THE FIRST TEACHING YEAR EXPERIENCES

OF BEGINNING TEACHERS

IN KIEN GIANG, VIETNAM.

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A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment

of the requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Education

Faculty of Education

La Trobe University

Bundoora, Victoria 3083

Australia

February 2013

TABLE OF CONTENTS

FIRST TEACHING PROBLEM CONCERNS, AND VALUED SUPPORT RECEIVED, AND THE QUALITY OF PREPARATION DURING TEACHER TRAINING COLLEGE FROM FIVE IN-DEPTH INTERVIEWS.   88

LIST OF FIGURES

LIST OF APPENDICES

Appendix A: Participants information sheet

Appendix B: Participants invitation letter

Appendix C: Participants consent form

Appendix D: Approval from the Director of the Kien Giang Provincial Department of Education and Training

Appendix E: Predetermined questions for Semi-structure interviews with individual beginning teachers

Appendix F: Data auditor's statement

ABSTRACT

In this thesis I examine the experiences of beginning teachers in the Kien Giang province, an area located in one of the remote areas of the Mekong Delta region in the south-west of Vietnam. In this disadvantaged area the people are mainly poor labourers and there is little infrastructural support for them or the schools. Using a qualitative case study approach I interviewed five beginning teachers and had focus group discussions with a further 24 beginning teachers to find out what they experienced in their first teaching year. Drawing on studies of beginning teachers in Western countries I sought to understand the experiences of teachers in this isolated and difficult context and to identify the unique needs that this group of teachers may have.

While the overall findings of the study were quite consistent with those in the literature, including concerns that beginning teachers have about lack of knowledge about teaching, classroom management and motivating students to learn, several critical issues emerged. Not only were teachers in this study dealing with particularly difficult and unmotivated students who saw little or no future in education, they also came to the task having had less teaching experience than those of their counterparts in other countries, and they had additional obstacles to overcome. My findings show that the participants felt they were not well equipped during their training course. They knew little about the importance of relationships in learning, in collegial communities or with parents. The teaching experience during the courses had been in schools that contrasted greatly with the ones in which they were employed and they had no experience in dealing with the four main difficulties encountered in this remote area: motivating students, lack of educational resources, poor living standards and relationships with parents. However, those who did receive some support within the school environment were able to overcome the weakness of their preparation.

I concluded that teachers in this area were in need of assistance from the stakeholders in the community such as school principals, Kien Giang Teacher Training College, teacher training and local authorities who need to work together to ensure the teachers received ongoing support.

STATEMENT OF AUTHORSHIP

Except where reference is made in the text of the thesis, this thesis contains no material published elsewhere or extracted in whole or in part from a thesis submitted for the award of any degree or diploma.

No other person's work has been used without due acknowledgement in the main text of the thesis.

This thesis has not been submitted for the award of any degree or diploma in any other tertiary institution.

All research undertaken in this thesis was approved by the La Trobe University Human Ethics Committee. (R030/11)

Signed

21st February 2013

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The journey of being able to bind a book of my work involving four years of study is thought to be an undertaking of the person who is writing this acknowledgement. However, in reality, it is the work of a number of individuals without whom I would not have been able to finish. There were key individuals who helped me complete the work and whom I would much like to express my acknowledgement and appreciation. Firstly, I wish to thank my supervisors Dr Peta Heywood and Dr Keith Simkin.Their supervision, advice, encouragement and particularly their patience during the last four years was greatly appreciated. Without their support, my study journey would not have ended. I would like to express my sincere appreciation and endless gratitude to my two respected professors.

Thanks to my colleagues at La Trobe University who have shared their valuable experiences of research and also my happiness and sadness over the four years of my study. They have kept me on track with the journey.

I also wish to express my heartfelt gratitude to the participants of this study. I would like to share this great achievement with them, as without their stories and great contribution, this study would not exist.

I would like to acknowledge the Ministry of Education for sponsor a project 322. I would also like to thank the Kien Giang teacher Training College for the paid leave that has enable me to undertake this research. Without these support this thesis would have never been completed

To my parents who have suffered from sickness without their daughter to take care of them.

Finally, I wish to send my deepest gratefulness to my husband who has been by my side and has constantly encouraged me. He has sacrificed his time to help me overcome the difficulties of my study.

CHAPTER ONE

Introduction to the thesis

1.1 Rationale and context of my study

This chapter introduces my study, and provides a background on the reasons for its development, the research questions, its purpose and objectives.

In Vietnam, people often describe a teaching career in respectful terms such as "virtuous" and "pure". However, the journey undertaken by teachers to achieve such recognition is usually challenging, especially for beginning teachers. The first year of teaching has long been recognised as difficult and full of challenges for all new teachers, no matter in which part of the world they are teaching (Fox, Deaney, & Wilson, 2010). Researchers worldwide have identified that the first stage of teacher development is significantly important to the development of their teaching career. If new teachers' concerns are not addressed satisfactorily, the following stage of their career development could be hampered (Conway & Clark, 2003; Watzke, 2007).Therefore, support should be provided for new teachers to help them meet the demands and expectations from the outset of their teaching career. My research project sets out to investigate the experiences of beginning teachers, as they become professionally involved in educational settings in Kien Giang province, in the southwest of Vietnam. This research explores the reality of the situation for these participants, as they become accustomed to their role as teaching professionals.

In addition, few studies exist in relation to first year teaching experience/s and the actual experiences of beginning teachers in South East Asia countries including Vietnam (Sing & Khine, 2008). Up to the time when my research was being conducted, there were no existing studies on the influences of the first year of teaching on new graduates in Vietnam, hence in this study, I seek to provide insight into the difficulties and challenges faced by new teachers and the valued support they received during their first teaching year. This study will provide the reader with insight into the unique experiences of beginning teachers in the context of Vietnam, especially in their first year of teaching in Kien Giang province.

As a lecturer in Kien Giang Teacher Training College, preparing teacher candidates, I believed it necessary to evaluate whether or not the service I provided was meeting the

needs of beginning teachers. Therefore, this study also focuses on the experiences of beginning teachers who were trained in Kien Giang Teacher Training College to better evaluate the quality of teacher education in preparing teacher candidates in Kien Giang province. I also hope that this report will create a point of reflection and influence those responsible for planning and providing services for beginning teachers in the early stages of their careers.

In order to provide more details on the research context, I set the scene of Kien Giang Teacher Training College, its location, its vision and mission in the current Vietnamese educational situation. I also include my personal reflections on working as a lecturer at the college to be clear about my role and position in this research.

Kien Giang is a province in Vietnam, located in the Mekong Delta region in the south-west of the country and covers an area of 6.269,00 km². Kien Giang's geographical features include plains, forests, mountainous areas, coastal regions, bordering lands, and islands, including the famous Phu Quoc Island, which is noted for its beauty and fertile land. Kien Giang has a population of approximately 1.8 million people. It was because of such diversity of geographical features that partly impacted on the living conditions including education situation in Kien Giang province. Kien Giang Teacher Training College in the south-west province in Vietnam has provided training for the majority of teachers in Kien Giang province for both primary and lower secondary teachers for nearly forty years. After three years of successful study in the college, students graduate with a Bachelor of Pedagogy and become teachers in schools in districts in Kien Giang province (Kien Giang has 13 districts and Rach Gia city). Kien Giang Teacher Training College enrols between 600 to 800 students each year in eighteen training sectors, including pre-school education, primary education, mathematic pedagogy, computer science pedagogy; physics pedagogy; biology pedagogy; literature pedagogy; history pedagogy; English pedagogy and physical training pedagogy at primary and secondary levels. After graduation, graduates apply directly for a teaching position through the District Department of Education and Training in Kien Giang province. If their application is successful, they are offered a short-term one-year contract. If the new teacher does not satisfactorily meet the requirements of the school, he/she will not be offered an ongoing teaching position.

The research focus is on the difficulties and challenges faced by beginning teachers, the support which is most valued and the quality of their preparation for teaching in addressing their concerns during the first stage of their teaching career.

I am a 36 year-old female pedagogy teacher who, at the time this study was conducted, had over ten years' experience teaching at Kien Giang Teacher Training College in Vietnam. I have taught the subject "Theories and Issues in Lower Secondary Education" and during my time there, I have had occasion to speak with former students who are now employed as teachers. This has caused me to be concerned about some of the issues facing my former students in their development as teachers. The question I ask myself is "How can I and the programs I am involved in at Kien Giang Teacher Training College better prepare the would-be teachers in our province?"

In addition to being a lecturer at Kien Giang Teacher Training College, I was also appointed as a member of the Socio-Cultural Office as a People's Council Representative. The purpose and function of this organisation is to discuss and make decisions on important issues within the jurisdiction of the People's Council, for example electing the Chairman and Vice-Chairman of the Province. The People's Council has the authority to petition to the State Offices on the law, policy execution and issues relating to the community.

Ten years ago, during meetings at the Socio-Cultural Office, my college received criticism that first-year teachers who had graduated from Kien Giang Teacher Training College were not fully qualified. Some directors of local education and training departments blamed the lack of quality of new graduates from the Kien Giang Teacher Training College on the failure of the local education system. In my earlier opinion, I considered the level of training we gave the students was of a high standard and I was upset by this criticism. However, after reflecting on this, I began to realise that as a newly graduated teacher, I did not have a profound awareness of the relationship and connection between the teacher training college and the graduate's performance in the school environment. On the way home from these meetings, I was upset and wondered:

- Was it true that most of my students were not appropriately qualified?
- How could I address this problem?
- Did the college provide quality training?
- How could I help our graduates perform well in their profession?
- Is teacher education responsible for the failure of the graduate?

As a newcomer to Kien Giang Teacher Training College, I also had to overcome several difficulties in my first year of teaching including preparing lectures, getting married and giving birth to my son. However, I kept these concerns to myself.

Now as a teacher with ten-year' experience, I remain focused on improving students' academic results and their performance in the workplace. I also gained further teaching experience by attending summer workshops to enhance my professional development. Fortunately, I was granted a scholarship to study at La Trobe University in Australia where I am involved in a project to investigate the development of teacher training in colleges and universities for the Vietnam Ministry of Education and Training (MOET). I am one of the first teachers in my province to be involved in this project. Devoting a large amount of time to this study has been an excellent professional development activity for me and has allowed me to reflect on both the knowledge I have attained from the literature and my experiences in relation to my concerns about the induction of new graduates in the field of teaching.

I have extensively searched the literature, and found the information on the development stages of new teachers extremely valuable. It has not only broadened my view on education in general, but has also caused me to reflect on and explore the reality of the international debate about the development of new teachers. This has encouraged me to present my findings and knowledge on the unique issues facing beginning teachers in Kien Giang Province.

I decided to undertake this research to find solutions for the concerns I had as a teacher educator by investigating the first-year teaching experiences of beginning teachers who had spent three years studying at Kien Giang Teacher Training College. I describe the experiences of beginning teachers in order to identify their common experiences and their difficulties and challenges. By studying the experiences of beginning teachers, I can reflect on the quality of our course in preparing teachers in Kien Giang province. Due to my personal involvement in this study, I believe my own experiences and observations will provide an additional source of data for the research. Denzin and Lincoln (2000, p.3) describe the relationship between the researcher and their study:

> .... Researchers could blend their own observations with the self-reports provided by subjects through interviews and life story, personal experience.... (2000, p.3)

My experience in delivering courses and working with student teachers in the teacher training college has given me insight into the process of teacher training. It also has provided me with a network of beginning teachers that I will utilise in my study. My experience also has provided me with a deeper understanding of the motivations and concerns of beginning teachers. John Rowan (1987 cited in Seidman, 2006, p.52) suggests:

> Researchers consider not only how their own personal interests are served by their research but also who else's interest is served.....

Not only is my personal interest served by this study but also that of the past students who I will involve and the future students whom I will teach. Since the early days of my time in teacher education, I have been concerned about improving the quality of education as a whole, and of teacher education in particular. Therefore, I chose to conduct this research to identify the experiences of beginning teachers and to understand if these are similar to or different from those in other countries. To do this, I set out to find new teachers' voices as I believe these will be the most appropriate way to uncover the real problems experienced in the first year of teaching. What I find out about the first teaching year experiences may be helpful to all who oversee the quality of education. Hopefully, school leaders, educational administrators, experienced teachers, training teachers and new teachers as well, will find my research insightful.

It is widely recognised that the experiences of teachers in their first year of teaching have an important impact, not only on the beginning teachers' career, but also on the quality of learning experiences that they provide for their students. It is necessary to understand the difficulties beginning teachers face in the real world during their first teaching year. What support do they receive in their work place? What are their perspectives on the quality of the preparation they received during their training course? Therefore, this study is undertaken to:

1. identify the problems encountered by beginning teachers during their first year of teaching.
2. identify the received support from the participants' perspectives in their first teaching year.
3. evaluate the quality of the preparation provided by Kien Giang Teachers' Training College for trainee teachers.

To do this I will ask the question:

What are the experiences of beginning teachers in their first year of teaching in Kien Giang province?

1.2 Significance of the study

The government has spent a great deal of money on educating teachers and, as is widely recognised (MOET, 2008), the quality of teachers is a determining factor in the quality of the education that students receive. However, in cases where public expenditure for training teachers is not spent effectively, the quality of education will suffer. To avoid wasting public money, effective policies should be designed based on the recommendations from empirical researches in teacher education (Darling-Hammond & Sykes, 2003). This study is significant because it provides, from beginning teachers' perspectives, an in-depth understanding of the quality of beginning teachers' preparation for their first-year journey of being a teacher. This study also provides recommendations that could enhance the quality of teacher training programs in Kien Giang province in terms of diversifying practicum programs and orienting student teachers to resolve problems they may face in their first teaching year. Stakeholders in the quality of education in Vietnam, especially stakeholders in the quality of teacher training in Kien Giang province might also benefit from this study as it will raise their awareness of the importance of beginning teachers' concerns and assist them to mitigate these concerns that result from ill-prepared teacher training courses, especially in relation to practicums. I hope that the information imparted in this research will provide empirical evidence on beginning teachers' experiences for local authorities that can be used to formulate policy relating to new teachers in Kien Giang province. It is my wish that as a consequence of reading this research, local authorities and people interested in the development of new teachers may work together to support new teachers in their future role in society.

CHAPTER TWO

Literature review

2.1 Introduction

This literature review focuses on three main areas:

Firstly, this literature review looks at the (first year) teaching experiences of beginning teachers and the role these play in teachers' future development. In the first section, I justify from the literature why the first teaching year is such an important one.

The second section examines the theoretical framework of teacher development identified by Fuller (1969), and Fuller and Brown (1975). Although the theory on the stages of teacher development was identified by Fuller and Brown nearly forty years ago, the model of a three-phase developmental conceptualization of teachers' concerns is useful in helping me understand more about the experiences of beginning teachers, especially their concerns relating to their first teaching year, that is, concerns relating to survival. The theory also emphasises the role of teacher education in orienting and supporting student teachers to address their concerns. Therefore, I will adopt this theory for my study on pre-service teachers through studying the concerns of beginning teachers and the ways they resolve their concerns with a supportive source in their first teaching year and from this point, I will make recommendations for the pre-service education programs in Kien Giang province.

The third section of the literature review looks at problems, support and influencing factors such as teacher education, family background, and school environment that may impact on the learning process of beginning teachers.

2.2 The importance of the first teaching year

Experiences in the first year of teaching are likely to be important to professional teaching development. Literature suggests that, because of their limited experience in classroom teaching during their training program, new teachers' initial teaching experiences can significantly differ from perceptions held during their teacher training course (Featherstone, 1993; Weinstein, 1990). Research indicates that first year teaching experiences lay the foundation for the new teacher's professional development (Feiman-Nemser, 2003; Flores, 2001; Fox, et al., 2010). The first year of teaching is highly

relevant to new teachers as they begin to apply what they acquired during their teacher training college course (Corcoran, 1981). It is perceived that the process of learning to teach during this transition period is paramount because the experience gained during the beginning years of teaching influences the teacher's permanent style of teaching (Bullough , Young, & Draper, 2004; Weiss, 1999).The first year of teaching is the period in which beginning teachers feel insecure about their teaching ability (Johnston & Ryan 1983). Therefore, research that explores and discloses actual first-year teaching experiences of beginning teachers is considered necessary for the future improvement of teaching, and is deemed exceptionally relevant to the overall teaching profession (Veenman, 1984).

These findings draw attention to the relationship between personal background, experiences gained during teacher education, and the workplace environment as influences not only relative to success in teaching, but also a teacher's perception and interpretation of the school, students, and teaching performance. Over the past decade, much research has been conducted into the significance of first-year teaching experiences in shaping the new graduates in their new role as teaching professionals, the potential influence of first-year teaching experiences and how these have an effect on the retention of teaching professionals.

Research and persepctives on the importance of the first teaching year experiences reported in Western studies provide me with basic knowledge to investigate and understand the experiences of first year teachers in Kien Giang province in particular and in Vietnam in general.

From the research that has emerged, it is apparent that first-year teaching experiences are significant in shaping the new graduate in their role as a teacher, and it has the potential to influence the retention of teachers (Feiman-Nemser, 2003; McCann & Johannessen, 2004; Strong, Villar, & Fletcher, 2008). Hoy and Spero (2005) suggest that the self-efficacy of teachers will be increased if student teachers are well prepared to face difficult situations they are likely to encounter during their first year of teaching and receive support during the induction phase. However, when my research was being conducted, there were no existing studies on the influences of first-year teaching experiences on new graduates in Vietnam. Hence in this study, I seek to provide insight into the difficulties and challenges faced by new teachers from KGTC and the valued support they received during their first teaching year. This will provide me with a more

practical view on the reality of these new teachers in their first year of teaching in the province.

   Research on the difficulties facing beginning teachers will help to identify possible solutions to support new teachers. This might help to reduce the rate of new teachers leaving their teaching position which is still occurring at an alarming rate. Retention rates are discussed in research conducted by several American scholars, revealing troublesome statistics indicating that 50% of new teachers resigned from their jobs within five years of teaching, of which 22% of teachers resigned within the first two years (Ingersoll & Smith, 2003; Smethem, 2007; Wong & Breaux, 2003). According to the Texas Centre for Educational Research (cited in Satin, 2005), the estimated expenditure to replace teachers who have left the education system is USD $329 million, annually.

   Recent research conducted by Hobson, Giannakaki and Chambers (2009) identifies that the main reasons student teachers withdraw from initial teacher preparation programmes relate to their huge workload and the lack of support from programme providers. Other researchers also suggest the following are influences/factors for new teachers resigning from their jobs.

1. Huge workload and lack of practical experience in handling teaching workload (Flores, 2001; Meister & Melnick, 2003)
2. Negative experiences in new schools, including poor relationship with mentors and other school-based colleagues, and problems relating to classroom discipline (Bezzina, 2006; Kyriacou & Kunc, 2007)

   However, these studies conducted in Western countries indicate that new teachers can overcome difficulties and challenges in their first year of teaching if they receive timely support from individuals and organisations related to teacher training and development. As Darling-Hammons (2000), and Loughran, Mitchell, Neal, and Toussaint (2001) suggest, new teacher support policies and principal and school board support play a significant role in the development of new teachers.

   Due to the important role of first-year teaching experiences in laying the foundation for the professional development of teacher, two trends emerge in cases where new teachers struggle with difficulties without receiving support from policies, educational administrators, colleagues or mentors: they resign from teaching to find better employment opportunities or they remain in the job but are not strongly committed to a

teaching career (Brown & Wynn, 2009). In both cases, the money spent on training these teachers is lost. Therefore, if problems for beginning teachers are not explored and resolved, the growth and development of new teachers will be limited, with the worst scenario being that they will resign from teaching at an early stage. Moreover, then their students also suffer (McCormack & Thomas, 2003). Hence, the importance of first-year teaching experiences is the focus of this study. My thesis explores the notion that first-year teaching experiences have a significant impact on the professional development of teachers. The problems faced by the beginning teachers in Kien Giang province and the support they received are the focus of this study.

First-year teaching experiences have a great influence on teachers' professional development, where beginning teachers are exposed to the reality of teaching and some of the difficulties and challenges they will face. If these teachers do not receive timely support, they may suffer from stress or resign from the teaching profession. However, no research has been conducted on beginning teachers in the context of Vietnam; hence this study is undertaken as a small step towards providing this information. Losses to education in terms of money and human resources are quite huge. Therefore, an in-depth study into the experiences of new teachers is necessary. The next section will present a review of theories directing my research.

2.3 "New teacher" development theories:

A number of studies have been conducted on the different stages of teaching development. The general purpose of these studies is to provide systematisation and conceptualisation to gain a deeper understanding about professional development levels and provide appropriate interventions for individuals and organisations to create the most favourable conditions for individuals to develop their careers (Flores, 2001).

Huberman (1989) studied the stages of career development and defined seven stages that teachers may go through during their profession as follows:

1. Survival and discovery: During this stage beginning teachers search for accurate information and are confronted by the difficulties which exist in classroom practice.
2. Stabilization: Teachers fit in with the school structure and feel more comfortable with teaching

3. <u>Experimentation</u>: Teachers discover and refine reward and punishment strategies in teaching. Teachers either confirm or refute the value of the school to them.

4. <u>Reassessment</u>: During this stage, teachers reconsider their future career paths, making a decision to either remain in the teaching field or leave it.

5. <u>Serenity</u>: The teacher makes a firm commitment to their teaching career

6. <u>Conservatism</u>: During this stage, the relationship between age and conservatism is evident, as after a long time in the teaching profession, teachers become resistant to innovation

7. <u>Disengagement</u>: During this stage, teachers turn their energy to other areas outside their professional field and prepare themselves for the end of the teaching cycle.

Similar to Huberman's (1989) study, Ryan's (1986) book, *The Induction of New Teachers* dentified four stages of teacher development: (1) fantasy stage; (2) survival stage; (3) mastery stage; (4) impact stage. Berliner (1989) notes that teachers go through five major stages: novice; advanced beginner; competent; proficient; expert. Fuller and Brown (1975) describe four areas of teachers' concerns: pre-teaching concerns, early concerns about survival, teaching situation concerns and concerns about pupils. All these models have in common the idea that becoming a competent professional involves identifiable stages through which teachers progress. Reviewing these studies helped me to identify that the most appropriate theory/model to guide my research is that proposed by Fuller (1969), and Fuller & Brown (1975).

The main reason the theory on the stages of teacher development developed by Fuller and Brown is considered the most appropriate for this study is because it mentions the concerns of teachers in different stages. This theory has been adapted by a number of studies (Korthagen & Kessels, 1999; Moore, 2003; Weinstein, 1988) despite the fact that the theory was developed forty years ago. The following studies, detailed in Figure 1, applied Fuller's three-stage model of teacher development (Conway & Clark, 2003), however, this theory also mentions the survival stage of beginning teachers. This difficult stage faced by beginning teachers is assessed by Western researchers to be extremely important to the professional development of teachers, as previously explained. Therefore, I considered it essential to research the difficulties faced by beginning teachers in their first year of teaching. This theory has enhanced my understanding and has

provided me with an evidence-based explanation in relation to the problems mentioned by beginning teachers in Kien Giang province in the interviews.

Figure 1: A matrix of research theories on the different stages of teacher development

Researcher	No.	Phase	Distinctions
Fuller & Brown (1975)	**4**	**1.Pre-teaching** **2. Early concerns about survival** **3.Teaching situation concerns** **4.Concerns about students**	Pre-service teaching
Ryan (1986)	**4**	**1.Fantasy stage** **2.Survival stage** **3.Mastery stage** **4.Impact stage**	First year of teaching
Huberman (1989)	**7**	**1.Survival and discovery** **2.Stabilization** **3.Disengagement** **4. Reassessment** **5. Serenity** **6. Conservatism** **7. Experimentations**	First year to the end of teaching career.
Berliner (1989)	**5.**	**1.Novice** **2.Advanced beginner** **3.Competent** **4.Proficient** **5.Expert**	First year to the end of teaching career

Reviewing the matrix in Figure 1 on the developmental stages of teachers proposed in other studies has helped me understand these more clearly. Of the three theories

discussed above, the theory proposed by Fuller and Brown (1975) is the most relevant to my research as it focuses on how teacher education can orient beginning teachers to anticipate the difficulties they will face in the real teaching environment.

During 1969, Francis Fuller carried out research on her first-year education students in Texas University by conducting confidential in-depth interviews with them, identifying three phases of concerns through which they move. This work was further developed by Anderson (1997), Van den Berg & Ros (1999), and is now more widely known as the Concerns-Based Adoption Model (CBAM). The theory of Fuller and Brown (1975) was adopted in the CBAM model which is used to study concerns related to the field of various educational innovations (Conway & Clark, 2003). In general, CBAM points out that as an individual or a group of people firstly apply educational innovations in their different contexts; their most intense concerns are self-concerns. They are concerned about the influence of the innovations on them personally and what the innovation is. After this, their concerns focus on the task, that is, how to implement and manage an innovation. Hence, CBAM had modified the stages of concern in relation to self, task and the impact of concern from the original theory of Fuller and Brown (1975). More specifically, it is used to study concern in relation to educational innovation. Studying changes in concerns relating to innovation is not my research focus; therefore, the CBAM was deemed to be not relevant to the focus of my study

Fuller's study (1969) on beginning teachers' concerns is helpful to other researchers investigating this issue as her study describes in detail the concerns expressed by beginning teachers which are similar to the concerns expressed by the majority of teachers entering their first year of teaching (Conway & Clark, 2003). In her study, Fuller (1969) suggests three phases of concerns:

- Pre-teaching phase: this phase occurs before student teachers commence teaching. At this stage, the concerns of student teachers are not specific nor do they relate to practical issues, rather they are based on the experiences that student teachers' have had during their general schooling, or from lectures in training college. Fuller (1969) refers to this phase as the non-concern phase because she suggests that student teachers rarely have concerns about teaching as they have not yet directly participated in any teaching activities.

- Early teaching phase: This phase involves concerns about self. Teachers' concerns in this early teaching phase are mainly about their competency and

whether they are capable of teaching in class; their knowledge of teaching subjects (subject matter) and whether they can effectively teach pupils; and their ability to know the answers to questions arising in the classroom. In this phase, the teachers' concerns involve teaching resources and how to make changes when failure occurs. It also involves concerns about their ability to cope with supervisor evaluation.

In summary, these concerns include concerns about classroom control, content adequacy and supervisor evaluation often occurring together all of which are very significant concerns for beginning teachers.

- <u>Later teaching phase</u>: these concerns involve pupils. When a teacher's concerns are mature, their concerns focus on the students, and self-evaluation.

There are three key points in Fuller's (1975) theory. Firstly, she suggests student teacher concerns may depend on and/or relate to each specific context and situation. Secondly, Fuller (1975) admits that in some cases, it is difficult to clearly distinguish between concerns about self and concerns about students. Thirdly, she tests the hypothesis that later concerns will appear when earlier concerns are resolved. Another researcher, Odell (1989) agreed with the perspective that beginning teachers first need to overcome the 'survival' stage and then progress to having concerns about pupils. Katz (1977), studying the development stages of teachers, suggests that the time a teacher takes to overcome each development stage is varied and depends on factors such as family background, individual characteristics, self-concept, efficacy, teaching context, support provided and social factors.

A later study by Fuller and Brown (1975) extended the theory on the stages of teacher development as follows:

- <u>Pre-teaching concerns</u>: in this phase, education students have little practical experience in teaching activities in the real world, because they are "fresh from the pupil role".
- <u>Early concerns about survival</u>: this phase involves concerns about one's adequacy and survival as a teacher, classroom control, being loved by people, supervisor evaluation, and colleagues' and mentors' comments. These concerns mainly involve the new teacher's feelings, and to some extent what they are thinking about their position, not as a teacher but rather as a learner.

14

Fuller and Brown (1975) suggest that this stage is one of the "great stresses" and arises from conflicting values and differences in expectations between what they experienced in the teacher training college and the real school environment. However, most concerns at this stage are about classroom control.

- Teaching situation concerns: this phase involves concerns about the teaching tasks such as content pressure, and heavy work load.

- Concerns about pupils: this phase involves concerns about the demands, feelings and attitudes of pupils. New teachers have concerns about how to ensure pupils adequately understand and acquire knowledge from their teaching.

In sum, the theory of Fuller and Brown (1975) discussed the stages of teacher development and each stage mentions concerns about self, task and dominant impacts. Conway and Clark(2003) claim that the reason why the theory of Fuller and Brown (1975) has been adopted in a number of research studies and still remains valuable in terms of validity and relevance is because this theory mentions the teacher development orbit which has been studied in several contexts.

Moreover, the original theory proposed by Fuller and Brown (1975) only mentions the process of becoming a teacher in general and does not discuss other elements which are also influenced by other factors, the most significant being:

- prior experiences: personal background-family, relatives, friends (Flores, 2001; Harley, Barasa, Bertram, Mattson, & Pillay, 2000; Su, 1992)
- impact of teacher education (Bullough & Gitlin, 1995; Kagan, 1992; Russell & McPherson, 2001)
- workplace practice and school culture (Billett, 2009; Fox, et al., 2010; Pollard, 1982)

Following is a review of the factors influencing the process of becoming a teacher.

2.4 Factors influencing the first teaching year

2.4.1 Prior experiences

One's experiences throughout their school years have a certain influence on the process of becoming a teacher. From kindergarten to graduating from high school, future teachers have had access to an educational environment so that the process of being a teacher is more or less influenced by this factor. Lortie (1975) developed the concept of

"apprenticeship of observation" which describes the phenomenon where student teachers have had a long time being involved in, observing and evaluating the teaching profession before they entered it themselves. Lortie (1975) has argued that this has a great influence on the development of beliefs and ideas relating to the teaching profession.

This apprenticeship of observation of a teaching career starts early in a person's experience of school and differs to the apprenticeship of observation of other careers, such as a doctor or lawyer. Virta (2002) agrees that "the apprenticeship of observation" is one of the ingredients in the process of becoming a teacher.

A number of studies have focused on the influences of family, friends, relatives and the environment in the process of becoming a teacher (Akyeampong & Stephens, 2002; Flores, 2001; Harley, et al., 2000; Su, 1992). One study commonly cited by researchers into teacher education was conducted by Flores (2001), who studied the relationship between a person's biographical and contextual factors and the influences of these two factors in the process of becoming a teacher. Flores's findings show that experiences gained as a pupil have an important impact on the new teacher's understanding of their teaching profession; and when they enter into a real teaching environment, these understandings are increasingly shaped and strengthened (Flores, 2001). Furthermore, though beginning teachers have observed thousands of hours of teaching activities since being primary pupils themselves, they are not yet familiar with the specific school setting in which they will spend their first teaching (Johnston & Ryan, 1983). Kagan (1992) claims that the majority of student teachers entering teacher education bring their personal beliefs regarding what constitutes a good teacher, images of self as a teacher and their past student experiences. The majority of these beliefs and images have not been changed during their teacher training course and they also bring these to their classroom practice. Kagan (1992) argued that individual prior beliefs and images need to be adjusted and refined in order to support the professional growth of the novice and the beginning teacher. Flores (2001) supported this idea when he argued that in general, school is where teachers are directly involved in the teaching process, which plays a key role in structuring the beliefs and attitudes of teachers regarding their teaching profession.

The importance of a person's family and background experience is reinforced by Su (1992). His findings show that factors such as family, relatives and friends of prospective teachers, the training college and groups of new teachers have little influence on their initial professional development, while Akyeampong and Stephens (2002) in Ghana,

16

Norway, assert that "the home background characteristics" are relative to and influence a new teacher's commitment to the teaching profession, because family background nurtures and encourages their professional orientation.

In short, experiences prior to entering teacher training have a certain influence on the process of becoming a teacher. This influence is based on the specific context in which factors such as family background, friends, relatives and experiences of being a pupil will have an effect on that process. The above factors may influence the career orientation and beliefs of teaching professionals, but will be "reshaped" by the skills and knowledge provided in teacher education through methods and foundation teaching courses as well as field experience.

2.4.2 The impact of teacher education

Two main areas of teacher education, namely foundation coursework and fieldwork experience, will be examined in this research. Debates on the influences of foundation courses and field experience in the process of becoming a teacher have been regularly raised in the field of teacher education. Some researchers argue that teacher education in terms of foundation courses have little impact on teacher development (Bullough & Gitlin, 1995; Kagan, 1992; Russell & McPherson, 2001). Kagan (1992) argues that university courses do not provide student teachers with adequate knowledge about classrooms, pupils and a practical teaching vision. The importance of school experience is confirmed by Whitney, Golez, Nagel and Nieto (2002), who conducted a survey with 900 classroom teachers and held four focus group interviews. The findings indicate that school teachers have a greater influence on the future classroom behaviours of student teachers in terms of their comments and advice to the student during their teaching practicum than do college educators. This is because teacher preparation programs have failed to clarify the importance of putting theory into practice (Whitney, Golez, Nagel and Nieto , 2002). This finding is in contrast with research undertaken by Ewing and Manuel (2005) which evaluated graduates from the Faculty of Education at the University of Sydney in relation to the effectiveness of pre-service training programs in preparing student teachers for the beginning years of teaching. Ewing and Manuel (2005) conclude that the in their research showed little criticism of pre-service programs except for three components of the programs: assessment, reporting and classroom management. However, Gibbs and Coffey (2004)'s findings were not totally in line with the conclusions

of Ewing and Manuel, arguing that the positive influence of training on student teachers' learning is inevitable.

Given that foundation course and field work experience are both essential to teacher training, Darling-Hammond (2006) argues that it is necessary to design teacher training programs where there is a close connection between course work and extended field work in order to develop effective and dedicated teachers. In Singapore, Yuen-Fun (2003) conducted a survey on first-year students that focused on investigating beginning teachers' perspectives and the best strategies to allay their concerns. The study found that in order to better guide and help prospective teachers anticipate and adapt to the requirements of real schools, Schools of Education need to design training programs that capture the diversity of schools. It is beneficial to familiarise student teachers with their future real work environment, hence many practicum and fieldwork programs in universities around the world focus on the duration and organization of these programs. For example the University of Wisconsin-Madison in the United States regulates that student teachers must complete at least one student teaching practicum in which they have to observe lessons delivered by school teachers and other classroom activities, assist school teachers in their classroom management and tasks, communicate with students and deliver several small group lessons. All activities carried out by student teachers are under the supervision of experienced teachers. Students in their final year have to spend four and a half days per week for fifteen weeks in a teacher training program (School of Education [University of Wisconsin-Madision], 2013). As another example, a secondary teacher training program at the University of Queensland in Australia has a compulsory placement of 120 days (Courses and programs [University of Queensland], 2013). At the University of Adelaide in South Australia, first-year teacher students undertake a practicum of five days whereas third-year student teachers spend one week in the country in their placement and fourth- year students have a much longer practicum of ten weeks, which incorporates a teaching block of five-weeks during this time (The School of Education [University of Adelaide], 2013).

Grossman and Richert (1988) argue that coursework and fieldwork provide student teachers with two different but supplementary aspects of learning to teach. This is because experience from fieldwork and practicums provide student teachers with general and practical knowledge on classroom management and organisation. Coursework in teacher training provides future teachers with basic concepts on subject matter and teaching ideology. This supports one of the aims of this thesis, which is to study the opinions of

new teachers on their teacher education and its influence at the beginning of their teaching profession.

In a teacher education course, both pedagogical knowledge and content-based knowledge is recognised as having value. According to Shulman (1986), content knowledge is the knowledge that a teacher must have on the content they will teach, whereas pedagogical knowledge is an understanding of the way to present, illustrate and explain the subject knowledge to learners so that they are able to understand it. McNamara (1991) argues that the ability of teachers to prepare lesson plans, teach effectively, apply a great variety of teaching styles, anticipate the learning progress of students, motivate active learning in students and flexibly use teaching materials and learning aids is much dependent on their subject matter knowledge. In addition, a lack of subject matter knowledge is one of the concerns which beginning teachers frequently mentioned in their first teaching year (Weinstein, 1988).Therefore, two of the important requirements to enhance teaching ability are pedagogical knowledge and content knowledge.

In addition, O'Brian, Stoner, Appel and House (2007), Russell and McPherson (2001), and Wilson, Floden and Ferrini-Mundy (2002) highlight that teacher training programs need to be more relevant to meet the needs of student teachers. Courses should do this by equipping them with adequate knowledge and skills to enter professional teaching practice, as a teacher's knowledge helps them to understand and solve content-related issues. An understanding of pedagogical strategies assists them to effectively deliver the content of lesson in a way that is suitable to the diversity of learners in the classroom (Byrne cited in Darling-Hammond; 2000). A teacher who possesses strong knowledge of pedagogy will be able to deliver lesson content, from an easy to a difficult level, depending on the age and learning capacity of the learners (Shulman, 1986).

Bullough and Gitlin (1995) conclude that beginning teachers should be aware of themselves and obtain knowledge of the dialectic relation between "self" and "context". In order to cope with difficulties during the survival period of teaching which may plunge most newcomers "deep into the sea". According to Darling-Hammond (2000), several studies demonstrate that if beginning teachers are not well-prepared in terms of teacher training, they will face many difficulties in preparing lesson plans, managing the classroom and motivating students to learn. For the purpose of my study, I follow these perspectives in order to investigate the difficulties faced by beginning teachers in Kien

Giang province and to determine whether or not they are related to the quality of the preparation they received at Kien Giang Teacher Training College.

