

How teacher educators perceive their approaches to teaching? A comparison between teacher educators from Finland and China

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Abstract: Teachers' approaches to teaching are influenced by culture, teachers' conceptions of teaching and learning, and the discipline and teaching context. It is important to explore teacher educators' perceptions of their approaches to teaching because the way they approach their teaching to educate student teachers can influence how the students learn, and further how student teachers approach teaching in class in future. The present study aims to understand how Finnish (n = 101) and Chinese teacher educators' (n = 115) perceptions of their approaches to teaching differ in consideration of the different cultures and teaching contexts. A questionnaire including 22 items from the revised version of Approaches to Teaching Inventory (ATI-R; Trigwell, Prosser, & Ginns, 2005) was used in the study. The results revealed that the student- and teacher-focused approaches to teaching were perceived differently in the two contexts. In the Chinese context, information transformation was perceived as an element of the student-focused approach, while in Finland, it was included in the teacher-focused approach like in other western culture. Furthermore, three kinds of approaches to teaching were revealed in both Finnish and Chinese contexts. It is indicated that although teacher educators from Finland and China possess different cultures, educational philosophy, and teaching contexts, they may share similar challenges and concerns in their approaches to teaching. Deepening our understanding of teacher educators' approaches to teaching would be the first step in understanding the complexity of teaching and learning, and to design training programmes to develop teaching. The training programmes need to be suitable for individual teacher educators' needs, meanwhile, the culture and teaching contexts the teacher educators face should also be considered. Furthermore, the ATI-R (Trigwell et al., 2005) was a valid instrument to explore teachers' approaches to teaching, though extra caution is need when applying the inventory in a new research context.