School Micropolitics in the Context of Reforms for Educational

Decentralization and Accountability in Mainland China

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Abstract

Decentralization and accountability have been two major themes in educational administration reforms in mainland China since the 1980s. They continue to loom large in the agenda of educational reforms in mainland China. Therefore, understanding how Chinese schools operate in the reform context is important for policy making. However, empirical studies on the issue remain scant.

To improve our understanding on the issue, one line of inquiry is to probe into the micropolitics in schools as they respond to the reforms. The perspective on school micropolitics examines how people articulate and reconcile their differences in interests within the formal and informal power context of schools. It points to a basic problem for the school organization: how to bring together people with different interests to work toward a common goal?

This study inquires into school micropolitics in the context of reforms for educational decentralization and accountability in mainland China. It focuses on the principals, middle managers, and teachers in public secondary schools in City G, which has been a pioneer in implementing the reforms since 2003. It seeks to unveil what micropolitics in the schools is like and why.

According to the empirical context of City G and the theoretical discussions in the related literature, three schools have been sampled based on two dimensions. One dimension is whether a school is a municipal school or not; the other the competitiveness of a school in the local school system. Ethnography methods have been used to probe into the micropolitical cultures of the sample schools, that is, to reveal the ways people in the schools define and deal with micropolitics. Semi-structured, in-depth interviews have been conducted with 46 participants with different backgrounds (gender, subject, position, seniority, Party membership,

teacher representative or not). Participant observations have been made in offices and internal meetings. Abundant relevant documents have been gathered.

The interpretation of the data has pointed out that a pattern of status-centered micropolitics permeates in the sample schools. Status refers to one's relative standing symbolically recognized by supervisors (*lingdao*, 领导) and co-workers for one's role performance as a teacher or middle manager in a school. While micropolitics focusing on money and on curriculum and pedagogy can also be detected in the sample schools, money and issues of curriculum and pedagogy are of lesser concerns to the participants. The study has also revealed varieties of strategies that are employed by the participants within the power plays of status, money, and curriculum and pedagogy. It has shown that participants' central concern on status shapes the features of the strategies they use in micropolitics of status, money, and curriculum and pedagogy.

The study further suggests that status-centered micropolitics could be accounted for by contextual factors such as the performance-based evaluationism in the schools, the ambiguity in performance evaluations, the peculiar nature of teachers' work as "*liangxinhuo*" (良心活, literally, "conscience work"), and employment security of teachers. Based on the findings, the study puts forth five propositions, which, taken together, provide a general account of micropolitics in the schools under study.

The study has produced indigenous understanding of micropolitical perspectives of people in public secondary schools in mainland China. It adds to the thin literature of empirical studies on school micropolitics in mainland China. The pattern of status-centered micropolitics suggests that we reevaluate the importance of monetary incentives in educational leadership in mainland China. The pattern also holds important implications for policy makers, school practitioners, and designers of professional training programs in mainland China.

摘要

从1980年代以来，中国大陆推行了一系列以分权和问责为主题的教育管理改革。研究改革背景下中国大陆学校的运作，对制定教育政策有重要意义。但是，对此问题的实证研究很少。

本研究聚焦于中国大陆教育分权和问责改革背景下学校组织中的微观政治。本研究在中国南部 G 市完成，因为该市自 2003 年以来推行的一系列教育管理改革集中体现了分权和问责这两个主题。本研究重点分析该市公立中学中校长、中层管理者和教师之间的微观政治互动，尝试对其进行描述和解释。

样本学校的选取基于两个维度：学校是否是市立学校和该校在本地学校中的竞争力。G 市的教育改革背景和已有文献表明，这两个维度可能影响校内微观政治。根据这两个维度，选取了三所样本学校。研究采用了民族志方法。对 46 位背景多样（性别、科目、职位、年资、是否中共党员、是否教工代表）的研究参与者进行了半结构化的深入访谈，对学校日常办公和内部会议进行了参与式观察，并收集了大量的相关文件。

本研究重点指出，样本学校中的微观政治呈现出一种模式。本研究称之为"地位中心微观政治"。"地位"指领导和同事基于某人的角色表现对某人所作的相对评价。这种评价往往是象征性的，表现为称号和表扬等。虽然人们在校内微观政治中也追求金钱和课程/教法方面的利益，但这二者不如地位来得重要。本研究考察了人们在地位、金钱和课程/教法领域的微观政治策略，并指出，人们在这三个领域的微观政治策略都受到"地位中心"的影响。

本研究进一步对"地位中心微观政治"模式进行了解释。解释涉及许多情境因素：校内的绩效评价主义、校内绩效评估中的模糊性、教师工作作为"良心活"的独特性、教师工作的稳定性等。基于研究发现，本研究提出了五个命题。这些命题相互勾连，大体呈现了样本学校中的微观政治。

"地位中心微观政治"模式促使我们重新评价金钱激励在中国大陆教育领导中的作用。本研究也指出了该模式对政策制定者、学校工作者、专业培训项目设计者的意义。

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Chapter 1 Statement of the Problem

Surface harmony, or what one principal labeled 'superficial harmony', can be defined as a school projecting the illusion of harmony to outsiders and, further, that this illusion is actually played out in the school in terms of overt behaviour, such as through conflict avoidance. This does not indicate, however, that disagreement and conflict do not happen in smaller forums and in different ways...the water appears calm but that this does not mean the absence of ferment below the surface. Such an atmosphere is obviously ripe for micro-political activity. (Dimmock & Walker, 2005, pp. 128-9)

This study is on school micropolitics in the context of reforms for educational decentralization and accountability in mainland China. It focuses on principals, middle managers[1], and teachers in public secondary schools and examines how they articulate and reconcile their differences in interests.

Two major arguments justify the study. The first is contextual and the second theoretical.

First, we need to better understand how schools in mainland China operate in the context of reforms for educational decentralization and accountability. Decentralization and accountability have been two underlying themes in educational administration reforms both in western developed countries and in mainland China since the 1980s (Brown, Halsey, Lauder, & Wells, 1997; Harvey, 2005; Hood, 1991, 1995). In fact, the two themes continue to loom large in China's most recent plan for educational reforms in the next decade (Ministry of Education, 2010). Knowing how schools operate in the reform context is important for future policy making in

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[1] People in many roles in the school organization perform duties of school management. This study refers to all these people, except the principal, as "middle managers". A middle manager may or may not have the formal title of "administrator" (*xingzheng*, 行政) in a public secondary school in mainland China.

mainland China. However, we only have a very thin knowledge base on the issue. Most writings on school management in mainland China today are prescriptive with little empirical support. To fill in the knowledge gap, indigenous empirical studies are needed. The present study is such an effort.

Second, a micropolitical perspective is especially helpful for understanding how schools operate as organizations. Organizations need to deal with a basic problem: how to bring together people with different interests to work toward a common goal (Ball, 1987; Clegg, Courpasson, & Phillips, 2006). The problem is particularly acute in schools, where teacher autonomy and poorly-defined goals and means make coordination challenging (Bidwell, 1965; Hoyle & Wallace, 2005; Weick, 1976). A micropolitical perspective focuses on how people in schools handle the basic problem of different interests. It asks how each player realizes its interests within the formal and informal power context of schools. Micropolitical inquiries promise to disclose the mundane reality of school operation (Ball, 1987; Blasé & Blasé, 2002) and inform school improvement efforts such as motivating teachers (Blasé & Anderson, 1995) and training practitioners (Hoyle & Wallace, 2005; Kelchtermans & Ballet, 2002; Ouyang, 2000). Despite its importance, research on school micropolitics is underdeveloped (Blasé & Blasé, 2002; Flessa, 2009; Mawhinney, 1999). This study seeks to add to the field and improve our understanding of Chinese school organizations.

This chapter has five sections. Section one explicates the above two arguments in detail, first the contextual one then the theoretical one. It further justifies the research question. Section two and three explain the purpose of the study and break down the research question. Section four and five discuss the significances and limitations of the study.

1.1 Rationale of the study

1.1.1 Contextual underpinnings

This part discusses the context of educational administration reforms in western developed countries[1] and in mainland China and thereby shows why it is important to study school micropolitics in the reform context.

The discussion of western reforms and studies here serves two purposes. First, it situates the study in a broader picture and argues for its significance. Second, it points out the close link between decentralization and accountability reforms and school micropolitics. The close link partly explains why this study takes a micropolitical perspective to study school operation in the reform context.

Decentralization and accountability have been two major themes of educational administration reforms in western developed countries since the 1980s. To respond to the economic crisis in the 1970s and to become more competitive in an increasingly globalized market, western countries adjusted the way they managed public service (Brown et al., 1997; Harvey, 2005; Hood, 1991, 1995). Leaders in countries such as the U.S., England and Wales, Australia, and New Zealand argued that the state should refrain from directly providing public service. Rather, it should focus on setting up regulations and standards, providing support, and monitoring performance. People operating at lower administrative levels should have more autonomy; where possible, market mechanisms of competition should be used to improve efficiency and quality of public service. The government should develop explicit performance measures and quality standards and use them to monitor how well service agencies are doing their job. In short, the role of the state should be steering from afar. These reform ideas had pervasive impacts, although to different extents in different sections and countries.

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[1] The use of words such as "west" or "western" in this paper does not indicate homogeneity but a generally similar trend among countries such as the U.S.A., the U.K., Australia, New Zealand, and Canada (Dimmock & Walker, 2000; Pollitt, 2001).

Education was no exception. Seen as a crucial contributor to national competitiveness and economic productivity, education has drawn substantial reform attention (Murphy & Beck, 1995). The worsening economic situation led people to ask: what's wrong with our schools and educational system? How to make schools better? Decentralization, accountability, and quasi-market mechanisms have been used to make schools and school districts more effective and efficient in delivering what people want from education (Ladd & Zelli, 2002). Prevalent were reform initiatives following these ideas. Some notable examples included Local Management of Schools and school inspection system in England, School-Based Management and the No Child Left Behind Act in the U.S.A., and Schools of the Future program in Victoria, Australia (Blackmore, 2004). The basic idea was that schools should compete in a quasi-market as relatively autonomous units for funding and enrollment. The government should evaluate schools with output measures. Indeed, output-based accountability reforms have been so pervasive as to make an "accountability age".

The twin themes of decentralization and accountability have also been prominent in the educational administration reforms in mainland China since the 1980s[1]. A milestone policy document was *Reform of China's Educational Structure – Decision of the Communist Party of China Central Committee* issued in 1985 (Communist Party of China, 1985). In the document, leaders criticized that the old way of educational administration in mainland China was too centralized. The central government funded the national education and made largely uniform decisions for all regions; the government controlled school operation in a strict and detailed way. The leaders argued that the central government should let local authorities have more responsibilities in funding and managing education. This way, the central

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[1] Table 2.1 summarizes educational decentralization and accountability policies issued by the central government in mainland China since the 1980s. These policy documents are selected because of their milestone significance.

government could ease its financial burden and leverage various channels of resources to expand educational provision. As for government-school relationship, the leaders suggested that the government should allow schools more operational autonomy and play the role of macro management. These ideas of decentralization have been repeated and emphasized in later major policy documents (Communist Party of China and State Council, 1993, 1999; Ministry of Education, 2010; State Council, 2001).

Along with decentralization, educational accountability has also been top on the agenda of educational reforms in mainland China. As early as in 1993, a major central policy asserted that quality standards and evaluation indices should be established for all levels of education; school inspection should be strengthened (Communist Party of China and State Council, 1993). It was also suggested that incentive and competition mechanisms should be introduced to the recruitment and management of school personnel to improve educational quality and efficiency. This concern on quality and accountability continued in later policy documents (Communist Party of China and State Council, 1999; Ministry of Education, 2008a, 2008b, 2010; State Council, 2001). Various measures were introduced: contract-based teacher employment, performance-based pay for teachers and principals, ranking schools based on school self-evaluation and external school review, just to name a few. Indeed, in a recently-issued outline for educational reforms in the next decade, establishing educational accountability systems was explicitly highlighted as a major goal (Ministry of Education, 2010).

Admittedly, different regions in mainland China may have been carrying out the decentralization and accountability policies in different degrees. But the policies do reflect a general trend of educational administration reforms in mainland China.

Given the prominence of the reforms, students of school management in contemporary China cannot neglect the context of reforms for educational

decentralization and accountability. They must understand well how schools operate in the context of the reforms. Though not the only approach, a micropolitical lens on schools is especially relevant to the context of reforms for educational decentralization and accountability.

Reforms for educational decentralization and accountability often touch on school micropolitics. Scholars have pointed out the theoretical link between decentralization, accountability, and power relations. On one hand, decentralization involves dispersing responsibilities and decision-making authorities from higher levels of hierarchy to lower levels (Rondinelli, 1980; Hanson, 1998). On the other hand, in an accountability mechanism, the party held accountable is required to provide an account on how well it has done its job. This is often accompanied by sanctions and rewards (Adams & Kirst, 1999; Ranson, 2003). Authority, reward, and sanctions are closely related to power relations, in which people influence one another to realize their own interests. Therefore, reforms for educational decentralization and accountability often touch on power relations among people in the educational system. People in schools are not immune to this process. Indeed, as many scholars emphasize, we should pay more attention to the environing context of schools when we examine how people in schools interact.

The close link between school micropolitics and reforms for decentralization and accountability is also demonstrated by empirical findings. For example, as studies pointed out, when England's Local Management of Schools devolved more authority to the school level, principals seemed to gain more share of the authority than teachers; the gap between principals and teachers seemed to widen (Whitty, Power, & Halpin, 1998). Other studies suggested that under increasing accountability pressures to deliver student performances, many principals tended to make more use of formal procedures to control teachers' work (Conley & Glasman, 2008).

However, to date, western studies dominate the literature on school micropolitics in

the context of reforms for educational decentralization and accountability. We know little about what the case is like in mainland China, whose context differs much from the west. Admittedly, reforms for educational decentralization and accountability in mainland China look similar to western ones. However, we cannot simply assume that what people found in western schools holds in mainland China. As many scholars assert, social context plays a big role in shaping how people in schools act (Dimmock & Walker, 2000). Given the unique cultural, political, and economic context in mainland China, we need to examine school micropolitics in the specific context of reforms for educational decentralization and accountability in mainland China.

In sum, reforms for educational decentralization and accountability have been prominent both in the west and in mainland China over the past decades. To inform future policy making in mainland China, we need to understand how schools operate in the reform context. For this end, a micropolitical perspective seems particularly relevant. As theoretical discussions and empirical studies in the west have suggested, reforms for decentralization and accountability are closely related to power relations in schools.

1.1.2 Theoretical underpinnings

"Power is to organization as oxygen is to breathing" (Clegg et al., 2006, p. 3). To understand the nature of an organization, that is, how an organization operates, we must understand the power relations among people in the organization (Blasé & Blasé, 2002; Morgan, 1986; Perrow, 1986). Why is it so? Because the power perspective points to a basic problem all organizations have to address: how to bring together people with different interests to work toward a common goal?

Organizations are tools created by people for some ends. To realize the ends, people in the organization need to coordinate their actions. They usually do not finish their tasks all by themselves but rely on the cooperation of others in the organization.

However, the cooperation of others is not guaranteed: people in an organization often have different interests due to their different backgrounds, needs, ideological stances, group affiliations and so on (Brass, 2002; Clegg et al., 2006; Hoy & Miskel, 2008; Pfeffer, 1981, 1992). Therefore, to get their work done, people in organizations often have to use their power to influence others. By looking at the way people in an organization pursue their interests with power, we will learn much about the internal workings of the organization.

While a power perspective is important for us to understand organizations in general, it is especially useful for us to understand school organizations in particular. This is so because the above-mentioned coordination problem is especially acute in school organizations. On one hand, it is hard for school managers to control the work of teachers, who often teach alone in classrooms (Bidwell, 1965; Weick, 1976). On the other, schools often have poorly-defined goals and means (Hoyle & Wallace, 2005). The ambiguity leaves much room for debate and conflicts. A careful analysis of the power relations in a school can tell us a lot about how the school organization handles the coordination problem and really operates.

In particular, we need to examine power relations among the principal, middle managers, and teachers in the school. These people deserve our special attention, though other parties such as students also engage in school micropolitics. As many studies have well shown, teachers who directly interact with students are the most important factor in determining how well schools perform (Day, Sammons, Stobart, Kington, & Gu, 2007). What teachers do and how they do it impact what students learn and how well they learn it. Likewise, studies have demonstrated that principalship matters for what happens in schools (Leithwood, Day, Sammons, Harris, & Hopkins, 2006; Leithwood & Duke, 1999; MacBeath & Dempster, 2009). Middle managers play a large part in the top-down and bottom-up communications.

The three parties often need to influence one another. For instance, to improve

student learning, the principal needs to influence teachers, who directly face students; to realize their interests, teachers need to influence the principal, who stands at the nexus of the school community and often has various resources at hand. Given the importance of the three parties, what happens among them may have big impacts on the school. Indeed, research suggests that principal-teacher power relations impact many things such as teacher morale, teachers' job satisfaction, and student learning (Blasé, 1993; Blasé & Anderson, 1995; Greenfield, 1991).

Despite its importance, research on school micropolitics remains underdeveloped (Mawhinney, 1999; Bacharach & Mundell, 1993). Some scholars point out that current discourse in educational leadership and management emphasizes efficiency and results and downplays differences in interests among people. Therefore, a micropolitical perspective, which focuses on differences in interests, only receives limited attention (Flessa, 2009). As for the available studies on school micropolitics, many of them, internationally and in mainland China, are anecdotal descriptions and add little to our understanding of school organizations. Besides, confusions on the concept of power also thwart the development of the field (Bacharach & Mundell, 1993; Malen, 1995; Webb, 2008).

The reforms for educational decentralization and accountability in mainland China create opportunities to study school micropolitics. The reason is that the reforms introduce changes into the work context of people in schools; the changes have the potential to disclose the hidden part of school micropolitics (Ball, 1994). Contextual changes disturb the old ways of working; people in schools need to interpret the shifting environment and develop strategies to respond to it. The dynamic process may bring to the surface what's usually under water in school micropolitics.

In sum, while a micropolitical perspective is important for us to understand school organizations, the field of school micropolitics remains underdeveloped. We should make use of research opportunities created by reforms for educational

decentralization and accountability in mainland China and study school micropolitics in the reform context.

1.2 Purpose of the study

The purpose of the study is to examine school micropolitics in the context of reforms for educational decentralization and accountability in mainland China.

Specifically, the study seeks to unveil how people in Chinese schools[1] address the basic problem of different interests in their work relations. When there is a difference in interests among people, as there often is, how do they use their power to influence one another to realize their own interests? What are their actions and strategies? Also, the study is to understand the thinking of people behind their actions and strategies: how they perceive their interests, the role of themselves and others, their work context, and the reforms.

In this way, we can learn about what people in Chinese schools think and do in their power relations. This will shed light on the internal workings of Chinese school organizations, where differences in interests and the use of power are pervasive. Also, the study will show how schools operate in the context of reforms for decentralization and accountability and thereby inform future policy making in mainland China. Given the prominence of the reforms, studies on school management in contemporary China cannot neglect the reform context if they are to be relevant to practice.

Within mainland China, the study focuses on public secondary schools. Public schools are the dominant majority in mainland China. Therefore, a focus on them makes the study more relevant to practice. The focus on secondary schools is also due to the purpose of the study.

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[1] In this study, the term "Chinese school" refers to public secondary schools in mainland China.

On one hand, secondary schools are generally under more accountability pressure than primary schools. Therefore, secondary schools better fit the research purpose, which is to examine what happens in schools in a context of increasing accountability. Students in secondary schools, but not in primary schools, need to take high-stakes tests in their final year. How well its students perform in the tests greatly influences the reputation of a secondary school and the resources it can get in the future.

On the other hand, the coordination problem is more serious in secondary schools, which are generally more departmentalized than primary schools. This may create more need for people in secondary schools to use power to realize their interests. Therefore, secondary schools are more informative for my purpose of seeing how people in schools articulate and reconcile their differences in interests with power.

Guided by its purpose, the study raises the following research questions.

1.3 Research questions

The study focuses on public secondary schools in mainland China which have been experiencing reforms for educational decentralization and accountability. It asks three main questions on the schools:

1. What is micropolitics in the public secondary schools like?
2. Why is micropolitics in the public secondary schools the way it is?
3. What are the commonalities and variations among the schools in terms of micropolitics?

1.4 Significance

1.4.1 Theoretical significance

First, the study will add to the empirical knowledge base of school micropolitics in mainland China. Despite its importance, the field of school micropolitics remains

infant in mainland China. Most writings on the issue are prescriptive essays with little empirical support. The study is one of the few starting steps to build up an empirical base in the field.

Second, the study will improve our understanding of Chinese school organizations. It focuses on three important types of actors in the organization: the principal, the middle managers, and the teachers. In addition, it digs into a basic problem in the organization: how the three parties deal with their differences in interests within the formal and informal power context of the school. The study will show not only what people do in their micropolitical interactions but also why they do what they do. As such, the study will shed light on how things get done in Chinese school organizations. Put differently, the study will help us understand how Chinese school organizations get organized and operate they way they do.

Third, the study will contribute to our knowledge on educational leadership in mainland China. In this study, leadership is not seen as something resting in one individual but as something co-constructed by leaders and followers in their interactions. In particular, the study examines a basic aspect of their interactions: how leaders and followers confront their differences in interests. With this micropolitical perspective, we will see an important facet of educational leadership in mainland China.

1.4.2 Practical significance

On one hand, the study will help educational practitioners reflect on their work. The study will show how the principal, middle managers, and teachers in the sample schools perceive and deal with their micropolitical interactions. It will also seek to explain the micropolitical interactions with various factors in their work context. This way, the study will provide school practitioners with a clearer and broader picture of their work relations. This can inspire them to reflect on what they do in schools and how they do what they do.

On the other hand, the study will inform future policy making in mainland China. Decentralization and accountability continue to dominate the agenda of educational reform in mainland China. This study examines how schools operate in a context shaped by past reforms for educational decentralization and accountability. As such, the study promises to generate knowledge useful for policy design and implementation.

1.5 Limitations

The study recognizes a number of challenges and limitations.

First, there is the risk of relying too much on western concepts and theories. At present, we see little indigenous research on school micropolitics in mainland China. Therefore, the study turns to western literature for useful ideas in the early phrase of exploration. However, western-based concepts may not fit a Chinese context (Dimmock & Walker, 2000). Borrowing western ideas introduces the risk of being dominated by existing western literature. The extreme case of the risk would be finding things "similar", only deceptively, to what scholars have found in western schools. To minimize the risk, the study will take great care in using the western-based theories. It will only use western literature as a "sensitizing" lens and initial guide. Insisting on a flexible and open approach, the study will strive to delve into the meaning world of people in local Chinese schools. One way to do this is to pay particular attention to the terms and phrases that have a strong local flavor. They will be given special attention during data collection and analysis.

A second limitation has to do with language. The nuances of the concepts used by the research participants, who work in Chinese schools, may be partially lost when I translate the concepts from Chinese to English in writing up the report. To address the problem, I will provide the original Chinese statements when I cite the quotations. This will help readers assess to what extent the problem has impacted my arguments.

A third limitation of the study is generalizability. The study seeks to uncover the deep and rich meanings people in Chinese schools attach to their micropolitical interactions. As such, it takes a qualitative approach and tries to understand the perspectives of people through small scale, in-depth inquires. Also, the study will focus on schools in a typical context shaped by reforms for educational decentralization and accountability. For these reasons, the findings of the study are limited to the schools under study. Though the findings can provide insights from a particular angle, they may not be generalizable to schools elsewhere in mainland China.

Chapter 2 Reform Context

The purpose of this chapter is to situate the study in its empirical context and thereby argue for its practical significance. The chapter first shows that reforms for educational decentralization and accountability have been prominent since the 1980s, both in western developed countries and in mainland China. Then, it focuses on City G in southern China and introduces its educational reforms since 2003. As the discussion suggests, City G is a "typical case" at regional level if we are to examine school operation in the context of reforms for decentralization and accountability in mainland China.

2.1 Reforms for educational decentralization and accountability: Western countries

By discussing western reforms since the 1980s in public administration in general and in educational administration in particular, this section highlights decentralization and accountability as two central themes in the reforms. The part first sets the reforms in their historical background and then shows what shapes they took on.

2.1.1 Historical background: The evolving role of the state in the west

As Harvey (2005, p. 1) suggests, "future historians may well look upon the years 1978-80 as a revolutionary turning-point in the world's social and economic history". Indeed, the role of the state in many western developed countries has evolved much since then.[1]

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[1] For the purpose of depicting the historical context, the discussion here draws on general agreements among observers. However, it must be pointed out that many of the observations remain to be verified by systematic empirical studies. In fact, given the complexity of the issue, people have yet to reach

The years after World War II witnessed the rise of the welfare state in the west. To different extent in different countries, the state was seen to have a responsibility to provide "prosperity, security, and opportunity" (Brown et al., 1997, p. 2) for its citizens through national economic growth. Sharing benefits with workers was regarded as important for stable and long term progress of capitalist economy. Therefore, state welfare programs burgeoned. In particular, efforts were made to expand educational opportunity and promote educational equality. Besides creating a facilitative social environment for economic growth, the state also played a prominent role in directly pushing economic growth, often with the aid of Keynesian fiscal policies.

While this model of welfare state helped deliver economic growth in its early days, it gradually showed its limit, especially during the 1970s.

> *The 1970s brought us the OPEC oil embargo, recession, and stagflation, the 'fiscal crisis of the state' (O'Connor, 1973)—embodying the 'cultural contradictions of capitalism'—and the beginning of a massive restructuring of the world economy. Western nations found themselves increasingly unable to compete with the new Pacific rim powers in manufacturing. As a consequence, the West began the painful transition from economies centered on manufacturing to ones centered on the service and information industries. (Boyd, 1999, p. 283)*

The above problems brought tight budget, which bound the hands of the welfare state. With limited financial energy, the state found it hard to sustain its welfare programs at previous levels. Also, the state's capacity as an engine driving economic growth was called into question (Brown et al., 1997; Harvey, 2005).

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final conclusions about the nature of the changes, the reasons behind, and the various implications (Dale, 1997; Hood, 1991, 1995; Green, 1999; Pollitt, 2001).

More importantly, the globalization of world economy fundamentally challenged the model of the welfare state. As Brown et al. (1997) point out, the economic foundation of the welfare state was national "walled" economy, in which major business activities took place within the national boarder and thus the state had much sway in influencing the flow of capital and labor. However, as the "walled" economy transited to world economy, capital flow could easily transcend national boundaries. With cheaper transportation and communication, the multinational companies became able to invest wherever they could get the most favorable conditions such as lower labor cost. This forced nations, and regions within nations, to compete against each other to attract capital investment and create employment opportunities. Therefore, tax rates were lowered down, just to further tighten government budget; state welfare programs were criticized and contracted.

With the role of the state in economic development and social provision declining, the market ideology gained more and more popularity (Boyd, 1999). This has been referred to as the rise of the Neo-Conservative (Levitas, 1986), the New Right (Aronowitz & Giroux, 1986), or Neoliberalism (Harvey, 2005). Margaret Thatcher, taking command of Britain in 1979, and Ronald Reagan, elected president of the U.S. in 1980, were leaders in this movement. They instituted the market ideology in their reform initiatives and propelled its diffusion to other western nations such as Australia, New Zealand, and Canada. To reduce the fiscal burden on the state,

> *policy responses have aimed first and foremost at greater budgetary restraint pursued in a variety of ways: the downsizing of public-funded organizations; corporatization and privatizing strategies; deregulation; and asset sales programs. (Peters, 1992, p. 269)*

In a Neoliberal design, the state should withdraw from many of the areas that it previously engaged in. The role of the state was to create an institutional framework, characterized by elements such as private property and legal regulation, to support

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the functioning of the free market. Beyond this, the state's intervention in the market should be kept to the minimum (Harvey, 2005). This belief in the virtue of the market combined, uniquely, "with a traditional conservative view that a strong state is necessary to keep moral and political order" (Brown et al. 1997, p. 19). In particular, given the tight budget and fierce global competition, the state was expected to drive efficiency, productivity, and public accountability with instruments such as performance indicators and quality audit. As will be shown below, these ideas have profoundly reshaped public administration in general and educational administration in particular.

2.1.2 Western reforms in public administration

In terms of public administration, observers have pointed to the rise of New Public Management (NPM) in major western developed countries since the 1980s (Hood, 1991, 1995; Kettl, 2000). In general, at the level of policy discourse, the nations seemed to have been converging in the way they manage public services (Pollitt, 2001). Admittedly, in their practices, different countries might be carrying out the NPM talking to different extents (Hood, 1995). However, the concept can help us get some flavor of the trend of change in public administration.

Hood (1991) lists seven doctrine components of NPM:

- "*Hands-on professional management*" in the public sector;
- *Explicit standards and measures of performance*;
- Greater emphasis on *output controls*;
- Shift to *disaggregation* of units in the public sector;
- Shift to greater *competition* in public sector;
- *Stress on private-sector styles of management practice*;
- Stress on greater *discipline* and *parsimony* in resource use; (Hood, 1991, original emphasis)

As Hood (1995, p. 94) further points out,

the basis of NPM lay in...lessening or removing differences between the public and the private sector and shifting the emphasis from process accountability towards a greater element of accountability in terms of results. (Hood, 1995, p. 94)

Note how the two core ingredients of NPM closely resembled the above-mentioned two aspects of Neoliberal ideology. On one hand, to improve the cost-efficiency and quality of public services, NPM tried to make public service agencies more like private suppliers rivaling against each other for customers. This often involved breaking down the monopoly of state bureaucracy, offering more autonomy to operational units through decentralization, and creating a quasi-market, in which the relatively autonomous units competed. On the other hand, NPM reflected Neoliberal's concern on public accountability. Using output standards and explicit measurements, the state increasingly freed itself from detailed control of the processes and operations of public service agencies. Yet, steering from afar, the state still maintained the overall hold, and, in many cases, its control might even be tightened (Dale, 1997).

2.1.3 Western reforms in educational administration

The above discussion shows how the changing global economy impacted the welfare state and the way public administration evolved in the west in the second half of the last century. To enhance their global competitiveness, western nations increasingly turned to a market ideology in managing economy and public services, dismantling centralized bureaucracies to increase institutional autonomy and foster competition. Meanwhile, the state held up outcome-based accountability as a central mechanism to keep its control.

Similar changes have also been taking place in educational administration in those nations (Adam & Kirst, 1999; Brown, 1994; Green, 1999; Whitty et al., 1998).