When embarking on their teaching career, beginning teachers enter the professional world of teaching. The new environment in which they interact will have great impact on the process of becoming a teacher. Following is a review of the influence of workplace practices on the development of new teachers' entering the teaching profession.

2.4.3 Impact of work place practice

Pollard (1982) highlights the importance of teachers reflecting on their positive and creative responses when participating in events in the school environment. Billett (2009) and Fox et al. (2010) share a similar perspective in suggesting that new teachers greatly need support from the work place. According to Kardos, Johnson, Peske, Kauffman and Liu (2001), the success or failure of beginning teachers depend on two factors, namely individual knowledge and skills, and the interaction between them and their teaching environment.

However, the individual plays a decisive role in selecting and using the available support to their maximum benefit for adapting to their new teaching environment. My study examines this interaction between the school environment and teachers in the process of becoming a teacher. Therefore, this section of the literature review will focus on issues surrounding the initial phase of a beginning teacher's professional journey in order to understand more clearly the various impacts that beginning teacher's experience.

Regardless of how well prepared a beginning teacher is, he or she will find that their first encounter with teaching can be difficult and challenging. New teachers have to face an unfamiliar environment which includes school culture, colleagues, pupils, pupils' parents and professional paper work. The issues and problems mentioned in the studies on the first year of the process of becoming a teacher will be reviewed in this section including: reality shock, problems of the first teaching year, professional culture and support from the work place.

2.4.3.1 Reality shock

The concept of "reality shock" is mentioned in studies on the difficulties faced by new teachers in the beginning period of teaching. The term "reality shock" is used to refer to beginners in a field of work who have been trained for a position for which they thought they were prepared but realise that this is not the case when they enter the real

workplace (Veenman, 1984). Reality shock occurs when the new graduate becomes aware of the importance of their role (Ballantyne, 2007; Carter & Francis, 2001). Friedman (2000) argues that the reason for reality shock is due to the failure of teacher education in providing beginning teachers with the necessary foundational knowledge for teaching. However, this perspective only mentions one part of teacher education programs. Darling-Hammond (2006), Feiman-Nemser (2001) and Yuen-Fun (2003) argue that providing foundational knowledge is not enough, as in reality, beginning teachers need both foundation knowledge and practical skill which is gained through field work experience. Both are crucial to help beginning teachers meet the requirements of their future teaching role. From my own experience and my understanding of the research, I acknowledge that the balance between foundational knowledge and skill preparation is key, for not only beginning teachers but also for teachers in general. Hence, in this study, I aim to understand beginning teachers' perspectives on whether the practical teaching experience and foundational knowledge they received during their teacher training program had any impact on their first year of teaching, in terms of dealing with their concerns and problems.

Reality shock for beginning teachers originates from the high standards demanded of the teaching profession, school situational factors and unrealistic expectations of beginning teachers. According to Rosenholtz (1989), reality shock is regarded as one of the main reasons for over 30% of beginning teachers giving up their job after one year of teaching. Friedman (2000) defined three stages of reality shock that beginning teachers go through in their first teaching year. Negative experiences in the first year of teaching are causally linked with the anxiety of new teachers.

Figure 2: Stage of Reality Shock

The first stage : the slump	Words including: shock, nightmare, catastrophe, collapse, suffering, despair, crisis and pressure are used by teachers when describing their first few weeks.
The second stage : fatigue and exhaustion	In the second stage, the following factors are related to "disillusionment" with teaching namely: 1. Difficulties with students 2. Overload 3. Criticism 4. Lack of recognition and reward 5. Isolation 6. Blaming initial training
The third stage: adjustment	At this stage, beginning teachers try to harmonise their teaching ideology with reality; and they try to "adapt" and "adjust" to "survive" in the new environment.

A recent study on the reality shock of beginning teachers was carried out by Sabar (2004) in Israel. In his study, Sabar describes the transition from teacher education to the real work of beginning teachers as "from heaven to reality crisis". This process is similar to the situation of a migrant arriving in a country for the first time, facing difficulties caused by culture shock. Sabar (2004) proposes solutions to reduce reality shock by increased cooperation between the school and teacher preparation program to minimise the gap between "the cultures of these two institutions".

In addition to the description of reality shock provided by Friedman (2000), Flores (2006), Feiman-Nemser (2003), "reality shock" has also been described as an initial response to entering the school world for the first time. Often beginning teachers feel lonely, worried, and unfamiliar and lost regardless of the education they received and the amount and quality of teaching practice they undertook. Cherubini (2007) claims that the new graduates are not the objects in the process of being a teacher but the subjects who adjust and control their own professional development. In the induction phase, it is "a personal service approach" to offer beginning teachers opportunities to become involved in dialectic relations in the new environment, and to freely identify their own professional development. The role played by the pro-activeness and self-motivation of beginning teachers in their first year of teaching is discussed in a study by Hebert and Worthy

(2001). However, others suggest that in many instances, reality shock could be due to the fact that as a student, they were often shielded from the role of the teacher by teacher education programs (Le Maistre & Paré, 2010).

Furthermore, Johnson and Birkeland (2003a) and Kauffman, Moore Johnson, Kardos Liu and Peske (2002) suggest that a lot of new teachers start their teaching in a situation where there is a lack of information and resources, therefore, beginning teachers feel isolated in their new environment. Not knowing or understanding a new environment is one of the aspects which leads to reality shock for beginning teachers (Flores, 2001). New graduates "swim" in the school culture with unanticipated professional experience (Cherubini, 2009). Therefore, there are challenges and difficulties for beginning teachers in making decisions and applying the knowledge gained in teacher training programs to a classroom context, or whether to report their concerns to their superiors/mentor (Haskins & Loeb, 2007; Russell & McPherson, 2001). As a result, it is difficult for new graduates to make decisions in relation to their teaching or whether to report a concern to higher managers (Feiman-Nemser, 2003). A lack of information about the new environment leads to uncertainty in identifying what should be done when problems occur. Corcoran (1981) stressed that no matter how extensive the beginner's pre-service education, beginning teachers have to be accountable to students, teaching colleagues, university supervisors, and parents. In the new environment of school and community with its own norms and rituals, beginning teachers generally feel that is extremely difficult to work with such a large number of strangers. In addition, they are shocked by the number of unknown procedures, which makes it difficult to transfer their obtained knowledge and skills to their students.

Another cause of "reality shock" is because beginning teachers are responsible and accountable for their activities, just as experienced teachers are, but they are usually ill-prepared which causes them stress and anxiety (Hebert & Worthy, 2001). Danielson and McGreal (2000) documented that beginning teachers are legally accountable for their practices and work to the same standards as veteran teachers. This often causes increased anxiety, particularly when no other professional group expects practitioners to perform in this manner (LeMaistre and Pare, 2010). Yet, new graduate teachers are accountable and responsible for their students' academic achievement (Feiman-Nemser, 2003; Villani, 2002). However, often they are not equipped to handle assigned tasks in a professional way, as they lack information and experience in their new teaching position (Feiman-Nemser, 2003; Villani, 2002). Hence, it is unrealistic to expect beginning teachers to be as

responsible for teaching as veteran teachers. In order to help beginning teachers learn to cope with and increase their level of competence in their new teaching position, it is crucial to provide them with necessary instruction about the practical area of teaching, particularly in the area of teaching routine (Williams, Prestage, & Bedward, 2001). Without support and guidance, a lot of beginning teachers will feel misguided in their profession and then may resign after their first year of teaching (Glickman, Gordon, & Ross-Gordon, 2009).

However, Lortie (1975) suggests that a certain amount of reality shock is inevitable for new graduates, as it is only when beginning teachers are qualified that they can be exposed to the realities of the job. Moreover, teacher training programs cannot equip trainees for every educational situation that they will encounter in their professional life. As Cochran-Smith (2000) claims, teacher education is not a system of input and output. Whatever is anticipated, the entirety of the role cannot be completely experienced until the person is actually functioning within that role (Lacey, 1977). Further, Feiman-Nemser (2003) states that teaching is considered to be the only profession requiring new teachers to become a completely "finished product" by the time they complete their teaching training programs.

Since reality shock happens to beginning teachers upon entering the real world of teaching in their first teaching year, issues relating to reality shock mentioned by these Western researchers may be found in my research, because based on the literature review, reality shock relates to the insufficiency of teacher education in preparing trainee teachers to enter the real teaching environment.

In addition to reality shock, beginning teachers still have to face many other difficulties and challenges. Details of studies relating to the challenges facing beginning teachers in their initial stage of teacher development are given in the following sub-sections.

2.4.3.2 Problems of beginning teachers

It would be inappropriate not to mention the research carried out by Veenman (1984) in studying the problems of beginning teachers. Veenman (1984) reviewed numerous studies on the problems that beginning teachers perceived in 84 countries and identified the following eight common problems of beginning teachers:

- classroom discipline

24

- motivating students
- dealing with individual differences
- assessing students' work
- relationship with parents
- organisation of class work
- insufficient material and supplies
- dealing with the problems of individual students

Veenman's (1984) review generally shows that the problems for beginning teachers originate at classroom level. Veenman (1984) also warns that concepts related to problems of beginning teachers are abstract ones. For example, the concept of "class discipline" is considered to be abstract when one teacher considers it discipline, whilst it is sometimes seen as disorder by other teachers. There is another factor in Veenman's (1984) review that did not define the problems as viewed by participants. Veenman suggests research needs to focus on the person-specific, and situation-specific nature of beginning teachers' problems, so as to more clearly define the issue and provide information about features of the educational situations that beginning teachers experience as problematic, and about the significant characteristics of beginning teachers interacting with these situations.

With this in mind, my research seeks to provide an overall picture of the problems faced by beginning teachers in Vietnamese educational context at the present time. Fuller (1969) defined concerns as the perceived problems that beginning teacher encounter during their teaching, so in my study the terms 'concerns' and 'perceived problems' or 'problems' refer to difficulties that cause worry for beginning teachers during their first teaching year.

Classroom discipline is one of the problems beginning teacher must deal with and that emerge at the classroom level. According to Veenman (1984), classroom discipline is "the most serious perceived problem" and Weinstein (1988), and Ingersoll and Smith (2003) found that one of the most important teaching tasks is to maintain order in the classroom. It is easy to understand that establishing classroom discipline is of foremost concern to beginning teachers. Johnston and Ryan (1983) confirm that classroom discipline is a characteristic difficulty that emerges within weeks of taking up their first appointment. Moreover, Clement (2010) states that beginning teachers cannot perform effectively if they do not plan for classroom management. Palumbo and Sanacore (2007) suggest that good teaching performance stems from a well-established classroom management process. Their advice to beginning teachers includes a focus on providing

students with a range of skills, and developing intellectual and emotional growth because interesting classroom activities and the feeling of being cared for can reduce the need to misbehave.

Beginning teachers face a number of problems in their first teaching year and according to previous researchers, the problem of classroom management is the most pressing. All teachers need to possess competent classroom management skills, particularly classroom discipline, to fulfil the task of teaching (Emmer & Stough, 2001).

Weinstein (1988), following Veenman (1984), studied the perceived problems of beginning teachers and differed in his ranking of the eight most frequently mentioned problems in his study as follows:

- dealing with work load
- improving the academic performance of low achieving students
- adapting curricula and instruction to the needs of slow learners
- teaching students from different cultures and backgrounds
- identifying why students are having difficulties with assignments
- effectively responding to students' misbehaviour
- maintaining discipline
- dealing with insufficient material and supplies

The two lists reviewed above offer common ground for the purpose of my study. I will follow the two lists of issues on the perceived problems of beginning teachers formed by Veenman (1984) and Weinstein (1988), considering these lists as a foundation to identify the key themes of the problems faced by beginning teachers in Kien Giang province. I also consider these lists as topics to reference during the interviews and discussions on the main topics to identify the problems of beginning teachers in their first teaching year in the province of Kien Giang. However, I hold the view that the experiences the beginning teachers share with their subjective opinions will paint a full picture of the unique problems that they faced in the Kien Giang context.

In addition to the problems beginning teachers faced during their first teaching year, the negative and positive effects of the interaction between beginning teachers and their new professional culture is also mentioned in the literature.

2.4.3.4 Professional culture

Another issue for beginning teachers is to adjust to the professional culture. Culture is a general term used to describe activities that indicate general operating norms of

conduct within an environment (Levinson, Foley, & Holland, 1996). Schein (1990) postulates that culture can be defined as: (a) a pattern of basic assumptions; (b) invented, discovered, or developed by a given group; (c) as it learns to cope with its problems of external adaptation and internal integration; (d) that has worked well enough to be considered valid and, therefore (e) is to be taught to new members as the (f) correct way to perceive, think, and feel in relation to those problems. Barth (2002) argues that a school is an organization and each organization has its own culture.

Culture has a great influence on individual performance and is closely integrated with the values which are shared and learned in beliefs, norms and life practice (Tanner, 1997). Feiman-Nemser (2003) believes that in the process of beginning teachers' learning, understanding school culture is one of the new teachers' concerns and in order for new teachers to experience success in their first year, the professional culture that surrounds them needs to be supportive. Kardos et al. (2001) recognises professional culture as an influence in the learning process of beginning teachers in a study of 36 first-year teachers and 14 second-year teachers in a Massachusetts public school setting. They argue that the success and/or failure of beginning teachers depends not only on their knowledge and skills, but also on the quality of their interaction with colleagues in the school setting. New teachers who interact with their school colleagues are exposed to a majority of norms and patterns through their interactions, observations and advice from experienced teachers on how to become a member of the teaching staff. With this in mind, they studied and analysed the influence of professional cultures in the process of learning to teach in the induction phase of beginning teachers. They then conceptualised three types of professional cultures within schools: the "*veteran-oriented culture, the novice-oriented culture, and the integrated culture*" (Kardos et al., 2001, p 261)

In a veteran-oriented culture, new teachers are largely ignored or marginalised in their school in which experienced teachers are dominant and direct the school culture. In schools with a veteran-oriented culture, support for new teachers is quite limited. Though new teachers in schools within this culture are surrounded by experienced colleagues, they are not supported in relation to their concerns or questions about the teaching profession including curriculum, pedagogy, and child development. As a result, new teachers in this type of school environment often feel lonely and isolated. In such a culture, new teachers should try to find different sources of support, particularly when there is no exchange, communication or professional support between new teachers and those who are experienced. Consequently, the opportunities for new teachers to build

teaching experience are limited and support for beginning teachers in this kind of school culture is minimal.

In contrast to the veteran-culture, new teachers are the dominant teaching staff in a novice-oriented culture. New teachers are enthusiastic and idealistic in their teaching activities but lack from expert judgement and skilled practice. Therefore, it is common for new teachers to experience great difficulty in their teaching practice due to the lack of support from knowledgeable and experienced colleagues. Though cooperation, belief and respect exist between new teachers and the other teaching staff, no guidance from knowledgeable and experienced teachers is provided, so new teachers in this school culture have to find their own way in teaching as they do not receive effective support which addressed their teaching need in the survival stage.

The professional culture described in Kardos et al.'s (2001) study is called the "*integrated culture",* in which communication and cooperation for improving instruction are considered the norms and responsibility for educating students is collectively shared among all teachers. In this type of school culture, what new teachers are and need to be aware of is paid due attention. There is open and exchanged communication between the new thinking of first year teachers and the wisdom of veterans. Teachers in this cultural environment are wholeheartedly devoted to their teaching and professional development. Experienced teachers enthusiastically support new teachers and allow new teachers to apply the knowledge obtained from the teacher training college. Both novice and experienced teachers have a great opportunity to successfully develop their professional teaching skills in an organization which has an integrated professional culture. An integrated culture also has a positive influence on student learning. It not only enhances the skills of the beginning teachers, but also reinvigorates the passion of teachers. Borko (2004) views the value of an integrated culture as a symbol of the development and improvement of communication norms and trust, and the cooperation among teachers when they work together to find ways to improve their teaching practice.

In conclusion, professional culture partly impacts on its members through the interactions among them. Each type of professional school culture has positive and negative impacts on the success and failure of their newcomers and also the development of its culture. Through Kardos et al.'s (2001) classification of the three types of professional cultures in schools, a set of ideas is provided for discussion about reciprocal influences among members in the culture. Particularly, Kardos et al. (2001) focus on the

impact of professional culture on how beginning teachers learn to teach in their induction phase, therefore, it is relevant to one of the purposes of the study to examine the support received by beginning teachers in their new working environment, including support from experienced teachers. Kardos et al.'s (2001) particular contribution to the knowledge in this study is their focus on the advantages and disadvantages of the relationships between experienced teachers and beginning teachers, beginning teachers and other beginning teachers, and experienced teachers with each other. From this knowledge, the researcher explores which type professional culture is valued in the induction phase in terms of received support, as evaluated by the participants.

Johnson and Birkeland (2003a) state that teachers will experience more success with students in an environment which is organised to support teachers in their teaching, motivate cooperation between new and experienced teachers, and provide opportunities for professional development as well as adequate resources. Teachers are less likely to remain in a school if the school environment is not organised to support them in their teaching.

2.4.4 Support for beginning teachers.

The literature also suggests that the initial teaching period is important to the professional progress of teachers; hence new teachers need support from different sources including school administrators, veteran teachers, parents, students, friends and family. Support from veteran teachers, in particular, plays an extremely important role in the first teaching year.

Mentors play an important role in supporting new teachers in their first teaching year. An American study by Friedrichsen, Chval and Teuscher (2007) utilizes two stages of collecting data. Firstly, they held an online discussion with 50 participants on the topics of the study and the support they were offered. Of the 50 participants, 18 participated in the one-hour semi-structured interviews. The findings show that both formal and informal support received in their schools was highly valued by all participants. The researchers then categorised the sources of support given to beginning teachers, suggesting that there are two kinds of support: internal support and external support. These are useful findings, since in my study, the sources of support given to beginning teachers in the Kien Giang context identify sources utilized by the beginning teachers and which were available in their new school.

Figure 3: The source of support (Friedrichsen et al., 2007)

Sources of Internal and External Support		
Type of support	**Sources of support**	**Number of teachers**
Internal: Programs	**Assigned mentors**	**14**
	Beginning teacher meetings	**12**
	District professional development	**4**
	Instructional coaches (maths/science)	**2**
Internal: People	**Administrators**	**16**
	Other teachers	**16**
	Department teachers	**14**
	Other beginning teacher	**14**
	Students	**11**
	Parents	**8**
	Counsellors	**5**
	Special education teachers	**5**
	Athletic coaches	**3**
External: Programs	**Beginning Teacher Institute**	**15**
	Teacher preparation institutions	**9**
	Professional organisation/conferences	**9**
	University-based induction programs	**2**
	Graduate course work	**2**
	Teachers' Union	**2**
External: People	**Beginning teachers**	**11**
	Family and friends	**11**
	Experienced teachers	**6**

Through the classification of sources of support for beginning teachers based on case studies on beginning teachers in Friedrichsen et al.'s (2007) study, it can be seen that the following sources of support are highly appreciated by beginning teachers: assigned mentors, beginning teacher meetings, administrators, other teachers, department teachers, other beginning teachers and students. Their findings also show that there are four strategies applied by beginning teachers to access support: (1) seeking advice, (2) discussions with other beginning teachers, (3) seeking friends to confide in; and (4) creating, practising and planning lesson/s during teaching practice.

A study on the role of support for beginning teachers carried out by Renwick (2001) and funded by the New Zealand Ministry of Education (n= 1,828) examined the experiences of beginning teachers and their evaluation of the effectiveness of the support they received from the programs. According to Renwick (2001), there are many sources of support for beginning teachers, including the supervising teacher, professional development providers, the principal, other beginning teachers, other teaching staff, teacher support services, the Board of Trustees, family and friends and others. The beginning teachers in this study ranked the usefulness of support from the most useful to useful as follows: other teaching staff, family and friends, the supervising teacher, the principal, discussions with other beginning teachers and professional development providers. However, there are some sources of support which were not provided for beginning teachers in the induction program: teacher education staff, the Board of Trustees and teacher support services.

The studies undertaken by Friedrichsen et al. (2007) and Renwick (2001) show support from mentors is considered one of the most useful for beginning teachers. Marable and Raimondi (2007), Roehrig, Bohn, Turner, and Pressley (2008), Tellez (1992) highlight that beginning teachers benefit from mentor support to help them overcome difficulties in the first teaching year. Tellez also mentions that mentoring is a means of helping newcomers learn the norms, behaviours and attitudes of the school culture in order to adapt to their work environment after graduating from teacher training college. Cullingford (2006) suggests that the goals of mentoring for beginning teachers include:

- increasing teaching effectiveness
- increasing the number of beginning teachers who will commit to teaching during induction years

- promoting the personal and professional well-being of beginning teachers by improving teachers' attitudes toward themselves and the profession
- helping beginning teachers meet the requirements of induction and certification
- transferring the system of school culture to beginning teachers

A mentor can play a significant role in a teacher's first teaching year by encouraging them to persevere in the teaching profession and advance their career. Haskins and Loeb (2007) suggest that well-planned professional development for beginning teachers includes access to organised mentoring to help them become familiar with effective learning and teaching methodologies. A Swedish study by Lindgren (2005), which investigated the experiences of seven novice teachers mentored during their first teaching year. This revealed that the participants gained positive personal and professional experiences from the mentoring program and wanted to introduce mentoring programs to other new teachers. However, the findings also show that one of the seven participants had a negative experience with the mentor, feeling disappointed with the ineffective communication that existed between the mentor and themselves. In spite of this, the study asserts that mentoring for beginning teachers in their first teaching year has advantages.

Another study on the benefit of mentors conducted by Danielson (2002) also found that not only did beginning teachers benefit from this experience, but so did the mentors who reported that they developed better leadership skills and increased their commitment to teaching. More importantly, through their discussions with mentors about their teaching profession and classroom management strategies, the teaching ability and knowledge of the beginning teachers was refined and improved because they were supported when faced with unexpected "dilemmas". Furthermore, mentors offer support in both spiritual and professional issues for beginning teachers (Feiman-Nemser, 2003; Hargreaves & Fullan, 2000). These studies provide evidence that the role of mentors in supporting beginning teachers in their first teaching years is vitally important.

However, there can be difficulties if an appointed mentor and the beginning teacher do not get along well (Tellez, 1992), or if the beginning teacher is reluctant to admit they have problems and seek advice from their assigned mentor (Jonson, 2008). Another issue arises when mentors fail to discuss pedagogical issues with the beginning teachers and instead expect them to follow their teaching style (Gratch, 1998). In addition, Brown (2001) found that mentors did not have enough time for the beginning teachers to continue after the first year, so they had to find other sources of support in order to

experience success in their 2nd year. 'Informal mentor' is the term for veteran teachers who are not officially assigned as mentors for beginning teachers (Chao, Walz, & Gardner, 1992). A study by Tellez (1992) examines which forms of support beginning teachers found when they were faced with difficulties in their first teaching year, showing that 12% of the participants in the study felt satisfied with their officially appointed mentors, while the rest preferred to seek support from their close friends or family members before they sought advice from their official mentors.

When beginning teachers do not receive support from their mentors, they tend to find support from other experienced teachers who were not assigned as their official mentors (Brown, 2001). Allen and Eby (2003) have argued that there is no direct influence on the effectiveness of mentoring if a mentor is formally or informally appointed rather; it is the amount of time spent in communication between mentors and mentees which is the most significant aspect. Grangeat and Gray (2007), and Wilson and Demetriou (2007) have argued that beginning teachers can learn effectively through informal discussion with other teachers in their school in their first year of teaching. The reason for the effectiveness of informal mentoring is because the development of a mutual relationship between experienced teachers and beginning teachers is most effective when the two sides voluntarily agree to cooperate (Galvez-Hjornevik, 1986). Oberski, Ford, Higgins and Fisher (1999) has also agreed that the relationship with colleagues plays an essential role in seeking and obtaining support during the first year of teaching. They have also found that it was most effective when the beginning teachers were to ones to approach those colleagues with whom they have felt they could build a relationship in order to learn professional skills and knowledge. Therefore, they suggested that in order to help beginning teachers overcome the problems of their first teaching year, teacher training programs should put more emphasis on teaching interpersonal skills and the role of relationship building in the workplace.

According to Fuller and Brown (1975), in their beginning year of teaching, the teacher's primary concerns are about their own teaching ability, their knowledge of the subject matter and the evaluation of their colleagues and students. Kelchtermans and Ballet (2002) also argued that beginning teachers are particularly sensitive to an evaluation of their teaching ability. Consequently, the establishment of positive relationships plays a crucial role in helping beginning teachers to increase their "self-esteem". Beginning teachers want to do a good job, so when interacting with their colleagues, they admitted that feedback from their colleagues is very important to their

professional development (Hoy & Spero, 2005). Gold (1993, cited in Kardos, Johnson et al., 2001) has also suggested that in cases where beginning teachers do not receive positive feedback, they may be prone to leave their job at an early stage. However, beginning teachers should receive accurate information about their teaching ability (Myron & Gibson, 1985).

In addition to seeking encouragement from colleagues, beginning teachers have a need to understand the norms, school culture and professional habits in their new school (Odell, 1989). Therefore, through communicating with experienced teachers, beginning teachers can understand and learn from advice received from their colleagues in dealing with day-to-day issues (Wilson & Demetriou, 2007).

Eraut (2004) suggests that due to the benefits of received support from other experienced teachers, an informal mentoring relationship should be encouraged as "informal support from people on the spot" was more important to some beginning teachers than help from formally designated mentors. Smith and Ingersoll (2004) found that in seven out of ten cases, beginning teachers expressed the view that they highly valued support from experienced teachers who were in the same field. Hobson et al. (2009) also argue that mentoring for beginning teachers is more effective if the mentor teaches the same subjects and is less effective if mentors are the administrators such as principals or deputy head teachers.

These studies mentioned above show that mentoring is one of the most beneficial and stable ways to nurture and improve professional competencies in the teaching profession and this will be an important aspect of my questioning in the interviews. In my opinion, both formal and informal mentors play key roles in the support of beginning teachers. When new teachers have opportunities to learn and teach in a mutually, cooperative and supportive environment, their professional skills will improve.

The identification of the different levels of support revealed in the above research has provided me with a solid foundation for strong arguments about the need to support beginning teachers in their first year of teaching. As mentioned in the introduction, the role of support for beginning teachers in the Vietnam context in general and the Kien Giang context in particular has not been given due attention. Therefore, I wish to examine, from the participants' own voices, how they evaluated this support in order to draw sound conclusions for my research.

It is a crucial role of collegial relationships to support beginning teachers to resolve their concerns; therefore, the principal should create favourable conditions for mentoring activities, in order to support effective mentoring programs for beginning teachers, both formal and informal.

2.4.5 Principals' support

Many researchers identify the role of the principal as a support for beginning teachers (Kardos, et al.,, 2001; Newby & Corner, 1997; Wood, 2005) . Watkins (2005) states that it is important for the principal to become involved in the overall induction process for beginning teachers which includes assigning mentors, motivating and evaluating, as well as enforcing policy at all levels of school management. It is also their responsibility to create favourable conditions for the professional development of both novice and experienced teachers in their schools.

The communication that beginning teachers receive from both their colleagues and the principal in their first year of teaching plays an important role in ensuring that they do not feel isolated, that they feel committed to their new school and that they feel they belong to the school. Kardos et al. (2001) identified the principal as essential in changing the professional learning culture of the school. They also found that when the principal does not pay due attention to creating a supportive learning environment between veteran and novice teachers, professional growth either does not occur or it develops spontaneously, having a negative impact on the development of the school culture. Therefore, the principal plays a vital role in providing instruction for collegial interaction and encouraging professional development that has a positive effect on the teacher pedagogical skills. Upon commencing in a new school, beginning teachers have an ongoing need to relate, interact and receive positive feedback on their teaching ability from their colleagues (Wong, 2004). However, some beginning teachers do not have an opportunity to benefit from sustained feedback in a collaborative environment in their first teaching year (Weiss & Weiss, 1999). It is up to the principal to encourage professional growth with the school. In order to do this, being in a position of "the leader of instructional leaders" (Glickman, 1989), the principal should be visible and accessible, being aware of assigning mentors and creating favourable conditions for collegial interaction within the school (Frye, 1988).

Brock and Grady (1998) have suggested that early success is more likely to lead to a successful career in the future. Support from principals is very important to beginning

teachers. The principal plays a crucial role in managing, directing and being responsible for all activities within the school; however, the most important role of the principal is as a retainer and developer of new staff members (Wood, 2005). According to Watkins (2005), an effective retention program must create opportunities for beginning teachers to become involved in the learning community in the school. This can be done through successful mentorship. Mentorship is one of the most effective ways to transfer norms, standards and regulations of a learning community. Watkins (2005) has also argued that the success or failure of mentorship depends on the management and direction of principal. Newby and Corner (1997) showed that the most effective role of the principal in the mentoring process is the selection and assignment of mentors.

Hope (1999) has suggested that when the principal does not pay much attention to supporting beginning teachers, they will seek help from other sources. However, if assistance for beginning teachers is not encouraged and managed, then beginning teachers' professional behaviours may be negatively affected. On a more serious note, when there is a lack of support from the principal, beginning teachers are more inclined to resign from their teaching jobs at an early stage. Ingersoll and Smith (2003) found that the lack of administrative support was one of three main reasons causing beginning teachers to leave their teaching career.

To sum up, cited research has shown the role played by the school principal in leading and managing is extremely important to the school's development, especially in supporting new teachers in their induction phase. This role includes assigning mentoring, creating favourable conditions for building positive relationships between new and existing teachers which helps to develop the new teaching staff and more importantly results in them remaining longer in the school. In light of these perspectives, it will provide a focus for discussion and interpretation in this study.

In the next sub-section, I will present an overview of key issues related to Vietnamese policies and practice that impact on beginning teachers in general and Kien Giang province specifically.

2.5 Overview of Teacher Training Colleges in Vietnam's Education System

Pre-service training for teachers in Vietnam has been mainly developed in recent decades; however, there is a long history of actions undertaken for the professional

development of teachers within the Vietnamese school system. An overview of these developments is important to provide background knowledge essential for understanding the research context.

Teacher training colleges in Vietnam are responsible for the education and training of lower secondary and primary teachers. The teacher training colleges are managed by local (provincial) authorities (Can, 1991). During the 1970s, there was a concerted effort to increase the level of literacy in Vietnam, and after 1975, it became clear that education needed to be available to the population, especially in rural areas, but there was a shortage of teachers in all provinces at that time. In order to meet the demand for teachers in rural and remote areas, secondary and primary teacher training schools were established. Since this time, most provinces in Vietnam have had their own colleges providing in-service and pre-service training for teachers to meet the need for provincial education and training. The majority of pre-primary, primary and lower secondary teachers have to finish teacher training programs at a teacher training college.

At that time, it was generally believed that the model of 9 (years) +3 (years) or 6+3 teacher training programs (grade 9 students can be trained for three years in teacher training college to become a lower secondary teacher; grade 6 students also took part in a three-year training program to become a primary teacher) saved both time and cost in effectively developing the ability of teachers to provide education for rural students. Depending on different geographical areas and the lack of teachers, teacher-training systems also varied to a certain extent. For instance, areas with difficult conditions adopted the 9+3 or 6+3 systems to solve the teacher shortage problem.

In the past, depending on the requirements of each type of teacher, the length of study varied:

- 12 (years) + 1 (year) for teachers in lower secondary school
- 9 (years) + 3 (years) for teachers in lower secondary school
- 9 (years) + 2 (years) for teachers in primary school or in kindergarten
- 6 (years) + 3 (years) for teachers in pre-school or kindergarten

The trend to recruit unqualified teachers stemmed from the 9+3 or 6+3 systems in the 1970s. At this time, teachers who had just graduated from the 9th or 6th year were able to start their teaching careers in primary or lower secondary schools. These systems are no

longer used as they exposed many pressing issues in terms of the quality of teachers (Viet, 2013). Teacher training programs locally must comply with the standards set by the Ministry of Education and Training (MOET) in Vietnam. These unqualified teachers were provided with regular teacher training programs during summer school holidays.

However, due to their lack of training, these teachers were not able to meet the new standards implemented in the education system, such as the use of the student-centred model.The number of teachers trained under the old model in Vietnam was high: many of these were unable to cope with new educational trends, such as the use of technology in the classroom (Huyền, 2012). Therefore, the need to develop the skills of teachers was perceived to be very high, under the pressure of national reports criticising the poor performance of teachers and the unacceptable teaching conditions, particularly in rural areas of the country, especially in some islands and mountainous regions.

In recent times, new teacher graduates are now more qualified to satisfy the demand for higher standards of new teachers. Ironically, some new graduates with an award certificate have difficulty in securing a teaching position in schools in cities and have to look for a job elsewhere, often only finding a job in low-income, outer-urban and rural schools (Linh, 2012). Rỹ's (2012) survey of 526 teachers in 27 schools in five provinces found that graduate teachers had great difficulty in finding a job. Some beginning teachers had to "bribe" their way to a position paying100 million VND, which is the equivalent of US$ 5,000 per annum, to obtain a teaching position in a rural province. After some years of teaching, they move to other positions in cities where they can earn higher salaries. Therefore, it is a paradox in Vietnam's education system that in many schools there is a large number of competent teachers who cannot participate in the teaching field because incompetent and unqualified teachers are never removed (Thu, 2011)

The quality and relevance of instruction during teacher training remain low. Firstly, students at teacher training colleges do not obtain specific knowledge of the curriculum, teachers' guides or student textbooks for the subjects they will eventually be teaching in schools (Trang, 2010). In Vietnam, students studying to become teachers typically study general academic subjects in the first year, spending the second half of their studies concentrating on core units. Most of these units are not related to their specific teaching areas but focus entirely on theory. This is also a reason why some new teachers are often shocked when there are significant differences between what they learned at college and what they have to do as a teacher in a real school.

Furthermore, insufficient time is allocated to practicums in Vietnamese teacher training courses compared to teacher training courses in other countries. In some courses, the students go into the school for part of each week during the course to give them an ongoing experience of the daily life of teachers. In contrast, in Vietnam, the time trainee students spend on field work is much less than those in the teacher training programs mentioned above (MOET, 2003). This is illustrated in Decision 36/2003/QD-BGDDT on 01/08/2003 by the Minister of The Ministry of Education and Training on the regulations of pedagogy practice and field work applied to universities and colleges, which states that second-year college students are allowed to have two weeks practice and teach only one period in total and the rest of the time is for lesson observation and participating in school activities. Third-year students are allowed to engage in six weeks' teaching practice where they can teach eight periods in total (Nguyễn, 2003). Hence, the total time student teachers spend on field work is eight weeks during their three years in college. This is a very significant problem and finding a solution is not easy. I will return to this in the discussion on the recommendations in the final chapter.

Secondly, the emphasis of the training is on theoretical knowledge rather than on guiding student teachers in how to put this theoretical knowledge into practice. Furthermore, most college teachers have never taught in a secondary school and may not fully understand the practical issues associated with classroom management and the delivery of instruction. Consequently, almost all students in pedagogy colleges and newly graduated teachers are lacking in basic teaching skills and pedagogy knowledge (Uyên, 2011).

No research has been found that conducted on the experiences of beginning teachers in the context of Vietnam, including induction programs. If beginning teachers face problems in their first teaching year without receiving support from their workplace, they are much more likely to experience great difficulties.

In summary, many concerns have been expressed regarding in-service training education in Vietnam. These include: an imbalance of education standards in country areas; a shortfall of qualified teachers; negative results from the fast-track training of unqualified teachers; and gaps between theory and practice in teacher training programs. Inevitably, these have had severe impacts on the quality of education in Vietnam.

To tackle these problems, Vietnam's educational authorities have tried to develop policies to support the improvement of the quality of education. However, the effort to

improve the quality of teachers can be clearly demonstrated by the increased allocation from the Vietnamese government's national budget. For example, the percentage of GDP spent on education significantly increased from 5.3% in 2000 to 8.3% in 2005 and 9% in 2009 (Việt, 2006).

Under current government policy and legislation, most new teachers will not enter, return or stay in the workforce under these conditions. The draft of education strategies for the period 2009 to 2020 stated that from the year 2010, no new teachers could be a member of the school personnel but could only be employed on a short-term contract basis (MOET, 2008).

The following sections will discuss the impact of current policies on new teachers, and analyse the reasons these policies were unsuccessfully implemented according to their original aims.

2.5.1 Some negative outcomes of policies on beginning teachers

There are several negative outcomes resulting from the current policies on beginning teachers in Vietnam. First, the lack of job security and low wages offered by short-term contracts has discouraged outstanding teachers (Rỹ, 2012). Furthermore, new teacher contracts must be considered for 'renewal' by the local school board and school principals after one year of teaching. Therefore, graduates feel that there is a serious lack of prospects for a career in teaching where job security is not guaranteed, which is the main reason why new teachers on short-term contracts decide to leave their teaching career for a job which offers better conditions (Hà, 2012).

