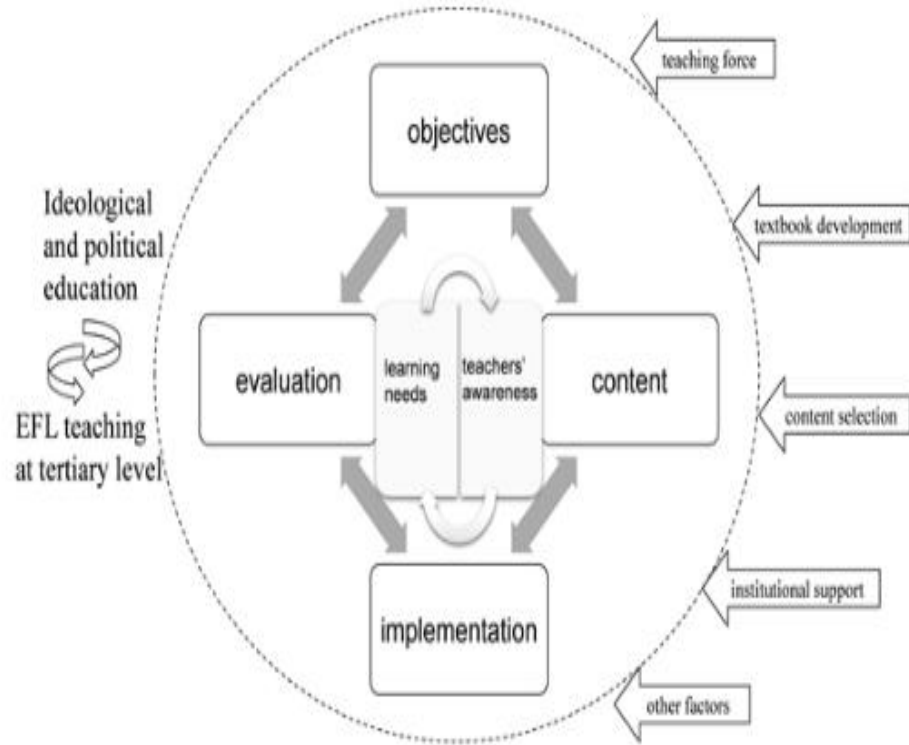




The Implementation Efficacy of Public English Policies in Chinese Universities: A Qualitative Analysis of Teachers' Perspectives

Wenrui Yin

Introduction



- Current models are ambitious and emphasise flexibility in curriculum development, and position teachers as change agents (Priestley and Drew, 2019)
- Teacher agency is vital in curriculum reforms (Tao and Gao, 2017)
- Current research on curriculum reforms and teacher agency focus on Western, Educated, Industrialised, Rich, and Democratic contexts (Miller and Gkonou, 2018; Vähäsantanen *et al.*, 2009)
- Limited studies on China

Research aim and significance



Aim: Explore CIPE policy implementation in China via teacher perspectives



Focus: Integration of CIPE in public English University in China



Significance: Fills gap in teacher-centered public English policy implementation research