Driven by global competition, the nations placed a growing emphasis on the quality of education, which was linked directly to human capital and economic productivity. In addition, the tight budget pressed for greater cost-efficiency in educational provision. Those concerns, coupled with others such as disappointing results of top-down reform initiatives (Murphy & Beck, 1995), led people to question how educational service could be best delivered. In particular, the demand for reform in educational administration escalated when school systems were blamed for producing unsatisfactory test scores and thus contributing to the economic crisis in the 1970-80s. Such a link between school reforms and economic changes was clearly illustrated by the U.S. case:

No aspect of the environment has molded education over the past 15 years more than the economy, more specifically, the perceived deterioration of our economic well-being as a nation. (Murphy & Beck, 1995, p. 69)

Our nation is at risk. Our once unchallenged preeminence in commerce, industry, science, and technological innovation is being overtaken by competitors throughout the world. (National Commission on Excellence in Education, 1983, p. 5)

The 1980s will be remembered for two developments: the beginning of a sweeping reassessment of the basis of the nation's economic strength and an outpouring of concern for the quality of American education. The connection between these two streams of thought is strong and growing. (Carnegie Forum on Education and the Economy, 1986, p. 11)

To respond to those challenges, the U.S., together with many other western countries such as England and Wales, Canada, and Australia, launched a series of reforms in educational administration. As suggested by many scholars, much similarity existed in the policies of those nations (Whitty et al., 1998). Again, as when we look at pubic

administration policies, we cannot simply assume that policy convergence represents practice convergence. However, from the common elements in policies, we can detect a general trend.

Just as in the case of public administration in general, in educational administration in particular, Neoliberal ideology has figured prominently in the reform initiatives since the 1980s (Brown et al., 1997; Leithwood, Edge, & Jantzi, 1999). Such reforms as there were generally emphasized the virtue of market competition in enhancing service quality and cost-efficiency. Through decentralization measures, local authorities and, in many cases, schools were allowed more autonomy in administrative matters such as finance and personnel. Not unusually, a quasi-market was created so that parents could choose between different schools, whose funding from the government then depended on how many pupils they can attract. Another side of the Neoliberal ideology, the concern about quality and public accountability, also played out. Besides exposing schools to market pressures, the state increasingly focused on student performance as the basis to evaluate schools (Barker, 2008; Blackmore, 2004; Carnoy, Elmore, & Siskin, 2003; Darling-Hammond, 2004; Marks & Nance, 2007; Whitty et al. 1998). In fact, the shift from a concern on input factors, such as teacher training and material investment, to output, notably student performance on standardized tests, characterized a general transition of educational accountability policies in many western countries.

The pervasiveness of decentralization and accountability efforts in educational reforms is evident when one scans the policy initiatives of western nations. For example, after reviewing the educational reforms in England and Wales, Australia, New Zealand, the USA, and Sweden, Whitty et al. (1998) conclude that:

> *The above discussion...suggests considerable **congruence** in the policies we are considering...This **decentralization via the market** is also articulated with justifications of quality and efficiency, drawing on the discourse of the **new***

public management with its emphasis on strong school management and external scrutiny – made possible by the development of performance indicators and competency-based assessment procedures, reinforced in many cases by external inspection. These developments in education policy reflect a broader tendency for liberal democracies to develop along the lines of what Gamble (1988) has called the 'strong state' and the 'free economy'. (Whitty et al., 1998, p. 35, my emphasis)

Similarly, Moos, Krejsler, and Kofod (2008) note:

*The situation for schools has changed markedly since the early 1980s in the UK, the USA, Australia and Canada, and since the early 1990s in Norway, Sweden and Denmark. Beginning at that point in time governments launched **neo-liberally inspired new public management** reforms (NPM), involving the **decentralisation of finances and administration** from the state to local authorities or to institutions...This has been coupled with a largely **neo-conservatively inspired interest in more centrally developed curricula and standards for student achievements**. (Moos et al., 2008, p. 343, my emphasis)*

In sum, decentralization and accountability have occupied the primary attention of educational policy makers in many western countries since the 1980s.

2.2 Reforms for educational decentralization and accountability: Mainland China

Like western developed countries, China has also been promoting reforms for educational decentralization and accountability. Table 2.1 shows how the major policy documents since 1985 reflect the two themes.

Table 2.1 *Major Policies of Educational Administration Reforms in Mainland China Since the 1980s*

Year	Document Release	Measures to Reform Educational Administration
1985	Reform of China's Educational Structure – Decision of the Communist Party of China Central Committee (Communist Party of China, 1985)	• The state must solve a big problem: it is controlling the schools too rigidly on too many details. It should focus on macro management, decentralize authorities, and give schools more autonomy. • The central government should withdraw from making uniform policies for all regions. It should provide general directions, leaving local governments responsible for basic education. • Schools should gradually implement Principal Responsibility System. The school principal should have authority in making operational decisions and take responsibility for them.
1993	Outline for China's Educational Reform and Development (Communist Party of China and State Council, 1993)	• The central government should withdraw from making uniform policies for all regions. It should provide general directions, leaving local governments responsible for basic education. • The state must change the way it manages salary levels. Currently, the central government makes all decisions. We should let the central government play the role of macro steering and let local governments and schools have more autonomy.

		• Schools should implement Principal Responsibility System. • The state should establish quality standards and evaluation indices for all levels of education and strengthen school inspection. • Schools should hire staff via public recruiting and fair competition. They should specify the responsibilities for every post and reward staff based on their performance.
1999	Decision on Deepening Educational Reform and Promoting Quality Education in an All-round Way (Communist Party of China and State Council, 1999)	• The central government should withdraw from making uniform policies for all regions. It should provide general directions, leaving local governments responsible for basic education. • County governments should have increased authority on educational funding, teacher management, and principal appointment. • School staff should be hired via public recruiting and fair competition.
2001	Decision on Reform and Development of Basic Education (State Council, 2001)	• For the compulsory education in rural areas, the central government should provide general directions, and the local governments, particularly the county level government, should take the major responsibility. • The central government should give local authorities and schools more autonomy in developing curriculum. • Teachers should be hired via public recruiting. Their performance should determine whether they will be retained and promoted. The hiring of school

			principals should also gradually be changed to this way. The local governments should actively implement Career-ladder-system (*zhiji zhi*, 职级制) for Principals, in which the principal's performance leads to his or her "career ladder rank" and salary level.
			• Local authorities should closely evaluate how well high schools promote quality education and reward good performers with the tile of Exemplary High School.
2008	• Guidelines on Implementing Merit Pay System in Compulsory Education Schools (Ministry of Education, 2008a) • Guidelines on Carrying Out Teacher Performance Evaluations in Compulsory Education . Schools (Ministry of Education, 2008b)		• From September 2009, teachers in compulsory education stage are to be evaluated based on their virtue, teaching (further divided into moral teaching, academic teaching, research on teaching, and professional development), and management duties, with an emphasis on workload and actual contribution. • Teachers with better evaluation results should receive more share of the incentive merit pay (about 30% of the total salaries of all teachers in the school) allocated to the school. The evaluation results also impact teacher accreditation and promotion. • Under the directions from local authorities, schools should design detailed evaluation procedures, carry out the evaluations, decide on how to allocate the incentive merit pay among teachers, and seek approval from their supervising authorities.
2010	Outline for China's		• Schools should have real and more autonomy in

	Educational Reform and Development: 2010-2020 (Ministry of Education, 2010)	operation. They should not be mere attachments to the state. The regulation and provision of education should be separated, with schools managing themselves according to the laws.
		• The government should change its role from directly intervening in school operation to serving schools with legislation, funding, planning, information service, and general directions.
		• The government should improve educational accountability systems and strengthen school inspection. It should establish national standards for educational quality and build up educational quality assurance systems. It should make different organizations to work together to monitor and evaluate national educational quality and regularly publish reports.
		• Schools should set up targets and manage their operation accordingly. They should look for better ways to incentive teachers and improve teacher performance.
		• Schools should implement Principal Responsibility System and Career-ladder-system for Principals.

Source: Compiled by the author on the basis of the policy documents.

Like what happened in the west, fiscal difficulty has been an important impetus for Chinese government to turn to decentralization policies (Hawkins, 2000; Mok, 1997). From 1949 to the late 1970s, mainland China adopted a mode of central planning in

the management of virtually all affairs. Accordingly, in education, the central government made decisions for all regions and funded education itself. However, in a vast country like China, this mode put huge financial strain on the central government. Therefore, since the early 1980s, along with its transition to a market economy, mainland China has been decentralizing financing responsibilities to local governments and, in many places, to schools and local communities. In 1985, in *Reform of China's Educational Structure – Decision of the Communist Party of China Central Committee* (hereafter, the *1985 Decision*) (Communist Party of China, 1985), it was stipulated that local governments should take the main responsibility for managing basic education and mobilize their resources to increase educational funding. It was emphasized that in a developing country like China, which had to support the education of a huge population, multiple channels of financing must be sought. Indeed, to make up the gap between government funding and school expenditure, schools usually had to cultivate various sources of income. This might include, as observed by many scholars (Delany & Paine, 1991; Wong, 2004, 2008), operating school business and recruiting "out of plan" students, who scored lower than the entrance requirement of the school but were willing to pay "sponsorship fees" to the school. As schools had to bear more financial responsibilities, they also gained more financial autonomy, though to a limited degree since the bulk of funding was still controlled by the local government. As a related change, schools acquired more latitude in matters such as student recruitment and internal management.

Besides pushing local governments and schools to take more financial responsibilities, the *1985 Decision* also highlighted the need to grant schools more operational autonomy in a general way. It criticized the old management system in which the government strictly controlled all aspects of school running in a detailed way. In that case, as the *1985 Decision* argued, the schools became passive attachments to the huge bureaucracy and lost opportunities and incentives to innovate. The *1985 Decision* suggested that the government should change into a macro steering role in educational administration and devolve authorities to schools. Later

policies have been repeating these ideas. For example, *Outline for China's Educational Reform and Development* (hereafter the *1993 Outline*) (Communist Party of China and State Council, 1993) pointed out that schools should have more autonomy on the matters of teacher salary. Indeed, in the Merit Pay System for Teachers released in 2008 (Ministry of Education, 2008a, 2008b), schools were to be responsible for designing detailed procedures for teacher evaluations, carry out the evaluations, and decide on how to allocate the incentive merit pay among teachers. Although the incentive merit pay only accounted for about 30% of the total salary of all teachers in the school, this new system still represented a step in increasing the say of schools in educational administration.

Among other measures, Principal Responsibility System was one way in which the *1985 Decision* tried to give schools more operational autonomy. In this system, the principal, with the aid of School Affairs Committee, took the charge of school operation. Also, schools should hold Teacher Staff Representative Meetings to approve principals' major decisions. This system aimed to relax schools from the strict control of the state and Communist Party of China (CPC). Instead of taking care of everything of school running, the *1985 Decision* stressed, CPC functionaries in schools should focus their attention on ideological leadership.

Besides decentralization, accountability has been another underlying theme in educational reforms in mainland China during the past decades. On one hand, measures were taken to hold schools accountable. For example, the *1993 Outline* suggested the government establish quality standards and evaluation indices for all levels of education and regularly inspect schools. Also, *Decision on Reform and Development of Basic Education* (State Council, 2001) asserted that local authorities should evaluate how well schools performed in promoting quality education and grant exceptional titles to the good performers. On the other hand, teachers and school principals were also held more personally accountable for their performance. Teachers no longer enjoyed "iron rice bowl" (lifelong employment) as they did

before the 1980s. Rather, they entered into contract-based hiring relations with schools (Communist Party of China and State Council, 1993, 1999; State Council, 2001). Their performance, instead of seniority, increasingly determined their salary levels and promotion opportunities. The reform of Merit Pay System for Teachers showed this clearly (Ministry of Education, 2008a, 2008b, 2010). Similarly, school principals had been held more accountable in many ways. One way has been the Principal Responsibility System, which placed more responsibility along with more authority on the position of the principal. In this system, the principal is the one to take final responsibilities for school operation. Another way was the Career-ladder-system for Principals (Ministry of Education, 2010; State Council, 2001). There, like the teachers, the principals received regular performance evaluations, the results of which led to their "career ladder ranks" and salary levels.

The twin themes of decentralization and accountability were clearly reflected in the most recent major policy document, *Outline for China's Educational Reform and Development: 2010-2020* (hereafter the *2010 Outline*) (Ministry of Education, 2010). As the title suggested, this policy document provided general directions for educational development in mainland China in the next ten years. Therefore, it deserves special attention. Even a quick reading shows that this policy continued the themes of decentralization and accountability since the *1985 Decision*. Like its predecessors, it stressed that the government should withdraw from detailed and direct management of schools and turn into playing the role of macro steering and service. Schools should have more and real autonomy on operational matters. Meanwhile, to hold schools and people in schools more accountable, the government should establish national standards for educational quality, strengthen school inspection, monitor school quality indices, and publish regular reports. Schools should set up targets and mange themselves accordingly, while teachers and school principals should be constantly evaluated, with the results impacting their salary levels. In short, as the *2010 Outline* suggests, mainland China should go farther on decentralizing authorities to schools and enhancing accountability.

Admittedly, the above review only deals with policies issued by the central government of mainland China. Different regions might have been carrying out the policies or, as in the case of the *2010 Outline*, will carry out the policy, in different ways and to different extents. However, the central policies still indicated the general trend of educational administration reforms in mainland China over the past decades.

2.3 Reforms for educational decentralization and accountability: City G in China

The study will be conducted in City G, a city in southern China. The reason is that City G has been a pioneer in promoting reforms for educational decentralization and accountability reforms and therefore is a "typical case" at regional level to answer my research question.

In 2003, government leaders in City G started an initiative to make the city one of the first few cities to win the title of "Educationally Strong City" in the province. As part of the initiative, a series of educational reforms were launched (see Table 2.2). The themes of the reforms have been decentralization and accountability.

Decentralization mainly happened in salary reforms. Since 2003, the public schools in City G have experienced two rounds of salary reforms, which shared similar guiding ideas. Therefore, I only introduce the first one, namely, the 2003 reform.

Before the reform in 2003, teachers' salary levels in City G, as in most other places in mainland China, were determined by local educational authorities. Factors such as a teacher's occupational grade (*zhicheng*) and seniority could tell you how much the teacher earned. Schools could do little to change the salary level of a teacher, whether the teacher performed well or not. This system, as many criticized, lacked

flexibility and motivation. In 2003, The Municipal Education Bureau of City G issued Implementation Measures for the Reform on the Allocation System in the Schools in City G (Trial Edition) (The Government of City G, 2003a). This policy divided teacher salary into two parts: fixed salary and fluctuating salary. The former took into account factors such as the teacher's occupational grade and seniority and would be calculated according to the general formula decided by local educational authorities. The fluctuating salary would be allocated by the schools based on the duty and performance of teachers. A budget of fluctuating salary was devolved to school level according to the number of the staff in the school. The management team were responsible to make detailed allocation plan, have the plan passed by the Staff Representative Meeting in the school, and submitted the plan to its local educational authority for final approval. Through this reform, the public schools in City G got more room in adjusting the salary level of their staff. Note that the educational decentralization in City G is not to be exaggerated: issues such as curriculum and school personnel quota are still decided by the government. In other words, the decentralization has been a real, yet limited, one.

The 2003 salary reform also embodied the idea of accountability, because the purpose was to use differentiated salary to motivate school staff. Specifically, a teacher's fluctuating salary comprises post salary (*gangwei gongzi*, 岗位工资) and performance bonus (*jixiao jiangjin*, 绩效奖金). Post salary was paid monthly, according to the type, amount, and quality of one's duty in the school. Performance award was paid every semester, according to one's overall work performance. How to evaluate teacher performance and decide the corresponding salary level was part of the allocation plan to be made at school level. The idea of accountability was clear in the policy document issued by The Municipal Education Bureau of City G:

> *The allocation of fluctuating salary must emphasize three principals. The first principal is to favor the frontline teaching posts and important posts...The second principal is to recognize the value created by staff when they work*

beyond normal load. These staff should gain reasonable reward for their extra work. This can be done in various ways such as giving them compensation for extra work. The third principal is to show how much contribution one has made in one's post. For those who fail to fulfill their post duties and those who take leaves of absence, their fluctuating salary should be deducted accordingly; For those who perform outstandingly or make significant contributions, their performance bonus should be increased. (浮动工资的发放要强调三条原则，一是向教学一线岗位和关键岗位倾斜原则……二是体现教职工超工作量劳动价值原则。教职工完成超过规定工作量所付出的劳动，要通过获得超工作量补贴等形式取得相应的合理报酬。三是体现岗位贡献原则。对因事、病假或不能完成岗位职责的，应相应扣减浮动工资；对取得优秀业绩和作出突出贡献的，应增加绩效奖金。) (The Government of City G, 2003a)

From the above introduction, we can see that the salary reform in City G in 2003 decentralized to the school level more authority in salary allocation and tried to strengthen the accountability of teachers with differentiated salaries. Similar reform measures became a national policy only after 2009. In 2009, the central government issued a policy on the reform of Merit Pay System for Teachers in the stage of compulsory education. The government of City G responded to the 2009 central policy by making a local version in late 2010. This is the second round of salary reform in City G. It largely continued the ideas in the first round, that is, the 2003 salary reform.

The salary reforms in City G tried to enhance the accountability of school staff at a personal level. That is, they targeted at individual persons and evaluated how well the individuals perform. Besides the salary reforms, the government of City G has also been promoting other educational accountability reforms at a personal level. In 2003, the government issued Opinion on Reforming the Personnel System in the Schools in City G (The Government of City G, 2003b). This policy changed the way principals and teachers entered schools and how they were managed. In the old way,

principals and teachers were assigned into schools by upper level bureaucracies. They generally enjoyed lifelong employment described by many as "iron rice bowl". But in the new way, they needed to join public recruitment and compete for their jobs. Principals needed to attain specific goals during their terms; Teachers signed contracts with the schools. Both principals and teachers would be regularly evaluated. How well they performed would impact whether they could keep their positions in the next round of recruitment or contract renewal.

Another initiative in City G to increase accountability at a personal level was Career-ladder-system reform for school principals. It aimed to improve school management by changing the way principals are classified and rewarded.

In the old personnel system, principals were regarded as government officials or cadres (*ganbu*, 干部), and were assigned administrative ranks by the local government. Meanwhile, schools were defined as units (*danwei*, 单位) in a public administration system and were also assigned administrative ranks according to their scale and government affiliations. The administrative rank of a school usually determined the rank of the school principal, which further determined the principal's income and privileges. "For example, the principal of a provincial/municipal key secondary school usually had an official status equal to that of the mayor of a county while the principal of a county (district) key school equal to that of a deputy mayor (Qian, 2009)."

The old personnel system for principals brought a number of problems (Chu & Yang 2002; Zhao, Xie, & Xu, 2008). On one hand, many principals oriented their effort toward a career in government bureaucracy, which made them more responsive to local government officials than to teachers and students. Indeed, the identity as official cadres often led principals to adopt a bureaucratic style in school management. That is, they expected or even demanded their staff to respect and obey them and were reluctant to let staff join decision making. On the other hand, the old

personnel system lacked incentive and flexibility. Since principals' ranks were locked with the largely fixed status of their schools, it was hard to motivate them to improve school quality. It was even harder to relocate a strong principal to help a weaker school. The reason was that the weaker school usually had a lower rank, which further meant that the principal, if relocated to the weaker school, would have lower salaries.

To address the above problems, in 2004, the government of City G replaced the old personnel system for principals with the career-ladder-system (Guangzhou Daily, 2004; Guo, 2007; Liao & Wu, 2004; Peng, 2005). This reform redefined principals from cadres to ordinary school managers and eliminated their official ranks. Moreover, it evaluated principals on their educational thought, school operation, instructional management, and student achievement. Based on their evaluation results, the principals were grouped into five classes ranging from junior to first. Those classes, coupled with other factors such as workload, would determine principals' income. According to the reform policy, the evaluations would be done regularly and reclassify principals every time.[1] Well-performing principals would have a chance for promotion, while principals getting poor results in evaluations would be degraded. It was hoped that the new personnel system would encourage healthy competition among principals and propel them to improve school effectiveness and efficiency.

In short, the career-ladder-system reform put more accountability pressure on school principals. It eliminated their cadre status, broke their stable privileges, and pushed them to perform for higher ranks. Note that in implementing this reform City G has also been a pioneer in mainland China; this is part of the reason why City G is a

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[1] The first round of evaluation was done in 2004. According to the schedule set up in the policy documents, at least another round of evaluation should have been carried out since 2004. However, no such evaluation has been done ever since. The Head of the Personnel Department of the Education Bureau of City G indicated that the government had been reconsidering the way to evaluate principals.

"typical case" for this study. Actually, as early as in 1999, a central policy document put forth the idea of Career-ladder-system for Principals. Later policy documents issued by the central government have also been repeating the idea (Ministry of Education, 2010; State Council, 2001). However, only a few cities such as City G have been implementing the policy idea at a local level. In 2010, City G was chosen as one of the two experimental sites in China to further explore how to use the career-ladder-system to improve the performance of principals.

In addition to the above accountability initiatives that targeted at individuals in schools, the government of City G has also been strengthening outcome-based accountability at school level. One important measure was the Action Plan to Invigorate Junior Middle Schools issued in 2004 (The Government of City G, 2004). It proposed a series of performance indices (e.g., the ratio of students whose test scores were above certain level), on which all public junior middle schools in City G would be evaluated at the end of every academic year. How well a school performed on the indices would determine its scores; thus, every school would get a total score. The Education Bureau of City G would compile a report, which would rank all the schools according to the total score and show detailed breakdown of the total score for each school. Then, the Bureau would distribute the report to all the principals of the public junior middle schools and their immediate supervisors. Also, the Bureau would hold a meeting joined by the principals and their supervisors. In the meeting, the Bureau would praise the schools that performed well on the ranking report. As I heard and saw in the field, people in the schools took the ranking very seriously and regarded it as a key indicator of school reputation.

As for high schools, the case was similar. Student performance in College Entrance Examinations (CEE) impacted schools' reputation the most. People would compare how many students in each school got admitted by universities. Both the total number and the prestige of the universities the students entered were important. The information was easy to get, even for the general public. In fact, many schools,

particularly the strong players, tried hard to let the public know their performance in the CEE.

Table 2.2 *Educational Administration Reforms in City G Since 2003*

Year	Reform Policy	Measures
2003	Contract-based Teacher Employment	• Teachers need to sign employment contracts rather than enjoy guaranteed employment.
2003	Public Recruitment of Principals	• Principals are no longer appointed by local educational authorities and enjoy safe employment. Rather, they are selected through public recruitment and need to fulfill specific goals during their terms.
2003	Performance-related Pay System for Teachers	• Schools receive a budget of performance-related pay and devise their own plans to allocate the budget among the staff. • Teachers get different levels of salaries based on their duties and performances.
2004	Career-ladder-system for Principals	• Municipal Education Bureau eliminated principals' administrative ranks and cadre status; • Put them under the management of Municipal Education Bureau, who evaluates principals' performances and decides their new occupational grades, which are linked to their salary levels.

2004	Action Plan to Invigorate Junior Middle Schools	• Municipal Education Bureau uses a set of performance indices to evaluate the schools and scores the schools according to their performances. • Ranks all schools according to the total scores they get; • Praises and rewards the top ones on the ranking list in a meeting joined by all principals of public junior middle schools and their supervisors.
2010	National Merit Pay System for Teachers	• A budget of incentive merit pay (about 30% of the total salaries of all teachers in the school) is allocated to schools. • Under the directions of local authorities, schools should design detailed procedures for teacher evaluations, carry out the evaluations, decide on how to allocate the incentive merit pay among teachers, and seek approval from their supervising authorities. • Teachers with better evaluation results should receive more share of the incentive merit pay allocated to the school. The evaluation results also impact teacher accreditation and promotion.

Source: compiled by the author based on policy documents.

Chapter 3 Theoretical Context

This chapter situates the study in its theoretical context. The chapter has two purposes: to justify the research questions and to argue for my way to approach the questions.

To achieve the two purposes, the chapter has five sections. Section one discusses the definition of micropolitics. Section two argues that knowledge on school micropolitics is important. With such knowledge, we can better understand how school organizations operate. We can also make our educational administration practices and training programs more effective. Section three shows that the prominent educational reforms of decentralization and accountability often touch upon school micropolitics. However, we only have a limited knowledge on school micropolitics in the context of the reforms. Section four demonstrates the lack of such knowledge in educational research, both internationally and in mainland China. It points out that the available literature on the issue is constrained by several problems such as unclear understanding of the power concept. The section also emphasizes that we should make use of the research opportunities brought by educational reforms in mainland China to advance our knowledge. In the end, section five addresses the problems of previous studies and discusses my way out of them. It builds on previous literature, clarifies the key concept of power, and highlights the important logic. Based on the discussion, the next chapter will suggest an initial conceptual framework, which can sensitize my fieldwork and data analysis.

3.1 Micropolitics: A working definition

Micropolitical research of schools is a relatively recent endeavor. Iannaccone (1975) is credited as among the first to apply a micropolitical lens to study the interactions of people in public schools. Since then, though a handful of empirical studies have been done (Ball, 1987; Blasé & Anderson, 1995), the field of school micropolitics

remains infant (Ball, 1994; Blasé, 1991; Blasé & Blasé, 2002; Flessa, 2009; Mawhinney, 1999). Given that, also due to the complexity of micropolitical phenomena, this study follows Blasé's (1991, p. 11) suggestion that "a broad-based working definition of micropolitics seems helpful at this stage". Based on a comprehensive review, Blasé (1991) proposes the following definition of micropolitics:

Micropolitics refers to the use of formal and informal power by individuals and groups to achieve their goals in organizations. In large part political action results from perceived differences between individuals and groups, coupled with the motivation to use power to influence and/or protect. Although such actions are consciously motivated, any action, consciously or unconsciously motivated, may have political "significance" in a given situation. Both cooperative and conflictive actions and processes are part of the realm of micropolitics. (Blasé, 1991c, p. 11)

Note that in this definition, both formal and informal uses of power are covered. This is in line with the spirit of a broad-based working definition. While that is the case, the "micro" part in micropolitics often refers to the more informal, subtle use of power. How do people in organizations pursue their interests in ways not explicitly stipulated by formal rules? This is what usually occupies the primary attention of students of micropolitics. In fact, as Hoyle (1986) asserts, micropolitics points to a wide array of strategies and activities outside of the formal structure of management.

Micropolitics is best perceived as a continuum, one end of which is virtually indistinguishable from conventional management procedures but from which it diverges on a number of dimensions – interest, interest sets, power, strategies, and legitimacy – to the point where it constitutes almost a separate organizational world of illegitimate, self-interested manipulation. (Hoyle, 1986, p. 126)

Taking bargaining as an example, Hoyle (1986) indicates that bargaining is

> *more micropolitical to the degree to which it is implicit rather than explicit, outside rather than inside formal structures and procedures, and draws on informal resources of influence (Hoyle, 1986, p. 127).*

3.2 School micropolitics deserves deep investigation[1]

This part briefly outlines the importance of examining school micropolitics. It should be noted that the perspectives outlined originate mainly from Anglo-American contexts. As such they may lack a certain amount of explanatory power in a Chinese society (Dimmock & Walker, 2000). Their use does not imply that there is no discussion of organizational politics in Chinese contexts (Feng, 2005; Wu & Yan, 2007). However, there is little formal empirical work or organized debate readily available in the literature, especially as it relates to schools.

The part first discusses the importance of studying school micropolitics for understanding how schools operate. Then, the part shows that research on school micropolitics can also inform educational practitioners and professional trainers.

3.2.1 A micropolitical lens is important for understanding school organizations

3.2.1.1 A micropolitical lens is important for understanding organizations in general

A micropolitical perspective points to a basic problem all organizations need to address: how to bring together people with different interests to work toward a common goal? Micropolitical studies examine how people in organizations address the problem and thereby provide unique insights on what happens in the organizations.

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[1] This part draws on some materials in Walker and Wang's (2011) chapter.

People in organizations often have to deal with conflicts, potential or real ones, among themselves. This is so because people in organizations are interdependent but often have different interests (Brass, 2002; Clegg et al., 2006; Hoy & Miskel, 2008; Pfeffer, 1981, 1992). Even in cooperative actions, people still need to handle their differences in interests.

To realize one's interests, one needs others to act in certain ways. One hopes that others support one's plan or, at least, not to stand in the way. However, others do not necessarily approve of one's goals or means. Not unusually, others have different perspectives and preferences (Ball, 1987, 1994; Perrow, 1986; Weick, 1995). Therefore, to achieve one's purposes through the organization, one often needs to handle the resistance of others. To prevail in the interaction, more often than not, one has to use one's power. This is due to the endemic uncertainty organizations work within and bounded rationality of people (Bacharach & Mundell, 1993; Thompson, 1967).

> *The combination of uncertainty and bounded rationality (the fact that cognitive processing limits make it impossible for any individual to make purely rational decisions on the basis of complete information) makes it difficult to specify goals and the means to achieve them. Because of this, the selection of goals, means, and the cognitive logic that links them can easily become the source of political activity within organizations. (Bacharach & Mundell, 1993, p. 427)*

This way, micropolitics abounds in organizations, various parties using their power to deal with others' resistance and try to prevail. Out of these interactions come the policies of the organization. These policies shape the organization's daily activities and "who gets what, when, and how" (Lasswell , 1936) in the organization.

Taking a micropolitical perspective, we examine how people in organizations handle

their differences in interests. We ask: who are having different interests on what issues? Why do some resist others? How do those prevail manage to prevail? What are the implications for what the organization does? From this inquiry, we can learn much about how the organization operates. Indeed, as many scholars point out, organizations, by nature, are unavoidably political entities. To fully understand how they work, therefore, they must be viewed as such (Blasé & Blasé, 2002; Flessa, 2009; Mintzberg, 1983; Morgan, 1986; Perrow, 1986; Pfeffer, 1981, 1992).

*We cannot make serious enquiry into organizations without an enquiry into power. Power is inscribed in the core of organizational achievement. If it were not, there would be nothing to remark on because, **whether for good or evil**, the social relations that constitute organization, the collecting together and coordinating of individual wills, endeavors, and energies, would not occur. (Clegg et al., 2006, pp. 2-3, original emphasis)*

3.2.1.2 A micropolitical lens is important for understanding school organizations in particular

Two key features of schools make them especially open to micropolitical analysis (Ball, 1987; Hoyle, 1986; Hoyle & Wallace, 2005; Malen, 1995).

The first is the structural looseness that accompanies high levels of teacher autonomy (Bidwell, 1965; Hoy & Miskel, 2008; Weick, 1976). High levels of discretion leave room for resistance. Schools leaders are therefore faced with complex issues of control (Hoyle, 1986; Kelchtermans, 2007).