Second, bribery and the abuse of power by minor officials to circumvent the obstacles of political mechanisms may be one of the reasons why the implementation of short-term contracts has not been applauded by new teachers and education experts in Vietnam. In some cases, beginning teachers on short-term contracts do not dare to question the decisions or actions of their superiors for fear of not having their contracts renewed (Hà, 2012).

Short-term contracts are also liable to disable the teacher, preventing them from effectively monitoring and intervening in the progress of their students, especially in primary and secondary schools. A student's progress needs the continuity of a teacher's supervision. It is difficult for a student to achieve satisfactory progress with a high teacher

turnover. This is a consequence of the extensive use of short-term contracts as mentioned in international research (Abbott, Moran & Clarke, 2009; Kelchtermans & Ballet 2002)

Moreover, renewal procedures and payroll matters are decided on by the local school board, but there is no reliable or clear framework for the actual implementation stage. Most decisions seem to be based mainly on personal preferences and prejudices, and political and bureaucratic processes (Sơn & Hương, 2013). Under such circumstances, effective and efficient education planning is very difficult, and consequently seems impossible in regard to attracting and stabilizing academic staff, especially the development of new teachers in Vietnam's education system.

According to Decision 14 QĐ-BGDĐT (2007), the responsibility for the appraisal and support of beginning teachers rests with the principal, whose duty is to formally report on aspects of teaching competence. This important task requires beginning teachers to be judged against a set of criteria contained in a checklist and interpreted by the supervising principal. In general, the standards concerning the appraisal and dismissal of new teachers are not clear as assessment guidelines, and mandatory compliance requirements are set out without any statistical support. International research showns that if a fair judgement is to be made, consideration must also be given to the question of whether or not these school leaders fully understand and give adequate support to their new teachers before carrying out their appraisal (Hargreaves & Hopkins, 2004; Hall & Noyes, 2009). In addition, support for beginning teachers must not be based solely on an externally created view of the giver without consideration of the concept of needed support held by the group of beginning teachers who are most affected by the support and appraisal they receive. Furthermore, if continued high quality education for Vietnamese students is to be ensured without compromising the valuable resource of beginning teachers, it is logical to improve and provide effective and relevant support for these teachers as well. For this reason, the research presented here explores beginning teachers' experiences in relation to the problems they encountered in their first year of teaching and the support they received in their first teaching year.

2.5.2 The implementation of educational policies at a provincial level: Kien Giang province

This section will explain why policies relating to increasing the quality of teachers, including new teacher are not (able to be) tackled effectively or successfully in Kien Giang province in Vietnam.

Admittedly in Kien Giang province new teacher development has been constrained by the mechanism of the local government. Support for new teacher development strategies belongs to teacher development in general. At the same time, teacher development is one of the many other national priorities within a very tight development package that compete for the attention of the local authority, including modernization of agriculture, health care, capital investment and further development of an infrastructural base on which most of the services depend (Phạm , 2006). Investment in these sectors may have the upper hand in priority setting. Therefore, the issues surrounding new teachers are unlikely to be placed at the top of the legislative agenda of any local government meetings.

Strategies to support new teachers are largely apolitical and are, consequently, disregarded in almost all local agenda for the following reasons. Local priorities are created in the framework of political activity. Unless the social and political leaders recognize the value of new teacher support and development, such a need may never materialize as a priority. Policies will not be implemented unless they are perceived to have some local or national payoff. Visibility is an important factor in politics (Phạm, 2006). Unfortunately, most research and practices regarding the need for new teacher support and development lack political visibility and hence their low relative value in Vietnam's political areas in general and particularly in Kien Giang province.

Clearly, it is one thing to formulate a new teacher policy and another to implement the policy as stated. The viability and effectiveness of policy ideals depend partly on political acceptability and the existence of the necessary administrative structure to run the programs, partly on a clear understanding of the goals to be achieved, and partly on whether the availability of adequate resources along with the effective means to achieve them are seen as feasible and meaningful. Therefore, support for new teacher development strategies have been placed in the sphere of microscopic policies.

2.5.3 The need for a focus on beginning teachers in Kien Giang province

As previously mentioned, the negative effect of polices on new teacher development could be dismissed or deemed insignificant. However, a certain level of government willingness to ensure the quality of education in Vietnam is a necessary condition for any reforms to occur successfully. The following section seeks to identify channels through which issues concerning beginning teachers could be tackled from the macro level to the

micro level. Accordingly, firstly it is important to focus on the willingness of the Vietnamese government to ensure the goal of quality education. Then the issue of new teachers is examined as one of the important factors that determine the capacity to sustain the implementation of those policies once they have been enacted. Finally, individual concerns about new teachers in Kien Giang province will be discussed.

Vietnam is one of the poorest of the world's countries, with education outcomes for its citizens continuing to improve while increasing costs are well under control at over 9% of GDP. The ratio of teachers to the population cannot realistically be compared with developed countries around the world. However, it is undeniable to conclude that over the last ten years, the quality of education has improved in Vietnam (MOET, 2008). This has been the result of a great deal of effort to increase the quality of education at the macro level, as stated in the political reports on the 11th National Congress of the Communist Party of Vietnam (the 11th National Party Congress Reports, 2011). Therefore, it is clear that the policies and strategies adopted to achieve significant development in education areas have had some results.

It has been widely recognised that Vietnam has made significant progress in education, staring in 2006 and being embraced seriously in recent years when Vietnam became a member of the World Trade Organization. There has been a considerable increase in the amount of foreign investment in Vietnam, especially in the field of education. For example, from the year 2006, there has been a growing number of training programs conducted jointly by Vietnamese schools and foreign partners. To date, there have been 112 joint training programs sponsored by foreign partners whose diplomats have been officially recognized in Vietnam's education system (SEAMEO RETRAC, 2010). However, this investment in education has progressed unwiselyat a slow pace compared with countries in the surrounding Asian region (Hồ, 2012). Intellectuals, professionals, and educators interested in the future of education in Vietnam tried to uncover the reasons for the slow pace of development in education in order to propose effective strategies to achieve the objectives outlined by the government for the period 2009-2020 (MOET, 2008). There are no published evaluations which identify the most effective strategies.

New teachers are the key to maintaining and improving the education system in this trend. Fullan (1993) stated that new teachers could be change agents when they were in well-organized schools which supported teacher development. Although unemployment

is dropping sharply and the business sector is taking on more employees, Vietnam still does not have enough teachers. At current rates, Vietnam is facing a shortage of more than 8000 teachers (Thi, 2010). Hence, hopefully with the effective teaching workforce planning of the Ministry of Education and Training in Vietnam, about 8000 new teachers started a teaching career in 2011. Therefore, in the next few years, new teachers will be an important factor in the success of strategies for educational development or reforms if these strategies improve teachers' workloads and deliver gains in pay. These types of critical support will enable teachers to deliver high quality education, increase their job satisfaction and will subsequently result in the likelihood of them remaining in the school system (Johnson & Birkeland, 2003b).

The first section of this chapter presented a review of the literature in Western research about the importance of the first teaching year in the professional development of teachers, the theories related to the stages of teacher development and other factors including professional culture, received support, difficulties faced and teacher education that may influence the adapting process of new teachers in the world of teaching. These issues are highlighted in this study because they emphasise the basic problems which occur during the first teaching year of beginning teachers. These are also the three foci of this study which are: (a) to identify the problems encountered by beginning teachers during their first year of teaching; (b) to identify the received support from the participants' perspectives in their first year of teaching; and (c) to evaluate the quality of the preparation provided by Kien Giang Teachers Training College for trainee teachers. Although the literature review on the education situation in Vietnam and particularly the policies related to the development of new teaching staff have been mentioned in this section, there has not yet been a specific and targeted examination of the induction phase of beginning teachers in the Vietnamese setting, especially in the Kien Giang province. Thus, the investigation and application of Western research on issues related to beginning teachers in Vietnam have provided the researcher with important references as the basis for describing and understanding the collected data in a later period. However, the question as to whether the conclusions and solutions arrived at in Western research will be effective in improving the quality of beginning teachers in the Vietnamese context needs to be thoroughly examined, because solutions to the same issue in different contexts will obviously be different.

To summarise, in order to implement the abovementioned policies, it is necessary to thoroughly understand the local education context. I carried out a study on beginning

teachers in Kien Giang province which started from my interest in the quality of beginning teachers in the province. There are very few studies on beginning teachers in Vietnam and it is hard to gain access to these as they are only stored in hard copy at the National Library located in Hanoi and there is no digital information data management for these studies. No study has been conducted on beginning teachers in Kien Giang. Therefore, my thesis focuses on understanding beginning teachers' experiences in their first year of teaching. This is why the focus of my study is to listen to the 'voices' of beginning teachers who have just graduated from the college where I teach. The impact of the new environment on them in terms of their perspectives toward difficulties, received support, and the preparation of Kien Giang Teacher Training College for teaching in the real world will be closely analysed.

CHAPTER THREE

Methodology

3.1 The research approach

Gray (2009) states that the methodology we choose reflects how we think about the world and what kind of an approach best suits the research we are undertaking. Thomas (2009) asserts the research approach is not only simply which methods we select to study the world, but also how we think about the world. While a paradigm orients and influences a researcher's point of view in the way research questions are studied and interpreted. Denzin and Lincoln (2000) provide a definition of paradigm, which "is a basic belief in the world view that guides the research in their choice of research methodology". Paradigms determine scientific approaches and procedures which stand out as exemplary to the new generation of scientists, as long as they do not oppose it (Thomas, 2009). Crotty (1988) asserts that there are four major elements connecting and reflecting the way researchers select their research approaches and methods. They are epistemology, theoretical perspectives, methodology, and research methods (see figure 4).

Figure 4: Relationship between epistemology, theoretical perspective, methodology and research methods (adapted from Crotty, 1988)

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┌──────────────┐      ┌──────────────┐      ┌──────────────┐      ┌──────────────────┐
│ Epistemology │ ==>  │ Theoretical  │ ==>  │ Methodology  │ ==>  │ Research Methods │
│              │      │ perspectives │      │              │      │                  │
└──────────────┘      └──────────────┘      └──────────────┘      └──────────────────┘
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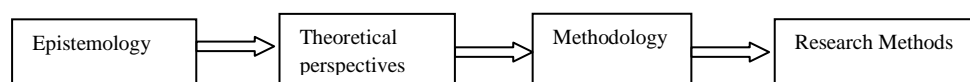
The following section briefly illustrates the interrelationship between theoretical perspectives held by researchers, the methodology and methods chosen, and the researcher's view of epistemology.

Firstly, epistemology is a "branch of philosophy that deals with questions concerning the nature, scope, and sources of knowledge" (DeRose, 2002). In other words, epistemology concerns the relationship between the inquirer and the known. Epistemology is the awareness about how we know about the world that we view through the ontology we hold (Gray, 2009). Ontology deals with

assumptions about how the world is made up and the ultimate nature of things. The question as to 'whether or not the world has a "real" existence outside of human experience of that world' (Guba & Lincoln, 2000) is the concern of ontology. The awareness of the existence of nature leads to three epistemological positions: objectivism, constructivism and subjectivism.

Objectivist epistemology concludes that the existence of the world is not dependent on the consciousness of the observer. Therefore, the purpose of research is to explore and search for truth. The theoretical perspective corresponding to objectivism is positivism which argues that the social world is a concrete structure which exists external to the researcher, so their epistemological position is to focus on studying the elements forming that structure (Morgan & Smircich, 1980). On the contrary, constructivism asserts that truth and meaning do not exist outside human subjectiveness and they are the results of the reactions of humans with the world. Interpretivism is a theoretical perspective which argues that culture and history originated and are established in the interpretation of the social life-world, linked with constructivism (Crotty, 1998) . In contrast to constructivism, subjectivism heightens the role of the subject by concluding that meaning and truth are not the interaction between subject and object and the subject constructs the meaning within unconsciousness. The theoretical perspective linked to this epistemology is postmodernism.

As discussed above, having an epistemological perspective is important as it helps researchers in several ways: (a) to identify the overarching structure of the research including different ways of gathering evidence, where to collect and how to interpret the collected information; and (b) to help the researcher understand and recognise which design will work and which will not. In this study, data is gathered using two types of interviews: the focus group interview and one-to-one interviews with a group of participants who are beginning teachers in Kien Giang province in Vietnam because of the belief that people can have different perspectives on the experience or situation under investigation.

Moreover, in order to identify the factors that contribute to the experiences of beginning teachers, I, as the researcher, have to understand the participants' perceptions about what happened to them in their first teaching year. This is necessary because the realities of the first teaching year are constructed by the

new teachers themselves directly in their real schools in Kien Giang province. I understand from Guba and Lincoln (1994) that reality is a mental construct of individuals, and such constructs "do not exist outside of the persons who create and hold them" (p.143). In addition, according to Husserl (1973), it is assumed that "the world in which we are already living furnishes the ground for all cognitive performance and all scientific determination". Moreover, Heidegger (1971) asserts that meaning lies within the way individuals deal with a situation so that the situation constitutes the individual. Therefore, I chose to explore the difficulties faced by beginning teachers and the support available to them in their first teaching year through their own voices around this complex practice.

Methodology is 'a philosophy of science' and the aim of methodology is to assist researchers to understand the process of scientific enquiry (Kaplan, 1988). Gray (2009) argues that methodology reflects the ways researchers apply their perspectives on epistemology and theoretical perspectives in practice. According to Guba and Lincoln (1994), methodology focuses on the best means of acquiring knowledge about the world and represents the theoretical formation, important suppositions and features of a human science viewpoint (see also Van Manen, 1990). In order to find answers to the research questions, quantitative researchers often focus on fixed measurements (reducing measurement to numbers), and hypothesis testing to analyse the causal relationship between variables, not the processes (Bryman, 1984). The focus of quantitative research refers to the quantity (how many). Research activities are conducted through experiments using statistical analysis. The purpose of research is directed to description, prediction, control, verification and hypothesis. The design is determined early and tends to have a more "perfect" structure with a large sample that is both random and representative (Cohen, 2000). Collecting data is conducted through a test, scale figures, surveys, questionnaires, and the results are analysed by using statistical findings in order to make an exact generalization

In contrast, qualitative researchers do not look for meaning in the form of numbers in data collection but in the form of words to describe what happened in the field work (Johnson & Christensen, 2008). Qualitative research focuses on research quality ("essence and quintessence"), the philosophical root of which is phenomenology and symbolic interaction. The main activities of quality research are field work, ethnography, grounded theory and case study (Creswell, 2006).

The aim is understanding, describing findings, and hypothetical eruption in quality research and the design is flexible to use, evolving, dynamic, and natural background research. In this framework, the source of the data is a small target, not random, and data collection involves using the researcher as a primary instrument, inductive analysis, and the findings are comprehensive, holistic and transferable (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007).

In summary, in the selection of the research approach and the research methods, the most important element is to understand the researcher's view about the nature of existence. The researchers' view about the construction of truth and meaning influences the decisions they make, whether it is measured through objectivism or subjectivism. With these considerations in mind, the researcher decides to collect qualitative data or quantitative data or both, in their search for knowledge.

3.2 The rationale for choosing a qualitative case study research

The main purpose of my study is to examine the first-year experiences of beginning teachers and as argued above, I have chosen to use a qualitative approach for this. Regardless of the methodology being used, concerns of ontology and epistemology about the nature of reality and the relationship between the researchers and the things being studied must all be considered. My research approach is influenced by the epistemological perspective of constructivism. As I hold a subjectivist view of reality which sees each individual construct their understanding of reality, it seems to me that each beginning teacher will have a personal experience of their lives which will be constructed through their individual views in different ways, even if the phenomenon is the same. In my research, I am looking for the interaction between the participants and the events that happened in their first teaching year. I will use this data to identify the problems and the support they encountered and, through their perspectives, evaluate the quality of their preparation for teaching. Accordingly, the chosen methodology for this research is qualitative as this is appropriate for researching interpretive dimensions of a social context. I am hoping it can help to bring about a detailed picture of perspectives and interpretations that the participants want to tell. According to Kohlbacher (2006), this dimension must be followed if we are to reach appropriate conclusions. Consistent with this, Barone and Eisner (2011) argue that educational research not only describes a matter or a phenomenon but also answers questions such as why it occurs; what is significant

about it; and how it functions. Furthermore, Marshall and Rossman (2011) argue that this process brings out a clearer and deeper picture of an issue and its meanings.

While qualitative research focuses on context and looks at emerging data it also allows that data to be interpreted. The intention of this research is to seek the meanings that beginning teachers attach to their behaviours and experiences that I, as the researcher cannot predict. To provide boundaries for the research I have selected a case study approach: as Thomas (2011) concludes, interpretation and case study fit nicely together.

As I wanted to gather data from the participants which would enable me to better understand the perceptions of these beginning teachers, I believe a qualitative approach is appropriate. Research is acknowledged as a process to better understand interactions in the individual's world (Patton, 1990).

The next decision to make is what kind of qualitative methodology is appropriate to this enquiry. There are a number of research methods that fall within the qualitative traditions of inquiry and Creswell (2006) identifies the following:

- narrative-biography study
- phenomenological study
- grounded theory study
- ethnography
- case study

My study does not fit with the criteria of biography, phenomenology, grounded theory or ethnography. Ethnographic inquiry focuses on the range of behaviours displayed by participants in their particular cultural setting, which was not possible to explore within the setting of the research. Grounded theory has a basic position which is to generate theory by building from interpretations of data, not from previously generated theoretical frameworks (Corbin & Strauss, 1990). The goal of phenomenological study is to fully describe people's lived experiences in relation to what is being studied. A notable point within phenomenology study is that it does not follow a theory or model during the research process, but generates interpretations of their meaning by exploring the essence of people's experience about the phenomenon. Furthermore, during this process, the researcher has to differentiate abstraction, theories, generalizations, and beliefs generated by the participants in the related phenomenon (Groenewald, 2004). A narrative - biography study focuses on the stories told by individuals. The main claim of this kind of study is that humans are story tellers who structure their stories by the way they

experience the world. Within this narrative biography, researchers apply analysis and presentation methods in order to bring these stories alive (Creswell, 2006). My approach makes use of some aspects of my participants' lives, but only those relevant to understanding their experiences in one year of teaching: the structure and themes of my use of narrative are different.

I have selected the case study as the most appropriate method for this research, this being first-year teachers' experiences, in this instance, in the province of Kien Giang. Creswell (2006) states that case studies allow the researcher to explore 'detailed, in-depth data collection involving multiple sources of information that are rich in content'. Yin (2009) argues that there is no formula for answering the question of "how do I know if I should use the case study method?" However, he also suggests that the selection of research methods mainly depends on the research questions and adds:

> the more that your research questions seek to explain some present circumstance... the more that the case study method will be relevant. The method also is relevant the more that your question require an extensive and "in-depth" description of some social phenomenon (Yin, 2009, p.4)

The case study method is discussed in greater detail in the following section.

3.3 Case study method

Stake (2000) states that in case study research, the *case* can be an individual, a group of people, an organisation, a program, an innovation, a process, a service or an activity. According to Creswell (2007), case studies allow the researcher to explore in depth a program, an event, an activity, a process, or one or more individuals. Yin (2009) also explains that when compared with other designs, case studies can provide 'holistic and meaningful exploratory characteristics' and 'descriptive' study reports, and that such a design focuses on a contemporary phenomenon within a real-life context. According to Stake, (1978) case studies provide an opportunity to acquire insightful knowledge regarding an individual or event. These parameters suit the study of beginning teachers in Kien Giang province which I am undertaking to provide insight into the issues these teachers faced in their first year of teaching.

The identification of the boundaries in case studies is especially crucial because it identifies what is and what is not "the case" (Stake, 2000). Merriam (2009) supports this idea arguing that *cases* are bounded and have clear limits about what is included or excluded. Smith (1978) explains a "bounded system" as being a single study, a unit which

is surrounded by boundaries, and then asserts that researchers are able to fence in what they want to look at in their study, and localize the subject of the inquiry to obtain in-depth information. In developing the design of my study, the boundary of the case was recognised as including beginning teachers who had graduated from Kien Giang Teacher Training College and have one year's experience in teaching.

The three different types of case studies, as described by Yin (2009) are exploratory, explanatory and descriptive. The exploratory case study is used to explore the phenomenon under study where the phenomenon 'has no clear, single set of outcomes' (p.20). The explanatory case study is related to causal links where the researcher seeks to explain why and how the phenomenon is happening in a real life context. It mainly seeks to answer the 'why' questions. The descriptive case study is used to describe the phenomenon and its context. Descriptive research may seek answers to 'who', 'what', or 'where' questions. Merriam (1988) referred to three types of case study, identified again by whether the study is descriptive, interpretive or evaluative. Stake (2000) identified two major types. One is *intrinsic*, undertaken because one wants a better understanding of a particular case 'this case itself is of interest'; and the other is *instrumental*, used when examining a particular case to provide insight into an issue or to refine a theory. The third type discussed by Stake is the collective case study where a number of cases are jointly examined

Using these explanations, my study is an *intrinsic* case study because, as a teacher trainer I embrace an intrinsic commitment into fulfilling my task of finding ways to better educates would-be teachers in our province. Therefore, I want to investigate what my former students experienced in their first teaching year after graduating from the course in which I teach. To find answers to my concerns, this case study will provide a better understanding of the situation.

This study also meets the requirements of a descriptive case study as defined by Yin (2009) because I am seeking to identify the common experiences and feelings of beginning teachers in Kien Giang province in terms of their readiness to teach.

Considering further parameters of the case study identified by Yin (2009), this is a single case study. Yin suggests that there are four types of case study design: holistic single case, embedded single case, holistic multiple-case and embedded multiple cases. The single case I am examining is the cohort of beginning teachers in a particular province of Vietnam. It does not meet the criteria of a holistic case study or what Thomas

(2009) called a 'nested' case study. A holistic case study limits researchers to examine one unique/ extreme/ critical case (Baxter & Jack, 2008). As mentioned in the literature review, in Vietnam, each province has one teacher training college that has been established and operates according to the requirements and characteristics of its geography and socioeconomic conditions. Therefore, researching the experiences of beginning teachers requires a localized and specific research process. Beginning teachers each have their own experiences of the first teaching year, even if they teach in the same school. It would therefore not only be inappropriate but unwise to conduct multiple cases in the current research. Hence, the current research satisfies the criteria of (and will adopt) a single case study design (as Yin clarified).

3.4 Sampling and participants

My research purpose is to understand the experiences of graduates from the teacher education course in my college, The Teacher Training College in Kien Giang province. To do this, I collect data from a number of former students who have completed their first year of teaching so that I can describe their experiences and understand what it was like for them when they entered the world of work. I selected purposive sampling as the most appropriate method of participant selection. Creswell (2006) and Patton (1990) wrote that purposive sampling involves the conscious selection of certain subjects and the subjects I need to identify are former students from our college. Ritchie and Lewis (2003) advised that purposive sampling is appropriate for qualitative research that requires the collection of in-depth information and by adopting this type of sampling; I expect to receive a full description of the participants' experiences about their first teaching year. From these, I will then be able to identify the common experiences of these new teachers in Kien Giang province.

According to Creswell (2006) and Patton (2002), purposive sampling is the selection of participant candidates who are considered to be representative of the desired population and who are judged knowledgeable about the subjects or areas being examined. I adopt purposive sampling because of the need to identify a particular population within the boundary of those who could be included in the study and who share certain characteristics.

Furthermore, as revealed in the literature review that beginning teachers had significant concerns regarding problems encountered during their first teaching year and for which they received support, purposeful sampling is beneficial because my research

focus is very specific. Overall, purposive sampling is applicable to my research, which explores the experiences of individuals in their first year of teaching who are employed in a range of school settings. The following criteria are chosen because they are relevant to beginning teachers in Kien Giang, and will result in the provision of rich data and experience. These criteria also enable me to explore the themes surrounding the case.

Figure 5: Research participants' inclusion criteria

| Beginning year teachers (in the first year) in Kien Giang province |
| Willingness to respond to my invitation |
| Teaching in secondary and primary schools in Kien Giang province |
| Graduated from Kien Giang Teacher Training College |

3.4.1 The process for selecting participants

I decided to start recruiting participants for my research during the school holidays as teachers are not busy with their teaching so they would have more time to become involved in the research and I would have more time to work with them as well. This would require me to travel to their homes to meet them, which would be time consuming; however, I was aware of this difficulty and ready for this challenge.

Firstly, I phoned the Vice-Director of the Provincial Department of Education and Training to talk about my research purposes and to ask for permission to interview the first-year teachers in schools in Kien Giang province. It was agreed, via telephone, that I send emails and phone to ask for help from my colleagues to bring me the documents that I require, including the participants' information sheet and the participant invitation letters in English and Vietnamese. On 25 May 2011 I received approval from the Director of the Provincial Department of Education and Training (see Appendix D) to gain access to all schools and work with the beginning teachers in Kien Giang province. Then I planned to make appointments with the directors of thirteen District Departments of Education and Training in the province to ask for a list and contact details of all first-year teachers in the province.

Fortunately, when I visited Kien Giang Teacher Training College to discuss teacher training and my research topic with my experienced colleagues and also to acquire the necessary information for the fieldtrip, I was informed that all teachers from the first to

the fifth year were attending a professional development course in the college. So, I simply visited the dormitory management office and asked for the list of names and contact details of the participants that I needed. It was much easier for me to work with the participants in the dormitory instead of travelling a long way to their homes.

Thanks to the help from the dormitory manager, I was given the list of all first-year teachers and their room numbers. Then, I went to each room in the dormitory to introduce myself and my research topic and to recruit suitable candidates. In the end, eleven teachers volunteered to participate and I asked for their mobile phone numbers to inform them of the schedule of the focus group discussion. It is not possible to provide an exact number of first-year teachers enrolled in the program but officials whom I contacted estimated the number to be about one hundred. So, my sample represents approximately 10% of the total of available first-year teachers in the province.

At that time, I was fortunate to meet some of my students who had become first-year teachers. Before coming to Australia to enrol in the Doctor of Education, I had taught two classes in 2008 and these students had become first-year teachers by 2011. We were extremely pleased to meet each other again and they agreed to participate in my research. They also helped me by encouraging some other first-year teachers to become involved in the research. Two days later, I received confirmation that thirteen beginning teachers had agreed to participate in the focus group discussion.

Finally, the venue and time for the focus group discussion were fixed with four groups and 24 participants. The time and date were scheduled for the convenience of the participants and were held after classes and after the afternoon meal, and not on a Friday or weekends as the participants spent these days with their families.

The one-to-one interview participants were selected upon the completion of the focus group discussion. Purposeful sampling was used to enable the researcher to select respondents through which the case could be known (Stake, 2000). Several participants who were involved in the focus group discussion wanted to engage in further discussions with the researchers about issues that they felt were hard to talk about in front of the group. Convenience sampling was considered when recruiting participants, as Marshall and Rossman (2011) believe that convenience sampling is selected with the aims of to 'save time, money, and effort but at the expense of information and credibility'. For example, after the group discussion, participants can volunteer to take part in the one-to-one interview, however, if the researcher does not see there is a need to investigate the

group further to obtain more detailed information, or if no-one in the group discussions wants to participate in an interview at a later time. This means that it depends on certain conditions and its convenience then the researcher select the participants.

3.5 Collecting evidence

Yin (2009) recommends sources of evidence including: documentation, interviews, direct observations, participant observation, and physical artefacts. However, Yin also states that sources of evidence also include films, photographs, and videos, 'street' ethnography, and life history, while Marshall and Rossman (2011) suggest four primary methods of gathering evidence in qualitative research, namely participation in the setting, direct observation, in-depth interview, and document review. Thomas (2009) categories sources of evidence depending on its characteristics which include:

- source mainly uses words: interviews, account, diaries, group interview, focus groups, interrogating documents
- source uses words, images and/ or numbers: questionnaires, observation, image-based methods.
- source mainly uses numbers: measurements and text, official statistics, other numerical data

Stake (1995, p.50) suggests that qualitative researchers can recognize which source of data is appropriate for their research, based on their experience and through their "sensitivity and scepticism".

In my study, the research purpose is to understand beginning teachers' experiences through their stories. There are many data collection methods, such as observation, writing journals or using the Internet to discuss and collect information on the first teaching year of beginning teachers. However, as the purpose of my research is to investigate the experiences of teachers in their first teaching year, I did not apply the observation method as the twelve-month period of their first teaching year had already expired. Moreover, when a teacher is observed in the classroom, he/she will usually perform to the best of their ability and will make a greater effort than they might usually make in their daily teaching when he is not being observed. According to Suddaby (2006), a researcher should minimize any action which may contaminate the observation. As mentioned previously, I was in Australia to pursue a Doctor of Education and I had to take into account the time constraint, the cost and the limitations of observation, so I did

not apply observational methods in the research. Therefore, I utilized other forms of data collection, including one-to-one interviews, focus group discussions, and documentation to collect data for the qualitative case study research.

3.5.1Focus group discussion

Focus groups are a research technique to collect data through group interaction on a topic determined by the researcher (Morgan, 1996). Morgan (1996) contends that the ideal number for a focus group ranges from six to ten people. Marshall and Rossman (2011) agree with the definition and add that a focus group should include from seven to ten people who have characteristics suitable for the study's focus.

Marshall and Rossman (2011) state that using focus group discussion has many advantages that allows the researcher to flexibly investigate unpredictable information which may arise during the discussion. Thomas (2009) informs that the researcher must identify the reasons for organizing a focus group before conducting a focus group discussion. To start my research from a position that would allow me to develop a flexible approach and pursue the issues raised by the participants, I considered that focus groups would be appropriate. They would also allow me to gain a general picture of the beginning teachers' situations and to identify from those groups, participants who would be willing to take part in individual interviews. These additional interviews would meet Morgan's (1996) idea of combining focus group discussion with other research methods as these techniques are frequently combined. The focus group discussion helps to explore the breath of the information while individual interviews provide the opportunity to explore the issues at greater depth.

The discussion in the focus group was organized in the expectation that some general issues would be identified by participants in relation to the problems they experienced, the support they received, and the role of Kien Giang Teacher Training College in preparing them for the real world of teaching. Once the focus groups were completed, I identified what I saw as the emerging broad categories and used these as the main focus for the one-to-one interviews that would allow me to dig deeper for additional information.

Similar to other methods of data collection, the focus group discussion has its own set of weaknesses, of which group dynamics is one issue (Morgan, 1996; Marshall & Rossman, 2011). Certain situations, including participants expressing contradicting opinions or one participant dominating the discussion or changing the focus of the topic,

could occur in a group discussion; for example, during the discussion one member in the group may talk more about himself and occupy most of the discussion time. In a situation such as this, the facilitator has less control in a focus group discussion than in one-to-one interviews. In addition, when listening to an audio recording of the discussion, it can be difficult to identify which participant is expressing a point of view, hence the discussion is usually video recorded. I carefully monitored the focus group discussion to ensure that the discussion stayed on track. To address the second issue, although I did not use a videotape, I asked one of my colleagues to act as a facilitator to lead the discussion while I documented the content of the discussion and focused on identifying whose ideas were being expressed. Therefore, when I listened to the recording again, this helped me to recognize whose ideas were being expressed in order to clarify the information later.

3.5.2 In-depth interviews

The primary source of evidence chosen in this qualitative study involved interviewing each participant, the purpose of the interviews being to delve into what people said about their own experiences in their first year of teaching. According to Marshall and Rossman (2011), information collected from interviewing plays an important role in qualitative research. Seidman (2006) has stated that the aim of the interview is not to receive answers to questions, nor to test the hypothesis of a certain theory, but to assist interviewers to understand the participants' experiences of the phenomena. Stake (1995, p.64) has stated that using a case study results in acquiring a description and interpretation for the phenomenon. Each person has his own view of the same matter and the interview is a helpful tool to collect this diversity of views of reality. Therefore, the function of the in-depth interviews was to allow me to access and understand the participants' interpretations of reality about their first teaching year experiences.

In the in-depth interview, the participant was not limited to only answer the specific questions of the researcher as the purpose of this research method was to allow the researcher to gain a better understanding of the experiences of beginning teachers in their first teaching year. However, this is not to say that there was no underlying framework for the interview. Before conducting the in-depth interviews, the researcher held group discussions to obtain background information about the context of the study and key information relating to the three foci of the study. In order to dig deeper in relation to the information collected in the group discussions and to facilitate a more diversified analysis

of the collected data, the researcher decided to conduct in-depth interviews. Therefore, in this study I used a semi-structured interview with open-ended questions.

- Semi-structured interview: has a set of predetermined questions (Bogan & Biklen, 1998; Freebody, 2003). Hence, it allows the researcher to cover the three issues, these being the problems faced by the first-year teachers, the valued support they received and the quality of their teacher training preparation (refer to Appendix E for the predetermined questions)
- Open-ended questions enable researchers collect more information when interviewees are free to answer and express a wide range of perceptions about the issues (Wilen & Clegg, 1986)

During the interview, the researcher did not exactly follow the set of open-ended questions as predetermined and the order of the open-ended questions was changed, depending on the situation of the interview. This was done to ensure the interview ran smoothly and the researcher did not lead the answers. Though it cannot be guaranteed that the order of questions in the five in-depth interviews was the same, in order to ensure consistency and coherence in the interviews and to identify any themes emerging from the responses, the researcher read and listened to the transcriptions several times while analysing the data.

In this research, prompts and probes were used to dig further for more information on the events mentioned by the interviewees. Sometimes prompt questions were also used to take the participant back to the conversation if they diverted from the topic (Leech, 2002).

After conducting four focus group discussions, I had collected comprehensive information on the teaching experience of these teachers. Then I summarized and drew out the main ideas which needed to be clarified more deeply in one to the one-to-one interviews.

The main ideas included:

- problems in communication with colleagues, having no mentor, schools far from home and the teaching profession.
- receiving support from friends and colleagues
- Feelings of how well beginning teachers have been prepared in Kien Giang province.

Based on purposeful sampling and convenience sampling, five participants were recruited for the one-to-one interview.

Interviews were scheduled individually, based on the participants' availability and location. Each participant was interviewed privately in a location that provided limited or no distractions. At the beginning of the interview, participants were asked if they approved the use of an audio recorder. All participants agreed to the use of this device, which allowed me to accurately transcribe the interview at a later date while making other notes and comments during the interview. The interview time averaged from 50 to 60 minutes The consent letters were signed by the participants and they were informed of the research purpose. In order for the respondents to communicate openly and without trepidation, it was important to establish a positive rapport with the participants prior to the start of the interview. Usually, participants are more engaged in conversation which starts with questions related to their daily activities, for instance, how was their professional development course this summer? This helps the researcher to naturally lead the discussion to the main topics.

3.5.3 Document collection

Stake (1995) states that collecting information through examining documents is the same conceptual process as observing and interviewing. Yin (2009, p.101) shared this idea with Stake and suggests that "documentary information is likely to be relevant to every case study topic". According to Marshall and Rossman (2011), the background information of the case study can be withdrawn from documents because of its objective characteristics. In my study, in order to better understand the setting in which the beginning teachers constructed their experience, I reviewed written materials at the provincial level in the form of reports on the beginning teachers' situations in Kien Giang province.

Yin (2009) argues that collecting information by combining documents with other sources helps researchers gather strong evidence. Marshall and Rossman (2011) note that documents could be used for interpretive meaning. For this reason, in my study, I used documents to interpret and clarify the experience of the beginning teachers. Therefore, documents issued by MOET relating to current regulations on mentorship and teacher training programs were closely reviewed.

3.6 Data analysis

Marshall and Crossman (2011) propose that data collection and data analysis are usually carried out together to ensure a consistent explanation in a qualitative study. According to Stake (1995), data analysis is the process of making meaning about cases from the first impression to the 'final compilation". The data analytical strategy most preferred in qualitative research is "relying on theoretical proposition" (Yin, 2009). By using this strategy, researchers can use research questions or topics mentioned in the literature review as the background for data analysis. Thus, in my study I started the data analysis together with data collection process as I want to investigate case studies on the following main topics:

1. perceived problems of beginning teachers in their first teaching year
2. received support they valued
3. the role of Kien Giang Teacher Training College in preparing these beginning teachers to overcome the mentioned problems.

I analysed the data through one-to-one interviews which would give me to a better understanding of the case.

According to Stake (1995) searching for meaning is often searching for patterns and I combined this search with Thomas' (2009, p.198) idea of the 'constant comparative method' in which the search for patterns and themes calls for data to be compared and contrasted to highlight the similarities and differences that enable me to code data . Or as Burns (2000, p.432) defines it, "classifying material into themes, issues, topics, concepts and propositions". However, as mentioned previously I had three main areas that I wanted to examine based on my reading of the literature and these areas served as a template for my data analysis as required by Stake (1995).

3.6.1 Process for analysing data

These are two stages in this analytic process, the first stage I spent carefully reading the data transcriptions from four focus group discussions to draw out the general issues discussed. The second stage I analysed data from one-to-one interviews to figure out themes for the study. The two stages are presented as follow:

In the first stage, as mentioned in the section on the purposes of collecting data from focus group discussions, I summarized general issues of the experience of beginning teachers in their first teaching year. After each discussion, I summarized the main content and read it out for the participants to comment, and got the agreement from them for my

summary. However, after that I also sent them the summary in written form for them to check the content of the discussion again. There were three major broad issues mentioned in four focus groups, including perceived problems of the first teaching year, valued support received, and the quality of preparation for the first teaching year.

