THE TEACHER WITHIN: SHAPING PRESERVICE TEACHER IDENTITY THROUGH PRIVATE TUTORING

Pham Khanh Linh, Nguyen Thi Bich Phuong*

Ho Chi Minh City University of Technology and Education,
No.1 Vo Van Ngan, Linh Chieu Ward, Thu Duc City, Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam

Abstract: Research into teacher identity is not novel, but the influences of private tutoring on the formation of teacher identity among pre-service teachers have not been extensively investigated, particularly in the context of Vietnam. This study, therefore, aimed to examine how private tutoring helped to shape and reshape the identity of pre-service teachers majoring in language education, their motivations to participate in private tutoring, and the challenges that they might encounter. The implications of this study were to better understand teacher identity of pre-service teachers so that higher education institutions might improve their practicum, internship programs and pedagogical practice. Thirteen semi-structured interviews were conducted with thirteen fourth-year students majoring in language teaching education at a university in Vietnam. The findings revealed that students chose to join private tutoring for hands-on experience in a realistic teaching approach, finances, and internship record as their graduation requirement. Additionally, most of the interviewees perceived the lack of practical experience, management of students' behaviour, and pressure from parents as their major challenges. Through private tutoring, their teacher identity was fostered and reshaped. Some recommendations for offsetting insufficient training in higher education for pre-service teachers, and further research directions were also put forward.

Keywords: private tutoring, teacher motivation, pre-service teachers, teacher identity, qualitative research.

* Corresponding author.
  Email address: phuongntb@hcmute.edu.vn

"NGƯỜI THẦY" BÊN TRONG: HÌNH THÀNH BẢN SẮC GIÁO VIÊN CỦA SINH VIÊN SƯ PHẠM THÔNG QUA HOẠT ĐỘNG DẠY THÊM

Phạm Khánh Linh, Nguyễn Thị Bích Phương

Trường Đại học Sư phạm Kỹ thuật Thành phố Hồ Chí Minh,
Sô 1 Võ Văn Ngân, Phường Linh Chiểu, Thành phố Thủ Đức, Thành phố Hồ Chí Minh, Việt Nam

Tóm tắt: Nghiên cứu về bản sắc giáo viên không phải là một đề tài mới, nhưng những ảnh hưởng của hoạt động dạy thêm đến việc hình thành bản sắc giáo viên đối với sinh viên sư phạm vẫn chưa được nghiên cứu sâu, đặc biệt trong bối cảnh Việt Nam. Do vậy, nghiên cứu này được thực hiện nhằm tìm hiểu về hoạt động dạy thêm đã giúp hình thành và định hình lại bản sắc giáo viên của sinh viên sư phạm chuyên ngành giảng dạy ngoại ngữ như thế nào, động lực dạy thêm và những khó khăn mà sinh viên gặp phải. Nghiên cứu này giúp hiểu rõ hơn về bản sắc giáo viên của sinh viên sư phạm, từ đó đưa ra góc nhìn giúp các trường đại học có thể điều chỉnh chương trình thực tập và phương pháp giảng dạy. 13 cuộc phỏng vấn bán cấu trúc đã được tiến hành với 13 sinh viên năm cuối tại một trường đại học ở Việt Nam. Kết quả cho thấy sinh viên có xu hướng tham gia hoạt động dạy thêm vì nhu cầu tài chính, để trau dồi kinh nghiệm với phương pháp giảng dạy thực tế, và hoàn thiện hồ sơ thực tập - một trong những yêu cầu để tốt nghiệp. Hầu hết những người tham gia phỏng vấn đều cho rằng bản thân thiếu kinh nghiệm thực tiễn, thiếu kỹ năng quản lý hành vi học sinh và chịu áp lực từ phía phụ huynh. Hơn nữa, thông qua hoạt động dạy thêm, bản sắc giáo viên của sinh viên sư phạm đã được nuôi dưỡng và định hình lại. Một số đề xuất nhằm điều chỉnh chương trình đào tạo trong giáo dục đại học cho sinh viên sư phạm, và hướng nghiên cứu tương lai cũng đã được nêu trong nghiên cứu này.

Từ khóa: dạy thêm, động lực giáo viên, sinh viên sư phạm, bản sắc giáo viên, nghiên cứu định tính

1. Introduction

Professional identity is defined as "the various meanings someone can attach to oneself or the meanings attributed to oneself by others" (Beijaard, 2004, p. 282), and this has been a focus of academic research for decades. It includes how a person views their own professional skills, obligations, and interpersonal connections (Adams et al., 2006). According to Khoi and Long (2021), identity is the result of personal personality, upbringing, learning and work experiences and many other socio-cultural factors, such as social interactions, ethical and professional standards and regulations. Flores and Day (2006) contend that pre-service teachers have an emerging professional identity in the educational context that is influenced by their perceptions of teachers, preconceived notions about successful teaching, and implicit pedagogical theories. Individual experiences with schools, teachers, and the teacher-student interactions also have an impact on these factors. In the context of foreign language education, it is essential to understand who teachers are and what identities they have, from which teacher training programs and classroom practices could be adjusted and improved (Nguyen, 2024a).

While private tutoring has existed since ancient times (Antalffy, 2020) and has been widely studied for its effects on learners, its impact on educators, particularly pre-service teachers, has been largely overlooked. Global studies on professional identity have largely

concentrated on in-service teachers, research exploring how private tutoring influences pre-service teacher identity remains scarce. This gap is especially evident in Vietnam, where existing research has focused primarily on the economic implications (Nguyen, 2021; Nguyen et al., 2020; Dang, 2013), educational disparities caused by private tutoring (Nguyen et al., 2021), and the professional concerns of in-service teachers (Nguyen et al., 2025). The growing number of pre-service teachers involved in private tutoring calls for a closer examination of its impact on their professional identity formation. These aspiring teachers differ significantly from their in-service colleagues because they have not yet cemented their professional identities and are actively developing their teaching outlooks. Investigating how tutoring contributes to this journey offers a unique viewpoint on an under-explored aspect of teacher preparation - one that promises insights beyond the typical focus on the economic effects or impact of private tutoring on student learning. This study aims to: (i) explore the motivations and challenges behind pre-service teachers' engagement in private tutoring activity; (ii) delve into the formation of pre-service teacher identity through the lens of private tutoring; and (iii) propose some suggestions to tap into private tutoring as an activity to support teacher education. To achieve the aims above, the research is conducted to answer these questions: (i) What are the motivations to participate in private tutoring among pre-service language teachers and the challenges they may face? (ii) How do pre-service language teachers negotiate and reconstruct their professional identity through private tutoring?