Teacher autonomy is reflected in the structure of school systems, resuling in what may be called their structural looseness. The teacher works alone within the classroom, relatively hidden from colleagues and superiors, so that he has a broad discretionary jurisdiction within the boundaries of the classroom. (Bidwell,

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Bidwell (1965, pp. 974-6) argues that such structural looseness is rooted in the nature of educational technology. As social organizations, schools are charged with the tasks of passing knowledge and socializing children. Both tasks require intensive interaction between an individual teacher and students. On one hand, such interaction allows the teacher to tackle subtle variations in students' capacities and their day-to-day fluctuations. On the other hand, over longer periods of interaction, the teacher and students may develop personal bonds, which may faciliate the teacher in motivating students. These distinctive educational requirements demand the usual temporal and functional division of labor in schools, which, in turn, leads to structural looseness as depicted above.[1]

The second feature is the ambiguous nature of schools, especially in terms of their educative and social purposes, and the diverse values which flow through them (Ball, 1987; Hoyle & Wallace, 2005). Schools operate with multiple yet poorly defined goals and technologies. Unlike many other organizations, schools are open to multiple sources of control: the bureaucratic authority of government, the professional authority of teachers, and lay authority in the community (Ball, 1987; Bidwell, 1965). As normative institutions, schools are rife for ideological dispute, the intensity and diversity of which are uncommon in many other organizations (Ball, 1987; Hoyle & Wallace, 2005). Ambiguity in terms of control, purpose and means induce and even encourage people to use micropolitics to promote or defend their ideological and pragmatic postures.

In sum, a micropolitical perspective is critical if we are to understand organizations in general, and schools and school leadership, in particular. With structural looseness

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1 To say that schools are particularly rich in structural looseness is not to indicate that they have no tight bureaucratic control. Schools may be best seen as closer to the loose end in a continuum from loose control to tight control (see Hoy & Miskel, 2008, pp. 122-4; Johnson & Fauske, 2005).

and rich ambiguity, schools fit into a micropolitical frame particularly well. In other words, we are not to neglect micropolitics if we are to make sense of how schools work. Ball (1987, p. xi) notes:

to deny the relevance of micro-politics is in effect to condemn organizational research to be for ever ineffectual and out of step with the immediate realities of life in organizations.

This is echoed by Blasé (1991, pp. 1-2):

The micropolitical perspective on organization provides a valuable and potent approach to understanding the woof and warp of the fabric of day-to-day life in schools. This perspective highlights the fundamentals of human behavior and purpose…The micropolitical perspective presents practicing administrators and scholars alike with fresh and provocative ways to think about human behavior in schools.

3.2.1.3 Micropolitical interactions among the principal, middle managers, and teachers are particularly important

The principal, middle managers, and the teachers are not immune to what's discussed above and also often encounter power relations in their interactions. In many occasions, the principal relies on the teacher to get things done but the teacher may resist the principal's will. For example, the principal may believe that teaching to test can produce high scores and enhance school reputation. However, the teacher may object this idea and insist that students' all-around development is much more important than exam results. Therefore, the principal needs to find ways to deal with the teacher's resistance. Similarly, micropolitics may come into play when the teacher seeks to realize some interests through the principal, who usually controls various resources. With different perspectives, the principal may resist the attempt of

the teacher.

Though power relations may happen among many stakeholders in the school organization, micropolitical interactions among the principal, middle managers, and teachers deserve our special attention. The basic reason is that the three parties are especially important for the operation of the school. After all, "schools depend on the concerted efforts of administrators and teachers"(Marks & Nance, 2007, p. 28) to excel. Middle managers play a large part in the top-down and bottom-up communications. Therefore, studying micropolitical interactions among the three parties can teach us particularly much about how things work in the school.

A well-developed body of literature on school effectiveness has attested to the utmost importance of teachers for student learning in the school (Day, Sammons, Stobart, Kington, & Gu, 2007). Compared with other factors such as material input and textbook availability, teacher training and teaching quality play a more significant role in shaping what and how much students learn. Similarly, research on principalship has shown that principals matter for schools (Leithwood et al., 2006; Leithwood & Duke, 1999; MacBeath & Dempster, 2009; Yu, Leithwood & Jantzi, 2002). Both qualitative cases (Leithwood, Harris & Hopkins, 2008; Murphy, 2008) and quantitative evidence (Hallinger & Heck, 1996, 1998; Leithwood et al., 2008) demonstrate that what the principals do and how they do it impact school outcomes to a great extent. Specifically, Leithwood et al. (2008) show that principal leadership account for 25% of across-school variation in student achievement, controlling for student background factors. This effect size is only second to that of classroom teaching.

Given the importance of the principal, middle managers, and teachers, studying micropolitical interactions among them promises to help us better understand how schools operate. For example, studying principal-teacher power relations may help

clarify the processes through which principalship impacts student learning. While scholars generally agree that principals impact student learning mainly in an indirect way (Hallinger & Heck, 1996), we have yet to fully understand what happens between principalship and student outcomes. Admittedly, principal-teacher power relations cannot lead us to find all the answers. However, considering the critical role of classroom teachers, we have reasons to look more into how principals influence teachers and how that impacts student learning. Indeed, a comprehensive review points out that enhancing teacher motivation and commitment are important ways principals shape student learning (Leithwood et al., 2008). Also, various case studies have shown how successful principals deal with power relations with teachers effectively and thereby improve student outcomes (Busher & Barker, 2003; Wong, 2007).

3.2.2 School micropolitics has important practical impacts

Besides improving our understanding of schools, studying school micropolitics may also contribute to our practice in school management and training programs.

Studies have shown that micropolitics impacts many things in school management. These include, among others, teachers' commitment and morale (Blasé, 1993; Blasé & Anderson, 1995), teachers' micropolitical relationship with other teachers, students, and parents (Blasé, 1991a, 1991b, 1991c), student learning (Greenfield, 1991), and policy implementation (Cibulka, 2001; Coburn, 2006; Kelchtermans, 2007; Smith & Rowley, 2005). For example, Blasé and Anderson (1995) found that teachers had lower morale, trust, and performance when they work with principals who are reluctant to share power. Other research indicates that lack of power in decision-making harms teachers' informal learning in workplace (Lohman, 2000).

When it comes to significance for training programs, researchers also believe that micropolitical perspectives can offer badly needed "micropolitical literacy" (Blasé &

Anderson, 1995) to educational practitioners such as principals and teachers.

A recurring theme in micropolitical writings about schools is that micropolitics itself does not entail negativity (Ball, 1994; Clegg et a., 2006). In fact, politics is a neutral tool and can well be employed to achieve positive school outcomes. Of course, it can also be utilized by some to attack or even hurt others (Blasé & Blasé, 2003). However, in any case, only by mastering proper knowledge and skills can practitioners effectively, and, hopefully, positively tackle the endemic micropolitics in schools.

It is for this reason that many scholars argue that teacher education and principal preparation programs should include micropolitical training (Blasé & Blasé, 2002; Chrispeels & Martin, 2002; Hoyle, 1999; Kelchtermans & Ballet, 2002; Ouyang, 2000). Such training may become more urgent as accountability policies expose schools to more scrutiny from the public and potentially heighten the conflicts in schools (Ladd & Zelli, 2002; Taylor, 2007). Actually, some scholars see micropolitics as an antidote to the pressure brought by increased accountability and provide lists of micropolitical strategies to practitioners (Hoyle & Wallace, 2005; Johnson, 2004).

In sum, a micropolitical perspective matters much, both for academics and practitioners in education. We should carefully study school micropolitics if we are to understand and, hopefully, improve schools.

The structure and source of authority are important educational issues, both for what they reflect about the way educational decisions are made and carried out and for the way they reveal connections between schools as organizations, the state, and society. At one level these issues have consequences for teaching, teachers, school curriculum, and student learning, and at another level they affect access to the opportunity structures schools provide. (Delany & Paine, 1991, p. 23)

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3.3 A micropolitical lens befits the context of decentralization and accountability reforms

How do schools operate in the context of reforms for educational decentralization and accountability? While there are other ways to approach the question, a micropolitical lens is particularly relevant.   This section will first discuss this from a conceptual perspective, examining the close link between the three concepts, decentralization, accountability, and power. Then, the section will use empirical findings to show that reforms for decentralization and accountability often touch on power relations among people in schools.

3.3.1 Decentralization, accountability, and power relations: Conceptual links

3.3.1.1 Decentralization and power relations

Lauglo (1995) unpacks the general meaning of the word "decentralization" as follows:

> *In spatial terms, to decentralise means to disperse objects away from a central point. In current usage, the term decentralisation refers not only to that process but also to the condition of objects being located remote from a centre...when the concept is used to denote...the distribution of authority in organisations such as national education systems...'centre' may still have a spatial reference...but it refers mainly to **the apex in a hierarchical authority structure in an organization**... (Lauglo, 1995, pp. 5-6, my emphasis)*

It is decentralization in an organizational context that bears relevance to our discussion. As Lauglo (1995) points out, decentralization in an organizational context involves the process of dispersing authority from a center of authority. It can also refer to the condition of authority distribution that results from the process. Here,

from the general definition of decentralization, we see how it is closely linked to power relations.

Specifically, Rondinelli (1980) defines government decentralization in developing countries. While he emphasizes that decentralization may take various forms in practice, his definition highlights the link between decentralization and power relations.

*Decentralization is defined here as **the transfer or delegation of legal and political authority** to plan, make decisions and manage public functions from the central government and its agencies to field organizations of those agencies, subordinate units of government, semi-autonomous public corporations, areawide or regional development authorities; functional authorities, autonomous local governments, or nongovernmental organizations. (Rondinelli, 1980, p. 137, my emphasis)*

More specifically, Brown (1994) defines decentralization in educational administration. His definition also points out the link between decentralization and power relations:

*Decentralization means **the devolution of authority** from a higher level of government, such as a department of education or local education authority, to a lower organizational level, such as individual schools. (Brown, 1994, p. 1407, my emphasis)*

A discussion of the classifications of decentralization measures further demonstrates that decentralization entails important power implications. A widely noted classification is based on the extent to which decision-making authority is transferred to the lower organizational levels (Rondinelli, 1980; Bray, 1999; Hanson, 1998). Accordingly, decentralization is divided into three major forms:

(1) Deconcentration: transferring tasks and responsibilities, but not authority, to lower levels in the organization;

(2) Delegation: transferring of decision-making authority from higher to lower hierarchical units, but that authority can be withdrawn at the discretion of the delegating unit;

(3) Devolution: the transferring of authority to an autonomous unit that can act without first asking permission.

Another classification is developed by Murphy and Beck (1995), who build on ideas of some previous scholars (Brown, 1992; Ornstein, 1983). To Murphy and Beck (1995), different types of decentralization imply varied locus of decentralized authority, which should be the basis to classify decentralization efforts. Based on this notion, their framework contains three types of educational decentralization to school level: administrator control, professional control, and community control. In each case, control of decision making authority rests in the hands of principals as administrators, teachers as professionals, or parents and other community members. Although, conceptually, other parties such as students may take hold of the decentralized authority, Murphy and Beck (1995) maintain that these situations are rarely to be found in practice and thus omit them from their classification.

While the above classifications are only ideal typical, they do suggest that decentralization often entails implications for power relations. Indeed, insisting that "any redistribution of authority is wrapped in politics" (Murphy & Beck, 1995, p. 55, note 7), Murphy and Beck (1995) reject the term "political decentralization" coined by some scholars (Brown, 1992).

3.3.1.2 Accountability and power relations

Based on dictionary definition, Leithwood et al. (1999) explicate the general

meaning of accountability:

> *...the quality of being accountable means being subject to giving an account, being answerable, and capable of being accounted for. The term "account" entails giving a report on, furnishing a justifying analysis or explanation, providing a statement of explanation of one's conduct, offering a statement or exposition of reasons, causes, grounds, or motives, or simply providing a statement of facts or events. (Leithwood et al., 1999, p. 13)*

As Leithwood et al. (1999) further highlight, there may be different levels of accountability. The party held accountable may be required to offer a description of activities under its jurisdiction, explain why the actions have been taken, or, in the highest level, make an argument to justify the appropriateness of the actions.

Though Leithwood et al.'s (1999) general discussion of accountability is useful, for our purpose of examining educational administration, Ranson's (2003) definition may be more suitable:

> *To be accountable, conventionally, is to be "**held to account**", defining a relationship of formal control between parties, one of whom is mandatorily held to account to the other for the exercise of roles and stewardship of public resources. (Ranson, 2003, p. 460, original emphasis)*

From Ranson's (2003) definition, we can see a clear link between the concepts of accountability and power. Essentially, according to Ranson (2003), accountability installs a mechanism of "formal control" so that one party has formal power, that is, authority (Scott, 2001), to demand certain "account" from the other party. Certainly, in practice, accountability relations, like power relations (Scott, 2001), are usually reciprocal and multiple, as Ranson (2003) stresses. However, the above simplified model helps clarify what's involved in an accountability relation. That being said, we

do not have to limit accountability relations within the realm of "formal control". In fact, one party can hold the other party accountable in various informal ways, as will be seen more clearly later.

The link between accountability and power becomes even clearer when one realizes the sanction, often in a potential form, involved in accountability relations:

> *Being accountable may mean . . . no more than having to answer questions about what has happened or is happening within one's jurisdiction . . . But most usages require an additional implication: the answer when given, or the account when rendered, is to be evaluated by the superior or superior body measured against some standard or some expectation, and the differences noted: and then praise or blame are to be meted out and sanctions applied. It is the coupling of information with its evaluation and application of sanctions that gives 'accountability' or 'answerability' or 'responsibility' their full sense in ordinary usage. (Dunsire, 1978, p. 41, cited in Ranson, 2003, p. 460)*

With the potential ability to sanction, the party holding the other party accountable obtains the ability to affect that other party's actions and, sometimes, even thoughts. Hence, a power relation between the two parties emerges (Bacharach & Lawler, 1980; Brass, 2002; Scott, 2001).

The link between accountability and power is also evident in the classifications of accountability relations. Again, it must be noted that the classifications serve conceptual discussion purpose only. In practice, often reciprocal and multiple forms of accountability relations exist between two parties at the same time.

A well-established classification of accountability relations in public administration is developed by Romzek and Dubnick (1987). Extending their work and synthesizing it with other important discussions such as Wagner's (1989), Adam and Kirst (1999)

come up with a classification scheme as below:

Table 3.1 *Types of Accountability Systems*

Type of accountability system	Nature of principal-agent relationship	Nature of accountability expectation	Accountability mechanism	Incentive
Bureaucratic	Superior/subordinate	Compliance with organizational rules	Supervision	Reward/punishment
Legal	Policymaker/implementer	Compliance with legal mandates	Oversight	Legal sanction
Professional	Layperson/expert	Special knowledge	Training	Discretion
Political	Constituent/representative	Responsiveness	Election	Support
Moral	Group/individual	Effort	Obligation	Affirmation
Market	Customer/provider	Service provision	Choice	Patronage

Source: Adam and Kirst, 1999, p. 467.

Note how the last column in the above suggests the link between accountability and power. In the table, "principal" denotes the party holding the other party accountable, and "agent" the party held to account. When an accountability relation is set in place, the principal gains the ability to use certain incentives to influence the agent. In other words, the principal gets certain power over the agent. For example, in a political accountability system, constituents obtain power over the representative through their ability to offer or withdraw, formally or informally, their political support for the representative. Likewise, by controlling reward or punishment, the superior in a bureaucratic accountability system acquires power to influence the subordinate.

One point is worthy to note: different types of accountability relations suggest different incentives controlled by the principal and thus may entail different power implications. Therefore, careful examination is needed when one tries to understand how accountability designs, particularly the change of these designs, impact power relations among actors.

Though the original Romzek-Dubnick (1987) classification contains fewer types of accountability relations, it helps to further clarify the link between accountability and power.

Figure 3.1 *Source and Degree of Control in Accountability Systems*

Source of Agency Control

		Internal	External
		Internal	**External**
Degree of Control Over Agency Actions	High	1. Bureaucratic	2. Legal
	Low	3. Professional	4. Political

Source: Romzek and Dubnick, 1987, p. 229.

As shown in Figure 3.1, different accountability relations indicate different locus and degree of control, thus generating different power implications. Take the degree of control for example. On one hand, bureaucratic and legal accountability specify the required processes and procedures in detail, through organizational rules and legal regulations respectively. On the other, in professional and political accountability systems, much discretion on execution is left to the agent; the principal just communicates general expectations and evaluates results.

In sum, theoretically, decentralization and accountability are closely related to power relations. Therefore, a micropolitical perspective, with its focus on power relations among people in organizations, seems particularly relevant if we are to examine school operation in the context of reforms for decentralization and accountability. The following part further shows this with empirical findings. The discussion mainly draws on western studies, for the empirical base on the issue in mainland China is

thin. It must be noted that the following review does not intended to be exhaustive but suggestive. It is just to highlight the relevance of a micropolitical perspective for examining school operation in the context of reforms for educational decentralization and accountability.

3.3.2 Decentralization, accountability, and power relations: Empirical findings

Much research points out that reforms for decentralization and accountability have contributed to widening the power gap between principals and teachers (Raab, Munn, McAvoy, Bailey, Arnott, & Adler, 1997). Principals and teachers seem to have been "differentially privileged" (Whitty et al., 1998, p. 57) in the reforms.

In many cases, the devolution of decision-making to the school has resulted in a concentration of power "at the top". In smaller schools, this power is usually concentrated in the hands of the headteacher alone. But in larger schools, the headteachers increasingly surround themselves with a cohesive "senior management team". (Whitty et al., 1998, p. 57)

Power concentration and emerging "senior management team", Whitty et al. argue, are "leading to a growing gap between the manager and the managed, and the consolidation of vertical, rather than horizontal, management structures" (Whitty et al., 1998, p. 57). This theme repeats in much other research such as Blackmore's (2004) study of Victoria's Schools of the Future program, which is bound to "drive a wedge between principals and teachers, positioning principals as managers and not just educational leaders" (Blackmore, 2004, p. 275).

The increased principal-teacher power gap is evidenced by studies on teacher participation in school decision making. For example, in Victoria's Schools of the Future program (Blackmore, Bigum, Hodgens, & Laskey, 1996) and England's grant-maintained schools (Thomas & Martin, 1996), principals or headteachers have been found to be program leaders or the sole decision makers. Admittedly, in some

schools, teacher participation may have grown. It seems that principals' styles of sharing power depend on their schools' "market positions" and local institutional contexts (Gewirtz, Ball, & Bowe, 1995; Raab et al., 1997). As Odden (1995) observes in Victoria,

> *less successful and more stressed principals were either centralizing power and decision-making in their offices, which undercut nearly all other attempts to involve teachers in decision-making, or trying to be centrally involved in both CEO (chief executive officer) type duties and instructional leadership, which simply stretched them beyond their limits of time and energy. (Odden, 1995, p. 10, cited in Whitty et al., 1998, p. 57)*

However, even when some principals "took very seriously the language of participation, and were not slow to convert this into specific arrangements to facilitate greater levels of collegiality, it has to be said that any such participation was very much on their terms and often more symbolic than substantive" (Whitty et al., 1998, p. 58). In Hargreaves' (1994) terms, such participation may be more properly described as "contrived collegiality" than genuine collaboration. It seems that decentralization policies and increasing accountability burden largely serve to exacerbate teacher participation in school decisions and legitimate principals' central leadership.

The increase in principal-teacher power gap is further supported by findings on teacher autonomy in the context of reforms for decentralization and accountability (Bushnell, 2003; Codd, 2005). "Felt open to increased control" (Blackmore, 2004, p. 277; Smith & Rowley, 2005), "teachers resented increased monitoring and evaluation by administrators and the intrusion of the school-mandated activities into their 'real' curriculum" (Wong & Anagnostopoulos, 1998, p. 46). On one hand, such monitoring and evaluation, as required or at least encouraged by accountability policies, offer principals more power; on the other hand, they reduce the room for teachers to

decide on instructional matters. Indeed, after reviewing research literature and conducting a survey of teachers, Taylor (2007, p. 555) concludes that "discretion in the workplace has been eroded to such an extent due to a high degree of central regulation and local accountability as to question the applicability of Lipsky's model", which portraits teachers as "street-level bureaucrats" enjoying self-policing and self-managing power.

However, in some cases, reforms for decentralization and accountability may reduce the principal-teacher power gap. For instance, in Dempster (2000)'s study in Australia, respondents

> *"generally agreed with the view that principals use participative decision making and planning processes in school-based management. In the main, principals, teachers and parents agreed that education policy, curriculum and resources were jointly discussed" (Dempster, 2000, p. 54).*

Another study shows that, when properly designed, accountability initiatives may lead to more teacher participation in decision making, though the authors also caution that the data " might reflect an unrealistically optimistic view" (Goldman, Dunlap, & Conley, 1993, p. 76). As introduced by the study, between 1987 and 1991, Oregon's "2020 School Improvement and Professional Development" program funded 271 schools to initiate and implement school improvement plans. It was required that the projects be written, administered, and led by teachers, instead of principals. Principals and teachers in the study said that "decision-making structures and processes developed for 2020 had begun to move the school toward more teacher involvement" (Goldman et al., 1993, p. 78).

Despite the above exceptions, the big picture from available data seems to be that decentralization and accountability policies largely increase or maintain the power distance between principals and teachers. It is not a trivial issue. Noticing that

principals, instead of teachers, were empowered by Britain's Educational Reform Act, Ball (1994) insists on a critical look at the change: "The manager's autonomy becomes the teacher's constraint. Decisions imposed from far away are replaced by decisions imposed from close at hand" (Ball, 1994, p. 62). As Ball sees it, teachers become "the objects of management relegated to the status of human resources; they do not participate, they are not included in the partnership; they are there *to be managed* (Ball, 1994, p. 62, original emphasis)".

Other studies examine how principals use power to influence teachers in the context of reforms for decentralization and accountability. It seems that the reforms lead principals to make more use of formal ways in enacting their power. Accountability policies bring principals more pressure to deliver student achievement; continuous reforms generate more uncertainty in principals' work environment. Therefore, principals may turn to formal procedures and rigid rules to get their priorities exactly carried out. This is described as a "mechanistic shift" by Staw, Sandelands, and Dutton (1981). Such a shift is demonstrated by a number of studies (Conley & Glasman, 2008; Raab et al., 1997). Studying the devolved management of secondary schools in England and Wales, Raab et al. note "a growing trend toward the monitoring and control of teachers' work through mechanisms such as performance indicators and appraisal" (Raab et al., 1997, p. 151). Indeed, as accountability policies such as No Child Left Behind reward or punish schools based on their student achievement, principals are propelled to locate, sort, and analyze a variety of data such as achievement targets and test scores (Luo, 2008; Thornton & Perreault, 2002). When school reputation depends on test scores, data-driven decision making appears more reliable than intuition. Therefore, principals translate external accountability pressures to internal management and evaluate teachers with objective data generated from formal procedures. In Ball's words, this process "replaces personal relationships with appraisal and commitment with performance incentives" (Ball, 1994, p. 63).

Still other studies show that reforms for decentralization and accountability may create more intermediate levels in schools and thus make principals' power use more indirect. The reforms put more challenges and responsibilities on principals. To survive and succeed, principals tend to build senior management teams and leverage middle managers in supervising teachers (Fitzgerald, 2009; Whitty et al., 1998). This way, the communication and control in schools become more indirect.

In sum, the above review suggests that reforms for educational decentralization and accountability in western developed countries often touch on school micropolitics. On one hand, the principal-teacher power gap seems increasing; on the other hand, schools seem to be moving toward bureaucracy with formal rules, intermediate levels, and tightened control. Note that this conclusion is tentative at best. More evidence with sharp focus on the issue and detailed analysis is needed to paint a clearer picture.

Meanwhile, we seem to be witnessing a growing separation in schools. As principals assume more the role of manager than "the leading professional", principals, together with their "senior management teams", seems to be increasingly distanced from teachers. Analyzing Britain's reforms for educational decentralization and accountability, Ball notices "the development of a division of values and purposes, of professional culture if you like, between managers, oriented to the budget, the market, entrepreneurial activities and the drive for efficiency, and teachers, oriented to the National Curriculum, teaching and learning, student needs and the drive for effectiveness" (Ball, 1994, p. 58). He summarizes it as an "increasing separation of the professional worlds, perspectives and interests of the manager and the teacher" (Ball, 1994, p. 63).

This separation may be regrettable to both principals and teachers.

> *We used to feel united as a group. That has changed with the new role of the*

principal. There is a perception of a bit of self-interest there (with principals getting performance bonuses) whenever they initiate anything. (a teacher, in Down et al., 1999, cited in Blackmore, 2004, p. 278)

What we need to be doing is working together but instead the dividing line is quite clear. (Jean, Principal, cited in Blackmore, 2004, pp. 278-9)

3.4 Limitations of literature on school micropolitics in the reform context

3.4.1 Mainland China

Few empirical studies exist on school micropolitics in the context of reforms for educational decentralization and accountability in mainland China. In fact, most writings on power relations in schools in mainland China are commentary essays without empirical support (Gu, 1996; Guo, 2008; Wu, Xie, & Zhou, 1999). The authors often provide suggestions and directions for the practitioners based on intuition and personal reflection. This situation is similar to what is happening in the field of Chinese principalship, which is closely related to the field of school micropolitics. In their dissertations, Qian (2009) and Hu (2010) have conducted careful reviews of the current state of principalship research in mainland China. As they have shown, despite improvement over the past two decades, prescriptive essays without empirical base remain dominant in the writings on Chinese principalship.

Some empirical studies do exist that touch on school micropolitics in mainland China. For example, some studies suggest that in mainland China, the typical way of decision making in schools is still top-down (Chen & Liu, 2003; Hu, 2010; Jin, 2007; Qian, 2009; Wong, 2006; Wu et al., 1999). When making decisions, the principals usually first discuss with his or her leadership team and come up with a proposal, which is then presented to the teachers for suggestions (Hu, 2010). However, more often than not, the consultation is a form lack of substance. It is just to let the

teachers to have a sense of ownership and confidence in the decisions rather than ask for their genuine ideas (Lo & Lai, 2004). Teachers have little input in making decisions. In Jin's (2007) survey, only 26.2% of the backbone teachers, who had strong expertise in their subject matters, reported that they frequently took part in school decision making. Compared with male teachers, female teachers seem to have even less opportunities for participation (Chen & Liu, 2003).

Some other researchers examine teachers' expectations on participative decision making. For example, Chen and Liu (2003) surveyed 244 teachers in primary and secondary schools in mainland China and found that teachers' actual level of participation was lower than their desired level. What kind of decisions do teachers want to participate in? Current findings on this seem inconsistent. Some studies indicate that teachers are interested in taking part in decisions related to their immediate interests, such as bonus allocation and instruction (Hu, 2010; Wong, 2006). It seems that teachers do not care that much about school-wide operational matters such as development plan and financial management (Chen & Liu, 2003). To teachers, the operational matters are not their duties but that of principals and middle managers; discussing the matters will increase teachers' workload with little benefit (Wong, 2006). However, other studies suggest that teachers actually have wider concerns and want to have some say in the long term development of the school. We can see this from the following words of a Provincial-level Backbone Teacher interviewed by Jin (2007):

> *The principal treats me well and often says that I am a pillar of the school. I hope that I can do something for the development of the school, but there is no formal channel. I do not have power. Even though I talk in formal discussions, I won't be heard. It's not like I want to be a cadre: I just want to do something. Now, besides teaching, I also write some stuff. Yeah, if you have time, do take a look. Sometimes, I wonder, the government sends us out to study, when we come back, what are we expected to do? Maybe I think too much. As a teacher, you are*

fine if you teach well. (校长对我还可以，经常说我是学校的柱子，我希望能给学校发展做点事，但没有正式渠道呀.我没权，正式场合说话没人听.不是我想当官，我只是想做点事，现在除了教学，我还写点东西，对了，有时间，你一定看看.有时候，我都在问，国家让我们出去学习，回来后，让我们干什么？可能是我想多了，老师嘛，教好书就行。) (a Provincial-level Backbone Teacher, cited in Jin, 2007, p. 81)

Other scholars investigate the ways principals use to influence teachers. In Qian's (2009) study, principals believed that teachers were driven by monetary rewards and material incentives. Therefore, the principals tried to win resources by cultivating *guanxi* (relationships) with external parties and use the resources to reward those teachers who performed well. In return, the principals demanded loyalty and good performance from teachers. Likewise, Delany and Paine (1991) pointed out that as principals assumed the new role of seeking financial resources in reforms for educational decentralization, they also gained more influence over teachers. The reason was that principals could use the financial resources as incentives for teachers. However, the way principals use to influence teachers may not be congruent with teachers' needs. In a survey of 879 teachers, Lin (2005) asked the teachers to rate different ways principals use to influence them. Along a 7-point Likert scale, teachers only gave an average score of 3.712 to "rewarding or punishing teachers publicly". By contrast, they seemed to like ways such as "encouragement", "providing visions and acting as an example", "care and support", and "cooperation" much better and, on average, rated these ways 6 or even more.

Although the above studies touch on school micropolitics and provide useful information, they are far from enough in giving us a clear understanding of school micropolitics in the context of educational reforms in mainland China. This is due to several limitations of the studies.

To begin with, most of them only focus on one side of the power game, either the

principal or the teacher (Chen & Liu, 2003). As such, they lose sight into the dynamic interaction process in which people adapt their own strategies according to what others do (Blasé & Blasé, 2002; Zeng, 2008). Seeing only one side of the interaction may lead us to form a false static image of "Chinese principalship" or "teachers' way".

In addition, few studies take a power perspective to systematically examine micropolitical interactions among the principal, middle managers, and teachers in Chinese schools. Usually, only anecdotal descriptions or stories are offered without deep analysis (Wang, 2010). As such, they have generated little fresh understanding about how Chinese schools operate as organizations.

Furthermore, few studies highlight the context of reforms for educational decentralization and accountability in mainland China and examine school micropolitics in this context. This is particularly true of those studies that use a quantitative approach and fail to take into account the context in which school micropolitics takes place (Chen & Liu, 2003). As shown before, reforms for decentralization and accountability have been pervasive in the educational administration of mainland China over the past decades. Therefore, we cannot neglect the reform context if we are to understand contemporary Chinese schools.

In sum, the literature on school micropolitics in the context of educational reforms in mainland China is scant. Though there are some related commentaries and empirical work, they fail to provide thorough knowledge. We have a knowledge gap on the issue. It is this gap this study seeks to fill.

3.4.2 Internationally

Despite its importance, a micropolitical perspective is not at the forefront of studies on organization and management (Clegg et al., 2006; Scott, 2003). As many scholars have pointed out, the mainstream research in organizational studies tend to look at

things from the eyes of the manager. This view emphasizes coherence and efficiency; it downplays conflicts and resistance. Therefore, micropolitical issues are to be avoided at best.