After obtaining general issues of beginning teacher experience in their first teaching year, I used these issues to get more insights in five individual interviews. In my study the set of procedures used for analysing the data from five individual interviews were described below.

In the second stage, I transcribed the entire audio taped of one-to-one interviews by myself. This enabled me to immerse myself data reading once more to make 'the researcher intimate with the material'(Marshall & Rossman, 2011). After I completed reading all transcripts, I read them again and I highlighted important impressions that made sense to me, in terms of how these meanings helped me to understand responses relating to my research question. The highlighted impressions included words and phrases. Guba and Lincoln (1994) name these kinds of data the smallest units of information in a text that can stand by themselves and provide the information relevant to the study.

I made a list of these impressions. Thomas (2009, p. 199) calls this list "temporary constructs". After that, I divided into two columns. The left column is the list of temporary constructs and the right one is the sources where the construct is evidenced.

For example in the left column, I listed the problems and the support which were some of my impressions

Temporary construct	Page numbers and notes
Poor transportation	**IDinh23, ILan 50**
Relationship between mentor and mentee (support)	**IChuc10, ILan67.**

I labelled the participants with artificial names; the one to one interviews were labelled with I; and number relates to the number of the page in the transcription. I also highlighted each major issue in the temporary construct. For example, I highlighted the

issue about the relationship between mentor and mentee mentioned in the transcriptions red.

Thirdly, I read through the transcriptions and focused particularly on the ones I highlighted, then compared and reconstructed the list of temporary constructs in order to identify the important themes in my data. Thomas (2009) suggests that at this stage, researchers should spend time to reread the transcription with the accompanying notes and refine the list of temporary construct until they capture the 'essence' of the data, then label which are the themes.

I further sorted these impressions into the broad themes. For example, the impressions including poor transportation, teaching in branch schools, poor living standards, difficulty in communication with parents, lack of opportunity for further training, were components within the broad theme about 'perceived problems of the first teaching year'. This is the main theme that will be discussed in Chapter V; however, I am not totally confident in the conclusions of these themes, so I will provide detailed descriptions of these inter-related themes in order for readers and related persons to make their own interpretation (Stake, 1995).

According to Thomas (2009), network analysis is one of the strategies to show the connection between themes in research. Figure 6 shows my network analysis (I have reordered it three times as I saw the various overlapping of the relationship between themes)

Figure 6: The network analysis
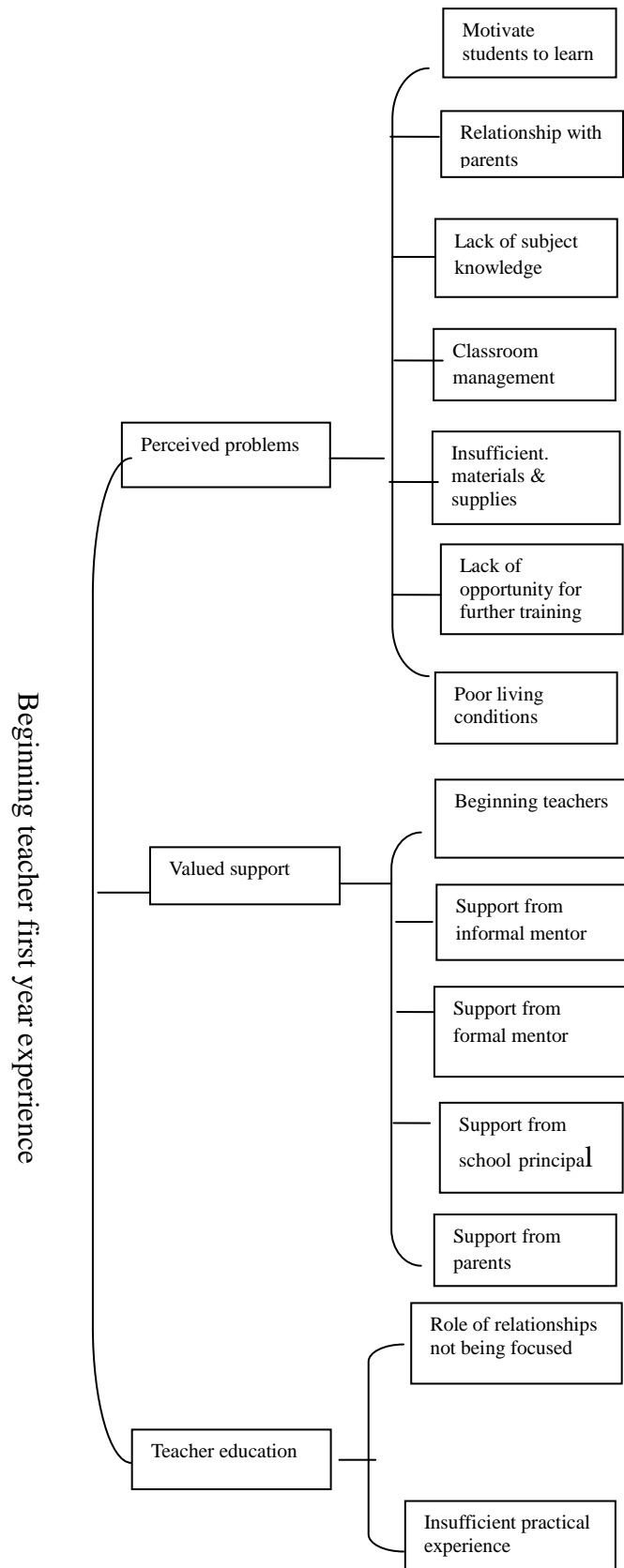
3.7 Establishing quality case study research

In both qualitative and quantitative research approaches, a high value is placed on the quality of the study. According to Marshall and Rossman (2011), for some individual purposes, researchers may manage to fabricate data or arrange to collect artificial data. In order to prevent the impact of the researchers on the research results, standards of quality research are established based on the requirements of the inquiry. For example, a quantitative inquiry mainly focuses on the research results replicated in another context, so the methods and the measurement have to be precise and statistically convincing to outsiders.

On the other hand, in qualitative inquiry the main focus is to investigate and deeply explore phenomena in specific contexts, and there is "no single truth for all". As a result, the question of how much the recorded data reflects what actually happened in the real context (Burns, 2000) is a main focus in qualitative inquiry. Therefore, in order to obtain credible research findings, investigators in both qualitative and quantitative studies should illustrate that their research processes are reliable and valid. As Morse, Barrett, Mayan, Olson and Spiers (2008, p.14) state:

> Without rigor, research is worthless, becomes fiction, and loses its utility. Hence, a great deal of attention is applied to reliability and validity in all research methods

However, there are differences between qualitative and quantitative inquiries in terms of the strategies and concepts used to demonstrate reliability and validity. As different epistemologies are applied towards the events or phenomena, each type of inquiry has its own terms or concepts regarding the quality of the research results. A "good" quantitative study is reliable if it can be replicated in different contexts. However, qualitative research is based on different assumptions of reality, and validity must be established through different criteria Merriam (1988). In the same vein, Stenbacka (2001) states that it is impossible to judge "good study" in a qualitative inquiry within the framework of a quantitative inquiry.

Patton (1990) points out that it is a major responsibility of a researcher to ensure validity and reliability during the research process. To ensure the validity of this study I have used the strategies suggested by Merriam (2009). These strategies are:

1. member checks
2. peer review
3. researcher's position or reflexivity

4. rich, thick descriptions

1. I used member checking for both the focus groups and the individual interviews to ensure I had reflected their views accurately. After each focus group I sent the participants my summary of the issues we had discussed to make sure that I had recorded them accurately. They were all satisfied with what I had written. If there was anything I did not understand during the interviews I rang the person to clarify their meanings. When the transcripts were completed I sent them to each person for validation. They were all happy with what I sent them as they agreed with the transcripts

2. There were ten PHD candidates who were my fellow students in the education field at Latrobe University, all being lecturers in the Teacher Training Colleges in Vietnam. I involved them in discussion about the issues related to the beginning teachers at the commencement of my study and continued to use them as my expert colleagues during the analysis and completion of my study. They also endorsed my transcriptions to verify that they were accurate recordings and translations (appendix F).

3. According to Merriam (1988) in qualitative research the researcher's role is to be the instrument of the study. 'The researcher is the primary instrument for data collection and analysis. Data is mediated through this human instrument'. Bogdan and Biklen (1998) support this idea and argue that researchers immerse themselves into the process of observing, analysing the data and interpretation of the findings and so become the key instrument for analysis. Finally, Guba and Lincoln (1994) claim that the researcher will create a definite and illustrated picture from their analysis of the information and data collected from the participants. As such, the subjectivity of the researcher in qualitative research must be recognised and accepted. In this study my insight and experience in this study will be acknowledged through my writing in the first person. I believe that I am well equipped to be the researcher in this study and in Chapter One I introduced myself and my interest in this research topic. Qualitative methodology admits and validates me in this role.

4. My study aims to achieve a "rich and thick description" to allow readers to make their own decisions regarding transferability. Such description draws pictures in words of something tangible, providing vivid descriptions of how it feels and looks like. 'Transferability' is expressed by returning the transcription

of the one-to-one interviews and focus group discussions to the participants allowing them to review their contributions and amend their ideas where appropriate. It helps ensure that their contributions presented reflect their understanding and intent. This type of cross checking by the participants shows that the collected information has been clarified and verified carefully.

3.7.1 Ethical considerations

Marshall and Crossman (2011) argue that any study is grounded in three moral principles of 'respect for persons, beneficence, and justice', where respect for persons means people bear their full right to participate or refuse, and their privacy and anonymity have to treated confidentially; beneficence means that researchers have to ensure that their study does not cause any risks or injures to participants and the moral principle of justice means that researchers have to carefully take into account the current justice and the amendment of previous legal practices. Bearing these considerations in mind, I have to ensure that my research is carried out in such a manner that any potential harm to participants is managed and minimised.

Voluntary participation and informed consent are the two principles taken to protect the right of the participants. I emphasized in the consent form that participants were on a voluntary basis and were free to leave the study at any time. Especially prior to a focus group discussion, participants were assured that their personal identification would not be revealed during the discussion. Therefore, if they had any sensitive information to share, they could talk with the researcher after the discussion. Each potential participant was sent an invitation letter (See Appendix B) that clearly explained the research purposes, the contact details of the researchers – the person responsible for the research, and the impact of involvement on the participants, allowing them to have more time to decide whether to participate or not. Finally, before conducting the one-to- one interviews and the focus group discussions, the participants were informed again of the content of the invitation letter and the participant information sheet to ensure that they fully understood the issues related to their right, and the informed consent forms were signed by each participant if they wished to participate in the study

The final important point I consider is the protection of the participants' privacy. By privacy, it is understood that the participants solely decide what can and cannot be mentioned in the research report. Therefore, participants were sent the transcriptions for their verification or to add more information if they wished. Confidentiality is also

ensured to protect the participants' privacy. In my study, in order to ensure confidentiality, people and locations were assigned artificial names to limit possibility of them being identified as well as to prevent them being linked to the information they supplied.

The prerequisite for research students at La Trobe University is to gain approval from the University Human Ethics Committee or the appropriate Faculty Human Ethics Committee before conducting fieldwork. I successfully gained the approval of the Education Faculty Human Ethics Committee in La Trobe University in July 2011.

Summary

In this chapter, I have presented my perspectives on the existence of the world and the approach applied in my research. I have outlined the qualitative case study methodology used as a framework for the overall data collection and the analysis of results. I presented my consideration of the moral principles and methods applied to achieve these principles in my study. The following three chapters will present the data and then my interpretations about these data also given.

CHAPTER FOUR

First year teaching problems and concerns, valued support received, and the quality of preparation from the teacher training college

This chapter outlines the data gathered from four group discussions in order to collect general information on the context of beginning teachers in this study. These data enabled me to identify general information on the research topic and invite potential participants to attend one-to-one interviews to assist me to gain deeper insight into the issues mentioned in the focus group discussion.

To investigate the participants' experiences in their first year of teaching, I invited those who had agreed to take part in the focus groups to a meeting that held in the College. I provided refreshments to create a relaxed atmosphere for our discussions.

There were four groups, each with six participants. The groups were randomly named Group one, Group two, Group three and Group four. All discussions were audio taped and transcribed in Vietnamese and then summarised for general issues about the problems they faced in their first teaching year, the support they received and the quality of their preparation for the teaching profession.

Figure 7 (see following page) shows the result of issues mentioned in four focus group discussions which also includes the participants' quotes.

The greatest problems discussed by 22 of the 24 participants in the four groups related to the quality of preparation in teacher training college, including the contradiction between field work and real teaching, not being oriented the role of relationships in work place and lack of the preparation for handling with paperwork and the work of form teacher.

Issues discussed in four focus group	Group one	Group two	Group three	Group Four	Participant representative quotes
Issues about perceived problems					
Teaching in branch schools (16)	5	4	3	4	*Because of teaching in the branch school I did not keep up with the school latest information announced in the main school that is about fifteen kilometres far away in the condition of no public transport in rural areas*
Teaching in Khmer ethic community usually in remote areas (9)	2	3	2	2	* Sometimes I explained my lesson so many times to my Khmer students, but my students were not able to follow my lesson, just because they did not understand my King words*
Teaching low ability students and crowded classrooms (12)	3	3	4	2	* There were so many students in the class. I could not handle and manage them, and the students were in chaos. I felt extremely upset at that time*
Poor transportation and inadequate accommodation (11)	3	3	3	2	*I was scare of taking the small boat in bad weather when the waves are sometimes higher than the boat, I knew I had a safe trip when the boat reached the school gate and I was alive*
Teaching in a low economic background community (15)	3	5	4	3	* Since I was merely the new one in the school with a lot of work to do and learn to be familiar with, I was not able to do much to prevent students from leaving the school due to poverty*
Lack of support from school principal (10)	3	4	5	1	* At first my school board did not pay attention to me. My vice principal said that I could teach whatever I wanted*
Mismatched between mentors and beginning teachers (13)	3	3	4	3	* I had two mentors; one was the school principal as such she was very busy with meetings outside and inside school. The other mentor was the physical education teacher while my major was maths, therefore, during my first year I only met my mentors only two time and did not learn much from the*
Issues about support received					
Sharing troubles and difficulties with someone who was in the same situation (17)	5	4	4	4	* As a newcomer in the school, I did not dare to ask anything that I want to know. Then I called my friend, also new teacher but this teacher had an aunty with over ten years' experience in teaching. my worry was solved by sharing my experience with my friend(*
Teaching in friendly environments with helpful staff	2	3	2	2	*It felt wonderful to be in my school atmosphere. I received tremendous support from my principal and the academic staff. How lucky was I! My grade leader was very helpful. She carefully guided me through my first teaching year(*

(9)					
Support received from people outside the schools (6)	2	2	1	1	** On the beginning days I did not have a mentor, so whenever I had difficulty I went to his school and asked for his advices. This was good*
Support from formal mentors (7)	2	2	2	1	** The relationship between me and my mentor was very good. I was liked by her. We taught the same grade so I learnt much about the practice of teaching from her*
Support from school principal (2)	2	0	0	0	** My principal and vice principal encouraged me to marry and settle down here(*
Issues related to KGTTC					
Lack of time for practicing in field work (22)	5	6	5	6	** During practicum, I had little time to contact with secondary textbooks and teaching practice so I did not have a chance to explore thoroughly curriculum and syllabus documents for secondary level which I have to teach later in my real school*
Field work experience and real teaching not connecting (22)	6	6	5	5	**During my placement time I taught in the city school where there was a computer room. I taught ICT lesson for the students here. I had to eat and slept with the ICT lessons. But ICT was not be taught in my real school where electricity was very limited. I wasted my time in learning and practicing about ICT in most of my placement time*
The role of relationship in work place practice not being oriented (22)	6	5	5	5	** I want to learn more about how to communicate effectively. At the first time contacting with people I want to make a good impression on them. In my school some situation I could not control myself, I did not know how to do in some sensitive cases. I did not know about this until I was in this real school*
Desired to learn more about doing paper work and the work of form teachers (22)	6	6	5	5	** During teacher training college, the knowledge about the duty of form teacher I learnt here was very superficial. Because of not being in real situation I could not image how hard the job was. Now I really wished if I had a chance of being back to the teacher training college ,I would have learnt carefully all detail about the duty and role of form teachers*

Figure 7. The result of issues mentioned in the four focus group discussions.

The following sub-section details issues about three major issues examined in this study. These are   the problems they faced in their first teaching years, support received and the quality of their preparation for teaching profession.

4.1 The problems faced in the first year of teaching

From the focus group discussion, it was clear that the new teachers faced many difficulties in their first year of teaching. These included teaching in branch schools, teaching in Khmer ethnic communities that are usually in remote areas, teaching in a community with a low economic background, teaching low ability students, crowded classrooms, poor transportation and inadequate accommodation.

4.1.1 Teaching in branch schools

It is important to understand the nature of branch schools in Vietnam, especially in remote areas in Kien Giang province where there are commonly two or more branch schools in a main school. The school principal and the board of education are usually in the main school. Although branch schools are often a long distance from the main school, the leadership and management in the main school usually covers all branch schools. There are few classes in branch schools in remote areas. Some teachers said that their branch school was located a day's walk or about 20 kilometres from the main school. There is no public transport except small boats on the river and bicycles along a path that usually becomes slippery and muddy in the rainy season. Teaching in these remote branch schools causes great difficulties for new teachers.

Access to resources is also an issue in branch schools. Teaching materials and reference books are commonly housed in the main school library, so teachers in branch schools have limited access to these resources. The problem of distance also makes it difficult for teachers to receive information from the main school on a wide range of general school-related issues.

4.1.2 Teaching in a Khmer ethnic community in remote areas

One of the issues reported by new teachers over recent years in remote branch schools was teaching in low income communities, especially communities with a large Khmer ethnic group. In Kien Giang province, there are about 1.8 million people with 12.5% of the population comprising the Khmer ethnic group (Nguyễn, 1985). Teaching in these areas causes difficulties due to the language barrier between the teachers and the Khmer students. Examples are given in the following stories of the interviewees.

Phuong talked about her first day of teaching in a remote school. All her students were from the Khmer ethnic group, and she did not know the Khmer language at all. It was hard for her to communicate effectively with her students. She said

> *I taught in a branch school far away from the main school. All of my students were Khmers; they did not understand my language. I did not understand their Khmer language either. I spoke in my language, they spoke in their language. The best thing I could do at that time was to keep the students inside my classroom until the end at the day. This lasted for two months until the educational authorities assigned another teacher with a Khmer background to take over my job. It was a nightmare time for me.*

Inability to use the Khmer language prevented these new teachers from teaching effectively because their students lacked Vietnamese words to fully comprehend their lessons. As a result, one of the new teachers felt teaching was a nightmare.Vu's experience expressed in a focus group conversation revealed:*There were many Khmer families in my school's local district. Parents did not pay attention to their children's academic achievement. I did not know any word of the Khmer language, while my students were not very good at Kinh Language. Sometimes I explained my lesson so many times to my Khmer students, but my students were not able to follow my lesson, just because they did not understand my King words. Sometimes I asked them to take extra classes without a fee, but it did not help at all.*

As such, in four group discussions there were nine among 24 participants who revealed that they had experience teaching in Khmer ethnic community and the problem they most mentioned was the language barrier between them and students. Besides language problem in some households, Khmer community in remote areas had low income. This also made the first teaching year of these teachers challenging

4.1.3 Teaching in a low economic background community

Teaching in a low income area was a major problem for the new teachers as it resulted in unmotivated students. Low income parents did not want their children to go to school because they expected their children to do the housework or take care of their younger siblings while the parents worked outside. In addition, some secondary students have to work on the farm to supplement the family income. The challenges of motivating students to learn in these remote low income areas are described by the participants in one to one interviews. Long and Khang identified that some parents wished to let their children to go to school but their family was extremely poor and they were busy with their hired labour jobs to earn their living. Their children were too small to go to school by themselves because it was dangerous to go alone without adult supervision (this area is in Mekong Delta region, and the only mean of transport is by boat or walking through

paths with a lot of foot bridges over small canals and children easily fall off the water if they go by these ways). Therefore, it was beyond their capacity to let their children to go to school. Moreover, their elder children were required to stay home to look after their siblings to let their parents secure to do to work. Thanh said:

> *Making parent's education conscious and encouraging them send their children to school was a difficult and challenging task. I had to go to all households of a village (there was over 200 households in one village) to advertise for the universal primary education campaign. The most concern of such extreme poor families was food and clothes rather than how their children can learn writing or reading*

One among 13 participants identified the necessity of helping these poor families to overcome poverty then they can support their children to go to school. Dao expressed

> *When my students were often away from school without permission, I tried to find out the truth about this problem. One of my students said to him he took a day off for rice harvesting, so he could help with his family's expenses. His parents would be more satisfied with his harvesting work than his learning, especially in rice harvesting season.*

This teacher added that

> *There was an official statement claiming that the problem of student truants would be solved by local authorities, school administrators and teachers working together to find the reasons and then keep students in schools. However, in practice the difficult task of truant reduction becomes the responsibility of the teachers.*

Thi also mentioned that

> *Some parents also expressed their expectation for their children to go to school, though they were exempt from tuition fee, there were some shopping they had to prepare for their children by the beginning of a school year including textbooks, new clothes, notebooks and other fees required by the school etc. Therefore they had to set aside their willing to let their children go to school to spend for their earning for their living*

In sum, more than a half of the participants had experience in teaching in low socio-economic background community; it seemed because of living in poverty, parents were not able to let their children go to school. And the difficulty of young teachers was that they were unable to motivate their students in studying and overcoming the high drop-out rate that originated from the low social-economic background of the community. And it was assessed by some participants to be beyond their capacity.

4.1.4 Teaching low ability students and crowded classrooms

One of the issues mentioned in the focus group discussions was the difficulty of teaching low ability students in crowded classrooms. Details of the participants' harrowing experiences of teaching low ability students in crowded classrooms and teaching students were given in the focus group discussions.

Of the 24 first-year teachers in this study, 12 talked about their concerns about teaching low ability students in crowded classrooms. As Tuy commented:

> *Before being assigned as a teacher I had been a receptionist in school, so I recognized that new teachers are expected to be assigned to teach the "hard" classes. Some experienced teachers, being tired with having many low ability students in their class, just wait for newcomers to take over these classes.*

Another participant, Chi, was not be assigned to a crowded classroom, she struggled with low ability students. She told me that once she started teaching, she soon realised that she had to teach in an abnormal class where almost all students were less obedient and had low learning ability. Chi added that:

> *I came to my school one week after the beginning of the new school year. At that time there was a large class with over 50 pupils, so they decided to divide the class into two. Half of the class were likely to be good students. I was in charge of the other half of students who had low-grades and were less obedient. It was this unfair assignment that created more work for me. I had to spend more time with low ability students and instead of going home after the morning shift to prepare lessons for the next day, I had to stay at the school in the afternoon shift to tutor the low ability students without receiving any extra pay.*

Another talk about teaching in a class with a large number of students but there was no weak students; it was because students were at different grades in her multigrade class. Dao said:

> *It was extremely rough to teach in a multigrade class. I had to teach in a multigrade class right from the day I entered to my school (also a branch school). I was so confused the first time because I did not know what to do in a multigrade class and how to organize a multigrade class. I talked to myself "alright I should teach what I know." I just made sure that I had to keep this class in order at the end of the day.*

In short 12 participants among 24 believed that it were because of large number of students in their class and weak students that made their first teaching difficult; however their experience in this situation was not totally similar

4.1.5 Poor transportation

Travelling long distances from home to schools with poor transportation and bad roads was mentioned by the participants as one of the difficulties they faced. All four groups mentioned the problems of poor transportation as they all taught in remote branch schools. Some participants said teaching sometimes was fun but the long travel to work was terrible.

Travelling long distances from home to schools with poor transportation and bad roads was mentioned to be one of the unpleasant experiences among the participants. Eleven beginning teachers in the study commonly mentioned the troubles of poor transportation in their stories. They all taught in remote branch schools.

Long is one participant who experienced the motion sickness while travelling long distances by boat. Long taught in secondary located on a remote island. Long said he has to take a thirty kilometres trip from his home to a small boat dock and wait here at least a half hour before departure time. It took him another a half hour to the school in a small boat. Long told me that at first he was scared of taking the small boat in bad weather when the waves are sometimes higher than the boat, and how he got seasick because of wildly waves. Long said:

I knew I had a safe trip when the boat reached the school gate and I was alive.

Que talked about the worry of their relatives when beginning teachers travelled long distance to school because the traffic was dangerous and frequent accidents occurred:

Everyday whenever I took my motorbike to go to work, my mother often said to me: "You should ride slowly and carefully. It has been a lot of accidents happened".

In addition to the troubles caused by travelling long distance, the lack of support from school principal was identified by some participants in group discussion

4.1.6 Lack of support from school principal

Receiving limited support from school principal also emerged in the focus group discussions as an issue for beginning teachers. The new teachers who participated in the study expressed in one way or another that teachers in main schools were given more attention than teachers in branch schools because the school board was located at the main school.

The following statement made during group discussion illustrates this:

Teaching in branch school sometimes was not received supervision from the principal. For example, a teacher took one or even two days off and asked her colleague teaching in the next class to take care for her class, but the school board was not aware of that (in Viet's statement).

The lack of support from school principals is exemplifies by Khang in terms of how his enthusiasm for teaching was dampened. He said

At first I planned my lesson very carefully. I received good feedback after my first appraisal observation. I was very happy. However, I started to lose my enthusiasm because no one in my school administrators paid attention to me. When I was in trouble with classroom management, no one cared for me. Sometimes my mentor who was also my school principal did not know that I was in difficulty with teaching workload, when asked her for her advice about lesson planning or writing about students' report, she said she was so busy that she could not give me her time.

The lack of support from school leaders become clearer from the story recounted by Minh when the stress of teaching in her first year unfolded. She struggled with difficulties in communicating with colleagues when she first started teaching. She had to take one month off teaching due to stress. Minh said:

My principal told me that it was normal that you, a new teacher, were being stressed about such troubles in your first teaching semester. Then she said: "the day I entered this school, I already had 7 years' experience, I was still being shocked for one year. Your troubles are normal girl, just keep going.

She added

He just told me like that, but did not do anything to help me overcome my problems.

The experiences of the ten first-year teachers in this study revealed that in their first year of teaching they did not receive supports from their principals and some of them indicated that the lack of support from school principal made them less interest in teaching

The other major factor that caused difficulty to beginning teachers was the mismatch with their mentors.

4.1.7 Mismatch between mentors and beginning teachers

Another prevalent issue for the new teachers was that there was a mismatch between the mentors and themselves. Most of the participants in the study did not receive much

help from their mentors because their mentors were not suitable. As Hien explained that he did not receive any advice and help from his mentor because:

I had two mentors; one was the mathematics teachers who taught in main school while I taught in the branch school. The other was the history teacher. Both of them were secondary teacher while I was primary teacher, so they did not help with anything in teaching skills or any problems I were concerned in my class.

Chuc, Dinh, Toai and Loan mentioned that they did not receive any advice or help from their mentor because some of the mentors were administrators who had no time for them as the following comment by Toai exemplifies:

Because mentors were entitled to receive 15% of their total allowance so it was prioritized to assign teachers who had power in the school; however these teachers normally were in charge of management and they were busy with a lot of meetings. And they sometime took for granted that we had been trained in the college and just teaching as being trained. If we were not sure about anything we had to ask for other teachers then applying in teaching, however, teaching in this current time was not as same as those in their time

Some had the experience of not receiving mentoring at all during their first teaching year. Thinh's experience illustrates the experience of not having mentoring. Thinh was trained to teach literature in secondary schools, but due to a lack of primary teachers in the province she was recruited into a primary school. Besides that, during her first teaching year she did not have a mentor teacher. Thinh talked about the lack of mentoring in her case.

The reason why I did not have a mentor because in my one year contract I had to teach one year first, then if I passed through the appraisal observation, I would have a mentor in my second year. The academic board offered the only assistance that allowed me to observe one lesson performed by one of outstanding in my grade. Then I taught as a fully-fledged teacher without any more help from the school.

Loan also shared the same experience of not receiving mentoring during her first teaching year.

I did not have a mentor. There were only three English teachers in my school. We had different timetables, so there was not much opportunity for me to talk with them about my concerns of classroom management.

Most of the participants in group interviews mentioned about issues of not having mentors during the first teaching year of teaching. However, some participants

experienced this issue somehow different depending on the environment they involved. And this issue through their stories was expressed in three aspects: firstly, mentors did not support them as they were busy with their work as school leaders; secondly mentors taught in different subjects and teaching shifts from beginning teachers; thirdly, beginning teachers only had short-term contracts so they were not assigned mentors in the first teaching

To sum up, the focus group discussions revealed the following problems of the beginning teachers in their first year of teaching: teaching in branch schools which were a long distance from the main school, teaching in Khmer communities and communities which were very poor, the lack of support from education administrators, and being mismatched with mentors. These difficulties made them sometimes consider abandoning their teaching position.

Although faced with a number of difficulties in the first teaching year, beginning teachers were greatly inspired when talking about the support they received and spoke enthusiastically about this.

4.2 General issues of perceived support from colleagues in the workplace mentioned in focus group discussions

4.2.1 Sharing troubles and difficulties with someone who was in the same situation was a major discussion point for many of the participants.

The research participants stated that they needed to have someone they could talk with, believing that this was one of the most important supportive sources.

The majority of the participants in the four focus groups highly valued having a companion who was also a new teacher, and sharing difficulties and worries together. When one was in trouble, the other was very helpful in terms of listening.

Some still kept contact with their friends who had been in their same teacher training course, sharing difficulties and exchanging information. By sharing issues that they were facing in their first school together, one was able to learn through the others' case.

For example the long waiting time to hear the decision about being recruited is stressful for newly graduated teachers. However, after chatting with other beginning

teachers about this problem, these beginning teachers felt released. Loan in group 4 said that:

> *I was worried and tired of waiting to hear the decision. However, after calling my friend who was in the same situation, waiting for information about when new teachers would be told the decision, I realised that some of the people who had been in the same course as me course were still waiting and one of my friends even had a relative who worked in the education and training department. This friend told me that it would be about two months before we would be told the decision.*

Hence, these new teachers, who were either classmates or who had been friends in the past worked together through phone and email solve their problems and share information together and learn through the others' experiences.

By working together, these new teachers were not only able to share classroom issues but also personal problems such as feelings of sadness and loneliness. For example, Thinh in group 2 said:

> *In my school there was a teacher who was the same age as me. We were not only the same age; we were also very similar in nature. Her character and the way she behaved were really similar to me. We became friends and shared our joy and the problems our first teaching year.*

Therefore, being faced with so many difficulties and challenges, these new teachers all experienced valuable support including having a friend to share experiences with, teaching in a friendly environment and working with helpful experienced teachers in their real teaching place.

4.2.2 Teaching in a friendly environment with helpful staff

Participants from group one, two and four mentioned the joy and delight of teaching in friendly environment with helpful staff, believing that this type of supportive environment helped them cope with the first anxious moments of faced by new-comers and made them feel more attached to the school. Phuong (In group 2) shared her experience of the friendly environment in her first teaching year.

> *It felt wonderful to be in my school atmosphere. I received tremendous support from the academic staff. How lucky was I! My grade leader was very helpful. She carefully guided me through my first teaching year. Most of the experienced teachers here have created a close and friendly atmosphere. if I did not start the conversation, they did. They often asked me how I felt in the new school and if I*

had experienced any trouble so far. They showed me how to manage the classroom and communicate well with tough parents. Indeed I was happy to be there.

Suong, Vu, and Trieu returned as teachers to the school where they had spent their childhood. Most of the experienced teachers there were their former teachers. Therefore, these new teachers felt like they were returning home. They said they did not feel embarrassed when learning from their former teachers. The experienced teachers in these schools were willing to help their former students, who were now beginning teachers. It was lucky for these new teachers to return to their home-district and to teach there.

Receiving support from experienced teachers who taught in the same professional team and on the same grade was particular highly valued as the beginning teacher could have daily discussion with their experienced colleagues about the same teaching content. This issue was mentioned by all focus groups, with 15 participants stating that they had received support from the experienced teachers (both outside and inside their schools).

The majority of participants in the four groups admitted that a good relationship with colleagues supported them greatly as the colleagues were willing and enthusiastic to help them solve their difficulties. When receiving sympathy from experienced teachers, beginning teachers can freely ask for help whenever they need it.

4.2.3 Support received from people outside the schools

Only three participants mentioned receiving helpful support from outside their schools. Lan in group 2, Duat and Que in group 4.

The experience of having a chance to receive support from an experienced teacher in other school was demonstrated in Lan's story. She received support from an experienced teacher from another school, and she greatly appreciated this source of support. She also participated in the individual interview.

The other two participants, Duat and Que in group 4, received support from a relative with experience in education sector, particularly in solving issues related to documents, reports and regulations regarding paper work. Some of their friends who were also beginning teachers phoned them to ask for information they were not sure, and Duat and Que sought advice from their relatives for their friends. (This finding reconfirms the mutual support which exists between among beginning teachers)

4.2.4 Support from formal mentors

The majority of participants did not receive supports from their official mentors during their first teaching year. Even some who had a formal mentor did not highly value this source of support in terms of resolving professional matters and concerns when they faced difficulties.

Seven participants in the focus group discussions were not assigned official mentors in their first teaching year, therefore, they had to seek supports from other people around them.

Some participants stated that their mentor was not suitable, for example, some mentors were their principals, and therefore they were busy with administrative tasks and did not have time to meet their mentees that is the beginning teachers under their supervision.

4.2.5 Support from school principal

Only two participants of the twenty-four who participated in the group discussions mentioned the support they received from their school principal, but the degree of support they received seemed to be quite weak and seemed to be only emotional support. . This was revealed in Dinh's and Trieu's experience.

Trieu commented that:

Although my school principal was very busy, he was a kind person who was always nice and friendly with everybody. Every time I saw him, he asked about my new job and whether I was having any difficulties so far. Even I knew he was too busy to have time for a newcomer like me, as being the boss, he had many things to do. Moreover, in my school, I knew most of the teachers here, so whenever I had troubles, I asked one of the other experienced teachers for advice. Actually, I did not have as many problems as a newcomer compared to other beginning teachers who were the same course as me in the Kien Giang Teacher Training College.

Dinh did not talk much about the support he received from his school principal, but he mentioned about the great impression that his school principal left on him when he first met him. It was this impression that motivated him to overcome the problems of his first teaching year.

General issues raised by the participants in the focus group discussions about the support they received during their first teaching year have been presented, including sharing troubles and difficulties with someone who was in the same situation was a major discussion point for many of the participants, teaching in friendly environments with

helpful staff, support received from people outside the schools, support from formal mentors, and support from school principal. These issues will be more deeply analysed in the five individual interviews.

The next section will mention the general issues relating to the quality of preparation participants obtained during their teacher training course.

4.3 Issues relating to the Kien Giang Teacher's Training College in preparing beginning teachers for their first teaching year.

4.3.1 Lack of time for practice teaching and field work

Four groups mentioned that due to a shortage of time for practice teaching and field work, they spent most of the time observing other teachers. The time allocated to them for practice teaching was not sufficient.

Agreeing with the other participants' opinions, Diep in focus group two argued:

During the three years studying at KGTTC, we only participated in two field trips. In the second year, we attended a two-week field-work and only taught one period and the rest of the time, we just observing other school teachers. It was not until the third year that we went on a five-week field-work placement and taught eight periods, where we taught a class for six periods and the remaining two periods were spent on doing head teacher's works.

The majority of participants concluded that the insufficient time for practice teaching and field-work made them feel under-prepared and confused about teaching in a real school at the time of their graduation.

4.3.2 What they experienced in field work did not reflect what they really underwent in their first teaching year.

All discussions mentioned the huge difference between the school in which they conducted their fieldwork and the school in which they were teaching. Participants argued that the difference were so great that it made them very confused and they found it difficult to teach in their real schools.

Long in group two:

During my field work, I felt teaching was quite easy. The school was fabulous, with well-behaved students; there were only a small number of students per classroom; the teaching equipment was well-maintained and there was a good school library. This was in stark contrast to my current school, where there is not only a lack of teaching equipment; there are not even a sufficient number of reference books for teachers. Each class had up to 40 students, and the school facilities were out-dated. Teachers could not teach on rainy days as the rooves of the classroom leaking and the student had to gather in dry areas in the classroom.

Loan in group four stated:

Students in rural areas are different from those in cities. City students receive much more attention from their parents so they drop out of school as happen with rural students. In my class, one student dropped out for a week for to have more leisure time outside the school, but his parents did not know about this as they were busy with their farming work. His parents only knew about their son dropping out when I came to their house to talk with them. However, when they found out that their son had been truanting, they said "if he is not interested in studying, just let him stay home to look after his siblings and help doing the house work".

