *minban* teachers who make up the teaching staff. Village schools rely much more on community-sponsored (*minban*) teachers. The living standards and location of village schools do not attract trained teachers. The county government will allocate the most inexperienced teachers to teach in villages, but these teachers will attempt to transfer to key-point schools. In interviews with village school teaching staff, many complain of boredom, low wages, and loneliness. One teacher stated that he was getting old but still could not find a wife because no woman would want to move out to the village. *Minban* teachers are unhappy at the village schools where they, on average, receive lower wages than their key-point counterparts. *Minban* teachers often have to take second jobs such as chauffeuring, as well as working on their families’ farms, because they cannot support their families on teaching wages that the community provides. (p. 155-156)

These ongoing challenges with providing quality education to the poor rural areas compelled Hu Jintao and Wen Jiabao to initiate the Free Teacher Education Policy (FTEP) in 2007. The policy is designed to provide more teachers in rural areas beginning in 2011.

**Demand for a New Approach Emerges: Centralization, Decentralization, and
Recentralization of Government Control, and Background of the Free Teacher Education
Policy**

Centralization, Decentralization, and Recentralization of Government Control

Caldwell and Spinks (1998; 2008) have investigated “self-managing schools” in some Commonwealth and other countries. They apply this description to K-12 schools that have been given more local autonomy in allocating financial and other resources that had previously been allocated by the regional, provincial, or state government. However, Caldwell and Spinks caution that “A self-managing school is not an autonomous school nor is it a self-governing school, for each of these kinds of schools involve a degree of independence that is not provided in a centrally determined framework” (1998, p. 4-5). Rather, “The existence of a centrally determined framework implies that a self-managing school is part of a system of schools, so the concept applies most readily to systems of government or public schools, or to systems of non-government or private schools where there has been decentralization” (Caldwell and Spinks, 1998, p. 4-5). According to Caldwell and Spinks, “An example of comprehensive reform that integrates a high level of decentralized decision-making within a centrally determined framework may be found in Seattle Public Schools where funds have been decentralized to the school level” (1998, p. 9-10).

The phenomenon of decentralized decision-making juxtaposed against a centralized authority is not uncommon. Caldwell and Spinks (1998) refer to it as a “. . . paradox of simultaneous centralization and decentralization” in their investigation of the relationship

between self-regulated schools and student learning (p. 11). In fact, they note that, “In an update of research on the effects of school resources on student achievement, Hanushek (1997, p. 156) drew attention to the finding ‘that simply decentralizing decision-making is unlikely to work effectively unless there exist clear objectives and unless there is direct accountability’” (Caldwell and Spinks, 1998, p. 42).

A decade later, in their investigation of the development of self-managing schools, Caldwell and Spinks note that:

There are important implications for those concerned with the allocation of resources at all levels. Governments and other authorities must invest in policies that attract, prepare, place and reward outstanding people to serve in schools. Schools must have a capacity to select those whose talents meet the unique mix of and priorities among learning needs at the local level. Once in post, working conditions must be of such a standard that people will be retained in the profession, rather than seek an exit within a few years of appointment, as in the case of some nations, including Australia and the United Kingdom. (2008, p. 19)

On this final point, within its higher education system China has also been struggling ever since 1985, when it adopted the “document called the 'Decision of the Central Committee of the Chinese Communist Party on the Reform of the Educational System'. One of the major themes of the decision is related to reform in the higher education sector, devolving decision-making power from the central government to individual higher education institutions” (Mok, 2002, p. 261). Accompanying this shift of decision-making power from the central government to individual higher education institutions have been reforms in education finance that likewise shifted responsibility from the central government to the individual higher education institutions.

As a result, higher education institutions became more entrepreneurial in order to raise revenue to increase faculty salaries, improve campus facilities, and develop research and development institutes, among others. With central government approval, a few institutions also began charging tuition in the 1980s; but, “From 1997 onwards, all students who want to enroll in higher education have to pay tuition fees” (Mok, 2002, p. 263). The most “. . . prominent universities,” according to Halachmi and Ngok (2009), “were highly motivated to take advantage of new opportunities to mobilize new resources and assume leadership positions as the country was starting to write a new chapter in the history of its academic institutions. China's mainstay universities aggressively sought new funding sources in order to support their current operations and future growth” (p.2).

Moving beyond the “. . . highly centralized system of higher education [that] impeded the development of higher education and inhibited institutions from changing to meet social, political, and economic challenges” (Wang, 2001, p. 206), has created institutions that have more flexibility to respond to local, regional, national, and international market changes. In fact, “. . . many universities have tried to merge with other universities to improve their research and academic profile (Christiansen, 1996; Rosen, 1997). For instance, old Shanghai University announced a plan to merge with other local colleges to become a more comprehensive university” (Mok, 2002, p. 268). And being able to charge tuition has provided an incentive for higher education institutions to enroll more students in order to fund new initiatives. However, since the central government shifted the financial responsibility for higher education to the provincial or local institutions, and the institutions have passed much of this responsibility onto the students through tuition and fees, students have gained more freedom to do what they want and go where they want after graduation. This led to fewer highly qualified graduates being sent to teach in

rural areas around the country and in turn led to a reduction in education access for students living in the most rural areas. Compounding this problem for students from more remote rural areas or from low-income families was increasing tuition costs. As a result, by the early 2000s “... China's higher education sector [was] experiencing a process of decentralization and marketization. 'Marketization' in the Chinese context means 'a process whereby education becomes a commodity provided by competitive suppliers, educational services are priced and access to them depends on consumer calculations and ability to pay' (Yin and White, 1994, p. 217)” (Mok, 2002, p. 269).

Therefore, I view the Hu Jintao and Wen Jiabao administration's mandated FTEP to provide more highly qualified teachers for middle and high schools in rural areas as a kind of recentralization of control over China's education sector; a recentralization that reestablishes the planned economy's (i.e., 1949-1978) requirement for university graduates to accept government-determined jobs in exchange for free tuition, subsistence, and lodging. But according to Mok (2002), even though decentralization of education may have begun occurring since the mid-1980s:

... we can easily find the coexistence of both decentralization and recentralization trends not only in China's education sector but also in other policy domains. Seen in this light, it is wrong to argue that once the decentralization policy is implemented in the education sector, the role of the control of the state will automatically diminish. In contrast, decentralization may be a mechanism for tightening control of the periphery instead of a genuine devolution of state powers. (p. 270-271)

Mok further argues that in China as well as other countries, “... deregulating some major aspects of education has indeed increased a limited number of state powers and, in turn,

strengthened the state's capacity to foster particular interests while appearing to stand outside the frame (see, for example, Young and Whitty, 1997; Whitty, 1994, 1997; MoE, 1994)” (Mok, 2002, p. 271).

In conclusion, Naughton (2007) summarizes this shift from centralization (1949-1978) to decentralization (1978-1993) to recentralization (post 1993) as seemingly paradoxical. “During the first period of reform [1978-1993],” Naughton notes, “the motivating force behind decentralization had been the need to introduce markets and incentives into the system. During the second period [post 1993], management responsibilities were more clearly divided between center and local, but in a way that tended on balance to be recentralizing in terms of ultimate control” (p. 98). And it is this recentralization of control through the Free Teacher Education Policy that is at the heart of my investigation.

Background of the Free Teacher Education Policy

After the Cultural Revolution, China began to make a “transition to a more market-oriented economy . . . (and) a different agenda came to guide educational policy, as leaders sought to promote market reforms and economic modernization” (Hannum, et al., 2007, p. 4). However, Hannum et, al. add that “One of the most critical changes that accompanied market reforms, with important implications for poor, rural communities, was soaring educational costs related, in part, to privatization” (p.5). These costs were a result of the government’s decentralization of education finance, which left the responsibility of supporting schools with the provinces, counties, townships, and villages (Li, Park, & Wang, 2007) with the expectation that these more local governmental bodies would find additional ways to finance their local universities, high schools, middle schools, and primary schools. And this “Decentralization has

indeed allowed new resources to be mobilized in support of schooling, as wealthier and more entrepreneurial communities became capable of marshaling non-public resources that were previously unavailable to them” (Hannum et al., 2007, p. 6). But not all communities or regions benefitted equally due to the market reforms. In fact, as noted by Li et al. (2007),

While a decentralized system improves incentives for local governments to generate revenues and to be responsive to local needs, it can hamper efforts to meet goals of distributional equity. Given overall budget scarcity, it is not surprising that in China decentralization led to greater inequity in the provision of public goods and services across regions. Many poor areas confronted a lack of local government revenues or subsidies from upper levels of government, leading to fiscal crises, which prevented local governments from even meeting their salary obligations to government officials and teachers, let alone enabling them to finance high quality public services (Park et al., 1996; Wong 1997). (p. 27)

Certainly, one of those “high quality public services” is education, which ended up being funded well in communities with local industries or other marketable resources, but poorly in others. “Decentralization,” Hannum et al. argue, “increased regional disparities in funding for schools, and also increased family educational expenditures required even for compulsory education, especially in poor areas where revenue-starved local governments had no choice but to pass the burden of educational expenditures onto rural households” (2007, p. 6).

To Whyte (2010), who describes post-Cultural Revolution market reforms as “China’s second social revolution” (p. 3), this move toward market reforms

. . . has involved a fundamental shift in priorities from promoting social equality to promoting economic growth. In the pursuit of growth, socialist institutions have been

dismantled, market coordination of economic activity has been promoted, foreign and domestic private ownership have once again been allowed, and in general any measures that are seen as promoting foreign direct investment, increasing export sales, and raising living standards are encouraged by the state, regardless of the impact such changes have on social inequality (at least until relatively recently). (p. 3-4)

And Unger (2009) suggests that China has even developed into two countries, referring to the regional disparity in poverty reduction:

Compared to the recent past, China increasingly contains ‘two nations,’ to paraphrase Disraeli, one of prosperous households and one of poor households. To varying degrees, this is occurring within villages. Even more evidently, though, it is occurring between regions, as some boom and others stagnate. An analysis of State Statistical bureau survey data for 1988 and 1995 showed that within that period of seven years deep rural poverty in the eastern region of China had fallen from 9 percent to 5 percent and in the central region had declined from 20 percent of the population to 13 percent; but in the western region it had actually increased substantially, from 26.5 to 31 percent of the inhabitants. (p. 143)

But beyond the macro-level disparities among regions, Connelly & Zheng (2010) noted a disturbing paradox: “Within education, academic meritocracy was again being touted as the criterion for academic advancement, but the ability to pay increasingly served as an important element of children’s educational progress” (p. 64).

In the 1990s the central government began to attempt to correct some of these disparities among regions and particularly poor rural areas.

By the mid-1990s, the government itself had recognized the policy importance of

reversing the trend of widening disparities, and began allocating targeted funds to reduce inequities in the public financing of education. Major changes to the fiscal system in 1994 led to increases in both the amount of revenues mobilized and greater control by the [central government] over budgetary allocations, presumably reducing budgetary pressures at all levels and increasing the [central government's] ability to redistribute resources. (Li et al., 2007, p. 28)

Then shortly after ushering in the 21st century, China announced its two new leaders, Hu Jintao and Wen Jiabao. Several scholars noted their determined approach to overcoming the financial and education access challenges experienced by the rural poor. For example, Hannum et al. (2010) cite that “Ensuring basic educational access in poor rural areas is a focus of intense government activity at present. During the Tenth National People’s Congress, Premier Wen Jiabao pledged to ‘eliminate all charges on rural students receiving 9-year compulsory education before the end of 2007’” (p. 144). In one of his endnotes Whyte claims that “The leadership team of Hu Jintao and Wen Jiabao that took over in 2002-2003 has voiced much more concern about inequality than that of its predecessors, Deng Xiaoping and Jiang Zemin, and it has begun implementing a number of new policy initiatives to address the problem . . .” (2010, p. 368). And Naughton (2007) adds:

Under Wen, the style of policy-making has changed rather dramatically, become more consultative and deliberate than under Zhu Rongji. The fundamental policy direction has not significantly changed, although the policy agenda has broadened. It has become clear that policy-makers today face the dual challenge of advancing the transition process while also cushioning the impact of changes that have increased inequality and reduced economic security. (p. 108)

Naughton continues,

Indeed, the post-2003 Hu Jintao—Wen Jiabao administration immediately shifted the rhetorical emphasis of the government toward greater solicitude, toward rural areas, and toward regions and individuals left behind in the development process. Expressions of good intentions have been followed by significant policy changes that, for example, have reduced the tax rate in rural areas, and eliminated some of the unreasonable extra burdens that rural-to-urban migrants experience in cities. Still, these shifts in orientation need to be reinforced by effective policies that bring the benefits of growth more inclusively to a broader swath of the population. (p. 109-110)

In addition to the policy changes Naughton refers to above, the Hu—Wen administration has initiated several policies aimed at reducing the education access gap for students in the poorest rural areas. One of these is “. . . the new *liang mian yi bu* subsidy” (Chan and Harrell, 2009, p. 157), which eliminates textbook, boarding, and miscellaneous fees for qualifying families (Hannum et al., 2007). This subsidy was designed to correct the trend of requiring even the poorest rural families to pay for their children’s education; expenses that compelled some to keep their children from attending school (Hannum et al., 2007). Another policy that was designed to increase the quality of education in rural, and especially remote, areas regards school consolidation (Chan and Harrell, 2009). By closing some of the most ineffectual schools in outlying areas, the government could redistribute the savings from those closures to more-centralized, key-point schools. These schools have better classroom facilities and teaching materials than the more remote schools, provide housing for the students who must travel from distant villages, and offer government-managed, *gongban*, teachers that are more highly paid than the *minban*, or people-managed, teachers (Chan and Harrell, 2009; Hannum et al., 2007;

Postiglione, 2007).

But these two policies have not solved the challenge of providing more highly qualified, government-managed teachers for those poorest rural areas where schools remain. Thus the Free Teacher Education Policy (2007) is designed to have six of China's most prestigious normal universities train upwards of 12,000 new teachers to serve in the poorest rural areas.

When Premier Wen announced the FTET in spring 2007, it joined several other policies and programs designed to increase access to quality education and, for those living in the most impoverished rural areas, eliminate the financial burden of paying for that access (Connelly and Zheng, 2007).