2. Literature Review

2.1. Teacher Identity as a Constant Negotiation of Values and Experiences

The concept of teacher identity is often described as a process of becoming (Lave & Wenger, 1991) and as "the self-image that teachers create through their experiences and interactions in the profession" (Beijaard et al., 2004, p. 113). This covers their opinions on education, learning, and their function in the classroom. Over time, individual, social, and cultural influences continuously shape and reshape the identity of teachers, making it an ongoing process of negotiation rather than a fixed state. Hence, teacher identity is a product of the constant negotiation of socially constructed beliefs and self-dispositions (Nguyen, 2024b). According to Flores and Day (2006), it is a process that evolves as a result of social interactions and adjustments to new customs. Their research suggests that professional identity is not static; it develops over time, influenced by past experiences, training, and the social and institutional environments people navigate. This viewpoint frames identity formation as an ongoing negotiation between personal beliefs and institutional expectations. For individuals training to be teachers, this journey often starts with seeing themselves mainly as students. As they move through their program, they progressively adopt a teacher's mindset. Britzman (2003) and Clarke (2008) describe this transformation as "learning to teach", an identity negotiation frequently marked by clashes between idealized notions of teaching and the practicalities of the classroom. However, this negotiation is not always straightforward, as Izadinia (2015) notes, pre-service teachers often wrestle with competing demands from university courses, classroom realities, and their own developing beliefs about education.

Getting involved in private tutoring often marks a significant beginning for a teaching career. It provides pre-service teachers with their initial hands-on experience interacting with students individually within a real learning environment. This allows them to gain essential practical insights that bridge the gap between academic knowledge and teaching reality. In this role, they start grappling with the intricacies of classroom management, adapting to diverse

student needs, and growing into their position as educators. Instead of merely adopting a set identity, Beauchamp and Thomas (2009) point out that these experiences allow pre-service teachers to actively construct and negotiate their unique teaching persona.

2.2. The Conceptual Framework of Teacher Identity

Flores and Day (2006) drew attention to the complex interplay between tutors' personal histories and the specific contexts they work within, such as the language centers and students' homes, examined in this research. Their framework emphasizes that teacher identity is not static; rather, it is dynamically shaped by both an individual's own background and the external conditions imposed by institutions. Teachers operating within collaborative environments tend to foster and display more positive attitudes towards teaching. Pre-service teachers in this study initially demonstrated a strong sense of personal identities as they embarked on their teaching journeys. They were seniors in a university teacher training program. However, as these individuals gained practical experience through tutoring and teaching, they ran into institutional hurdles that challenged their developing professional identities. The way they navigated this identity negotiation, which is a process involving both the deconstruction and reconstruction of their professional selves over time (see Fig. 1), was shaped by the combined influence of their previous schooling, teacher preparation programs, and early workplace cultures. This finding aligns well with Beijaard et al. (2004), who emphasize that teacher identity is not fixed or uniform, but rather evolves continuously through interactions with diverse sociocultural influences.

Teachers' views of themselves and their behaviour, as well as the way they change their professional identities, are significantly influenced by their personal biographies. However, personal identity alone is insufficient in shaping teaching beliefs; rather, it interacts with external factors such as institutional expectations, pedagogical training, and real-world teaching experiences (Izadinia, 2015). Furthermore, the work environment played a pivotal role in reshaping their teaching philosophies, either promoting or hindering their professional development and the (re)formation of their identities. Goodson and Cole (1994) and Williams et al. (2001) emphasize places that encourage self-regulation about practice, teamwork, and ongoing learning. This contrasts with unsupportive environments, which could hinder how pre-service teachers in this study developed their teaching ideas and professional selves.

Figure 1

Key Mediating Influences on the Formation of Teacher Identity (Flores & Day, 2006, p. 230)
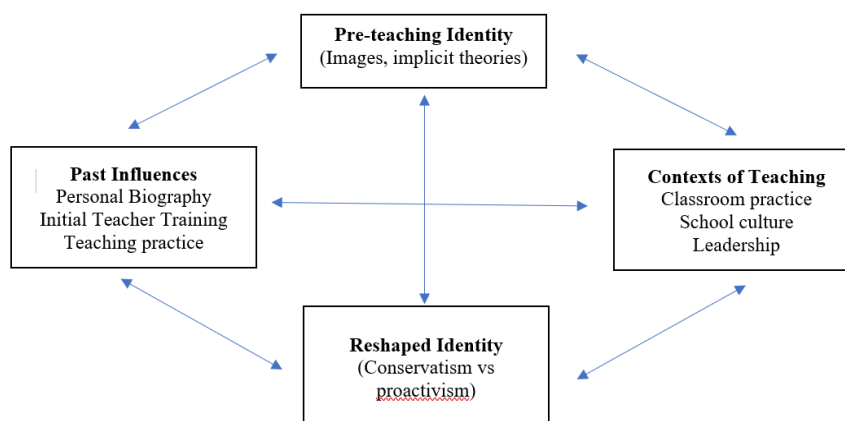
Flores and Day's approach was initially designed for in-service teachers, but in this study, it is applied to pre-service teachers. There are similarities between pre-service teachers who have been in private tutoring for at least 18 months and in-service teachers. Since pre-service teachers have not yet worked in formal school settings, they lack direct interactions with school culture and leadership. These factors are not expected to influence the identity formation of pre-service teachers and were therefore excluded from the scope of this research (see Fig. 2).