4.3.3 Not being well informed about the importance of relationships in the work place

Almost all the beginning teachers who participated in the study reported experiencing difficulty in communicating with experienced teachers and parents when they first entered their new school. After one year of teaching, these teachers expressed that they wished they had learned more about how to build up the good relationship with the experienced teachers, parents and children as well. Effective communication would have helped to create a friendlier environment in which to work

Thi, in group 4, confirmed that

I was a newcomer in my school. I was so nervous. Sometimes my style of speaking was not strong and persuasive enough. I knew this speaking style made other teachers feel no emotion toward me. Living in a group, we should know how to build good relationship with others. Effective communication would have made it easier to do certain things.

In addition to feeling ineffective in communicating with colleagues, the new teachers also expressed their concerns about not being armed with good communication skills with parents. Good communication skills enable the new teacher to work efficiently, effectively and navigate any potential issues that may arise in communicating with parents.

Thanh, in group 3, experienced the feeling that he was not welcomed to his student's house by the parents. He was unable to control the situation. Thanh said:

> *I did not know how to talk to the parents when coming to their house. Once I went to my student's house because he was truant and a low ability student. His mother was so busy with her little child and her house work. She did not have time to talk with me. We talked for a while without any purpose. Then I went home without achieving the purpose for visiting his house. I did not know to organise and host a parent meeting .I was embarrassed when speaking before a crowd of experienced people. I heard someone saying that the teacher was so tiny how would he be able to handle grade 5 students? On that day, I was so sad.*

Thinh, in group 1, stated:

> *In a new environment if one is active and friendly, one will be liked by the others. Then everything seems to be alright to them. As a result of being liked by others, one's performance appraisal would be carried out in a friendly atmosphere.*

Participants expressed the view that if given a chance to study again KGTTC they would like to have course on the role of the relationship between teaching and the working environment.

In brief, the participants raised many general issues as they discussed the role of KGTTC in preparing them for teaching in real world. These beginning teachers revealed the shortage of time for fieldwork. They mentioned the contrast between the schools in which they engaged in practice teaching and the schools in which they were currently teaching. This contrast made them feel confused when they entered their real teaching environment. In the group discussions, the beginning teachers acknowledged the importance of having good relationships in the work place. During their three years of training at KGTTC, they were not made aware of or informed of the importance of good relationships in the work place.

4.3.4 Learning more about the duty and role of form teachers and paper-work

Participants expressed their expectation to learn more about the paper work which needed to be completed, such as how to document in record books, score and comment on school report books for students, and other works of form teacher. During their first year of teaching, grade leaders commented that they were not familiar with doing scoring record books for students.

Khang, in group3, told of the following experience:

When I first entered the school, I did not know how to deal with the paper-works including the school report books, and the score books for students and I did not know who I should ask for support. Also, I had to revise the paper-work several times before getting it done. My grade leader asked "What were you taught at KGTTC if you do not know how to do anything?" I felt so ashamed to hear this, and I felt a huge loss of face. I had been trained the theory of completing score books for students, but the format of this document was different in each school and I had did not have much time to familiarise myself with this while on practice teaching so it was a big challenge for me in the real teaching environment.

Trieu in group shared that:

I did not practice much about the duty of head teacher. I also was not informed that the head teacher role and duty was important. Because of not being in the real situation, I could not image how hard the job was. Now I really wished if I had a chance of being back at the KGTTC, I would have learnt and practice carefully in detail about the duty and role of head teachers.

Focus group discussions highlighted one of the issues was a lack of time for practice during their practicum. It was because of lack of time that issues of paper work, duty of the form teacher, insufficient teaching practice lead to their perceived problems in the first teaching year. The differences between schools where they spent their practicum and their real teaching were mentioned in four focus group discussions. In focus group participants also emphasized the role of relationships in work place practice, and provided the opinion that during their training they were not informed or oriented about the importance of these relationships.

Summary

This chapter presented general issues about the three major themes in this research. The majority of participants (16/24 participants) identified that teaching in branch school was their major concerns because some branch schools were not updated from the main school; or not received information from the main school; or getting access to resources. Other problems mentioned in the group discussion were ranked as follow (according to the number of participants commented): teaching in a low economic background community by 15 out of 24, lack support from school principal by 10 out of 24, teaching low ability students and crowded classrooms by 12 out of 24,, teaching in poor transportation area and inadequate accommodation by 11 out of 24, and teaching in Khmer ethnic community, usually in remote areas, by 9 out of 24

In terms of received support, the data indicated that most (17) of these beginning teachers assessed that sharing their first teaching year trouble and difficulties with someone who was in the same situation was highly valued in their first year.. Supports revealed by the participants were identified as follow: teaching in friendly environments with helpful staff, support received from people outside their school, support from formal mentors, and support from school principal. Data indicates that it depended on each situation and opportunities that beginning teachers could get access to and seek for different source of supports. For example, one participant said that she had a relative teaching in other school so she usually sought advice from her relative, therefore she did not have to ask for support from other sources. In contrast, some participants did not receive supports from school principal and her experienced teachers; they had to seek for sharing, sympathy and information exchange from other beginning teachers.

Coming to the end of the first teaching year, mentioning the quality of preparation from teacher training college, the majority of the beginning teachers in group discussion mentioned three factors related to the training in Kien Giang Teacher Training College including lack of time for practicing in field work, no connection between field work experience and real teaching and the desire to learn more about doing paper work and the works of form teachers.

It can be concluded that the majority of the participants in the focus group discussion mentioned their problems of the first teaching year: it seemed that most of their comments were negative. Though in life experience in general and in teaching in particular even in the first teaching year, some may also have happiness, humour and satisfaction in teaching.

As mentioned in methodology chapter, the purpose of the research is to figure out general information about the context of beginning teachers in Kien Giang province. The research conducted focus group discussion to collect general ideas, issues relating to the three focuses of the research, then I followed these issues with individuals to investigate variations as much as commonality in five one-to-one interview. The following chapter provides deeper information about the experience of beginning teachers in five one-to-one interviews.

CHAPTER FIVE

First teaching problem concerns, and valued support received, and the quality of preparation during teacher training college from five in-depth interviews.

The purpose of this study is to gain better understanding of the situation of beginning teachers in Kien Giang province in their first teaching years. The study aims to identify events, factors that happened in the first teaching year of these beginning teachers. Of particular interest is an examination of problems that these beginning teachers encountered, the received supports they valued in helping them dealing with their concerns, and the participants' evaluation of the quality of preparation of Kien Giang teacher training college in relation to equipping them to meet the requirements of the work place practice.

The previous chapter outlined data gathered from four group discussions in order to collect general information of the context of beginning teachers in this study. These data enabled me to identify general information of the research topic and potential participants to attend one-to-one interviews that supported me to get insights into the issues mentioned in focus group discussion.

In terms of searching for variation in beginning teachers' experience as much as commonality, the one-to-one interview data assists me with information at a deeper level with details of the experience told by five volunteer participants through their stories. The analysis of these data from one-to-one interview requires the identification of examples from the data that would illuminate the aims of the study

The following sections present the themes of perceived problems, support received and the quality of preparation for beginning teacher's real teaching in five one to one interviews. These collective issues emerged based on the analysed strategies presented in Chapter Three (page 62). Throughout my interpretations are presented in relation to the research focus.

5.1 Perceived problems in indepth interviews

Seven issueses emerged from the five individual interviews in relation to the problems faced by the beginning teachers during their first teaching year.

Theme one: motivating students to learn

Theme two: relationship with parents

Theme three: classroom management

Theme four: lack of subject knowledge

Theme five: insufficient materials and supplies

Theme six: lack of opportunity for further training

Theme seven: poor living condition (including a lack of basics such as

Electricity and drinking water and poor transportation)

Figure 8: Seven themes on the problems described in the five indepth interviews

Participants	Theme one	Theme two	Theme three	Theme four	Theme five	Theme six	Theme seven
Chuc	✔	✔	✔	✔			
Thuy	✔				✔	✔	✔
Dinh	✔	✔		✔	✔	✔	✔
Suong				✔	✔		
Lan		✔	✔	✔			✔

Figure 8 shows the seven themes that emerged from the five in-depth interviews. At least four of the seven themes were discussed by all the participants except Suong. Themes three (classroom management) and six (opportunities for further training) were least often raised for discussion, and theme four the most often mentioned. The overall picture suggests that although the interviews were semi-structured, relevant concerns were raised by each person. Dinh provided information covering the whole range of themese except for classroom management. Suong provided comments on the lowest range of themes. According to Suong, this relates to the fact that she was able to return to her home town to teach, and received great support from her former teachers and from her community. The following sections present these themed experienes in more detail, from the interviews.

5.1.1 Interview one - Chuc

Chuc was a participant in the first discussion group. During the group discussion, she spoke of the difficulties she experienced in her first teaching year; she rarely smiled and spoke in a gentle voice. Towards the end of the group discussion, I indicated that I wanted to recruit someone for an in-depth interview and asked whether anyone in the group had any difficulties that they would like to discuss privately. Most of the participants in the group pointed to Chuc and exclaimed "She would have!" Chuc also agreed with this comment. So I asked for Chuc's telephone number at the end of the group discussion, and invited her for an in-depth interview, to which she agreed.

Chuc was assigned to teach grade 4 at a branch school in Ngoc Chuc commune, Giong Rieng district. Ngoc Chuc school is one of three branch schools affiliated with the main school in Giong Rieng, that were constructed in order to reduce the distance travelled by students from their homes to school. The branch school that Chuc works for is only one kilometer from her home.

Chuc related the story as to how she became involved in primary school teaching. She explained that she was born into a poor farming family, and as such her parents encouraged her to pursue more stable employment as an adult, such as teaching or a similar profession. Keeping this in mind, when she failed the entrance exam to Can Tho University (one of the most famous universities in the South of Vietnam), she enrolled in Kien Giang Teacher Training College to become a teacher. Initially, Chuc was enrolled as a student with the Faculty of Literature and was trained to be a literature teacher at secondary school level. However, at the time of her graduation, Kien Giang province was short of primary school teachers, so Chuc decided to enrol in a two month training course to qualify for primary school teaching. Chuc confided in me that, upon graduating from Kien Giang Teacher Training College, it took her three months of job hunting before being accepted for her current teaching position. During that time, she was very disappointed and believed that she would never become a teacher, until finally an opportunity opened up for her and she was successful in applying for her current position. However, Chuc soon experienced greater difficulties when she entered the teaching environment.

Problems concerning communication with the students' parents occurred in Chuc's first year of teaching. She had trouble communicating with the parents due to their busy farming schedule and their limited time to attend to matters relating to their children's

learning. Sometimes Chuc was not able to answer questions raised by the parents specifically relating to school policies, for example, questions regarding the number of days in a semester that a student is allowed to be absent from school, and regulations relating to school fees, such as insurance and construction fees:

Being a new teacher at a branch school, I only had limited information concerning regulations pertaining to social insurance fees, students leaving school, and teachers' authority to approve days off for students, with or without permission from parents. When they asked about the school fees for the school year, I was unable to provide an answer.

Chuc spent time visiting the main school to collect information on issues that students' parents had queries about:

A lot of parents just visited the school once, and then did not return. I tried to contact them but it was difficult in this rural area with transportation difficulties and no means of contact. I sometimes visited students' homes to answer parents' queries and motivate their children to go to school. However, the parents were often too busy to spend adequate time with me. Often they avoided inviting me into their homes and instead just spoke to me at the front gate, whereby after conversing for 5 minutes I was so bored I soon left.

Chuc identified classroom management as the most "hard to handle". She found managing the children very challenging:

Frankly I was not familiar with classroom management at the primary level and did not fully understand the psychological development of primary students. While attending the training course and fieldtrips, I was assigned to teach literature at grade 6 at the secondary level. Those students were well-behaved and came from better-off families in the city so the class was well-organized and managed. In contrast, my current classroom management was so confused and I felt that it was very hard to handle with all issues at the primary level from delivering knowledge to managing students during lesson time and their break hours. For example, during the break hour, the students thought they could do anything they liked, so many of the students played in the streets and I had to find them when the lessons started. [Being a branch school in a remote area, the school did not have a gate.] Students sometimes asked to go to the toilet but in fact they went out to play. I was terrified when I didn't know where to find them. Sometimes I didn't know what to do when the local people told me they saw students playing outside, because if I went to find them the students in the classroom would make a mess of the room when I wasn't there.

Chuc's main problem lay with her stated inability to effectively apply disciplinary rules to her students:

My students were not scared of me; if I had stern words with them, they would then be absent from school. In the school regulations, when a student is absent, teachers must try to stop them from dropping out of school. As such, teachers had to visit their students' homes to motivate them to come back to school, so the students would not be afraid of returning.

Sometimes Chuc became very anxious when her students absented themselves from class: she wanted them to return, and and felt she could not give up the struggle to keep her students motivated to attend school.

It was really difficult in the beginning, but having been officially trained at teachers college I felt I could not give up. On occasions, when I was really upset and the students and other teachers had gone home at the end of the day, I stayed back in the classroom and did nothing but cry and did not want to go home. At times I had not arrived home by meal time, and my mother came to school looking for me and found me sitting there alone. She worried that I might have mental health issues, but could not help me in this situation as she had no relevant experience, being a farmer.

Chuc found that there were a lot of things that needed to be done in her first teaching year:

I was so confused and not familiar with the teaching routine at the beginning. I worried that I had not completed tasks correctly. For example, when I had to prepare lesson plans according to the school forms, I asked for advice from experienced teachers, but they only showed me roughly what to do. I consequently made mistakes in my lesson plans, and how to fill in paper work for students, paper work for the head teacher required at the end of each week, and how to mark tests. I found these things extremely confusing and misleading. At that time I felt teaching was too difficult, and it was hard resolving these problems. I wanted to seek advice, but I did not know what to ask, because I did not know what I should be aware of. Therefore, I felt so frustrated and upset I sometimes could not eat my meal and only drank water.

Chuc's story revealed her concern about problems of communicating with parents of students. Though she taught in a school near her house, her school was a branch school, so she was not usually updated with new information about regulations and rules from the main school in order to confidently answer inquiries from parents of students. In addition, because of the fact that she was not officially and fully trained in teaching at primary level, she faced a lot of difficulties in classroom management. Furthermore, there was a strong evidence of the disconnection between her field work experience and what she had to handle at school. Though she taught near her house, she was not in the same situation

with other participants in the focus group who commented that when they were assigned to teach at their home town they also received supports from their old teachers, but it was not in Chuc's story, she did not received this kind of support. It might be that experience in the first teaching year in handling problems they concerned was different depending on each situation.

Beside the story of Chuc, difficulties faced by other four participants reported in the following part will show the diversity of difficulties in the first teaching year. In the next sub-section, I present findings of concerns of the participants about her experience in the first teaching year in the context of teaching in a school in an island of Kien Giang province

5.1.2 Interview two - Thuy

Thuy was a 23 year old teacher, who, at the time of the interview was preparing to get married to a young colleague at the school. After her graduation from Kien Giang Teacher Training College, she applied for a number of teaching positions before being recruited by two schools. One of the positions offered was at a primary school in her hometown in the Chau Thanh district, which is close to the centre of Kien Giang province. The second school offered Thuy a position as a mathematics teacher at secondary level, which is the subject she specialised in at Teachers College. However, this school was located on the small island of Hon Nghe, in the Kien Luong district which is 100km by road or three hours travelling by waterway from her hometown. Although Hon Nghe was far from her home, Thuy decided to accept the teaching position offered there because it was relevant to her training.

Thuy briefly described the context in which she worked:

> *The school that I work at is on an island with limited transport; the majority of the local people are poor and rely on sea fishing for a living. The better-off families have homes in the centre of the province and send their children to school there. Almost all the students in my school are from poor families. Being an island district, life is very difficult here; there is a lack of drinking water for daily usage, and electricity is only available from 5pm to 11pm each day. It is very hard living here*

Thuy commented that one of the primary problems in her first teaching year was motivating her students to study. She wanted to create a better learning environment by

applying the knowledge she obtained from college to challenge her students and bring out their academic potential. Additionally, she wanted her students to work collaboratively in the classroom, to help them memorise the lessons and retain the information, and extend their expectations to study at a higher level.

> *Student motivation was a huge challenge for me. I wanted to help my students study further to prepare them for their graduation examinations and entrance exams into upper secondary level. Therefore, I searched for appropriate exercises for their homework, but the students rarely did their homework. Also, when learning how to use calculators, I suggested that they buy a calculator to practice with, but no-one bought one. The reason they did not complete their homework or buy a calculator was because they were intending to drop out of school at the end of term, so buying a calculator or doing homework seemed pointless to them.*

Thuy remarked that there is no high school on the island so after finishing lower secondary school students have to move to the mainland if they want to continue studying. [Although it is only about 30 to 40 kilometres from the island to the mainland, it takes over six hours for a round trip due to the poor condition of the roads.] As most of the students came from low income families, they could not afford to live on the mainland. Since students recognised that they would not be able to access high school education, they did not care about their academic progress. Thuy remarked that she had difficulty motivating her students to learn under these circumstances.

Thuy shared a story with me about a student she had trouble motivating to study:

> *I had a ninth grade boy who dropped out of school last year at the beginning of the second semester. During the first semester, noticing that the boy was a persistent truant, I went to his home twice to speak with his parents. Unfortunately I found no-body at home, so I did not have a chance to discuss his absence with the parents. Time passed, and then the boy dropped out completely. After questioning other students I discovered that this boy had to work to support his family. Therefore I determined it was pointless visiting his house anymore; according to the students the family often left very early in the morning for work and did not return home until very late at night.*

Thuy shared her "guilt and regret"t at being unsuccessful in prompting the student's return:

> *I felt really guilty and regretted not having an opportunity to see his parents to motivate them to allow him to continue his studies. As I had a lot of work in my first teaching year, I did not have much time or experience to deal with this case. I hoped this year in the first semester I would see him back in my class, because*

94

people don't go out fishing during this season due to the strong winds and rough seas.

Thuy also admitted that teaching in an area where the local people were poor and the parents of the students were mainly poor labourers, as well as the low motivation of students towards their studies had an impact on how she perceived her job. Generally, she enjoyed teaching, but sometimes her teaching satisfaction level was lower than she expected, so she did not have a lengthy commitment to teaching here.

> *I wanted to teach what I was trained for so I accepted this teaching position even though it was far from my hometown. Generally, I found that there were only a few students who were interested in studying, but they were unable to continue studying at high school on the mainland as their families were poor and could not afford the cost of boarding. Consequently, the students lost interest in studying when foreseeing their future even though they were capable students. Some students confided in me that they would have liked to study further in order to secure more stable employment, but their families could not afford it. I felt so sorry for these students. I thought if I continued teaching here for too long, my career would hardly improve. Because the students did not have the motivation to study, I lacked the motivation to devote myself to teaching. Most of the teachers in my school shared similar feelings to me. In contemplating the future, when I am married and have children, if I continue living here, then the future of my children could end up the same as the students here. Therefore, I have only set a target of teaching here for five or six years before seeking a job on the mainland. Because I was afraid that if I got married and settled down here, my kids would not be able to fully acquire schooling like other children in the island*

Thuy also commented on the lack of adequate facilities and reference books that necessitated her to seek information elsewhere in order to advance her own knowledge of mathematics to master the subject she taught. Thuy believes that if teachers have a profound knowledge of the subject they teach, it will help them improve their teaching profession.

> *Lack of adequate materials and resources made it hard for me to improve my understanding of my subject area. I felt the need to search for references outside the school library. Whenever I visited home, I also visited the biggest bookstore in Kien Giang province to buy more reference books. In particular, I searched for mathematics exercise books suitable for my students to help them better understand the lessons so they would obtain better results in their graduation examinations.*

However, what was key for Thuy was the lack of financial support from the school for teachers' professional development. Thuy's need for more reference books and

exercise books was not funded by the school which severely limited her motivation to self-study and develop her career.

> *I bought reference and exercise books for the students but they were not paid for by the school; I did ask for payment from the finance department but I was told by the accountant that they did not pay for books that were not required. Teachers were only required to teach what was printed in the textbooks and students were only required to do exercises from the textbooks. The salary for teachers in their probation period is 85% of official teachers, so I couldn't afford to buy more reference and exercise books for my students*

According to Thuy's story, Thuy decided to accept the teaching position offered there because it was relevant to her training. Therefore, she avoided the problem of teaching at a different level of her profession as faced by other participants. However, she taught in an island school, so she had problems of lack of electricity, drinking water and especially in her story it was because of the long distance with the main land and poverty in the island that strongly demotivated students away from study. And it was the main reason why she did not intend to teach there for long when she thought about the future of her kids. Though she tried to study more reference books was not supported by the school's regulation

5.1.3 Interview three - Dinh

Dinh graduated from the Kien Giang Teacher Training College in July 2010. After graduation, he applied for a number of teaching positions throughout the districts in Kien Giang province. In October 2010, he was successfully recruited by Hon Dat District Department of Education and Training to be a physics teacher at Hon Me Secondary School in Hon Dat district in Kien Giang province. Hon Me Secondary School is located in a remote area in the Hon Dat district and is home to a large population from the Khmer ethnic community. Most of the local people mainly earn their living by wet rice farming and/or working for some natural stone exploration companies.

Therefore, almost all the students attending the secondary school are of Khmer ethnicity and from poor families. Their parents have to work all day so they do not have time to look after their children and help with their study. Life in the area is very difficult and lacks a lot of facilities. With Dinh's hometown being located in the Vinh Thuan district, a southeast district in Kien Giang province which is approximately 70km from Hon Me Secondary School, he had to live in staff housing at the school.

Dinh told me:

Because I lived far from here, it was arranged that I stay in staff housing at the school. The accommodation consisted of a row of houses that were built temporarily for single male teachers like myself. Electricity was only available from 5pm to 11pm so it was hard for me to prepare soft lesson plans [using the PowerPoint program to plan lessons]. Running water was taken from mountain streams, and as it was not treated the local people's teeth were heavily decayed. I believe if I stayed here for a long time, my teeth would surely decay like theirs.

Dinh explained the main problem encountered in his first teaching year was that he lacked experience in teaching physics to grade 9 students. As Dinh was the only one in the school who specialised in physics, he could not seek advice about teaching methodology from the veteran teachers in the school. Thus, was frustrated with this situation and sometimes he wondered how to overcome this difficulty:

With grade 9 being the final year of secondary level, the curriculum content was very intensive with a huge amount of exercises to be completed, and being a beginning teacher here I lacked practical experience in teaching the subject. Therefore, I had a lot of difficulties with teaching and could not seek support from teaching colleagues as they did not have specialist training in physics which meant I had to research by myself.

Dinh consulted professional books to gain knowledge, because he did not have a mentor to support him in his teaching development.

That was how it was in the teaching job. If I was not quite sure about something I would read more reference books as that was the only thing I could do. Then I gradually got used to it and could conduct teaching.

Another issue that concerned Dinh was his students' low academic level and lack of motivation to study. Sometimes, Dinh felt that there was absolutely nothing that he could do to motivate his students to study and progress further. Dinh was expected to teach physics at grade 9, however, the students' knowledge of this subject was much lower than required, so sometimes he felt:

Students were far behind the subject requirements. The students' knowledge of physics was essentially nil. That is why I could not effectively teach them physics for grade 9 even though I really wanted to.

As a teacher, Dinh strove continually to support his students to regain the background knowledge of physics that they had forgotten. For those students who struggled with physics, Dinh spoke of providing extra lessons in the school office after school, and he

voluntarily did so without any payment. Despite his efforts, some of his students continued to struggle with physics. Dinh surmised that his students' struggle with basic physics concepts was no doubt due to their deficiency in comprehending the Vietnamese language used to teach physics.

> *The majority of students here were from the Khmer ethnic group, and so their grasp of the Vietnamese language was limited. This meant they had difficulties in understanding and memorising physics concepts and definitions to do their homework. When I tried to teach them more, they seemed not to understand me and I felt so helpless.*

Another problem that concerned Dinh was the lack of support from students' parents, and how to encourage them to become involved in their children's learning. Dinh was aware that the students' parents were busy earning a living, and they did not have enough time to focus on their children's studies.

> *I contacted the students' parents and invited them to meet with me at school, and I also visited them in their homes, but it did not help as they were not interested in their children's schooling beyond learning to read and count; this was seen as sufficient to them, and it was not considered necessary to study at a higher level, because as soon as their children reached a certain age, they would leave school to become hired labourers like their parents.*

> *Some parents even told me that letting their children study like this was enough; even if their children were capable of studying further, they did not have the money for continuing studies.*

When Dinh shared his concerns with veteran teachers to seek their advice on how to solve this problem, they informed him that it was extremely difficult to solve. Most of them had been teaching here for more than ten years and by now had given up. Their only advice was to let this problem be and simply aim to finish each lesson. Dinh remarked:

> *I felt so sorry for my students here but I did not know what I could do to help them.*

Another problem Dinh encountered was that he rarely found any opportunity to improve his teaching career because he was in such a remote area. He wished he could design soft lesson plans so he could participate in the *Excellent Teacher Competition* held every year by the Provincial Department of Education and Training. However, the school had limited facilities, and electricity was only available for a limited time:

The Excellent Teacher Competition was held every year by the Provincial Department of Education and Training. One of the criteria for the competition was soft lesson plans. There was only one computer in my school and twenty teachers. I knew that I would surely fail right at the beginning despite not having yet entered the competition. Do you think I was discouraged?

Sometimes it started raining during the lesson, and the classroom became so dark that I could not finish the lesson, and I spent the remainder of the time having to keep the students in order until they were allowed to go home. It always made me fall behind in my teaching schedule.

The findings of difficulties expressed by Dinh during the interview showed that his difficulties seemingly originated from teaching in a rural area with Khmer people who earning their living by hired labour jobs and did not care about their children's studying in such poor living conditions. Dinh's concerns about preparing his lesson plans, apply new teaching methodology, attending the Excellent Teacher Competition held every year by the Provincial Department of Education and Training and fostering his weak students besides school time showed that he actively tried to solve his problems though it seemly did not bring good results. It seems that outside interactions were needed to solve his problems rather than from him. For example, he could not handle his 'task' concern of how to make his students understand lessons by teaching extra hours without allowance because of the language barrier between Vietnamese and Khmer languages. Findings in Dinh' story showed that solving his concerns was beyond his capacity.

The next interview presents the problems of a beginning teacher who taught in different profession with what she was trained though she taught in her hometown

5.1.4 Interview four - Suong

Suong was a graduate secondary teacher from the Faculty of History & Geography who took up a teaching position at a local primary school in Hoa Hung commune, Giong Rieng district. Even though it was not what she was initially trained for, Suong accepted the position due to its proximity to home. Giong Rieng district has three upper secondary schools, the biggest one being Giong Rieng High School. It is a difficult district; the main industry is farming, and the majority of local people have a low education level, poor management level and the area has a slow economic growth rate.

Suong explained the reason why she accepted to teach in a different area to what she was trained for:

I knew that teaching in a different subject area would be really hard. However, I accepted the position so I could teach at a school close to my home. Being a former student at the school meant I knew some of the students' parents and teachers at the school. The proximity of the school to home meant it would save much time in travelling and everything would be easier for me.

The first problem Suong encountered was teaching a multi-grade class:

The first day of teaching, I was assigned to teach a multi-grade class consisting of three grades: grade 1, 2, and 3. I had only obtained knowledge on primary school teaching during a short two month course, and I had to start teaching on the second day (because I arrived at the school three months after the first day of the school year). I was very worried when finding that I had to teach a multi-grade class because I had to teach three different levels in one class. As a result I was totally confused at the beginning and did not know how to organise the class activities. I told myself to just keep teaching and take it as it comes, and I just tried my best to deliver the lessons and keep the students under control.

I felt so despondent, stuck, and misled when I did not teach well. My lack of experience in teaching at the primary level meant I struggled to effectively apply teaching methodology and classroom management to a multi-grade class. I decided I would not teach here for a long time as I was worried about the students' results and it was extremely difficult for me.

Another difficulty experienced by Suong was the lack of necessary facilities, text books and teaching equipment.

My school lacked teaching equipment and as you know visual aids are very important for primary students. Therefore, if we needed additional teaching aids, we had to prepare them ourselves or buy them with our own money.

This financial burden created additional problems for Suong, as she did not receive her salary for the first six months:

Due to problems with paper work at the District Department of Education and Training, myself and another teacher who started working at the school at the same time did not receive our salaries for the first six months. I had to ask my family to support me while I continued teaching here to cover my meals and travelling expenses. I felt very unhappy with the situation, particularly as I was looking forward to not having to rely on my family for support; something that I had been doing since I was a small girl up until my graduation from teacher training college. Yet here I was working as a teacher and still having to ask for my parents' support to cover my breakfast or going out with my friends. Even without a salary, I still needed to buy teaching aids because the school was unable to provide them. When I approached the principal to find out the reason why I had not received my salary, he replied that I should continue teaching without a salary, because if I gave up my position the principal would have to recruit

another teacher to replace me, and he could not guarantee a job for me until after the official decision. Sometimes I thought teaching was just too hard, and with no salary forthcoming, I wanted to give up and find another job. However, I felt more encouraged dealing with the well-behaved students and students' parents.

Even though Suong experienced difficulties with the teaching facilities, no salary and teaching in a primary school, she still felt fortunate to receive support from her teaching colleagues, and the students' parents who regarded her highly.

In the next interview, a description about the story of beginning teacher who travelled long distance to school struggle with teaching in primary school is presented.

5.1.5 Interview five - Lan

Lan was a graduate teacher from the History Faculty at the Kien Giang Teacher Training College, and was trained to be a history teacher at the lower secondary school level. However, due to there being a shortage of primary school teachers, Lan decided to attend a short training course to equip her to teach at the primary school level. This course only ran for two months, after which the participants were granted a certificate.

Lan applied for a number of teaching positions before being recruited by a primary school in the Qo Quao district. It was located adjacent to National Road 61, approximately 7km from the centre of Qo Quao district, 37km from Rach Gia, and about 60km from her hometown in Tan Hiep district. Although it was far from home, Lan still accepted the position, as she had not received any other offers at the time.

There were a number of problems Lan had to deal with in her first teaching year including: difficulty travelling from her house to school; not being allocated a mentor; not being fully prepared for teaching at the primary level; experiencing problems with student management; having difficulties in motivating students to study; finding it hard to adapt to the teacher collective; dealing with overcrowded classrooms with many grades; being scared that her contract would be terminated; and feeling ashamed when receiving negative feedback from the school vice principal.

Having to travel a long distance to school each day via poor transportation and bad roads was one of the problems Lan experienced. Lan confided that teaching was fun but the long travelling distance to work was "hard".

Because my home was about 60 km from the school and there was no staff housing available for teachers, I had to leave home in the early morning and ride my motorbike to school, and then return home again in the afternoon of the same day. My round trip took about four hours in ideal weather. In bad weather it took considerably longer and was much harder, thus I had to take spare clothes in the rainy season.

Lan revealed that:

Whenever I went to work, my parents were very worried about me because the traffic was dangerous and frequent accidents occurred. If I came home half an hour late, my parents would repeatedly telephone me to ask about whether something had happened to me on the road. Every day, only after I had arrived home did my mother feel secure and eat her dinner; if I was still not at home, my parents felt so worried.

Lan disclosed that she applied to the District Department of Education and Training for a teaching position closer to her home to reduce the traveling distance, but she was told that she would have to wait for two years before being moved to a closer school.

Another problem Lan encountered was a lack of parental support. When her students would not study and just wanted to play, Lan contacted their parents to meet her at school but they could rarely arrange a time to visit her. Sometimes she had to make special visits to the students' homes to meet with their parents and inform them of their children's study results.

The students' parents did not like me and so avoided having contact with me. Apparently some of them did not even want their children to study in my class because I had a different accent to the local people. One parent even came to speak with the principal to have his child moved to another class because his child did not understand my accent. [In the south of Vietnam, the local people living in rural areas rarely have contact with people from the north, so this can lead to misunderstandings in communication between them because of the difference in accents.] *On the occasions when I visited their homes to inform them of their children's disappointing study results, they responded that their children were bad at studying and that was why they sent them to school; if I could not improve their study, it must be my fault and they did not know what else to do. They informed me they only wished their children to study to complete secondary level, after which they would be required at home to help with the farming because it was not helpful letting them study at a higher level.*

During the discussion, Lan repeatedly commented on her lack of knowledge and skills regarding primary school teaching, which appeared to be a major concern for her.

She disclosed that she found little satisfaction in teaching the primary level compared to her experiences as a history teacher during her training at college.

> *Because primary teaching was different to what I was originally trained for, I experienced a lot of difficulties in knowing how to effectively deliver the lessons in class, so I just followed the instructions in the reference books. However, after each lesson I did not feel as satisfied as I had felt during my training periods at the college. My lack of proficient knowledge of teaching at the primary school level made me very exhausted with teaching.*

Lan also stated that because she lacked knowledge of teaching methodology at the primary level, she did not understand clearly the psychology of primary students to implement effective methods to educate her particular students. This was a concern as the majority of students in her class struggled academically:

> *I started teaching my class two months later than the starting date of the school year, (because I had applied for jobs in many schools before this school finally offered to employ me). My class consisted of half the students from one big class initially run by one teacher. The group that I was assigned to teach consisted of several naughty and struggling students with low average scores. My students often played truant so they could go out to play. On occasions, I was informed by some of the students in class that their friends were playing truant so they could play snooker outside the school. I then had to ask the teacher in the classroom next-door to keep my class in order for me while I went out to find my students. However, these students did not change their bad habits and just wanted to go and play. Unfortunately I could not give them effective advice as I did not fully understand what they were thinking and why they were so addicted to playing rather than studying.*

Lan's lack of knowledge and skills in teaching at the primary level made her first nine weeks of teaching really difficult, particularly in relation to classroom management which was in line with the school's requirements.

> *At first my school board did not pay attention to me. My vice principal said that I could teach whatever I wanted because it was so easy to teach at the primary level. As you know, I was trained to be a history teacher at the secondary level. I did not know much about teaching and learning styles in primary school. However, I did things the way I thought was alright. Nine weeks passed, and then I had to teach for an appraisal observation. Right after the observation, in front of my class the vice principal complained loudly and bitterly that my teaching style was totally different and not suitable for a primary level. I was shocked and so embarrassed at that time. He asked me why I did not observe other teachers in my grade. Then I explained to him the reason why I was unable to observe others' teaching:*

There were three teachers in grade 3 including me. One was not qualified because she only took a two-month course to become a primary teacher. The other was Khmer background, and a Khmer accent. Sometimes I was not able to understand what she said. Also, we taught the same shift so I could not manage to observe their teaching.

The vice principal said to me that "It is up to you. You can do whatever you want, but unless you can teach effectively, you will be fired."

I felt so sad and desperate with the fear of being fired. I debated with myself whether I should quit this primary school teaching job and seek to be recruited in a secondary school.

Lan complained that she was not initially instructed to carry out lesson observations, and found it hard to find anyone willing and suitable who taught at the same year level:

From the time I started teaching at the school, no one had informed me that I needed to conduct lesson observations or arranged their schedule so I could observe their teaching practice. On hearing that I needed to improve my teaching practice by observing other teachers, I felt really upset because in my school there were only three classrooms at grade 3 level, and the other two teachers were not fully qualified (they had just completed the 9+3 model). Therefore, I found there was little I could learn from them through lesson observations. Moreover, they were not willing to let me observe their lessons because they felt disturbed by my presence and they also had to spend extra time in designing their lesson plans. After hearing what they said, I was bitterly disappointed and did not want to eat anything. I was very afraid that I would not be successful at the next appraisal observation, and not be given a contract to continue teaching here. My parents took me to visit a doctor in Saigon because they were afraid that I was suffering from mental disease. Thankfully the doctor said I was fine and should not worry so much.

Lan's predicament left her feeling anxious and very disappointed but she did eventually obtain valuable support from a teacher of the same year level located in a school close to her home, and this will be mentioned in the sub-section about received support.