Main Provisions of FTET

To attract top applicants into the FTET the Ministry of Education, Ministry of Finance, and Ministry of Human Resources have provided several benefits to reduce the cost and increase the value of university education for those wishing to become teachers. These include four years of free tuition, free room and board, free textbooks and class supplies, and a monthly stipend. However, to receive these benefits, the students must sign a contract, which will commit them to teaching in a rural area in their home province for a minimum of two years, and then continue to work the remainder of their ten year commitment in education within the same province. For the remaining eight years FTET graduates may choose to teach in urban areas within the province or may take an administrative position within the education system.

In addition to the students who enroll in the FTET when they first enter the university, academically outstanding non-teaching students may be admitted into the FTET within their first two years, after which they will receive a reimbursement for their tuition up to that point and will

be paid any stipend they missed.

Other unique benefits of the FTEP are that students will experience a newly designed, student-centered curriculum that emphasizes practical aspects of teaching and skills development rather than the traditional lecture-style teacher-centered format emphasizing education theory. And leading senior professors, not lecturers or teaching assistants, will conduct these courses. Further, to provide additional opportunities for students to develop their practical teaching skills, FTEP students will experience a significantly extended student teaching assignment.

Regarding graduate school, FTEP students who pass the appropriate entrance examinations may attend graduate school part-time as well as during summers while they are fulfilling their teaching duties within their home province. During the academic year they will attend classes either at a satellite branch campus or building, or through the university's online courses. They may not enroll in a full-time graduate program while completing their ten years of service.

Finally, FTEP students wanting to exit the program may do so at a cost of repaying all the tuition, stipends, and other benefits they received before exiting. And if after graduation FTEP students fail to complete their ten years of service in their home province, they will be required to reimburse the government for all the education expenses and pay a fine.

Implementation of FTEP

In his March 5, 2010 "Report on the Work of the Government Delivered at the Third Session of the Eleventh national People's Congress," Wen Jiabao emphasized the need to develop education at all levels and in the central and western regions:

Fourth, we will reform the management and admissions systems of institutions of higher

learning. We will give them more decision-making power, encourage them to adjust their majors and curricula to meet employment needs and the needs of economic and social development; more intimately integrate personnel training, scientific and technological innovation, and academic development; inspire their teachers to concentrate on education; and become high-level universities with their own distinctive features. We will develop a number of first-class universities that produce outstanding personnel. The central government will increase support for the development of higher education in the central and western regions.

Fifth, we will improve the ranks of our teachers. We will take a variety of measures to attract outstanding personnel to pursue careers in education and devote their lives to it. We will focus on strengthening training for teachers and principals of rural compulsory education schools, and encourage excellent teachers to teach in impoverished rural areas. We will intensify education to improve the professional ethics of our teachers, and enhance their sense of responsibility and mission. Hundreds of millions of families place their hopes for a better life on education, and education has a direct bearing on the quality of the nation and the future of the country. A country cannot become strong and prosperous if it does not make education universal and improve its quality. We must always keep this in mind. (p. 10)

And according to a news report, “The Ministry of Education came up with the rules of implementation of the policy in May” 2007 (Lu, 2007), and the first students to benefit from the free tuition enrolled at the six FTEP universities in September 2007. To assist in the rapid implementation of the policy the Central Government provided 500 million yuan (roughly \$73.2 million) for the first three years. Of this 500 million, the four universities that are required to

enroll most of the FTEP students have received 100 million each, and the other two universities have each received 50 million. With these funds the universities are each developing and piloting the use of new teaching facilities, purchasing new textbooks, and redesigning teaching curriculum. In addition, the universities will be reimbursed for the tuition waivers, stipends, and room and board they provide for each of their FTEP students.

The FTEP universities have also been actively working out the teaching practicum arrangements, which have not only dramatically increased in number, but in duration—from eight weeks to twenty weeks). The policy also indicates that the Central Government will assist provincial governments in their collaboration with the universities to accommodate the influx of new FTEP teachers.

Chapter Three

Study Purpose and Research Problem

In spring 2007, the Ministry of Education required the six FTEP-implementing universities—Beijing Normal University, East China Normal University, Huazhong Normal University, Northeast Normal University, Shaanxi Normal University, and Southwest University—to use support from the Ministry of Finance to expand their existing infrastructure to accommodate from 300 to 2,881 FTEP students. For some universities, the FTEP students accounted for all the new freshman education majors that year. And because all of the FTEP students will need to complete a teaching practicum in their home province, the six universities will be working with each of the provincial governments, from which their FTEP students have come, to provide enough locations for each of their students.

The purpose of this study has been to understand the perspectives of frontline administrators, student services providers, and faculty on the implementation of this policy at one university. My research questions were:

1. How much and in what ways do the responses of the frontline administrators reflect local institutional characteristics, constraints, developmental trajectory, and local reform history?
2. How have frontline administrators responded to the converging demands of implementing a government-mandated undergraduate teacher education policy and a local institutional expansion policy at the graduate level?
3. How, if at all, are faculty members involved in decision-making regarding the development and implementation of FTEP curriculum, teaching methodology, and teaching facilities?

4. Do any additional insights emerge that are beyond the immediate scope of the above three questions?

Conceptualization of the Research Problem

Because the institutional (MoE) demand to implement this policy to some degree signals a move toward recentralizing central government control over higher education, my investigation centered around how Southwest University (SWU), which is training the largest number of these teachers, was implementing this policy and whether this process was impacting the university's organizational culture or decision-making.

Before the 1997 reforms higher education administrators had little opportunity to develop their universities in ways other than those that the MoE stipulated. With greater freedom to do so after 1997 some normal universities have been developing additional cutting edge colleges, institutes, and programs in technology and engineering, for example, to meet regional and national demands for experts in these fields. However, generalizing about how any one university is responding to the MoE's recentralization through the FTEP becomes complicated, since Greenwood and Hinings (2000) argue that

In order to understand differences in organizational responses, organizations are conceptualized as heterogeneous entities composed of functionally differentiated groups pursuing goals and promoting interests. How organizations 'respond' to institutional prescriptions, in particular, whether they undergo radical change, and, if they do, how quickly, is a function of these internal dynamics. (p. 314)

Thus, due to a decade of decentralized control in higher education, the internal dynamics of Chinese universities have been changing, because their institutional context changed due to ten

years of reforms. This is consistent with the claims of “Institutional theorists [who] declare that regularized organizational behaviors are the product of ideas, values, and beliefs that originate in the institutional context (Meyer & Rowan, 1977; Meyer, Scott, & Deal, 1983; Zucker, 1983 as cited in Greenwood and Hinings, 1996 p. 315). Tierney (2008) goes on to argue how “An organization’s culture is reflected in what is done, how it is done, and who is involved in doing it. It concerns decisions, actions, and communication on both an instrumental and a symbolic level” (p.24). Tierney (2008) also draws on Geertz (1973) to expand this idea about organizational culture:

Geertz (1973) defines culture by writing, ‘man is an animal suspended in webs of significance he himself has spun. I take culture to be those webs, and the analysis of it to be therefore not an experimental science in search of law, but an interpretive one in search of meaning’ (p.5). Thus, an analysis of organizational culture of a college or university occurs as if the institution were an interconnected web that cannot be understood unless one looks not only at the structure and natural laws of that web but also at the actors’ interpretations of the web itself. Organizational culture, then, is the study of particular webs of significance within an organizational setting. (as cited in Tierney, 2008, p. 25)

In this study, then, I investigated how the university’s frontline administrators, student service providers, and faculty (i.e., the “actors”) have interpreted the particular webs of significance (i.e., their university’s organizational culture) when engaged in decision-making regarding the implementation of the FTEP.

Similarly, Scott (2008) refers to Hoffman (2001: 143) who suggests “. . . that organizational actors attempt to reframe [institutional] environmental demands in terms that

make sense from their specialized perspective” (as cited in Scott, p. 168). But in this case study, I explored the administrators’, student service providers’, and faculty’s perspectives to gain insights into how SWU has been implementing the FTEP and whether implementing the FTEP may impact their strategic or curricular goals.

In his “Framework of Organizational Culture” Tierney (2008) lists the following elements and example questions for exploring each:

Environment: How does the organization define its environment? What is the attitude toward the environment? (Hostility? Friendship?)

Mission: How is it defined? How is it articulated? Is it used as a basis for decisions? How much agreement is there?

Socialization: How do new members become socialized? How is it articulated? What do we need to know to survive/excel in this organization?

Information: What constitutes information? Who has it? How is it disseminated?

Strategy: How are decisions arrived at? Which strategy is used? Who makes decisions? What is the penalty for bad decisions?

Leadership: What does the organization expect from its leaders? Who are the leaders? Are there formal and informal leaders? (p. 30)

One may imagine how the definitions of each of these six areas might vary slightly or even significantly among respondents at the six universities; therefore, my study focused on one university so I could explore facets of these areas in greater detail. Another area which Tierney’s framework helped me to explore involves how the administrators, student service providers, and faculty decided which of their preexisting programs to keep, which to modify, and which to drop. Because of the sheer number of FTEP students required by the MoE to enroll each year (e.g.,

2,881 in 2008; 2,934 in 2009; 2,878 in 2010; 2,765 in 2011)), I anticipated that SWU may experience the greatest pressure among the six universities to effectively implement the FTEP. Yet, because of its six-pronged approach, Tierney's framework served as an effective tool to investigate how SWU is managing to implement the FTEP.

Regarding the MoE's (i.e., the state's) role in requiring six universities to implement this policy, Scott (2008) paraphrases "Skocpol (1985), who argued that the state develops its own interests and operates somewhat autonomously from other societal actors. In this and other ways, attention to the regulative aspects of institutions creates renewed interest in the role of the state: as rule maker, referee, and enforcer" (p. 53). Mok (2002) expresses a similar perspective on the state's relationship with the education sector: ". . . we may argue that the role of the market is becoming the most dominant force in higher education development in the mainland, while the state has assumed the role of facilitator and regulator in education" (p. 265).

And while concluding his chapter titled, "Organizational Culture in Higher Education", Tierney (2008) argues that

We also must investigate the system of higher education to understand its impact on individual institutions. For example, state systems undoubtedly influence the culture of a public state college in ways other than budgetary. A study of the influence of states on institutional culture appears warranted. (p. 40).

Thus, my study explored the influence of the MoE's demand to implement the FTEP on one university's organizational culture.

Research Study Context

Although the MoE is providing financial support to each of the universities required to

implement the FTEP, administrators at two of the universities expressed concern about how accommodating this influx of FTEP students is creating at least two unique challenges. One challenge facing administrators at two of these universities has been balancing the MoE demands in implementing the FTEP with the way some FTEP host universities have been developing since 1997, when the MoE initiated higher education reforms that allowed normal universities to expand by developing additional, non-teaching colleges and, thereby, become more competitive in attracting a wider variety of students and investment. Since 1997, when the Central government dramatically cut funding for higher education, colleges and universities have had to depend on their own ability to respond to the needs of society, business, and industry, by preparing the experts needed for these areas. This kind of flexibility has allowed universities that were established to focus on teacher training, as in the case of normal universities, to expand into areas of science and technology, and partner with local, national, and international investors to develop cutting edge colleges and institutes. However, with the new MoE requirement to produce a much larger number of teacher education graduates within four years, the evolution of these normal universities into more competitive comprehensive universities with multiple colleges has been interrupted.

Another challenge concerns the prospective graduate program enrollments in the Colleges of Education at these six universities. In the past, a majority of the College of Education MA and PhD students at these universities had graduated from their own undergraduate education programs; therefore, there had been a balance between the number of students graduating after four years and entering the teaching profession immediately, and those who prepared to enter graduate school to become education scholars. However, now that the universities are mandated to focus on preparing large numbers FTEP graduates who are only

permitted to attend distance graduate courses part time, or to take courses during their winter and summer breaks, and who had to begin reporting for their teaching assignments in rural areas beginning in 2011, the universities have had to find other ways to ensure that enrollments in their College of Education graduate programs remain high.

Given the context I have laid out, and the challenges this context presents, I will now turn to a discussion of the research questions that have propelled this study. Below is a presentation of my rationale for asking them and a detailed description of the methodological approaches I used to collect data in an attempt to understand the issues underlying these questions.

Conceptual Framework

My conceptual framework (Figure 1) explores the extent to which SWU's administrators, student service providers, and faculty have worked within their current organizational structure to accomplish the MoE's and their own goals, and to what extent they have revised that structure to meet the demands of this new policy. Scott (2003, p. 14) notes, "...at any given time, much of the diversity exhibited by a collection of organizations is due to the varying conditions present at the time of their birth." And while this has certainly not been the birth of SWU's (i.e., organization's) overall organizational structure, implementing the MoE's policy has provided a catalyst that has led to the birth of a revised structure, which I will discuss below. Furthermore, the university administrators', student service providers', and faculty's choices have occurred within the current Chinese political context, which also has influenced the university's implementation processes.