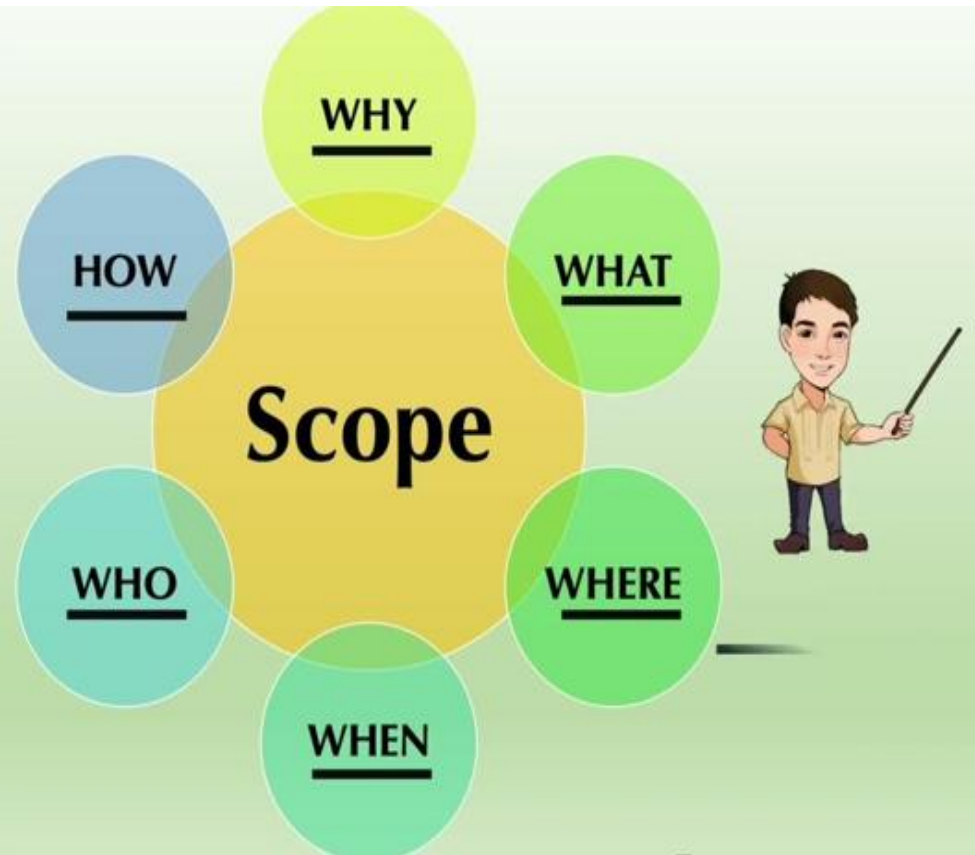
Offers deep context-specific insights into policy implementation

Research Objectives



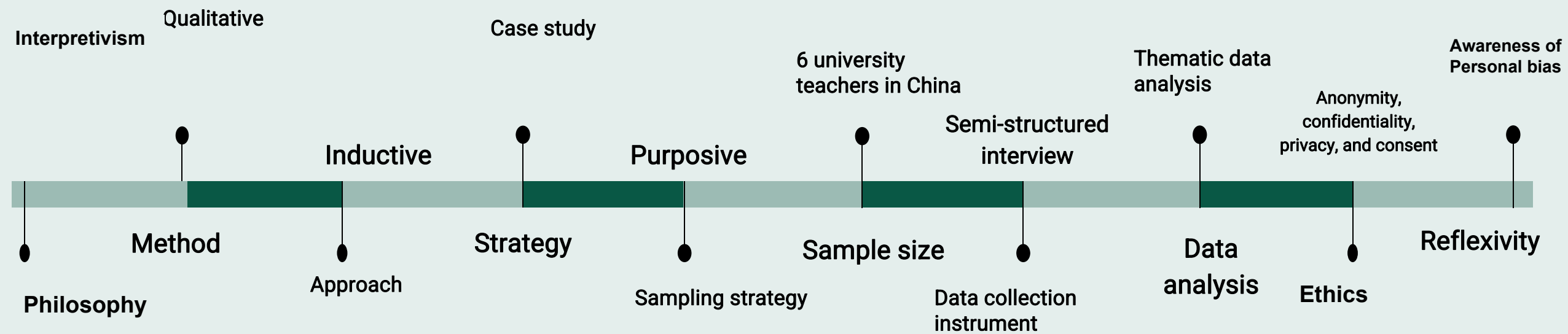
- Explore how university teachers in China interpret, adapt, and implement public English policies in the context of their universities.
- Explore the factors that, from university English teachers' perspectives, facilitate or limit the effective implementation of CIPE reforms in Chinese universities.
- Explore how institutional context shapes the implementation efficacy of CIPE, as experienced and interpreted by university English teachers.