Summary

The theme of a lack of subject knowledge was identified by four participants (Chuc, Dinh, Suong, and Lan) as one of their perceived problems during their first teaching year, while the four themes of motivating students to learn, relationships with parents, insufficient materials and supplies, and poor living standards were equally ranked as the second most important concerns. The two remaining themes, the lack of opportunity for

further training, were mentioned by Thuy and Dinh; and classroom management was mentioned by Chuc and Lan

Figure 9: shows the results of the seven themes on the perceived problems described in the five indepth interviews.
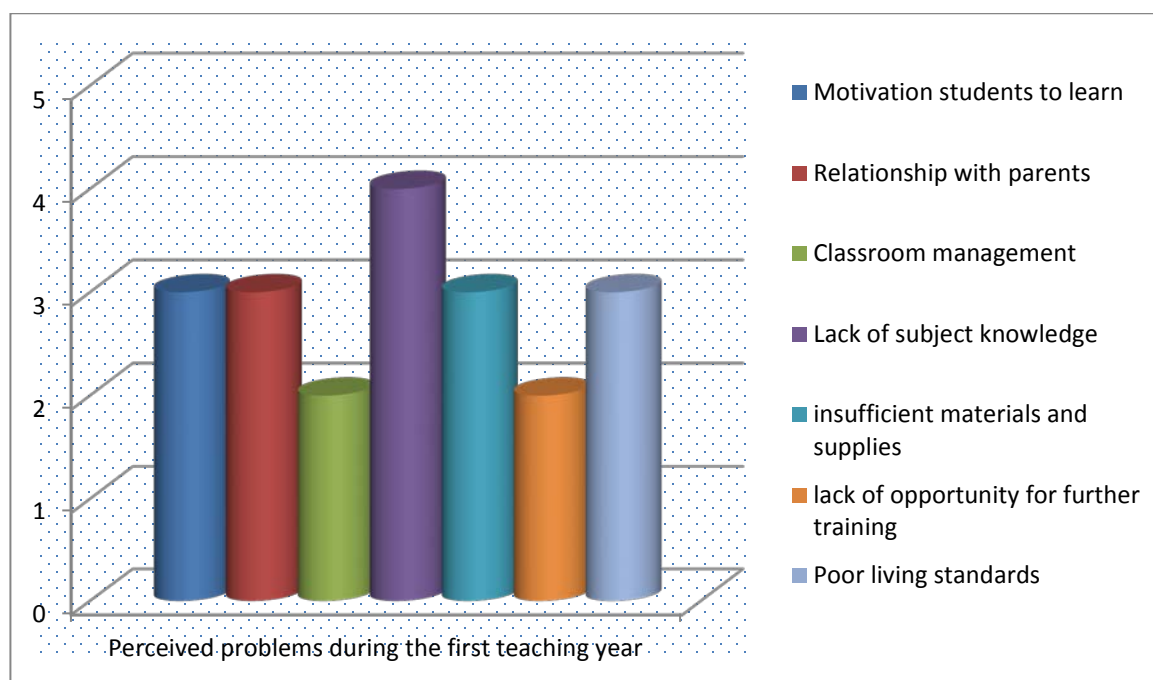
This figure summarises the interview results graphically, so we can see that there are three levels of concern. The most frequently mentioned concern is lack of knowledge (by which the teachers mean not only foundation knowledge, knowledge appropriate to teaching at the primary level, but also knowledge of classroom techniques and the regulations and practices common in their schools). The middle level of concern relates to student motivation and parental support, related to poor living standards of the community, and insufficient school resources with which to tackle these problems. The lowest mentioned level of concern relates to classroom management and lack of opportunity for further professional development. I will comment on these in the final chapter when I discuss implications for teacher education and educational policy and practice at the provincial level.

In the next sub-section I present my interpretation of the problems identified by the participants discussed under two headings: firstly, concerns about a lack of subject

knowledge; and secondly, concerns about poor living standards, motivating students to learn, relationships with parents, and insufficient materials and supplies. I also discuss the relationship between these four themes in the situation of Vietnam education.

5.2 Discussion

5.2.1 The problem of lack of subject knowledge

In research conducted by Veenman (1984), subject matter knowledge is ranked 16th of 24 perceived problems. However, in my research, this problem was mostly commonly noted by the participants. This finding is consistent with McNamara (1991) and Weinstein (1988), both of whom conclude that beginning teachers are very concerned about their lack of subject knowledge as having a thorough knowledge of the subject matter helps them to teach effectively in the classroom at the beginning of their careers.

The participants' problems of the participants in my research relating to a lack of subject matter knowledge can be interpreted as follows:

Three of the participants had trained to teach at the secondary level. However, because of the shortage of teachers at the primary level they attended a short course of two months to learn how to teach at the primary level including methodology, psychology and classroom organization. They all reported that this course was too short and they did not know how to deliver subject content to primary students. They did not have a profound background in the subject; therefore they felt ill-prepared to teach at the primary level. This lack of knowledge made them confused when teaching primary students. As Feiman-Nemser and Buchmann (1987) argue, when beginning teachers are not well equipped with knowledge of the subject matter, they will be unable to thoroughly analyse their decisions and beliefs in relation to their classroom teaching.

Though I only conducted five interviews in my research, three of the participants felt that they were not equipped with sufficient knowledge of teaching at the primary level and this was one of the main perceived problems in their first teaching year. In the total sample, four of the other participants (Quang, Duat, Diep and Tu) had trained for three years to be primary teachers, none of whom mentioned the problem of lack of subject knowledge. Therefore, this study found that only beginning teachers (Chuc, Lan, Suong) who took the two-month course expressed their concern about lack of subject knowledge compared to the beginning primary teachers who trained for three years. According to Wilson, Shulman and Richert (1987), the connection between subject matter knowledge

106

and pedagogical knowledge can be understood as the way topics and teaching skills are coordinated and organized to enhance students' learning. As such, insufficient training in pedagogy in relation to teaching young children makes content delivery difficult. From this cohort of teachers, it appears that insufficient training in subject matter and pedagogical content knowledge emerged as a great difficulty.

Moreover, the participants also found that the teaching content of the primary level and the psychology of primary students were totally different from the secondary level and secondary students; therefore, they concluded that training course caused them a lot of difficulties in their first teaching year. The findings of the current study are consistent with those of Book and Freeman (1986) who found secondary teaching requires a clear vocational orientation. Pressley et al. (2003) argue that more attention is paid to the subject content at the secondary level then the primary level, and conclude that teaching processes at the primary level and secondary level are different.

These findings on the perceived lack of knowledge of the subject matter and pedagogical content of the beginning teachers in Kien Giang province indicate that organizing short training courses to certify secondary trained teachers to teach at the primary level is an inadequate strategy. Though it may be an effective solution to resolve the shortage of primary teachers, this course is likely to fail to equip teachers who have a secondary education major with an understanding psychology of primary students, primary teaching methodology and especially knowledge of the subject matter at the primary level. It is the lack of the knowledge of subject matter at the primary education level which caused the most difficulties for teachers with a secondary education major in their first teaching year. Moreover, as mentioned in the literature review, there is no induction program to support beginning teachers in Vietnam. So when beginning teachers experience a lack of knowledge of the subject matter, their students will be disadvantaged. The participants felt that their lack of knowledge of the subject matter makes caused them to lack confidence in their ability to teach and even made the teachers feel insecure and ashamed when they were not sure whether the way they teach were teaching was right or wrong.

At the start of this research I did not consider that content knowledge would be such an issue for beginning teachers, as I was confident with Kien Giang Teachers' Training college program. However, the participants revealed their most pressing concern was the lack of content knowledge. The shortage of primary teachers also suggests that the teacher

training quotas have not been accurately estimated which has resulted in the development of the short course for primary teachers.

5.2.2 The second group of problems

Four problems were identified equally as being the second greatest concern to participants: motivating students to learn, insufficient materials and supplies, relationships with parents and poor living standards. These findings are similar the findings of a great deal of the previous work in this field such as Veenman (1984), Hebert and Worthy (2001) and Loughran, Brown and, Doecke (2001). Of these, concern about motivating students is consistent with studies conducted by Veenman (1984), and Kagan (1992). However, as mentioned in the literature review Veenman (1984) lists the perceived problems that beginning teachers identify and does not give further details about these problems. He suggests that his research is limited because of this. However, in this study I am able to provide an explanation for this result in Kien Giang province.

In my study, the participants were employed at remote schools where almost all the students lived in low income families. Students' parents were busy with their work and did not have time to supervise their children's study, and many did not even want their children to go to school because then they could not help their parents do farm and house work. This situation was the reality in rural poor areas in the South of Vietnam. Decision No. 9/2011/ QĐ-TTG issued by the Prime Minister on the promulgation of poor and near-poor household standards applied for the period of 2011-2015 (Nguyễn, 2011) states that poor households in rural areas are households with an average income of 400,000 Vietnam Dong/person/month which is equivalent to USD\$20/month. If there are two parents in a household who are working with an income of 800,000 Vietnam Dong per month equal to USD\$40/month and they have more than two children, they cannot properly look after their children and their children's schooling. This finding is important as it corroborates the research of Arndt, Huong, McCoy and Minh (2009), who concluded that the drop-out rate at secondary level accounts for 22.8% of students who leave to join the labour force and mainly concentrates on students in the Mekong Delta provinces. Grant (1989) also points out that students find it hard to totally engage with their study when their life is full of poverty and violence. This relationship between poverty, low academic achievement and motivation seems to be confirmed by the participants' data. Hence, in order to support beginning teachers in Kien Giang province to resolve their concerns about student motivation, it needs the issuance of new policies to support for

poor households and to encourage veteran teachers and school administrators to help beginning teachers overcome this difficulty.

The Vietnamese Government has issued policies supporting low income areas, especially poor and remote areas of ethnic minorities. Commins, Benson, El-Wakil, Gambirazzi, Song and Wood (2001), and Vuong Quoc (2011) found that currently in Vietnam, policies have been implemented which support low income communities, those living on island and bordering areas, and areas where there are ethnic minorities. These policies partly contributed to reducing the number of poor households and increasing the number of children going to school. For examples Program 135, as stated by the Committee for Ethnic Minority Affairs and the United Nations in Vietnam, aims to ensure the social and economic development of ethnic minorities in especially difficult communes in order to reduce the gap between the ethnic minorities in remote areas and other areas (Quan, 2009) However, the findings in this study imply that this program has not had much impact for beginning teachers, as they still faced obstacles when teaching in low income communities.

One unanticipated finding was that 22 participants had been allocated to teach in rural areas. It seems that beginning teachers find it difficult to secure a position in city schools and so are sent to hard-to-staff schools. This is consistent with Ry's finding in a survey of 526 teachers in 27 schools in five provinces, that graduate teachers had great difficulty in finding a job. Some beginning teachers had to "bribe" their way to a position paying100 million VND, which is equivalent to USD\$ 5,000, to obtain a teaching position in a rural province (Rỹ, 2012). As reported in the year-end personnel report in Kien Giang province (2011), 75% of new graduate teachers were allocated to rural and difficult areas. The remaining 25% of new graduate teachers were reportedly unemployed and some had to find other jobs. This report and the findings in this study reveal that new graduate teachers in Kien Giang province mostly have to teach at remote schools, which is difficult, even for experienced teachers.

Minot (2000), Aikman and Pridmore (2001) and Hargreaves, Montero, Chau, Sibli and Thanh (2001) described the disadvantages in social and economic development of the majority of rural areas in the Mekong Delta as follows:

- the majority of labourers work at physical jobs
- infrastructure including electricity, roads, schools and hospital has not been developed

- living conditions in some mountainous and island areas are poor, such as a lack of electricity and water
- local people live in scattered areas and are not concentrated in a centre which creates difficulty for children who have to travel a long distance to school
- there is a severe lack of classrooms

Sharplin (2002) found that when teaching in an Australian remote rural school, beginning teachers' concerns included: a lack of mentors, fewer colleagues with the same teaching subjects to discuss issues relating to the teaching profession, and it was time consuming to travel to the city centre. The participants in my study also reported the similar concerns. However, due to differences in the political and economic situation, in the Vietnamese context, the participants had greater concerns about motivating students to go to school.

In my study, findings about the four concerns: a lack of relationship with parents, motivating students, poor living standards and insufficient material and supplies are closely related to each other, in remote areas in Vietnam, infrastructure and transport facilities remain quite poor. Almost all local people work as hired labourers to earn their living so they have little time to supervise their children's study. Meanwhile, children especially at the secondary level are expected to work to help their family's income. Therefore, these four problems which were equally ranted by three participants are strong evidence of the difficulties facing beginning teachers when employed in remote schools. Even experienced teachers may have difficulties in such conditions. Therefore, solving these concerns is beyond the ability of these new teachers. It is necessary that local authorities, education administrators and related agencies cooperate to design more practical policies in order to improve the socio-economic development in remote areas.

This chapter began with a description of the seven themes which emerged from five sets of interview data where Thomas' (2009) framework for data analysis was used through the instance comparative method. The two major findings about the perceived problems of the beginning teachers in Kien Giang province were the lack of subject knowledge derived from the short course for the primary level and motivating student to learn, insufficient materials and supplies, relationships with parents and poor living standards. These concerns related closely to the situation of teaching in rural areas where most of the participants in my study are employed.

In the next sub-section I examine at the issues of support which were highly valued by interviewing participants, and I give my interpretation of the support received by the beginning teachers from their school.

5.3 Received support from the in-depth interviews

The following five isssues were identified by the interview participants:

Theme one: support from other beginning teachers

Theme two: support from other experienced colleagues

Theme three: support from formal mentors

Theme four: support from the principal

Theme five: support from parents

Figure 10: Themes on valued received support emerging from five indepth interviews.

Participants	Theme one	Theme two	Theme three	Theme four	Theme five
Chuc	✔	✔			
Thuy	✔	✔			
Dinh	✔	✔		✔	
Suong		✔			✔
Lan		✔			

Details on the five issues arising from the interviews will be described in the following sections.

5.3.1 Interview one-Chuc

Chuc discussed the type of support that she sought and received during her first teaching year, including: (a) support from her formal mentors and other experienced colleagues; and (b) support from other beginning teachers who were teaching in other schools.

The mismatch between Chuc and her two mentors was the main problem that she experienced during her first teaching year. According to Decree No. 116/2003/ NĐ-CP, each beginning teacher during his/her probation is to be allocated one or two mentors. A beginning teacher receives only 85% of their basic salary during the contract period; the two mentors receive an allowance equal to 15% of the teacher's basic salary (Phan, 2003). The two mentors allocated to Chuc were an accountant and cashier from the main school. Consequently, they were unable to advise or support Chuc when she had difficulties with classroom management or questions relating to the teaching profession. Additionally, Chuc taught in a branch school, while her mentors were in the main school.

The branch school was far from the main school, so she lacked opportunities to contact and discuss issues with these two mentors:

> *I rarely had contact with my two mentors because they worked at the main school, and I taught at branch school which is about eight kilometres away [*public transport is very limited in rural areas in Vietnam*]. When I had difficulties, I had little opportunity to seek their advice. If I asked them about professional teaching issues, they only provided me with general answers, so I received little support from them. On the occasions I was required to attend professional development meetings for teachers at the main school, I hoped to meet with them, but the accountant and cashier were not usually required to attend such meetings.*

When not receiving support from formal mentors, Chuc sought advice from her teaching colleagues, but her questions were received with little enthusiasm:

> *Sometimes, if I did not understand an issue relating to teaching, I asked some of the experienced teachers, but they tended to keep their distance from me and did not provide much support. Sometimes I avoided asking them as I was afraid they would comment to someone else that I did not know anything. One teacher even said to me that because the teacher training college did not train me in those things I had to ask them everything. As a result, I felt very upset with their attitudes.*

Chuc eventually found some support from a relative who was also teaching at the school in a different year level. He helped her with lesson plan design, but he was so busy with his own workload that he could not help her much:

> *I had a cousin teaching in the school but in a different grade. In the beginning, I did not know how to prepare lesson plans and did not have a computer, and as he had one, I asked him for help. However, he could only help me in the first month and could not continue because at that time he was busy with farming as the rice harvest period arrived.*

Since she did not receive support from her mentor or experienced teachers, the only support that Chuc received during her first teaching year came from her friends who studied with her at the Kien Giang Teacher Training College.

Support from other beginning teachers

Chuc revealed that her classmates from the teacher training college who were now teaching at other schools encouraged and supported her in dealing with her difficulties in the teaching profession.

> *Sometimes, I was so upset and frustrated because I could not find solutions. When seeing me discouraged, my parents asked about my problems, but I did not know how to explain to them because I knew they could not help. Then I talked with some friends from the teacher training college and felt much better after that. They also experienced difficulties in their schools so I felt greatly relieved when sharing with them.*

The reason why Chuc shared with her friends was not purely to seek their advice in the hope of solving her problems, but because they encouraged her and listened to her stories which helped make her feel more relaxed. Chuc said:

> *Everyone generally had their own difficulties, and sometimes I shared my difficulties with my friends. However, they had never encountered such difficulties, and I realised I could not help them solve their problems either, because we were all beginning teachers. At least I knew that I wasn't the only one facing difficulties. By sharing with friends, I felt greatly relieved regarding my own troubles, which is one of the reasons I continue in my teaching career.*

5.3.2 Interview two – Thuy

Thuy also discussed the type of support she sought and received during her first teaching year, namely: (a) support from her formal mentors and other experienced colleagues; and (b) support from other beginning teachers.

Support from mentors and colleagues

During her first teaching year, Thuy was not allocated a formal mentor.

Because it was the first teaching year and we were only offered a contract period, we were not allocated official mentors. Hopefully, next year, I thought I would be allocated a mentor.

Although Thuy did not receive support from a formally-appointed mentor, she did receive great support from her teaching colleagues, upon which she remarked was important and beneficial to her. Fortunately, her school had a supportive and welcoming environment and it was the enthusiasm and friendliness of the colleagues who supported her that made her first teaching year less difficult.

From the time I was a little girl, up until the time I graduated from Kien Giang Teacher Training College, I had never lived far from my family for such a length of time. At first I was upset and cried a lot, but I was much encouraged and supported by the teachers in the school. As I became more familiar and friendly with these teachers, my homesickness disappeared.

In the beginning, I hesitated to have contact with the experienced teachers, but we all lived in the staff housing together, so in time, I became more familiar with them; the teachers here slowly loved me and helped me in my teaching profession. Existing brothers and sisters (Thuy referred to experienced teachers as brothers and sisters) helped me a lot. For example, they told me which books should be brought to professional meetings, and what should be noted in staff meetings and team meetings. I was also told these things in advance so I would be less confused in these meetings.

In addition to receiving support from a group of beginning teachers and school colleagues, Thuy also sought support from short professional development courses organised by the Provincial Department and District Department of Education and Training.

I was very interested in participating in short courses held by the District Department or Provincial Department of Education and Training. A number of teachers did not wish to attend because participants had to cover the cost of accommodation and meals during the course/s, and they said these courses helped them little in their professional development. Regardless of the cost, I was very interested in these courses, because it presented opportunities to learn from other experienced teachers who taught at different schools. I usually sought their advice on teaching issues on which I did not fully understand or on aspects of teaching which I did not know how to effectively deliver to the students.

Despite this, Thuy only had limited opportunities to participate in short courses because of financial restrictions.

> *Although I wished to attend short courses, I only had the opportunity to participate sometimes. This is because the vice-headmaster responsible for the professional development of teachers usually sent male teachers to these courses as it helped reduce the costs on accommodation because male teachers could share a room, whereas; the accommodation fee would be higher if female teachers attended.*

Support from other beginning teachers

Four other beginning teachers were recruited at the same time as Thuy. Thuy and the other beginning teachers supported and consulted each other regarding teaching issues, problems relating to students and so on. Thuy stated that because they were all beginning teachers and had known each other in college, it made her feel less alone:

> *There were five of us, two male and three female beginning teachers. We three female beginning teachers were housed together in one room of the staff houses while the other two male beginning teachers were located next door. Although we taught different subjects such as mathematics, physics, music, painting and history, we often supported each other in different ways. We discussed how to prepare lesson plans, or how to effectively carry out classroom management based on observations of other teachers' practices. Therefore, we were not under competitive pressure because we were all beginning teachers so we cooperated and worked together.*

While interviewing Thuy, I overheard her telephone conversation with a friend as they were making arrangements to go somewhere. On finishing her conversation, Thuy remarked:

My friends and I are trying to arrange a time to travel back to school together, because it is so boring travelling alone on the ship.

Overhearing this conversation confirmed to me that a close relationship existed between the five beginning teachers.

5.3.3 Interview three – Dinh

There were two major types of support that Dinh specifically discussed: (a) support from his official mentors and other experienced colleagues; and (b) support from the principal.

Support from formal mentors and other colleagues

Dinh maintained that his mentor did not help him with anything, either in his teaching practice or informing him of school regulations or news as his mentor was so busy with his job outside the school.

> *I did not have a mentor in the beginning. I organised myself to teach a class and of course, initially experienced a lot of difficulties. After two months, I was assigned a mentor. However, my mentor taught history while I taught physics. How strange this arrangement was! I taught physics for grade 9 while the mentor taught history for grade 6, so I rarely had a chance to meet with him. Sometimes at staff meetings, we just greeted each other, as I knew if I asked him any questions related to physics teaching, he would surely not know how to advise me. Even in the lesson observation when he had to assess my teaching quality in class, he only could formally assess it as he was unable to assess whether it was right or wrong in terms of the physics profession. It was very strange to assign a history teacher as a mentor to a physics teacher. Therefore, I had to manage by myself in terms of how to effectively deliver lessons in class.*

However, Dinh did receive some support from one of his colleagues who shared a room with him at school, and gave him lots of advice during the probation period.

> *I shared a room with a mathematics teacher who started teaching here a year before me. Because we were room-mates, he was able to assist me by explaining anything that I was not sure of. Before my lesson observation, he told me to practice teaching the lesson first for his comments. Even though we taught different subjects, both were related to the natural sciences as some parts of physics originated from mathematics and are related to physics exercises. Thus, with such strong support, my lesson observation for assessing teaching quality was quite highly praised.*

> *With regard to documenting students' records, he advised me to buy several copies of score recording books at a bookstore in Rach Gia in the centre of Kien Giang. This was in case I made a mistake when recording in the students' recording books. He informed me that because I was a new teacher, mistakes would be unavoidable when recording school recording books.*

According to Dinh, he was the only beginning teacher to commence his tenure at the school that year. Fortunately, he had very supportive colleagues and experienced teachers who were in the same natural science group as him, all of whom were willing to help him whenever he needed.

> *My natural science team consisted of six teachers; I was the youngest and newest member. During the school breaks, we often talked and drank coffee together in the staff room. Whenever someone had a chance to go to Rach Gia, they always*

brought back some items, usually coffee, for the people here, and they were willing to buy items for others if required. The team leader had twenty years of experience so sometimes he gave me helpful guidance and I helped him in other ways too, like using the computer, because he did not know how to use a computer.

When Dinh discovered strategies to motivate students' in their studies, he was very excited and willing to share with the other teachers in the natural science team.

When students were lazy in studying, I had to figure out a solution. For example, in the case of a struggling student in my physics class, I gave him a test score of seven instead of five to encourage and motive him, and then he was more hard working in his studies. I was so happy with the result and told the other teachers in the natural science team. I spoke to every teacher in the team about my positive result in order to encourage them to follow the example applied to struggling students.

Dinh shared his successes and difficulties with his natural science team because he was strongly supported by experienced teachers in the team sharing their experiences. Also, he felt he earned the respect of the older teachers by showing them how to use the computer.

Support from school principal

The principal was the first person with whom Dinh had contact on his first day at school. The principal welcomed him and showed him around the school, the room in which he would stay, and the kitchen area. The principal expressed his expectation that Dinh would work in this school for a long time.

The principal was very enthusiastic, even when he spoke about the problems faced by the school because it was in a remote area, lacked facilities and there were several other associated difficulties at the school. These conditions accounted for the high staff turnover, because new teachers only taught here for a few years then left as they could not overcome such difficulties. He encouraged me to teach here for a long time, then get married and settle down and build my life here.

Dinh remembered those words of encouragement whenever faced with difficulties, which inspired him to attempt to overcome his problems.

When experiencing difficulties in the teaching profession or other fields, I rarely discussed this directly with the principal because I knew he was very busy (his house was in the town centre); he returned home after school hours, so I did not have many opportunities to meet with him. However, I remembered what he told me on the first day, and so I pushed myself to overcome these difficulties, and seeing that the other teachers here managed to teach, I felt I should try harder.

5.3.4 Interview four – Suong

Suong's story revealed the two main types of support she received during her first teaching year; (a) experienced teachers support and (b) parental support

Support from experienced colleagues

Firstly, Suong remarked that most of her colleagues were her former teachers, so she often received support from these teachers. Their enthusiasm in supporting her made her happy and willing to try harder to meet the school's demands and to be able to teach as effectively as they did. Therefore, Suong had an excellent relationship with her colleagues that compensated for her postponed salary and not having a mentor in her first teaching year.

> *I taught in my old school where I had formerly been a student. Many of the teachers were my old teachers, so I was happy to meet them again, and they were willing to support me when I needed help. The teachers made me feel comfortable and enthusiastically supported me in classroom management and how to communicate with the students' parents. Often I didn't even ask for their help, but they would enquire as to how I was going, or how I was feeling, and whether I was experiencing any difficulties. Then I talked about my difficulties with the multi-grade class concerning classroom management and lack of teaching aids. They happily gave me their helpful guidance and let me borrow their lesson plans and teaching aids, and usually only required them back if they needed them for their own classes. As a result, whenever I had questions, I knew that all I had to do was visit the staff meeting room to receive helpful advice. Almost all the veteran teachers were enthusiastic and loved me, so I felt happy to teach in this school. Although I was not assigned an official mentor, I received excellent support from almost all veteran teachers here.*

Support from parents

Receiving support from the students' parents was another positive element for Suong in her first teaching year. Love from parents inspired her to continue her teaching career even though she had not received a salary for six months and had to teach in an area she was less comfortable with.

> *The parents all lived in my local neighbourhood, and they loved me and considered me like one of their relatives because they had seen me grow up from kindergarten until becoming a teacher. They always used me as a role model for their children (the majority of local people here were poor, had little education and relied on farming). Therefore, if my students were stubborn or naughty in class, I would scare them by threatening to discuss their behaviour with their parents, which made them behave immediately. Sometimes these parents brought*

118

me fruit from their gardens and remarked that it was to compensate for my salary. Though the material value of such gifts was little, its spiritual value encouraged me much whenever I felt bored or wanted to give up.

Even though Suong received support from colleagues and students' parents, she still faced difficulties, which she believes is directly related to teacher education. This will be mentioned in page 119.

5.3.5 Interview five – Lan

Lan believed that did not receive support from the experienced teachers in her school; in compensation, she received huge support from experienced teacher from other schools.

As mentioned in chapter four (page 96), Lan's first appraisal was not successed because she did not follow the process of organized her classroom as the requirement of the primary school standard, her vice-principal gave her a permission to have a month off for preparing her next appraisal. Lan complained that she was not initially instructed to carry out lesson observations, and found it hard to find anyone willing and suitable who taught at the same year level.

One time when she visited a school close to her home, she met up with a teacher who taught the same grade level as Lan and had fifteen years' teaching experience, and understood the situation that Lan was facing. She offered her support to Lan and invited her to observe her lessons every day for a period of three weeks.

Observing this teacher's lessons for nearly a month helped Lan develop an understanding of primary teaching methodology and gain practical experience. Lan remarked that she gained important knowledge from this support.

> *She was an excellent and enthusiastic teacher. For each lesson I observed she prepared detailed lesson plans and lent them to me for my review. After each lesson, she stayed and asked me how I found her teaching, and whether there was any part that I did not understand. I did not hesitate to ask her for an explanation about areas I did not understand.*

Receiving support from this experienced teacher was very valuable to Lan and helped her receive a good evaluation at her next appraisal. She no longer had the intention of giving up her job and relocating to secondary level.

> *After observing the other teacher's lessons, I learned how to teach and deliver lessons in line with the school's requirements for primary level. It was not that I did not know how to teach, but the fact I did not teach in line with the primary*

teaching methodology. After my lesson observations, the vice principal praised me for my rapid progress. I felt so happy about that, and I was excited to register for good lesson delivery competition held every year in my school and my lesson was recognised as a good one. Now I felt motivated to conduct more thorough lesson preparation, and my students' parents, seeing my huge efforts appeared more understanding towards me. I owed a great deal of gratitude to the teacher who had supported me so much and I considered her as my great teacher. Whenever I had difficulties, I often called to seek her advice. If I had spare time at the weekend, I often visited her at her home and our relationship became closer over time

Figure 11: shows the results of the five issues on the value of the received support as indicated in the indepth interviews
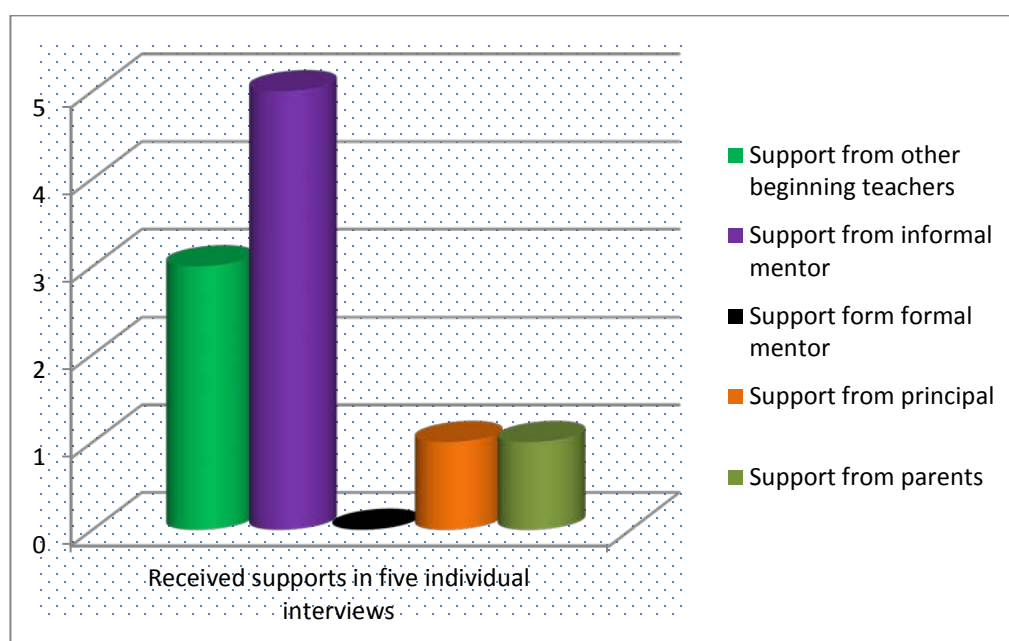
Support from informal mentors was identified by all five as a helpful source during the first teaching year. There was no participant who experienced gaining positive support from their formal mentors, but they experienced negative support from these formal mentors. This is also why they seek support from other experienced colleagues. Therefore, the theme about supportive formal mentors presents participants' negative experience. Support from friends was highly valued by the three participants (Chuc, Suong, and Dinh) and was identified as a useful source of support in their experience. Support from principal, as identified by Dinh, and support from parents as identified by Suong were also assessed as valued supports in their first teaching year.

My interpretation about the five themes emerging from five individual interviews about support they received is set out below.

5.4. Discussion

Issues of support for beginning teachers in their first teaching year have been detailed in the literature review section (page 33). The review of the literature have suggested sources of supports which were evaluated as beneficial for beginning teachers, including mentor support, other beginning teacher support, and colleague support. In the next section, I will discuss and compare the findings in my research with those in the literature review in terms of beginning teacher supports.

5.4.1 Support from other beginning teachers

As mentioned in the literature review, when beginning teachers have problems, in addition to seeking help from their assigned mentors, they also find support from other sources including other beginning teachers (Friedrichsen et al., 2007; Hertzog, 2002). The participants in this study also regarded beginning teacher colleagues as a source of support when they were in trouble. However, the studies conducted by Friedrichsen, et al. and Hertzog mention the number of participants who chose a particular answer, nor do they provide reasons for the participant's answers by examining the context of each situation. For example, Friedrichsen et al.'s (2007) study stated that 11 of the 18 participants mentioned they sought help from other beginning teachers. In contrast, in my research, the reasons why participants sought support from other beginning teachers are discussed, as well as how much they valued this type of support in each situation.

The majority of the participants confirmed that when they experienced trouble during their first teaching year, the persons from whom they sought support were other beginning teachers in their school or outside their school. The study shows that, as in Chuc's experience, it was a great relief for her when she shared her concerns with other beginning teachers in other schools and especially so if these were friends from the Teacher Training College. Ryan (1986) shows that the majority of beginning teachers are quite unsure about their competence as a teacher and are concerned as to whether other beginning teachers have the same problem as them or not. Therefore, sharing information and experience plays an important part in reassuring participants that other beginning teachers are in a similar situation. In addition, the value of support of peers is recognised by Stansbury & Zimmerman (2000) agrue that it provided personal and emotional support and problem-related support and promoted critical self-reflection on teaching practices.

121

Each type of support helps beginning teachers in different ways. For beginning teachers emotional and personal support are critical importance and this is confirmed in my finding.

Participants reported that it was easier to share their troubles with each other because they were in the same situation and the same age, particularly so if they had been friends at the Kien Giang Teacher's Training College, as they trusted each other and felt confident to share their difficulties and were not afraid of being judged. Kardos et al. (2001) found that beginning teachers enjoyed working with colleagues who were the same age as them; however, these researchers argue that the interaction between beginning teachers who are a similar age does not help their professional development because they only discuss their concerns with each other without reaching a solution, because all are inexperienced in the area of teaching. However, in my study participants reported that they not only sought assistance from other beginning teacher but that they also gave help to other beginning teachers as learning from other beginning teachers' mistakes. For example, Dinh's experience was confident about becoming a form teacher in his next year of teaching as he had no difficulty in completing the necessary paper work because he had helped another beginning teacher to alter and edit the paper work of form teacher during his first teaching year. In rural schools where materials and supplies are lacking, beginning teachers' support for each other can be critical. Tuy and Toai (in focus group two) gave examples of how they helped each other by sharing equipment and teaching aids.

Stansbury and Zimmerman (2000) believe that emotional support does not directly help beginning teachers improve their teaching performance; however, it helps them easily adapt to the culture of teaching and stay in the job of teaching longer. The participants involved in my research also highly valued support from other beginning teachers, which suggests that they were in need of sharing and encouragement. Beginning teachers need someone to listen to their concerns about the initial stages of their teaching career. The participants admitted that though the listeners could not give them effective solutions to their concerns about "reality shock" of their early teaching experiences, they still felt relieved by talking about their troubles. As Wildman, Niles, Magliaro and McLaughlin (1989) state, beginning teachers need someone beside them and sometimes they can say to that person "I'm frustrated". They add that if, mentors, principals, and local policy-makers listen to beginning teachers, and they can more readily understand the teachers' perspectives on the difficulties in their professional development and can devise suitable solutions to address their concerns.

To sum up, sharing difficulties and supporting each other during their first teaching year was important for the participants, and worked well in the Kien Giang educational context. This is consistent with the conclusions of Damon (1984) and Webb (1989) who found that the interaction in peers was significantly beneficial to both the giver and the receiver.

5.4.2 Support from experienced colleagues (informal mentors)

Much of literature stresses how important mentors and collegial support are for beginning teachers. For instance, Marable and Raimondi (2007), and Roehrig, Bohn, Turner and Pressley (2008) suggest that mentoring is a means of helping newcomers learn the norms, behaviours and attitudes of the school culture in order to adapt to their work environment after graduating from teacher training college. Cullingford (2006) findings is one of goals of beginning teachers from being mentored is to increase their teaching effectiveness. This also applies to informal mentor's support as difficulties arises when mentors and mentees are mismatched in which cases beginning teachers find another source of support, including their other colleagues

The analysis of supportive and positive supports from experienced colleagues revealed that beginning teachers highly valued this kind of support, especially when they taught in a supportive environment; it made them feel more open to look for supports from their colleagues. For example, three participants indicated that they had benefited from strong collegial support. This could be because they were teaching in primary schools where they studied as a child and found that the relationship with their former teachers meant they could meet with their experienced colleagues and freely discuss any problem without fear of losing face. This evidence showed that in order to maximize the supports from experienced colleagues received by beginning teachers, they should be assigned to teach in their hometown. And it was one of the solutions to help beginning teachers handle with their concerns in their first year of teaching in Kien Giang context. Tellez (1992) believes that the reason why novice teachers hesitate to discuss their problems with their mentors is because they are afraid of losing face and feel ashamed. According to Fuller and Brown (1975), in the first period, the survival stage, beginning teachers' concerns about their adequacy and survival as a teacher include the need to feel loved by people and to receive positive supervision evaluation. In the case of these three participants they were fortunate to be among colleagues who knew and accepted them and willingly helped them in their work so that their worry about being evaluated was

dismissed. These three participants admitted that being treated so kindly by their former teachers they felt like returning home. Katz (1977) also found that the period of time a beginning teacher takes to overcome each developmental stage is varied and depends on a range of factors including the amount and type of support provided and social relationships and events available in their working environment. Gaining support from experienced colleagues who were also their former teachers certainly helped these three overcome their self-concerns more easily than the other beginning teachers who were in less familiar settings.

Grangeat and Gray (2007) and Galvez-Hjornevik (1986) has shown that informal support is effective for beginning teachers because both sides voluntarily approach each other and are therefore willing to work together. In my study while the majority of participants reported that they were really in need of help and valued the informal support in their first teaching year, only eight were able to find supportive colleagues. These eight participants revealed that even though they did not have formally appointed mentors, they were able to obtain support from helpful colleagues so it depends on each individual relationship rather than a formal system of allocating mentors. These participants revealed that it was much easier to receive help and support from helpful colleagues rather than their assigned mentor. Whenever they had questions and their experienced colleagues were available to answer their concerns, their colleagues were enthusiastic in guiding them. These colleagues actively approached and advised the beginning teachers if they were facing problems, however the mentors who were also the school administrators were so busy so they could not meet with the participants at any time. Some mentors did not teach the same grade as the mentee or taught a different grade, so they could not ask their mentors about the content of their teaching curriculum. It appears that the received support from colleagues was dependent on the individual person rather than just on official arrangement. Hence, it means that the level of support receiving from informal mentor was different for each participant because they were in different situations and environments.

