Copyright Statement

The digital copy of this thesis is protected by the Copyright Act 1994 (New Zealand).

This thesis may be consulted by you, provided you comply with the provisions of the Act and the following conditions of use:

- Any use you make of these documents or images must be for research or private study purposes only, and you may not make them available to any other person.
- Authors control the copyright of their thesis. You will recognise the author's right to be identified as the author of this thesis, and due acknowledgement will be made to the author where appropriate.
- You will obtain the author's permission before publishing any material from their thesis.

To request permissions please use the Feedback form on our webpage. [http://researchspace.auckland.ac.nz/feedback](http://researchspace.auckland.ac.nz/feedback)

General copyright and disclaimer

In addition to the above conditions, authors give their consent for the digital copy of their work to be used subject to the conditions specified on the [Library Thesis Consent Form](http://researchspace.auckland.ac.nz/) and [Deposit Licence](http://researchspace.auckland.ac.nz/).

Note: Masters Theses

The digital copy of a masters thesis is as submitted for examination and contains no corrections. The print copy, usually available in the University Library, may contain corrections made by hand, which have been requested by the supervisor.
Teachers’ Conceptions of Excellent Teaching in Chinese Middle Schools

Junjun Chen

A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Education

The University of Auckland, 2010
ABSTRACT

While there have been many western studies about what excellence means to teachers, there are far fewer eastern studies. This research explores how Chinese teachers perceive excellent teaching in middle schools. Three linked studies have aimed to identify teachers’ major conceptions, and how they related to their conceptions of teaching practice.

Study One investigated how 169 Chinese teachers, students, parents, and school leaders understood excellent teaching in middle schools in Liaoning Province, China. Their conceptions of excellent teaching were analysed using narrative inquiry. The study identified 47 characteristics of excellent teaching and 45 characteristics of teaching practice, which resulted in the development of two survey instruments.

Study Two aimed to condense the items of the two survey instruments to a more succinct set of items that could be meaningfully utilised in Study Three. This was achieved using a group of Chinese judges and 291 Chinese middle school teachers. As a result of exploratory and confirmatory factor analyses, two eight-factor measurement models for excellent teaching and teaching practice with reasonable goodness of fit indices were identified.

Based on a sample of 951 Chinese middle school teachers, the final study confirmed two measurement models and one structural model pertaining to the relationships between teachers’ conceptions of excellent teaching and teaching practice. A hierarchical model of conceptions of excellence was supported with two second-order dimensions. The examination-oriented dimension related to teachers seeing themselves as preparing students for examinations. The teacher-student dimension involved four first-order conceptions: Teacher As Developing Lifelong Learners, Teacher As Student Focused, Teacher As Responsible For Engaging Students In Learning, and Teacher As Professional Learner. A hierarchical model of teachers’ conceptions of teaching practice involved one second-order conception which was Strict Teacher-Oriented and five first-order conceptions which were Teacher Is in Charge, Examination Practice, Novel Variety Methods, Beyond Classroom Connections, and Encouraging Student Involvement. The structural model showed that most teachers’ conceptions of excellent teaching were related to their conceptions of teaching practice. Therefore it is possible that teachers’
teaching practices may be changed or improved if teachers’ conceptions of excellent teaching could be changed. Implications for teacher professional development programs, teacher evaluation, and Chinese teaching standards are proposed.
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to express my sincere thanks to the many people who have assisted and encouraged me in completing my PhD research.

My first special thanks go to my three wonderful supervisors, Professor John Hattie, Associate Professor Gavin Brown, and Dr. Pam Millward. John is an excellent supervisor. He has provided incredible patience to motivate me, has foreseen the issues and guided me to handle them by myself, has provided insightful and challenging ideas in both statistics and theory, and has always kept me working in the right direction. I really appreciate that he was committed his time to me despite his full schedule. Gavin supervised me through the most part of my study at the University of Auckland, and still gave me comments for my writing after his appointment at Hong Kong Institute of Education. I would like to take this opportunity to acknowledge that Gavin is the first person to guide me towards a true academic path. He has assisted me in learning the wonders of statistics. He is patient, caring, encouraging, and critical. He was willing to devote his time to me. Whenever I was in trouble both in life and study, Gavin was always there to help me. Pam is a very nice lady. She supervised me in the latter stage of my research. Pam has given me timely and valuable comments for my writing. Especially in the section of discussion, she has provided me with wonderful ideas based on her own rich experience. I am so lucky to have them all as my supervisors.