Scope and critical perspective



- Focus on China as an under-studied context since most existing studies focus on the developed Western nations (Miller and Gkonou, 2018)
- Changes in China's public English curriculum is unique due to the integration of ideological and cultural concepts (Ministry of Education, China, 2020) that draws research interest
- Covers elite vs regional universities in China due to the different funding model between the university tiers in China (Law, 2014)
- Helps to explore how resources influence reforms

Methodological justification (overview)



Research Philosophy and method

- Interpretivist-qualitative research – multiple realities and context-specific data (Pham, 2018)
- Depth and detail (O'Donoghue, 2018)
- Explore teachers' perspectives, experiences, beliefs, and opinions (O'Donoghue, 2018)
- Frames teachers as active agents in public English curriculum reform implementation
- Enables a deeper comprehension of socio-cultural factors (Pham, 2018)



Limitations of Interpretivism and alternatives



Limitations of Interpretivism

- Lack of statistically verifiable and generalisable data (Pham, 2018)
- Subjective
- Potential researcher bias and inaccurate findings

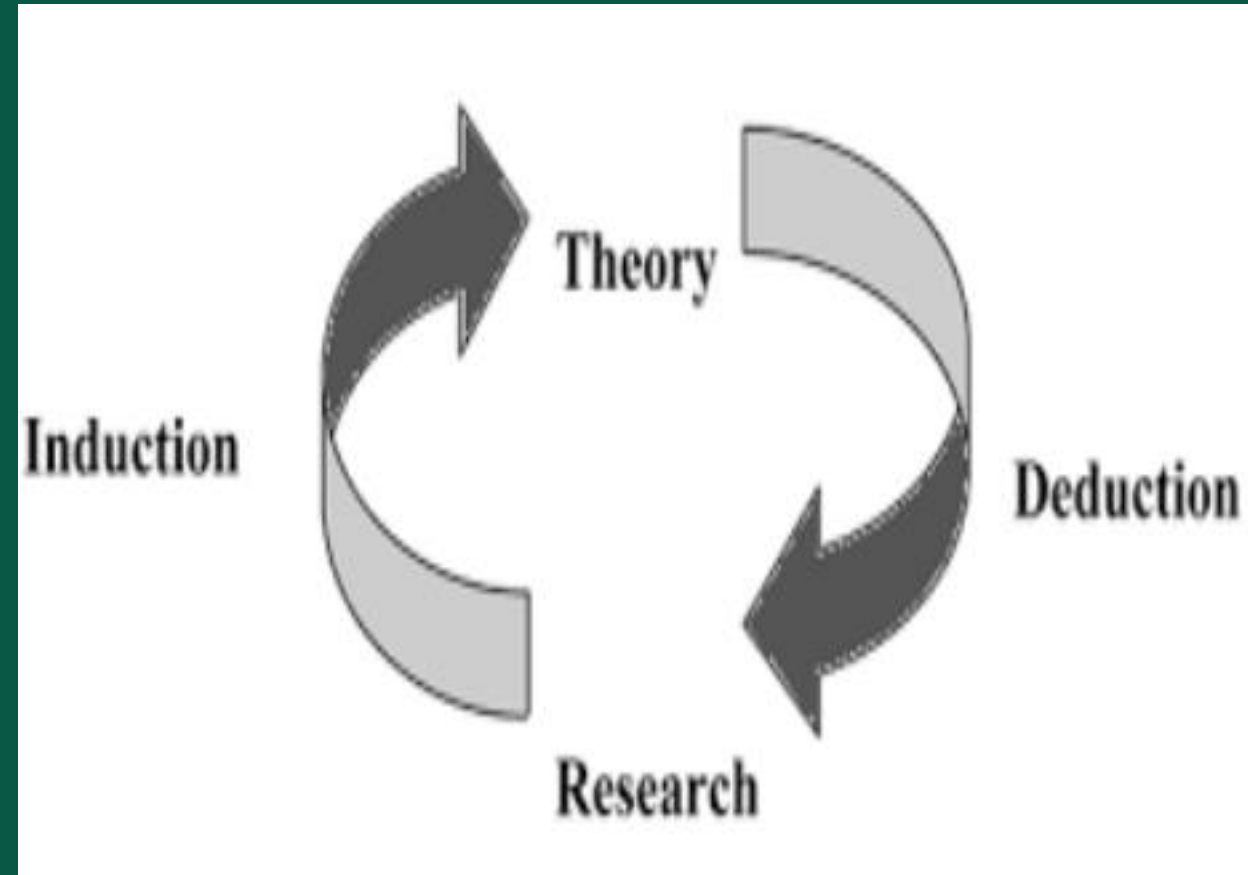


Alternative paradigm

- Positivist-quantitative research preferred for statistically quantifiable and generalisable findings.
- Rejected for lack of depth and detail as compared to interpretivist-qualitative research (Pham, 2018)

Research Approach

- Inductive reasoning – theory emerged from the data collected from the university teachers in China (Creswell, 2014)
- Suitable for under-explored research contexts
- Captures un-anticipated practices and insights
- Does not rely on preset hypothesis and therefore flexible (O'Donoghue, 2018)



Limitations of Inductive reasoning



Limitations of Induction

- Risks drawing broad conclusions from small samples (O'Donoghue, 2018)
- Inductive approach, however, maintained for contextual depth



Alternative approach

- Deductive approach – initially considered due to ability to draw conclusions from larger sample and address limitations of induction
- Rejected due to its rigidity and the reliance of the approach on existing theories

Research Strategy

- A single specific case study design
- China selected as a case study due to the unique context (CIPE)
- Case study captures context-specific data
- Helped to explore institutional differences between elite and regional universities in China (Yin, 2009)



Limitations of Case Study Strategy



Limitations of case study

- Limits generalisability
- Findings specific to the context of elite and regional universities in China (Yin, 2009)