My findings have shown that some participants received support from their colleagues because they also taught far from their house and in the same teaching subject so they voluntarily discussed and learned from other experiences through daily conversation with a cup of coffee. They shared and learned experiences not depending on how long they have been teaching. For example in Dinh's story, he received a lot of helpful advice from his experienced colleagues, and Dinh also guided his mentor in using

a computer. In Suong's story, she received supports from her former teachers and it was a good relationship between her and her old teacher that created favourable conditions for her to get access to the source of collegial support. However, in Lan's story, when she looked for supports from other teachers near her house, she met another experienced teacher outside her school by chance. And it was because of the supports from this experienced teacher that helped Lan overcome the difficulty of lacking subject knowledge. In contrast in Chuc's story, she returned and taught in her hometown but she did not receive the kind of support as Lan did. She revealed that her problems were only resolved when she shared them with other beginning teachers who were her classmates from Kien Giang teacher training college.

Hence, it seemed that in looking for supports from colleagues, the communication and relationship between the person giving supports and the person receiving supports must be harmonized. Moreover, the person receiving support must proactively seek and utilize any cases to get access to valuable collegial support. Within teacher education this approach to collaborate among beginning teachers and their colleagues should be considered to inform teacher students because I strongly believe that it is crucially beneficial to beginning teachers if they can receive supports from their experienced colleagues who will support newly qualified teachers in new teacher professional development.

The participants confirmed that they had gained the most benefit from supportive colleagues who taught the same subjects and at the same grade levels. For example, Lan had not been trained in teaching at the primary level and received a very negative evaluation from the administrator and was afraid of losing her job. Fortunately, she met another teacher by chance from another school who taught the same grade that she did. She arranged to observe the lessons of this teacher who assisted her with lesson preparation, whereupon Lan successfully overcame her difficulties and was more confident about her teaching capability. Eraut (2004) suggests that this type of support should be encouraged because it is from "people on the spot", which tends to be practical and important to beginning teachers who are developing their competence.

The findings from my research are in line with those of Smith and Ingersoll (2004) and Hobson et al., (2009) who assert that beginning teachers in their first of teaching need strong help from colleagues who are teaching the same subjects.

This finding closely resembles the experiences of beginning teachers described in the study of Brown (2001).The participants in Brown's research concluded that assigning mentors who fit well with mentees is a difficult job and it is often hard to find a perfect match. Consequently, while struggling in the survival stage of teaching, beginning teachers have to find out their ways to overcome their difficulties, hence, some may survive better than others. Finding support from experienced colleagues is one of the solutions that beginning teachers often choose

In Vietnam there is no formal system to ensure that all beginning teachers have proper mentors. Support for graduate teachers is limited to the assignment of mentors for them. However, the regulation of assignment mentors for beginning teachers does not clearly state the tasks and implementation of mentoring for beginning teachers in their induction phase. For example, Article 19 and 20 in Decree 116/2003 NĐ-CP 10/10/2003 from the Vietnamese Government states that each beginning teacher who graduates from teacher training college has a 12-month induction phase. The school which has recruited the beginning teacher is responsible for assigning them a mentor (Decree 116 NĐ-CP, 2003). The lack of clarity in the way mentors are assigned to beginning teachers has resulted in the regular mismatch between mentor and mentee. For example, while the participants in this study gladly received support from their informal mentor, thirteen teachers in this study experienced a mismatched mentor and seven did not know who their mentors were. This situation suggested that their initial work experience in the field of teaching was difficult, as they were without assistance of any form. This indicates that official mentorship for the case of beginning teachers in Kien Giang context may not work efficiently at the time this research was carried out.

The participants' experiences are evidence of the importance of support from colleagues for the beginning teacher. This is especially so in the case where beginning teachers do not have official mentors and must seek support from other sources, including assistance from their colleagues. Therefore, the finding that the participants in this study greatly valued the support of colleagues clearly demonstrates that this type of support is one of the most effective solutions to help beginning teachers to solve their concerns in their first teaching year in the Kien Giang educational context.

5.4.3 Principal support

In Chapter two, the role of the principal in providing support was identified as critical for the beginning teacher's success (Brock & Grady, 1998; Wood, 2005). However,

according to all but only one of the participants in this study, the principal was not involved in their supervision or support and seemed to play only a vague role during their first teaching year. The participant who mentioned the principal valued their interest, even if it was only a brief meeting at the start of the year. The importance of contact with the principal and its long term effect on morale and confidence is well illustrated by the participant, Dinh (see page 113. Although he had only one encounter with the principal, the effects of this were long lasting. From the Western literature, it seems that this would be insufficient to sustain morale in many cultures in which a meeting with revered superiors is less valued and sometimes even resented. In general, being paid attention and consideration from a leader is an indispensable need of junior staff (Smylie, 1988), this need is greater in Vietnamese culture, and as the benefits of one moment of encouragement from the principal last for a whole year.

As noted in Chapter two, previous researchers have found that when a principal does not provide adequate support, beginning teachers will seek it from other sources (Hope, 1999).This was true of the participants in this study who went to colleagues and peers when they were in need of ideas, suggestions and strategies. The four participants for whom the principal was their mentor found that he or she was too busy to have any time for them. Glickman (1989) states that the principal is not the sole instructional leader but in my study the participants revealed that a lack of instruction from the principal resulted in a great number of difficulties in the process of learning and teaching in beginning teachers. These difficulties included the mismatch between mentors and mentees, a lack of material and supplies, and providing beginning teachers with further opportunity for attending professional development course. They saw the role of principal as crucial in directing support for beginning teachers during their induction phase. These findings could be perceived as guidelines for the improvement of support for beginning teachers in Kien Giang province. Currently there is no induction program in the Vietnam education system (Hayden & Thiep, 2010). Consequently, to help beginning teachers solve their concerns during the induction phase, the principal must be aware of his or her important role in managing, paying due attention, guiding and monitoring induction activities for beginning teachers.

In summary, within the theme of support received for beginning teachers in the case of the Kien Giang province this study found that the majority of participants greatly valued the support from informal mentors. In particular, this study found that if an

informal mentor taught the same subject and the same grade, their support was of much greater benefit to the beginning teachers during their first teaching year.

This study found that participants also highly valued the support from other beginning teachers. There were two benefits from this type of support. Firstly, the emotional support they received from other beginning teachers when sharing their problems was a source of great relief. The support given and received by all the beginning teachers was a source of spiritual support which helped them overcome their difficulties in their first teaching year. Secondly, sharing information about professional issues helped them to learn from each other's experience.

The findings of this study on the role of the principal were quite varied. The many difficulties faced by the participants including not receiving a salary for six months, not being assigned mentors, or being mismatched with mentors showed that the role of principal in supporting beginning teachers was insufficient.

We have seen that supports during the first year of teaching are crucial in helping beginning teachers overcome difficulties. The role of Teacher Training College in preparing for these beginning teachers to deal with difficulties is apparently no less important. The next part presents the evaluations of these participants on the quality of their preparation from the Teacher Training College.

5.5 Beginning teachers' perspective about the role of the Kien Giang Teacher Training College in preparing them for the first year of teaching.

Three themes emerged from the five individual interviews:

Theme one: weakness of the short course

Theme two: practice teaching and fieldwork experience

Theme three: not being aware of the importance of establishing good relationships in the workplace.

Figure 12: Three themes on the role of KGTTC from the five indepth interviews

Participants	Theme one	Theme two	Theme three
Chuc	✓	✓	✓
Thuy		✓	
Dinh		✓	
Suong	✓	✓	✓
Lan	✓	✓	✓

Details on the three themes emerging from the individual interviews are discussed in the following sub-sections

5.5.1 Interview one – Chuc

When commenting on the quality of her preparation for the first year of teaching, Chuc indicated that having been trained to teach literature at secondary level but assigned to teach at primary level resulted in her not being able to effectively deliver lesson content to her primary student, even though she was awarded a primary level teaching certificate following the completion of a two-month course. She said:

> *Sometimes when designing lesson plans and delivering the lessons, I wasn't sure what should be taught with such a wide range of knowledge covered in the textbooks. It wasn't because I did not understand the contents, I just wasn't sure what I should keep aside and what should be delivered to students. The knowledge obtained from the teacher training college was at a higher level than*

that found in the students' text books. So when teaching an issue, I did not know what should and should not be delivered to students. Consequently, I usually did not finish my planned lessons, especially when teaching Vietnamese literature.

Regarding the two-month training course designed to train secondary teachers to teach at a primary level, Chuc stated:

The two- month course only provided general theoretical knowledge about the psychology of primary students, and the teaching methodology at primary level, and was definitely not sufficient training. I did not even know how to prepare lesson plans at primary level according to the school form.

Chuc noted that:

In self-assessing myself as a teaching professional, I assessed myself as still weak. For example, when students asked me about King Tran Nhan Tong in Vietnamese history, I did not know how to answer because it was not my area of expertise, so I only answered them vaguely, and felt I had not fulfilled my responsibility as a teacher.

In addition to this, Chuc claimed that the time allocated for teaching practice was not sufficient. She voiced her concerns at only experiencing teaching practice at one large school in the town centre, as it did not prepare her for dealing with the difficult teaching issues in rural and crowded classrooms she faced in her current school.

During teaching practice, I was not allocated many hours for teaching, and only taught literature. I was familiar with the teaching methodology for the literature subject which applied to teaching secondary students. I practised at a National standard school [in the Vietnamese education system, schools have to meet the requirements of quality appraisal according to the national comprehensive quality standards as recognised by the national standards schools (MOET, 2010)]. *Therefore, the school at which I completed my practice teaching sessions had fewer and well-behaved students. Before I started teaching the class, I was instructed by the classroom teacher on how to implement her lesson plans and she answered any queries that I had. During the lesson I was observed by the teacher educator, so if there were any mistakes I was corrected. It made me feel less stressed when delivering lessons in class. However, the students in my current school are at a different schooling level; there are more students per classroom, and the majority of them are not interested in studying.*

Furthermore, Chuc asserted that the number of hours of teaching practice allocated by the Kien Giang Teacher Training College for practicum and fieldwork experience was not sufficient for her:

The total number of lesson periods that I allocated for practice teaching during the course at the practicum was only nine periods which I thought was too few.

At the end of the interview, I asked her what she would have liked to have learned more about if she had her time over again at the teacher training college.

Chuc replied:

Actually, I did not pay much attention to my studies at the college; it maybe because I was not fully aware of the numerous responsibilities of a teacher, therefore I did not focus on what the course provided at the college. Consequently, it was so hard for me when entering the real teaching environment after graduation. So I really want to learn more about classroom management for head teachers; and good communication skills because when working in a collective environment like a school, if I had good communication skills I would be able to seek sympathy and encouragement from other colleagues to help support me in dealing with my difficulties

5.5.2 Interview Two – Thuy

During the teacher training program, especially the teaching practice period, Thuy was given numerous opportunities to engage in practice teaching which made her feel confident to teach mathematics to Grade nine students in the real teaching environment:

When I was assigned to teach mathematics to grade nine at school, I was very interested, though some teachers, including experienced teachers, were not quite as confident in this area. However, I was excited about my assigned tasks because I had been given numerous opportunities to teach classes during the teaching practice period, and I spent much time studying the content and teaching methodology of mathematics for grade nine.

Surprisingly, the teacher training college that Thuy attended only allocated nine periods for teaching practice as part of their training program. So it begged the question, was the number of teaching practice periods sufficient for Thuy?

Thuy explained that she was fortunate to have more opportunities to engage in practice teaching in the area of mathematics to grade nine than most students:

During the teaching practice period, I had more chances to engage in practice teaching than other students because the teacher at the school realised my capacity for teaching mathematics to grade nine and often asked me to teach for her when she was busy or had other jobs to do elsewhere. I was very interested in teaching mathematics so before each lesson (both during the practicum and real ones) I studied the content to be delivered in the lesson. If there was any part that

I was not quite sure of, I sought advice from the teacher educator or school teacher. If neither of them were available, I searched reference books or discussed with friends in the practicum group. This is why I felt confident and excited when being assigned to teach mathematics to grade nine after graduation.

At the end of the interview, when questioned about what she wished she could have learned more of if she had her time over again at the teacher training college, Thuy replied:

I wish that I had studied more about computer skills that apply to mathematics methodology. When studying in the teacher training college, I enjoyed lectures in which teacher educators told us stories about secondary students, and how to resolve situations in the classroom. Through these stories I came to understand more about students at secondary school. However, the teacher educators only shared these stories when they had some spare time during lectures. Unfortunately, teacher educators spent the majority of time delivering the content of lessons rather than telling such stories.

I also wish that I could have learned more about how to prepare documents including how to calculate scores, record scores and prepare school reports for students.

When asked to sum up her first year of teaching at Hon Nghe School, Thuy concurred:

I love teaching here, especially the contact with students. Some of them are very interested in studying and I consider them as my nieces and nephews so we have a very close relationship and it makes me love teaching more. Luckily, I was encouraged by the other teachers in the school, so my life far from home was not so difficult.

If there were a high school on the island, it would help the poor students here as they would not have to leave school because they can't afford to move to the mainland. However, it is not likely they will build a high school here because only a small number of students would be able to attend. (She smiled sadly)

5.5.3 Interview three-Dinh

Dinh shared a story about classroom management in his first days of teaching:

I had taught here for one week, and then one day one particular student in class stuck a paper on my back with the words "I want to get married urgently". When I discovered this, I was very angry and when I discovered which student had done this, I ordered him to leave the class and told him to stay home for three days until he submitted me his lesson learnt review, then I would let him return to class. Now thinking back on this, I feel relieved that nothing bad happened. If after

three days that student had not come back to class, I may have had to face the consequences. On gaining more experience in teaching, I now realise that the way I solved that problem did not bring any educational benefit because at that particular age they are prone to playing tricks.

Dinh explained why he resorted to such a solution:

Actually, I did not have experience in how to deal with those types of situations. If I had gained more experience in classroom practice, I would not have resorted to such a solution. In fact I did not fully understand the psychology of secondary students. Because I didn't understand them, it was hard to motivate students to study, and I was not happy with the quality of my teaching.

With regard to his studies at the teacher training college, Dinh assessed the course as follows:

The professional knowledge taught at the teacher training college was much higher than the content needed to be delivered here. As a result, I did not know how to effectively divide and analyse that knowledge for teaching, so I found it difficult to apply the knowledge I obtained in the college to the teaching environment. I would have liked to have gained more practical experience in teaching methodology during my time at the college. I think it would be beneficial if teachers had more contact with students and the opportunity to deliver more lessons to draw on useful experiences. For example, I will definitely teach much better next year than this year, because I gained experience through practice.

I would have also liked to learn more about classroom management for head teachers, and how to prepare school documentation. I was fortunate to have a room-mate who worked as a head teacher last year as I helped him with recording students' scores and document reviews; if not for him I would have had difficulties, especially if I was assigned to be a head teacher this year.

The issues raised by Dinh with regard to teacher education, and the areas he would have liked to learn more about if he had his time over at the college can be summarised as follows: more practical application of teaching methodology; knowledge of student psychology; student record documentation, including how to write reports in student record books, and record student scores; and how to manage student behaviour in a classroom context.

5.5.4 Interview four- Suong

In her first teaching year, Suong experienced difficulties in classroom management, and how to effectively deliver lessons to students:

Initially, I was trained to teach history and geography to secondary school students, so I had to learn from the beginning when I was assigned to teach at primary level for a multi-grade class. I was lucky to receive strong support from the experienced teachers at the school; if not I would have given up from the beginning.

When studying at the college, I was not taught how to manage a multi-grade class. Therefore, I was frightened to teach a multi-grade which had an extremely different classroom layout. For example, how should I organise the black boards, tables and chairs in order to ensure that this grade did not impact on the other grade in the classroom; how should I allocate time for each grade to ensure progress for all three grades (I was fortunate to learn these things through advice from experienced teachers).

Suong believes that the two-month training course for primary school teachers should be focused on textbook content in order to let teachers grasp in detail what they have to teach, as it would make it less confusing when teaching a class.

When Suong was asked about the areas she would focus on to improve her teaching performance, if given the chance to study at the teacher training college, she replied:

I would want to learn how to prepare documents for head teachers, record scores and mark tests for students.

Looking back on her year of teaching, Suong reflected that:

Actually, I experienced the greatest difficulties in the first month of teaching, because at the time I had little knowledge of teaching at the primary level. Now having overcome these difficulties, I feel more satisfied with my teaching career because my students are really lovely, especially as the primary students are really cute and innocent. If I had been assigned to teach at secondary level, I would have not had such fond feelings towards them because they are more grown up. It is a pity that the school lacked suitable teaching facilities which led to poor study conditions for students. It was easier when it was sunny, but if it rained, some of the students fell on the floor because of the leaking roof. I felt so sorry for my students but did not know how to improve the situation.

Suong also asserted:

In order to improve my teaching practice, I should observe other teachers' lessons to gain knowledge and experience, thoroughly review textbooks before each lesson and determine ways to motivate students to study. Everything is always difficult at the beginning, so I have to try harder.

5.5.5 Interview five – Lan

Lan confided that if she had the opportunity to study again at the college, she would have loved to have more practical experience:

> *The college should provide more opportunities for student teachers to engage in practice teaching. By having more practice periods, student teachers would be able to spend more time with students and may better understand their expectations. There were only two practice periods during the training time at the college and there was less time for teaching in class. With regard to preparing documents and record books for students, we only received a short overview and did not have any real practice in this area. In terms of work relating to head teachers, I think it would be worthwhile having a specified subject in this area, especially for the primary level.*

Being an experienced lecturer at the Teacher Training College in the subject "Teaching Activities and Theory at Primary and Secondary Levels", I agree with Lan concerning the point that neither the duties and responsibilities of the teachers regarding the completion of forms and documents, nor the theory underpinning the rationale behind this were given much attention in the Kien Giang Teachers Training College for the following reasons. In my teaching schedule, there were only three units dedicated to head teacher's duty. Though the content of head teachers' duty was integrated into other subjects, it was very roughly presented, and normally lecturers at the college regarded this content as having been covered in other subjects so they did not spent time on the content of head teachers' duty and responsibilities. However, in the real teaching environment in schools, the amount of work and the number of periods head teachers need to spend on completing forms and document and other activities was enormous and diversified, depending on the characteristics of each school. For example, two periods per week were allocated to biology while the head teachers' work took four periods per week at the secondary level; at the primary level, science subject was allocated two periods per week, while the head teachers' work was not allocated to a certain number of periods (MOET, 2012)

In the two-month course to train secondary teachers to teach at primary level, Lan would have liked to study more about music:

> *In my school, there were no music teachers, so head teachers had to teach music to their students. As I did not have any knowledge or talent in music, I did not know how to teach music to my students. I only wrote down the lyrics for students and asked them to practice singing at home, and they knew whenever I took music class that it was not taught the same way as the other teachers taught. I wish that*

this course could have been conducted for a longer period and that it had provided the theory of music in the primary curriculum, as it would have been very helpful to me.

Developing skills in communicating with colleagues was mentioned by Lan as another area she would have liked to have learned more about if she returned to study at the teacher training college.

If I could have my time again at the college, I would not spend a lot of time studying subject knowledge, because teaching knowledge at the primary level is not difficult. I would have liked to learn more about communication skills with colleagues, and particularly students and parents of students. In my school, there were a lot of experienced teachers so I felt reluctant to communicate with them. Because I lacked confidence in communicating with colleagues, when I made mistakes they knew but they would not help me. Only when I asked them directly did they attempt to help me, but they only briefly explained. Therefore, I really would have liked to have learned more about how to build good relationship with my colleagues, so that when I come into contact with people for the first time, I will make a good impression.

When Lan was asked how she felt about her first teaching year, how she evaluated her teaching practice; what support she found most useful, and how she would try to improve her teaching performance, she replied:

Reflecting on my first year, I think the first three months were the most difficult time for me and I even thought at times I could not overcome the problems. However, I gradually understood more about the role of a primary teacher and adapted to my new environment. I love this job, especially my students. In fact, in every lesson observation, both I and my students felt worried. After each lesson observation, my students told me that they were really worried for me, especially when they saw me looking so nervous. I felt so warm and moved when my students shared that with me.

In terms of improving my performance, I think that I should spend more time planning lessons more thoroughly, by reviewing the content of lessons and the teaching curriculum. Next year, I would like to try to conduct more lesson observations to gain further experience. Although I know that not all teachers are excellent in teaching, I can still learn from their lessons by trying not to make the same mistakes. I would like to work on my pronunciation so that my students understand my lesson more easily, although I have found that my students have finally become more used to my accent. (She smiled happily)

Figure 13: Five issues from the five indepth interviews on the quality of preparation in the teacher training college.
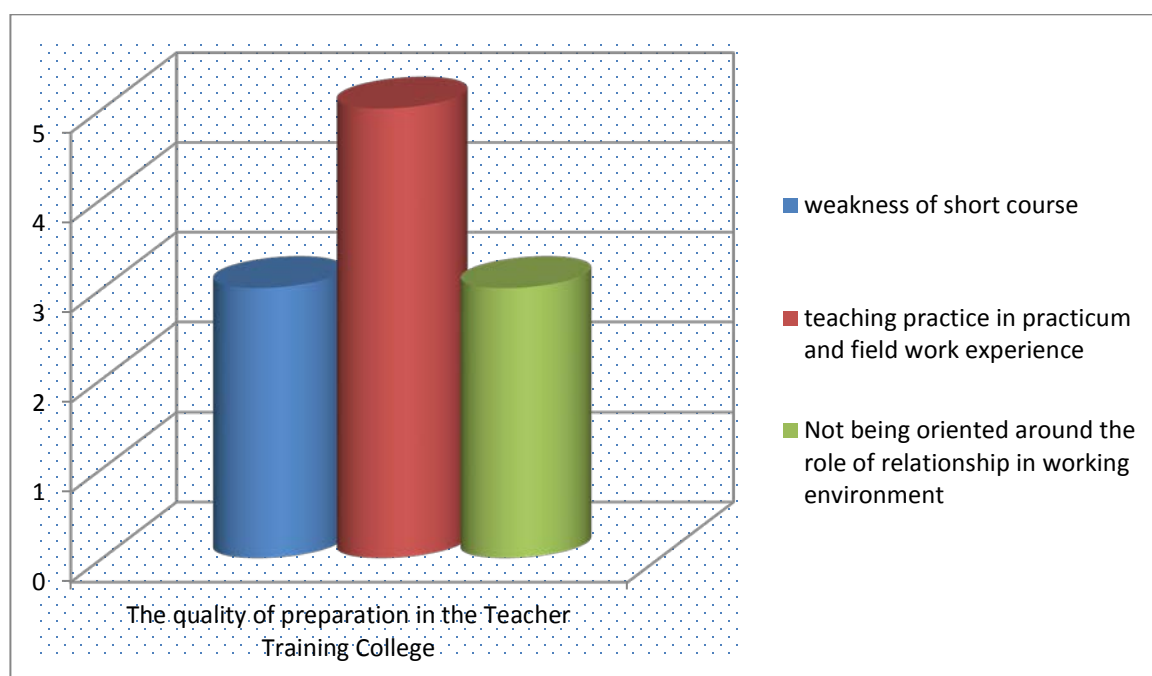
To sum up, when discussing the quality of the preparation of these participants for their first teaching year, the majority of participants expressed a common experience in the in-depth interview in three aspects: one was the lack of practice teaching, the second was the importance establishing good relationships in the work place; the third was the weakness of the short-course expressed in the experience of Chuc, Suong and Lan, it was the weakness of the short-course entailed their concerns about the lack of subject matter knowledge. The discussion about the problems of lack of knowledge about subject matter has been given in the previous section (page 108).

Next I will present my interpretation about the data from five individual interviews about the quality of their preparation during KGTTC

5.6 Discussion on the quality of the role of KGTTC in preparing participants for their first year of teaching

Participants in this study identified two elements in the teacher education program that were either missing or poorly presented. They claimed that they had insufficient practical experience and that the role of the relationships in teaching and being part of a school community had not been a focus in any teaching or discussion. When they spoke of 'communication skills', it was always in the context of maintaining relationships and getting on with new people: students, colleagues, parents.

5.6.1 Insufficient practical experience during field work

In the literature, the need to balance formal theory and practical experience is pointed out by Grossman and Richert (1988). There is much literature about practicum programs in the education faculties of distinguished universities in countries such as America and Australia. In these programs, the trainee teachers go into schools for a part of each week during the course to give them ongoing experience of the daily life of teachers. For example, in the University of Adelaide in Australia, first-year students spend five full days in schools, third-year students have a week placement in the country, and fourth-year students have ten weeks for field-work, in which five weeks are spent in real teaching. However, in the Vietnamese context, the time trainee teachers spend on their field work experience is much less than those in the teacher training programs mentioned above. This is illustrated in the Decision 36/2003/QD-BGDDT on 01/08/2003 by the Minister of the Ministry of Education and Training on the regulations of pedagogical practice and field-work applied to universities and colleges, that is, second-year students at college are allowed to have two weeks in practice and teach only one period and the rest of the time is for lesson observation and participating in school activities. Third-year students are allowed to spend six weeks practicum, in which they can teach a total of eight periods (MOET, 2003). As such, the total time trainee teachers spend is eight weeks in field-work. In the curriculum framework at the teacher training college, the number of credits points given for practice teaching is nine of the total 288 credits points (MOET, 2007). This suggests that insufficient recognition is given to practice teaching in the Vietnamese education context. Participants in my study also confirmed that they experienced the lack of time for teaching practice during their practicum

The literature on 'reality shock' experienced by beginning teachers (Johnson & Birkeland, 2003b; Kauffman, et al. (2002); Sabar, 2004; Veenman, 1984) shows that

beginning teachers enter real teaching situations with a belief that they have been trained, but when handling tasks in reality they realize that this is not the case. This issue was also relevant to the participants in the focus groups in my study, who admitted that insufficient practical experience lead to a mismatch between the reality of their first teaching year and what they had experienced during their field work. This caused them a lot of difficulty when the things they practised in the field work were not the same as the reality of the situation at their schools. The data revealed that most of the field-work experiences were organized at inner city schools which have better teaching conditions such as classrooms with fewer students, spacious classrooms and sufficient teaching aids. However, in reality, they were sent to teach in rural schools where teaching conditions are totally different, with crowded classrooms, a low-income community, and a lack of teaching aids.

This finding implies that these participants did not benefit from their-field work because of the enormous differences between field-work and their real teaching environment. This study finding confirms Yuen-Fun (2003)'s view that field-work experience should be designed in a variety of forms in order to help student teachers interact with contexts related to reality.

> Regarding the issue of insufficient field-work experience, participants who did not have extra time for practice teaching believed that if they had had more time for teaching practice during their fieldwork, they would have been better prepared for their first year of teaching. One beginning teacher in this study expressed the view that having extra teaching practising time helped her gain much confidence in teaching in her first year: "*I was excited about my assigned tasks because I had been given numerous opportunities to teach classes during the teaching practice period, and I spent much time studying the content and teaching methodology of mathematics for grade nine*"..

The majority of participants expressed concerns about completing the required teachers' paperwork and said that they learnt how to do this during the teaching course. However, during their field-work, because of the shortage of time, they did not have the chance to gain access to and explore in samples of teacher paper work.

This finding leads to the conclusion that participants need more time in practice teaching during their field-work. This conclusion is supported by research that focuses on the necessity of designing better teacher training programs in order to better connect theory with practice through intensive field work experience

5.6.2 The need to understand the importance of establishing good relationships in the teaching environment.

The second element in the teacher training program that the participants identified as either being missing or poorly presented is related to the role of relationships in teaching and being part of a school community.

This study found that the participants felt that they were not aware of the importance of establishing good relationships to their professional development until they became involved in a real teaching situation. Participants who did not have a good relationship with colleagues and parents had difficulty in seeking support from their colleagues. Moreover, they did not receive agreement and tolerance from parents when discussing issues related to the students' progress. Therefore, these participants needed to understand the necessity of establishing good relationships with colleagues and parents. After having experienced a reality teaching environment, they realized that beginning teachers would have more opportunity to adapt and learn from their colleagues if they could develop good relationships with them. One of participants stated that: "*It is much easier if you have a good relationship, for example, in evaluating the lessons of beginning teachers they will be assessed with kinder words and given more dedicated guidance*". In addition, most of the participants admitted that they had not been focused on learning about the importance of building good relationships with colleagues during their teacher training course. This finding is consistent with Oberski et al. (1999) who found that teacher training courses in England should focus on equipping students with knowledge and skills in developing relationships in the workplace. They also conclude that almost all beginning teachers who are successful in their first teaching year have established good relationships with their colleagues and students.

The role of relationships in teaching and the importance of being part of a school community has not been a major, explicit, formal focus of any Vietnamese teaching program that I am aware of, and is not included in the curriculum framework of most teacher training colleges and universities in Vietnam. This content is integrated in the pedagogy of the professional competence practice subject which only accounts for two credits of the 137 credits throughout the four years of teacher training in the university and also 2 credits of the 106 credits in the college (MOET, 2007). The World Bank report (2012) identified that Vietnamese students are weak at soft skills, particularly in collaboration. In addition, a survey of 234 recruiters and 3,364 graduates from 20 universities, published in the research "Solutions for Enhancing Higher Education

Quality" by Ho Chi Minh University of Pedagogy, revealed that both graduates and recruiters shared a common view: 50% of graduates have to be retrained. The main reason is that professional skills including collaboration or team work do not meet the standards of recruiters (Luong, 2010). The result of this study indicated that it is necessary that trainee teachers in the final year in general and the participants in this study need to develop knowledge of and skills in teamwork during their college course. Participants in my study also expressed the desire to better understand how to build good relationships with colleagues in their new school.

To sum up, the participants involved in this study confirmed the huge difference between teaching standard schools during their field-work experiences and in their real school. Therefore, they were so unfamiliar with teaching in the real context that they were not able to handle situations for which they had not been prepared. In addition, the participants also pointed to the lack of time allocated to practice teaching when on their fieldtrips, causing them 'reality shock'. My study also found that KGTTC had not oriented and equipped these beginning teachers with the knowledge and skills to establish a good relationship in the work-place; having a good relationship with their colleagues would have helped these beginning teachers to look for support from other people.

CHAPTER SIX

Conclusion and recommendations

6.1 Introduction

This study was designed in the context of Vietnamese education and aims to improve the quality of education to be similar to that in other countries in the world and in the region by implementing an effective education policy. The most frequent question raised in many education forums and seminars is: where to start in education reform? In each developmental phase, several education reform policies have been implemented such as changing textbooks; capacity building for administrators at all levels; living allowances for teachers; and allowances for teacher seniority. Notwithstanding, evaluating the effectiveness of the reform process, Mr Huynh Cong Minh, Director of the Provincial Department of Education and Training in HCM City stated: "the attempt of the whole education system in the past years remains limited compared to the developmental demand of the country in the period of integration to the world" (Minh, 2012). Every policy implemented revealed its weakness after a period of time, most notably the policy on textbook reform (Tiên, 2010). The current topic of education discussions and forums investigates the reasons for Vietnamese students lagging behind as a result of the Vietnamese education system. The *Vietnam Education Magazine*, the most prestigious magazine in Vietnam, published an article that raised the issue that Vietnamese education is in the period of " the comprehensive investigation of the reasons for Vietnamese students lagging behind" (Trung, 2012). However, in all policies on Vietnamese education reform or in discussions of the out-dated education system, there are quite a few evaluations on the quality of beginning teachers and research on the situation of beginning teachers when they graduate. However, there is no research on beginning teachers in the Kien Giang province.

My qualitative case study research holds a consistent perspective on what is needed in order to sufficiently resolve the situation of Vietnam education; each individual working in the education system, regardless of their position, has to fully complete their tasks and responsibility. Only when each person in the system has met their responsibilities will the education system improve. Starting from this point of view, and aiming to fulfil my responsibilities as a lecturer at KGTTC to provide training for future teachers in the Kien Giang province, this study has been conducted with the purpose of

helping me better understand the situation of my students when they enter their real teaching environment in their first teaching year. I wanted to listen to their voices and concerns, understand the support they receive from their new environment and their assessment of the preparation of KGTTC in relation to their teaching.

This chapter will outline the major conclusions derived from the findings of this qualitative case study research. Recommendations for practice and future research based on the study's findings are also provided, in the next section.

6.2 Conclusions

The purpose of this study was to investigate the beginning teachers' experience in their first teaching year in Kien Giang province, a province located at the lower section of the Mekong River in Vietnam. To achieve this purpose, a single qualitative case study design was used to obtain an in-depth understanding of the experience of beginning teachers in their first year by collecting data from four focus group discussions, five individual interviews, and documentary evidence.

The first finding of this study revealed that these beginning teachers were concerned about their lack of subject knowledge, how to motivate students to learn, the lack of material and supplies, their relationship with parents and the poor living standards. The foremost concern of three participants, expressed in the individual interviews was their lack of knowledge of subject matter. The specific problem was for participants who had been trained as secondary teachers and who had completed only a two-month course to gain a qualification to teach at the primary level. This course did not provide them with the sufficient knowledge to teach at the primary level. Therefore, they argued that it was the lack of training which made them incapable of teaching at this level. This finding indicated that the two-month training course for primary teachers was not successful and resulted in a lot troubles for these beginning teachers. They also admitted that they sometimes felt apologetic for their incapability to fulfil their responsibility to students in terms of not being assured and confident about what they were teaching in their primary classrooms. This result is consistent with prior research which argues that beginning teachers need to be equipped with clear and detailed knowledge of subject matter to enable them to manage a class and teach effectively.

The study also found that teachers in remote schools had many concerns about how to motivate students to learn, how to establish good relationship with parents and

colleagues, a lack of material and supplies and poor living standards. The reason for these concerns revolves around the poor infrastructure in remote and disadvantaged areas such as the lack of electricity, poor road quality, inferior school facilities and poor living standards. Teaching in such conditions resulted in many problems for the participants.

Moreover, teaching in a Khmer minority ethnic community caused more difficulties for beginning teachers than teaching in other communities because of the language barrier between teachers and learners. The teachers did not speak or understand the Khmer language and the students did not know much Vietnamese. Therefore, the development of bilingual teaching staff for rural Khmer minority ethnic communities is crucial. In addition, due to the disadvantages of teaching in rural areas, not many teachers want to take teaching positions in these areas. The participants in this case study found it hard to find for a job in a city school so they had to teach in a remote school where even experienced teachers faced obstacles. Hence, providing academic support and better working conditions are important to beginning teachers, as this affects their ability to properly educate their students. For example, how can beginning teachers concentrate on their teaching when they must travel 60 kilometres to school each day or worry about the lack of pure water and electricity after they return to their guest house? Therefore, greater investment in rural areas in terms of increasing living standards (building more roads, hospitals, schools and infrastructure) is the key solution for raising the quality of education in these areas and will ensure education of equal quality in rural school, especially in Khmer minority ethnic communities. Walle (2003) supports this view, stating that in order to develop education and increase incomes for people in rural areas in Vietnam, it is necessary to apply multi-sectoral approaches for development projects including roads, electricity, communication, health and social welfares, because all these factors are closely related to each other.

The second finding of this study relates to the two sources of support that the participants experienced and most valued, namely support from experienced teachers (from both outside and inside their schools), and from other beginning teachers. The participants' experience of supportive colleagues varied from context to context, as they were in different schools. Most participants highly valued the support they received from experienced teachers; however, only three participants were lucky enough to be teaching in their old schools and received strong support from their former teachers. This strong support helped them resolve many of their difficulties in their first year of teaching, although they faced other difficulties such as a lack of knowledge on subject matter and

not being assigned a formal mentor. This finding confirmed the importance of the support from experienced teachers for beginning teachers in school cultures where "integrated cultures" exist. Communication between experienced and beginning teachers helped the beginning teachers to be more confident in sharing their successes obtained (in Dinh's experience). This research also found that communication between beginning teachers was a highly valued source of support by these participants. It is noted however that, although support from the principal is highly valued in previous studies, in this study there was a lack of support from principals in terms of assigning mentors to beginning teachers. The findings of this study on the support received by the first-year teachers is quite similar to western research in terms of beginning teachers needing support in their new environment. From the participants' perspective, the support they received from their former teachers when they returned to teach in the home town was very strong. This is likely to be different in western culture. In Vietnam, the culture of 'the village' has influenced behaviour and communication in daily life. The Vietnamese treat people from the same village in a more favourable way. Therefore, when beginning teachers return to their home village, they experienced strong support from their neighbourhoods which included their former teachers and their students' parents.

The third major finding of this study concerns the participants' perspective of the role of KGTTC in preparing them for their first year of teaching. This study revealed that the time allocated to practical teaching and field-work was insufficient, therefore during their practicum, trainee teachers did not have enough time to actually practice what they had been trained in relation to theoretical knowledge. Consequently they experienced many difficulties in undertaking tasks of head-teachers and also transferring the theory of teaching into practice in the first teaching year. In addition, this research also found that the practicum and field experience programs offered by KGTTC did not expose participants to the full range of tasks and responsibilities expected to teachers and the demands of the real teaching environment were far beyond what they had imagined when they were training to become teachers. This resulted in many participants experiencing 'the reality shock' during their first teaching year.

Regarding the role of KGTTC in preparing the trainee teachers for their first teaching year, this research identified that the importance of establishing good relationships in the work-place had not been focused on and these trainee teachers had little understanding of its importance during their training course. Almost all the participants only realised the

importance of having good relationship in the workplace upon entering a real teaching environment.