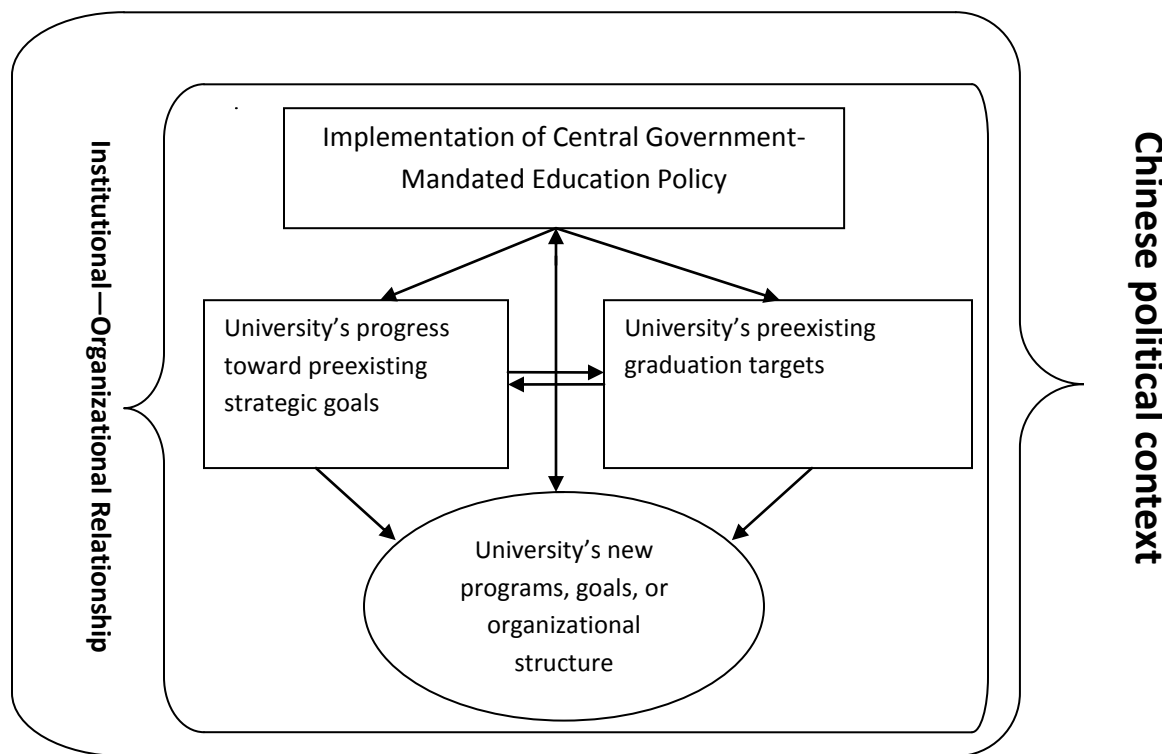


Figure 1: Conceptual framework of study

This conceptual framework has as its primary boundary the Chinese Political Context; therefore, as I consider the top centered box, which represents the MoE's top-down, recentralized mandate to implement the FTEP, I will keep in mind Elmore's (2010) notion that "Elected officials . . . generate electoral credit by initiating new ideas, not by making the kind of steady investments in people that are required to make the educator sector more effective" (2010, p. 2). Elmore adds that this results in ". . . an education sector that is overwhelmed with policy, conditioned to respond to the immediate demands of whoever controls the political agenda, and not invested in the long-term health of the sector and the people who work in it" (p. 2). As I will

show in the findings of this study, Elmore's notion provides a useful framework for interpreting the MoE's FTEP revisions. Below this are two, one-way arrows emphasizing the top-down direction of the mandate (i.e., institutional demand) and pointing toward boxes that represent two of the University's 2007 goals. I have chosen these two goals because the revised strategic goals had been developing since the decentralization policies in 1997 and I wanted to know how, if at all, these have been influenced by this institutional context shift toward recentralization, and because I wanted to know whether implementing the FTEP had influenced the university administrators', student service providers', and/or faculty's decision-making processes regarding graduation target goals. The arrows between the two boxes represent whether changes—made in response to the new institutional prescription (Greenwood and Hinings, 1996)—in either of these two goals influenced the other. The oval at the bottom represents the changes in the university's programs, goals, and/or organizational culture resulting from the new institutional context, implementing the FTEP. And the arrow originating at the bottom oval pointing toward the topmost box represents the influence changes in the university's programs, goals, or organizational culture has had on how the MoE is requiring the FTEP to be implemented. The first box surrounding these represents the context of the relationship between the MoE, or “. . . the state: as rule maker, referee, and enforcer” (Skocpol, 1985, as cited in Scott, 2008, p. 53), and the university, and again outside of that, enveloping all these elements is the current Chinese political context, which has determined what additional resources have been used to support the university in implementing the FTEP as well as motivation for implementing the policy now.

Methodological Approach

This study consisted of a primary qualitative case study based in SWU and included interviews with frontline administrators, student service providers, and faculty who are responsible for implementing the FTPEP. The interview phase of this study was conducted between March 2010 and November 2011, with analysis of the interview transcripts occurring in the winter and spring of 2012.

My preliminary, informal discussions with key administrators at two of the six key universities (i.e., Shaanxi Normal University and SWU) in June and September 2009 indicated that tension existed between the MoE's requirement to graduate a high quantity of teachers to serve in rural area schools, and the universities' requirement for graduating high quality teachers, many of whom are expected to continue on for MAs and PhDs in education. Therefore, I focused my investigation on how frontline university administrators, student service providers, and faculty balance the demands of implementing a Central government-mandated policy with their preexisting university development efforts; how frontline university administrators, student service providers, and faculty maintain a viable graduate student program when the demands of implementing a Central government-mandated policy to increase undergraduate graduation rates of students who are prohibited from attending graduate school during the normal academic school year, and to what extent, if at all, faculty have been involved in the decision making about curricular, teaching methodology, or teaching facilities changes resulting from FTPEP implementation. To investigate each area I chose a qualitative case study for my research approach, because its “. . . specificity of focus makes it an especially good design for practical problems—for questions, situations, or puzzling occurrences arising from everyday practice” (Merriam, 2009, p. 43).

About the Research Site: Southwest University, Chongqing, China

Located near the banks of the Jialing River in Chongqing, “Southwest University, an amalgamation of the former Southwest China Normal University and Southwest China Agricultural University, was founded in July 2005 under the approval of the State Ministry of Education (MoE) and was granted to be a ‘Project 211’ university [granted to the top 100 universities in China] as a national educational priority for the 21st century” (<http://swu.edu.cn/english/history.html>). Prior to merging, the two universities “. . . were neighbors with only a wall separating the two institutions,” and they “had a long historic relationship, which could be traced back to their common origin, i.e. East Sichuan Teachers College in 1906” (<http://swu.edu.cn/english/about.html>). Currently, SWU hosts around 50,000 full-time students and is one of 73 universities under the direct administration of the MoE (http://www.moe.gov.cn/publicfiles/business/htmlfiles/moe/moe_2812/200906/48836.html). Most notably for the FTEP, its College of Education “. . . has served educational communities of China and the world, especially Western China through its leadership in research, service, and advocacy for more than fifty years” (<http://jyxy.swu.edu.cn/aboutus.html#>). But in addition to these, the MoE’s choice of SWU to educate more FTEP students than the other five FTEP-implementing universities may be because “The college ranks third in academic research and fourth in programs for undergraduate and graduate students among the colleges of education in China. [And] With development of Southwest China, the college will make more contribution to the communities and China” (<http://jyxy.swu.edu.cn/aboutus.html#>).

The setting for the primary study was SWU’s main campus in Chongqing, China. My preference was to locate the study at SWU, because I had already developed some relationships there and because, of the six universities tasked by the MoE to implement this policy, SWU is

required to produce the most graduates. Also, SWU's President, Vice President, Deans, and other administrators are in regular contact with the MoE and with administrators from the other five universities about the process and modifications of implementing this policy. In selecting my informants, I used Patton's (2003) notion of purposeful sampling: "The logic and power of purposeful sampling lie in selecting *information-rich cases* for study in depth. Information-rich cases are those from which one can learn a great deal about issues of central importance to the purpose of the inquiry, thus the term *purposeful sampling*" (p. 230).

Therefore, at SWU I interviewed the Vice President and the Vice Dean who are together overseeing the implementation of this policy for SWU, as well as one of the Vice Deans in the College of Teacher Education and other administrators and faculty who were working closely with the implementation of the policy. In addition, I interviewed those student service providers who were directly supporting FTEP students. Interviewing these informants, who were at different positions in SWU's hierarchical structure, provided enough different perspectives for a "thick" (Merriam, 2009, p. 43) description of the phenomenon. The choice of settings and participants was mostly made in June 2009 when I was a participant in an advanced doctoral student fellowship to SWU. During the fellowship two of my informants gave lectures on recent educational reforms in China and both mentioned the MoE's 2007 Free Teacher Education Policy as one of the notable policy reforms over the last five years.

Sampling Approach

The frame for this case study included those administrators, student service providers, and faculty who were identified as the leaders for implementing the FTEP at SWU or those who were working directly with FTEP students. Also, I included Deputy Party Secretaries of different

colleges as well as *fudaoyuan* (i.e., student service administrators, under the supervision of a college's Deputy Party Secretary, who support students in academics and daily life needs) who were working with FTEP students full- or part-time. To locate the sample participants for this study, I asked to be formally introduced to lead administrator(s) responsible for implementing the FTEP by SWU's Vice President, who gave me permission to conduct this research at SWU. I asked him for the names and email addresses of key administrators, student service providers, and faculty who are working with and/or teaching in the FTEP at SWU.

To help me identify and address any social or cultural challenges while developing my study design I remained in regular email or phone contact with administrators, professors, and graduate students, at SWU, whom I met during my two trips to SWU in 2009. I had also asked SWU graduate students and an administrator to help me locate appropriate and willing informants for my research and they had been graciously accommodating during both trips and in arranging telephone and email interviews. They also continued to provide advice on Communist Party, academic, and cultural protocol as they related to design as well as issues that emerged during my data collection.

Table 1: Data Sources

Source	Number	Type
Southwest University Administrators	7	Interview—transcript of audio recording
Southwest University Faculty	3	Interview—transcript of audio recording
Southwest University Student Services Providers	7	Interview—transcript of audio recording
News		Documents
College of Teacher Education Publications		Documents
Central Government/university press releases		Documents
FTEP Meeting		Fieldnotes, documents

Data Analysis

Because I was introduced to the FTEP through attending lectures while conducting a pilot study on another topic, I decided to approach this study in light of organizational theory—with the MoE as the institution and SWU as the organization—(Meyer & Rowan, 1977; Meyer, Scott, & Deal, 1983; Zucker, 1983 as cited in Greenwood and Hinings, 1996 p. 315), while at the same time keeping an eye on what else the informants were expressing about the challenges and opportunities of implementing the FTEP. Like Charmaz (2001), “I assume that the interaction between the researcher and the researched *produces* the data” (p. 339); therefore, I have tried to pay attention to any other themes that emerged (Miles & Huberman, 1994) from the data record, since part of the inductive nature of qualitative work results in other findings surfacing.

Therefore, in addition to answering my primary research questions my analysis uncovered additional insights and findings worthy of mention. I have also attempted to remain critical of my data, because of the political climate in which my investigation sits. In particular, as I poured over transcripts from formal interviews and notes from informal discussions, I continued to filter what I was seeing through the question, “How [do] the research [participants] think, feel and act while involved in this process?” (Charmaz, 2001, p. 344).

Conducting interviews with informants face-to-face in addition to over the phone or through email over 18 months encouraged me to compare “data from the same individuals with themselves at different points in time” (Charmaz, 2001, p. 346). This was necessary because there have been several amendments to the FTEP since its implementation began in 2007. I used clustering techniques described by Miles & Huberman (1994) and paid particular attention to their section on “Partitioning Variables” (pgs. 254-255), as they discuss the care with which they separated “*individual*” and “*institutional*” concerns in their own study. Also, in working on

moving my coded data toward categories of meaning, I followed Coffey & Atkinson's (1996, p. 46) suggestion that moving "... from coding to interpretation involves playing with and exploring," which allowed me to consider and scrutinize different possible meanings for the codes. And to move beyond these categories, I borrowed from Strauss's (1987) suggestion—summarized in Coffey & Atkinson (1996, p. 49)—"... to use [my] codings and categories to think with and not to remain anchored in the data ... alone."

Chapter Four

Emerging Themes

This chapter consists of a review of my research questions, the answers to those questions, and the evidence, organized by themes, that supported those answers. In Table 2 below, I list the name, title, and duties of my interviewees.

Table 2: Interviewees

Name	Title	Duties
Wang	Vice President of SWU	Administrative lead for implementing FTEP at SWU
Liu	Deputy Party Secretary, College of Education	Responsible for overall management of students and Fudaoyuan in College of Education
Min	Deputy Party Secretary, College of Physical Science and Technology	Responsible for overall management of students and Fudaoyuan in College of Physical Science and Technology
Li	Deputy Party Secretary, College of Foreign Languages	Responsible for overall management of students and Fudaoyuan in College of Foreign Languages
Hong	Vice Dean, College of Teacher Education and Vice Director of Teaching Affairs	Directly under VP Wang in implementing FTEP at SWU
Cheng	Vice Dean, College of Teacher Education	Leads implementation of FTEP at SWU through College of Teacher Education
Ren	Vice Dean, College of Foreign Languages	Works with Dean to lead implementation of FTEP within College of Foreign Languages
Qin	Faculty, College of Physical Science and Technology	Director of Teaching and Research Section in College of Physical Science and Technology, and responsible for teaching and management of free normal students in College of Physical Science and Technology (29 years at SWU)
Ma	Faculty, College of Physical Science and Technology	Vice Director of Teaching and Research Section in School of Physical Science and Technology (20 years at SWU)
Hu	Faculty, College of Foreign Languages	Teaches FTEP and non-FTEP English majors (20 years at SWU)
Guo	Fudaoyuan, College of History and Culture	Responsible for daily life, study, psychological health, personal development, as well as moral and ideological education
Zhao	Fudaoyuan, College of Chemistry	Responsible for daily life, study, psychological health, personal development, as well as moral and ideological education
Bai	Fudaoyuan, College of Literature	Responsible for daily life, study, psychological health, personal development, as well as moral and ideological education
Chen	Fudaoyuan, College of Politics and Public Policy	Responsible for daily life, study, psychological health, personal development, as well as moral and ideological education
Song	Fudaoyuan, College of Music	Responsible for daily life, study, psychological health, personal development, as well as moral and ideological education
Zhou	Fudaoyuan, College of Chemistry	Responsible for daily life, study, psychological health, personal development, as well as moral and ideological education
Yan	Fudaoyuan, College of Foreign Language	Responsible for daily life, study, psychological health, personal development, as well as moral and ideological education

Question One

My first research question asked how much and in what ways do the responses of the frontline administrators reflect local institutional characteristics, constraints, developmental trajectory, and local reform history. Evidence indicates that frontline university administrators, student service providers, and faculty leveraged their unique position as a key national teaching institution to develop a new college of teacher education that both broadened its national influence as a comprehensive university and allowed it to create a new, nationally recognized teacher education model for other teaching institutions to emulate.

