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The Confucian Educational Philosophy and Experienced Teachers' Resistance: A Narrative Study in Macau

Abstract This study investigates experienced teachers' resistance in an era of neoliberalism in Macau. The narratives of three experienced teachers are examined under a post-structuralist framework. The findings indicate that the traditional Chinese Confucian ideology of education guides the experienced teachers' professional practice and offers them an alternative subject position to inhabit that makes it possible for them to establish a critical distance from the prevailing norms imposed by the hegemony of neoliberalism. Such a distance allows the experienced teachers to observe, to think otherwise and consequently to live out a different teaching life and to reassemble their identity around an empowered notion of self. The study concludes that the Confucian ideology of education has contributed to the transformation of the contemporary discursive context of Macau by promising a future for education, a future with a revisioned future rather than a neoliberal incorporation of the past.

Keywords experienced teachers, resistance, post-structuralism

Introduction

In the last few decades, teachers in East Asia have been confronted by significant change in the educational landscape which is, by and large, due to the growth of neoliberalism which has become a huge challenge both to teachers and to the education system itself. Previous studies indicate that neoliberalism has exerted an oppressive influence on teachers' lives (see Ball, 2012a; Goodson, Loveless,

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& Stephens, 2012). It inevitably leads to a reaction on the part of teachers which is mainly manifested as resistance.

However, teachers' resistance is not at all a negative move, and very often it is a promise of a better future. As a Chinese proverb says: "If there is no struggle, there is no progress." Resistance implies the possibilities of transformation and creativity both for institutions (Giles, 2006; Peters & Reid, 2009), and for a teacher's selfhood and identity (Musanti & Pence, 2010). Hence, one of the objectives of this study is to explore the connotations and strategies of resistance of teachers in their careers.

The interest of the two authors in researching teachers' lives is very much driven by their own personal experiences. The first author "learnt" his lesson during his time as a novice teacher at a secondary school in Guangdong province, China. He was then "advised" by his senior colleagues that it would be better to keep a low profile in the school. His lesson was that a teacher should accept injustice and difficulties, especially those meted out by school authorities. This drove the author to research experienced teachers' forms of resistance. The second author has long witnessed the development of educational reforms in the territory of Macau. Unhappy with the way in which the voices of teachers are monitored, harmonised or silenced by the social, historical conditions as well as the dominant quantitative research culture, she has actively committed herself to explore the "localised and buried" voices of teachers. The two authors' experiences differ in contexts and circumstances, but they share an interest in teachers' lives and a sense of solidarity with frontline teachers. This study is derived from a project entitled *Research on Life Stories of Macau Senior Teachers*¹, and attempts to reveal the ways in which experienced teachers perform their resistance in the discursive context of Macau, a former European colony where there is a meeting point of entrenched Confucianism and global neoliberalism. This study reveals that the experienced teachers are striving for improvement throughout their teaching career, not by the means of neoliberal discourse, but via traditional wisdom embedded in daily Confucian practice. In this study, we employ in-depth interviews to collect their narratives for analysis in order to uncover their possible discursive resistance and identity formation that has become possible for them.

¹ "Research on Life Stories of Macau Senior Teachers" (MYRG090, 2011–2015) was a project commissioned by the University of Macau.

Teachers' Resistance from a Post-Structural Perspective

Resistance, quite often, is conceptualized as destructiveness, an anti-social movement or even an explosion of mass violence. In the field of teacher education research, resistance is always used to describe the tension between teachers and educational reforms (Marshak, 1996; Pease-Alvarez & Samway, 2012; Tusting, 2009). These studies mainly focus on oppositional behaviors that teachers perform so as to respond to threatening changes that the reforms have brought.