Figure 2

The Adapted Conceptual Framework of Key Mediating Influences on the Formation of Teacher Identity (Adapted from Flores and Day (2006))
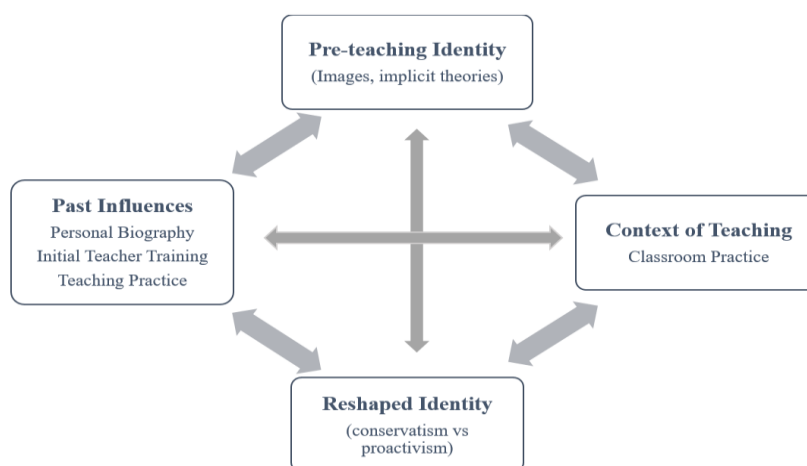
2.3. Private Tutoring in Vietnam

Known widely as "shadow education" since Stevenson and Baker (1992) coined the term (further elaborated by Bray, 1999), private supplementary tutoring is greatly impacted by the structure and requirements of mainstream education. Its forms are diverse, encompassing one-on-one instruction, small home-based or after-school groups, online tutoring, and programs run by tutorial centres (Bray, 2011). Despite being a private arrangement, private tutoring is closely intertwined with formal schooling, often reinforcing and even exacerbating existing educational inequalities (Bray, 2011). Private tutoring is common in both industrialized and developing nations, and its use has been growing over the past few years. Driven by exam pressures, private tutoring has become normalized within educational systems (Bray, 2007). In Vietnam, private tutoring manifests in various forms, facilitated by parents, teachers, schools, or private tutoring centres (Dang, 2013). The practice is deeply ingrained in Vietnamese educational culture, driven by high-stakes examinations and societal expectations regarding academic success (Nguyen et al., 2020). According to a 2014 survey by Youth Newspaper in Vietnam, most parents arranged additional lessons for their children at teachers' homes (39%), followed by private training centres (16.3%), schools (14.1%), and least commonly at home (13.5%). In the context of this study, the private tutoring provided by pre-service teachers predominantly takes place at students' homes and language centres.

3. Methodology

Using semi-structured interviews as the technique for gathering data, the study used a descriptive research design. Semi-structured interviews, according to Sharp (2003), use open-

ended questions and prompts intended to elicit thorough answers on participants' experiences, perceptions, feelings, and knowledge. The qualitative nature of these interviews provided rich, detailed insights into the participants' perspectives (Krefting, 1991; Denzin & Lincoln, 2008). This approach is particularly effective for exploring complex, subjective phenomena such as emotions, attitudes, and behaviours, which are difficult to quantify (Creswell, 2009). Participants were assured of complete confidentiality to encourage candid responses. The interview questions were structured to be open-ended and non-leading, ensuring that responses were shaped by participants' own perspectives rather than the interviewer's expectations. Furthermore, the interviews were conducted in familiar and comfortable environments to minimize external pressures (Creswell, 2007). A descriptive design was selected as it allows for an accurate account of characteristics of a particular individual or a group, thereby discovering new meaning (Dulock, 1993). In the context of pre-service teacher education, a descriptive design allows for a thorough, realistic investigation of how participants use private tutoring to create and negotiate their professional identities. A qualitative narrative approach further facilitated this by allowing for a deep analysis of identity development, giving participants ample opportunity to expand on their experiences. Creswell (2007) points out that this narrative-centred approach improves the quality of the data by allowing participants to freely express their emotions and experiences without being restricted by time constraints.

Participants were senior students majoring in teacher education from a language department at a university specializing in foreign language teacher training. Each participant was required to accumulate at least 18 months of experience as a private tutor, considered sufficient to provide meaningful insights into the early stages of teacher identity formation. The purpose of this study is not to generalize to a broader population, but to explore and gain insights into the practice of private tutoring among preservice teachers. Thus, convenience sampling can ensure the reliability of research findings. Thirteen participants were invited to the interviews after being informed about the study's objectives and procedures with written consent. Confidentiality was maintained through pseudonyms, and participants were assured their information would remain secure.

Table 1

Demographics of participants

No.	Name (pseudonym)	Private tutoring duration (years)	Gender	Modes of private tutoring
1	Nguyen Lan	3.5	Female	Home-based, Language centre, Online
2	Hong Loan	2	Female	Home-based, Language centre, Online
3	Linh Nguyen	2	Female	Home-based, Online
4	Minh Thao	1.5	Female	Home-based, Online
5	Nguyet Anh	2	Female	Home-based, Language centre, Online
6	Thu Thuy	2.5	Female	Home-based, Language centre, Online
7	Tuan Anh	3	Male	Home-based, Language centre, Online
8	Hoang Nhan	1.5	Female	Home-based, Online

9	Thai Giang	1.5	Female	Home-based, Online
10	Minh Hue	3	Female	Home-based, Language centre, Online
11	Van Luc	4	Male	Home-based, Language centre, Online
12	Thu Trang	3	Female	Home-based, Language centre, Online
13	Thanh Binh	3.5	Female	Home-based, Language centre, Online

Face-to-face interviews formed the primary method of data collection, with participants also agreeing to follow-up sessions for additional clarification. The interviews, conducted in Vietnamese to ensure accuracy and comfort, were digitally recorded for analysis. The semi-structured, open-ended questions employed in the interviews were designed in alignment with the framework of Flores and Day's (2006) about teacher identity construction. Two pilot interviews were conducted to refine the interview questions. This process allowed us to evaluate the clarity of the questions, and uncover ambiguities, leading to necessary adjustments before conducting full-scale interviews (Gudmundsdottir & Brock-Utne, 2010).

The interview recordings were transcribed verbatim and then translated into English. A thematic analysis approach was applied to systematically identify patterns in the data. Researchers carefully examined the transcripts to identify recurring themes and key ideas related to participants' motivations, challenges, and the impact of their experiences, training, and tutoring on teacher identity development. A detailed list of the themes and sub-themes, along with quotes from participants, was created in a separate document when recurring themes were found throughout the transcripts.