There are five themes that emerged from the data that support the answer above: First, Ministry of Education oversight; second, education as a characteristic of university strength; third, creating our own way; fourth, developing the Office of Teacher Education; fifth, developing the College of Teacher Education.

Ministry of Education Oversight

As is noted in the FTEP, the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Finance provide the oversight of and funding for this policy. SWU is one of only six key teaching universities piloting the implementation of the FTEP and frontline administrators, student service providers, and faculty all expressed the weight of responsibility to implement the policy well. SWU Vice President Wang noted how “this is a Central Government policy . . . so we must do well.” On how implementing the FTEP in the midst trying to develop as a leading comprehensive university, since Southwest China Normal University (SWCNU) merged with Southwest China Agriculture University (SWCAU) to become SWU in 2005, President Wang,

our university is trying to make this university as a leading comprehensive university, but

we think our strongest areas are teacher education and agricultural science. So even though we will make this university as a comprehensive university, these two areas will be the most, the strongest. So teacher education, we keep the teacher education. We not only keep the teacher education as a tradition, but also the strongest, one of the strongest areas.

Also, that SWCNU and SWCAU merged in 2005 was timely, because according to Vice Dean Hong from the newly formed College of Teacher Education, “we are the only one among the six universities who doesn’t reflect ‘normal’ in its name.” Although, Vice Dean Hong hastened to add that “When this policy began to be implemented in 2007, we realized that teachers’ education is still at the core position in our university,” reiterating that while SWU has the goal of becoming a leading comprehensive university it must fulfill its mission to produce many of the teachers for the west and southwest regions. This national responsibility for providing well-prepared teachers for the west and southwest regions was also emphasized by Deputy Party Secretary Min from the College of Physical Science and Technology:

the Southwest area has a vast territory with a large population and its education is relatively less-developed. Our nation is implementing the western development strategy now, so this policy is in compliance with this strategy. It also shows that the nation is taking measures to deliver excellent teachers to central and west regions, especially regions inhabited by minority ethnic groups. Besides, our university was founded based on the strategy of western development, so we have the obligation to contribute to the training of talents in the western area.

Indeed, because of the Central Government push to implement this policy quickly, the top university leaders not only need to attend meetings at the Ministry of Education in Beijing,

but disseminate how the Ministry of Education and they plan to implement the policy at SWU. As such, Deputy Party Secretary Li from the College of Foreign Languages, described how the university leaders have conducted many top-level meetings wherein “the President, the Vice President, the Party Secretary, and the Deputy Party Secretary of the university, who is responsible for students’ work, made a lot of important speeches in these meetings and made requirements and guidance about how to implement this policy.”

After the FTEP was announced in the spring of 2007, SWU, and the other five universities, prepared for these new students to arrive the following September. SWU accepted about 2,900 FTEP students in September 2007 and each year since, more than the other five universities. To help gauge the impact of the influx of FTEP students, Deputy Party Secretary Liu from the College of Education, described how about 80% of the College of Education’s enrollment is currently FTEP students; however, “During the first two years after this policy began, all the undergraduate students enrolled [in the College of Education were] free normal students.” Afterwards, to account for the drop from 100% of the College of Education enrollment to 80%, Liu explained, “We adjust our majors according to the development and requirement of society.”

Education as a Characteristic of University Strength

Because SWU is well known for its production of scholarly research, it was a strong choice for implementing the FTEP. In particular, its scholarship in “Education and Psychology Science . . . ranks number three in China. Ranked number four is Beijing Normal University. The sixth is East China Normal University,” claimed Vice President Wang. “Our university ranks number three, so we want to keep this strong point.” And according to Vice Dean Ren from the

College of Foreign Languages, the FTEP has allowed SWU to maintain an emphasis on its “prestigious specialties, such as agriculture and teacher education. Therefore, even though our university is a comprehensive university, yet teacher education and agriculture are still what our university lays the greatest focus on.” But after the two universities merged in 2005, Ren added, “more emphasis is laid on research. In the past, we placed more emphasis on teaching, now there’s more emphasis on research.” And the FTEP will allow a new kind of teacher-based research, because of some of the changes to the policy since its inception in 2007.

Even if SWCNU had not merged with SWCAU it would have been a “reasonable” choice for implementing the FTEP due to its historical significance in producing teachers for western China. Regarding SWCNU Deputy Party Secretary Min stated that it,

could trace back to East Sichuan Normal School in 1906. Our university is also the first group normal universities established after the foundation of China. Teacher education is our tradition. As a university which is directly attached to the Ministry of Education in the southwest area and a university that has a teacher education background, it is reasonable that we were selected.

Deputy Party Secretary Li added that, “Cultivating normal students is our tradition and passion and it is still our characteristic nowadays.” And Fudaoyuan Guo from the College of History and Culture echoed similar sentiments: “It is in accordance with our expectation because part of Southwest University is Southwest Normal University, which occupies an important place in normal education in China. It is reasonable that we are chosen to implement this policy.”

Also, two Vice Deans expressed a kind of opportunistic confidence about SWU being selected to implement the FTEP. Vice Dean Hong noted that even after becoming a comprehensive university, “teachers’ education is still our strength. We are the best in [west]

area and we should have the leading role.” Hong went on to add: “We have many advantages and we are worthy of [being called comprehensive]. It is right for the nation to choose us for implementing this policy in the [west] area and we are doing an excellent job.” And Vice Dean Cheng also from the College of Teacher Education admitted that, “There are a lot of benefits for us to implement this policy. We could enjoy all relevant policies directed to the free normal students.” Then referring to two projects that the Ministry of Finance supported through the FTEP implementation, Cheng added that SWU had “Benefitted from the financial support. We’ve done a lot of things that we wanted to do in the past. For example, we’ve constructed the quality training center for the normal students and the resource center.” The training and resource centers are just two of the additional supports for FTEP students that SWU established with the FTEP funding.

Creating Our Own Way

Vice President Wang stated directly what several frontline administrators, student service providers, and faculty only mentioned symbolically regarding the creativity with which the leaders acted in implementing the FTEP. “This policy can give us the chance to create,” Vice President Wang said. “We can do [this] creatively.” And Wang later described how this creativity is evident among the other five universities in the ways they chose to mobilize their resources to manage their FTEP students:

Each university has its own organization. Beijing Normal University established the College of Teacher Education, but . . . their management system is different. Beijing Normal University’s College of Education is just only an administration office. Northeast Normal University, they don’t have this office; they established a Research Center to do

this. But East China Normal University, they have the College of Teacher Education different from here.

Regarding these differences, Vice Dean Cheng explained how SWU “is different from other five universities in the management of normal students. [The other universities] just set up a special office under the leadership of academic administration to take in charge of the normal students. Their way of management has some problems because some functions of the two branches may overlap sometimes.” But, according to Vice Dean Cheng, being the only comprehensive university in the group gives SWU a special advantage: “We are the only comprehensive university that implements this policy among the six universities and I think this is our operating system and management model of exploring teacher education.” And Vice Dean Hong believes this trend of exploration by higher education institutions was widespread, and used this to make a prediction: “The education in China is going through transformation now. Every university is exploring, especially normal universities. Maybe 10 or 20 years later, we would have a similar system to the U.S.”

One way SWU has explored how it might develop and sustain a leading teacher education program is by sending administrators, faculty, as well as FTEP and other students, to leading edge universities in China and abroad to gather information about their teacher education programs and colleges. Vice President Wang noted how SWU,

sent many administrators and teachers to go outside, to learn how the outside do this; for example, this summer vacation we sent twelve teachers to go to London University. Last year we sent some to England, to United States, and also to Australia. And also we sent some students to go outside. After they’re coming back they do some comparison. They tell me, ‘I was in Windsor University in Canada. They teach me like this. In SWU you

teach me like this.’ They always give me some suggestions, so we can change some things.

During my fall 2011 visit to SWU I attended a meeting with university and college administrators, faculty, and 13 FTEP students who had earned the privilege to participate in a three-month study tour at Windsor University, Windsor, Ontario, Canada. This was the second year in a row that an FTEP group were being sent to Windsor to learn about western education as in general and about teacher education in particular. According to Vice President Wang, “Last term we sent some teachers to Hong Kong, and stay Hong Kong for one week. So I think we can learn many things from outside. And also some other universities come to our university, so we can have many interactions. I think it’s good.” And Wang hastened to add that, “But all these, they go outside, they need money, so now the Central Government gives the sponsorship for this. We can organize all the activities.” Therefore, SWU has decided to use some of this financial support to gather teacher education perspectives from around the world, and to expose and train some of their administrators, faculty, and students in these perspectives and methods.

SWU has also added to its organizational structure to manage the FTEP students. First steps were to establish a leadership group to oversee this work. At the university level, the President and the President’s committee make the macro decisions about what resources to use and which projects to take on. “And last term I also did some investigations and then I gave the suggestions to the President,” said Vice President Wang, “and then the President said, ‘Ok, you may offer this item to the President’s meeting and then we’ll discuss [it].’” At the college level SWU has created departments of education around the university. Below Deputy Party Secretary Min describes how this organization was created at both the university and college level:

Speaking of changes on organization, first, the university set up a leading group of teacher education. This leading group is responsible for all the free normal students of our university. [...] Its leader is our Vice President Wang. There is a special office attached to this leading group. It coordinates the management of all the free normal students. Besides, every college set up the department of teacher education. Second, the university built an autonomous study center . . . which occupies an area of several thousands of square meters for the free normal students. Every college builds skill training center for these students. Third, we arrange a half year internship for them which focuses on the practice of their teaching skills.

But what has resulted from these new structures is perhaps most significant in setting SWU apart as a leading edge comprehensive university; the development of an Office of Teacher Education that evolved into a College of Teacher Education.

Developing an Office of Teacher Education

When Premier Wen Jiabao announced the commencement of the FTEP in the spring of 2007, all six universities mandated to implement the policy had to work quickly to prepare for the arrival of the FTEP students in September of that same year. SWU accepted the bulk of the FTEP students that year (i.e., 2,881), and according to Vice President Wang, “For this policy we established a specific office; an Office of Teacher Education to implement this policy. This Office is responsible for the training of the students of this university.” Vice Dean Hong also referred to this office when describing how SWU responded to the influx of FTEP students: “Soon, we found that the Normal College [was] not very efficient, so we decided to set up the Office of Teachers’ Education in the first half year of 2008. This office [was] formally set up in

April, 2008 and it means we have an administrative system to manage teachers' education. Our purpose is to do a better job in education of free normal students." This decision to establish this Office of Teacher Education was made by the President's Committee, according to Deputy Party Secretary Min: "There is a special office attached to this leading group. It coordinates the management of all the free normal students," and according to Vice President Wang: "First, we have the leaders, because we need to build this office. I think this is very important." The Office of Teacher Education established a new authority for guiding decisions about management and training of the FTEP students as is reflected by Deputy Party Secretary Min who admitted, "Our teaching to the free normal students should obey the guidance of the Office of Teacher Education." Deputy Party Secretary Liu described, "Another change is the reform on our pattern of talents cultivation. We adjusted [FTEP students'] course structure. We constructed a training center to practice their basic skills of being a teacher." And Professor Qin, a 29-year veteran faculty member, explained how the Office of Teacher Education not only influenced curriculum and instruction, and supported faculty to revise their courses, but represented an organizational change at SWU:

There are some reformations in our management, and we set up the Department of Teacher Education which is in charge of the curriculum and education of free normal students. The organizational structure of the university has changed. The university has strengthened its teaching and management of free normal students. Based on this requirement, our [college] changed the teaching and research section of science education into Department of Teacher Education. [...] There are three courses put on the BB [an online course management system] platform of our website. Not only professors in our

school participated in their construction, but also professors from the Office of Teacher Education and teachers who teach pedagogical techniques helped us.

Associate Professor Hu, a faculty member with nearly two decades of experience at SWU corroborated this description:

There are changes both in the aspects of teachers and students. First, in the aspect of teachers, our [college] has set up the Teacher Education Department after the implementing of this policy, which is in charge of the education of free normal students. The teachers in this department are related to teaching of free normal students. Based on the supports of the university, we arranged some training for these teachers, including study of this policy, training of skills and construction of courses.

But as 2,765 to 2,934 FTEP students have enrolled at SWU each year the role of the Office of Teacher Education needed to change. According to Vice President Wang, “this Office has some limit of implement this policy.” Wang later added, “As for the Office, we’re just administration, only administration.” And Vice Dean Hong noted that, “During the office time, the main task [was] to construct.” Therefore, out of its first Office of Teacher Education SWU created its first College of Teacher Education.

Developing a College of Teacher Education

SWU’s first College of Teacher Education was established in September 2011. According to Vice President Wang, “the College of Teacher Education is not only administration, but also can have some training for the students.” Wang went on to emphasize how the College of Teacher Education’s reach is university wide:

We have Mathematics, Foreign Language, we have Chinese Language, we have History, we have Chemistry. These students are in [15] different colleges. But we have a College of Teacher Education to organize all of these colleges, so it has an administrative function. And also, this College will do some training, especially the practical training; for example, classroom teaching, and music, music training, and art, and also we have the language.

Considering the progression from the Office to the College of Teacher Education, Vice Dean Cheng described how, “the Teacher Education [college has] two functions, one is the administrative function, the other is the education function.” And Vice Dean Hong noted that “the main function is to make use of what we have constructed [through the Office of Teacher Education], and this is also its function in the future.” But this is not limited to the two, newly renovated teaching buildings use for teacher training and practice, it also refers to hiring and developing faculty: “We will hire more full-time and part-time teachers on these courses.” Vice Dean Hong also commented on the university-wide reach of the new college: “We are in charge of teacher education of the 15 colleges in our university. We will train teaching-methods teachers for specific colleges. We are also responsible for evaluation of teachers major in teaching methods –whether they are qualified to be professors.”

Question Two

In September 2009, while having preliminary conversations about the FTPEP with frontline administrators, student service providers, and faculty at two of the universities implementing the policy, consistent themes emerging were the challenges of maintaining FTPEP students’ interest in studying and their motivation to be teachers in a rural area in their home

province. Underlying these challenges were the policy's guidance that FTEP graduates could not enroll in graduate school and had to serve the first two of their ten years in a rural school in their home province, and continue to serve in their home province for the remainder of those ten years. Student and parent frustration with these parts of the policy were significant enough that during two of my conversations individuals even expressed concern about the potential for some students to challenge the enforcement of their expectation to fulfill the ten years of service, since they were under 18 years old when they signed the contract (the age of majority in China), so could not be legally bound by it. Although this was not a majority concern—mentioned by only two of the six with whom I had conversations—those who expressed this were at two different FTEP-implementing universities.