In this study, the adoption of Foucauldian post-structuralism attempts to provide an alternative view of resistance. According to Foucault (1979), resistance is indispensable to power which is intimately linked to knowledge. Knowledge is not considered as “facts” or “truth” but as accepted reality. Knowledge is expressed, conveyed, and shared in discourse (van Dijk, 2003), which is referred to as the institutionalized use of language and language-like sign systems, and thereby power is embedded in discourse. Power acts on people by persuading, coercing or seducing them to internalize sets of norms and views. Through this “internalization” of discourse, people’s gestures, actions, habits and skills, and ultimately a certain subjectivity, are constituted. For Foucault (1981), there are multiple discourses co-existing within a certain context and they are not always unified or coherent but rather diversified and even contradictory. Power thereby is intrinsically contestable and reversible. Resistance here means to inscribe the norms, ideas or values in a different way and thereby to challenge “the ways in which an individual is defined, labeled and classified” (Meriläinen, Tienari, Thomas, & Davies, 2004, p. 545). Resistance in this sense is often presented as “everyday forms of resistance” (Popper, 1968) which includes an individual’s broad spectrum of acts of defiance that does not constitute a social movement, such as skepticism (Fleming & Sewell, 2002), cynicism (Fleming & Spicer, 2003), and irony (Trethewey, 1999). These “everyday forms of resistance” indicate that the teacher is not solely an institutional fabrication, but rather is a kind of self-production and self-creation (Leask, 2012). Through performing resistance, a teacher acts upon a kind of restrictive normalization which ultimately enables his/her “own power to produce a specific type of freedom” (Infinito, 2003, p. 71). Resistance therefore reflects the active role of human agency in an institutional context structured within unequal power relations (Giroux, 1983; McFadden, 1995). In effect, resistance also contributes

to the formation of the teacher's identity. "Conscientização" or critical consciousness, a term coined by Freire (1998, 2000), is an important quality in a teacher for perceiving social, political, and economic oppression, and more importantly, for taking action against oppressive elements of society. Furthermore, hooks (1990) subverts the perception of marginality and considers it as a "site of resistance" which allows the emergence of counter-hegemonic practice and the "capacity to resist" and the "possibilities to radical perspectives" to create a new world (p. 341).

To recap, in this study teachers' resistance does not refer to collective, explicit, and concrete activities, but rather links to those disguised, implicit, and plural forms of action in everyday life. Teachers' resistance is not always antagonistic and destructive but rather embraces creativity and innovation in respect of pedagogical practice, professional development and identity construction. This resistance, as Weedon (1997) points out, "is the first stage in the production of alternative forms of knowledge, or, where such alternatives already exist, of winning individuals over to these discourses and gradually increasing their social power" (p. 111).

The Neoliberal Pressures in Macau: An Overview

During the last two decades, along with the impact of globalization, neoliberalism and its associated values and beliefs have been increasingly pervasive in Macau and have involved into a dominating discourse (Liu, 2008). Neoliberalism in education systems is underpinned by a narrowed vision and is seen as a set of financial practices and exchanges (Ball, 2012b) in which students are defined as products or human resources. Apple (1999) elaborates as follows "the world is intensely competitive economically, and students—as future workers—must be given the requisite skills and dispositions to compete efficiently and effectively" (p. 9). In effect, under this neoliberal discourse, students and teachers are measured in terms of productivity, that is, monetary outcomes (Davies & Bansel, 2007).

In Macau, the 9/2006 Law, *Fundamental Law of Non-Tertiary Education System*, claims that the principles and objectives of the education system are "to enable Macao to be a society of competitiveness that strives constantly for self-improvement" and "to cultivate the various talents with the ability to face the

world and the future, to meet the challenges and opportunities brought by the crescent globalization” (Macao Legislative Assembly, 2006). In order to achieve these goals, “privatisation, marketisation, performativity” (Apple, 2001, p. 421) are appreciated as policy technologies. In line with these, private schools comprise 75% of the total of 121 schools in Macau (Education and Youth Affairs Bureau, 2013). The operation of private schools is market-driven which is assumed to result in higher performativity and to “produce” better students.

Undoubtlessly, neoliberalism has profoundly changed the nature of teaching and teachers. The technologies associated with neoliberalism are “not simply vehicles for the technical and structural change of organizations but are also mechanisms for reforming teachers and for changing what it means to be a teacher” (Ball, 2003, p. 217). Under such a neoliberal framework, teachers have been relegated to paid service providers for students and parents (Kostogriz, 2008). The decisive index for teachers’ quality of service is students’ academic achievement and performance in examinations. Therefore, the principle priority for teachers is to help students achieve high scores in order to satisfy both students and their parents. Although Macau does not have any public or national examinations (except for the Programme for International Student Assessment, PISA), teachers are indeed facing different kinds of pressures such as continuous school reforms and student recruitment. In order to increase the quality of service, teachers are constantly required to further their capacity or skills relevant to teaching. In a sense, a teacher is making “an entrepreneur of himself” [*sic*] (Foucault, 2008, p. 226), exhibiting “usefulness” and productivity in the neoliberal regime.