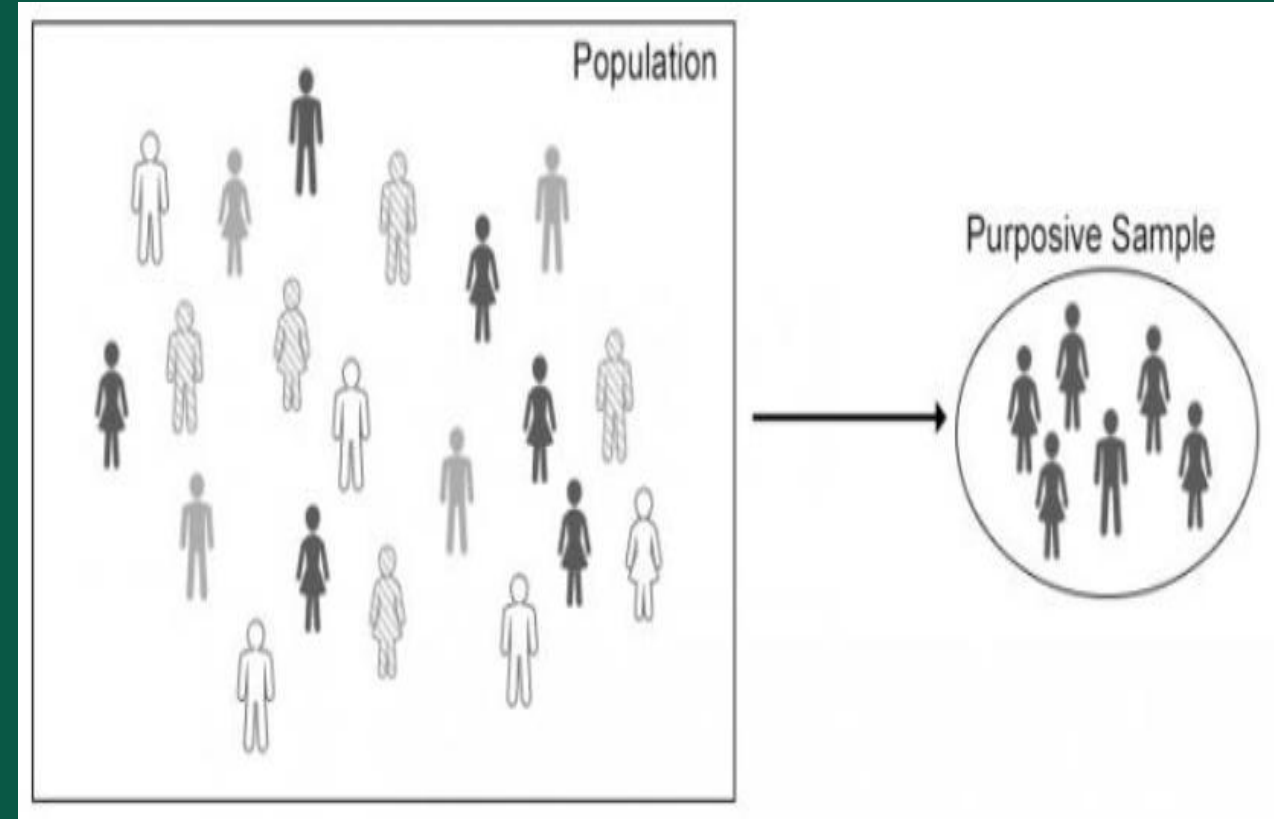


Alternative strategy

- Survey strategy was initially considered
- Surveys provide breadth due to larger study sample (Creswell, 2014)
- Survey strategy rejected due to less context depth and shallow analysis

Sampling Technique

- Purposive sampling technique
- Sample only experienced teachers in universities in China
- Targets information-rich individuals from the population
- Simple and efficient sample selection (Obilor, 2023)
- Less time taking
- All selected participants are suited for the study due to their knowledge of the research (Rai and Thapa, 2015)



Limitations of Purposive sampling technique



Limitations of purposive sampling

- Sampling bias due to non-randomness
- Lack of statistically representativeness (Obilor, 2023)



Alternative sampling technique

- A random sampling technique initially considered due to randomness and representativeness
- Rejected – random sampling may include low experienced teachers in the sample and reduce data quality (Rai and Thapa, 2015)

Sample design



Six teachers – 3 from regional universities and 3 from elite universities

- Sample design enables cross-tier comparison and reveal the effects of funding discrepancy on CIPE implementation effectiveness

- Small sample but high information yield.
- Dense data and focussed aim offset the small sample size

Sample design limitations

- Lack of generalisability due to small sample size
- Less than a typical saturation level of at least 12 individuals (Guest *et al.*, 2006)
- However, sample size limited by time and finances
