**Symposium Paper -Significant Experience Reflection**

**Fan Feng**

**January 13, 2017**

Before I started my first teaching practicum, I had many days and nights imagining what my first teaching experience will be like, most of my thoughts were worrying about having difficult students challenging my authority as a teacher, or dreaming that after I teach, students in my class will all be interested in mathematics, and their marks will improve dramatically. However, during my first practicum, I had encountered many things that I would have never thought about teaching, and throughout these few months, I have learnt a lot about myself and the real role of a good, professional teacher.

I had opportunities to teach grade 9, 11, 12 math, and grade 11 physical geography, at the start of my teaching experience, I was frustrated by seeing the number of students who were not motivated to make any effort. I have grown up in a culture that everyone values education and ever since I was young, I have been told to study hard so I can have a better future. Then, I started seeing the reality of education and about math learning, there are many students who are not motivated to study math because of a failure they might have experienced in the past and has made them believe that they will never do well in math, or some students just simply do not care about their studies.

After marking assignments and tests for my grade 9 math class, one student got me concerned, he always appeared to be so quiet and seemed to be working hard in class, but his mark was very low and did not seem to improving. So, on the day of handing back the midterm marks, I called him over and tried to comfort him because I could see the disappointment on his face, I told him this is just a simple test, if he keeps trying, he will be fine. Then, he teared up, and started telling me how hard he tries in class and at home, he told me that he was worried about failing grade 9 math, and he was stressing out because his parents are constantly asking him about his mark, he told me that he thinks he will never do well in math, because he has been doing badly in math all his middle school years and he has been told that if he cannot do well in math in middle school, he will certainly not be successful in math in high school… After comforting that student, I discussed with my mentor teacher and later participating in the parent- teacher conference, I started realizing the misconceptions students have about math and various reasons behind every student’s behavior and attitude toward study, I started putting more time having conversations with students, and trying to help students stop believing in those misconceptions. I started giving positive feedback on small improvement students make or breaking down every step of the questions, using games and other activities to help students learn and gain a sense of success in math, and eventually I started offering math help sessions at lunch 4 times a week , and during those math help sessions, I prepared fun worksheets and easy basic questions for students to work on, and after they finished I always told them how good they did on the questions I gave to them, and how much I believe that they will do well in math. It boosted most of their confidence and got some of them interested in math. I think what I learnt from this experience is never under-estimate the ability of a student and instead of telling them they cannot do well, praise and encourage them.

Overall, I had an amazing teaching experience, I have met many great teachers that showed me how to be a great teacher and even though I was quite tired at the end of each day, I found great joy in teaching and I cannot wait to teach and create a positive influence on many students in the future.