4. Findings

4.1. Motivations for Participating in Private Tutoring

Every participant emphasized that they mostly used the money they received from private tutoring to pay for their recreational and educational costs. This result supports Chui's findings (2016) that the broad acceptance of private supplemental tuition is mostly driven by financial considerations. For instance, Nhan emphasized her family's financial difficulties, stating that earning her own income was essential to avoid being a burden: "*I need to earn my own money, so I don't become a burden on my family.*"

The second key motivation for engaging in private tutoring was the lack of practical teaching experience. During micro-teaching sessions, students frequently practiced with classmates whose language skills were far different from those of real students, creating situations that were not representative of actual classroom environments. Private tutoring, therefore, offered an invaluable opportunity to teach real students in authentic settings, allowing the application of pedagogical techniques in a more realistic context. Binh explained: "*In micro-teaching, the learners may not have been her students but her classmates or colleagues, whose language proficiency levels are different from the real learners. As a result, what happens in micro-teaching lessons may not exactly reflect reality.*"

The third motivation was tied to the graduation requirements for pre-service teachers. As a requirement in the undergraduate program, students must complete a mandatory six-month teaching internship. All participants voiced concerns about graduating on time and viewed private tutoring as a practical way to meet internship requirements quickly. Thao expressed her

anxiety about this: *"The internship portfolio is a mandatory factor that accounts for 20 points. And if I don't complete it, I can't graduate with a good degree."*

4.2. Challenges of Working as a Private Tutor

Pre-service teachers frequently identify a lack of teaching skills (pedagogy) as their main difficulty in private tutoring, often leaving them feeling unprepared and perplexed. This highlights the importance of pedagogy, which Subedi (2018) emphasizes as essential for tutoring, requiring tutors to have the required abilities, routines, and dispositions to teach effectively. However, due to the limited practical application of their academic training, these novice teachers often feel overwhelmed, lacking clear guidance on how to address specific student needs or select appropriate teaching methods. For instance, Lan shared how her initial tutoring experiences forced her to rethink her approach to classroom management: *"At first, I thought being strict was the key, but I soon realized that fostering engagement and allowing students to express themselves made my lessons more effective."*

Another common difficulty identified by participants was a perception of being underpaid, which was commonly linked to the difficulties in negotiating reasonable wages for their tutoring services. This feeling aligns with research from Nguyen et al. (2021), which documents similar difficulties faced by university student tutors when trying to negotiate payment terms with families or language centers. Nhan shared her frustrations: *"In some classes, parents have quite high requirements, such as students with no basic background knowledge or those taking entrance exams to specialised schools, but the wages they offer are not commensurate with what parents expect…"*

Handling disruptive student behaviour is another major challenge for pre-service teachers. Trang recounted a particularly troubling incident: *"He [the student] was a disaster. He cursed and physically assaulted the teacher [my friend]."* Research by Doyle (2006) and Wangdi and Namgyel (2022) defines disruptive behaviour as any actions that interfere with planned lesson activities. These include disruptive behaviours in the classroom, inattention, disinterest, and disregard for directions (Lauth & Naumann, 2009, as cited in Kaymak & Demir, 2012). According to Shamnadh (2019), ill-handled responses to student misconduct might exacerbate the problem and compromise learning objectives.

Another significant challenge for pre-service teachers serving as tutors is pressure from family expectations. Parents frequently have high expectations for their children's grades, the instruction provided, homework habits, and overall conduct. While Rosenblatt & Peled (2002) confirm that parental engagement is essential for academic achievement, private tutors may find it too difficult to meet these high standards, particularly for pre-service teachers who may lack extensive experience. Minh Thao described her struggle with managing these expectations: *"The biggest difficulty is psychological pressure from parents, as some tend to expect too much of their child's academic performance and demand too much from the private tutor."*

4.3. Negotiations in the Formation of Teacher Identity through Private Tutoring

4.3.1. Past Experiences about the Image of an Ideal Teacher

Professional Knowledge

Gradually, pre-service teachers moved beyond the traditional role of merely imparting information, and started to see themselves as facilitators of learning as well as subject matter experts. Hoa shared an insightful observation from her experience: *"I realized that students are more engaged when teachers not only possess strong subject knowledge but also know how to*

explain concepts in an accessible and relatable way. Simply knowing the material is not enough - how we communicate it makes all the difference." According to Beijaard et al. (2004), as teachers' professional knowledge grows, their ability to integrate beliefs into teaching practices becomes stronger, reinforcing identity formation. Tuan Anh recounted his personal growth: "*When I first started tutoring, I was quite nervous and worried. However, the knowledge I have acquired and my ability to answer all the students' questions related to the subject have made me much more confident.*"

Personal Qualities

Teachers who exhibit personal qualities like a growth mindset, humour, resilience, cultural competence, and passion for their work often achieve greater classroom success and leave a stronger positive mark on students. Luc shared his perspective: "*My ideal role model is someone who has personal characteristics that leave an impression in the hearts of students.*" Research by Mesler et al. (2021) highlights the significance of a growth mindset—the conviction that ability is developed via effort — showing such teachers effectively foster this mindset in their students. Collectively, these personal traits are highly influential in both shaping a teacher's professional identity and affecting their students' achievements.

Teachers' Pedagogical Skills

Building a strong identity as a teacher was linked, in the interviewees' view, to being versatile in the classroom. This meant using a variety of teaching strategies and making good use of technology. They found this approach helped students engage more and understand concepts more deeply. Interestingly, this adaptability did not just improve their teaching effectiveness. It also helped the teachers clarify and express their own teaching philosophies, which further reinforced their professional identity. Trang noted how her teachers' dynamic approaches influenced her perception of effective teaching: "*Our teachers often apply technology in teaching, and they change teaching methods constantly so that we do not feel bored during the lessons.*"

4.3.2. Negotiations of the Ideal Teacher Image and Teacher Identity

Teacher Education

The research results suggested that teacher education programs are vital for equipping aspiring educators to navigate diversity effectively by assisting future teachers to deal with diversity in the classroom by helping them identify and overcome their own prejudices and promoting a more tolerant attitude toward different classrooms. Hue elaborated on how these programs help students transition from theory to practice: "*In the third year, students start to familiarise themselves with subjects and knowledge related to pedagogy. They begin to apply theoretical knowledge more frequently, even in micro-teaching sessions, to gain a clearer understanding of what a real classroom setting would be like.*" Study by Loughran (2013) have shown that such programs significantly shape the beliefs and attitudes of pre-service teachers toward the teaching profession

Accumulation of Experience from Private Tutoring

Tutoring activities provided participants with practical knowledge that often surpassed what they acquired through formal university education. Most pre-service teachers identified communication and the ability to share learning orientations with students as the first essential skills they developed through private tutoring, followed by effectively imparting subject

knowledge. The experience gained from private tutoring significantly influenced their appreciation for personalized and student-centred instruction. Binh shared a moment that shaped her mindset: "*Children involved in activities throughout the lesson were very excited… I will find ways to praise my student and create more chances for him to win the next game. … Immediately, he regained his enthusiasm and paid more attention to learning.*" Hence, private tutoring plays a dual role, both skill-building and identity-shaping through hands-on, adaptive teaching.