Specifically, in studies on school organizations and school management, micropolitical analysis is thin (Blasé & Blasé, 2002; Flessa, 2009; Hoyle, 1999; Malen, 1995; Malen & Cochran, 2008; Mawhinney, 1999). This is true in many sub-fields. In a comprehensive review, Blasé and Blasé (2002) conclude that "extant research on micropolitics of instructional supervision is limited both in quantity and breadth" (Blasé and Blasé, 2002, p. 6). Also, Flessa (2009) demonstrates that while a micropolitical perspective would contribute much to the field of distributed leadership in schools, such a perspective is largely neglected in the field. As an example, he cites two recent books by leading scholars on distributed leadership (Leithwood, Mascall, & Strauss, 2009; Spillane & Diamond, 2007) and notes:

> *Although both books are concerned with the way that leadership is stretched across roles and positions, and both books include empirical investigation of the ways that leadership is enacted by different individuals at school sites, neither includes an index reference for "conflict" or for "politics"; micropolitics garners mention on 2 pages out of almost 500. Why does a literature that focuses on individuals' work within school sites and that investigates the different ways schools are managed and their implications fail to feature a micropolitical analysis? (Flessa, 2009, p. 332)*

Flessa's (2009) comments remind us of Ball's (1987) similar complaints two decades ago. Ball (1987) is unsatisfied with the then-dominant systems approach in studying school organizations. He argues that systems approach fails to see the unavoidable conflicts in schools and thus loses relevance to the daily realities of people in schools.

I take schools, in common with virtually all other social organizations, to be **arenas of struggle**; *to be riven with actual or potential conflict between members; to be poorly coordinated; to be ideologically diverse. (Ball, 1987, p. 19, original emphasis).*

to deny the relevance of micro-politics is in effect to condemn organizational research to be for ever ineffectual and out of step with the immediate realities of life in organizations. (Ball, 1987, p. xi).

Not only is the field of school micropolitics now an infant, its growth is also limited by some enduring challenges. A critical issue is the concept of power. Many studies fail to provide their definitions of the concept; where defined, the concept often remains unclear (Bacharach & Mundell, 1993; Malen, 1995; Webb, 2008).

All in all, one might sum up micropolitical research as an interesting field, but methodologically wanting as a result of contested notions of power. (Webb, 2008, p. 128)

Another challenge is to examine the link between school micropolitics and organizational features of the school. Discussing promising areas of micropolitical inquiries, Blasé and Blasé (2002) suggest researchers look more into "the relationship between school organization factors (e.g., policies, programs, evaluation) and micropolitical interaction" (p. 27) and "the influence of informal cliques, grade level and department teams, and standing committees" (p. 24).

To move forward, the field of school micropolitics must address the above challenges.

3.4.3 Research opportunities brought by educational reforms

The lack of current research on school micropolitics in the reform context is

regrettable, especially given that educational reforms may bring abundant opportunities to study the issue.

The basic argument is that reforms generate change, which in turn has the potential to disturb the established order and so invite new interpretations and micropolitical action within schools (Ball, 1994; Mintzberg, 1983).

Changes have the potential to expose the micropolitics that are too-often obscured by daily routines (Ball, 1987). Changes give rise to micropolitical actions. For example, scholars note that bringing parents into school-level decision making in Hong Kong and Taiwan may increase conflict (Lai & Lo, 2002; Ng, 2007). Indeed, Hong (1999, cited in Chen, 2002) shows that in Taiwan teachers and parents hold significantly different views on the extent to which parents should influence school decisions through aggressive lobbying. Another example is the principal selection process in Taiwan. Wu (2004, cited in Wu & Lai, 2006) finds that involving multiple parties in decision processes is accompanied by more power struggles in some schools.

Through applying a micropolitical lens, researchers can acquire fresh understanding about school management. Although this perspective may fall outside more pedagogically focused approaches, it has the potential to provide realistic insights into what is happening in schools and why it is happening. This in turn can aid understanding of ways leaders can influence student learning.

In sum, while school micropolitics is an important area, it remains underdeveloped, in mainland China and in the international literature. We should make use of the valuable opportunities brought by the educational reforms to advance the field.

To move the field forward, this study addresses the afore-mentioned limitations of existing literature on school micropolitics. On one hand, the study examines how the organizational features of Chinese schools are related to school micropolitics. On the

other hand, the study informs its inquiries with a clearer understanding of the concept of power.

3.5 Clarifying the concept of power

While there are many definitions of the concept of power (Scott, 2001), this study focuses on interpersonal power relations. This is so because the purpose of the study is to examine micropolitical interactions among people in schools.

The purpose of the study also suggests how the study should define the concept of power. As Blasé's (1991) working definition of micropolitics indicates, people engage in micropolitics to realize their goals in the organization; also, micropolitics often derives from the perceived differences among people. Therefore, differences in interests are at the core of micropolitics. To serve the purpose of examining micropolitics, the study emphasizes differences in interests among people when it conceptualizes power. Borrowing Weber's (1968) classic definition of power, the study defines power as the ability to realize one's own interests in a social relationship despite resistance.

Clearly, this definition, like Weber's (1968), is open. Many factors may allow one to realize one's own interests despite others' resistance. Indeed, as Bacharach and Lawler (1980) suggest, power may be best understood as a primitive concept, which can sensitize us to certain phenomena but needs specification to be empirically and analytically more useful.

To clarify the concept of power for the purpose of this study, I build up the following scheme (Table 3.2). The scheme heavily draws on the works of Scott (2001), Lukes (2005), Bacharach and Lawler (1980), and Clegg (1989), who have thoroughly and critically reviewed the debates on the concept of power and contributed useful synthesis and suggestions. While the discussion below cannot detail all elements in the scheme, it stresses the logic behind and the linkage among the elements.

To simplify the discussion and highlight the core, assume A and B engage in interpersonal power relations. That is, they need to deal with their differences in interests. Further, let A be the one who manages to prevail and realizes its interests.[1]

Table 3.2 *Clarifying the Concept of Power*

Elementary forms of power	Corrective influence		Persuasive influence	
	Force	Manipulation	Signification	Legitimation
Developed forms of power	Through constraint		Through discursive formation	
	Coercion	Inducement	Expertise	Command
Power base	Punishment	Rewards	Cognitive symbols	Normative symbols
Power type	Influence			Authority
Power source	Personality, training and experience, network position, etc.			Structure

Source: adapted mainly from Bacharach and Lawler (1980) and Scott (2001).

The scheme begins with power form. As defined above, power is the ability to realize one's interests despite resistance. Power form means what shape the ability takes on. Scott (2001) differentiates between elementary and developed forms of power. Developed forms go beyond elementary forms to include resistance, intentionality, and subordinates' anticipated reaction. For example, hit by A with physical force, B may have no room for resistance. This is a case of A prevailing over B with an elementary form of power. Contrast this with coercion, a developed form of power.

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[1] Note that this is only for the purpose of discussion. To be clear, this study recognizes that power relations are inherently two-way, each side having the potential to affect the other and prevail. (Scott, 2001).

There, A relies on threat of physical force rather than the actual use of it. Therefore, resistance is possible for B.

Scott (2001) further divides elementary forms of power into corrective influence and persuasive influence. While the former operates through directly impacting B's interests, the latter is based on reasoning. Signification and legitimation appeal to different kinds of persuasion:

> *"Where persuasion operates through cognitive symbols – ideas and representations that lead people to define situation in certain ways – it takes the form of signification. Where it operates through the building of value commitments to particular ideas or conditions, it takes the form of legitimation (Giddens 1984: 29). (Scott, 2001, p. 15)*

In their developed forms, corrective influence takes the shape of constraint, where B complies to A after deliberate calculation; persuasive influence functions as discursive formation, where B complies because B recognizes A's positions designated by certain cognitive systems (expertise) or value systems (command). For example, in inducement relations, A offers B rewards and incentives for conformity, whereas in command relations, A gains conformity with her office in a formal structure. As Scott (2001) notes, the classifications are ideal typical, serving analytical purpose only. In practice, different forms often operate in combination. Nevertheless, systematic classifications such as Scott's help clarify the concept of power.

When linking Scott's (2001) classifications to Bacharach and Lawler's (1980) synthesis on power base, one finds an interesting correspondence between the two, as shown in Table 3.2 above. Bacharach and Lawler (1980) highlight the difference between power base, power source, and power itself.

In dealing with the bases of power we are interested in what parties control that enables them to manipulate the behavior of others; in referring to the sources of power we are speaking of how parties come to control the bases of power. (Bacharach & Lawler, 1980, p. 34)

With the light shed by Bacharach and Lawler (1980), we see what A controls to gain the capacity to affect B. For example, command is based on A's control over normative symbols, which leads B to ascribe legitimacy to A's orders, believing that it is appropriate to follow the orders. Likewise, expertise is based on A's control over cognitive symbols. With this control, A claims a superior position in a knowledge system. This leads B to define the world in certain ways and thus accepts what A suggests according to the knowledge system. The professional authority of a doctor over a patient is a case in point.

Bacharach and Lawler (1980) also emphasize that it is analytically important to differentiate between influence and authority, which are of different nature and operate differently. On one hand, stipulated by formal structure and regulations, authority deals with issues in a given scope. On the other, deriving from sources such as personality and experience, influence may spreads over a wide array of issues. [1]

Power, as a capacity to affect others, may or may not be exercised (Scott, 2001). When exercised, that is, when A uses her capacity to prevail over B's will, this may be manifested in various ways. Power theorists call them different faces.[2] The first face is decision making, where A and B discuss their different ideas and A makes the final decision (Dahl, 1961). The second face is non-decision making. There, A stops B from bringing certain issues into the discussion. A may do this with tactics such as

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[1] See Bacharach and Lawler (1980, p. 44) for a fuller discussion on the differences between authority and influence.

[2] Lukes (2005) calls them dimensions, while Scott (2001) and Bachrach and Baratz (1962) term them facets/faces. The latter view is better, for when discussing power exercise, we are not dealing with dimensions of a construct but are referring to the different ways power may be exercised.

agenda-setting and behind-the-door manipulation (Bachrach & Baratz, 1962). In this case, B's interests may still get expressed, but in the form of grievances at best. The third face of power goes even further. In that situation, A mobilizes her power to shape B's interests, preferences, and perceptions so that B would not realize that there could have been differences in interests between A and B. It should be noted that the extent to which the third face of power succeeds in affecting B may vary across contexts (Lukes, 2005). Schools, because of their structural looseness, may be more appealed to ideological control through meaning management and less susceptible to more direct modes of control (Blasé & Anderson, 1995). Indeed, when analyzing schools as political systems, we need to take into account all three faces of power exercise, overt or covert (Gronn, 1986; Malen, 1995).

A focus on power exercise characterizes what Scott (2001) calls the main stream of power research. A second stream, in Scott's (2001) terms, concerns dispositional power, or power base, as understood above. Clegg (1989) helps highlight the dialectic between power exercise and power base. When exercising power, A may also gain or lose power, depending on the way power is exercised and the result. In other words, power base is not fixed once for all but fluctuates over time. Successful exercise of power increases power base, while failure to prevail this time may weaken power base and make it more difficult to exercise power next time. On the other hand, the temporary balance of power base facilitates or constrains A's power exercise. This dialectic provides us with a dynamic view of power relations.

Taken together, the above discussion clarifies the concept of power by differentiating between the form, base, type, source, and exercise of power and showing their connections. In addition, the discussion highlights the uncertain results of power exercise. Admittedly, this is not the only way to treat the concept of power in interpersonal relations. However, the above discussion serves to sensitize the micropolitical inquiries in this study.

Chapter 4 Conceptual Framework and Research Design

4.1 Conceptual framework

It is useful to highlight some themes emerging from previous review of reform context and theoretical context of this study.[1]

1. State policy and market competition constitute important environment for schools operating in the context of reforms for educational decentralization and accountability (Whitty et al., 1998).

2. A micropolitical perspective is essential for understanding how schools operate in the reform context. On one hand, by design, reforms for educational decentralization and accountability often touch upon power relations in schools (Adams & Kirst, 1999); On the other hand, a micropolitical perspective points to a basic problem all organizations need to address: how to bring together people with different interests to work toward a common goal (Ball, 1987; Clegg et al., 2006)? Schools are especially open to micropolitical analysis because of their organizational features (Bidwell, 1965; Hoyle & Wallace, 2005; Weick, 1976).

3. In particular, micropolitical interactions among the principal, teachers, and middle managers deserve our special attention. The three parties occupy critical roles in the school organization (Day et al., 2007; Leithwood & Duke, 1999). Their interactions matter.

4. Micropolitics is used by people to articulate and reconcile their differences in interests within the formal and informal power context of the school. It may show up in conflictive and cooperative interactions (Blasé, 1991). Where conflicts are involved, they may be real or potential[2], overt or covert (Lukes, 2005; Scott,

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[1] Only illustrative references are given here. For detailed discussions, see Chapters 2 and 3.

[2] A-B conflict is real when both realize that they have differences in interests. If only one side sees the differences or neither has seen the differences, the conflict is potential. When the conflict is potential, to avoid real conflicts, one party may take measures to prevent the other party from thinking that there are differences in interests between the two parties. For example, the principal, worrying

2001).

5. In micropolitical interactions, people try to prevail over others and realize their own interests. However, it is essentially uncertain which side will prevail (Scott, 2001). Also, the outcome is temporary, subject to change in the new round of power play (Ball, 1987).

Taken together, the above themes argue for the importance of the study and suggest a conceptual framework, which is discussed below. Besides the ideas above, the framework further draws upon role theories (Berger & Luckmann, 1967; Biddle & Thomas, 1966; Merton, 1957) and organizational literature (Feldman, 1976, 1981; March & Olsen, 1979). This is done because the purpose of the study is to examine interactions within a formal organization, the public secondary school.

People in school organizations work within the context shaped by reforms for educational decentralization and accountability. They also face competitions with other schools for quality students and reputation. When they work together to handle the challenges, they often encounter micropolitics among themselves.

At the heart of the micropolitics are divergent interests (Ball, 1987, 1994). Based on his case studies of micropolitics in British schools, Ball (1987) highlights several critical concepts. One of the concepts is interest. Ball points out three basic types of interests: vested interests, ideological interests, and self-interests (Ball, 1987). Vested interest has to do with material concerns; ideological interest is about what you believe and value; self-interest is related to self-identity, as when the sense of who you are is at stake.

One's interests may influence one's role definition, that is, "clarification of one's

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that the teacher may object to her new plan of school development, may try to shape the teacher's preferences before she announces the plan. If the principal had not made the effort, the teacher might well have disagreed with the plan.

own role within the immediate work group, deciding on job duties, priorities, and time allocation for tasks" (Feldman, 1981, p. 310; also see Feldman, 1976). This clarification is needed because of the ambiguity in organizations (March & Olsen, 1979). In other words, the job of each role is often not as clear as formal rules suggest. Rules are usually general and leave room for choices; people need to decide what to do and how to do it when they deal with their daily work.

One's role definition may further influence how one performs one's role and what expectations one has for other roles in the organization. Sometimes, one's expectation on others is not in line with others' perceptions of their interests; alternatively, others' expectations on one may not be in line with one's perceptions of one's interests. It is in the cases of different interests that micropolitics comes into play. People negotiate the micropolitics so as to realize their interests and expectations; they may also do that to protect themselves from intrusion of others.

Note that when one engages in micropolitics, one does not have to overtly resist others. While overt resistance is an alternative, one may deal with the differences in interests between one and others in covert ways such as superficial compliance. Indeed, as emphasized before, micropolitics alerts us to the subtle, covert strategies people use to realize their interests.

Out of the micropolitical negotiations come spheres of control, that is, who has how much say on what decisions in the school (Willower, 1991). Ball (1987) pointed out that spheres of control

> *do not, indeed cannot, remain distinct. They are subject to negotiation, renegotiation and dispute (Strauss, 1978). The boundaries of control are continually being redrawn...(Ball, 1987, p. 10)*

The framework is helpful for the study, particularly in the early phrase of fieldwork.

In a sense, the framework provides a sensitizing lens. It points to the concepts and connections important for understanding school micropolitics in the reform context. Informed by the framework, the study designed instruments for interviews and observations (see Appendix[1,2]).

That being said, the study is careful not to be dictated by the framework. On one hand, the framework is crude. Though it builds on the concepts in existing literature, the relationships among the concepts are asserted rather than demonstrated. One the other hand, the framework originates from western studies. This is the case because there are few empirical studies in mainland China on school micropolitics. While the western-based framework can sensitize the initial steps of the study, the study notes that the framework may not fit Chinese context (Dimmock & Walker, 2000). It may well fail to capture important elements of micropolitics in Chinese schools. The specific local contexts of Chinese schools may be quite different from western schools; people in Chinese schools may perceive and deal with their micropolitical interactions in ways different from what have been found in western schools. To arrive at a genuine understanding of micropolitics in Chinese schools, the study must strive to be open. It must unearth how local people in the Chinese schools define and deal with their lives.

For the above reasons, the framework-informed interview schedules were used more as starting questions than as complete guides. For the same reasons, the study did not break its research questions into specific questions using concepts in the framework. Rather, it phrased the questions in general terms as follows.

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[1] The study also interviewed middle managers, who might play a large part in school micropolitics. An interview schedule for middle managers, similar to that for principals and teachers, was also devised but, to save space, not shown in Appendix 1.

[2] In the interview schedules, the sections on micropolitical interactions only show principal-teacher interactions. This is only for the purpose of illustration. Interviews in the field inquired into micropolitical interactions among all the three parties, namely, the principal, middle managers, and teachers.

4.2 Raising more specific research questions

As discussed before, City G has been a typical case at local level in implementing reforms for educational decentralization and accountability since 2003. Therefore, the study was conducted in public secondary schools in City G. The focus was to examine micropolitical interactions among the principals, middle managers, and teachers in the schools. The following questions led the inquiries.

1. What is micropolitics in the public secondary schools in City G like?
    - What do people in the schools pursue in the micropolitics?
    - How do people in the schools negotiate the micropolitics?
2. Why is micropolitics in the public secondary schools in City G the way it is?
    - Why do people in the schools pursue what they pursue in the micropolitics?
    - Why do people in the schools negotiate the micropolitics the way they do?
3. What are the commonalities and variations among the schools in terms of micropolitics?

4.3 Research design

4.3.1 Using a qualitative approach

This study used a qualitative approach. A qualitative researcher focuses on the meanings people attach to their behaviors and thereby understand why they do what they do and why they do it in that way (Goetz & LeCompte, 1984; Silverman, 2000). These meanings belong to people's "inner world" and are often complex, subtle, dynamic, and contextually specific. Therefore, they are usually not fairly represented in quantitative instruments such as standardized surveys. To feel the "inner world" of participants, a qualitative researcher turns herself into a research instrument. She tries to empathetically understand how the participants see the world and their lives in it. Instead of using experiments, she strives to minimize her intervention into the natural

flow of participants' lives. This allows her to situate the participants in their mundane life context and holistically understand participants' behaviors in this context. Denzin and Lincoln (2000) point out the features of qualitative research:

Qualitative research involves an interpretive, naturalistic approach to the world. This means that qualitative researchers study things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of, or to interpret, phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them." (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000, p. 3)

A qualitative approach befitted the purpose of this research. This research aimed to examine how people in Chinese schools deal with their differences in interests through micropolitical interactions in the context of reforms. It sought to look at things from the perspectives of local people and understand how they defined and dealt with their lives in schools. How did they interpret the reform context and the operational environment of the school? What did they see as their interests? What significances did they attach to the interests? What did they consider when they negotiate micropolitics? To answer questions such as these, the researcher must delve into the meaning world of research participants so as to empathetically appreciate their viewpoints and actions. Therefore, a qualitative approach was more suitable for the study.

4.3.2 Ethnography: A way of seeing[1]

Specifically, the study utilized an ethnographic lens. The ethnographer immerses herself in the daily lives of the participants,

watching what happens, listening to what is said, and asking questions through informal and formal interviews, collecting documents and artifacts — in fact, gathering whatever data are valuable to throw light on the issues that are the

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[1] The title of Wolcott's (1999) book is borrowed here.

emerging focus of inquiry. (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2007, p. 3)

However, these general techniques of data collection are *not* the essence of ethnography. The unique focus of ethnography is cultural interpretation (Geertz, 1973; Wolcott, 1987). That is, it seeks to understand a particular type of meaning: how native members in a society or group define and deal with their interrelations.

This unique focus of ethnography was what this study needed. The study examined how people in Chinese school organizations defined and dealt with their micropolitical interactions. It aimed to reveal the meanings people brought to the micropolitical interactions. Their perspectives in defining and dealing with the interactions constituted the micropolitical culture of the schools. It was the micropolitical culture this study sought to describe and interpret. To see the micropolitical culture, an ethnography eye helped.

4.3.3 Sampling

4.3.3.1 Sampling of schools

The logic of sampling for this study was "purposive sampling" (Patton, 1990). Using my research purpose as a guide, I looked for those places, schools, and people that were most informative for answering my research questions. I did not choose places within mainland China randomly. Rather, to study school micropolitics in the context of reforms for educational decentralization and accountability, I should focus on the places that have been implementing the reforms. Preferably, the place I selected should have been carrying out the reforms for several years and to a great extent. This way, the place was likely to contain abundant materials for the study. That was the reason why I chose City G as the research site. As shown in Chapter 1, City G has been a pioneer in mainland China in implementing reforms for educational decentralization and accountability. In particular, the reform measures in City G since 2003 constituted a "typical case" that is most informative for the purpose of this

study.

Likewise, when I selected schools within City G, I followed the same logic. Though I focused on public secondary schools, I did not randomly pick among all the public secondary schools in City G. Rather, I looked for those schools that were most informative for my research purpose. Specifically, sampling of secondary schools within City G was based on a cross-classification along two dimensions. Taking the two dimensions into account helped examine school micropolitics in different specific local contexts.

The first dimension was which level of government manages and funded the school; this was believed to impact how the school responded to the decentralization and accountability policies, which were made by municipal government. Along this dimension, the public schools in City G were divided into three types: municipal schools, district schools, and township schools; each was directly managed and mainly funded by municipal government, district government, and township government respectively.[1] Because of the different funding sources, reform policies, made by the municipal government, might be implemented in municipal schools but not in non-municipal schools, that is, district and township schools, or not in the same ways. This mattered for my study because this meant that people in municipal schools and non-municipal schools might work within different immediate policy contexts and thus might behave differently in micropolitical interactions. Therefore, the first dimension was to see whether a school was a municipal school or a non-municipal school.

The second dimension was the school's position in the local competition of enrollment and reputation. Studies showed that what position a school stands in the local competition impacted power relations in schools (Ball & Maroy, 2009; Odden,

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[1] In City G, district is an administrative level equal to township.

1995, cited in Whitty et al., 1998, p. 57).

Using the two dimensions to cross-classify schools, we have a two-by-two table as below (Figure 4.1). In order to examine school micropolitics in different specific local contexts, I selected one school from each cell. This way, three schools were selected. Their names are shown in the cells. The left-below cell is missing since all municipal schools were strong competitors in terms of reputation and enrollment.

Figure 4.1 *Sampling of Schools Based on a Cross-classification*

	municipal school	non-municipal school
strong competitor	Qing Shu Middle School (QSM) (including high school and junior middle school with about 500 teachers)	Yang Fan Middle School (YFM) (high school with about 180 teachers; the top school in a rich town)
weak competitor		Hong Yi Middle School (HYM) (junior middle school, with about 80 teachers; in a poor town; ranked nearly the last according to the indices proposed by Municipal Education Bureau)

Which specific school to put in each cell was based on the following reasons. First, why did I select Qing Shu Middle School (hereafter QSM)? Following the classification above, City G had four municipal schools: three in academic track and

one in sports training track, which trained athletes for competitions. This study excluded the athlete-training one because it focused on principals in academic schools. Among the three academic municipal schools, QSM was the only "purely public" one. That is, other municipal schools also got funding from sources other than the municipal government while QSM did not[1]. As mentioned before, where schools got their money might impact how schools responded to municipal reform policies. Based on these considerations, QSM was selected in the left-above cell; this way, we have a typical case that was mostly likely to follow municipal reform policies.

Then, why were Yang Fan Middle School (YFM) and Hong Yi Middle School (HYM) selected? On one hand, they were both township schools and thus belonged to the non-municipal class. On the other, YFM, just like QSM, passed the quality evaluation of provincial specialists and enjoyed high reputation, while HYM passed quality evaluation of municipal specialists and did not have that strong competitiveness in student recruitment. Actually, YFM was the top school in a very rich town and HYM had been ranked at the bottom stratum in the ranking report complied by Municipal Education Bureau according to the performance indices.

Note that the three schools differed markedly in terms of size. QSM was a comprehensive middle school. That's, it contained a junior middle school section and a high school section. Therefore, it had a big staff (about 500) and students. YFM was a high school and HYM was a junior middle school. They were much smaller compared with QSM, with a staff of 200 and 80 respectively.

It may be argued that the notable difference in the size of the schools would make comparing across the three schools unfruitful. However, my purpose in the comparison was not causal deduction but to show school micropolitics in different

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[1] I learned about this from interviews with a middle manager and a teacher in QSM during the early phrase of the study.

specific local contexts. The difference in the size of the schools did not hurt but help with my purpose.

4.3.3.2 Sampling of research participants

<u>The organizational structure of a Chinese public school</u>

Before discussing the sampling of research participants within the schools, it is useful to briefly introduce the organizational structure of a typical public secondary school in City G. Though specific schools vary on many detailed aspects, a general picture facilitates discussion. An organizational chart below (Figure 4.2) shows the roles in charge of the "main business" of the school, that is, academic performance and moral education. To be clear, there are also other roles in the school organization such as Finance Director. But they are usually seen as supporting staff. Therefore, to highlight the major roles, Figure 4.2 gives a simplified picture.

Figure 4.2 *The Organizational Structure of a Public Secondary School in Mainland China*

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                          ┌─────────────────┐
                          │  The Principal  │
                          └────────┬────────┘
              ┌────────────────────┴────────────────────┐
   ┌──────────────────────┐                  ┌──────────────────────┐
   │ Vice Principal        │                  │ Vice Principal (Moral │
   │ (Academic Affairs)    │                  │ Education)            │
   └──────────┬───────────┘                  └───────────┬──────────┘
   ┌──────────────────────┐                  ┌──────────────────────┐
   │ Director (Academic    │                  │ Director (Moral       │
   │ Affairs)              │                  │ Education)            │
   └──────────┬───────────┘                  └───────────┬──────────┘
        ┌─────┴───────────────────┐                      │
   ┌──────────────┐               │                      │
   │ Subject Head │               │                      │
   └──────┬───────┘               │                      │
   ┌──────────────────────┐  ┌──────────────┐            │
   │ Lesson Preparation    │  │  Grade Head  │            │
   │ Team Head             │  └──────┬───────┘            │
   └──────────┬───────────┘  ┌──────────────┐            │
              │              │  Class Head  ├────────────┘
              │              └──────┬───────┘
   ┌──────────────────────────────────────────────────────┐
   │                      Teachers                          │
   └──────────────────────────────────────────────────────┘
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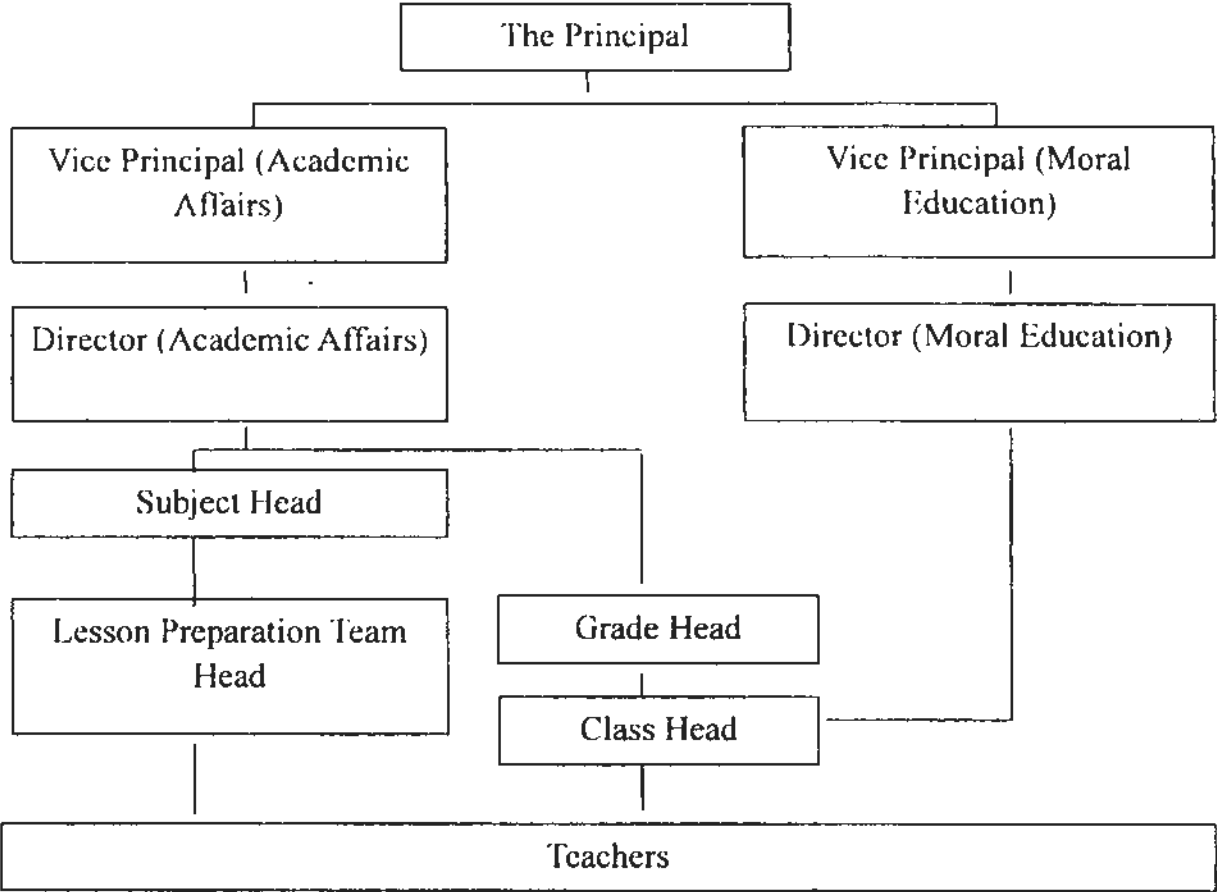
As Figure 4.2 suggests, an important role in the school is Class Head, who is responsible for both the academic development and moral education of students in her class. Usually, a class in a secondary school in City G hosts about 50 students, though some classes may have as many as 80 students. The Class Head teaches a subject for the class. Meanwhile, she needs to take care of student discipline and classroom order. This covers a wide array of issues ranging from the hygiene condition of the classroom to the clothing and hairstyle of the students in her class. The schools set standards for students' dressing, sitting, standing, exercising, socializing, sleeping in the dorms, etc. These all fall into the realm of "moral education". The Class Head must make sure that students obey the rules. In addition, she is expected to coordinate the teaching of other teachers for the class.