It was against this backdrop that I began my initial research into the FTEP; however, by autumn 2011 much of the underlying causes for these challenges had been eliminated due to some key FTEP revisions. Thus the current environment reflects several changes resulting from these policy revisions that are evident in the responses to my second research question.

My second research question asked how frontline administrators have responded to the converging demands of implementing a government-mandated undergraduate teacher education policy and a local institutional expansion policy at the graduate level. Evidence indicates that frontline university administrators, student service providers, and faculty were initially challenged to balance these competing demands, and with motivating FTEP students to remain committed to the teaching duties that were to follow their graduation. However, the MoE amended the FTEP to include an option to apply for graduate study and relaxed the requirement that students must teach in a rural area of their home province for the first two years of their ten-year teaching requirement. These adjustments to the policy were made in the latter part of 2009

and were beginning to have their effect on not only FTEP students' attitudes and motivation, but on the administrators', student services providers', and faculty's as well, as I will discuss below.

In one respect, Vice President Wang succinctly stated the answer to my second research question when he explained that SWU "can admit students from other universities." And this is exactly what SWU did to offset the loss of undergraduate, College of Education FTEP students who could not enroll in the SWU College of Education's traditional graduate programs. However, because the implementation of the FTEP had evolved since its inception in 2007, other themes surfaced as responses to this question. In fact, responses centered around three themes: preparation for FTEP students, job prospects for FTEP graduates, and policy revision.

Preparation for FTEP Students

Within the first theme emerged three subcategories: new facilities and equipment, longer and more frequent practical teaching experiences, and cultivating the teaching spirit. Each of these was designed to provide the FTEP students with the top teaching preparation in the country.

First, new facilities and equipment were often touted as evidence of the changes SWU had made to accommodate the FTEP students. Vice Dean Hong gave an overarching, institutional perspective of SWU's efforts:

The purpose of this project is to educate normal students well through modification of infrastructure, expansion of resources, and construction of faculty, including teaching methods training for teachers and introduction of talents. For example, the sixth and seventh teaching buildings have been renovated and more equipment (such as the micro-

teaching classrooms) has been added to train students well. There is also construction of new courses.

To provide a sense of scale, Deputy Party Secretary Min noted that “the university built an autonomous study center [i.e., buildings six and seven] which occupies an area of several thousands of square meters for the free normal students.” Min then described how, “Every college has built a skill training center for these students.” Notable here is not the construction and efforts themselves, but that they are not to support a new science research center or computer design facility, or business and economics research institute. They are to improve the nature and breadth of teacher preparation for those FTEP students who will be going to the most culturally diverse and impoverished provinces in China. Vice Dean Hong also described how SWU has “bought different editions of teaching materials of middle and elementary schools. We have spent 30,000 Yuan on editions from Hong Kong, and we’ve bought some in England. We are going to buy American editions. These books are prepared for both students and teaching methods teachers.” Gathering these textbooks and materials is another aspect of how SWU, according to Vice President Wang, “. . . can learn many things from outside.” Another facility that is in the process of being upgraded is the library. As Vice Dean Ren noted, “We also built a library for teacher education.” Ren later explained how, “In the past we had one level in the old library, and now a new library is being built. And after that library is built it will be especially used for teacher education.”

In addition to these upgraded facilities and new materials, the FTEP students also benefit from improved accommodations rather than the traditional undergraduate accommodations. It is not unusual around China for seven undergraduates to share a single dormitory room with four bunk beds—the eighth bunk bed being used for storage. At these universities it is also not

uncommon for four graduate students to share a similarly-sized room with four single beds. At SWU, “In the aspect of management and service, the obvious evidence [between FTEP and non-FTEP students] lies in the dormitory. We provide a lot of help in students’ daily life. For example, first, we provide them the best dormitories in our university,” noted Fudaoyuan Song from the College of Music. Also, most of the FTEP students share a dormitory room among four, not seven. This sentiment was reflected in Deputy Party Secretary Min’s comment that although not all FTEP students are placed in the newest buildings, “we do our best to provide them the best dormitories.”

The second subcategory under preparation for FTEP students is the development of longer and more frequent practical teaching experiences. As a result of SWU’s FTEP implementation, the amount of practical experience its teacher education students gain prior to graduation is significantly greater than before. One way this occurs is by providing opportunities for students to gain firsthand teaching experiences during their freshman year. According to Fudaoyuan Bai from the College of Literature, “Before this policy began, we only arranged practice courses in the [junior year], but now there are practice courses in the [freshman year]. That means all activities for the free normal students are [earlier] than before.” In addition to providing experiences earlier, SWU has also increased the quantity of experiences they offer to FTEP students. “Before this policy began,” explained Professor Ma, an 18-year veteran of the College of Physics, “there were hardly any courses to cultivate [FTEP students’] skills and abilities. When this policy began, our university adjusted the teaching plan according to the training program of free normal students and added more courses of teacher education. Students’ skills and qualities changed a lot because of these courses.” These additional courses on teacher education coupled with the expanded and improved teaching facilities have led to increased

opportunities for FTEP students to tryout their new skills. Fudaoyuan Zhou from the College of Chemistry, illustrates this:

We divide our students into many groups (we have 261 students; about 10 students are in a group) and they cooperate with each other. The university provides them with the micro-frame classroom (a kind of classroom especially for teaching skills training). They could make use of the advanced equipment of that classroom to practice their teaching. For example, they could video record their teaching and watch themselves. Students could evaluate the teaching for each other and make progress.

But these groups of ten students are not left to do their own and each other's evaluations. "There is a teacher who is responsible for each group," Zhou added. "The teacher would listen to their classes and give some suggestions." This additional practice also holds true for FTEP students' internships or student teaching. Before FTEP, internships were conducted during the first semester of senior year. Now, says Fudaoyuan Bai, "Some students could conduct their [internship] in the first semester of [their junior year]; some could choose to conduct their [internship] in the second semester. This can help them know the work in middle schools well." Worth mentioning here is the fact that prior to implementing FTEP, the duration of SWU's teaching internships was approximately one month. SWU has extended that to around a semester, that is, 20-22 weeks.

Beyond the additional courses and opportunities for earlier and more frequent teaching practice on and off campus, experts from the surrounding area are invited onto campus to share their experiences about the opportunities and realities of teaching. Deputy Party Secretary Li described how in the College of Foreign Languages they "invite many excellent middle school teachers and headmasters to give lectures. They tell our students how to be a good teacher and

show students some model English classes.” Since implementing the FTEP there are other and stronger connections with middle schools as well, especially because of two key factors; a drastic increase in teacher education majors and an extended teaching internship.

In the fall of 2009, during my preliminary conversations with administrators, student services providers, and faculty at SWU and Shaanxi Normal University, several expressed concerns about how the universities were going to manage arranging so many internships for their students (i.e., approximately 2,800 per year for SWU). In the fall of 2011, Vice Dean Cheng expressed not the slightest hint of concern when detailing how SWU had “constructed eight teacher education, creative experimental areas and 40 normal education bases in the southwest area.” Cheng added that SWU’s “purpose of constructing these bases is not only for students’ internships, we also want to explore a new cultivation pattern for the normal students. Our ideal of establishing this cultivation pattern is to combine the strengths of middle schools and university to cultivate normal students.” This is a significant shift in practice and perspective from pre-FTEP times, when students had attended lectures on the theory of teaching and completed their internships in about one month. Vice Dean Cheng explained this new relationship SWU has with the middle schools this way:

On the one hand, middle schools regard the cultivation of normal students as their basic duty and help students improve their teaching skills. On the other hand, Southwest University regards the education of middle school teachers as its own work and helps middle school teachers improve their academic ability. We call this pattern UGS (University Government Schools). This is also an integrated pattern of cultivating normal students before and after their works.

Considering these new innovations in teacher education and practice, Professor Ma summarized that, “All these mean that [our FTEP students have] got more channels to learn. Besides, they gain a lot of opportunities to practice what they have learned. We pay more attention to the cultivation of their all-round qualities and other skills.”

The third subcategory under preparation for FTEP students is cultivating the teaching spirit. This has had a special emphasis ever since the FTEP was announced, because as Deputy Party Secretary Li stated, “There is a fundamental change in the cultivation program of the free normal students.” This change has occurred because of the central government mandate that FTEP graduates take teaching jobs once they graduate. Of course, the policy is clear about how FTEP graduates who do not follow through and teach after graduation, or do not complete their ten years of service, will have to pay back the financial equivalent of all their expenses and pay a fine as well. Therefore, to encourage FTEP students to be excited about choosing a teaching career and look forward to their ensuing teaching assignment, “we encourage all of them to be teachers in middle or elementary schools” said Li. “They have a clear target now and we arrange courses and as Li admitted: “before this policy began, it was not necessary that all our normal students would go to schools.” In the early to mid-1990s, because the Central government had loosened the regulations that had restricted college graduates’ job choices, many teacher education graduates, as well as graduates from other majors, were choosing jobs that commanded the highest salaries, and were job searching in more affluent regions of the country where their chances of finding such employment increased. Deputy Party Secretary Min further explained that even though the FTEP is not necessarily a new policy (i.e., before the mid-1990s it was customary for graduates from teacher education and other majors to be placed in jobs that matched their majors of study):

This policy is very different from the old policy in the aspect of cultivation purpose. In my opinion, there are three main purposes. First, this policy attracts many excellent students into teacher education and to devote themselves to the group of teachers. Second, thanks to this policy, we could provide the best resources to cultivate these students. The nation chooses six key universities directly attached to the Ministry of Education

Another way SWU has tried to motivate FTEP students has been by welcoming them onto campus with special fanfare. As Deputy Party Secretary Liu described, SWU “holds entrance education and an opening ceremony for them. We conduct an educational activity whose theme is ‘Honorable Teachers’ and invite many excellent middle and elementary teachers to give lectures. We try to influence and guide free normal students through these activities and strengthen their faith of being a teacher for their whole life.” During my preliminary discussion on this topic in 2009, I had learned about these ceremonies and how successful they were, for a time. However, at that time the consensus was that the FTEP students’ initial exuberance was short-lived, and soon they not only lost their motivation to study, some were losing interest in being teachers.

But this did not deter SWU from stepping up efforts to motivate the FTEP students. It could not, when the high expectations of the MoE and the nation were upon them. Further, SWU’s efforts to motivate FTEP students were not limited to them simply being teachers; SWU was also concerned about their character: “We pay more attention to the moral culture of free normal students,” said Fudaoyuan Song, “because they are going to be teachers in the future. A teacher can teach students well only when he is morally superior.” Others expressed this unique emphasis on moral character as well. Fudaoyuan Yan from the College of Foreign Languages said, “But now, we focus on the conviction of being a teacher and cultivation of basic qualities.

We arrange many thanksgiving and introspection experiences for free normal students to strengthen their faith.” And Deputy Party Secretary Liu even categorized this emphasis as a cultural difference: “There is a difference between American education and Chinese education. In our country, we pay more attention to students’ moral education and we consciously cultivate them into teachers that our country needs.” Finally, Fudaoyuan Song drew on a Chinese idiom to explain SWU’s emphasis on moral character: “Teachers are engineers of the human soul [jiaoshi shi ren lei ling hun de gong cheng shi], so we focus on their integrated development and noble spirit.”

Job Prospects for FTEP Graduates

Within the second theme emerged two subcategories: faculty and student satisfaction with new job prospects, and policy tolerance.

The first subcategory regarding faculty and student satisfaction with new job prospects is notably different from what administrators, student service providers, and faculty were expressing about the FTEP students’ prospects for satisfying jobs in 2009. But this difference is not because there were no job prospects in 2009; rather the types of jobs had changed. And this change was because the Ministry of Education revised the policy in ways that allowed FTEP graduates more options for choosing where they would eventually teach. As a result of this change, Vice President Wang admitted that “we don’t think, don’t care about their working, because after graduation it’s easy for them to find work.” Vice Dean Ren shared a similar sentiment and also reflected on the four years that led to this first cohort’s journey: “And now after they graduated they found their job. Most of the students are very satisfied with their job, and we think this is the reward for my, for our job for the last four years.” Apparently, however,

some of the FTEP graduates to whom Ren referred are not “very satisfied with their job” and this fact, according to Deputy Party Secretary Min, is used by Min and others to motivate the current FTEP undergraduates to be diligent in their study:

Before this policy began, students could choose any excellent middle school in the nation. Now, they can only choose within their province. But middle schools still select talents from the entire nation. This is an encouragement to them. Besides, we let them know that their competitors are free normal students from the other five universities that are implementing this policy. They are the best students from the best universities. They are all well-trained. If our students want to enter excellent middle schools, they should be excellent talents first.

This level of competition from the other five FTEP-implementing universities, in addition to graduates from other top universities in the nation, coupled with the easing of restrictions on where FTEP graduates may work has resulted in a measure of uncertainty for the students, administrators, student service providers, and faculty. Therefore, Fudaoyuan Guo from the College of History and Culture sounded hopeful when stating, “Yes. The free normal students in Grade 2007 have graduated this year and their career prospects are very promising.” However, as my interview with Guo was in September 2011, merely two months after the first FTEP cohort graduated details about their career prospects were still developing.

Policy tolerance has emerged in the FTEP students’ job placement as the policy has evolved. When SWU and the other five universities recruited FTEP students in 2007 the policy required that once graduated they must serve their first two years in a rural elementary or middle school. However, by the time the first cohort graduated they were allowed to delay that service and, perhaps, avoid it altogether. When I asked Vice Dean Ren from the College of Foreign

Languages whether teaching in a rural area for two years was still a requirement of the policy,

Ren admitted:

Theoretically, yes, it is still there, but in practice it depends on in which school a student works. For example, if the student works in an urban middle or primary school, and there some of the schools will send some of their teachers to go to the rural area to work for one year or two years. Then, in that case, this policy will turn into reality. But for some primary schools that don't have such a system, then probably those two years will not be turned into reality. To my understanding that is the case.