Knowledge Gained from Instructors and Co-workers

The interactions pre-service teachers built during their educational journey have a significant impact on their professional development and the perspectives they adopt. Othman & Kiely (2016) emphasize that interactions with lecturers, students, and peers particularly affect their image of the teaching profession. For instance, in order to assist pre-service teachers in gaining a comprehensive understanding of teaching, lecturers in higher education institutions frequently share their knowledge and experiences. "*She [my teacher] is also extremely fair in giving comments and assessments of each student's performance, thereby helping students significantly improve both subject knowledge and practice*," said Lan. Also, peer learning plays a crucial role in shaping pedagogical development and improving their beliefs and methods of instruction, as illustrated in the Vietnamese saying "*Học thầy không tày học bạn*" (loosely translated as "*Better learn from your friends than your teachers*").

4.3.3. Reconstructed Teacher Identity under the Influences of Private Tutoring

Teacher's Roles

Tutoring experiences have significantly transformed pre-service teachers' ideas about the 'ideal teacher' and reshaped their understanding of a teacher's classroom function. While many initially viewed the teacher primarily as an authoritative figure, their tutoring work prompted a change in this perspective. They now often imagine a teacher as someone who empowers learners by cultivating an environment where students feel appreciated and are encouraged to voice their opinions. Binh shared: *"Previously, I thought a teacher's role was mainly about delivering knowledge and ensuring students understood the material. However, through my tutoring experience, I realized that being a teacher also means being a mentor and a motivator. I learned that students engage more when they feel heard and supported…"*

Career Orientation

Private tutoring offers pre-service teachers an opportunity to sharpen their professional ambitions and actively direct their future in the teaching profession. Regardless of whether individual participants preferred working in language centres or public schools, every one of them expressed a clear commitment to pursuing a teaching career. This dedication aligns with findings from Zhan et al. (2013), whose research indicate that instructors engaging in private tutoring often gained confidence in their teaching skills and were more likely to perceive themselves as successful educators. Binh shared: *"After four years attending my university, together with participation in private tutoring, I find myself suitable for the teaching profession."*

5. Discussion

5.1. Private Tutoring as a Way of Offsetting Insufficient Training in Higher Education

Through private tutoring, pre-service teachers acquired practical experience, earned

personal income, and added valuable elements to their internship records – the benefits consistent with findings reported by Torres-Cladera et al. (2021), and Bilsland & Nagy (2015). These advantages offer more than just a supplement to their formal professional training; they also crucially help bridge the significant gap between theoretical concepts learned in coursework and the practical expectations of real-world teaching. Pre-service teachers frequently feel inadequate and unprepared as a result of this misalignment (Flores & Day, 2006; Izadinia, 2015). While theoretical knowledge and microteaching sessions are part of teacher preparation programs, they rarely capture the unpredictable and multifaceted nature of real classroom teaching. In addition to offering pre-service teachers useful insights into lesson design, classroom management, and the development of interpersonal skills, private tutoring provided a space for professional self-reflection and identity exploration. This notion is supported by Beauchamp and Thomas (2009), who argue that teacher identity formation is dynamic and shaped by both structured training and practical engagements. As they taught real students, participants revisited and reshaped their ideal teacher image based on authentic classroom experiences.

Tutoring was a great way for pre-service teachers to actually use what they learned in theory. This fits Kolb's (1984) idea that we learn best by doing things and thinking about them afterward. They were able to perceive the connection between their university coursework and actual teaching after receiving this practical experience. Mufidah (2019) notes it also improved their ability of setting goals, trying out teaching ideas, and working with experienced teachers. Tutoring allows pre-service teachers to do exactly that – try different ways of teaching, see what worked, think it over, and adjust based on how students responded right away. Also, pre-service teachers highlighted the significance of interpersonal skills, including social engagement, cultural sensitivity, and leadership. These competencies are critical for teachers, as they contribute to student motivation, classroom inclusivity, and overall learning outcomes (Guerriero, 2017). These competencies became crucial as they dealt with behavioural issues, parental pressure, and performance expectations. However, tutoring experiences also exposed them to other external constraints, such as negotiating wages, handling unrealistic parental expectations, and dealing with difficult student behaviour, all of which were seldom ever covered in their formal training programs. These findings are consistent with the concerns raised by Slomp et al. (2014), who argue that teacher education must incorporate real-world engagement opportunities to effectively prepare pre-service teachers for professional challenges. Private tutoring, on the other hand, increased their self-efficacy and professional autonomy and self-efficacy while fostering their resilience, adaptability, and problem-solving skills - critical attributes for success in the teaching profession.

Pre-service teachers can enhance their pedagogical knowledge, reflective practices and instructional adaptability by combining their formal teacher education with real-world tutoring experience. Their professional development is supported, their teaching skills are encouraged, and they are more equipped to assist their students. This blended approach of formal education and experiential learning contributes to a well-rounded preparation process, ensuring that pre-service teachers enter the profession with both theoretical knowledge and practical competence (Darling-Hammond, 2006). In the end, this dual approach prepares them for more successful career planning and effective teaching practices (Slomp et al., 2014). This result aligns with the notion that developing a teacher identity is an ongoing journey shaped by formal training, hands-on work, and self-initiated learning (Beauchamp & Thomas, 2009). Wenger's (1998) work further highlights that professional identities take shape within "communities of practice," settings where learning is fundamentally both social and rooted in experience. Private tutoring, seen through this lens, functions as such a community, offering pre-service teachers a practical

context to reflect on their actions, navigate various teaching difficulties, and actively build their professional selves.

5.2. Negotiation and Reconstruction of Pre-Service Teacher Identity through Private Tutoring

Many respondents pointed to their high school foreign language teachers as key role models, individuals who likely shaped their conception of the "ideal teacher" during their own schooling. This early image of an ideal teacher plays a substantial role in how their professional identity develops later. The prominence of these high school figures as models probably stems from adolescence being a crucial formative period when young people often start appreciating and wanting to imitate inspiring individuals (Verhoeven et al., 2019). Furthermore, pre-service teachers reported that their experiences interacting with students both within and outside of the classroom had changed their perception of the ideal educator. According to Izadinia (2015), these observations highlight the value of mentors and teacher educators in helping aspiring educators develop their teaching identities and methods.