Besides the class, teachers also belong to several other sub-units in the school organization. One is subject team, which consists of all teachers teaching the same subject in the school. A subject team meeting is conducted every month and lasts for about 40 minutes. The meeting often mobilizes subject teachers to finish tasks assigned by upper level authorities; it also passes down school expectations and management decisions to teachers. Besides the subject team, a teacher also belongs to a grade team. In a junior middle school, there are three grades, from junior first grade to junior third grade. Similarly, in a high school, there are three grades, from senior first grade to senior third grade. All teachers teaching the same grade form a grade team. A Grade Head, sometimes with the support of one or two Vice Grade Heads, is responsible to coordinate the work of teachers in the team. The grade team is divided, by subjects, to lesson preparation teams, which comprises teachers teaching the same subject for the same grade. Every week, members of a lesson preparation team gather together to discuss instructional issues. They may set pace of progress, share teaching experience, and discuss exam results.

The grouping by sub-units is only one way to categorize people in the school. Another dividing line is whether one is an administrator (xingzheng, 行政) or not. The Principal, Vice Principals, Directors, and Vice Directors have the formal title of administrator. Administrators often also teach classes, though their teaching workload is usually lighter. Besides teacher salaries, they also enjoy special subsidy from the local government. By contrast, Subject Heads, Lesson Preparation Team Heads, and Class Heads do not have the formal title of administrator, though they perform various management functions.

As for Grade Heads, the situations differed among the three schools under study. In HYM, Grade Heads did not have the title of administrator. In QSM, Grade Heads were not classified as administrator either; but they enjoyed special subsidy given by

the school. In YFM, a reform of Grade Responsibility System (年级负责制) was implemented at the beginning of 2010-2011 academic year. As the name of the reform suggested, the school expected Grade Heads to take the overall responsibility of teaching and moral education for all students in the grades. The grade became a central operational unit with its own budget. It also gained personnel authorities. A three-person Grade Committee, including the Grade Head and two Vice Grade Heads, picked teachers for the grade from all teachers in the school. With the increased responsibility, the post of Grade Head was assigned to administrators such as Vice Directors. Meanwhile, Vice Grade Heads were still not classified as administrators in YFM.

Two other institutions in the school deserve some mentioning. One is Teacher-Staff Representative Meeting. As stipulated by official rules, representatives have the right to review important school matters and pass the major decisions. The other is Party divisions in schools. Some teachers and administrators are members of Communist Party of China (CPC). A school with many CPC members sets up a Party Committee, which leads Party Chapters in the grade teams. This was the case in QSM. By contrast, a school with a small number of CPC members sets up a Party Chapter. This was what happened in YFM. As for HYM, since there were few CPC members in the school, no Party Chapter was set up. The leaders of Party divisions are called Secretaries. In the public secondary schools in City G, the Principals also acted as Party Secretaries if there were Party Chapters in the schools.

Choosing research participants

Sampling of research participants also followed the logic of "purposive sampling" (Patton, 1990). The purpose of the study was to examine micropolitical interactions among the principal, middle managers, and teachers. Therefore, the study focused on the three parties as main participants. Middle managers not only included those with the formal title of administrator but also those "Heads" in Figure 4.2, namely, Class Heads, Grade Heads, Subject Heads, and Lesson Preparation Team Heads. Though

the "Heads" did not have the formal title of administrator, they performed important management functions and played critical roles in top-down and bottom-up communications. As such, they might initiate or participate in micropolitical plays in the school.

When choosing research participants within the sample schools, the study took care to include middle managers and teachers of various backgrounds. The effort made here was to learn about various perspectives on what was going in the school with regard to micropolitics. This way, the study could weave a clearer picture of school micropolitics. Specifically, the study considered factors such as gender, subject, position, Party membership, and seniority (both in terms of years of teaching experience and years of working in the sample school). Also, it took into account whether a participant was a teacher-staff representative or not. People differing on the factors might define and deal with school micropolitics in different ways. For example, a young teacher might worry about house installment and thus place more importance on material interests than an established senior teacher. Also, a teacher representative might provide useful stories about how representatives participate in school decision making. Table 4.1 shows the distribution of research participants by position in the three schools under study. With those included in Table 4.1, formal interviews were conducted. On average, one and a half hours were spent with every interviewee. Tables in Appendix 3 show the distribution of the participants along other dimensions such as gender, seniority, subject, and Party membership.

Table 4.1 *Research Participants, by Position*

Position	HYM	YFM	QSM	Total
Principal[a]	2	1	1	4
Vice Principal (Academic Affairs) [a]			1	1
Vice Principal (Moral Education) [a]			1	1
Vice-Principal (Junior Middle School section) [a]			1	1

Role				
Director of Moral Education [a]			1	1
Secretary of China Communist Youth League Committee [a][b]	1			1
Head of Teacher-Staff Representative Meeting [a]		1		1
Grade Head [c]	2	2	2	6
Vice Grade Head		2	1	3
Subject Head			2	2
Subject Head & Lesson Preparation Team Head		2	1	3
Lesson Preparation Team Head		1	1	2
Lesson Preparation Team Head & Class Head			1	1
Class Head	2	2	3	7
Common Teacher	4	4	1	9
Administrative Clerk		2		1
Teaching Support Staff		1		1
Total	11	18	17	46

Note:

a) This role had the formal title of administrator.

b) The divisions of China Communist Youth League (CCYL) in the schools selected and prepared students and some teachers to become future members of Communist Party of China. Student members of CCYL divisions often helped maintain discipline in the schools.

c) The two Grade Heads in YFM had the formal title of administrator, while the Grade Heads in HYM and QSM were not administrators.

The following table shows the brief backgrounds of the principals interviewed.

Table 4.2 *Backgrounds of School Principals in the Study*

School	Name	Gender	Age	CPC Secretary	Brief Career Experience
QSM	Tang	M	50-55	Y	2000-2011, Principal of QSM;

					before that, worked as a teacher and middle manager in QSM.
YFM	Song	M	55-60	Y	2003-present, Principal of YFM; before that, used to work as the principal of a provincial-level key school and the Vice Head of Municipal Education Bureau in another city.
HYM[a]	Ma	M	40-45	N[b]	2008-present, Principal of HYM; before that, worked in the Vocational Middle School in the same town as a teacher, middle manager, and then a principal.
	Ni	M	40-45	N[b]	2002-2007, Principal of HYM; before that, worked in HYM as a teacher and a middle manager.

Note:

a) During 2007-2008, the Vice Head of Township Education Bureau, Mr. Lan, acted as the principal of HYM. This transitional arrangement only left momentary impressions on teachers in HYM. Therefore, Mr. Lan was not interviewed.

b) No CPC Chapter was set up in HYM since there were few Party members in the school.

4.3.3.3 Other sampling considerations

Besides sampling of schools and participants within the schools, I also considered other factors in sampling. To begin with, I took care to observe people in different places and temporal periods. The reason was that place and time constituted the immediate context of micropolitical interactions, and people might behave differently and show different perspectives when they interacted in different places and temporal periods (Ball, 1993). I made effort to observe people in different places

such as office, conference room, cafeteria, and passing hall. I also tried to observe them during different periods of time such as work time, lunch break, and overwork time in the evening or at weekend, when fewer people were around in the school. A further sampling consideration was that people might express different perspectives when they were alone and when they were in a group setting (Becker, Geer, Hughes, & Strauss, 1976). Therefore, in order to gain a fuller picture of peoples' perspectives on power relations, I interviewed them alone as well as observed their group interactions.

4.3.4 Access

For YFM, I was introduced to the principal by a friend who met the principal once before when she did a project. The principal welcomed the study after I introduced my general purpose. For HYM, I called and met its local educational authority, who introduced me to the school principal. For QSM, a formal application was made to the Municipal Education Bureau. The reason was that QSM was a municipal school and was under the direct supervision of Municipal Education Bureau. In the application, I phrased my research purpose in a general way, saying that I was to examine the school management in the school. The application was approved and the school principal welcomed the study.

I carefully negotiated access with the principals, who were usually the "gatekeepers". First, it was about trust. I asked the Faculty to issue a certificate which proved that I was a doctoral student enrolled in a prestigious university in Hong Kong. This gave the principals a general idea about who I was, where I was from, and what I came for. Also, I made it clear to the principals that I did not represent any partisan interests such as local educational authority, and they did not need to worry about that. I also promised confidentiality to ease their concern.

Second, I tried to build up a win-win relationship with the principals. I prepared an invitation letter printed with official letterhead. In the letter, I agreed to provide

services such as free courses, communicating with students, or consultancy as an exchange for the school joining my study. This proved helpful. At the minimum, it showed that I appreciated their support and was willing to give back rather than just concerned about my own purpose. During my fieldwork, Principal Tang of QSM asked me for some management consultancy. Also, Principal Ma of HYM hoped that I could help his staff learn about how Hong Kong schools dealt with problems of student discipline. Besides getting access, the win-win mindset also reminded me to understand the concerns and priorities of the principals. This provided useful data about the perspectives of the principals (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2007).

But even when I got the support of the principal, I had no guarantee that the teachers would join the study. My general strategy was to ask the principal to introduce me to some teachers as the first group of participants. Then, after interviewing this first group and building some trust, I asked them to introduce me to other teachers who, according to theoretical sampling, were likely to provide useful data. I believed this was better than asking the principal to introduce me to every teacher because that way teachers might identify me as "someone close to the principal" and therefore have concern when they talked to me. This potential concern deserved attention, particularly given that my purpose was to understand the micropolitical interactions among the principal, middle managers, and teachers.

I also made conscious effort to build trust and a win-win relationship with the teachers, as I did with the principals. For example, I prefaced the interviews with small talks, in which I introduced myself and the general purpose of the study and promised confidentiality. Whenever the interviewees showed some doubt on or interest in my identity as a doctoral student, I let them see the proof endorsed by the Faculty. Also, I tried to find ways to help the interviewees personally. A useful way was to help their children. For example, one interviewee asked me to give some advices on English learning to his daughter, a sophomore then. The other interviewee appreciated it much when I said that I could talk with her daughter about the pros and

cons of a career in academics. The point was that people felt my sincerity to know them personally, my care about their life, and my willingness to help. This helped build a personal relationship important to win the support of the interviewees.

I also paid attention to my clothing and behaviors and tried to fit into the work context in an unobtrusive way. During the fieldwork, the situation was that the teachers were very busy; most teachers, after my first appearance, ignored my presence. Some of them even apologized for having ignoring me and not being a good host. In fact, I thought their ignoring me was good, because that reduced my intervention into the natural flow of their daily life in the schools and allowed me to see what things looked like in the school organization.

4.3.5 Data collection

4.3.5.1 Interview

Three strategies were used for data collection. The first was semi-structured, in-depth interview. Using the framework as an initial guide, I devised the interview schedules (see Appendix 1). The schedules were not intended to be applied to every interview in a uniform way. Rather, it was not unusual that during the interviews, I needed to adjust the sequence of the questions and the way I phrased them. Because my purpose was to encourage the interviewees to open their heart to share their experiences and perspectives, I needed to follow the emerging threads mentioned by the interviewees rather than stick rigidly to the schedule. As Dexter (1970) suggests, a researcher should adapt her schedule to every interview and essentially get the same class of information which she can use to compare. I paid attention to using "local concepts" during interviews and following the line of thinking of interviewees. I paid particular attention to differences in interests because they were closely related to school micropolitics.

There were some considerations in interviews. To begin with, I was careful about the

sequences of my questions. I first asked general questions such as background information. This usually helped build some trust and rapport and gave a good start to the interviews. Then I moved to more sensitive questions such as power and micropolitics.

Who should I talk with first? My general strategy was to first talk with the principals for a short time to introduce my general purpose, to learn about the operational context of the school, and to build some trust. As Dexter (1970) comments, you do not want to spend much time with those high-level important figures at the beginning. Otherwise they may feel that you know little about what they are doing. That will make them lose interest in talking to you. Therefore, usually I started from the teachers and learned from them about the school organization, the routines, the general requirements, and the major things that were going on recently. Then I moved up to middle managers, and finally to the principal again to ask more specific and challenging questions.

Because my research dealt with school micropolitics, a sensitive topic, I made some special efforts to ease the burden on interviewees. I did the interviews in separate rooms or when no other people were around. I introduced my research purpose in a general way, like "I come to learn about the management in your school". During the interviews, I replaced sensitive words such as micropolitics and power with other words that pointed to the same class of phenomena but were not that sensitive in a Chinese culture. The important thing was that they would not see me as a trouble maker. Usually, when you tell people your purpose in a general way, they will interpret it in their own terms, and most people are settled with that (Wildavsky, 1993).

As for the recording of the data, in order to accurately put down the interviews to facilitate later analysis, I asked for the agreement of the interviewees for me to tape the interviews before I started. Generally, people agreed with my taping the

interviews. There was only one case of rejection; it was when I interviewed Teacher Shen in YFM for the first time. I respected his choice. Instead of taping the interview, I quickly jotted down notes – key words, turning phrases, and important nonverbal signals such as changing tone and facial expressions – during the interview and wrote up the interview report the very night (Dexter, 1970). He allowed me to tape our second interview, when we had built up a higher level of trust with each other.

4.3.5.2 Observation

Observation provided another source of data. I observed social interactions in formal settings such as conferences and informal occasions such as cafeteria and hallway. Social interactions in the formal and informal settings were guided by, and thus indicated, what people thought of themselves, others in the school, and the relations among people. By carefully observing and noting down the interactions, I accumulated valuable information that helped me understand the "inner world" of the people. In particular, observation helped me detect how they perceived and negotiated micropolitics in their daily work life.

Besides the interactions, I also observed the physical settings of the school, such as the office decoration and the location of different offices. The reason to pay attention to these things was that they embodied the perceptions of the people in the school organization. They reflected what these people saw as important or wanted others to think that they believed as important. In the terms of Becker (1998), these things were the products of the collective actions of the people in the school organization. Therefore, they might contain useful clues to examine the micropolitics among the people.

To facilitate my observation in the field, I devised the attached observation guide for conferences, daily talks, and teachers' offices (see Appendix 2). In YFM and QSM, I managed to observe the major meetings such as Executive Meetings joined by

administrators and Teacher-Staff Representative Meetings. Some meetings were taped. In Executive Meetings, it seemed intrusive to use a tape recorder. Therefore, I put down notes with a pen and refined the notes soon afterwards. I wrote up notes of the observations of the daily interactions at spot. As for office decoration, school buildings, bulletin boards, signs, and symbols, I took photos when the situation allowed; I described them in my field notes when I figured that taking a photo would cause suspicion.

4.3.5.3 Documents

Documents and artifacts were still another source of data. They included policy documents, particularly those related to the reforms, evaluation forms and results, school development plan, and rules and regulations in the school. Besides, school website and online work platform were not to be neglected in this information age. These documents and artifacts reflected how people in the school interpreted and responded to challenges in their work context. They were the residue products of people acting together in some social relations (Becker, 1998), relations that I sought to understand. By examining these residue products, I had a better sense of power relations among people in the schools.

During the fieldwork, I collected abundant documentary materials from the websites of the schools under study. Also, in YFM, I managed to get copies of allocation plans for teachers' merit pay. The plans were effective before or were being discussed when I was doing the fieldwork in the school. The allocation plans of HYM were available on its website. As for QSM, the principal was concerned about the sensitivity of the allocation plans and was reluctant to share the documents. However, from interviews, I got a general idea about the allocation plans in QSM.

4.3.6 Data analysis

I organized the data collected from the above three sources to facilitate later coding

and analysis. Interview tapes were transcribed; the transcriptions were given serial numbers in the form of "school—interviewee—date". Similar serial numbers were assigned to observation notes in the form of "school—setting—date". For example, a note recording the observation of a conference was serialized as "YFM —conference — 20110114". Likewise, photos were given serial numbers in the form of "school—object—date when I took the photo", while documents were assigned codes in the form of "school—title—date when the document was issued".

Analysis began immediately after data collection in the field and continued through the whole process thereafter. Immediately after some interview or observation, I talked to my recorder my impressions and thoughts. I tried to capture the important concepts frequently used by the people in the school and map out the relationship among the concepts. Further, I kept reflecting on what the interview or observation taught me about how the organization operated and the power relations within the organization. Admittedly, the impressions and thoughts at spot were crude. Most times, they were not in good shape, segmented, or uncertain. But the point is that right after the interview or observation, your mind is excited and your impressions are fresh. Therefore it is important that you put down these impressions immediately so that you can later on retrieve and refine them, which will facilitate further analysis.[1]

During the later phrase of data analysis, the data was coded carefully. Again, I paid particular attention to the important concepts and categories and tried to distill the emerging relationships among them (Miles & Huberman, 1994). I took the concepts and categories as important when I saw them frequently in the data. They were

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[1] I learned these ideas from Mawhinney (2010) in our correspondences. Part of her email is quoted to show the point: "Immediately (and I mean within an hour) after EACH interview or observation you MUST debrief in the following way: 1. In your notebook write down key words, ideas, impressions; 2. FORCE yourself to map out the relationships between concepts and processes that your interview uncovered; 3. Then use your digital recorder to record your explanation of the mapping- You can listen to yourself at a later point."

referred to by many people or emerged as a prominent theme in someone's talk. I was also alert to the concepts and categories that the participants attached strong emotions to. The emotions indicated that the things mentioned were significant to the participants and deserved my attention if I was to understand their perspectives. In addition, terms and phrases that had a strong local flavor caught my attention, for they often indicated perspectives indigenous to the schools under study.

The process of data analysis was an interactive one. It was a dialogue between theory and data, between what I thought the case might be and what I heard as I listened to data (Maxwell, 2005). Linking these two was observable implication (King, Keohane, & Verba, 1994). When I had some idea about what the case might be, I asked: if that is the case, what else should also be true and what I should expect to see in the data? Also, as I examined the data, I asked: of what theory can the data be the observable implications of? This way, I engaged myself in a productive dialogue between theory and data, and continuously refined my understanding of school micropolitics in the context of reforms for educational decentralization and accountability.

4.3.7 Other issues

4.3.7.1 The observer and the observed

Some other issues also deserve discussion. The first is the relation between the observer and the observed. Some people have concern that the presence of the researcher may change the way participants behave. Following Becker (1977) and based on my fieldwork experience, I believe that this was not a serious issue in this study. The reason was that participants not only interacted with the researcher. They also had been interacting with other people in their daily work for a much longer time and on a more institutionalized basis. They needed to respond to the expectations and demands of these other people, as they had been doing before the researcher arrived. Usually, these other people could impact the participants' wellbeing in the organization to a much greater extent than the researcher. Therefore,

as long as the researcher did not make himself too important in the eyes of participants, the participants would not significantly change the way they behaved at the presence of the researcher.

During the study, I made several efforts to minimize my intervention into the natural flow of the life in the schools. One way was that I made it clear to people that I was not someone coming from "the top" to examine their work and I did not represent any partisan interests. The other way was that I limited my participation in the social interactions to the level of real necessity. For example, when I observed some group discussion, people might ask me what I thought of the issue in question. In this case, I tried to avoid giving my own opinion but take it as an opportunity to stimulate further discussions among the participants (Wildavsky, 1993). I might pause, think, and say: well, this is a challenging issue, particularly in this reform context. What do you think, Mr. X? Besides, I made efforts to check to what extent my presence had impacted the way people behaved. For instance, after observing the conferences, I checked with participants how my being there had impacted what they talked about and how they talked about it in the conferences. Generally, participants reported that my presence did not alter their behaviors.

The other issue in the researcher-participant relationship is rapport. The researcher needs to keep a careful balance between building rapport with participants and maintain an objective position. As mentioned before, I tried in several ways to build rapport with the participants such as getting to know each other personally and offering some help when it did not interfere with the purpose of the study. On the other hand, I kept reminding myself not to fall into the pitfall of overrapport with participants (Wildavsky, 1993). In that pitfall, I would lose my detached perspectives to examine the interactions and relations among the participants. During the study, I felt that this risk of overrapport might be particularly acute for educational researchers. Educational researchers have gone through school organizations as students before and thus may retain many stereotyped images about what schools and

schooling are like. If they are not careful, they can easily let their loaded images get in the way of their research on the school organization.

4.3.7.2 Validity and reliability

I made efforts to ensure the validity of the data. Consistency and coherency of self-reports was checked; doubts were clarified through follow up interviews. I insisted the participants provide concrete details and examples to support their opinions and impressions (Becker, 1977). Besides, I verified across different people and different types of data including interview, observation, and documents. Special attention was paid to the possible incentives for the participants to provide false or partial information. For example, if I sensed that the principal was concerned about only showing me the bright side of the school, I would seek opportunities to ask about the challenging issues he or she faced and pursue for specific examples.

The other issue is reliability. Essentially, other researchers may not be able to reproduce what I found in the field and come up with the same conclusions about school micropolitics in the context of reforms for educational decentralization and accountability. Various factors may play their part here. Other researchers may approach the phenomenon from different perspectives; they may come across different events to observe; their relations with the participants may also be different, which further impacts to what extent the participants trust them and tell them the full story. Also, things change as time goes. Therefore, even though another researcher goes to the same schools I visited, he or she may see different micropolitical interactions among the people.

4.3.7.3 Ethical issues

I observed the general guidelines of ethical considerations in the study. For example, I respected the choices of people and only invited them to join the study when they were willing to. Due efforts were made to ensure confidentiality and protect the

participants. I used alias for the participants, schools, and places involved in the study in this final report. Also, I made sure that the interviews were not overheard. When necessary, I conducted interviews in places outside the schools so that participants would be more comfortable in talking about micropolitics in the schools. For example, Teacher Shen in YFM expressed worries in the first interview. He was scolded by supervisors not long ago for the way he guided students to do research projects. Therefore, I moved our second interview to a hostel outside the school.

In addition, I tried to make the researcher-participant relationship a mutually rewarding one. As many veterans point out, an important way the participants can benefit from a study is that they can enjoy the total attention of the researcher (Wildavsky, 1993). During the interviews in this study, the participants had an opportunity to share their lives without the fear of being judged. They talked about their worries, concerns, challenges, and other experiences to a knowledgeable researcher who strived to appreciate the meanings they attached to those experiences. This seemed to be a compliment and enjoyment for many participants, particularly for those who usually did not receive this level of attention in their daily lives. Other ways of making the research relationship a win-win one included, for example, providing consultancy suggestions to the principal as long as this would not hurt other participants, helping the teachers' children on academic matters, and sharing information about education in Hong Kong.

One thing in the research deserves special ethical considerations. It was about how I introduced my research purpose to the people in the schools. During the study, I did not tell people that I came to study school micropolitics. Rather, I framed my research purpose in some general terms such as "I am interested in school management", "I want to study how people work in the school", or "I come to study the educational reforms". This way, participants interpreted my purpose in their own terms and got a general sense of what I did. Usually they were satisfied with that (Dexter, 1970; Wildavsky, 1993).

The reason why I avoided terms such as power and micropolitics when I introduced my research purpose was that these terms were so sensitive that they could make participants perceive me in a wrong way that hurt the research. As Clegg et al. (2006) point out, in the daily talk, power and micropolitics are often associated with disruptive, dark, and negative stuff. This "bad" sense of power and micropolitics was *not* what I used in this study. My study did not carry a value judgment on whether power and micropolitics were good or bad but just tried to examine what the case was in the schools under study in terms of micropolitical interactions. If I had simply told people that I came to study school micropolitics, it would have been misleading. People in schools were far from academic world and would not understand my purpose in the neutral sense defined before (Blasé, 1991). Rather, they would leverage their daily sense of power and micropolitics, often a negative one, and perceive me as someone looking for "bad stuff" in their organizations. In that case, I would have little opportunity to gain their trust, let alone expect them to share with me their genuine perspectives and experiences in the schools. This concern was important, particularly given that I conducted my study in a Chinese culture, which valued harmony and tended to avoid public conflicts.

Although I did not use the exact phrase "school micropolitics" when I introduced my research purpose, I argue that there was no ethical issue there. On one hand, when I invited participants to join the study, I let them have a fairly good idea of myself and my study. I made it clear that I was a doctoral student studying in a Hong Kong university and came to the school to collect data for my doctoral dissertation. I also promised that I would not carry words and would ensure anonymity in my writing. All these were true. Knowing that, people chose whether to join the study and I respected their choices. Actually, one teacher in YFM rejected to be interviewed even after I made the efforts. I respected his decisions and turned to other people. On the other hand, when I replaced sensitive words such as power and micropolitics in interviews, I did not do that to hurt the participants but to avoid any

misunderstanding, as explained above. In fact, I made special efforts to protect the participants such as conducting the interviews in separate rooms or somewhere outside the school if necessary.

Chapter 5: Micropolitics in Public Secondary Schools in City G: Status, Money, and Curriculum and Pedagogy

The purpose of this chapter is to show, in the schools under study, what people pursued in micropolitics and how they negotiated the micropolitics.

As mentioned before, Ball (1987) highlights three kinds of interests that people pursue in school micropolitics. The first is vested interest, which is about material concerns. The second is ideological interest, which has to do with what you believe and value. The third is self-interest, which touches upon the sense of who you are. Though Ball's classification is based on his case studies in British schools, his classification can sensitize the analysis of my data. Three kinds of interests have emerged as important to people in the sample schools in City G in mainland China. Informed by Ball's (1987) classification, the three kinds of interests are based on the data collected in this study. They are status, money, and curriculum and pedagogy. The chapter deals with the three kinds of interests by turns, discussing the significance of each and examining the strategies of people in each area.

5.1 Micropolitics of status

5.1.1 The concept of status

In this study, status means one's relative standing symbolically recognized within the formal and informal organization of a school. The symbolic recognition can be granted by one's supervisors (*lingdao*, 领导) and co-workers. It is primarily related to one's role performance as a teacher or middle manager in the school.

This definition is elaborated below, with illustrative quotations and examples in the data.

5.1.1.1 Who were supervisors (*lingdao*)?

Participants in the schools under study often used the term "*lingdao*" (领导). As will be shown later, it was the recognition from "*lingdao*" that they cared the most about. Therefore, it is useful to clarify who the supervisors (*lingdao*) were in the Chinese schools under study.

The data suggested that the term "*lingdao*" mainly referred to those formally classified as administrators (*xingzheng*, 行政) in the school, particularly the principal, the top administrator in the school. Though some roles such as Class Head and Subject Head entailed management duties, they were not classified and, more importantly, not perceived by people in the school, as administrative posts. When teachers talked about the various posts and when people holding the posts talked about themselves, they were clear about the difference between administrators and non-administrators. A role that deserved attention was Grade Head. As mentioned before, in HYM and QSM, Grade Heads were not administrators and were thus usually not perceived as "*lingdao*" by teachers. In YFM, with the recent reform of "Grade Responsibility System", the post of Grade Head was taken by one with the rank of administrator.

In fact, an examination of the post of Grade Head showed clearly that the term "*lingdao*" referred to those with formal ranks of administrator; a common teacher performing management duties was not a supervisor (*lingdao*).

Grade Heads were expected to coordinate the teaching of all teachers teaching the same grade. Therefore, in many ways, Grade Heads managed teachers. For example, when teachers printed some exam papers, they needed to get the approval of the Grade Head. Also, if a teacher had to leave the school during a workday, she needed to get the assent of the Grade Head. Though the approvals might be quite informal, say just a nodding yes, they showed the management function of Grade Heads.

However, in HYM and QSM, also in YFM before its recent organizational reform, Grade Heads were not perceived as supervisors (*lingdao*). This was clearly shown in the experience of Mr. Shen in YFM. As a Grade Head, Mr. Shen saw some students sleeping during a class. He went into the classroom and waked up the students. While he thought what he did was helpful for the teacher, his behavior annoyed the teacher, who said: "Even the supervisors would not enter my classroom to wake up the students, how dare you?" The teacher's words suggested that the role of Grade Head, when taken by a common teacher, was not perceived as an administrator by other teachers. Teachers taking the role of Grade Head also knew this well. An example is Grade Head Mao in HYM. Soon after I started to interview him, he clarified his role: "I am not an administrator (*xingzheng*). (我不是行政。)"

Understandably, teachers identified more with the non-administrators; they felt more comfortable in sharing their concerns with non-administrators than with non-administrators. Ms. Deng's experience showed this well and further demonstrated that performing management duties itself did not make one a "*lingdao*".

Ms. Deng used to be a Lesson Preparation Team Head in YFM. As mentioned before, though this role carried some management duties such as coordinating the lesson preparation and teaching progress of teachers, the role was not perceived as an administrative role by teachers. At that time, Ms. Deng got along well with other teachers and enjoyed the casual relationship. She often brought some special food to share with other teachers; other teachers liked her sunny disposition and often joked with her. Later on, through public competition, she rose to the rank of administrator and took the role of Grade Head. She felt that her relationship with teachers was not as casual and close as before:

Some teachers and I were good friends. As I said, I wished that their kids would

call me Big Teacher Deng. But only a few of their kids call me that way [now].
Many changed how they called me. Sometimes, you see that they are chatting
happily. Once I enter the room, they stop. Sometimes, well, I feel bad [about
it]...My being there definitely stops them from continuing the chatting. However
hard you try to show that you want to fit into the group, they feel that you are
someone close to the principal. That is the case. So my relationship with the
teachers is not as close as before. This happens to everyone [who becomes an
administrator]. (其他的那些以前都还是很不错的，用我的话来说我希望他孩
子叫我大邓老师，但是真正叫的不多很多人都改口，是这样。有时候就觉得
例如他们明明在很开心地谈，我一进去他们就不谈了，然后有时候哎呀，就
不怎么开心...我在那里就肯定会影响他们会继续谈下去。因为哪怕你再表现
得想融入进去，他们都觉得你是校长身边的一个什么人物，是这样的。所以
应该就说肯定会跟老师之间关系淡一些，就是任何人都是这样的。) *(Grade*
Head Deng, YFM)

Among all administrators in the school, the principal seemed to be the most
important supervisor (*lingdao*). It's recognition from the principal that people cared
the most about. Frequently in interviews, participants talked about being careful not
to leave bad impressions on the principal. For example, as a way of management,
Grade Head Deng in YFM sometimes reminded teachers of how the principal might
evaluate their behaviors.

For example, once a teacher did not do "pre-class waiting"1. After he finished
the class, we went to talk to him. We would say: well, you did not do "pre-class
waiting"...It seems that the school takes this regulation seriously. It would be
not good if you were noticed next time. We tell you this, not because we hope that
the grade performs well, but because we hope that you keep your good image in
the eyes of the principal...(例如哪个老师没有候课 [作者注：扬帆中学要求教

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[1] "Pre-class waiting" was a requirement for teachers in YFM. It meant that teachers should arrive at classrooms at least three minutes before the lessons began and get ready for the lessons.

师在正式上课前三分钟左右就到教室，准备上课，称为"候课"]，他上完课，我们就凑过去，说不候课……好像这个 [学校] 特别关注嘛，下一次被看到了也不好，我们还是期望不是说年级怎么怎么样，期望你在校长心目中一直都保持做得那么好……). (Grade Head Deng, YFM)

Grade Head Deng's words suggested that people in the school generally cared much about how the principal appraised their role performance. A "good image in the eyes of the principal" was used as an incentive for teachers' satisfactory performance.