I am grateful to the Chinese middle school participants in my research. Some of the teachers and principals provided on-going support through their participation in the three studies. The parents not only completed the questionnaires but also gave permission for their students to be surveyed. Particular thanks go to my friends, Lihua Song, Fengjuan Li, and Mingda Xu who helped me to approach schools and to administer questionnaires. Lihua also helped me input data in China. Thanks also go to my friends in Auckland, who have assisted me in designing questionnaires, doing translations, and checking the validity of the questionnaires. Without their cooperation and assistance, this research would never have been possible.

I would like also to thank the University of Auckland for the financial support over three years of my International Doctoral Scholarship, to thank the Faculty of Education for the
financial support for conferences, and to thank the School of Teaching, Learning, and Development for the financial support for conferences and academic training. The university staff members have been supportive in assisting me with the completion of my thesis. I would like to thank the school manager, Ms. Keran Pocklington, from the School of Teaching, Learning, and Development for her kindly administrative support. My thanks also go to the staff in Student Learning Centre who offered helpful workshops and one-to-one meetings. Special thanks go to Dr. Susan Carter who has assisted me with my academic writing. The friendly support and smiles of all of these people are another source of encouragement for me.

My final sincere thanks go to my family: parents Yongji Chen and Guiyun Liu, sisters Yanjun Chen, Haijun Chen, Huijun Chen, and Chi Chen, brother Guojun Chen, and husband Heng Yang. They have given their selfless love, care, and encouragement to accompany me through this research journey. They have shared all my happiness and frustration. They have been my spiritual anchor in the past few years as they will always be.

Thanks all of you, I have no choice but to be successful. All your commitment will never be forgotten in my mind.
TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT .......................................................................................................................... ii

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS ........................................................................................................ iv

LIST OF TABLES .................................................................................................................. ix

LIST OF FIGURES ............................................................................................................... x

LIST OF APPENDICES ....................................................................................................... xi

CHAPTER ONE INTRODUCTION ......................................................................................... 1

1.1 Problem Definition of the Research ........................................................................... 1

1.2 Aims of the Research ............................................................................................... 3

1.3 Chinese Education Context .................................................................................... 3

1.3.1 Chinese Education System ................................................................................ 3

1.3.2 Liaoning Education Contexts ............................................................................ 5

1.4 Structure of the Thesis ............................................................................................ 8

CHAPTER TWO LITERATURE REVIEW ............................................................................ 10

2.1 The Theory of Planned Behaviour ......................................................................... 10

2.2 Conception and Teacher Conception .................................................................... 13

2.3 Teachers’ Conceptions of Teaching ....................................................................... 14

2.3.1 Teachers’ Conceptions of Teaching in Other Countries .................................. 15

2.3.2 Conceptions of Teaching in China ................................................................. 18

2.4 Teaching Practice ................................................................................................... 25

2.4.1 Teaching Practice in Other Countries ............................................................ 25

2.4.2 Teaching Practice in Mainland China and Hong Kong .................................. 27

2.5 Links between Teachers’ Conceptions of Teaching and Teaching Practices ................. 29

2.6 Teachers’ Conceptions of Excellent Teaching ....................................................... 31

2.6.1 Teachers’ Conceptions of Excellent Teaching in Other Countries ................. 31

2.6.2 The National Board for Professional Teaching Standards ......................... 34

2.6.3 Conceptions of Excellent Teaching in China and Hong Kong ................... 37

2.7 Summary ................................................................................................................ 40

CHAPTER THREE CONCEPTIONS OF EXCELLENT TEACHING AND SELF-REPORTED TEACHING PRACTICES IN CHINESE MIDDLE SCHOOLS ............. 41