During their undergraduate studies, pre-service teachers experienced significant attitude shifts regarding teaching. They appreciated institutional support but often desired enhanced career development assistance, acknowledging the vital role instructors played in their journey (Slomp et al., 2014). This focus on relationships resonates with the OECD's observation (2005) that interpersonal dynamics within the pedagogical environment strongly influence pre-service teachers' ideologies, just as direct involvement fosters deeper understanding ("enlightenment"). Practical elements like practicum and micro-teaching clearly served as key identity shapers within this environment, especially during the pivotal final year when students prepared for work, defined their ideal teacher image, and planned their path towards achieving it.

The transforming impact of university lecturers in helping pre-service teachers rebuild their identities was highlighted by the participants in this study. Observing how lecturers engaged with students and imparted knowledge allowed them to gain a significant deal of knowledge about effective teaching techniques. Many pre-service teachers emphasized the critical value of self-directed learning and adaptation, particularly insights gained through peer collaboration and trial-and-error during tutoring, while formal mentorship was thought to be advantageous. This emphasis on active engagement resonates strongly with Gee's (2000) work, which points out that identity formation is not a passive process but an active negotiation between external structures (like guidance from mentors) and personal agency. Further demonstrating the complex nature of identity development, this active negotiation takes place in conjunction with influences like lecturers offering their professional knowledge.

Instead of passively acquiring a teacher identity through their coursework, pre-service teachers actively reconstructed their professional personas through real-world teaching experiences such as tutoring. Frequently, the unpredictability encountered in tutoring situations forced them to rethink fundamental teaching assumptions and adopt more adaptable, student-focused methods that went beyond their formal training. This active rebuilding underscores the complexity of identity formation, where structured learning environments and unstructured practical experiences interplay in shaping a professional sense of self. It highlights that teacher identity development is fundamentally a dynamic and cyclical process.

5.3. Teacher Identity Formation: Insights and Transformation

The results of this research underscore that teacher identity is not static; instead, it is a fluid and developing entity. This evolution appears driven by experiences encountered in both

formal university programs (representing structured academic learning) and practical settings like private tutoring (representing real-world teaching experiences), reflecting theoretical perspectives from Beijaard et al. (2004) and Wenger (1998). Pre-service teachers' perceptions of teaching duties changed as they approached professional practice, influenced by their ideal teachers and previous encounters with role models. This study identified three key attributes of the ideal teacher: professional experience, personal traits, and instructional skills. Although previous studies (Arnon & Reichel, 2007) highlight the critical significance of individual characteristics and subject-matter knowledge, our study supports Vokatis and Zhang (2016) in emphasizing the vital role of pedagogical abilities and creative teaching strategies. Boonen et al. (2014) emphasize the necessity of ongoing pedagogical skill development during private tutoring to increase student outcomes. In contrast to controlled classroom settings in university-based training, tutoring requires pre-service teachers to independently manage learning environments, navigate diverse student needs, and adapt their teaching strategies. Additionally, career planning is a continuous process in which demands from the external labour market are frequently subordinated to personal fulfilment (Alexander et al., 2019). This iterative process of identity refinement aligns with the argument of Beijaard et al. (2004), in which teacher identity is shaped through ongoing interactions between past experiences, present challenges, and future aspirations. Many participants in this study initially viewed private tutoring as a temporary occupation but later recognized its value in preparing them for long-term teaching careers.

This study found out that pre-service teachers frequently lacked structured institutional guidance when engaging in tutoring, requiring them to rely on peer networks and self-directed learning to refine their teaching strategies. This implies that teacher preparation programs should consider incorporating organized mentoring or hands-on learning experiences beyond microteaching to bridge this gap (Loughran, 2013). Pre-service teachers are better prepared to handle the complex demands of the teaching profession by combining a structured university education with real-world tutoring experiences. This helps them develop the resilience, instructional adaptability, and reflective practice that are necessary for long-term success in their profession (Schutz et al., 2018). Kelchtermans (2009) emphasizes that professional identity formation is a continuous negotiation between personal experiences and institutional expectations. Pre-service teachers, while developing their pedagogical approaches through tutoring, must reconcile these experiences with the theoretical knowledge acquired in teacher education programs. This ongoing interplay is crucial in establishing a coherent teacher identity. Britzman (2003) and Clarke (2008) describe identity negotiation as "learning to teach", a process often marked by conflicts between idealistic ideas of teaching and the realities of classroom practice. Through tutoring, pre-service teachers actively navigate these challenges, refining their instructional strategies and reconstructing their professional identity.

6. Conclusion

This study employed a qualitative research method supported by Flores and Day's (2006) conceptual framework of teacher identity. Through a detailed analysis of semi-structured interviews with thirteen pre-service teachers, the research identified three primary motivations for engaging in private tutoring: financial needs, practical teaching experience, and internship fulfilment. Participants expressed dissatisfaction with their university's professional training programs, which they perceived as overly theoretical, often disconnected from the realities of classroom teaching. The findings reveal some potential shortcomings in the pedagogical training programs offered by teacher education institutions, particularly in addressing learners' practical

needs. When it came to the development of teacher identities, pre-service teachers' experiences with private tutoring led them to rethink their ideal teaching images, emphasizing three key components: pedagogical abilities, professional knowledge, and personal traits. Participants' attitudes and views of teacher identity underwent substantial changes during their academic journey, especially through informal teaching experiences. By fostering identity discovery and in-the-moment reflection, tutoring offered students opportunities for linking theory and practice. By providing insights different from those found in typical teacher education pathways, this study adds to the expanding conversation by illuminating the ways in which private tutoring functions as an early, informal place for identity construction.

This study remains several limitations in spite of its contributions. Researchers were unable to observe participants in their regular teaching activities due to time and financial resources. Furthermore, the small sample size of thirteen pre-service instructors limits the generalizability of the findings. In order to provide a more comprehensive understanding of teacher identity construction, future study should expand the sample size and incorporate additional qualitative and quantitative methods, such as surveys, classroom observations, reflective diaries, teacher feedback and longitudinal tracking of identity development.