5.1.1.2 Recognition from supervisors mattered the most

Both supervisors and co-workers could show recognition for one's role performance as a teacher or middle manager in the school. However, as the data suggested, recognition from supervisors seemed to matter the most. In other words, supervisor-granted status seemed to be more important than status gained from other sources. Some examples below show the special importance of supervisor-granted status.

Compared with peer-granted status, supervisor-granted status seemed more significant. An example in point was Teacher Liu's story in YFM. Mr. Liu was a chemistry teacher in YFM. He had worked in YFM for more than 8 years. Story 1 below shows excerpts from his correspondence with Principal Song in YFM[1]. The emails allow us to have a deep understanding of what people pursued in schools. Therefore, they deserve long quotation and will be referred to many times in the following discussion.

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[1] During an interview, Principal Song mentioned that some teachers and students wrote emails to him. He saw it as an important part of his work to handle the emails. I asked him to show me some of the emails and promised confidentiality. He agreed. The emails cited in Stories 1 and 2 were shared by him together with other emails. He just copied the emails to my flash disk without reviewing the content of each (I stood beside him while he was copying the files.). The Execution Reports cited in Story 3 were also collected this way. The emphases in underline and bold in the emails cited were original.

Story 1*: Teacher Liu in YFM Complained to Principal Song About the Results of Evaluations on His Work Performance*[1]

Teacher Liu's email to Principal Song, July 6, 2010

Principal Song:

First, I am sorry to disturb you. This afternoon, I went to talk with you about the trivial matters, and I did that together with Teacher Han!...

In the eight years I worked in YFM, I have been performing my duties carefully, taking on responsibilities, and finishing tasks well. I nearly spent all my time in the school, including the time beyond normal work day...

Among all the Parallel Classes [whose student intake was among the average], my class achieved the best results in CEE. They also performed the best in terms of discipline. However, my bonus ranked almost the last! I took a modest attitude, thinking that things will get better when I deliver greater achievements later. I persisted, even when some similar-aged young teachers laughed at me, saying that I took the school as home and worked too hard.

As a principal, you trusted me. In 2010, you let me teach an Experimental Class for Science disciplines. I worked even harder. I thought that I must deliver excellent results. Only then would I feel that I deserve the trust. Unfortunately, I got some strange illness in my stomach. But I persisted. I took up even more responsibilities. As a Head of Lesson Preparation Team, I analyzed the test scores of the senior third grade students. I forgot to eat and worked overtime to get the analysis done. What's more, for countless times, I talked to students and

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[1] See Appendix 4 for the Chinese version of the emails.

helped them solve thought problems after evening classes and during weekends...

I was ill, deadly painful every day. I still worked well! My effort paid. My students liked me and gave me high scores in teacher evaluations. Their performance in CEE was excellent, which made me happy. My class was allocated a target of 23 students who would enter university through CEE. The target was the highest among all classes. I accepted that calmly. In the end, 32 students in my class entered university through CEE. My class performed the best among all classes in the senior third grade, no matter you consider the total number or the above-target number! I am a person who tried hard, delivered results, and had the passion!

But think about the result of performance evaluation! At first, I got no award. My I got worse results in the performance evaluation than those who performed worse than me, those who did not meet the target, and those who did not work seriously, let alone compared with those who exceeded the target. All of them got awards! Later on, the school gave me an award of "Township Excellent Teacher" as a makeup. **It was like a charity.** *I felt so disappointed. Some may say I am too young to get the awards, but I am not young any longer. XX and XX are both younger than me; their performance was recognized...*

I teach a minor science discipline in this township high school. How difficult it would be for me to rise to the rank of Secondary Senior Teacher! I am afraid it would be impossible for me to deliver such performance again in the future, even though I tire myself to death. So I cherish this opportunity when I've delivered excellent results. I do not dare to give up the awards. Really no other choice do I have. I really do not care about the bonus, but I really care about recognition and honor! I am really a person who wants to move forward!

I really hope that you can consider this issue, give me answers, and solve my doubts...

<u>*Principal Song's email to Liu, July 27, 2010*</u>

Respected Teacher Liu:

First, I apologize to you because this is a late reply. I believe I have already made you disappointed. During the term end, I was really too busy...

In my impression, you have always been a young teacher who talks little but works well. You love education, take work seriously, and are kind-hearted...When you taught the senior third grade, you worked persistently despite illness and delivered good performance in CEE. According to the evaluation of Grade Committee comprising three persons, it was decided that you got the honor of Municipal Excellent Teacher and Township Excellent Teacher. While the honor of Municipal Excellent Teacher was a default honor, it also showed our recognition. The school and the grade team recognized your work effort and your performance. However, during the process of award allocation, we had to try to let the awards cover as many people as possible. Therefore, one person could not get too many awards. This happened in the award allocation every year.

...

You felt unhappy due to the evaluation results. I understand you very well, because I was also once young and felt wronged. You care about it [the honor]. This shows that at least you are still aiming for the positive things and caring about how others see you. On the issue of honor, I would like to share with you my personal experiences and reflections.

...

Should we "give up" or "argue for" honor? The choice shows one's way in the art of life. Are those who choose to "give up" honor fools, as some people say? I don't think so. If we care too much about it, we will have much complaint, uneasiness, and pain. In my opinion, if you "argue for" honor, even if you have reasons, you will feel bad, and the result is necessarily that all are unhappy. No matter you get the honor or not, the final result is that you will make others feel bad. They will think that although this person has some reasons, she acts too aggressively. Alternatively, they may think that this person is just making trouble out of nothing.

If we take it easy and "give up" honor, we will be able to enjoy the bright sky full of stars. We will let others see our dignified personality. We will feel very relaxed and very happy. Are those who "give up" honor fools or those who "argue for" honor?

...

When it comes to work, some people willingly pick the tough challenges; when it comes to honor and interests, they willingly give up what they deserve, even though they are wronged. These people we all respect and admire very much. Around us, there are many such kind of people. We should take them as examples and learn from them. This way, all will be happy and relaxed. Our life will be enjoyable and harmonious!

...

Liu's email to Principal Song, December 1, 2010[1]

Respected Principal Song,

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1 No reply to this email was available in the data collected. Interviews and observations suggested that Teacher Liu's complaints seemed to fade away.

*In my heart, you have always been a wise leader, a busy and successful educational administrator, and a kind elder. However, maybe just because of that, there is an unavoidable big distance between you and me, which hinders your understanding about me. Therefore, you and I have some different ideas. I still want to have a heart-to-heart talk with you, an approachable man. **Just to have a heart-to-heart talk with you!***

I have nearly forgotten all the past and returned to my own happiness. However, things did not go as we wished. From the term beginning to now, many teachers gossiped in front of me. Today, the bonus for excellent teaching in the last term was distributed. More colleagues gossiped! This unsettled me.

*Some people saw me and said: "Teacher Liu, you are in charge of chemistry, which achieved good test results. Your class performed the best in the test. So you've got much term bonus?" I smiled but felt bad (thinking that my bonus was just among the average). Some said: "Mr. Liu, your test performance in the last term was just so so. There are less than 40 teachers in the grade. You ranked between the 10th and 20th." And many young Class Heads said: "See? You are a fool, an idiot! You worked so hard and performed so well. Your health became so bad. What's the result? You are stupid. I won't do that." Some said: "Why do you work so hard? Can't you be a little lazier? Some people do not like it!" And so on. A couple of young Class Heads...have been asking me to teach them the business of being a Class Head...I have been teaching and helping them carefully and patiently. But as soon as they talked about the result of evaluation on my work in the senior third grade, they said: "**So discouraging!**" Principal Song, talking about this now, I really do not mean to gain anything. I just need a little understanding. I really want to talk more about it! Can you read it carefully?*

I am not sure whether you still remember my previous email. Did you read it carefully? Since childhood, I have been a quiet and introversive person. Before I started to work in 2002, my parents kept saying this to me: "My kid, you are hard-working. We do not worry about that. But you are not good at social conversation and dealing with people. This really worries us! Do not be scared when you meet the elders and the supervisors. Do not just work hard silently like a fool. Be sure to talk with them. Be sure to learn how to conduct social conversations. Otherwise you appear impolite, which makes people think bad of you! Even though you have no bad thoughts and work hard, people will perceive you negatively when they see you ignoring others." When I came back home during last summer vacation, my parents said similar words again. They wondered why my character was still the same as before with no improvement!

In 2004, I was allocated to the senior first grade...I was the Class Head of the 5th class. Later on, when I taught the senior second and third grade, I was relocated to chemistry 2nd class. From the senior first to the senior third grade, my class always performed the best in terms of hygiene work and discipline. Every month we won the title of Excellent Civilized Class. Our test scores were also the best among all classes in the same tracking group. In the end, we delivered the best CEE results among all Parallel Classes...You can ask the teachers. The teachers who worked with me before all said that I did the best in carefully compiling and analyzing the test scores...

I arrived at the school at 7AM and did not leave for home until 10:40 nearly evening. I stayed in the school all time in between. I did not eat well or sleep well. How could my health remain good? It was from then my health became worse! When there was too much work in the Grade Team and the Grade Head could not handle it, I took care of it. In my daily work, I had been paying attention to those aspects in the grade team that needed improvements. When I noticed them, I offered sound advices and dealt with the matters carefully. About

this, you can check with the Grade Head. This way, in the second term when I taught the senior third grade, from Monday to Sunday, I never took a full break of a half day, let alone one day!

*Therefore, since I taught the senior first grade, students delivered top test performance in chemistry. In the end, **all my students in the chemistry 2nd class, a "weak class", entered university**...the performance of my students in chemistry 2nd class **was the closest to that of students in the first-tier classes. I contributed the most to the grade.** When it was time to allocate the CEE bonus, I ranked among the last! Teacher Deng Zhao also ranked among the last. He taught a parallel class and performed better than others teaching parallel classes. When the Grade Head distributed the bonus, he said: "According to the allocation plan and test results, the bonus of you two is not the lowest. But I need to favor some people, so I made you two the lowest." The moment I heard that, I felt very disappointed. But later on, after some consideration, I gave up. I just finished the hard work teaching the senior third grade [and felt tired]. Let it be! I did not bother to care about the evaluation!*

In 2007, I started another cycle and taught the senior first grade. I worked hard. My class performed among the best from senior first grade to senior third grade, both in terms of test scores and discipline.

*But why did the Head of Grade Team for senior second grade asked me to give up the title of Excellent Teacher? Why didn't I get any award when my senior-third-grade class **performed the best in CEE**, even after I begged him for it? The answer I got was: He could not do much about it. It was decided by the principals and he had no authority. He would try to get an additional quota for me.*

Was it really you who made all the decisions? *I think you are so busy, taking*

*care of the whole school. I guess it should not be you. Was it true that those who do not argue for the honor suffer the loss every time and **are played tricks upon every year**? Those who work harder and better are disliked. I teach each cohort for three years. How many three years are there in one's work time over one's whole life?*

...

Last, I really hope that you give me and some other teachers' an answer so that I can forget about this issue. In the future, I will continue to go by my nature, work hard, and finish every task carefully. But I hope that you can help me regain the motivation to work as hard as I did before.

As the emails suggested, Mr. Liu had been working very hard and delivering exceptional performance. This had been noticed and recognized by his colleagues. Some colleagues explicitly showed their recognition, saying that Mr. Liu did the best in analyzing the test scores. Some others such as the young Class Heads sought his advices about work. Still other colleagues thought that Mr. Liu worked "too hard" like a fool. Invariably, their evaluation of Mr. Liu's work was the same. They agreed that Mr. Liu worked hard and well. However, this recognition from peers, though important, did not satisfy Mr. Liu.

The reason Mr. Liu wrote to Principal Song was to gain the honor and awards he thought he deserved. Honor and awards were indicators of supervisors' recognition; they could be given by supervisors, but not peers or subordinates in the school. Although honor often entailed monetary benefits, it was the honor itself Mr. Liu cared, as he stated explicitly in the first email above.

I really do not care about the bonus, but I really care about recognition and honor! I am really a person who wants to move forward! (我真的不在乎那些奖

Although the honor and awards also impacted a teacher's promise of rising to higher ranks, it was the understanding and appreciation from supervisors, particularly the principal, that Mr. Liu pursued for. That's why he wrote a second long email to Principal Song, even when he knew that the email would not change the result of honor allocation. In his words: "Principal, talking about this now, I really do not mean to gain anything. I just need a little understanding. I really want to talk more about it! Can you read it carefully?" (Story 1: Teacher Liu's email to Principal Song in YFM, December 1, 2010)

Another example, Mr. Shen's story, also suggested that supervisor-granted status was more important, but showed that point in another way. It indicated that even if peers did not recognize one, one would still be motivated if supervisors recognized one.

Mr. Shen taught English for senior second grade in YFM when I interviewed him in the first term of 2010-2011 academic year. He worked in another school before, won many awards, and was promoted to be an official in Township Education Bureau. However, he disliked the job of being an official and made an application to the bureau for just being a common teacher in a school. This way, he joined YFM. Principal Song liked him and asked him to be Grade Head. As Mr. Shen told me in the interview, though he wanted to reject the offer, he accepted it at last for fear of annoying the principal.

As a Grade Head, he carried out school regulations strictly and thus offended some teachers. For example, when he saw students sleeping in classes, he would enter the classroom, wake up the students, and give them a lesson. This hurt the self-esteem of some teachers, who thought what Shen did was a major insult of their autonomy in the classroom. A teacher said: "Even the supervisors would not enter my classroom,

to wake up the students, how dare you?" Incidents such as this made Shen unpopular among teachers. While Shen tried hard to fulfill Principal Song's expectations on him, his way of solving problems annoyed many people, including Principal Song. At last, Mr. Shen resigned the duty of Grade Head at the end of the second term of 2009-2010 academic year.

What follows are excerpts from Mr. Shen's email to Principal Song on March 9, 2010, when Mr. Shen was still a Grade Head.

Story 2: Mr. Shen in YFM Explained His Motives to Principal Song
Mr. Shen's email to Principal Song in YFM, March 9, 2010[1]

Respected Principal Song:

Many words you said in the meeting yesterday were for me. I felt very sad. There is a big gap between my level of thinking and yours, so I often make mistakes and cause troubles for you. However, I still want to speak out my true thoughts regardless of [possible concerns].

First, the student [that I beat] was the one who you caught smoking in a toilet last term. He not only did not listen to your teaching but also wanted to attack you (I heard about this from Director Ning. Maybe you yourself have already forgotten about the matter.)

After he attacked the previous Class Head Teacher Pan, he not only did not regret about his errors at all but also threatened that the current Class Head Feng Yin would be his next goal to attack. I am just reporting this to you.

---

[1] See Appendix 4 for the Chinese version of the email.

Before this [I beating the student], I had been remembering your teaching and keeping myself calm. The Class Head was not willing to go to the police station to pick up the student. You asked me to go; I agreed. Also, I had been friendly to the student.

When I saw that you seemed very annoyed too and prepared to beat the student (actually I took it wrong. You did not mean that at all), I was quite surprised: If someone were to beat the student, it should be me, absolutely not the principal! Definitely I cannot let the principal be the one who make the mistake [of beating a student]!

So, I just bluffed the guy [by beating him]. For this kind of person, if you do not give him a lesson, I am afraid that he will cause even bigger troubles in the future!

...

My fault it was. But my intention was to punish the student for you. Definitely I did not mean to add troubles for you.

Second, when I heard teachers discussing hotly in the offices and even cursing you by name, I felt irritated. I just wanted to report to you the true situation. Definitely I did not intend to act as "the representative of teachers' interests" at all. Could I not report to you?

In short, others could misunderstand me. They could attack me. But I only hope that you can "know" me, know my real intention. That's all.

Regards,

Your subordinate: Jiajiang Shen
March, 9, 2010, Tuesday

Mr. Shen wrote the email to explain the motives behind his role performance and win the understanding and recognition from Principal Song. He was striving to maintain his status recognized the principal. Notice what Mr. Shen stressed in the end of the email.

> *In short, others could misunderstand me. They could attack me. But I **only** hope that **you** can 'know' me, know my real intention. That's all. (总之，别人可以误会我，可以攻击我，但我只希望您能" 了解" 我，了解我的真实意思。仅此而已。) (Story 2: Mr. Shen's email to Principal Song in YFM, March 9, 2010, my emphasis)*

These last sentences indicated that Mr. Shen cared the most about whether the principal understood his true motives behind what he did. That mattered much more than whether "others", presumably his co-workers, understood and recognized him. In other words, principal-granted status was more significant to Mr. Shen than peer-granted status.

Not only did supervisor-granted status matter more than peer-granted status, it also seemed to impact the latter. That is, when one was less recognized by supervisors, one was likely to be less recognized by peers. Grade Head Deng in YFM explained this in an interview.

Before showing the interview excerpts, some introduction of the background is in order. At the time of the interview, YFM had just implemented the "Grade Responsibility System". In the old system, the position of Grade Head was taken by a common teacher, who was in charge of horizontal and vertical coordination but did not have much substantial authority. In the new system, a three-person Grade Committee was set up for every grade. The Grade Committee included the Grade Head, who had the title of administrator in the school, and two vice Grade Heads,

who were common teachers. The three persons were responsible for all grade affairs such as academic performance, student discipline, and budget planning. The committee had the authority to choose teaches from the pool of all the teachers in the school. The higher the grade, the more priority it had in getting the teachers the Grade Committee chose. If a teacher was not chosen by any grade, she would be assigned to some non-teaching positions. Clearly, teachers cared about whether they were chosen and which grade they ended up teaching. In particular, having the opportunity to teach the senior third grade was regarded by teachers as recognition for their professional competence.

Now we can see how peers saw a teacher who, somehow, seemed not recognized by the supervisors. As the quotes below demonstrate, peer recognition depended greatly on supervisors' recognition.

Interviewer: For those teachers to whom you do not allocate important duties, why are they unhappy?

Deng: They feel even worse. Say it were me and I should teach the senior third grade this year according to the normal cycle. But you [the Grade Head] did not pick me. Since you did not pick me, I might stay in the senior second grade or senior first grade. Whatever the reason was why I was down, others may not know it. All people will think that you were degraded and it was because you were unqualified that you were degraded. Then, somehow, wherever you go, people do not tell you explicitly, but in private talks, people will think that you are unqualified since you were not picked.

(访谈者：那您不器重那些人他们又怎么不开心？

邓主任：他们更不开心。就好像同样是我，我今年按道理应该是上高三，但是你没有要，没有要我可能留在高二我可能留在高一，无论我是因为什么原因下来的，别的人并不一定理解，所有的人就觉得你就是降级了，你就是因为差而降级。然后无形中无论走到哪里，人家不会公开跟你说什么东西，但

是私下里人家内在的你是留下来是差的。) *(Interview with Grade Head Deng, YFM)*

In short, supervisors' recognition was of utmost importance to people in the Chinese schools under study. It seemed more important than, and significantly impacted, peer recognition.

5.1.1.3 Supervisors' recognition of one as a unique individual

What one expected of supervisors was that supervisors should understand, appreciate, and recognize one as an individual. This certainly had to do with recognizing the value or excellence of one's work performance. However, it seemed more than that. It's also about recognizing one as a unique individual. Therefore, it required the supervisor to not only know what one did in work but also understand one's motives and extraordinary efforts and thereby arrive at and show appreciation of one's talent and personality. In other words, people expected supervisors to recognize not only the result of their role performance but also the process and the commitment behind the performance. Therefore, not unusually, people explained the details in their life histories to supervisors so that supervisors would understand and appreciate their role performance. We saw this in Stories 1 and 2.

In Story 1, Mr. Liu went to great lengths to show that he was a hard-working teacher who took the school as home and spent nearly all his time working in the school. Even after the result of award allocation could not be changed, he wrote to Principal Song to have a "heart-to-heart talk" and to get "a little understanding". In that email, he recalled his parents' comments about his personality: hard-working but not good at dealing with personal relationships, particularly relationship with supervisors.

Since childhood, I have been a quiet and introversive person. Before I started to work in 2002, my parents kept saying this to me: "My kid, you are hard-working. We do not worry about that. But you are not good at social conversation and

dealing with people. This really worries us! Do not be scared when you meet the elders and the supervisors. Do not just work hard silently like a fool. Be sure to talk with them.... " When I came back home during last summer vacation, my parents said similar words again. They wondered why my character was still the same as before with no improvement! (我从小性格就是个很少言，极为内向的人。02 年参加工作前，爸妈就不停嘱咐我："孩子你能踏实拼命工作我不担心，可你不会说话，不善打交道，着实让人担心！不要见到长者或领导就吓的不知所以然，就知道低头做事，傻傻做事！要知道和他们说说话..."这话，去年暑假回家，爸妈说我性格咋还这样，没有改进！) (Story 1: Teacher Liu's email to Principal Song in YFM, December 1, 2010)*

Why did he go into detail to talk about his parents' comments on his personality in an email discussing the results of evaluation on his performance? It seemed that he wanted Principal Song to better understand his personality. Teacher Liu acknowledged that he was not good at dealing with relationships with supervisors. But he did not want this weakness to hurt his impression on Principal Song. Therefore, he made great effort to present his life, not just his work performance, to Principal Song.

Similarly, in Story 2, Mr. Shen explained why he beat the student and why he told Principal Song about teachers' gossip. He wanted Principal Song to understand his true motive, which was to help Principal Song. As he wrote in the end of the email: "But I only hope that you can 'know' me, know my real intention. That's all. (Story 2: Mr. Shen's email to Principal Song in YFM, March 9, 2010)"

5.1.1.4 Status was relative

Status was relative, meaning that one's status was relative to the status of those in comparable roles in the school organization. The important thing to note here is that it's this relative standing, not some absolute position, that people in schools cared about when they evaluated how much recognition they got from supervisors.

We saw this in Story 1. When Mr. Liu in YFM argued that he did not get the award he thought he deserved, he compared what he got and what other teachers in the school got. When he realized that his award was among the last while his performance was among the top, he complained.

> *But think about the result of performance evaluation! At first, I got no award. I got worse results in the performance evaluation than those who performed worse than me, those who did not meet the target, and those who did not work seriously, let alone compared with those who exceeded the target. All of them got awards!... Some may say I am too young to get the awards, but I am not young any longer. XX and XX are both younger than me; their performance was recognized...* (可是评价那! 一开始什么奖都没有! 我比差的，没完成的，不要说超标的，不认真工作的都差，他们都有! ...要说年轻，我不年轻了，XX 和 XX 都比我小，可他们出成绩也受肯定啊!) *(Story 1: Teacher Liu's email to Principal Song in YFM, July 6, 2010)*

Likewise, Grade Head Mao in HYM emphasized that it was not the absolute amount of bonus that teachers cared about.

> *Those who get more money may not be happy; those who get less may be happy.* (钱多的不一定开心，钱少的不一定不开心) *(Grade Head Mao, HYM)*

In a later interview, Mao indicated what he cared about: the bonus allocation should show that the principal "recognizes my work" (认可我的工作). Therefore, the relative standing of one's bonus should match the level of recognition from the principal one thought one deserved. Otherwise, one would feel unhappy even though the bonus was big in terms of absolute amount.

5.1.1.5 Supervisors' recognition could be formal or informal

When supervisors showed their recognition, they might do it formally or informally. Informal recognition often took the form of praise. This might be done in private occasions such as personal correspondence or in public occasions such as a school-wide meeting. Formal recognition might take the symbolic forms of awards and task allocation. For example, in the high schools, teachers felt recognized when they were given the opportunity to teach the senior third grade, which meant that they were to face the challenge of CEE. Given the importance of CEE performance for the fate of the students and the reputation of the school, allowing a teacher to teach the senior third grade showed supervisors' recognition of the teacher.

Formal recognition was important to teachers. On one hand, formal recognition usually constituted necessary requirements for teachers to apply for higher occupational grades. For example, when the school allocated awards for teacher performance during last academic year, there were various levels of awards such as Township-level Excellent Teacher, Municipal-level Excellent Teacher, and Provincial-level Excellent Teacher. A teacher's award level might impact the likelihood that he rose to next level of occupational grade. On the other hand, formal recognition was public and thus helped a teacher build up higher status among peers.

That being said, we need to note that supervisors' recognition in informal ways could also motivate people. We saw this in Story 1. To settle Mr. Liu's complaints, Principal Song praised Mr. Liu's hard work and exceptional performance. He explained that there was a limited number of awards and suggested Mr. Liu not care too much about the formal titles of "Excellent Teacher" (Story 1: Principal Song's email to Teacher Liu in YFM, July 27, 2010). This informal recognition from the principal seemed to have calmed Mr. Liu down, as the beginning of his second email indicated.

I have nearly forgotten all the past and returned to my own happiness. (我本来已近忘掉了前尘，忘掉了往事，我也回到了自己的快乐！) (Story 1: Teacher Liu's email to Principal Song in YFM, December 1, 2010)

Another example was Teacher Kang in HYM. During the interview, she emphasized that she did not care much about how the supervisors saw her.

It's not like I work for the supervisors...I teach the students. What I want is to deliver a useful person to the society. So, I do not care about the come and go of the principals. It does not impact me much. I do not care much about whether the principal have a good impression of me or a bad impression of me. It does not impact me much.(我又不是为领导做事情...我教得这个学生我只为让这个社会多一个有用的人，所以对于校长的来去我没有什么太多的，对于我不太受影响，我不管你这个校长对我印象好还是印象不好我没有多大影响...) (Teacher Kang, HYM)

But still, she felt pleased when Principal Lan praised her for arriving at school early every day. The informal recognition from the principal was for her role performance as a teacher. Teacher Kang's words below indicated that she remembered the recognition and felt motivated.

I like Principal Lan. At that time [during 2007-2008], I taught the junior third grade. He often praised me, for I came to the school early. I lived in the suburb area and drove here. He often praised me. As soon as he arrived at the school, he noticed that my car was already there. (兰校长的时候我觉得他挺好的，兰校长的时候我是教初三的他经常表扬我因为我来得很早，我住在郊区我开车过来，他经常表扬我他一来就看到我的车来。) (Teacher Kang, HYM)

5.1.2 The centrality of micropolitics of status

Status was the central micropolitical concern to people in the schools under study.

Various examples cited above showed this well. Besides, when asked what they saw as important for their happiness in schools, teachers frequently responded with phrases such as "I hope the principal recognizes me". They might use different words such as "approve", "recognize", "understand", "value" , and "praise" (肯定，认可，了解，器重，表扬), but the meaning behind was similar. Of course, the case should not be exaggerated. Saying that status was of central concern to people in the Chinese schools under study is not to say that the concern on status existed to the same intensive extent in every instance or for every person. Rather, it is meant to depict a general pattern about what people pursued in the schools under study.

5.1.2.1 The taboo of "making petty reports"

The importance of status in terms of role performance was shown in several ways. First, the data suggested that status was the top concern in dealing with the intricacies of work relations in the school. To protect other's status, if possible at all, was implicit expectation for everyone. Since status was mainly about the recognition one got from supervisors, it was critical that one maintained a good image in the eyes of supervisors, particularly the principal. Therefore, people were very sensitive not to let their errors, delinquencies, or any imperfections in their role performance be exposed to supervisors. This suggested a taboo in the Chinese school organizations: "making petty reports" (*daxiaobaogao*, 打小报告), which meant telling supervisors negative things about colleagues. This was seen as a much more severe hurt than criticism. Grade Head Deng in YFM knew this taboo clearly and avoided it carefully:

> *Grade Head Deng: Usually, I do not talk about teachers in front of the principal.*
> *Interviewer: What are your concerns?*
> *Grade Head Deng: First, I think everyone can make mistakes...you should give him an opportunity to correct the mistakes...sometimes you say something unintentionally about a teacher in front of the supervisors, the teacher may be discouraged. So I am very careful about this. I try not to say things about the*

teachers in front of the principal. Of course, if a teacher has some strength, I will talk a lot about it, definitely. For example, a teacher did a good job in allocating students to different classes...

（邓主任：老师的事情我一般都不会跟校长说。

访谈者：老师们的事情一般是出于什么样的考虑，一般的不会去跟校长说？

邓主任：第一个我觉得任何人都会有错的时候...你都要给他一个改正的机会...就因为你一句无心的话，在领导面前无心的话，可能就没有上进心。所以我会很注意这方面，尽量不在校长面前说这个老师怎么怎么样。当然好的优点我会吹绝对会吹，例如一个老师分班的时候做工作做得很到位...）

(Interview with Grade Head Deng, YFM)

Unlike Grade Head Deng, Mr. Shen in YFM sometimes broke the taboo and was perceived by other teachers as making petty reports, though he did not intend to. That happened when he was a Grade Head in YFM before. In an interview, he mentioned that some teachers did not show up for their classes. Later on, they went to Grade Head Shen to make some explanations. Some teachers said that their kids were ill; others might say that they had a headache. This troubled Grade Head Shen. On one hand, missing classes was a serious neglect of one's duty and he should criticize the teachers. On the other hand, the teachers offered some seemingly reasonable explanations. After all, it was not kind to punish a teacher who missed her class because her kid was ill. The problem was that nobody could verify whether the reasons offered were true or just excuses. Grade Head Shen sometimes turned to his superior for advices, but that brought him further troubles. Some teachers accused him of making petty reports.

I ask my superior: "how should I deal with such cases [of teachers missing classes]?" He would ask: "who was it?" I may tell him. The superior may go and talk to him [the teacher], who would explain to the superior and then blame me for making petty reports to the superior. You see, I am not clear about the boundary. Is it within my scope of duty or is it making petty reports? I am painful

about it. In my eyes, it is the right thing to do to pass information between supervisors and teachers so that we can work well together. However, some teachers see it as making petty reports. This is really a tough thing. In their eyes, the best scenario is like, when they miss classes, you should not tell the supervisors, then you are really acting like a good buddy. But I think it is a matter of principal. Say, your car is broken on the way and you ask me to pick you up. I will go, with no hesitation. There is no problem in acting like a buddy in those cases. But if you miss your class, it is not a matter of friendship. When this teacher misses her class, you ignore it, then what would you do if another teacher misses her class? (我会问领导，我说，如果碰到这样的情况，怎么办？他就会问，是谁？我可能会告诉他，领导可能会找他，找他谈话。他就跟领导解释，然后他就会骂我。说你去跟领导去打小报告。那我就搞不清这个界限，这是属于我职责范围内呢？还是属于打小报告？这个就痛苦。我认为，上通下达，上下一致，这是天经地义的。但是，有一部分老师，他就觉得是打小报告。这个是很难搞的一件事。这个，他认为，理想状态就是，我旷课，就不应该告诉领导，就是够哥们，够义气。但是我认为这是原则性的问题，你比如说，哎，我车子在路上坏了，你来接一下我。我毫不犹豫的就去了。这个讲一点义气没有问题，但是你旷课了，这个不是义气不义气的问题。因为如果一个旷课你也睁一眼闭一眼，下一个人旷课怎么办？) *(Teacher Shen, YFM, talking about what he experienced when he was a Grade Head before)*

Grade Head Shen also suggested that the taboo of making petty reports nearly covered everything that might impact teachers' personal interests.