Fudaoyuan Yan agreed that the first cohort of FTEP graduates were not strictly required to teach in rural areas. Yan had been in touch with a few former students who were then working in their schools and learned that they were working near home, not in rural areas. "This policy has become more and more tolerant nowadays," said Yan. "They could work at any middle or elementary schools in their home province." During informal conversations about this phenomenon with others at SWU, I discovered that over the four years the FTEP has been in existence, the percentage of low-income student enrollees between 2007 and 2011 had dropped. In the earlier years the percentage was roughly 70% low-income students. By 2011 it was about 50% low-income and 50% middle class students. I asked Vice Dean Ren about this phenomenon and whether it had an influence on the enforcement of the rural teaching assignments for the first two years after FTEP students' graduation. Ren explained by referring to some recently published articles by a few Chinese scholars who:

after they did some investigation in Peking University, Tsinghua University and some other famous universities, they found that the percentage of the students from the peasant families from the rural areas declines strikingly. In Peking University last year the

percentage is about 10% and three decades ago that percentage is about 60%, and you can see the decline. [...] Nowadays, you know in our country, we are in the process of modernization, yet the modernization is not balanced for the coastal areas and the interior areas, for the rural areas and the urban areas. And the gap is becoming bigger and bigger. [...] And now the government has noticed this problem and maybe we'll address this issue immediately

Ren saw this enrollment shift as a problematic trend across the country and one that demanded immediate attention. If this enrollment trend, coupled with the relaxed enforcement of the initial two-year rural teaching assignment, continues, it may further reduce educational access for students and families in poorer rural areas.

Policy Revision

Within the third theme emerged two subcategories: initial challenges and policy changes. Given the limited time between Premier Wen Jiabao's announcement of the policy in the spring of 2007 and the arrival of FTEP students on their respective campuses in the fall of 2007, there were bound to be unique challenges at the six universities. While discussing some of the challenges of FTEP implementation, Vice Dean Hong divided the major problems into two: "The biggest problem now is [...] the development of people. For example, the construction of faculty is slower than construction of classes and equipment. Choosing excellent teachers is more difficult." An example of this is SWU has been sending their own faculty to other universities in China and abroad to observe and gain training in student-centered teaching methods, but because they have the greatest number of FTEP students out of the six sites, the quick implementation of the FTEP has presented SWU with the greatest challenge in training or ascertaining faculty. Still,

all six campuses were facing a similar challenge, according to Vice Dean Hong who explained that,

The second problem faced by all the other five universities is that there are some special policies and restrictions for these students. They have such a clear future, which is going back to their home province to be a teacher for at least 10 years. They are not allowed to take postgraduate studies during this period. These may dampen their enthusiasm. Some students may lose motivation in study. We are trying to change this situation.

This second challenge was also noted by other administrators. However, the fact that the MoE was implementing the FTEP at all six of its key national teaching universities compounded the challenge, since it is these six universities that typically produce the top education research scholars in China. Vice Dean Ren emphasized this point:

In 2007, when the students entered the six universities then some of the students complained to those who were responsible for the program, that they don't have a chance to further their education. You know, these six universities, I mean these six normal universities, are very prestigious in our country and in the past many of the students will further their education as postgraduate students [...]. But now, with [FTEP], they don't have the chance. Many of the students complained, and many of the parents also complained, and many of the teachers, I mean the faculty members, also complained.

In addition to FTEP students' lack of desire to teach in rural areas were challenges surrounding their perceptions about the contract they signed to enroll in the FTEP and interest in opting out of the FTEP. According to Vice Dean Ren,

in a sense, yes, [FTEP students], have signed the contract, but some of them thought they are fooled or cheated, because they did it not out of their own will. This is one thing. And

second, they think they don't have a chance to further their education. And third, some of the students wanted to transfer from this major to some other majors, for example, that are not involved in teacher education.

But in the fall of 2009 many of these challenges eased as the MoE revised some aspects of the policy. About these revisions Vice Dean Ren said, "And now we don't have such a challenge," although Ren added, "But in the past, I should say, in 2007, 2008, and even 2009, for those two or three years we had some real tough times in telling students to study in this program." Tough times, indeed, as indicated by some of the FTEP students' depth of feeling about their own dilemma, as expressed in Fudaoyuan Bai's reflection: "I was responsible for the first group of free normal students in 2007. Many of them were not very clear about this policy, and they just thought that they had sold off ten years of their youth. So there must be some changes according to this situation."

That some of these challenges have subsided is due to the reporting process regarding policy implementation at each of the six universities. If problems occurred during the implementation of the FTEP with a level of severity and frequency that alarmed frontline administrators, student services providers, and/or faculty, "then," said Vice Dean Ren, "we will report it to the Vice President in charge of teaching affairs and the Vice President may directly report it to the Ministry of Education and the head of the Ministry of Education will report it to the Premier and the Premier may make a decision to modify the policy. That is the system. I mean the policy making system." This reporting system allowed news these system-wide challenges to reach the highest levels of MoE decision making and led to the policy revisions that allowed students more freedom to negotiate their initial, post-graduation teaching placements.

As a result, major revisions did occur. “And as time went on the central government modified some of the policies and then [motivating the FTEP students] became easier for us,” said Vice Dean Ren. First, as mentioned above, the MoE relaxed the requirement to teach in a rural area for the first two years after graduation. Second, not only were FTEP students permitted to attend graduate school, their tuition, room and board, books and materials, and transportation would be paid by the Central Government. “This is also supported by the mienfei shifan sheng policy [FTEP],” said Ren. “The government will pay not only the tuition, but also for the accommodation and the expenses and the [travel].” Ren further explained how this policy revision applies to all the FTEP graduates from the six universities:

According to the national policy, all the students are entitled to participate in this program; but, if you ask me what percentage [will take advantage of it immediately], it’s hard to say, because, on one hand, we have the regulation, but the students have their own wills. Maybe some will come back immediately, some will stay and work in the middle school for some years and then they’ll have the motivation and then they come back. It’s hard to say. Probably we expect one third to come back to study next year.”

Now it is possible for recent FTEP graduates to return to SWU for graduate courses as early as after their first semester teaching in their home province, if they are qualified. And reports are positive from this first FTEP cohort. Ren mentioned that “[...] this July [2011], after the first group of students graduated and they have some very good jobs and now we no longer need to explain [the FTEP is a good policy] to the parents or to the students. The students know this is a good policy.” Finally, Fudaoyuan Guo provided a brief four-year overview of SWU’s progress in implementing the FTEP: “When this policy first began in 2007, there may be some aspects we

couldn't expect. We had more good plans for them in 2008. In 2009, the management of the FTEP students began to be perfect. There were more opportunities for them in 2010.”

Question Three

My third research question asked how, if at all, faculty members are involved in decision-making regarding the development and implementation of FTEP curriculum, teaching methodology, and teaching facilities. Evidence indicates that while the university administration required that each college develop its own Department of Teacher Education, officials from the College of Teacher Education guided and supported these colleges during that development process. Therefore, what faculty involvement in decision-making did occur centered more on curriculum development and teaching methodology than on teaching facilities.

Initially the Office of Teacher Education, and then the College of Teacher Education provided financial and administrative support (e.g., leave, travel subsistence expenses, tuition) for select faculty to visit other universities inside and outside of China to gain special training or to gain new insights for developing innovative teaching methodologies. Vice President Wang noted how during the summer of 2011 they “sent twelve teachers to go to London University. Last year we sent some to England, to United States, and also to Australia.” Likewise, Vice Dean Ren explained how the College of Foreign Languages supported its faculty: “. . . one of the faculty members went to Cambridge University to study for her Ph.D. and this year she got her degree and returned, and for her, she applied for a scholarship. And for some teachers, for example, four teachers now are studying in Beijing Normal University.” As noted earlier, Vice President Wang also described how SWU has been sending groups of FTEP students and other

College of Education graduate students abroad for three or more months at a time to not only observe different teaching and teacher-training methodologies, but to engage in them as well.

Once back, the students have showcased their findings and experiences through providing face-to-face lectures and video conferences and faculty have been integrating what they have learned into not only their classrooms, but their college's approach to instruction. In the College of Physical Science and Technology, for example, Professor Qin explained how, because of the FTEP and administrative support and renewed emphasis on teacher education, "We reformed the courses that closely related to teacher education and pedagogy of physics has become the competitive course of the nation." Qin described, as noted above, how the training of physics teachers changed dramatically since the FTEP had been implemented. "Before this policy began, we had one teacher education course, named physics education theory," Qin explained. "When this policy began, we divided this course into three sub-courses: physics education, instructional design of physics in middle school, and teaching skills training of physics in middle school." A critical element of the FTEP, which sets it apart from previous teacher education reforms, is the balance of content knowledge and the ability to apply that knowledge in a student-centered classroom. "On the one hand," Qin added, "we try to improve students' theoretical level; on the other hand, we pay attention to the cultivation of their ability of practice." Also, as a result of the additional financial support by way of the FTEP, Qin described how the College of Physical Science and Technology decided to provide new faculty with three paths through which to receive training in these new student-centered teaching methodologies:

There are three channels to train the new faculty. First, we may send them to other excellent universities to accept advanced studies. Second, our university may organize teaching methods teachers to go to other regions or go abroad to learn, for example, we

may go to Hong Kong Chinese University, Hong Kong Institute of Education or London Institute of Education. Third, because our school has a close relationship with national elementary education curriculum reform and some middle schools, we may invite some excellent middle school teachers to give lectures and classes.

These opportunities demonstrate the college-level efforts to support frontline faculty in implementing the FTEP; however, how this plays out in individual classrooms is perhaps most notable, in light of Premier Wen Jiabao's desire to cultivate more homegrown creativity (Zhao, 2009). Professor Ma, from the College of Physical Science and Technology, illustrated this classroom-level change generated by implementing the FTEP when describing how teaching had changed since the policy had begun: "We paid much attention to theoretical teaching in the past and students learned passively and had little opportunities to practice. But now, we encourage students' initiative and participation. There are also some changes in teaching methods. In the past, teachers talked a lot in class. But now, we give students more time to practice."

Additional Findings

In the spring of 2009, while on a fellowship to learn about the Chinese education system, I attended lectures presented by six of SWU's education scholars, four of whom mentioned the FTEP as part of their lectures. Some detailed how the FTEP had ushered in a shift in focus for the professors and students, as class sessions were being designed to shift from the traditional professor-centered lectures about theories, to student-centered interactive classes about the practical application of theories in teaching. This shift from professor-centered to student-centered classes represents a monumental change not only in the philosophy of teaching at the postsecondary level, as illustrated by Professor Qin's description of training for physics teachers,

but at the P-12 level as well. By the fall of 2011, however, this shift still remained a challenge for SWU.

But a balanced understanding of theory and practice within a particular subject is not enough to produce excellent teachers, according to Vice Dean Cheng. Other skills must also be mastered: “Compared with the normal students in the past,” explained Vice Dean Cheng, “we have arranged a new module of professional teacher’s courses for them, so they receive excellent training regarding teaching abilities and skills.” Here Vice Dean Hong fleshed out the details of these courses; for example, students will learn “handwriting, including writing with chalk. There are also computer classes to teach them how to make courseware.” In addition, there will be art classes to teach them composition, to improve their aesthetics [and] music classes to teach them how to use their throat and control their voice.” Also, because many FTEP students come from a number of different provinces, Vice Dean Hong noted how there is “training in oral language for teaching, including Mandarin, expression, speech, eloquence, and more important, handwriting and calligraphy. And this is the difference between us and foreign universities.”

Secondly, unique preparation of FTEP students, although briefly covered here, is perhaps the most significant change in how FTEP students are prepared for the workforce. In the recent past, not all graduates from teacher education colleges decided to teach. As Deputy Party Secretary Li said, “before [the FTEP], it was not necessary that all our normal students would go to schools.” Thus, some graduates went into other careers, taught in schools, or continued on to graduate school, usually to pursue a research career and teach at university level. But with the help of the FTEP SWU has merged the latter two paths into one, and now the FTEP students not only receive more intensive teacher-based research training throughout their program, they also have the option to attend SWU’s graduate program. During their undergraduate study, however,

they already have opportunities to conduct research. This is central to the new College of Teacher Education's "purpose of cultivating researchers or educators for the education field," said Vice Dean Hong. Across campus Vice Dean Ren described how the College of Foreign Languages is implementing this shift in focus: "Even today we ask students to do some research not only on English literature, linguistics, or traditional fields. We also encourage students to research how to teach well, how to teach middle students, how to teach primary school students more effectively, and how to do some reflection on their own teaching practice and so on." This new perspective and emphasis on teachers as researchers has inspired some students to get a head start on practicing their research skills, and this has resulted in some students publishing some of their work. "While they were here studying as students," said Ren, "actually some students published some papers on teacher education and learning strategies and cultivation of students' affections, and now they have graduated. Some of these students work in the middle or primary schools which are also the basis for their teaching practice [i.e., student teaching] for our university."

This early experience with teacher-based research will be a tremendous benefit to these FTEP graduates, especially if they choose to apply to SWU's graduate program, because their approach to research during their employment will be part of SWU's graduate school admission process. Ren explained how they, "ask the Principals of those schools to report how the students are going on there, not only in their teaching, but also in the field of research." But according to Ren, having teacher-based research experience does not merely enhance an FTEP graduate's application for post baccalaureate study, it completes it: "At least, theoretically, we expect them to do such kind of research. Otherwise, they cannot apply for the degree." All of the colleges housing FTEP students have been making this transition. In the College of Education Deputy

Party Secretary Liu also explained that “we want our students to become research teachers in middle and elementary schools. Thus we take a lot of measures, for example, we emphasize academic research activities and we encourage our students to read more masterpieces on education. We also cultivate students with advanced educational theories.”