Experienced Teachers in Macau and the Deep-Rooted Confucian Heritage

There is no doubt that both novice and experienced teachers could perform their resistance. However, previous studies (e.g., Achinstein & Ogawa, 2006; Musanti & Pence, 2010) on this issue mainly focus on novice teachers. Experienced teachers are often neglected. Some scholars (Goodson, Moore, & Hargreaves, 2006; Ponte & Twomey, 2014) have recognized that experienced teachers in reality often act differently from their younger partners in resisting educational reform. Goodson et al. (2006) contend that this is mainly due to their age, stages

of life and career, and, more importantly, that their memory is formed and situated in particular historical periods. As such, this study investigates teachers who have more than 20 years teaching experience in order to document the voices of experienced teachers in the territory.

These experienced teachers, unlike the novice teachers, grew up in the 1980–90s when neoliberalism was still in its embryonic stage and entrenched Chinese cultural traditions played a key role in the discursive landscape of Macau. For these experienced teachers, Confucianism is not merely a set of beliefs or values for them to choose, but rather a lifestyle. Historically, a large proportion of experienced teachers in Macau obtained their qualifications from normal universities in the Chinese mainland or by upgrading their qualification through programmes jointly organized by a normal university in the Chinese mainland and a local entity in Macau. Therefore, it is reasonable to suppose that the Chinese cultural tradition, especially Confucian educational philosophy, contributed to the formation of their professional ideology.

Morality is the core value of Confucian educational philosophy. As noted, the five principles or directions of education, namely cultivation of the “moral, intellectual, physical, social, and aesthetic” (*de, zhi, ti, qun, mei*) with morality given priority, is the practicing motto of most schools in Macau. Hence, the principal work of the teacher is to cultivate students’ moral character, more specifically, cultivating students with extensive knowledge, moral integrity, and strong social responsibility (Chan, 2002). Furthermore, the teacher is always expected to be a conscientious educator himself or herself and an exemplary model for students. This is reflected in an influential Chinese saying: “Teach by personal exemplary behavior as well as verbal instruction” (*yan chuan shen jiao*). In order to be a role model, teachers must also pay special attention to their personal relationships with students which is guided by the overarching principle of benevolence, *ren*. This character, depicting two people together, is defined by Confucius in this way: “Wishing to be established himself, he seeks also to establish others; wishing to be enlarged himself, he seeks also to enlarge others” (Analects, 6:30). This implies that teaching by nature is a dual-process of teaching and self-learning (*jiaoxue xiangzhang*), which means teachers and learners grow mutually through learning from one another. In addition, a qualified teacher has an obligation to be a model of lifelong learning because virtues, such as benevolence, honesty, fidelity, justice, altruism, modesty and other value can only be attained through diligent study and constant

self-improvement (Sun, 2008). Learning is primarily an inner-directed self-cultivation exercise in which the subject strives to become a good person.

Obviously, a discrepancy exists between deep-rooted Confucian philosophy and pervasive neoliberal discourse. This has created a transitional space for the experienced teachers to enunciate, act, and reflect upon themselves and on their relations to others. In addition, compared to their novice counterparts, the experienced teachers have a fuller vision of the changing landscape of Macau and its education system which enables them to crystallize their voices in their rich lived experience. These voices, albeit often neglected, marginalized or misunderstood, still remain, and thus appeal to be interrogated thoroughly. Such a consideration becomes one of the key reasons for us to conduct the current study, that is, to attempt to listen to those unheard voices of experienced teachers which may shed light on certain transformative possibilities for teachers and for the education system.

Methodology

In order to investigate the resistance of experienced teachers, we combine Foucauldian post-structuralism with a narrative approach as the methodological framework. Narrative (interchangeable with stories in this study) is always viewed as means of human sense-making. However, narrative stems from a long history of literary tradition and has been increasingly extended to various usages and interpretations. In this study, narrative refers to a method of inquiry, research methodology, the means of data collection and the data itself (Goodson & Gill, 2011; Webster & Mertova, 2007). Informed by post-structuralism, narratives become the mobile sites where personal experience and contextual discourse intersect in certain ways (Hole, 2007). In their narrative, teachers position themselves in the culturally created web of meaning and draw on the discourse available to them in the particular context. These discourses provide necessary frameworks for them to construct and to make sense of their experience in and through their storytelling. Grondin (2011) explains the traits of the post-structuralist narrative in this way:

Rather than attempting to replace one framework with another, post-structuralists focus on individual, "local" narratives to highlight difference, nuance and complexity. This allows for the recognition of alternative claims as truths in their own right, whether they

stem from above or below. (p. 250)

In line with this thinking, narrative in this study allows teachers to “speak the truth of their lives in their own way using their own words” and it also “allows meanings to emerge, and so validates the worth of the telling and the living of the participants’ worlds” (Peters & Reid, 2009, p. 553). Therefore, the post-structuralist narrative approach makes it possible to legitimize the participants as knowers of their own experience.