Interviewer: When will teachers see you managing them as carrying out your duty rather than making petty reports?

Shen: As far as the current context is concerned, no teacher will think that you are carrying out normal duty when you really hurt her personal interests. You see, missing classes…Nothing more serious happened as I managed the teachers. Even in such cases, she expects you not to tell the supervisors. [If you tell the

supervisors,] she will see you as making petty reports. Are there more serious things than this [missing classes]? No.

(访谈者：那在哪些情况下，老师会觉得您管他们是职责范围内的事而不是在打小报告？

沈：就目前这个环境来说，没有老师会认为，你真正触动个人的利益，他会认为是正常的。你想一想，旷课这一件事...我认为在我的管理的过程当中，没有出现过比这更严重的事。那么这种情况，他都认为你不应该说，都认为你是打小报告，还有比这更严重的吗？就没有了。) (Teacher Shen, YFM, talking about what he experienced when he was a Grade Head before)

Sometimes a supervisor learned about something negative about subordinates from some informants. In these kinds of cases, the supervisor must be very careful to protect the informants, that is, not to give out the names of the informants. Otherwise the informants would gain the notorious reputation of making petty reports among colleagues; in the future, nobody would take the risk to tell the supervisor anything.

Many cases suggested that this protection of the middle informant was of top concern when people in the management posts (not necessarily those classified as administrators) dealt with problems in subordinates. One example was how Grade Head Pang in QSM dealt with the issue of a teacher assigning excessive homework to students. The teacher did that so that students would spend more time on her subject and, hopefully, achieve better results in exams. Given the importance of exam results for teacher evaluations, what the teacher did was understandable. However, student time was limited; spending too much time on one subject would harm student performance in other subjects and, ultimately, hurt the overall performance of the student. Therefore, once the Class Head noticed the issue, she reported to Grade Head Pang. Pang went to talk to the teacher, but she was very careful not to let the teacher know that she learned about the issue from the Class Head. Rather, she would tell the teacher that she happened to discover the issue herself from a student survey. It was students' complaints of excessive homework in

the subject, not someone making petty report, that brought her attention to the issue. This way, Grade Head Pang protected her informant, the Class Head, who would not worry that her reporting the issue would hurt herself. Clearly, as Pang explained in the interview, she was quite aware of the "subtle things" when she chose how to address the issue.

Similar to Grade Head Pang in QSM, Grade Head Deng in YFM also made careful efforts to protect her informants.

Say someone tells me about a matter [concerning a teacher]. I will purposefully let some days pass before I go and talk to the teacher. [When I talk to the teacher,] I will say that I myself found something. [As an administrator,] you must be careful about the sensitive thing here. Otherwise, you will have trouble in doing your work in the future. (有人跟我提到这个事情，我故意过几天再去找，就说我发现什么，这个是要注意那个意思的，否则的话你以后做工作就很难。) (Grade Head Deng, YFM)

5.1.2.2 Hurting other's status was severe hurt

As discussed above, status was of central concern to people in schools. Therefore, protecting other people's status was very important. The reverse side was also true: hurting other's status was a severe hurt. Actually, the participants in Chinese schools used the word "*dezuiren*" (literally, "get sin from someone") to describe the extent to which one could offend others when one hurt their status. For example, Grade Head Deng in YFM said that she was prepared to "*dezuiren*" since she would have to not allow some teachers to teach the senior third grade. That was seen as a hurt to the teachers' status.

If it were not because of the school reform [of Grade Responsibility System], I should have had good relationships with colleagues. I think the reform definitely

forces [the administrators to "dezuiren".] I have to "dezuiren" in one year. You have to change teachers. If we don't, as I just said, how can you [deliver good performance?] You must ensure good test performance [when you are in charge of] the senior third grade. So you must keep some backbone teachers who taught the senior third grade last year. They can help you. [But this means that you have to not allow some other teachers to teach the senior third grade.] So by that time you will have to "dezuiren". I will have to "dezuiren" for two consecutive years. There is something I often say to the principal. I say, I will resign by myself after two and half years [when I will have finished a cycle from the senior first grade to the senior third grade]. The school even does not have to bear the trouble of firing me. (不是学校机制的话，我跟同事关系应该是非常不错的，我觉得他这种机制肯定会迫使…我肯定一年之后还要得罪人。你必须得换人，你不换人，用我刚才的话来说，我们怎么能够…那你要保证成绩，高三你要出成绩，你必须得要留下他们上一届高三一点骨干来把关，所以你肯定到时候要得罪一批人。连续两年得罪人，我经常跟校长说的一句话，我说两年半以后自动请辞，不用直接辞我了。) (Grade Head Deng, YFM)

The above discussion shows that status was of top concern to the participants in the Chinese schools under study when they dealt with the intricacies of work relations.

5.1.2.3 Status as a central motivation mechanism

Another way to see the importance of status is that performance-based status differentiation was used as a central motivation mechanism. Leaders in the Chinese schools under study used differentiated status as an important incentive to motivate teachers to work harder. Various titles for teachers were created; the evaluation results were made public and easily seen. For example, in front of the main building of YFM, there was an exhibition area. The first poster listed the names of "*gongxun jiaoshi*" (功勋教师, teachers who have made great contributions) in YFM since 2003. Every year, two to four teachers were selected as "*gongxun jiaoshi*" to recognize

their exceptional performance in CEE. The exhibition was set up besides a main route on campus; passengers, be they students, teachers, or visitors, could see the name list at a glance. Imagine how much teachers were motivated to work harder so that their names would appear in the list next year!

Besides formal titles, supervisors also often made use of informal praises to show their recognition and motivate teachers. The first morning after I arrived at YFM, I went to the main building to talk with Grade Head Deng. Deng was chatting with Principal Song at the passing hall. When Song realized that I was looking for Deng, he ended the chatting with Deng, with a last sentence that he spoke out loudly: "Tell the teachers I praise them greatly!" Principal Ma and Principal Lan in HYM also knew the effect of praising teachers. As mentioned before, even Teacher Kang, who did not care much about how supervisors regarded her, felt glad when Principal Lan praised her for arriving at the school early every day. As for Principal Ma, one way he thought the school could increase the happiness and motivation of teachers was to praise them.

Principal Ma: For example, we take measures to motivate teachers and recognize their work. We often give awards and praises to those teachers who perform well. I think this is where we are doing the best.

Interviewer: What are the specific ways you give teachers awards and praises?

Principal Ma: We praise them at meetings, publish the praises on the school's website, and put posters on the poster area. We do it in various ways.

(马校长：比如说我们采取激励老师的办法，对于老师工作肯定，对老师取得的成绩我们都是经常给予奖励跟表扬，这我觉得我们现在做得最好的。

...

访谈者：具体是采取什么样的形式对老师的奖励表扬？

马校长：我们开会的时候会表扬，然后校园网会公布，张贴栏那边会张贴等等，各个方面会表现。）(Principal Ma, HYM)

A further way to see the importance of status was that status could be not only personal, it could also be related to a group. That is, just like a person, a group could have high or low status in terms of supervisors' recognition. This showed that status was a widely accepted value among the group. It was something desirable, or at least acceptable, to most people in the group. Therefore, just like personal status could be used by supervisors as a way to motivate teachers, group status could play the same role. One example was how Grade Head Deng motivated her team members when she was a Lesson Preparation Team Head. In order to improve the test performance of teachers in her team, she reminded the teachers how their work would impact the status of the team in the school.

It's not like we [the Lesson Preparation Team] want to deliver the best test performance. Actually, it's like our members all have the drive. If the team ranks twelfth or fifteenth, we all lose our face. So I pay attention to diffusing the message in the daily work. "What's wrong with us? Why cannot we improve our test performance? Shameful! We are trying hard, right?" You can imagine, even the worst teacher will feel pressured when she hears the words. (我们这个成绩倒没有想怎么怎么样，大家其实都有那种冲劲，其实你搞了一个十二名十五名肯定脸上无光，所以平时多渗透一点。我们怎么搞的，这个成绩上不去，丢死人，反正不断的在学习。你想他再差的老师他听到了，他也是不好意思的。) (Grade Head Deng, YFM)

Another similar example was how Principal Song in YFM tried to persuade teachers to vote for the merit pay allocation plan. When there was only one week before the term end, YFM conducted a meeting joined by all staff (see Table 5.1, school-wide meeting on January 14, 2011). In the meeting, teachers would vote for the merit pay allocation plan the school just designed after numerous discussions over the past month. Given that term end was approaching and a veto of the plan would mean more troubles, Principal Song made a long speech before teachers voted. As a teacher commented after the meeting, Song's speech had a clear intention to

persuade the teachers to vote for the plan. One strategy Song used for that purpose was to emphasize group status. During the speech, he said loudly: "We should have a sense of honor and self-respect. Other schools [in the township] have already passed their plans. They can, can't we?" (我们要有我们的荣誉感和自尊。其他学校通过了，我们通不过？)

The above discussion shows the central importance of status in terms of role performance to the participants in the Chinese schools under study. The central concern on status guided their micropolitical efforts. The following section discusses the strategies people used in micropolitics of status.

5.1.3 Strategies in micropolitics of status

5.1.3.1 Strategies of the administrator

For those at the management posts, a basic strategy was *to use symbolic status as a motivation mechanism*. In previous discussion, we have seen how YFM created the title of "*gongxun jiaoshi*" to recognize the teachers who contributed the most to the CEE results. Similarly, since 2005, Principal Tang in QSM set up a ladder of titles to encourage teachers for professional development. The titles included, from low to high, "Education New Star", "Education Famous Teacher", and "Education Expert" (教坛新星——教育名师——教育专家). Every year, evaluations were done and the titles were awarded to teachers.

Besides *formal titles*, supervisors in the Chinese schools under study also *made pervasive use of informal recognition as a motivation mechanism*. In the above discussion, we have seen how Principal Lan and Principal Ma in HYM paid particular attention to praising teachers. In fact, as Principal Ma saw it, praising teachers was an important way to improve the happiness and motivation of teachers. When asked his future plan to further motivate teachers, Principal Ma indicated that praising teachers would still be an important part of his strategy.

We reward teachers [for their good performance] in all areas of their teaching, all areas...we make it a big event when we reward them...We conduct a school-wide meeting joined by all the staff. (对老师的方方面面的教育教学方面，方方面面的都有奖励...我们都是大张旗鼓的去奖励...开一次集体的会议全校的。) (Principal Ma, HYM)

As for Principal Song in YFM, we have seen how he praised Grade Head Deng and the senior first grade in the daily talk ("Tell the teachers I praise them greatly!"). Besides, he also showed his informal evaluation on teacher performance by writing to all teachers via internal email system. Since the first term of 2010-2011 academic year, he had been sending Execution Reports to all teachers. The reports pointed to specific issues he noticed, were sent usually soon after the issue in question happened, and delivered clear messages of praise and criticism. Though the recognition a teacher got or lose in the report was informal, it still mattered much, since the report was sent from the principal, the top administrator in the school, to all teachers. The very first two Execution Reports Principal Song sent were shown below to give a flavor.

Story 3: Execution Reports Issued by Principal Song in YFM[1]

Execution Report

No. 1, 2010 Academic Year

Today is the first day in the new term. Teachers and students in the whole school look energetic. The lessons are conducted in an orderly way. But, there are still some cases that should not have happened:

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[1] See Appendix 4 for the Chinese version of the Execution Reports.

The first lesson in the morning, no teacher was there for the English lesson of Class 8 in the junior first grade. The person liable: Qiang Tian.

The fourth lesson in the morning, students Xiaohu Chen and Hua Deng in Class 9 in the senior first grade skipped the class and played in the basketball court. The person liable: Anna Di.

The junior first grade and senior first grade have problems in execution. They are criticized.

Principal: Shan Song

September 1, 2010

Execution Report

No. 2, 2010 Academic Year

After the bell rang to announce the end of the second lesson this morning, the music for between-lesson exercise was played. Five or six male students gathered to smoke in the passing hall besides the building for senior first grade. At that time, Director Song Qi and I were walking out of the new Music Building. The boys heard us and fled away. We could not catch them. Then Teacher Yike Ding and Director Hu Ning heard the noise and joined us to catch the boys. But the boys ran very fast and disappeared soon. Teacher Yike Ding guessed that the boys must have hidden themselves in toilets. Finally we caught two boys in a toilet.

The praise is hereby given to Teacher Yike Ding. The proactive action of Teacher Yike Ding shows well the execution of "Four Consistency"! If every teacher in our school can carry out the "Four Consistency", the overall execution capacity of the school will surely improve greatly. Bad behaviors will be less and less!

[The boy students] gathered to smoke at a corner of the school. I believe they did not do it for the first time. Yesterday, some students skipped classes and played in the basketball court. I believe they did not do it for the first time either. The new International Communication Center and Music Building were built up [in the school]. Our scope of management has been expanding. We must foresee the dead corners and blind spots in our operation, strengthen our management, and eliminate the hidden risks.

Principal: Shan Song

September 2, 2010

Why was there so pervasive use of informal recognition? One reason might have to do with the limit of formal recognition in the form of awards and positions. As discussed before, people in schools cared much about their status symbolically recognized by supervisors. However, both awards and formal positions had a finite number. In the terms of economics, the supply of status through formal recognition often could not meet the demand of teachers' need for status. By contrast, informal recognition such as praises and criticisms in daily talk had much less constraint; supervisors could create them almost at will. In addition, as we have seen from examples such as Teacher Kang's expérience, informal recognition worked well in motivating teachers.

I like Principal Lan. At that time [during 2007-2008], I taught the junior third grade. He often praised me, for I came to the school early. I lived in the suburb area and drove here. He often praised me. As soon as he arrived at the school, he noticed that my car was already there. (兰校长的时候我觉得他挺好的，兰校长的时候我是教初三的他经常表扬我因为我来得很早，我住在郊区我开车过来，他经常表扬我他一来就看到我的车来。) (Teacher Kang, HYM)

Therefore, supervisors turned to informal recognition to make up the short supply of

formal recognition. This way, they maintained the high level of teacher motivation.

An example of the supplementary function of informal recognition was shown in Story 1. In his email to Principal Song, Teacher Liu provided solid evidence that he worked hard and exceptionally well in the school. Based on that, he complained to Principal Song that he deserved higher level of awards. Principal Song agreed with his arguments but did not give him more awards. In Song's words, honor and awards were limited.

> *However, during the process of award allocation, we had to try to let the awards cover as many people as possible. Therefore, one person could not get too many awards. This happened in the award allocation every year.* (但是在年级评优中，不得不考虑到尽可能让更多的人都得到表彰，所以荣誉不可能太集中到某一个人身上。在历年的评优中，都存在这种情况。) *(Story 1: Principal Song's email to Teacher Liu in YFM, July 27, 2010)*

To mitigate Teacher Liu's complaints, Principal Song used informal recognition. At the beginning of his replying email, Principal Song clearly told Teacher Liu that he was deeply impressed by Teacher Liu's hard work and excellent performance. Later on, after indicating that no more awards were available, Song went to lengths to make a case that "giving up" honor was more respectable than "fighting for" honor. What Song indicated was that he would recognize Teacher Liu more in his heart if Liu stopped complaining and accepted what was given.

> *When it comes to work, some people willingly pick the tough challenges; when it comes to honor and interests, they willingly give up what they deserve, even though they are wronged. These people we all respect and admire very much.* (在工作面前，愿意挑重担、啃硬骨头的人；在名利面前，耐得住寂寞，能受委屈、愿意吃亏的人，是大家伙都非常尊重敬佩的人。) *(Story 1: Principal Song's email to Teacher Liu in YFM, July 27, 2010)*

5.1.3.2 Strategies of the teacher

For most teachers, the basic strategy in the micropolitics of status was *to work hard to meet the expectations from supervisors and, hopefully, to win supervisors' recognition with impressive role performance. Accepting whatever status was given silently was common choice, though there might be unvoiced grievances.*

Teacher Liu's earlier responses to evaluation results showed his strategy clearly. He devoted much passion and effort to his work and achieved outstanding results. However, for several years, he did not get the honor he thought he deserved. He felt bad but still accepted the honor allocation results.

Among all the Parallel Classes [whose student intake was among the average], my class achieved the best results in CEE. They also performed the best in terms of discipline. However, my bonus ranked almost the last! I took a modest attitude, thinking that things will get better when I deliver greater achievements later. I persisted, even when some similar-aged young teachers laughed at me, saying that I took the school as home and worked too hard. (高考完后，平行班 [作者注：指生源质量属平均水平的班] 中我算考得很好的，班级纪律表现也是最好的！可是奖金却差不多最后了，我谦虚，我觉得以后做出更大成绩就好！哪怕同龄的年轻人笑我以校为家，工作拼命过了头！) (Story 1: Teacher Liu's email to Principal Song in YFM, July 6, 2010)

A teacher interviewed put it this way:

If it [the award] is yours, you will get it anyway. If not, it is useless for you to argue for it. (是你的就是你的，不是你的，你争了也没用。) (Teacher Ma, YFM)

Teachers also generally believed that *not to fight for the honor* was a virtue. As

shown above, Principal Song suggested Teacher Liu not care much about the formal titles. One of the reasons Song offered was that "giving up" honor was more respectable than "fighting for" the honor.

[If you argue for the honor,] No matter you get the honor or not, the final result is that you will make others feel bad. They will think that although this person has some reasons, she acts too aggressively. Alternatively, they may think that this person is just making trouble out of nothing. If we take it easy and "give up" honor, we will be able to enjoy the bright sky full of stars. We will let others see our dignified personality. (争来了或是争不来，最后的结果，都是让人感觉不好，或是此君得理不让人，或是此君无理取闹。如果我们用很洒脱的态度去"让"，就会让出一片灿烂的星空，让出高尚的人格魅力...) (Story 1: Principal Song's email to Teacher Liu in YFM, July 27, 2010)

Principal Song's judgment seemed to be shared by the teacher group. Grade Head Deng's story showed this. While Deng had the title of administrator when I interviewed her, she was Lesson Preparation Team Head before and was not an administrator. At that time, she was popular among the teacher group; not to fight for honor seemed to be one of the reasons for her popularity.

I did well in teaching and in my work as a Class Head. Even those people who did not know me well heard things about me: a kind, easygoing person who did not care much about interests in personal relations. Whether I got the title of Excellent Teacher or not, whether I got more or less money, I never went to talk with the principal. If you gave it to me, it was fine. If you did not give it to me, it was also fine. That was it. I did not care much about these things. So people knew it. Many times the principal went to talk with me after [the awards were given and said]: "I am sorry that I did not treat you fairly." I said: "how did you treat me unfairly? How come I do not know?" It often went that way. (教学不错，班主任也做得不错。然后再怎么不了解你他们也通过一些个人的说法，

人很不错，又开朗又不跟人计较那么多东西。有没有我的评优或者今年评的怎么样或者钱多少，我从来不会去找校长，你给我就给我，不给我就不给我，就是这样。在这方面我是很不重视。所以他们也知道。很多时候校长过后就会找我，"很对不起你"，我说你又怎么对不起我，我怎么不知道？多数时候是这样。) (Grade Head Deng, YFM)

However, not all teachers who accepted what was given continued to work as hard as before. Indeed, one important strategy teachers might use was **to withdraw their effort and motivation**. This did not mean that they would openly resist management orders. Rather, they were more likely to take a passive attitude toward work, just to fulfill the minimum requirements of role performance or comply superficially. Behind their passive attitude was their unvoiced complaint that they did not gain a fair status recognized by the supervisors.

One typical example of this *passive resistance* was the story of Grade Head Mao in HYM. Mao was a senior teacher and had taught in HYM for more than 20 years. When he worked with a former principal of HYM, Principal Ni, he encountered an unpleasant incident, which greatly changed his work attitude. At the time, Mao was assigned to be the Class Head of a notorious class with many naughty students. With poor discipline, the academic performance of the class ranked almost the last in the grade. Mao had a good reputation in handling the naughty students. After he became the Class Head of the class, discipline improved, and so did academic performance. However, since the class was too weak before, it was not able to improve its test results greatly within a short time. This way, Mao got a low score in teacher evaluation, which was mainly based on student test performances. Mao was disappointed: he made great effort in improving the class discipline. He thought he deserved a higher score. As he saw it, the unsatisfactory test performance of the class was not his fault since the class was even weaker before. But he did not complain to Principal Ni to get a higher score; he just accepted the evaluation result.

When I asked him why he did not complain, he said: "Meaningless (*meiyisi*, 没意思)." When I asked him for further explanation, he said: "He did not recognize my work. (他不认可我的工作。)" It seemed that Mao expected Principal Ni to understand his effort and devotion and give him a fair status without him fighting for it. If he had to fight for the honor, even though he got it, the honor would lose its meaning. In other words, it was meaningless to work hard to get an honor from a supervisor who did not understand and appreciate your work.

As Mao told me in the interview, after that incident, he just *dealt with his job perfunctorily*. He still went to the meetings and listened to the principal's words, but he did not translate the words to his action when doing work. This situation did not change until Principal Ni left. The new principal, Principal Ma, was Mao's old classmate. He showed his appreciation of Mao's talent, and asked Mao to be a Grade Head. Mao agreed. When I did fieldwork in HYM, I often saw Mao putting on some notice on the blackboard of teacher office or correcting the discipline problems of students. It seemed that his motivation for work was back.

Some teachers did not accept the evaluation result and attempted to improve it. When they did this, they mostly went in covert ways. That is, few teachers would raise the issue in public discussions such as Teacher-Staff Representative Meetings. They might *complain through private and individual correspondence with the principal or talk with the principal in private occasions*. In Story 1, we have seen that Teacher Liu in YFM used both ways when he tried to get higher level of awards he thought he deserved.

Another covert way was *to express complaints through trusted intermediaries*, similar to what Hong Kong teachers do to get their opinions heard by the management team, as described by Dimmock and Walker (2005). An example of complaining through intermediaries was told by Mr. Wang, Director of Moral Education in QSM. Mr. Wang was easygoing. Though he had the title of

administrator, he got along well with teachers. Many teachers trusted him and often joked with him. Once, a teacher approached him to express doubts and worries. The issue was that the teacher was not given any award though his performance in terms of student test results was among the top. Mr. Wang, being an administrator, was close to the administrators in charge of award allocation. After he talked to them, he learned that the teacher was going to get a prestigious award to be announced a little later. He passed this message to the teacher. This way, the teacher found out what was going on and solved his problem; meanwhile, he avoided asking supervisors for awards and leaving a negative impression.

A further strategy teachers used in the micropolitics of status was *to build up personal relationship with the supervisors and please them*. As shown before, status was mainly about supervisors' recognition. Therefore, some teacher tried to please the supervisors, who made decisions in allocating symbols of recognition such as honor, awards, and positions. An example in point was how teachers responded to the reform of "Grade Responsibility System" in YFM. As mentioned before, this reform allowed the three-person Grade Committee to select teachers and assign them to different classes. The higher grade a teacher was selected to teach, the higher her status. The reason was that allowing a teacher to teacher a higher grade showed supervisors' recognition. If no Grade Committee selected a teacher, the teacher would be moved to non-teaching positions, which was perceived as a humiliation by many teachers. To maintain their status in this reform, teachers used various ways to please the Grade Heads, who were in charge of selecting teachers. Some teachers showed special respect for supervisors by proposing toasts to them. Other teachers explicitly expressed their commitment and loyalty to the Grade Heads, even to the extent of flattering. Grade Head Deng occasionally mentioned what some teachers said to her when the reform first got implemented.

> They are highly motivated. Many teachers keep saying this to me: "You allocate the tasks. I will go through hell to finish it." They put it that way. Often teachers

say to me: "Whatever you say, we agree." (他们积极性也蛮高的。很多老师，无论是什么时候，他都会说，你分工我赴汤蹈火，就是这样说的。经常还会有老师说，你说什么我们都认为是对的。) (Grade Head Deng, YFM)

In sum, in micropolitics of status, teachers generally used covert strategies. Whether they accepted the status given or not, they tended to avoid open conflicts with supervisors. Even when they tried to argue for higher status, they often did it in private and polite ways.

5.2 Micropolitics of money

5.2.1 The importance of money

Money was important for the participants in the schools under study. It was a basic condition for survival. In addition, many teachers in the schools in City G were from northern China. They had jobs in inland schools but gave up. One of their important purposes for changing jobs was to win higher salaries in City G, a southern city economically more developed than many inland cities. Principal Ma in HYM paid much attention to the material interests of teachers:

Of course, to motivate teachers, the first way to use is material benefits. Salary is part of the issue. There are other issues such as housing benefits and other housing subsidies...Material benefits of course are to be considered first. But currently the material benefits follow the uniform standard that applies to the whole city. That is, teachers in the whole city get the same level of material benefits, as long as the schools they work in belong to the same class and the same type...so if you want to motivate teachers more, I think a proper level of bonus is necessary. Because other schools might not have set up the bonus your school set up. Even though they have also set up the bonus, the amount of bonus might differ among schools.(当然提高老师积极性首先办法是待遇问题，工资是一方面，还有几个方面是住房公积金，其他住房津贴等等... 待遇当然是

首先要考虑的问题，但是你待遇因为现在你待遇是全市统一的标准，所以这种就是说，全市老师是同样级别的同一类型的学校的老师，他的待遇都是一样的…所以要如果更能激发老师积极性进步的话我觉得适当的奖金是需要的，因为你奖金是不一定其他学校有，其他学校有，不一定各个学校高低不一样…）(Principal Ma, HYM)

Figure 5.1 below shows the components of the money a teacher got from working in a public secondary school in City G.

Figure 5.1 *Components of Income From Teaching in a Public School in City G*
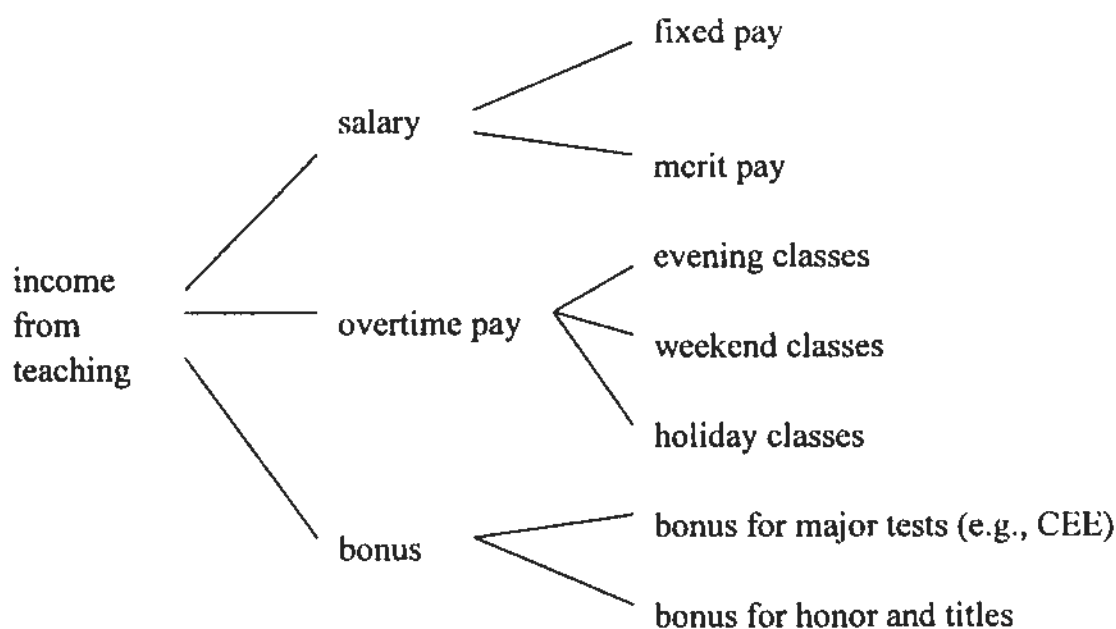
Arguably, all components could be the objects of micropolitical efforts. However, the non-fixed part, namely, the merit pay, overtime pay, and bonus, were more likely to become the issue of micropolitical debates. For example, for merit pay, teachers and administrators might have different ideas about what counted as "merit". Some teachers might prefer to give more weight to teaching workload, while some administrators might emphasize teaching performance. Similarly, overtime pay could

become the source of struggles. How much should a teacher be paid when she was asked to monitor the self-study classes in the evening?[1] How about for makeup classes during weekends and holidays? Who should get the opportunity to do these overtime work and be paid? These issues could be disputable. Needless to say, bonus was closely tied to allocation of duties and honor, a central issue in school micropolitics.

5.2.2 Strategies of the teacher

5.2.2.1 Covert strategies

When the teachers pursued their material interests, they might take covert and overt strategies. One of the covert ways was to *complain behind administrators in informal discussions*. For example, as Teacher Shen said, teachers in YFM often complained in their offices about the low pay of overtime work. Another issue that frequently became the subject of complaint in YFM was the pay for Class Heads. Many people argued that Class Heads had to assume too many responsibilities with too little pay.

Another covert strategy was to *complain to trusted intermediaries*. Just as in the case of micropolitics of status, sometimes, teachers wanted to voice out their concerns on material benefits but did not want to leave bad impressions on supervisors. Therefore, they turned to some "middle man" to let their ideas be heard. An example of this was told by a former Head of Teacher-Staff Representative Meeting, Teacher Hao, in an interview. As he said, some teachers used to complain to him that they had no idea about the revenue and expenditure of the school's "*xiaojinku*" (小金库), which referred to the income the school created by operating a shop and conducting trainings. Usually, these complaints were made in informal

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[1] To excel in tests, the middle schools in mainland China often have evening classes, some of which extend to as late as 10PM. The evening classes are often for the self-study of students. But there still needs to be a teacher monitoring the class. Some schools also conduct makeup lessons during holidays, though official regulations prohibit makeup lessons.

occasions such as when Teacher Hao and his close friends hanged out together. Another example was mentioned by Teacher Shen in YFM, who used to be a Grade Head. When he was a Grade Head, some teachers complained to him about the low pay for overtime work. They hoped that he would talk with higher level administrators on the issue.

A further covert way was *to complain through private and individual correspondence with the principal or talk with the principal in private occasions*. These ways were covert because the teacher only voiced out her opinions to the principal in private ways, instead of in some open forums such as a school-wide meeting. One example of teachers complaining to the principal about material benefits through private correspondence was Teacher Chen's email in YFM. Teacher Chen taught Chinese for two classes; she performed well in terms of student test scores on Chinese. In fact, her students' scores on Chinese were among the top in the grade. However, her merit pay ranked the last in the grade. The reason was that the two classes she taught ranked the last when the students were evaluated in all subjects. According to the allocation plan for merit pay in YFM, the overall performance of students in all subjects would impact the performance evaluation of teachers teaching different subjects for the students in the class. Teacher Chen was rather depressed by the result of allocation on merit pay. She wrote to Principal Song about this.