3.1 Middle School Participants’ Conceptions ................................................................. 41

3.1.1 Teachers .......................................................... 41

3.1.2 Students .......................................................... 42

3.1.3 School Leaders ................................................... 43

3.1.4 Parents ............................................................ 43

3.2 Narrative Inquiry ................................................................................................... 44

3.2.1 Nature of Narrative Inquiry ........................................................................... 44

3.2.2 Reasons to Use Narrative Inquiry with Stories ........................................... 45

3.2.3 Stance of the Researcher to Use Narrative Inquiry ...................................... 47

3.2.4 Interpretation of Narrative Inquiry ................................................................. 49
3.2.5 Validity Concerns .............................................................................. 50
3.2.6 Limitations of Narrative Inquiry .......................................................... 52
3.3 Methodology .......................................................................................... 53
   3.3.1 Participants ...................................................................................... 53
   3.3.2 Instrument ...................................................................................... 56
   3.3.3 Procedure ...................................................................................... 57
3.4 Results .................................................................................................... 62
   3.4.1 Study One A-Teachers .................................................................... 62
   3.4.2 Study One B-Students .................................................................... 71
   3.4.3 Study One C-School Leaders ............................................................ 80
   3.4.4 Study One D-Parents ...................................................................... 91
3.5 Summary ................................................................................................ 101

CHAPTER FOUR MEASURING TEACHERS’ CONCEPTIONS OF EXCELLENT
TEACHING AND TEACHING PRACTICE IN CHINESE MIDDLE SCHOOLS ....... 106
4.1 General Discussion about Validity Procedures ........................................ 106
4.2 TCET Questionnaire ............................................................................... 107
   4.2.1 Questionnaire Development .............................................................. 107
   4.2.2 Item Validity .................................................................................. 108
   4.2.3 Category Validity ........................................................................... 109
   4.2.4 Translation .................................................................................... 112
   4.2.5 Trial Survey ................................................................................... 112
4.3 TCTP Questionnaire ............................................................................. 123
   4.3.1 Questionnaire Development .............................................................. 123
   4.3.2 Item Validity .................................................................................. 123
   4.3.3 Trial Survey ................................................................................... 124
4.4 Summary ................................................................................................ 129

CHAPTER FIVE TEACHERS’ CONCEPTIONS OF EXCELLENT TEACHING AND
TEACHING PRACTICE IN CHINESE MIDDLE SCHOOLS ................................. 130
5.1 Sample Size ........................................................................................... 130
5.2 Instrument .............................................................................................. 132
5.3 Translation .............................................................................................. 132
5.4 Procedure ............................................................................................... 133
   5.4.1 Participants Selection ..................................................................... 133
   5.4.2 Administration .............................................................................. 135
   5.4.3 Analysis ......................................................................................... 136
   5.4.4 Hypothesis .................................................................................... 138
5.5 Results .................................................................................................... 139
   5.5.1 TCET Results ................................................................................ 139
   5.5.2 TCTP Results ............................................................................... 150
   5.5.3 Structural Model Results ................................................................. 160
5.6 Summary ................................................................................................ 164

CHAPTER SIX CONCLUSION .................................................................... 165
6.1 Findings .................................................................................................. 165
6.2 Discussion .............................................................................................................................. 168
   6.2.1 TCET Model .................................................................................................................... 169
   6.2.2 TCTP Model ................................................................................................................... 182
   6.2.3 Structural TCET and TCTP Model ................................................................................ 185
6.3 Implications .......................................................................................................................... 188
   6.3.1 Practical Implications ..................................................................................................... 188
   6.3.2 Theoretical Implications ............................................................................................... 189
6.4 Future Research .................................................................................................................... 190
6.5 Summary .............................................................................................................................. 191
REFERENCES ............................................................................................................................ 225
LIST OF TABLES