Teachers and lecturers can learn more about how teaching identities are influenced by private tutoring, which could result in better teacher education programs. In order to give pre-service teachers better opportunities for professional development, institutions might think about acknowledging private tutoring as an organized part of their training and incorporating it into the formal curriculum. As a result, teacher training institutes may better prepare pre-service teachers for the challenges of the classroom and ensure they enter the profession with a well-rounded and practical foundation that values both formal instruction and experiential learning.

References

Adams, K., Hean, S., Sturgis, P., & Clark, J. G. (2006). Investigating the factors influencing professional identity of first-year health and social care students. *Learning in Health and Social Care, 5*(2), 55–68. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1473-6861.2006.00119.x

Alexander, McCabe, & De Backer. (2019). *Careers and labour market information: An international review of the evidence*. Education Development Trust.

Antalffy, P. (2020). *A brief history of tutoring*. TutorCruncher. https://tutorcruncher.com/tutoring-online/a-brief-history-of-tutoring-infographic/

Arnon, S., & Reichel, N. (2007). Who is the ideal teacher? Am I? Similarity and difference in perception of students of education regarding the qualities of a good teacher and of their own qualities as teachers. *Teachers and Teaching: Theory and Practice, 13*(5), 441–464. https://doi.org/10.1080/13540600701561653

Beauchamp, C., & Thomas, L. (2009). Understanding teacher identity: An overview of issues in the literature and implications for teacher education. *Cambridge Journal of Education, 39*(2), 175–189. https://doi.org/10.1080/03057640902902252

Beijaard, D., Meijer, P. C., & Verloop, N. (2004). Reconsidering research on teachers' professional identity. *Teaching and Teacher Education, 20*(2), 107-128. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tate.2003.07.001

Bilsland, C., & Nagy, H. (2015). Work-integrated learning in Vietnam: Perspectives of intern work supervisors. *Asia-Pacific Journal of Cooperative Education, 16*(3), 185-198. https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ1113544.pdf

Boonen, A. J. H., Van Wesel, F., Jolles, J., & Van Der Schoot, M. (2014). The role of visual representation type, spatial ability, and reading comprehension in word problem solving: An item-level analysis in elementary school children. *International Journal of Educational Research, 68*, 15-26. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijer.2014.08.001

Bray, M. (1999). *The shadow education system: Private tutoring and its implications for planners* (Fundamentals of Educational Planning No. 61). UNESCO International Institute for Educational Planning (IIEP). https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000118486

Bray, M. (2011). *The challenge of shadow education: Private tutoring and its implications for policy makers in the European Union*. European Commission.

Bray, M. (2007). *The Shadow education system: Private tutoring and its implications for planners*. UNESCO IIEP. https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000180205

Britzman, D. P. (2003). *Practice makes practice: A critical study of learning to teach* (Rev. ed.). State University of New York Press.

Chui, M. M. (2016). Private supplementary tutoring: Motivations and effects: A review study. *Journal of Education and Practice, 7*(27), 195–198. http://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ1115807.pdf

Clarke, M. (2008). *Language teacher identities: Co-constructing discourse and community*. Multilingual Matters. https://doi.org/10.21832/9781847690838

Creswell, J. W. (2007). *Qualitative inquiry and research design: Choosing among five approaches* (2nd ed.). Sage Publications, Inc.

Creswell, J. W. (2009). *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches* (3rd ed.). Sage Publications.

Dang, H.-A. (2013). Private tutoring in Vietnam: A review of current issues and its major correlates. In S. G. Khoo, P. W. L. Chng, & B. H. Yeo (Eds.), *Asia Pacific education: Diversity, challenges and changes* (International Perspectives on Education and Society, Vol. 22, pp. 95-127). Emerald Group Publishing Limited. https://doi.org/10.1108/S1479-3679(2013)0000022005

Darling-Hammond, L. (2006). Constructing 21st-century teacher education. *Journal of Teacher Education, 57*(3), 300–314. https://doi.org/10.1177/0022487105285962

Denzin, N. K., & Lincoln, Y. S. (Eds.). (2008). *The landscape of qualitative research* (3rd ed.). Sage Publications, Inc.

Doyle, W. (2006). Ecological approaches to classroom management. In C. M. Evertson & C. S. Weinstein (Eds.), *Handbook of classroom management: Research, practice, and contemporary issues* (pp. 97-125). Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

Dulock, H. L. (1993). Research Design: Descriptive Research. *Journal of Pediatric Oncology Nursing, 10*(4), 154-157. https://doi.org/10.1177/104345429301000406

Flores, M. A., & Day, C. (2006). Contexts which shape and reshape new teachers' identities: A multi-perspective study. *Teaching and Teacher Education, 22*(2), 219-232. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tate.2005.09.002

Gee, J. P. (2000). Identity as an analytic lens for research in education. *Review of Research in Education, 25*, 99-125. https://doi.org/10.3102/0091732X025001099

Goodson, I. F., & Cole, A. L. (1994). Exploring the teacher's professional knowledge: Constructing identity and community. *Teacher Education Quarterly, 21*(1), 85-105.

Gudmundsdottir, G. B., & Brock-Utne B. (2010). An exploration of the importance of piloting and access as action research. *Educational Action Research, 18*(3), 359-372. https://doi.org/10.1080/09650792.2010.499815

Guerriero, S. (2017). *Pedagogical knowledge and the changing nature of the teaching profession*. OECD Publishing. https://doi.org/10.1787/9789264270695-en

Izadinia, M. (2015). A closer look at the role of mentor teachers in shaping preservice teachers' professional identity. *Teaching and Teacher Education, 52*, 1-10. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tate.2015.08.003

Kaymak, Ö. S., & Demir, Ö. (2012). İlköğretim öğrencilerinin dikkat toplama sürecine ilişkin görüşlerinin incelenmesi [Examining primary school students' views on the attention gathering process]. *Ç.Ü. Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü Dergisi [Journal of C.U. Institute of Social Sciences], 21*(1), 135–154.

Kelchtermans, G. (2009). Who I am in how I teach is the message: Self-understanding, vulnerability and reflection. *Teachers and Teaching: Theory and Practice, 15*(2), 257-272. https://doi.org/10.1080/13540600902875332

Khoi, M. N., & Long, T. T. (2021). Using narrative inquiry to examine teachers' identity via Facebook narratives. *VNU Journal of Foreign Studies, 37*(2). https://doi.org/10.25073/2525-2445/vnufs.4699

Kolb, D. A. (1984). *Experiential learning: Experience as the source of learning and development*. Prentice Hall.