Data Collection

The narrative data were collected through a series of face-to-face interviews with three experienced female teachers: Wu, Mo, and Jiu (pseudonyms). They were recruited on a voluntary basis. When recruiting participants, the guiding criterion was related to age and years of teaching experience. That is, participants were required to fall in between the age range of 45 to 60 years and have more than 15 years of teaching experience in primary schools in Macau. The interviews were semi-structured. The interview questions were designed mainly around the themes related to teachers’ everyday work in school, including their establishing relations with students, parents, and colleagues; their pedagogical practice, their professional development and their awareness of the educational reform. During the interviews, participants were encouraged to talk about their everyday life experience around the designed questions. Each interview lasted approximately 60 minutes. With the participants’ permission, the interviews were audio-taped. Moreover, the interview and the following data analysis were conducted in accordance with rigorous research ethics which includes protecting participants’ privacy and confidentiality.

Transcription and Analysis

The audio-taped interviews were transcribed for analysis with reference to McCormack’s (2004) operational framework. Based on Hole’s (2007) idea regarding post-structuralist analysis of narrative, this is specifically concerned with people’s experience of resistance as a process of deviation from, or defiance towards, the dominant discourses. The data analysis mainly focuses on certain discourses adopted in the teachers’ stories, particularly on the teachers’ resistance

against the dominant influence of neoliberalism through their local and fragmentary voices. In the transcription and analysis, certain strategies were employed to increase reliability. First, all the verbatim transcriptions were read and re-read by the participants to confirm their original ideas. Second, multiple sources of data, such as field notes and participants' post hoc feedback, were used to triangulate the emerging findings. Third, throughout the writing process, if necessary, the manuscript was sent to the participants for validation and verification of our interpretation of the data.

Findings

As stated, the aim of this study is to reveal the way in which the traditional discourses are used as a resource by the experienced teachers to resist the dominating neoliberalism. Teachers' discursive strategies are made visible in their narratives through the way they talk about their responses or attitudes towards what they are confronting in their everyday life at school. Based on a post-structuralist analysis, we conclude that the teachers' resistance mainly stems from the position provided by the following four discourses.

To Provide Education for All Children without Discrimination

As mentioned earlier, the operation of the private schools in Macau is market-driven with the priority to seek better performance and "produce" better students. One of the crucial goals for these schools is to obtain better rates of social prestige or parents' satisfaction. In so doing, schools adopt various strategies, for example, setting high standards as a screening mechanism in order to keep more "prestigious/elite" students. Students are required to live up to the procedures and standards imposed on them. Those who fail in academic development are forced to repeat the year or perhaps even to drop out.

In this study, all participants criticized the business-oriented style of school operations. They claimed that it was unfair to reject or expel the students with difficulties in learning or disadvantaged groups who did not have sufficient support from their families. According to these experienced teachers, school above all should be an inclusive place for all students. They also acknowledged the importance of the setting up of a standard for students' improvement but not

for the sake of discrimination. In this respect, Wu's story concerning an expelled student provides particular evidence.

There was a boy in the sixth grade. He was such a trouble-maker. His family was rich and offered him too much freedom... He could not control his emotions and often got angry at some trivial things. He had transferred from one school to another before he came to our school. Each school could not tolerate him for more than one year. At his sixth grade, he applied for our school. I thought it over and over again and decided to accept his application. He came to our school and then, not surprisingly, gave rise to a lot of trouble, such as bullying classmates and offending teachers. However, I acknowledged that he was a really smart student. In my class, he also took an oppositional attitude towards me. But I selectively paid attention to his advantages and, above all, viewed him as a normal kid. I purposely avoided conflict with him. It was not easy for me. As time passed, he was still who he was. I was not sure what I had brought to him. Fortunately, he finally graduated and subsequently received an offer from a middle school abroad. (personal communication, September 20, 2012)