Table 1 Comparison Basic Education between Liaoning and China in 2007 .............................................. 6
Table 2 Conceptions of Teaching Art........................................................................................................... 21
Table 3 A Summarised Table for Conceptions of Teaching ........................................................................ 23
Table 4 Teacher Characteristics in Study One ............................................................................................. 53
Table 5 School Leader Characteristics in Study One .................................................................................. 55
Table 6 Parent Characteristics in Study One ............................................................................................... 55
Table 7 Distributions of Schools and Cities in Study One .......................................................................... 57
Table 8 Chinese Middle School Participants’ Conceptions of Excellent Teaching ..................................... 102
Table 9 Teaching Practices in Chinese Middle Schools ............................................................................. 104
Table 10 Round One Validity Survey for Category of Excellent Teaching .............................................. 111
Table 11 Round Two Validity Survey for Category of Excellent Teaching ............................................. 111
Table 12 Teacher Characteristics for Excellent Teaching in Study Two .................................................... 115
Table 13 Correlations for Factors of Teachers’ Conceptions of Excellent Teaching .................................. 123
Table 14 Teacher Characteristics for Teaching Practice in Study Two ..................................................... 125
Table 15 Mean Percentage of Yes/No Question Giving Yes as an Answer ............................................. 127
Table 16 Correlations for Factors of Teachers’ Importance of Teaching Practice .................................... 129
Table 17 Teacher Characteristics in Study Three ....................................................................................... 134
Table 18 Distributions of Schools and Cities in Study Three ................................................................. 134
Table 19 School Size and Type in Study Three ......................................................................................... 135
Table 20 Correlations for TCET Factors ..................................................................................................... 141
Table 21 Factor Means, Reliabilities, and Percentage of Agreement Level for TCET ............................. 142
Table 22 TCET MANOVA and Univariate Results and Teacher Characteristics .................................... 144
Table 23 TCET Factor Mean Scores and Teacher Characteristics ............................................................ 145
Table 24 Effect Size for TCET Conceptions ............................................................................................. 148
Table 25 TCET Multivariate and Univariate F-Tests Results and School Characteristics ............................. 149
Table 26 TCET Factor Mean Scores and School Characteristics ............................................................... 150
Table 27 Factor Means, Reliabilities, and Importance Levels for TCTP ................................................ 153
Table 28 TCTP Multivariate and Univariate Results and Teacher Characteristics ................................ 154
Table 29 Teacher Characteristics and TCTP Factor Mean Score ............................................................. 155
Table 30 Effect Size for TCTP Conceptions ............................................................................................... 158
Table 31 TCTP Multivariate and Univariate Results and School Characteristics .................................... 159
Table 32 School Characteristics and TCTP Factor Mean Scores ............................................................... 159
Table 33 Correlations between TCET and TCTP Factors ....................................................................... 160
Table 34 Correlations for TCET Factors in the Structural Model ............................................................. 162
Table 35 Comparison of Conceptions of Excellent Teaching .................................................................... 171
LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1. The Theory of Planned Behaviour (Ajzen, 2005) ........................................... 11
Figure 2. A Modified Model of Conceptions of Teaching (Brown, 2007) ...................... 24
Figure 3. Teachers’ Conceptions of Excellent Teaching Measurement Model ............. 122
Figure 4. Teachers’ Conceptions of Teaching Practice Measurement Model ............ 128
Figure 5. Teachers’ Conceptions of Excellent Teaching Model ................................ 140
Figure 6. Teachers’ Conceptions of Teaching Practice Model .................................. 151
Figure 7. TCET and TCTP Structural Model ................................................................. 162
Figure 8. Conceptions of Teaching ............................................................................. 170
LIST OF APPENDICES

Appendix A. Teacher Questionnaire: One of Your Excellent Teaching Experiences ..193
Appendix B. Student Questionnaire: One of Your Excellent Teaching Experiences ...196
Appendix C. Parent Questionnaire: One of Your Excellent Teaching Experiences .....198
Appendix D. School Leader Questionnaire: One of Your Excellent Teaching Experiences ...........................................................................................................................................200
Appendix E. Questionnaire for Validity of Category for Excellent Teaching ............202
Appendix F. Questionnaire for Validity of Category for Teaching Practice.................207
Appendix G. Teacher Questionnaire: Conceptions of Excellent Teaching and Practice210