Krefting, L. (1991). Rigor in qualitative research: The assessment of trustworthiness. *American Journal of Occupational Therapy, 45*(3), 214-222. https://doi.org/10.5014/ajot.45.3.214

Lave, J., & Wenger, E. (1991). *Situated learning: Legitimate peripheral participation*. Cambridge University Press. https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511815355

Loughran, J. (2013). *Developing a pedagogy of teacher education: Understanding teaching & learning about teaching*. Routledge. https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203019672

Mesler, R. M., Corbin, C. M., & Martin, B. H. (2021). Teacher mindset is associated with development of students' growth mindset. *Journal of Applied Developmental Psychology, 76*, 101299. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.appdev.2021.101299

Mufidah, N. (2019). The development of pre-service teachers' teaching performance in the teaching practice program at English Department of State Islamic University of Antasari Banjarmasin. *Dinamika Ilmu, 19*(1), 97–114. https://doi.org/10.21093/di.v19i1.1469

Nguyen, C., Hafeez-Baig, A., Gururajan, R., & Nguyen, N. C. (2021). The hidden reasons of the Vietnamese parents for paying private tuition fees for public school teachers. *Social Sciences & Humanities Open, 3*(1), 100105. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ssaho.2021.100105

Nguyen, T. B. P. (2021). English private tutoring in high school in Vietnam through the lens of Bourdieu. In B. H. Duong, H. A. Duc, & B. T. M. Hong (Eds.), *General Education in Vietnam: Challenges, Innovation, and Change* (pp. 267-398). Dan Tri Publishing House.

Nguyen, B.-P. T., & Tesar, M. (2024a). Teacher identity ambiguity and where to find it? A narrative inquiry of ELT teachers in rural areas. *Policy Futures in Education*. https://doi.org/10.1177/14782103241266906

Nguyen, B.-P. T. (2024b). "Bamboos taught me to bend, but not to break": a poetic narrative of teacher identity negotiations. *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education*. https://doi.org/10.1080/09518398.2024.2365194

Nguyen, B.-P. T., Le, H. M., & Duong, B.-H. (2025). "Why do I risk my professional reputation to do it?" Vietnamese teachers' motivations and identities in relation to private tutoring. *Asia Pacific Education Review*. https://doi.org/10.1007/s12564-025-10046-1

Nguyen, T. C., Hafeez-Baig, A., Gururajan, R., & Nguyen, N. (2020). *How does private tutoring knowledge influence parental perceptions of private tutoring? A case study in Vietnam*. SSRN. https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=3555656

OECD. (2005). *Teachers matter: Attracting, developing, and retaining effective teachers*. OECD Publishing. https://doi.org/10.1787/9789264018044-en

Othman, J., & Kiely, R. (2016). Preservice teachers' beliefs and practices in teaching English to young learners. *Indonesian Journal of Applied Linguistics, 6*(1), 50-61. https://doi.org/10.17509/ijal.v6i1.2661

Rosenblatt, Z., & Peled, D. (2002). School ethical climate and parental involvement. *Journal of Educational Administration, 40*(4), 349–367. https://doi.org/10.1108/09578230210433427

Schutz, P. A., Nichols, S. L., & Schwenke, S. (2018). Critical events, emotional episodes, and teacher attributions in the development of teacher identities. In P. A. Schutz, J. Hong, & D. Cross Francis (Eds.), *Research on teacher identity: Mapping challenges and innovations* (pp. 13-23). Springer.

Shamnadh, M. (2019). Misbehavior of school students in classrooms-main causes and effective strategies to manage it. *International Journal of Scientific Development and Research, 4*(3), 141-144. https://www.ijsdr.org/papers/IJSDR1903053.pdf

Slomp, M. W., Gunn, T. M., & Bernes, K. B. (2014). Training pre-service teachers in career education: Developing foundational perceptions, knowledge, and skills. *The Canadian Journal of Career Development, 13*(1), 18–34.

Stevenson, D. L., & Baker, D. P. (1992). Shadow education and allocation in formal schooling: Transition to university in Japan. *American Journal of Sociology, 97*(6), 1639–1657. https://doi.org/10.1086/229942

Subedi, D. (2018). *Utilizing tutoring approaches and strategies effectively* (Report No. ED591992). ERIC. https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED591992.pdf

Thanhnien.vn. (2014). *Gần 75% phụ huynh cho con học thêm* [Nearly 75% of parents enroll their children in extra classes]. Thanh Niên Online. https://thanhnien.vn/gan-75-phu-huynh-cho-con-hoc-them-185382124.htm

Torres-Cladera, G., Simó-Gil, N., Peñafiel, L. D., & Amat-Castells, V. (2021). Building professional identity during pre-service teacher education. *CEPS Journal: Center for Educational Policy Studies Journal, 11*(3), 35–54.

Verhoeven, M., Poorthuis, A. M. G., & Volman, M. (2019). The role of school in adolescents' identity development. A literature review. *Educational Psychology Review, 31*(1), 35-63. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10648-018-9457-3

Vokatis, B., & Zhang, J. (2016). The professional identity of three innovative teachers engaging in sustained knowledge building using technology. *Frontline Learning Research, 4*(1), 58-77. https://doi.org/10.14786/flr.v4i1.223

Wangdi, T., & Namgyel, S. (2022). Classroom management strategies to reduce student disruptive behavior: An action research. *MEXTESOL Journal, 46*(1). https://doi.org/10.61871/mj.v46n1-16

Wenger, E. (1998). *Community of practice: Learning, meaning, and identity*. Cambridge University Press.

Williams, A., Prestage, S., & Bedward, A. (2001). Individualism to collaboration: The significance of teacher culture to the induction of newly qualified teachers. *Journal of Education for Teaching, 27*(3), 253-267. https://doi.org/10.1080/02607470120091588

Zhan, S., Bray, M., Wang, D., Lykins, C., & Kwo, O. (2013). The effectiveness of private tutoring: Students' perceptions in comparison with mainstream schooling in Hong Kong. *Asia Pacific Education Review, 14*(4), 495-509. https://doi.org/10.1007/s12564-013-9276-7