This excerpt implies that Wu was attempting to differentiate herself from others. In dealing with the boy, other teachers or schools would consider this "disruptive" child as a liability and one which would bring harm to the school. As such, a simple act of expulsion is the best fit in terms of the cost-effectiveness. By contrast, Wu's inclusive stance allowed her to transcend this biased and narrow view with respect to being a teacher or to teaching. During the interviews, Wu, like the other participants, claimed that she had followed the great Confucius to "provide education for all students without discrimination" (*you jiao wu lei*). Wu said that "this is a respected value for me. Yet, I also recognize that it is easier said than done to actualize this ideal... I would like to be inclusive as much as possible." Wu stated that students with different backgrounds and characteristics would have different support needs. She considered that this Confucian inclusiveness could be put into daily practice. As illustrated earlier, Wu appreciated the boy's good qualities and "viewed him as a normal kid." She created new meanings in her relationship with the boy which was quite different from other teachers. In this sense, her being inclusive created a new space, which allowed her to "perform differently," and could be viewed as a silent but constructive resistance to the hegemonic business-oriented climate of the school.

The Core Tenet of Professionalism: Being a Person of Conscience

In the neoliberal era, teachers in school should be automatons in carrying out their routine work in order to gain their personal and institutional goals and thus maximize their returns (Apple, 1999). Furthermore, teachers' efficiency, together with external accountability, has also become the primary principle that guides their behavior in school. The coupling of efficiency and accountability may translate into a neoliberal interpretation of teachers' professionalism, with managerialism becoming central in its definition (Davies, 2005). In line with managerialism, schools have set certain procedural guidelines for teachers to follow, for instance, collective teaching preparation and the production of a teaching package and so forth.

However, from the viewpoint of these experienced teachers, these working prescriptions are not so crucial for their professionalism. According to them, a teacher's work is not limited to teaching, but obliges them to adopt several roles in their daily routine work. For example, Mo claimed that she worked as a counselor after class to help children and/or parents with problems in their family. Wu, as a supervisor of a primary school, sometimes had to act as a guardian. Jiu, a mathematics teacher, talked about her multiple roles this way:

Those parents are willing to report to me their children's performance at home. For example, one of them told me that her child often skipped breakfast. She trusted me and expected me to do something for her child. It is not difficult for me to intervene and adopt some strategies to adjust the child's bad habit [skipping breakfast]... The students can see me as a teacher as well as a grandmother. I play the two roles simultaneously. I think it really works well both in their character cultivation and mathematical learning. (personal communication, March 19, 2013)

Jiu highlighted her two roles in the classroom, the role of a grandmother as well as a teacher. No doubt, the additional workload may contribute little to her productivity in terms of students' test scores. This kind of additional workload may, very often, jeopardize teachers' professionalism. Even so, Jiu was proud of being able to help the children and their parents. Jiu agreed that she was mainly driven by her sense of responsibility as a teacher.

Jiu's experience was echoed by Mo. She painted a picture of the excessive workload endured by frontline teachers in Macau:

Yes, teaching is a job. But it is much more than a job. The ultimate goal for teachers is not to finish the prescribed job and get financial reward. It is not enough to just fulfill these duties. I see teaching as an act of self-sacrifice, rarely acting out of their self-interest... Every day, I have to do work for school after hours and in the evenings. These excessive out-of-school tasks include checking exercise books, preparing lessons, coaching the students for competitions, and so on. I call the work I bring home a "night snack." It does not lead to any overtime payment. My nephew observed me keeping busy at these excessive tasks and asked curiously why I worked so hard for the school. I could not give him a reasonable explanation. That is me. This is because of my conscience; teaching is primarily a matter of conscience. (personal communication, June 15, 2012)

Mo admitted that teachers' workloads often reach unbearable proportions. However, from Mo's point of view, the excessive workload did not bother her over much. She accepted it because she, as a teacher, fashioned herself as self-sacrificing and above all, she was a teacher of conscience. Conscience is very important in Confucianism. It is advocated by Mencius, and refers to the inner knowledge that guides people to distinguish between right and wrong (Taylor, 2009, p. 49). Conscience encompasses a much broader meaning than the official definition of a teacher's professional ethics, including sensitivity, kindness, and the capacity to act in an ethical way. Mo did not have a clear view on the notion of conscience. She put it this way: "A teacher should uphold certain virtues and put them into practice. For me, a good teacher should sacrifice for the students. It is where a teacher's dignity, respectability and integrity come from." In Mo's view, she specified her conscience in terms of self-sacrifice. This personal definition of conscience is the way Mo conceptualizes herself as a teacher. It also implies that Mo is taking a position that is alternative to that advocated by the dominant neoliberal discourse. It is not the working prescriptions or standards specifically regulated by the official blueprint, but rather the inner principle of conscience that provides the foundation from where Mo could build up a sense of professionalism.