- Sample of six considered due to participants knowledge and experience and data

saturation (Fugard and Potts, 2014; Guest *et al.*, 2006)

Sample inclusion criteria

- Aged 18 years and above to ensure express consent from the participants and avoid sampling vulnerable groups
 - Sound mind
 - At least five years of experience to ensure in-depth knowledge of the research area
 - Either from elite or regional university in China for variability
 - Express willingness to take part in the research to avoid coercion in line with research ethics
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Data collection and research instruments

Semi-structured interview and rationale

- Used semi-structure interview as primary data collection method
- Complement interview data with secondary data
- Semi-structured interviews are flexible and used to probe the research participants and acquire in-depth data (Bryman, 2016)
- Effective in exploring subjective issues
- Aligns to interpretivism (Brown and Danaher, 2019)



Limitations of semi-structured interviews



Limitations of Semi-structured interviews

- Heavily relies on self-reported data that maybe inaccurate (Bryman, 2016)
- Time taking (between 30 and 40 minutes per single interview)
- Limited number of participants (only 6 teachers)
- Limit generalisation of research findings (Bryman, 2016)



Alternative data collection technique

- Surveys were considered due to the ability to collect data from larger samples and produce generalisable findings
- Rejected due to their inflexibility and inability to collect deep-seated and detailed contextual data (Adeoye-Olatunde and Olenik, 2021)