6.3 The contribution of this study

The purpose of this case study, as stated in the introduction chapter, is to improve teaching practice in the context of Kien Giang teacher education. In addition, it is hoped that this study will contribute to the development of educational practice and theory. Outcomes in these areas are discussed below.

The experiences of the beginning teachers in Kien Giang province in their first year of teaching not only pointed to solutions for past problems but also helped to clarify some issues about the training, fostering and supporting required by beginning teachers in the first stage of their teaching careers.

As discussed in the introduction section, the findings of this study will help my own professional development. Concerns about the lack of subject knowledge and the lack of awareness of the importance of establishing relationships in the workplace were expressed by the participants. Therefore, these issues will be mentioned in lectures on "issues in the primary and lower secondary schools" which will be given by the researcher in future teachers training courses. Furthermore, these issues will be raised for discussion with colleagues in meetings or seminars in Kien Giang Teacher Training College or at a regional level in the Mekong Delta in the south of Vietnam.

It is hoped that other practitioners in the field of teacher training will find this research beneficial in providing knowledge and raising for discussion the many issues which confront beginning teachers, as the foremost purpose of teacher training colleges is to train future teaching staff that are capable of meeting the requirements of their schools in a real educational context. In particular, it is hoped that firstly, the difficulties of beginning teachers in Kien Giang, especially of those teaching in rural schools, will provide other practitioners with new understanding and experiences. Secondly, it is hoped that a contribution has been made to understanding the solutions for improving the support of principals in the areas of encouragement and assigning mentors who have skills which match the needs of the beginning teachers. Developing positive relationships with teaching colleagues is also crucial to assist beginning teachers to adapt to their new teaching environment and address the gaps in their teaching training which may have left them unprepared for certain situations encountered in their first year of teaching. These

issues hopefully are beneficial to other educational practitioners in the field of teacher training.

In order to share research outcomes with teacher educators in other provinces in the Mekong Delta of Vietnam to help them grasp the research issues, the recordings of the participants' interviews were transcribed in entirely to ensure the reliability of the research and the process of data collection which was presented in the methodology chapter.

The contribution of the research is not only in terms of the research outcomes. It is not anticipated that this research study will be replicated exactly in other settings. As affirmed in the methodology chapter, truth and meaning do not exist outside human subjectiveness and they are the results of the reactions of humans with the world. Indeed, those who find this study valuable can apply it to their own individual situation. In order to do this, it is necessary for them to fully understand and become involved in the study which includes a thorough understanding of the research context, my experiences and my participants' experiences so that they can reflect on it and relate these to their own experience or their own context.

Though being drawn from a single case study in personal practice, the specific findings and the way this study was conducted in the research process set out below are offered as being trustworthy, that is, they are likely to produce recognisable, relevant results beyond the particular situation which generated them, which is the contribution of this study to educational theory and methodology. Firstly, this study combined new teacher development and data analysis to identify the key themes discussed by the participants in the one-to-one interviews. In the discussion part, these key themes were combined with the development approach proposed by Fuller and Brown to interpret echoed evidence leading to the findings of the research. Secondly, in the literature review on the problems of beginning teachers, Western scholars normally ranked and listed problems and solutions for beginning teachers but did not provide detailed explanations for these problems. In this research, I have contributed to the work of other researches on the unique problems facing beginning teachers in the South of Vietnam. From the participants' own voices and stories, explanations of the reasons why they faced the aforementioned difficulties, how they evaluated the received support and the quality of the training provided by Kien Giang Teacher Training College have been given. Thirdly, the contribution of this thesis to research methodology has been in using focus group

discussions to collect general information from the participants and their teaching context and then investigate these further in one-to-one interviews. The collection of general information from the focus group discussion helped the researcher better understand the surrounding information about the research topic.

Furthermore, it helped the researcher build on this in the early stage of the study in order to define and more fully understand the key issues and anticipate the information needed and hence, to dig deeper in the one-to-one interviews. The experiences of the researcher in conducting the in-depth interviews and the focus group discussions show that building relationships with the participants is crucial: it helps the data collection process and enables the researcher to capture the participants' deepest concerns more naturally and honestly. For example, I was able to recruit my former students to participate in the group interview (as they had returned to the training college for a PD course). As a result of the close relationship that existed between these former students and me, the atmosphere in the discussion group was very friendly with lots of humour between the researcher and the participants. We discussed the topics of the study naturally and smoothly. This is probably because the participants comprehended the purpose of the study and knew the researcher and trusted her. They discussed sensitive issues freely without being afraid their identity would be revealed or they would be reprimanded in some way, for example, for revealing that they had not received support from the school principal or formal mentors. At the end of the discussion, the participants in this group thanked the researcher for listening to them. They revealed that after speaking about their experiences and the troubles they had encountered, they felt relieved and hoped they would be fine next year. They also expressed the fact that they hoped the results of the study would be implemented in order to help the next generation avoid the problems they had faced. In short, the relationship between researchers and participant is crucial, especially when conducting research in the Vietnamese context where people do not share their problems, especially issues relating to their lack of ability to do something or regarding sensitive issues about relationships with experienced teachers. However, when trust is built, participants will reveal their deep perspective about sensitive issues freely.

In order to put the findings of this study into practice a detailed set of recommendations is discussed in following sub-section.

6.4 Recommendations

6.4.1 Recommendation for school principals

This study has led to the following recommendations:

1. Networks between beginning teachers in the same school should be organized and encouraged.

2. Suitable mentors should be allocated to mentees, based on the mentor having teaching expertise in a similar discipline to the mentee and that they teach the same grade as the mentee in order for the mentors to have time to communicate with the mentee and to impart relevant knowledge and advice. If these issues are resolved, the mismatched between mentors and mentees will no longer exist. In addition, it is recommended that the principal spends more time monitoring the induction phase for beginning teachers.

3. Beginning teachers should be encouraged to conduct lessons with experienced teachers as they are often prone to be weak in classroom practices and more emotional support. The principal should acknowledge these two factors and encourage beginning teachers to conduct lesson observations

4. Principals in remote schools should be aware of the disadvantages of the local socio-economic environment in remote areas and should encourage more efficient support for teachers especially beginning teachers. Principal should also have sympathy towards and an understanding of the difficulties associated with mobility issues in relation to teachers travelling to work, due to poor transportation in remote areas.

5. Beginning teachers should have greater opportunities to attend training courses and develop their professional development.

6.4.2 Teacher educators

This study has led to the following recommendations:

1. The teacher training college should assist trainee teachers grasp the connection between theoretical knowledge attained in teacher training courses and how to put this knowledge into practice by giving practical examples of teaching in schools. They should also help trainee teachers examine the content of the curriculum at all grade levels and help trainee teachers understand the curriculum and the most

appropriate teaching methodologies before they begin teaching, so that they will understand what to do when they are in front of their future class.

2. During field-work and practicum, teacher educators should maximize all available opportunities in the limited teaching practice time to help trainee teachers better understand teaching and learning activities in the school, in particularly, how to complete score books, and school report books

3. Advice and counselling should be provided to the department responsible for planning teaching practicums and field-work on the importance of ensuring that practicum are organised in diverse education environments to ensure that trainee teachers are familiarised with both city schools and remote schools; and strong academic environment and weak academic environments, to give the trainees a more balanced understanding of various teaching contexts. If this issue is resolved, 'reality shock' will be avoided when there a large gap between what the trainee teachers have been experienced in their training and what happens in reality.

4. Advice and counselling should be provided to the department responsible for designing teacher training programs on the importance of informing trainee teachers about the significant of establishing good relationships in the workplace.

6.4.3 Local authority

This study has led to the following recommendations:

1. Closely coordinating with principals at local schools to create the best conditions in capacity in terms of venues and budgets for school activities, in which including the organization of the network among beginning teachers from all schools.

2. Creating favourable conditions and encouraging poor families to make them feel more secured to let their children go to school.

6.4.4 Kien Giang Provincial Department of Education and Training

Kien Giang Provincial Department of Education and Training executes the state management functions in education and training including objectives, programs and the content of education and training; manages the standard of teaching staff; issues certificates and enforces examination regulations to ensure the quality of the education

and training in Kien Giang province. Therefore, it is clear that the role of Kien Giang Provincial Department of Education and Training in directing policy and issuing administrative documents to provide guidance, direction and support for beginning teachers in their real school environment is certainly crucial. As a result, this study has led to the following recommendations for Kien Giang Provincial Department of Education and Training.

1. Consult with MOET in increasing the amount of time for field experience in teacher training programs.

2. Increased funding is required for beginning teachers to practice in rural schools because of long travelling of the long distance trainee teachers need to travel. Therefore, Kien Giang Provincial Department of Education and Training needs to consult with Kien Giang People's Committee in granting more funds to allow trainee teachers to practice in rural schools. This would definitely help trainee teachers understand and address difficulties they may have to face with when they graduate.

3. Issue detailed guidance for principals in assigning mentors to ensure there is a match between the mentors and mentees in relation to the subject that they teach and their teaching timetable so that they both have time to engage in professional discussions between them. When principals clearly understand and grasp of the requirements of mentor assignment, mismatch between mentors and mentees will be minimized.

4. Cooperate with Kien Giang Teacher Training College in developing more detailed teacher training programs to avoid the shortage of teachers at all educational levels. If this recommendation is followed closely, short training courses and "instant" teachers will be minimized.

5. During the job allocation process for beginning teachers, it is strongly recommended that beginning teachers should be allocated to teach in their hometown. It has been revealed from the findings of the study that beginning teachers teaching in their hometown received valuable support from their former teachers and their neighbourhood.

6.4.5 The Ministry of Education and Training

This study has led to the following recommendations:

1. Advice should be given to the Government in relation to amending Article 20 which regulates teaching practicum instruction and Article 21 which regulating the policies on the allowances for trainee teachers and instructors in Decree 116/2003/NĐ-CP about recruiting, employing and managing staff in State agencies. This will help in the assignment of mentors and the management of induction program in each school

2. The framework of teacher training programs should be amended more time to be spent for practicum and field-work experience. In addition, the importance of establishing good relationships in work-place should be included in training programs for student teachers.

3. MOET should research an effective induction program for beginning teachers in Vietnam.

6.5 Limitations and implications for future research

6.5.1 Limitations

There were some limitations of this study. Only a small number of beginning teachers' experiences were studied and analysed. Because this is not a quantitative piece of research, this is not necessarily a limitation. Its relevance does not depend on the size of the sample but on the trustworthiness of its findings. Although the number of teachers involved was satisfactory for this study, it may not be appropriate for us to draw conclusions applicable to other are as, for example, the replication of this study in a larger urban area might not produce similar conclusions. While the population of the study was representative of the provincial beginning teacher population, it did not include other beginning teachers in Kien Giang province trained in different teacher training colleges in other provinces nearby. Only beginning teachers trained in KGTTC were included. Further research needs to be conducted to examine the experience of beginning teachers being trained in different training colleges to bring about a more comprehensive picture of beginning teachers in Kien Giang province.

In this study was the absence of the opinions and perspectives of school principals, mentors, and experienced teachers. As these partnerships directly connect and relate to the experience of beginning teachers, they are in a position to judge what they are looking for (or expect from) these beginning teachers in terms of being a part of the school. These perspectives could contribute to understanding the quality of the preparation of beginning teachers, and provide a comparison between what is being assessed by the people around

them and what the beginning teachers are concerned about. This could also validate the findings obtained from other sources of data. However, the scope of this thesis did not include these additional and importance data sources.

There was also the lack of available time in which to gain more insight into the issues affecting these beginning teachers after their first teaching year. It would be valuable to explore the experiences and concerns of these beginning teachers in their subsequent years of teaching. As further research, I will propose a longitudinal study on beginning teachers' experiences.

6.5.2 Future directions for research

Four years on the journey to conduct this study has given me opportunities to practice, reflect, discuss and write about the things that I love being part of and am passionate about-that is the quality of teacher training for the Kien Giang province. As a being part of this, I became a colleague of these trainee teachers as we all serve the educational cause of the province. Given my passion for this role (my position), I am even more enthusiastic in trying to improve teacher training services for the education system and provide the best quality of teacher education to ensure that we can adequately and professionally care as supplying future teacher staff for Kien Giang education.

I have had opportunities during this research to contact and discuss issues with beginning teachers, some of whom were my former students and were trained at KGTTC. Several of these beginning teachers were assigned to teach in schools in the province. Through working with them, my knowledge of learning and teaching activities in different parts of the Kien Giang province was widened. I had the chance to have better understanding of the situation facing teacher graduates; what they needed for their professional development and the barriers that they encountered such as the difficulties of teaching in poor remote schools. In the future, I hope there are more opportunities to develop induction programs for beginning teachers as the first teaching year is important as the foundation year for their career development. These beginning teachers also face huge obstacles during their first year in applying what they have been taught into teaching practice.

Future directions for research could involve responses from teacher educators, school principals and educational administrators at the provincial level if this research is published and disseminated through magazines or journals related to education and training in Vietnam. Future research could also be encouraged by the Kien Giang

Department of Education and Training in the fields of monitoring and directing schools in the province to carry out more research on the concerns of beginning teachers in order to explore effective support for their career development. Future research could be focused on school administrators, principals, and mentors' perspective of the situation facing beginning teachers in their respective school. These will result in principals, school administrators, mentors and related people including beginning teachers having a more diversified and profound view of the field of beginning teachers. The imperative for future research directions is how teacher training college can ensure that the development of beginning teachers in particular and teaching career development in general go from strength to strength.

This research represents a rather small segment of the beginning teacher population in a small rural province. Replication of this study in a more populated region with more beginning teachers who have graduated from different training colleges may yield more diverse and different findings.

The importance of the mentors' role in supporting beginning teachers during their first teaching year cannot be understand, therefore it is recommended that research be conducted a research to explore a training model for mentor programs. This research may provide information for developing a mentor program to improve the skills of mentors, and contribute to the quality of beginning teachers. Teacher education programs might look at developing a curriculum, including relationship issues, to provide guidelines for students to deal with the issues about relationships in their real teaching environment.

Moreover, this study investigated the experience of beginning teachers in their first teaching year. Future studies should follow these teachers into the next few years because policy making related to the professional development of teachers needs to be based on the evidence of longitudinal research on the development of teachers.

In conclusion, this research has provided significant indepth information on the experience of beginning teachers in the Kien Giang province. When I first embarked on this research I did not realise how much I would learn. In particular, I have learnt about the difficulties that beginning teachers encounter in dealing with their first year of teaching in terms of information and the requirements of the real job, due to the insufficient preparation of the KGTTC. Also there was a lack of clarity regarding policies relating to beginning teachers in terms of assigning mentors and the disadvantages associated with the lack of infrastructure disadvantages in local districts where schools

are located. I hope the outcome of this research will be considered as information for trainee teachers about the difficulties experienced by the previous generation. This will help illustrating what are waiting at their graduation and what important information should be obtained right at the teacher training college. I also hope that this study reaches teacher educators, and concerned people in the Kien Giang province education in particular and Vietnamese education in general to give them a comprehensive view of the issues affecting beginning teachers' experience in the Kien Giang province.

APPENDICES

PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET

Project Title: **A study of the first teaching year experiences of beginning teachers in Kien Giang, Mekong Delta, Vietnam.**

Researcher: Pham Xuan Binh

Supervisors: Dr. Peta Heywood and Dr. Keith Simkin

Course: Doctor of Education

The project "**A study of the first teaching year experiences of beginning teachers in Kien Giang, Mekong Delta, Vietnam**" is conducted by Ms Pham Xuan Binh during her doctorate candidature, under the supervision of Dr. Peta Heywood and Dr. Keith Simkin, Faculty of Education, La Trobe University, Australia. It aims at investigating the challenges and issues beginning teachers are likely to deal with in their first teaching year in Kien Giang province, Vietnam.

This project will provide an opportunity for beginning teachers from selected schools in Kien Giang to discuss their concerns and issues regarding the specific needs within their classroom, and the need of specific suggestion from mentors to address these needs. It also brings them an opportunity to learn more from one another how to better adapt to their new school. Thus, it provides more information for new teachers to know more about what requires them to be continued employment in their schools, and help them actively find the ways to enhance themselves with the necessary knowledge and skills. The knowledge, skills and personal attributes necessary at work is also very important for them during their first teaching year and to be successful in their teaching life.

Participation in the project will involve participation in a focus group discussion organised in the selected secondary schools, Kien Giang, Vietnam. Participants will share their experiences and find out what they have in common and what was unique with each other and the researcher.

The interviews will be notes, and examples will be translated into English by the researcher. Only the researcher and possibly her supervisors will know participants' identity. Their personal information will be kept confidential, and the data will be kept in a locked cabinet in the university and password protected computer file. The results of the research will be published in a thesis and may also be published in a journal article or presented at a conference. However, at no time will participants' identity be revealed. The summary of the results of the study and personal data collected during the course of research will be available to the participants on request.

Participation in this project is on a voluntary basic. Every participant may withdraw from participation in the project at any time during the data collection period. If they wish

to withdraw from the project, they are asked to complete the "Withdrawal of Consent Form" or to notify the researcher by e-mail or telephone that they wish to withdraw their consent for their participating in this research project. There are no disadvantages or adverse consequences for not participating or for withdrawing prematurely from the research.

Any questions regarding this project may be directed to the researcher, Mrs Binh Xuan Pham, email address: xuanbinhkg@gmail.com, or telephone: (+61) 401859645 (Australia), or (+84) 773502787 (Vietnam), or Dr Peta Heywood, Senior Lecturer, Faculty of Education, email address: p.heywood@latrobe.edu.au

If the participants have any complaints or queries that the researcher has not been able to answer to their satisfaction, they may contact the Secretary, Education Faculty Human Ethics Committee, La Trobe University, PO Box 199, Bendigo Victoria, 3552, e-mail: educationethics@latrobe.edu.au.

You are now invited to participate in this study. Should you agree to participate, you are requested to complete a signed consent form and return to the researcher.

Thank you for understanding and cooperation.

Yours sincerely,

Xuan Binh Pham

ED Student

Faculty of Education, La Trobe University

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Appendix A (Translation) **THÔNG TIN DÀNH CHO NGƯỜI THAM GIA ĐỀ TÀI**

*Tên đề tài: **Tìm hiểu kinh nghiệm một năm tập sự của giáo viên năm trung học cơ sở trên địa bàn tỉnh Kiên Giang, Việt Nam.***

Người thực hiện: Phạm Xuân Bình

Người hướng dẫn: Tiến sĩ Peta Heywood và Tiến Sĩ Keith Simkin

Chương trình: Đào tạo Tiến sĩ giáo dục

Đề tài "***Tìm hiểu kinh nghiệm một năm tập sự của giáo viên năm trung học cơ sở trên địa bàn tỉnh Kiên Giang, Việt Nam***" được thực hiện bởi nghiên cứu sinh Phạm Xuân Bình trong khuôn khổ chương trình đào tạo Tiến sĩ giáo dục dưới sự hướng dẫn của Tiến sĩ Peta Heywood và Tiến sĩ Keith Simkin, thuộc Khoa Giáo dục, Đại Học La Trobe, Úc. Đề tài nhằm nghiên cứu kinh nghiệm sau một năm tham gia giảng dạy của giáo viên Trung học cơ sở (THCS) trong thời gian tập sự.

Đề tài có ba mục tiêu chính. Một là khảo sát kinh nghiêm thực tiễn của giáo viên mới ra trường. Qua đó những khó khăn và thách thức họ đã trải qua sẽ được phản ánh.Hai là tìm hiểu yếu tố ảnh hưởng, tác động đến sự phát triển nghề nghiệp của họ trong năm đầu tham gia giảng dạy . Ba là tìm kiếm những chiến lược, phương pháp nhằm giúp đỡ giáo viên mới ra trường thích ứng với môi trường làm việc mới.

Đề tài này sẽ tạo điều kiện cho giáo viên mới ở các trường trung học cơ sở trên địa bàn Tỉnh kiên Giang được trao đổi những vấn đề mà họ cùng quan tâm liên quan tới việc nâng cao chất lượng giảng dạy của họ, và làm thế nào để thích ứng với môi trường làm việc mới. Đề tài cũng giúp họ có cơ hội học hỏi lẫn nhau và học hỏi từ phía các đồng nghiệp, từ đó giúp họ hiểu tốt hơn về những đòi hỏi thực tế của môi trường làm việc mới để có thể định hình và giúp họ chủ động trau dồi các kiến thức và kỹ năng cần thiết cho năng lực giảng dạy. Những kiến thức, kỹ năng và tính cách cá nhân mà sự nghiệp giáo dục đào tạo đòi hỏi cũng chính là những kiến thức, kỹ năng và tính cách cần thiết giúp họ thành công trong quá trình giảng dạy giảng đường và cho cuộc sống.

Các dữ liệu thu thập từ buổi thảo luận sẽ được ghi chép lại. Người thực hiện đề tài sẽ dịch sang tiếng Anh những nội dung tiêu biểu. Chỉ có người thực hiện đề tài và giáo viên hướng dẫn đề tài là có thể biết được ai đã tham gia. Mọi thông tin cá nhân của người tham gia đều được bảo mật; dữ liệu sẽ được bảo quản trong tủ hồ sơ có khóa tại Đại học La Trobe và trên máy tính được bảo vệ bằng mật khẩu. Kết quả nghiên cứu sẽ được trình bày

trong luận văn tốt nghiệp và có thể được đăng trên tạp chí khoa học hoặc được báo cáo tại hội thảo nào đó. Tuy nhiên, các thông tin cá nhân của người tham gia đề tài sẽ luôn được giữ kín trong mọi trường hợp. Bản tóm tắt kết quả nghiên cứu và những dữ liệu thu thập được từ mỗi cá nhân trong quá trình thực hiện đề tài sẽ được gửi đến riêng từngg cá nhân nếu họ có yêu cầu.

Việc tham gia vào đề tài này là hoàn toàn tự nguyện. Mọi đối tượng tham gia có thể rút tên khỏi chương trình vào bất kỳ thời điểm nào trước khi quá trình thu thập dữ liệu diễn ra. Nếu người tham gia nào muốn rút tên khỏi đề tài, họ cần phải điền và ký tên vào mẫu "Cam kết rút tên" hoặc thông báo cho người thực hiện đề tài qua email hay điện thoại rằng họ không muốn tham gia đề tài. Sẽ không có bất lợi hay hậu quả gì cho người tham gia khi không tham gia hoặc rút tên giữa chừng.

Mọi thắc mắc liên quan tới đề tài xin gửi tới nghiên cứu sinh Phạm Xuân Bình, người thực hiện đề tài qua địa chỉ email: xuanbinhkg@gmail.com hoặc điện thoại: (+61) 401859645 (Úc) hoặc (+84) 773502787 (Việt Nam), hoặc gửi đến cho Tiến sĩ Peta Heywood, Giảng viên chính, Khoa Giáo dục, Đại học Latrobe, Úc, địa chỉ email: P.heywood@latrobe.edu.au

Nếu người tham gia nào có thắc mắc mà người thực hiện đề tài trả lời không thỏa đáng, họ có thể liên lạc với nhân viên Thư ký của Hội đồng Đạo đức Con người (Human Ethics Committee) thuộc Đại học La Trobe, vùng Bendigo, tiểu bang Victoria, 3552 qua địa chỉ email: educationethics@latrobe.edu.au.

Bạn được mời tham gia đề tài này. Nếu đồng ý, mời bạn hãy điền và ký vào bản cam kết tham gia, sau đó gửi lại cho người thực hiện đề tài.

Xin cảm ơn sự đồng tình và hợp tác.

Trân trọng,

Phạm Xuân Bình

Nghiên cứu sinh Tiến sĩ Giáo dục

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Appendix B   **PARTICIPANT INVITATION LETTER**

Project Title: **A study of the first teaching year experiences of beginning teachers in Kien Giang, Mekong Delta, Vietnam** *Researcher*: Binh Xuan Pham

Supervisors: Dr. Peta Heywood and Dr. Keith Simkin

Course: Doctor of Education

Dear Teachers,

My name is Binh Xuan Pham, a postgraduate student at the Faculty of Education, Latrobe University, Australia. I am currently conducting a project entitled *"***A study of the first teaching year experiences of beginning teachers in Kien Giang, Mekong Delta, Vietnam** "* during my doctorate candidature, under the supervision of Dr. Peta Heywood & Dr. Keith Simkin, Faculty of Education, La Trobe University.

The project purpose is to explore the first teaching year experience of beginning teacher for better understanding beginning teachers' situation in Kien Giang province. The findings will contribute to the body of knowledge about how to support beginning teachers.

It gives me great pleasure to invite you to participate in my study on beginning teachers so please accept this letter as an invitation to an interview. The in-depth interviews will be taped. The questions will focus on your perspective of your life as a beginning teachers and center on themes of what happened to you during your first teaching year.

This qualitative study will seek to understand and explore perspectives so that I might generalize and learn from your experience and make recommendation for better support beginning teachers in our province.

Should you be interested in the project, please have a look at the information sheet attached for more details. Participation in this project is entirely voluntary. Every participant may withdraw from active participation in the project at any time during the data collection period. There are no disadvantages or adverse consequences for not participating or for withdrawing prematurely from the research.

Thank you very much for your understanding and cooperation.

Yours sincerely,

Xuan Binh Pham

EdD Student

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Appendix B (Translation) **THƯ MỜI GIÁO VIÊN THAM GIA ĐỀ TÀI**

Tên đề tài: : Tìm hiểu kinh nghiệm một năm tập sự của giáo viên năm trung học cơ sở trên địa bàn tỉnh Kiên Giang, Việt Nam.

Người thực hiện: Phạm Xuân Bình

Người hướng dẫn: Tiến sĩ Peta Heywood và Tiến sĩ Keith Simkin

Chương trình: Đào tạo Tiến sĩ giáo dục

Các bạn sinh viên thân mến,

Tôi tên là Phạm Xuân Bình, là nghiên cứu sinh khoa Giáo dục, trường Đại học Latrobe, Úc. Hiện nay, tôi đang thực hiện đề tài nghiên cứu mang tên "*: Tìm hiểu kinh nghiệm một năm tập sự của giáo viên năm trung học cơ sở trên địa bàn tỉnh Kiên giang, Việt nam*" trong khuôn khổ chương trình đào tạo Tiến sĩ giáo dục dưới sự hướng dẫn của TS Peta Heywood và TS Keith Simkin, thuộc Khoa Giáo dục, Đại Học La Trobe. Đề tài nghiên cứu về những khó khăn và thách thức mà giáo viên mới ra trường gặp phải trong năm đầu giảng dạy tại các trường trung học cơ sở trên địa bàn tỉnh Kien Giang. Mục đích của đề tài nhằm nâng cao nhận thức và năng lực giảng dạy cho giáo viên mới ra trường đáp ứng với nhu cầu thực tế tại địa phương, đồng thời kết qua của nghiên cứu nhằm phục cho việc phát triển đôi ngũ giáo viên trẻ cũng như cung cấp những kết quả mang tính khoa học phục vụ cho việc đề ra những chính sach có liên quan.

Một phần của đề tài này là việc thu thập dữ liệu từ các giáo viên đa trải qua một năm kinh nghiệm giảng day. Công việc đòi hỏi Giáo viên mới nhiều trường khác nhau cùng tham gia trong một nhóm thảo luận, trong đó, giáo viên sẽ được yêu cầu thảo luận xoay quanh bốn chủ đề chính, đó là (1) những vấn đề giáo viên mới quan tâm va thường gặp trong năm đầu giảng dạy cũa mình, (2) những yếu tố, nhân tố có tác động đếnsự phát triển nghề nghiệp của giáo viên mới (3) các quan tâm, đề xuất, kiến nghị của giáo viên năm nhất trong việc làm thế nào để nâng cao một cách tốt nhất năng lực giảng dạy cho giáo viên mới ra trường.

Nếu các bạn quan tâm, vui lòng xem thêm chi tiết trong bảng thông tin chung đính kèm. Nếu bạn là sinh viên năm cuối của trường đại học và muốn tham gia vào đề tài này, xin vui lòng báo tôi biết và tôi sẽ mời bạn tham gia. Việc tham gia là hoàn toàn tự nguyện. Các bạn có thể rút tên khỏi chương trình vào bất kỳ thời điểm nào trong suốt quá

trình thu thập dữ liệu. Sẽ không có bất lợi hay hậu quả gì đối với các bạn nếu không tham gia hoặc rút tên nửa chừng.

Xin cảm ơn sự đồng tình và hợp tác của các bạn.

Trân trọng,

Phạm Xuân Bình

Nghiên cứu sinh Tiến sĩ Giáo dục

Khoa Giáo dục, Đại học La Trobe

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Appendix C   **PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM**

Project Title: **A study of the first teaching year experiences of beginning teachers in Kien Giang, Mekong Delta, Vietnam.**

Researcher: Bình Xuân Phạm

Supervisors: Dr. Peta Heywood and Dr. Keith Simkin

Course: Doctor of Education

I, ……...................……………………….., have read and understood the information sheet provided by the researcher concerning this activity, and any questions I have asked have been answered to my satisfaction.

a. I agree to take part in a focus group interview organised by the researcher.

b. I agree that the research data collected for the study may be published or provided to other researchers on the condition that my name is not used, and that I cannot be identified in any other way (except to other participants in the focus group discussion).

c. I agree to participate in the project, realizing that I may physically withdraw from the study at any time during the data collection period and may request that no data arising from my participation are used, up to four weeks following the completion of my participation in the research.

d. A copy of the information sheet for this project and this form has been provided to me to keep.

Name of Participant..**Email** ....

Signature...**Date**...

Name of researcher Phạm Xuân Bình

Signature...**Date**...

Names of supervisors Dr Peta Heywood

Signature...**Date**...

Names of supervisors Dr Keith Simkin

Signature...**Date**...

Appendix C – (Translation)   GIẤY CAM KẾT DÀNH CHO NGƯỜI THAM GIA

Tên đề tài: Tìm hiểu kinh nghiệm một năm tập sự của giáo viên năm trung học cơ sở trên địa bàn tỉnh Kiên Giang, Việt Nam.

Người thực hiện: Phạm Xuân Bình

Người hướng dẫn: Tiến sĩ Peta Heywood và Tiến sĩ Keith Simkin

Chương trình: Đào tạo Tiến sĩ giáo dục

Tôi, …….......................……………………….., đã đọc và hiểu bảng thông tin về đề tài do người thực hiện đề tài cung cấp và những thắc mắc của tôi đều được trả lời thỏa đáng.

a. Tôi đồng ý tham gia vào nhóm thảo luận tại trường Cao Đẳng sư phạm Kiên Giang.

b. Tôi đồng ý rằng dữ liệu của đề tài có thể được xuất bản hoặc cung cấp cho những nhà nghiên cứu khác với điều kiện tên tôi được xóa đi trước đó và không ai có thể xác định được tôi bằng bất kỳ hình thức nào, ngoại trừ trong trường hợp thảo luận nhóm thông tin về cá nhân của tôi có thể bị tiết lộ sau khi cuộc thảo luận kết thúc.

c. Tôi đồng ý tham gia vào đề tài và hiểu rằng tôi có thể rút tên khỏi đề tài vào bất cứ lúc nào trong giai đoạn thu thập dữ liệu, và có quyền yêu cầu xóa dữ liệu của cá nhân mình trong vòng 4 tuần từ khi giai đoạn thu thập dữ liệu kết thúc.

d. Tôi được giữ một bản copy của tờ thông tin chung và giấy cam kết này.

Tên người tham gia..**Email** ....

Chữ ký ....

Ngày...

Tên người thực hiện đề tài ....

Chữ ký ....

Ngày...

Tên của người hướng dẫn đề tài ....

Signature...**Date**...

Appendix D: Approval from the Director of the Kien Giang Provincial Department of Education and Training

Kien Giang Department of Education and Training

131 Dong Da Street - Vinh Lac ward- Rach Gia City - Kiên Giang

Phone: 077.3862045 - Fax: 077.3863988

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

Kien Giang, 25 May, 2011

Kien Giang Department of Education and Training hereby approved Ms Xuan Binh Pham's request for access to secondary schools in Kien Giang province in connection with her research and data collection for her doctoral research project "**A study of the first teaching year experiences of beginning teachers in Kien Giang, Mekong Delta, Vietnam**".

The research and data collection will be administered from August, 2011 to November, 2012. It is expected that the research findings will contribute to the body of knowledge about how to support beginning teachers and will offer insights into the secondary Vietnamese first year teacher experience.

Binh Xuan Pham is the lecturer of Psychology and Education Department, Kien Giang Teacher Training College which provides the main teacher work force for Kien Giang's Secondary education. Therefore, Kien Giang Department of Education and Training introduces Ms Xuan Binh Pham to Secondary schools located in Kien Giang province and hope that related parties will give her and this research full support.

Deputy Director of education and training, Kien Giang

Huynh Quoc Khanh (signed)

Appendix D – Approval from the Director of the Kien Giang Provincial Department of Education and Training (Translation)

Sở Giáo dục và Đào tạo Kiên Giang

131 Đống đa - P.Vĩnh Lạc - TP. Rạch Giá - Kiên Giang

Điện thoại: 077.3862045 - Fax: 077.3863988

GỬI NHỮNG NGƯỜI LIÊN QUAN

Kiên Giang, ngày 25 tháng 11 năm 2009

Sở Giáo dục và Đào tạo Kiên Giang chấp thuận lời yêu cầu của bà Phạm Xuân Bình và cho phép bà đến các trường Trung học cơ sở trên địa bàn tỉnh Kiên Giang tiến hành nghiên cứu và thu thập dữ liệu cho đề tài nghiên cứu bậc tiến sĩ "Tìm hiểu kinh nghiệm năm đầu dạy học của giáo viên mới ra trường tại các trường Trung học cơ sở, Kiên Giang". Quá trình thu thập dữ liệu sẽ được tiến hành vào khoảng thời gian từ tháng 8 năm 2011 và kết thúc vào tháng 11 năm 2012. Hy vọng rằng, kết quả của dự án nghiên cứu sẽ đóng góp vào các nghiên cứu khoa học liên quan đến việc định hướng các chính sách hỗ trợ giáo viên mới ở Việt Nam, và đồng thời cung cấp thêm thông tin về những trải nghiệm thực tiễn năm đầu giảng dạy của giáo viên Trung học cơ sở trên địa bàn Tỉnh Kiên Giang.

Bà Phạm Xuân Bình là giảng viên khoa Tâm lí-Giáo dục của Trường Cao đẳng Sư phạm Kiên Giang, nơi đào tạo chủ yếu giáo viên hệ trung học cơ sở của Tỉnh. Vì thế, Sở Giáo dục Đào tạo Kiên Giang cho phép và giới thiệu bà Phạm Xuân Bình đến các trường THCS trên địa bàn Tỉnh Kiên Giang, đồng thời hy vọng rằng các đơn vị nơi bà Bình đến liên hệ sẽ tạo điều kiện giúp bà hoàn thành công tác nghiên cứu.

Phó Giám đốc

Huỳnh Quốc Khánh (da ki)

Appendix E

Semi-structure interviews with individual beginning teachers

Main questions:

- ➢ Introduction

  Greeting, explain the purpose of the interview, getting consent form signed, permission to use tape recording.

  Some questions may be used to ask:

  - *To start with, would you tell me about yourself and why you decided to be a teacher.*

  - *How about this summer PD program?*

  - *Where are you teaching? Is it far from here?*

  - *Are you married? What does your husband do? Have you got any rice field? How many children have you got? How old are they?*

- ➢ Starting the main focus:

  - *How would you describe the first year of teaching in this school. Tell me more about this? What was it like for the rest of you?*

  - *Will you tell me about the children you are teaching?*

- ➢ Received support:

  - *Who helps you overcome these difficulties? - in what way?*

  - *Please tell me more about the support and guidance you received*

  - *If you had to think of one successful moment of teaching, what would it be? Why do you think it was successful?*

If participants mention about the problems, use these predetermined questioned to digger more about their concerned problems.

- ➢ *Concerned problems:*

  - *What have been the main problems or issues so far?*

  - *How does it constrain your professional developments?*

  - *How do you deal with this?*

  - *Who has been the most support?- go back to the issues of received support if participants mention about support and have not mention about support.*

- *What difficulties did you encounter? Allow time for thinking if participants pause.*

➢ The quality of preparation for teaching:

  - *What aspects or experiences from your college programme have been most helpful so far?*

  - *(Disposition, subject knowledge, pedagogy, assessment, reflection)*

  - *What aspects or experiences from your college programme have been least helpful so far?*

  - *What changes would you make to the college programme to help you in your first year of teaching?*

  - *What are the differences from being on practicum to teaching this year?*

  - *What could college do to bridge the transition from your teacher education program to teaching?*

  - *What advice do you have for beginning teachers?*

Appendix F   **Data auditor's statement**

I, hereby, certify that

1. The English translation of the participant information sheet, invitation letter, consent form and approval from the Deputy Director of the Kien Giang Provincial Department of Education and Training is accurate and complete.
2. I have compared some quotations from the in-depth interview one and three presented in Chapter Five with the listening and the transcripts of these in-depth interviews. They are translated faithfully from Vietnamese into English.

Dang Xuan Thu

Lecturer of Translation

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