The Essence of Life-Long Learning: Reflection upon One's Life

Teachers in Macau are required to take part in certain in-service training programmes authorized by the government. Policy makers have turned in-service education into an obligation. It is widely believed that these programmes are the necessary nutrients for teachers' professional growth in order to enhance the quality of education in Macau.

The participants in this study presented a different view regarding these institutionalized in-service training programmes. They did agree with "life-long learning" or "constant improvement." However, they also argued that most of these programmes were ill-conceived and often had little relevance to their everyday practice. For example, Mo complained about being required to learn Photoshop in the in-service training. She pointed out that it made no sense for her art teaching in the primary school. In this study, experienced teachers are likely to rely upon their own experience, albeit informal and loosely organized, to expand their professional knowledge. This is well-embodied in Jiu's story. She stated:

It is claimed that these in-service programmes are one of the decisive conditions for teachers' promotion or even their continuing employment contracts. However, I don't like to be forced to attend these programmes. I have my own priority in self-improvement. The organizers and instructors of these programmes do not know much about what I want in my teaching. (personal communication, June 28, 2012)

Jiu further argued that a teacher had his/her own style and it was not necessarily to follow the norms or models approved by these in-service training authorities. In line with this, Jiu contended that teachers should be sensitive to contextual, situational teaching-related events. Furthermore, she highlighted personal reflection on her own lived experience.

For me, I prefer learning from everyday life. I admit that this informal learning process may be inefficient. But it really incites a desire for me to learn from the seemingly trivial experience. In my teaching work, I focus much more on students' performance rather than on the technical environment featured with beautiful PPT or other multimedia stuff. I have learned a lot from students. Those experts in the workshop would preach about using CAT (Computer-Assisted Techniques) to facilitate students' learning, however, I recognized that the students were badly distracted by the dazzling demonstration

performed on the slides. So, I used CAT as little as possible. I would like to instruct students by writing down on the blackboard. It works well because it increases students' engagement in their learning. (personal communication, June 28, 2012)

From Jiu's extract, it is evident that reflective learning and practice are incorporated in her daily teaching. The knowledge she discovered in this way is different from that advocated by the experts in the in-service training programmes. This is a kind of "personal knowledge" which is "carved out of, and shaped by, situations; knowledge that is constructed and reconstructed... through the processes of reflection" (Clandinin, 1992, p. 125). Jiu's narrative also indicates the intimate connection between learning and reflection. From a Confucian perspective, the coupling of reflection with learning is concrete methodology leading towards an ethical life which partly bears a connotation of relational "harmony" (Zhao & Biesta, 2011). Jiu put it this way:

For example, a lot of these programmes put weight on the recent development of techniques, such as the computer, software packages, internet and some others like that. These trendy techniques may help in my teaching. Yet, I believe the pivotal issue in my teaching is not the techniques but the teacher-student relationship. This relationship is mainly attributed to teachers' care and passion and other emotional dynamics rather than to these various dazzling techniques. (personal communication, June 28, 2012)

This extract indicates that Jiu's learning is essentially through her conscious and constant reflection upon her daily classroom teaching. This knowledge attained through reflection enables her to establish some critical distance from the prevailing discourse concerning life-long learning which puts weight on teachers' capacity, efficiency or competitiveness, as advocated by school management and policy makers. Additionally, Jiu's stories regarding life-long learning also indicate that the knowledge discovered through personal reflection is cherished as reliable, valuable and authentic which legitimizes herself, but not the experts or other mentors, as the knower in her life-long learning process.