Language and medium

- Interviews were conducted in Mandarin and translated verbatim
 - Native language was preferred since it enabled clear expression
 - Participants were able to speak freely without any language barriers
 - Verbatim transcriptions ensured a higher accuracy of the data
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Data collection Procedure

- Teachers were firstly accessed through university administrators who acted as gatekeepers
 - Interviews were conducted in Mandarin Chinese which allowed participants to articulate nuanced views without language barriers
 - Each interview lasted between 30 and 40 minutes
 - Interviews were conducted either face-to-face or via secure video conferencing platforms depending on participants' availability.
 - All interviews were audio-recorded with participant consent
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Piloting

- Piloting was done with two teachers
 - Pilot feedback was used to refine the interviews
 - Specific CIPE questions were added after piloting
 - Final interview questions ensured comprehensive coverage of the research areas
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Interview topics

- Background information
 - Teachers' understanding of CIPE policy
 - Iterational Dimension (Professional History & Identity)
 - Context of Practice (Institutional Environment)
 - Practical-Evaluative Judgements (Teaching Practices)
 - Projective Dimension (Future Orientation)
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Ethical considerations – informed consent

Institutional ethical approval obtained pre-research

Participants given detailed information sheets

Emphasised freedom to participate or withdraw

**Voluntary consent forms signed by all participants
(Brown et al., 2020)**

Ethical considerations – anonymity and confidentiality

Pseudonyms (X1–X6) used for all teachers

Removed personal and institutional identifiers

Maintained strict confidentiality of responses

**Protected identities given CIPE's political sensitivity
(Bridges, 2017)**

Ethical considerations – data security

Data stored on secure, password-protected drive

Complied with China PIPL and UK GDPR standards

Followed rigorous data privacy protocols

Encrypted interview transcripts for extra security
(Cohen *et al.*, 2017)

Ethical considerations – participant welfare

Participants free to skip distressing questions

Avoided probing sensitive personal issues

Prioritised participant comfort and safety

Negotiated with gatekeepers to prevent coercion
(Ramrathan *et al.*, 2017)

Data analysis – thematic data analysis



Justification

- Flexible methods of data analysis and compatible to interpretivist approach
- Allows for patterns and themes to emerge from the collected data
- Aligns data analysis with the exploratory research objectives



Limitations

- Theme identification relies on researcher judgment
- Potential subjectivity in coding and theme development
- Does not inherently produce new theory (vs GT)
- Mitigated bias via reflexive analysis practices

Thematic data analysis stage 1

- Familiarization – read and re-read the data transcripts
- Coding – manually generated the initial codes
- Search for themes – grouped codes into themes
- Identified patterns from the themes (e.g agency, constraints, and adaptation)

(Braun and Clarke, 2021)

Thematic analysis stage 2

- Review of themes –checked themes against the full dataset
 - Definition – defined and named themes
 - Created a link between the themes and the research aims
 - Prepared the final report (Braun and Clarke, 2006)
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Integration of theoretical framework

- Used Priestley *et al.* (2015) and Ball (1994) theories
 - Guided interpretation of themes through the lens of context and agency
 - Tied the research findings to established curriculum reform policy framework
 - Highlighted the role of teachers as active agents for curriculum reforms
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Alternative data analysis method

- Grounded theory considered for theory generation
 - Grounded theory builds new theory but requires broader scope
 - Rejected: beyond study's objectives and scale
 - Thematic analysis better suited to research goals
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Researcher reflexivity



Reflexivity

- Researcher a former English teacher in China
- Insider position raises potential bias risk
- Dual role (teacher-researcher) acknowledged openly
- Reflexivity seen as essential from the outset



Researchers' reflexive practices

- Kept a reflexive journal throughout the study
- Logged assumptions and emotional reactions
- Separated personal views from participant data
- Enhanced transparency and credibility of analysis

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