Thus, because of this shift in approach to education research, the FTEP graduates from SWU may be among some of the first in the country specially trained to conduct teacher-based research. Although each of the six FTEP universities is choosing different ways to implement the policy, Vice Dean Hong is focused on how this teacher-based research approach will influence the current FTEP students 10 to 15 years hence: “During 10 years teaching, these students may study for their Master’s degree in Education. Then, they could continue their Ph.D. study and I’m sure they would definitely be top-grade educators through these experiences.” Then Hong added, “If an educator wasn’t a good teacher in middle or elementary school, his research must be limited.” With this qualification Hong reiterated one of the fundamental goals of this policy.

Interestingly, as I will discuss in my final chapter, this new student-centered approach to teaching has met resistance.

Summary

In summary, here is what I think are primary answers to the questions. My first research question asked how much and in what ways do the responses of the frontline administrators reflect local institutional characteristics, constraints, developmental trajectory, and local reform history. As noted, five themes emerged indicating that frontline university administrators, student service providers, and faculty leveraged their unique position as a key national teaching institution to develop a new college of teacher education that both broadened its regional and

national influence as a comprehensive university and allowed it to create a new, nationally recognized teacher education model for other teaching institutions to emulate. SWU did this by garnering resources the MoE provided to implement the FTEP and with them creatively developed and expanded its role as the southwest region's only FTEP institution. SWU also used the FTEP mandate and funding to pull its teacher education program back on track, since, as Vice Dean Hong stated that, "After the merging [of SWCNU and SWCAU], we may have paid less attention to teachers' education for a very short period; about one or two years (2005-2007)." Finally, SWU first established an Office of Teacher Education to manage the FTEP students and as the demands of this university-wide management grew, it developed this Office into a new College of Teacher Education. This combination of factors has strengthened SWU's recognition as the only comprehensive university among the six FTEP-implementing institutions.

My second research question asked how frontline administrators have responded to the converging demands of implementing a government-mandated undergraduate teacher education policy and a local institutional expansion policy at the graduate level. The short answer to this challenge is that SWU "can admit students from other universities," according to Vice President Wang; however, SWU did not stop there. Instead, it developed a substantially more robust teacher preparation program than it had offered prior to fall semester 2007 by creating and modeling student-centered teaching methods, increasing the interaction between FTEP students and model elementary and middle school teachers, and significantly extending the FTEP students' teaching practice. But the most significant impact on maintaining a viable graduate student program while implementing the FTEP is that the MoE revised the policy to allow a pathway for the top-performing FTEP graduates to return to graduate school at SWU. Moreover, the only graduate program to which the FTEP graduates may apply is the one designed to provide

advanced training for teacher-based research, a major that has emerged as FTEP implementation has evolved.

My third research question asked how, if at all, faculty members are involved in decision-making regarding the development and implementation of FTEP curriculum, teaching methodology, and teaching facilities. As noted, a number of faculty have been sent to visit other leading teacher education universities and institutes in China and abroad to learn more about promising practices in student-centered teaching methodologies. These faculty have then been part of the decision-making about FTEP curriculum and teaching methodology reform at the college and department level.

Also, additional findings emerged as a result of my data analysis. Most notably, SWU has embarked on piloting a new student-centered teaching model, and a new graduate program designed to produce teacher-researchers; both present new challenges and opportunities for faculty and students. However, with an increasing number of FTEP graduates working at primary and middle schools in their home provinces, their attempt to use these student-centered teaching methods may begin to inspire other teachers to adopt similar methods and, thereby begin to fulfill Wen Jiabao's desire (Zhao 2009) to provide more opportunities for Chinese children to express and grow their creativity.

In the fifth and final chapter I will provide some interpretations about what this all means regarding FTEP, education policy in general, and future inquiry following this study.

Chapter Five

Impressions through Deeper Relationships

The challenge of reaching all of China's rural poor with a quality education is herculean at best. Reaching a majority of these with the quality of education available in more affluent urban areas is, perhaps, impossible for China or any country. However, in 2007 Premier Wen Jiabao set into motion a policy that was to change the nature of teacher education for thousands of university students, their faculty and administrators, and ideally, tens of thousands of elementary, middle, and high school students in those poor rural areas receiving these newly trained teachers. I say ideally, because it seems the first cohort of FTEP graduates have not been required to teach in the poor rural areas. Whether the MoE will require future FTEP graduates to teach in the poor rural areas for their first two years is yet to be determined. The new leadership in China has the power to follow through with Wen Jiabao's envisioned policy—to increase education access to the poorest rural areas—or initiate new policy ideas of its own. As I discussed earlier, Elmore (2010) provides an understanding of these kinds of organizational shifts. For example, the Moe has made two significant FTEP revisions. One was not enforcing its original requirement for FTEP graduates to serve their first two years of service in a rural area in their home province. The other was creating a graduate school option for FTEP graduates. Elmore emphasizes how those elected gain political capital by “initiating new ideas” and later adds that “This condition seems to be a result of our particularly American form of political pluralism. It is not—I repeat *not*—the case in the other industrialized democracies in which I work, Canada and Australia.” That the MoE has not required the first graduating cohort of FTEP students to teach in rural areas may suggest that Elmore's notion, about the condition he describes as seeming “to be the result of our particularly American form of political pluralism,”

may also be influencing FTEP implementation, at least initially. Nonetheless, when I visited SWU in 2009 and attended lectures by several College of Education faculty and administrators, they referred to the FTEP as a unique policy that was influencing how they and other faculty were approaching their teaching as well as their students' active participation in and out of class. Therefore, the policy is compelling change in teaching and learning practice.

As a result of my four visits to SWU in two and a half years the feeling of hope around this policy's ability to make a difference in rural education is palpable; though, administrators, student service providers, and faculty expressed this hope differently.

Administrators

Frontline administrators speak of the many MoE planning meetings in Beijing, their SWU meetings that include the SWU President and other SWU officials, and about the notoriety SWU garnered by first developing its Office of Teacher Education and then its new College of Teacher Education. These have resulted in expressions of both the weight of responsibility and a sense of mission in tackling the country's rural education dilemma. In fulfilling its duty by implementing the FTEP, SWU has not only journeyed back to its roots as a normal university (i.e., as SWCNU before merging with SWCAU in 2005), it has established itself as a leading teacher education institution in the process. This is a significant development for both teacher education at the university level and for scholarship emanating from SWU's new breed of teacher-researchers. I expect within the next few years as SWU graduates around 2,900 FTEP students per year that new areas of place-based research will emerge. However, with the demands that school leaders and departments place on new teachers, I also expect that the production of this research will be slight at first. In fact, one Chinese researcher who is surveying

the first cohort of FTEP graduates and comparing their teaching practicum and their first semester of full-time teaching, noted how she received few returned surveys because FTEP graduates were complaining even during their practicum that they had little time for much else than planning for classes, teaching, and grading their students' daily homework.

Frontline administrators are pleased with the expansion of the FTEP students' teaching practice from less than one month to nearly three and a half months. In light of my first research question, which asked how SWU's development had been influenced by the mandate to implement the FTEP, SWU's ongoing development of its innovative teacher education programs has drawn the attention of local institutions who are also interested in gaining MoE support for developing similar programs, and increasing numbers of financially well off parents wanting to steer their children toward a reputable institution and an affordable university education.

Frontline administrators also spoke fondly of the new lines of communication between the university and primary and middle schools where the FTEP students are gaining pre-service training. This has also created a pathway for outstanding local teachers to come to SWU and share their expertise and valuable experiences with the FTEP students.

But some administrators did express concern about the ten years of service as being too long for most FTEP graduates. This was a practical concern because of two reasons. First, the salary which most teachers will earn even after ten years, especially those in the most rural areas, will not be enough to buy a house in a more metropolitan area. Second, after leaving university it is customary for graduates to seriously consider marriage. However, one administrator noted that it will be difficult for FTEP graduates to find a suitable spouse in these rural areas and, therefore, will be less likely to want to teach there.

Student Service Providers—Deputy Party Secretary and Fudaoyuan

Deputy Party Secretary Liu clearly described a distinction between the Chinese and American education systems regarding guiding student learning: “There is a difference between American education and Chinese education. In our country, we pay more attention to students’ moral education and we consciously cultivate them into teachers that our country needs.” Therefore, meeting and interviewing several of SWU’s Deputy Party Secretary and Fudaoyuan was of particular interest to me. As they shared their direct experiences I learned it was no easy task to keep FTEP students motivated to study and to keep the goal of teaching in their home province as their primary goal. Fudaoyuan are close to the students’ daily life. Responsible for approximately 150 to 300 students each, they organize, or encourage their students to organize events, competitions, and meetings, in addition to serving as a central figure providing updates to students on national, local, and FTEP policies and events from their supervisors (i.e., Deputy Party Secretary). Also, because they work closely with their students, they are able to recognize students who have particular difficulty adjusting to being away from home and family, or to college life in general. This level of communication has made the Fudaoyuan’s role crucial in maintaining FTEP students’ motivation to stay in the program. However, Fudaoyuan are not part of the decision-making for implementing the FTEP. Deputy Party Secretaries, on the other hand, are.

Deputy Party Secretaries are in charge of the Fudaoyuan in a college and work closely with their college counterpart or Vice Dean. In implementing the FTEP the Deputy Party Secretaries are responsible for teaching the Fudaoyuan and the new students about the policy and for providing updates about any policy revisions that occur. They also help students to remember how important it is to fulfill their contract and commitment to the FTEP by being excellent

elementary or middle school teachers in the future. Furthermore, as students work through the FTEP, Deputy Party Secretaries push them to achieve academic success, because even though the FTEP students will be returning to their home provinces to teach, the other five FTEP universities are also graduating students from those provinces; therefore, competition may be fierce for the best jobs. Finally, Deputy Party Secretaries also teach courses for FTEP students in subjects such as politics and international affairs.

United States' higher education policymakers as well as college and university administrators would do well to consider implementing a system akin to the one in China that provides Deputy Party Secretaries and Fudaoyuan for their students, particularly those at community and other typically nonresidential colleges. While it is customary for residential institutions to staff their housing units with Resident Assistants (RAs), community colleges and other traditionally nonresidential institutions typically do not. But Fudaoyuan and RAs both work closely with students and provide a level of attention and care that faculty and administrators cannot. With President Obama's mandate that community colleges increase college access and progress for low-income, underrepresented, and first-generation students, now may be an opportune time to pilot a similar model at a handful of different community colleges in different regions of the country.

Faculty

Faculty have been experimenting with new, interactive teaching methods that engage students with the course content and materials in ways previously unfamiliar to both. Veteran faculty seemed encouraged by the new direction of student-centered methods. Many have collaborated in groups with other faculty and administrators on how to design and deliver

courses that are more student-centered. In the spring of 2009, when I heard that FTEP professors were expected to conduct their classes not in the traditional way—that is by lecturing on theory and have students more-or-less memorize their lectures—but in ways that engaged student in the learning of more practical knowledge, I was skeptical that the more senior faculty would be willing to adopt, learn, and apply these methods. However, responses during my three faculty interviews indicated that I was wrong in that assumption. Two of the faculty I interviewed had around 20 years of experience and one nearly 30. All three were actively using student-centered teaching methods and they found this form of teaching rewarding to their students and themselves. Whether their students will be able to use these methods when they teach in elementary and middle schools, however, is yet to be determined.

Chinese Higher Education System

I am still impressed with how in the Chinese system a national policy can be announced and then implemented within a few months. Mobilizing the resources it takes to accomplish this at six national universities within the same amount of time is even more staggering. Perhaps one factor that makes this possible is the communication system that allows university officials to report challenges with implementing the policy up the chain of command to the MoE, and allows the MoE officials to report the severest challenges to the Premier. However, while this communication system seems to work well for the six FTEP-implementing universities that are under the direct supervision of the MoE, further research will be required to determine whether this holds true for other universities that are under the jurisdiction of the provincial or city governments. Nonetheless, for the MoE to have such a diverse group of six universities in different regions of the country through which to pilot a policy is advantageous. This direct link

to the Central Government ministry also facilitates developing collaborative relationships between the six universities and other education system partners, like those that have resulted from implementing the FTEP; for example, the elementary, middle, and high schools at which the FTEP undergraduates have been performing their teaching practicums and, perhaps, will ultimately be employed.

The Chinese higher education system is also enhanced by the Deputy Party Secretaries and Fudaoyuan, who work closely with the students and the academic officials about how students are adjusting to the requirements and opportunities of the policy.

Limitations of the Research

Because of my limited Chinese language ability, I was acutely aware of my lack of spontaneity in asking probe questions, of my sparse understanding of discussions during official university meetings about the FTEP, and of my sometimes debilitating need to work with an interpreter for most of my interviews. If I were invited to do so, I would have stayed at SWU longer by teaching in the College of Teacher Education or the College of Education, as teaching at SWU would have given me more of an insider perspective on some of the implementation practices of the FTEP. I would also have liked to interview a handful of new teachers at SWU who work with the FTEP students as a way to gain some perspectives from teaching faculty who are less familiar with SWU than are two- or three-decade veteran faculty members. I would have liked to interview some of the administrators and faculty from whose lectures I first learned about the FTEP, so as to learn about their perspectives on the FTEP now that the first cohort has graduated. Also, I would like to have interviewed more College of Education faculty and

administrators about their perspectives on the development of the new College of Teacher Education.

In addition, as this is a qualitative study, I, the researcher, am the instrument of interpretation. Therefore, the design of my study was influenced by my background experience of living and working in China. I taught at Xi'an Medical University from 1993 to 1996 as a Foreign English Expert and was appointed Foreign Teaching Leader. This provided me with a general understanding of the Chinese higher education system, but not enough to consider myself an insider, especially since sixteen years has elapsed since that experience and much has changed due to higher education reforms in China. However, I knew that in order to gain permission to conduct my research I must gain support from the highest leaders. And to do so, I would have to respectfully make my request. This opportunity came through my contact with Vice President Wang and Vice Dean Hong as a result of our interaction during my fellowship visit in spring 2009. Through follow-up emails with both Vice President Wang and Vice Dean Hong, I began to prepare my September, 2009 and 2011, and November 2011 visits. Had I developed relationships with other administrators my study participants and outcomes may have been different. Furthermore, I chose to build my study participants through referrals from these two leaders, because I understood the power of a personal referral in gaining access to participants.