The Ultimate Goal of Education: Students' Self-Cultivation

It is believed that the younger generation is the future of our society. However, very often, the future is narrowly defined by the economic dimension. In line

with this, schools are acting as an interface to produce efficient workers that possess the necessary skills and capacity to sustain economic development. Under such circumstances, schools emerge as an assembly line and a teacher's job is simply to add value in the form of knowledge as the product offered to the students. During the interviews, experienced teachers furiously criticized this assembly-line metaphor for school. And yet, it seems that they do not have a clear vision about what are the essential aims of education but they experience feelings about it. This is especially evident in Jiu's story about her wonderful experience as she was teaching Grade 1 children "the concept of numbers":

That day, I asked every student to draw an animal on an A4 paper. They were interested in drawing and finished them very quickly. Then I guided them to look for the "friend" who had drawn the same animal as they did. The children started to count two ducks, three bunnies and so on. They were happy, I think, it was mainly due to the fact that they learnt the concept of number while at the same time built up relationships with each other. After class, when I was about to leave the classroom, a boy came up and handed in his picture with a duck, and said, "Miss Jiu, I received two gifts [pictures] from them [classmates] and now I would like to give my picture to you as a present." Hmmm, they would express their respect and gratitude to me in their own way, such as presenting paintings they drew or handicrafts they made as gifts. All of them really made me happy. (personal communication, July 6, 2012)

This extract implies Jiu's personal idea regarding the ultimate mission as a mathematics teacher. From the pervasive point of view, mathematics teaching should emphasize the cognition, skills, and rationality rather than the affective side. In Jiu's class, she deliberately combined the rationality with affective experience of mathematics. Moreover, Jiu also highlighted the relational aspects of mathematics education. In the activity mentioned earlier, Jiu claimed that she placed emphasis on students' character development rather than their skill or knowledge expansion as her first priority in her mathematics teaching. Specifically, in Jiu's words, students' characters are understood as "to be with and, more importantly, to be for others." This is in line with the Confucian ideology of "self-cultivation" which, by definition, includes learning, living up to virtues and reflecting through exploring one's inner self, which will ultimately contribute to helping other people and harmonizing human relationships (Tu, 1999). Moreover, the above narrative also implies that developing students'

self-cultivation, at the same time, enables Jiu to exercise her own self-cultivation. This is the essence of the Confucian idea of *jiao xue xiang zhang*. This is a joyful transformative journey as is indicated in Jiu's narrative.

By and through highlighting the emotional and relational aspects, Jiu takes a different position from the one imposed by the prevalent discourse on mathematics education. This contributes to Jiu's sophisticated resistance because, from a Foucauldian perspective, a teacher could perform his/her resistance in the form of alternative practices (Greer, Mukhopadhyay, & Roth, 2012). In and through Jiu's resistance, a discursive space is produced for her as well as for her students' self-cultivation. The school is no longer an assembly line to produce skilled workers but rather, through their joint venture of self-cultivation, a place for both students' and teachers' self-actualization.

Discussion

In the Macanese educational system, the dominance of neoliberalism contributes to the transformation of school into a new and different "regime" where human subjects are considered as the means and ends of economic productivity, and this coexists with other discourses, especially the entrenched Confucianism. The inconsistency or contradiction between discourses implies that this "regime" is far from omnipotent, its "control is never total and hegemonic imposition is never complete" (Kornberger & Brown, 2007, p. 501). This opens up a space for teachers to perform their resistance (hooks, 1990). The above findings have illustrated that experienced teachers are likely to employ Confucian ideology as a discursive resource to perform resistance against the hegemonic neoliberalism.

In this study, experienced teachers did not present a clear expression with regard to the Confucian ideology, but it served as a kind of practical knowledge. Very often, such Confucian ideology has turned into "subjugated knowledges" which "have been disqualified as inadequate to their task or insufficiently elaborated: naïve knowledge, located low down on the hierarchy, beneath the required level of cognition" (Foucault, 1980, p. 82). This traditional ideology does not present a regulatory guidance for the teachers' daily routines of life. Nevertheless, it inscribes these experienced teachers' views of themselves, frames their thoughts and makes them account for their actions. In other words, experienced teachers have internalized the beliefs and values associated with

Confucianism, and consequently have made it sensible and accountable to that which she or he, as a teacher, should do, can do and does do.