Future Research Potential

Four and a half years have passed since the first FTEP students entered six key national universities in six different regions of China. The first cohort of FTEP graduates from each of these universities is now serving in the second semester of their new teaching job; however, these jobs are not necessarily in rural areas, as the original version of the FTEP had intended.

During the planned economy of the 1950s – 1970s some teacher education graduates had been sent to China’s rural areas as a way to improve literacy standards around the country. “But for the student teachers now,” Vice Dean Ren admitted, “probably some students don’t understand the value of working in the rural areas. And they are unwilling to work there. So if you ask me what change we need [...] it’s hard to say. Probably, as time goes on, the economic conditions in rural areas will change, and then probably more students will like to go there. It’s hard to say.”

Through informal discussions at SWU, I learned that in the next few years the MoE will strengthen the requirement for FTEP graduates to teach their first two years in rural areas. How the MoE may accomplish this or, if it does, how this might influence the students and families who are attracted to participate in the FTEP, future inquiry would do well to follow. Other potential studies may compare the 2011 FTEP graduates’ first-, second-, and third-year teaching positions or the initial and subsequent teaching positions for the 2011, 2012, and 2013 graduates. Also, future studies may explore to what extent minority nationality students are enrolling in FTEP programs at the six universities and to what extent they are serving minority nationality communities once they graduate.

The new college of teacher education and its emphasis on cultivating student-centered, teacher-researchers is a significant development for teacher education and research in China. And because the MoE has revised the FTEP to allow FTEP graduates the option to attend graduate school, this provides a unique opportunity to grow a new kind of graduate program to serve FTEP graduates who are currently working professionals in the field. Having so many part-time graduate students (i.e., approximately 1,000, or one third of the 2011 graduates are expected to return for graduate study, according to Vice Dean Ren), will also expand the nature and volume of the research produced. Additional longitudinal research is also needed over the next

few decades on developments in teacher training and production at all levels, because of three indicators. First, preliminary conversations I had in 2009 about the FTEP revealed that frontline administrators were borrowing heavily from American and British education models for guiding their development of the FTEP. Second, Vice President Wang and Vice Deans Hong, Ren, and Cheng all described how FTEP administrators, faculty, and students were being funded to travel abroad to learn firsthand about teacher education models. Third, Vice Dean Hong admitted that, “The education in China is going through transformation now. Every university is exploring, especially normal universities. Maybe 10 or 20 years later, we would have the similar system as US.” Another area of inquiry to explore will be how the FTEP graduates, who have been trained through more student-centered classrooms, are managing to implement more student-centered teaching methods in their primary or middle school settings, if at all. How, one might ask, are the Headmasters, teachers, parents, and students responding to a more student-centered classroom style? Preliminary reports from some of the faculty I have spoken with indicate that initially the student-centered methods negatively affect the students’ test scores, so FTEP graduates have been encouraged to use the more teacher-centered, lecture style of teaching method to maintain high test scores for their students. These are preliminary high stakes tests that build to the national college entrance examination (*Gao Kao*) which takes place in June each year.

Lastly, as I discussed above within the first four years of implementing the FTEP, the MoE has introduced two key revisions that have made the policy more appealing to families and students. First, it has relaxed the requirement for FTEP graduates to teach in a rural area for the first two years after graduation. Second, it has opened up an option for FTEP graduates to attend graduate school. However, Vice Deans Hong and Ren have already suggested that if the policy requirement for FTEP graduates were to teach and work within the education sector in their

home province for five years instead of ten years, many more students might be willing to apply for the program. Therefore, research that results in helping the Chinese government strike a balance between student commitment and government subsidy will benefit not only the Chinese education system, but the United States' system and others as well.

Conclusion

I began this investigation with three research questions. First, I wanted to know how much and in what ways do the responses of the frontline administrators reflect local institutional characteristics, constraints, developmental trajectory, and local reform history. Through my investigation I have learned that instead of interpreting this policy as one that would inhibit SWU from growing its reputation as a leading edge comprehensive university, SWU has strategically leveraged its position as a key national teacher education university to strengthen its comprehensive university standing by establishing a new and innovative College of Teacher Education that is developing a new model of teacher education and practice for the region and country.

Second, I wanted to know how frontline administrators have responded to the converging demands of implementing a government-mandated undergraduate teacher education policy and a local institutional expansion policy at the graduate level. However, because I later discovered that just as my study was getting underway the MoE revised the FTEP to allow the top performing graduates a pathway to graduate school, I unwittingly found myself in the midst of another innovative development; the preparation of undergraduate teacher education students as teacher-researchers. This not only guaranteed there would be a healthy supply of SWU undergraduates transitioning into SWU's graduate programs; it meant a new teacher education

graduate program needed to be created. Thus, I discovered that the mandated FTEP has so far prompted much innovation at SWU and is likely to continue to do so as the graduate program evolves.

Third, I wanted to know how, if at all, faculty members are involved in decision-making regarding the development and implementation of FTEP curriculum, teaching methodology, and teaching facilities. I have learned that because of the FTEP and its accompanying administrative and financial support from the MoE and the Ministry of Finance respectively, SWU's leaders have devoted much attention to developing a new teaching model for SWU and the country. And at the heart of this work are SWU-supported faculty leaders from 15 different colleges—some of whom have been sent to other leading teacher education universities in China and abroad—who are working together to create new teaching and teacher education methodologies in which new, student-centered practices are emerging.

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Appendix A

Administrator

Interview Protocols

Interview Protocols

The proposed study addresses two major research questions:

- 1) How do frontline university administrators balance the demands of implementing a federally mandated policy with their existing university development efforts?
- 2) How do frontline university administrators maintain a viable graduate student program when the demands of implementing a federally mandated policy to increase undergraduate graduation rates of students who are prohibited from attending graduate school?

The following interview questions will guide interviews with frontline administrators at Southwest University, Chongqing, China.

University Administrator Interview 1 -- 75 min

Appendix A. First Administrator Interview Protocol: Study of Organizational Structure

1. Please describe your role at Southwest University in implementing the Ministry of Education's 2007 Free Teacher Education policy.
2. What administrative changes has Southwest University made to manage the implementation of this policy?
3. How did you feel about Southwest University being one of only six universities chosen to implement the Ministry of Education's 2007 Free Teacher Education policy?
4. How would you describe the progress Southwest University has made in implementing this policy since 2007?
5. How has Southwest University's goal of becoming a leading comprehensive institution been influenced by the need to implement this Free Teacher Education policy?
6. What has Southwest University done organizationally to continue to develop into a comprehensive university?
7. How were decisions about these organizational changes made at Southwest University?
8. Do you feel that Southwest University's organizational challenges are comparable to the organizational challenges being faced by the other five universities tasked with implementing this policy?
9. How do you feel Southwest University's work in meeting these organizational

challenges compares with how the other five universities are meeting theirs?

University Administrator Interview 2 -- 75 min

1. How has Southwest University's tradition of producing some of China's leading educational researchers been influenced by the need to implement this Free Teacher Education policy? (Probe: initial 2007 impression, 2011 impression)
2. What has Southwest University done organizationally to maintain its production of high quality educational researchers? (Probe: any help from Ministry of Education?, any administrative restructuring?, collaboration with other institutions)
3. How were decisions about these organizational changes made at Southwest University?
4. Do you feel that Southwest University's organizational challenges in maintaining its production of high quality educational researchers are comparable to the organizational challenges being faced by the other five universities tasked with implementing this policy?
5. How do you feel Southwest University's work in meeting the organizational challenges in producing high quality educational researchers compares with how the other five universities are meeting theirs?

Appendix B

Student Service Provider
Interview Protocols

The following interview questions will guide interviews with frontline Student Service Providers at Southwest University, Chongqing, China.

University Student Service Provider Interview -- 75 min

Appendix B. Student Service Provider Interview Protocol: Study of Organizational Structure

1. Please describe your role at Southwest University in implementing the Ministry of Education's 2007 Free Teacher Education policy.
2. How did you feel about Southwest University being one of only six universities chosen to implement the Ministry of Education's 2007 Free Teacher Education policy?
3. What student service changes has Southwest University made to manage the implementation of the FTEP? Which changes do you believe have been most effective? Least effective?
4. How do Southwest University's student services for the FTEP students differ from those for other students, if at all?
5. How has Southwest University changed the organization of its student services since implementing the FTEP, if at all?
6. If organizational changes were made regarding student services, how were decisions about these organizational changes made?
7. Do you feel that any changes made to Southwest University's student services are comparable to the changes being made by the other five universities tasked with implementing this policy?
8. How do you feel Southwest University's work in meeting the FTEP's student services challenges compares with how the other five universities are meeting theirs?

Appendix C

Faculty

Interview Protocols

The following interview questions will guide interviews with frontline faculty at Southwest University, Chongqing, China.

University Faculty Interview 1 -- 75 min

Appendix C. Faculty Interview Protocol: Study of Organizational Structure

1. Please describe your role at Southwest University in implementing the Ministry of Education's 2007 Free Teacher Education policy.
2. How did you feel about Southwest University being one of only six universities chosen to implement the Ministry of Education's 2007 Free Teacher Education policy?
3. What faculty changes has Southwest University made to manage the implementation of this policy?
4. How would you describe the changes Southwest University has made regarding faculty expectations since implementing the FTETP?
5. How would you describe the changes Southwest University has made regarding faculty development since implementing the FTETP?
6. If organizational changes were made regarding faculty development, how were decisions about these organizational changes made?
7. How would you describe the changes Southwest University has made regarding teacher training since implementing the FTETP?
8. If organizational changes were made regarding teacher training, how were decisions about these organizational changes made?
9. How do you feel Southwest University's work in meeting these faculty expectations, compares with how the other five universities are meeting theirs?

Appendix D

Free Teacher Education Policy

Translation

Translation of FTETP

Implementation of the Free Teacher Education Program within the Normal Universities directly under the Ministry of Education (pilot project). 2007, Number 34.

Written by the Ministry of Education, Ministry of Finance, Ministry of Human Resources

Introduction: The State Council (*guo yu yuan*) decided to implement the Free Teacher Education Policy in the Normal Universities that are directly under the Ministry of Education.

By taking on this important policy:

--to further an environment in which teachers are respected and education is valued, so that education is the most respected profession in society.

--to produce a large quantity of outstanding teachers

--to promote genuine educators in education

--to encourage more outstanding youth to become lifelong educators

Following is the implementation of the FTETP at the six universities directly under the Ministry of Education.

1. Beginning in the fall of 2007 students enrolled at Beijing Normal University, East China Normal University, Northeast Normal University, Central China Normal University, Shaanxi Normal University and Southwest University. These universities will implement the FTETP. Piloting this program at these six universities under the MOE will accumulate experience, establish systems, and build foundations for training large numbers of teachers and educators.
2. FTETP students will have their tuition waived, room and board waived, and will be given a stipend for living expenses. The required funding will be arranged by the Ministry of Finance.
3. The FTETP students at these six universities under the MOE will be selected from the top applicants, will love teaching, and will want to devote themselves to lifelong education.
4. Before enrollment, FTETP students will sign a contract with the school and their home provincial education office, stating that after they graduate they will remain in primary and

secondary education for more than ten years. To work in urban schools, graduates must first complete two years of teaching in rural compulsory schools. The government encourages FTEP students to be life-long educators.

FTEP graduates who do not complete their contractual teaching duties will be required to repay all the benefits they received due to free tuition in addition to a fine. The provincial education office will be in charge of overseeing the fulfillment of the contract, and will establish an integrity file for the FTEP students. If there are special reasons why an FTEP student cannot fulfill the contract, they must apply for approval from the provincial education office.

5. Generally, FTEP graduates will return to their home province to teach in elementary or secondary schools. The provincial government will coordinate and plan to prepare and receive the FTEP graduates and make sure every FTEP graduate who comes to teach in elementary or secondary schools has a position. The provincial government will be responsible to arrange the receiving schools and FTEP graduates for the two-way selection, to make sure every graduate is placed in a school. To be sure that each FTEP graduate has a teaching position the provincial government will first use natural attrition policies, and, where necessary, will create a special working establishment.

During the FTEP students' service agreement period they may move between schools or work in educational administration.

6. Outstanding non-teacher education students may transfer into this FTEP within two years of their enrollment and in keeping with the MOE plan. According to the regulations, the university will reimburse their tuition and fees paid up to that time, and provide them with the stipend and other benefits they missed up to that time. Also, the FTEP students may change their major one time within the teaching area.
7. Before graduation, and within the FTEP students' service agreement, FTEP students may not apply for full-time graduate study.

After FTEP students graduate and pass examinations, they may be accepted for part-time graduate study for a Master of Education. After successful completion of courses and thesis defense, they will receive a graduate diploma and a Master's degree.

8. The Normal Universities directly under the MOE should take this FTEP opportunity with the goal to cultivate teachers and educators, vigorously promote teacher education reform, particularly based on the requirements of basic education development and curriculum reform, and carefully design the education and training program. Prestigious professors should be provided for FTEP students and high level professors for the teacher training courses. Set up an FTEP mentoring system. According to the requirements of learning to be a teacher of the people and being a role model, strengthen teacher education students' moral education. Strengthen the six-month teaching practicum to improve teaching practice. Through training and education, students develop advanced education ideas, love for the teaching profession, long-term career aspirations, and build a solid foundation for becoming outstanding teachers and educational experts.
9. The work of training outstanding primary and middle school teachers should become the important indicator for evaluating normal universities teaching quality. Those normal universities that are directly under the MOE who make a great contribution toward implementing the FTEP will receive policy leeway, to increase the support for teacher education.
10. The relevant organizations, departments, and schools should deeply understand the important, far-reaching significance, and impact of the implementation of the FTEP by these six universities, and take the responsibility, with care, to ensure the smooth implementation of this major initiative. Governments at all levels should take effective measures and active encouragement and support for FTEP graduates who are committed to long-term teaching in elementary and middle schools. The Central government finance will provide some support to the central and western regions to accept the FTEP graduates. Local governments and rural schools will provide necessary working and living conditions as well as turnover of housing.

Based on this policy the Ministry of Education, Ministry of Finance, Ministry of Personnel, and Central Office will work with local organizations so that all aspects of implementing the FTEP will be accomplished effectively and efficiently.

Vita

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