These “subjugated knowledges” have been uncovered and given recognition as local truths in this study. They are the essential guidelines for the experienced teachers’ professional practice and at the same time offer an alternative subject position for them to inhabit, as well as observe from and reflect. For example, in Wu’s attitude towards the naughty boy expelled by other schools, she adhered to the Confucian idea, “to provide education for all students without discrimination,” and presents her inclusiveness. Wu cherishes this old Confucian paradigm and regards it as a definitive feature of her to being a teacher. It helps her keep a critical distance from the business-orientated norms concerning teaching and teachers. She later commented: “I work together with other teachers but sometimes I feel that I actually live in my own worlds, a world seemingly different and separated from others’.” Wu’s experience indicates that she is bearing a critical consciousness (Freire, 1998, 2000) and is able to say “no” to the hegemonic discourse. She is more concerned with benefits to students than other things. Her belief in “education for all students without discrimination” has served as a powerful supporting resource to make her different, or to “liberate” herself from the dominant current. In this regard, traditional Confucian doctrines map “lines of flight” (Deleuze, 1988) for experienced teachers from the midst of the struggle produced by the dominating power relations manifested in the institutionalized discourse on teaching and teachers. Such lines of flight do not lead to freedom but rather recreate or act against hegemonic norms on the teachers’ being. That is, the Confucian doctrines allow experienced teachers to mobilize some alternative territory, to think otherwise, and to live out their teaching life in a different way.

Additionally, as experienced teachers employed the traditional discursive resources to resist against the hegemony of neoliberalism, they achieved a sense of empowerment. Teachers’ resistance is no longer “the weapon of the weak” as Scott (1989) theorizes in his classical study on peasants’ resistance in south-east Asia. On the contrary, the forms of resistance in the current study embody the experienced teachers’ practising their autonomy in the neoliberal era. For example, as Mo dealt with excessive out-of-school tasks, she did not deliberately calculate the possible reward but rather regarded them as a “night snack.” She was willing to be busy because her hard work came from out of her conscience. The notion of conscience gives Mo a sense of empowerment, at the same time,

serves as a central component of her professional identity. It is not because this conscience fits the expectation of the role of a teacher, but rather she chooses to be a teacher of conscience, that is, she makes her choice! This conscience is particularly important in effecting social justice (Freire, 1998, 2000). Mo's story illustrates that the experienced teachers employ Confucian education doctrines as resources to negotiate themselves in face of the neoliberal pressures. In so doing, they are capable of reassembling their identity around an empowered notion of self.

Conclusion and Implication

This paper contributes to research on teachers' resistance by contextualizing experienced teachers' lived experience in the specific discursive background of Macau. It illustrates that experienced teachers are not passive recipients of the norms imposed by the dominating neoliberalism but rather consciously take an alternative position provided by traditional Confucian ideology. The entrenched ideology of education mirrored in their storytelling, mainly embodied four aspects. First, experienced teachers seek to provide education to all students without discrimination, which is essentially an unconditional acceptance and inclusiveness of all students regardless of their potential economic value. Second, for the experienced teachers, the essence of professionalism is not confined to professional knowledge or skill, but hinges on the notion of "conscience." Third, experienced teachers take personal reflection as the principle way to achieve their life-long learning which ultimately leads towards an ethical life. And finally, for these experienced teachers, the ultimate goal of education is to help students' self-cultivation rather than teaching them the knowledge and skills required by the market.

In the Macanese education system, the pervasiveness of neoliberalism and its apparatuses of control have begun to exercise ever increasing degrees of influence over how teachers' identities are produced, behaviours conducted and desire mobilized. Against this background, the Confucian educational ideology contributes an alternative set of discursive resources. Even though it is present as abstract knowledge that is loosely organized and distributed in experienced teachers' everyday life, it does enable experienced teachers to establish a critical distance from the prevailing norms imposed by neoliberalism. Such distance

makes it possible for them to observe, to think otherwise and consequently to live out a different teaching life and to reassemble their identity, that is, to re-interpret their being as a teacher, around an empowered notion of the self.

These experienced teachers, armed with the traditional educational ideology, are able to perform their resistance against the hegemony of neoliberalism. Yet, experienced teachers contribute only a small proportion of the entire teacher population in Macau. They are sometimes regarded as lacking flexibility and openness and their resistance is often depicted as thwarting the progressive reform. Therefore, they are marginalized and their voices are neglected or silenced. For this reason, this study attempts to unearth the “subjugated knowledges” belonging to the participants, as well as to contribute to the betterment of education in the territory. It is in their narratives, however, that they are capable of reclaiming their cherished value of education. As their voices are heard, they undoubtedly provide wisdom and open up a door for us, especially the younger generation of teachers to take a more vigilant and more critical attitude toward the neoliberal trend in and beyond the schooling system. In this sense, the potential of traditional Confucian ideology of education will contribute to transforming the contemporary discursive context of Macau. It promises a future for the education, a future with a revisioning of possibility and not a neoliberal incorporation of the past.

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