Another covert way was to *show superficial assent to avoid conflict with supervisors*. An instance of this was told by Teacher Hao in HYM. When he was the Head of Teacher-Staff Representative Meeting, City G started the reform of Performance-related Pay System for Teachers. The then-principal of HYM, Principal Ni, asked Teacher-Staff Representative Meeting to discuss an allocation plan for performance-related pay proposed by administrators in the school. In the past, Ni was usually present at the Teacher-Staff Representative Meeting. But somehow, when the allocation plan was discussed, Ni did not join the meeting. Teacher Hao

and other teachers found that the proposed plan was largely copied from another school. They thought that the plan could not be applied to HYM and vetoed it. The next morning, as Teacher Hao recalled, Principal Ni looked annoyed. Later on, in a meeting, Ni hinted that his ideas should be supported. He was present at later Teacher-Staff Representative Meetings. After the incident, the representatives just signed on the new plans proposed without much discussion.

Still another covert strategy was *to dissent in anonymous voting*. In anonymous voting, people could express their opinions without worrying about being hurt. They did not necessarily go in the way expected by supervisors; meanwhile, they avoided open conflicts with supervisors.

An instance of this strategy was observed in YFM. On January 14, 2011, YFM conducted a meeting joined by all staff (see Table 5.1, school-wide meeting on January 14, 2011). The non-administrators (including teachers and supporting staff) were asked to vote on an allocation plan concerning merit pay for non-administrators in the school. The voting, unlike in previous Teacher-Staff Representative Meetings, was anonymous. This was consistent with the guidelines of Municipal Education Bureau. The plan came out after numerous discussions over the past month. Actually, designing the plan had been occupying the primary attention of the principal and his staff recently. All the administrators were present at the meeting. Principal Song made a long speech before the voting, with a clear purpose of persuading people to vote for the plan. Still, the plan was vetoed by the majority. The management had to continue the work of revising the plan and negotiating with the staff. Clearly, this result surprised Principal Song. He looked depressed, pressured, and weak after the meeting, quite the opposite of his usual image in the school (Observation, YFM, 2011-1-14).

5.2.2.2 Overt strategies

Besides covert strategies, teachers also pursued their material interests overtly. One way was *to express their opinions about allocation plans for merit pay in public forums*. For example, in YFM, after the veto (see Table 5.1, school-wide meeting on January 14, 2011), Principal Song conducted a meeting joined by Leadership Team (*lingdao xiaozu,* 领导小组) and Drafting Team (*qicao xiaozu,* 起草小组). These two teams were created in December 2010 to design the allocation plan for merit pay in YFM. The former comprised eight administrators, including the Principal and Vice Principals, the Director of Academic Affairs, the Grade Head of senior third grade, and the Head of Teacher-Staff Representative Meeting. The latter comprised eight teachers representing different teacher groups in the school such as young teachers, middle-aged and senior teachers, Subject Heads, and supporting staff. The eight teachers were nominated, based on teacher votes, as members in the Drafting Team. In the meeting, the eight teachers were asked to share what they thought about the veto and what might be done to get the plan passed. Though some teachers were reluctant to speak up, finally all teachers made some comments. After all teachers had said something, a Vice Principal remarked that it was good to ask teachers to take turns to speak out. He said: "You see? Even Teacher Jiang spoke today! He usually did not say anything before!" Expressing opinions in such a public discussion was an instance of teachers overtly pursuing their material benefits.

Another overt way was *to voice out opinions among peers*. This happened in teachers' offices, passing halls, cafeteria where teachers ate together, and sports center where some teachers did exercises together. In one word, it could happen wherever teachers met. This was different from the above-mentioned complaining behind the back of administrators. Complaints were more emotional; those who complained might not expect to be able to change anything. By contrast, the discussions with peers were serious, in the hope that the suggestions made would find their way into school decisions.

Teachers in all the three schools under study took part in heated discussions of allocation plan for merit pay in the 2010 reform. The background was that the Education Bureau of City G required schools to fully hear teachers' opinions and pass their allocation plans with at least 70% support. When doing fieldwork in HYM, I frequently heard teachers discussing the drafts of the allocation plans in their offices. They did not do it stealthily. Rather, they exchanged ideas with each other naturally and calmly. In QSM, as participants told me, the allocation plan became the center of the topics in offices and the cafeteria when it was under discussion. This lasted for nearly the whole first term of 2010-2011 academic year.

5.2.2.3 Conditions for using different strategies

By now, we have seen that teachers might take covert or overt strategies in pursuing material interests. One question deserved our attention: what were the conditions for using each type of strategy? That is, under what conditions would teachers go in a covert way? Under what conditions would teaches go in an overt way? The study did not provide us with definite answers. But the data suggested one important condition for overt strategies: the teacher must feel safe in expressing opinions. Most importantly, the teacher must not fear that she would be hurt by supervisors if she expressed her ideas overtly.

Two examples showed the above point clearly. The first was about Teacher Hao in HYM. As mentioned before, Teacher Hao used to be the Head of Teacher-Staff Representative Meeting. With his leadership, the representatives once vetoed the plan proposed by Principal Ni. The incident seemed to have annoyed the principal. After that, the representatives just signed on the plans proposed without much discussion. Later on, Principal Ni was assigned to another school and Mr. Lan became the principal of HYM. Principal Lan was more open, encouraging teachers to express their opinions on the allocation plan. Also, unlike Principal Ni, Principal Lan

did not take part in the Teacher-Staff Representative Meetings. This way, as Teacher Hao commented, teachers became more active to make suggestions:

At that time, we [teacher-staff representatives] had many rounds of discussions [about the allocation plans for merit pay in the Teacher-Staff Representative Meetings]. Because he [Principal Lan] followed the rules and was more democratic. The administrators discussed much [about the plans], so did [the teacher-staff representatives] at Teacher-Staff Representative Meetings. People took it seriously. Things were done in a more detailed way according to the procedures set up [by the government]. (郝老师: 那个时候讨论的很多次的，我们都讨论很多次，因为他都是做事比较正规一点，什么都比较民主，因为行政都讨论过比较多，那个教代会那里也讨论过比较多，也比较着重于那个东西，什么都比较，就是按照正规的程序，做的比较细。) (Teacher Hao, HYM)

The other example was about Teacher Teng in YFM. She was among the supporting staff and was in charge of arranging class schedules. I first met her at the school-wide meeting in YFM on January 14, 2011. Recall that the meeting vetoed the proposed allocation plan (see Table 5.1, school-wide meeting on January 14, 2011). Before the voting, I asked her whether she would vote for the plan; she said yes, reluctantly: "I think it is unfair. They [the school] do not value the work of supporting staff. But what is the use of you [an individual worker] thinking that it's unfair?" When the teachers filled in the votes, I asked her what her vote was. She said she voted against the plan. I asked to take a look at her vote, and she agreed. Indeed, she voted against the plan. A week later, I saw her having lunch in the cafeteria. I chatted with her, asking her why she changed her ideas at the meeting. As she explained, at first, she thought it would be useless to vote against the plan. Others would vote for it and nothing would change. With this idea, she was about to just vote for the plan, though she disagreed with it. Later on at the meeting, she chatted with several colleagues sitting beside her and found that they also disliked the plan. This way, she saw the hope and finally voted against the plan. The meeting also

changed her perception. Previously, she would not discuss issues of salary reform with colleagues. "You know, the administrators are just at next door." The meeting, with its result of vetoing the proposed plan, made her feel that it was fine to express opinions. Other teachers seemed to feel the same way; discussions in the offices increased. As she put it: "You [administrators] let us talk, right?"

The two examples suggested that when teachers did not feel threatened by supervisors, they were more likely to express their ideas overtly. When supervisors were perceived to be more open, they assured the teachers. Also, they let teachers feel that teachers' suggestions might become school policies. This encouraged the teachers to participate in serious, overt discussions and make inputs into school decisions. In other words, teachers adapted their strategies according to how they interpreted the leadership style of supervisors.

5.2.3 Strategies of the administrator

5.2.3.1 Creating a sense of participation and fairness

Administrators in the schools under study adopted several strategies in micropolitics of money. A notable strategy was to *let teachers have a sense of participation and fairness in the process of designing the allocation plan for merit pay*. As mentioned before, in the reform of Merit Pay System for Teachers in 2010, the Education Bureau of City G required that the schools must have their allocation plans passed with at least 70% teachers supporting the plans. The schools studies used various ways to let teachers feel that their suggestions were important and the process was fair. It was believed that this would smooth the passing of the proposed plans. In HYM, we have seen that the teacher representatives were asked to discuss the allocation plans. In QSM, various meetings were conducted with different groups of teachers such as teacher representatives, young and senior teachers, and teachers who were members of democratic parties in the school. In the meetings, the teachers were encouraged to speak out their ideas on the proposed allocation plans. Survey forms

were distributed to collect teacher opinions. After hearing opinions, revisions were made on the initial proposal, and a new round of meeting and opinion collection started. This lasted for almost a whole semester.

In YFM, as mentioned before, a Leadership Team comprising administrators and a Drafting Team comprising teacher representatives were set up specifically to design the allocation plan for merit pay. The diagram below gives a rough picture of the design process.

Table 5.1 *Designing Process of Allocation Plan for Teachers' Merit Pay in YFM*

Time	Meeting	Actors	Activities
2010-12-2	NA[a]	NA[a]	Set up a Leadership Team comprising 8 administrators and a Drafting Team comprising 8 teacher representatives to design the allocation plan for teachers' merit pay.
2010-12-2 to 2011-1-11	Leadership Team and Drafting Team conducted a series of meetings separately. Two joint meetings were conducted[a].		Discussed how to design the allocation plan for merit pay.
2011-1-11, 2:30-4:20PM	Executive Meeting	administrato rs	Discussed how to manage the reduced budget of overtime work[b].

2011-1-11, 4:50PM-5:30 PM	School-wide Meeting	all staff	Principal Song proposed two versions of allocation plans for merit pay and asked the staff to consider them.
2011-1-14, 8-8:50AM	Joint meeting of Leadership Team and Drafting Team[c)]	Leadership Team and Drafting Team	• Discussed the allocation plan to be voted in the coming school-wide meeting. • A teacher representative complained that the allocation plan to be voted was not what had been proposed by the Drafting Team; too many revisions were made. He remarked that the plan would be vetoed in the coming school-wide meeting.
2011-1-14, 8:50-9:30AM	School-wide meeting	all staff	• Principal Song made a long speech before the voting. • A version of allocation plan for merit pay was anonymously voted and vetoed by the staff (except the administrators) (For: 67; Against: 84; Abstain: 14)
2011-1-14, 10-11:30AM	Leadership Team Meeting[d)]	Leadership Team members	Reflected on the reasons why the proposed allocation plan was vetoed.
2011-1-14, 2:30-4PM	Joint meeting of Leadership Team and Drafting	Leadership Team and Drafting Team	• Teacher representatives in Drafting Team shared perspectives on why the proposed allocation plan was vetoed. • The meeting decided that Drafting Team should come up with a new version of allocation plan over the

	Team		following two days (the weekend); Leadership Team would not revise the new plan proposed by Drafting Team.
2011-1-15 to 2011-1-16	Drafting Team Meetings[d]	Drafting Team members	• Discussed how to design a new version of allocation plan for merit pay.
2011-1-17 Morning	_[e]	_[e]	• The new allocation plan proposed by Drafting Team was distributed to all staff via internal email system.
2011-1-17 3:30-4:50PM	Executive Meeting	administrators	• Discussed the new plan proposed by Drafting Team; • Discussed how to conduct the coming school-wide meeting.
2011-1-17 5:20-6:10PM	School-wide meeting	all staff	• Two leaders of Drafting Team introduced the new plan and the designing process before the voting. • The staff (except the administrators) passed the new plan with anonymous voting (For: 122; Against: 38; Abstain: 7; Invalid Vote: 3)

Note:

a) The meeting was conducted before the researcher arrived at the school. The researcher learned about the information about the meeting through later observations and interviews.

b) While promoting the reform of Merit Pay System for Teachers, the Township Education Bureau reduced the budget of overtime work for about 20%. Therefore, the school needed to decide whether to use part of the merit pay budget (24,000 RMB/teacher/year) to make up the reduced budget of overtime work.

c) I did not know about the meeting until I interviewed a member (Mr. Tian, the Head of

Teacher-Staff Representative Meeting) of Leadership Team later on January 14, 2011. The member recalled what happened in the meeting in the interview.

d) I made my best efforts trying to observe the meetings but was not allowed to do that. The general descriptions of the activities are based on later interviews.

e) Not applicable.

Several issues indicated that administrators in YFM made conscious choices to create a sense of participation and fairness for teachers to facilitate the passing of the plans. My discussion is based on what I saw and heard at the meetings, where the administrators discussed how to address the challenges. I managed to audited all the meetings since January 11, 2011 in Table 5.1 except the ones noted.

One issue was whether the administrators should take part in the vote on the allocation plan. In the school-wide meeting on January 14, the administrators did not vote. Teachers were told that the allocation plan only had to do with the merit pay for non-administrators. In the beginning of Executive Meeting on January 17, Song proposed that administrators should also take part in the next vote. The administrators discussed this idea:

> *Song (Principal): We administrators must consider this issue today. [We need to think about] whether the allocation plan proposed by the Drafting Team works or not. Let's assess how likely the plan can be passed [by the Teacher-Staff Representative Meeting]. If it works, we administrators should reach some agreement. If we think it works, we should participate in the voting [in the Teacher-Staff Representative Meeting today]. Otherwise, the debates will never end.*
>
> ...
>
> *Someone: Should we administrators join the voting or not today?*
>
> *Tian (Head of Teacher-Staff Representative Meeting): Yes.*
>
> *Song (Principal): Yes.*

Ke (Grade Head for senior third grade): Last time we did not join the voting. If we join the voting today, it is not good.

Bao (Vice Principal): My personal suggestion is that administrators not participate in the voting this afternoon. We did not change a word of the plan proposed by the Drafting Team. We voting today won't look good, whether the plan gets passed or not.

(宋：我们行政今天考虑一下，看起草小组这个方案是否可行，评估一下通过的可能性大不大，如果可以，我们行政统一一下，如果觉得可以就参与投票，不然没完没了的吵下去。

...

某人：我们行政今天投不投？

川：投。

宋：投。

柯：上次没投，这次投不好。

包：我个人建议今天下午行政不要投。我们一个字没动过。我们今天投，通过也不好，不通过也不好。) *(Observation of Executive Meeting at YFM, January 17, 2011)*

Vice Principal Bao and Grade Head Ke's comments indicated that it would harm the sense of fairness if administrators joined the next vote. The decision was that administrators should not take part in the vote in the school-wide meeting on January 17 (see Table 5.1).

The other issue was whether all staff except administrators should participate in the next vote or just the representatives. Generally speaking, allowing all teachers to vote would make it much more difficult for the plan to be passed. However, as Mr. Tian, the Head of Teacher-Staff Representative Meeting, commented during an interview, it would harm the sense of participation if only the representatives were allowed to join the next vote. The situation was that all staff except administrators joined in the last vote. Therefore, narrowing the scope of participation would cause doubts among

the staff. This issue was also discussed in the Executive Meeting on January 17:

We [administrators] need to reach some agreement today. If the allocation plan [proposed by the Drafting Team] gets passed [in the Teacher-Staff Representative Meeting today], nothing needs to be said. If the allocation plan does not get passed today, Principal Song [should] make a summary speech, saying that future votings [on this issue] will be only conducted by the representatives [instead of all staff except administrators]. [He should say that] according to the spirit of municipal guidelines, we are not going to trouble all the teachers [to vote]. [Head of Teacher-Staff Representative Meeting] Li Tian called Director Lan in Office of Education in Township Government. Lan talked for 6 minutes, making the same point. (我们今天要统一一下，如果通过，就没什么好说的了。如今天没通过，宋校作一个总结性讲话，说以后就教代会表决了，根据市里文件精神，就不麻烦各位老师了。田立向镇教办兰主任打电话，兰说了 6 分钟，也是这样说。) *(Vice Principal Bao, YFM)*

Administrators' discussions on the above two issues also suggested the limit of "participation and fairness" in the process of designing the allocation plans. Clearly, it was up to the administrators how much teachers could participate and who could join the vote. Though administrators needed to consider the pressures from teachers, administrators seemed to have more leeway in the power play.

5.2.3.2 *"Chuichuifeng"*

A second strategy administrators used in the micropolitics of money was "*chuichuifeng*" (吹吹风, literally, "blow the wind"). This meant *leaking out information through informal channels, mostly through middle managers*. Those leveraged not only included those with the formal title of administrator but also the Subject Heads, Lesson Preparation Team Heads, Grade Heads, and Class Heads. These middle managers were expected to pass the ideas of school administrators to

teachers through informal interactions.

I first heard the term from Mr. Tian, the Head of Teacher-Staff Representative Meeting in YFM, when I interviewed him after the veto on January 14, 2011 (Table 5.1, school-wide meeting on January 14, 2011). As he saw it, one of the reasons for the veto was that Principal Song was "too confident" about the proposed plan and did not do enough work in "*chuichuifeng*". By contrast, as he recalled, in the last salary reform around 2004, YFM smoothly passed the allocation plan. At that time, the management team put great effort in "*chuichuifeng*", mobilizing those at various management positions to gain the support of the teachers around them.

Another example of "*chuichuifeng*" was about Grade Head Shen in YFM. Replying to Grade Head Shen's email (see Story 2: Mr. Shen's email to Principal Song in YFM, March 9, 2010), Principal Song in YFM said that a cadre (*ganbu*) should not blindly bend to teachers' requests for more benefits but should try to influence them:

> *As a [teacher] cadre, you should have the courage to listen to the opinions of the mass. But, not only must not we follow them, we but also must dare to lead them skillfully. We must dare to say no to unhealthy thinking! Only such a cadre is a good cadre. Only such a cadre can really win the support of the mass. (作为一个干部，群众的意见要敢于听，但是，我们不仅不能跟着走，还要敢于、善于引导他们，对不健康的风气，要敢于说不！这样的干部，才是好干部，才真正赢得群众的拥戴。) (Principal Song's email to Teacher Shen in YFM, March 9, 2010)*

Mr. Shen seemed to follow the teaching of Principal Ni. In an interview, Mr. Shen said that when teachers complained to him about the low pay for overtime work, he consoled them. He would tell the teachers that the school had a limited budget, though he himself also thought that the pay rate was too low. When asked why he chose to respond to the complaints that way, he explained:

I had no other choices. Look, first, I could curse the supervisors, as other teachers do. Second, I could tell the supervisors teachers' opinions. Someone mentioned the issue [of low pay for teachers' overtime work] in the Inclusive Executive Meeting. The principal said: "Do not act yourself like the representative of the interests of the mass." So, would you raise the issue again? I did not like to curse others carelessly, which I think does not solve any problems. Therefore, what I could do was only to console the teachers. But I myself felt guilty [doing that]. (我没有其他的选择。你看，第一，我可以跟老师们一起骂领导；第二，我可以把老师的意见跟领导提。有人在行政扩大会议上提过这个问题，校长说："你不要把自己扮演成群众利益的代表者。"那你还提吗？我也不喜欢随便骂，我觉得那样不解决问题。所以只能是安抚老师了。但我自己觉得都很违心。) *(Teacher Shen, YFM, talking about his experiences when he was a Grade Head before)*

5.2.3.3 Legitimation by using official guidelines

A third strategy administrators used in the micropolitics of money was *to legitimate their actions by creatively using guidelines from higher authorities*. We have seen one instance of this in Vice Principal Bao's idea on what to do if the proposed plan was vetoed again in YFM:

If the allocation plan does not get passed today, Principal Song [should] make a summary speech, saying that future votings [on this issue] will be only conducted by the representatives [instead of all staff except administrators]. [He should say that] according to the spirit of municipal guidelines, we are not going to trouble all the teachers [to vote]. (如今天没通过，宋校作一个总结性讲话，说以后就教代会表决了，根据市里文件精神，就不麻烦各位老师了。) *(Vice Principal Bao, YFM; see Table 5.1, Executive Meeting on January 17, 2011)*

Another instance of this happened when Principal Song replied to Teacher Chen's

complaints in YFM. As mentioned above, Teacher Chen's classes ranked among the top in the grade on the subject she taught. However, Teacher Chen's merit pay ranked among the last in the grade. She wrote to Principal Song about this. Song explained that her classes did not perform well on other subjects. According to the guidelines of the Education Bureau of City G, the overall performance of the class impacted the performance evaluation of teachers teaching different subjects for the class. Therefore, she got low score in the performance evaluation because her students did not perform well on the subjects she did not teach.

In another instance, administrators chose to interpret the guidelines of higher authority in such a way that their troubles were minimized while their privileges were maintained and legitimated. The example was about how teachers, or their representatives, should vote for the proposed allocation plans for merit pay.

When City G first implemented Performance-related Pay System for Teachers in 2003, no clear guidelines were given with regard to voting method. Given the situation, QSM asked teacher representatives to vote by raising hand. In 2010, when City G started a new round of reform of Merit Pay System for Teachers, teachers in some schools complained much about the allocation plans for merit pay. Therefore, the Education Bureau of City G required schools to pass their allocation plans with anonymous vote.

When this new guideline was issued, QSM had already got an allocation plan passed with voting by raising hand. Following the new guideline, QSM went through another process of designing the allocation plan for merit pay. Numerous meetings were conducted with different teacher groups to hear their input. Survey forms were distributed to collect teacher opinions.

During this process, a central issue emerged: the gap between administrators and teachers in merit pay. Many teachers criticized that the administrators were enjoying

too much share of the merit pay in the allocation plan just passed not long ago. Specifically, while administrators also taught classes, their teaching load was generally much less than a full time teacher. However, in previous allocation plans, including the one just passed, the administrators got the same level of teaching salary as a full-time teacher. Besides the teaching salary, administrators received subsidies for their managerial work from the Education Bureau of City G. In addition, in the eyes of many teachers, administrators generally got the greater portion whenever there were some material benefits such as year-end bonus. Disparities such as these were brought up in the discussions.

The situation was that the school had to obey the official guidelines and pass a new allocation plan with anonymous vote. Finally, Principal Tang and other administrators decided that the teaching salary of administrators should be calculated according to their real teaching load.

In other words, in the previous allocation plans, the administrators maintained their material privileges by legitimating the allocation plans through voting by raising hand. After all, it was much easier to pass a plan in the way of voting by raising hand than anonymous voting when the teacher representatives feared about vetoing supervisors' ideas overtly.

5.3 Micropolitics of curriculum and pedagogy

Micropolitics of curriculum and pedagogy had to do with the power play around issues such as what to teach and how to teach. What should the students be taught? How should a class be carried out? These matters could become disputable and catch the attention of people in school micropolitics. A survey of the data collected in the three schools located only a few instances of micropolitics of curriculum and pedagogy. Unlike the above-discussed issues of status and money, what to teach and how to teach were rarely raised as micropolitical issues when people in the three secondary schools were interviewed. Given that, it may be better to show several

instances directly than to summarize any strategies. Two cases are shown below to give a gist. The first is about micropolitics of pedagogy, that is, how classroom teaching should be conducted. The second case is about micropolitics of curriculum; the central issue in question was what counted as teaching students "positive values".

Story 4*: How Grade Head Deng in YFM Dealt With Pedagogical Issues*
Source: compiled by the author based on interviews with Grade Head Deng, January 12 and 13, 2011.

Grade Head Deng was careful when dealing with issues in teachers' pedagogical methods. She adapted her strategies according to what type of teacher was in question.

Young teachers who had just graduated for one or two years were called novice teachers. Some novice teachers taught Geography, the same discipline as Deng's. Deng would audit their lessons and offer suggestions. In this kind of instances, she seemed to leverage mostly her professional expertise to influence the teachers:

After I audited his [a novice teacher's] lesson, I told him my suggestions. I just talked out how I felt. I said: "We [senior teachers] went through this process before and made some mistakes...so I hope [that you can avoid my mistakes before]"...then I said: "Today you go back and revise [your lesson plan]. Tomorrow you teach the lesson again." The second day, after he finished the lesson, I talked to him again. Then he felt like he had already tried hard. Why did he have to teach the lesson again and again? He even argued with me over some issues. I said: "It is good to have your own ideas. You can also try adding your ideas [to the lesson plan]. I am not saying mine is totally right. Add your own ideas in [the lesson plan] and try it out in another class, see which one works better." I said: "Teach the lesson again." (听完之后什么立场，反正凭着我自己的感觉，我就说我们也是

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这么过来的，原来我走的一些弯路...所以我也希望...然后我就说你今天去修改你明天再上，第二天上完之后再给他点，然后可能他的那个感觉好像觉得已经很辛苦了，为什么上完一遍还有第二遍，有一些东西他还分辩了一下。我就说你有自己的主见是很好的，我说你也可以试一下把你的这个因素加进去，我并不是说我的这个东西全部都是对的，加进去看看在另外一个班再上一下看看哪个状况好？我说你再上去。) (Grade Head Deng, YFM)

For other novice teachers who did not teach the subject Deng taught, Deng also offered them pedagogical suggestions. Generally, the suggestions were not on the specific content of the lessons but the way the teacher conducted the class. Deng might point to many factors. How did the teacher introduce a new lesson? How did she interact with students? What clothes did she wear? These could become the issues. Here, still, what Deng leveraged was mainly her professional expertise. She offered general pedagogical suggestions based on her experience, which seemed to be respected by novice teachers. She audited the lesson of a teacher for three times. When the teacher finally presented her lesson to the official leaders, she adopted Deng's suggestions.

Finally she [a novice teacher] told me: "I followed your words and dressed in red today." You know when she practiced it for the first time, she dressed in black with very casual slippery shoes, which gave a sound of "da" when she walked. I told her: "When you dress like that, you give others an impression that you are not taking it [the lesson] seriously." Then I said: "If you want to conduct your lesson well, first you need to make others feel good. You should put on some light makeup. You should dress some more bright clothes, but not those irritating colors." Then I told her how she should wear her shoes when she stood on the lecture platform and how she should walk down the lecture platform. I tell them [novice teachers] all the stuff. (她最后跟我说："我今天穿的红衣服，听你话了。"因为她第一次

穿着的是黑的，鞋子也是很休闲的，拖拖的那种，一走嗒一下，我就说她：你这样你给人的感觉你是很不重视，然后我说你要想让你这堂课好，首先你要让别人心情好，你自己要化一下淡妆，衣服最好要穿亮一点的，不要刺激人。然后我说鞋子站在讲台应该怎么样，走下讲台应该怎么样，反正这些都跟他们讲。) (Grade Head Deng, YFM)

For the senior teachers, Deng generally avoided offering pedagogical suggestions. But in some extreme situations, she had to take some action. As she mentioned in the interview, a senior teacher often punished students with disciplinary problems by making them stand outside the classroom. Sometimes Deng saw that a dozen of students standing outside the classroom in winter. Deng agreed that students violating school disciplines should be punished. However, as Deng saw it, it was not good to make the students stand outside in the cold winter. Also, the punishment put too much pressure on the students, whose self-esteem might be severely hurt. In addition, a queue of students standing outside the classroom would leave bad impressions to government officials when they visited the school. Deng tried in vain to persuade the teacher to change the way he punished the students. Several other administrators, including the principal, also noted the issue and talked to the teacher. However, nothing worked and the teacher insisted on his way of punishment. In the interview, Deng indicated that she might have to use her legal authority to do something about the matter.

It's like we are not going to let him teach the important classes or let him be Class Head...basically when things get worse to certain extent, we have no choices. We have to take some so-called action. I think it is what we have to do when we have no other ways. (就是说不会比较重要的班级给他，或者不让他当班主任了...基本到一定的情况没有办法，我们只能采取一些所谓的行动去做，我觉得这个是没有办法的办法。) (Grade Head Deng, YFM)

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Story 5: Teacher Shen in YFM Got Scolded for "Leading Students to Rebel Against the Government"
Source: compiled by the author based on interview with Teacher Shen, January 7, 2011

Teacher Shen taught English for senior second grade when interviewed in January 2011. We started the conversation with the topic of English teaching and learning. In Mr. Shen's eyes, English classes should be more than teaching a language; the teacher should influence students with positive values during the classes.

This concern on value education used to cause a big trouble for him when he was Grade Head and Class Head in YFM. At the time, the students were asked to donate money for those suffered from earthquakes in other parts of mainland China. Some students insisted on not donating money, saying that they even did not know where the money went. What if some corrupted officials took the money as their own?

Mr. Shen considered it a great opportunity for value education. Given that teachers in the school were required to conduct research projects, Mr. Shen chose the issue of donation as the topic of his research project. He asked all students in his grade to investigate into the issue and find out where the donated money flowed to. The students must check every step in the donation process: the student, the student cadre, the Class Head, the Department of Finance in the school, the township government, the Red Cross, and so on. As Mr. Shen saw it, the investigation would help students learn about the society around them. Also, students would be more confident about the donation process when they found that the donated money was managed properly.

However, the government officials and the school administrators did not share

Mr. Shen's ideas on value education. Before the investigation went for long, Principal Song talked about this matter in a school-wide meeting, without mentioning Mr. Shen's name. Song said that some students called the township government and asked where the donated money flowed to. He was angry to learn about this from the government officials. Song commented on the matter in the meeting: "Students are immature, but a teacher should be mature! Are you leading the students to rebel against the government?" Later on, an administrator in YFM talked to Mr. Shen about the matter, emphasizing that he should teach students positive values such as trusting the government and the CPC.

In his heart, Mr. Shen could not agree with the administrator, thinking that clearing students' doubts through the investigation was a good way to teach them positive values. However, he felt fearful: The issue seemed very serious. Finally, he told the administrator that he acknowledged his error and would give up the research project and the investigation.

The administrator took away most materials his students collected, but not all, for the administrator did not discover some materials. This way, Mr. Shen managed to keep some materials such as the questionnaires he asked the students to distribute to Class Heads. When interviewed, he showed me the questionnaires. The top of the questionnaire read: "We only want to know the truth rather than hurt anybody! (我们只为了解真相，不为伤害任何人！)" The Class Heads surveyed signed on the questionnaires with dates around April 10, 2010.

The above two Stories gave a flavor of micropolitics of curriculum and pedagogy in the schools under study. Again, it seemed that issues of what to teach and how to teach did not occupy the primary attention of people in micropolitics. Participants reported very few cases of micropolitical play around issues of curriculum and

pedagogy.

5.4 Status-centered micropolitics

The above discussion highlighted the three types of interests people pursued in micropolitics in the schools under study. For the purpose of discussion, the three types of interests were treated separately, as if they were unrelated. However, in real school life, the three types of interests were often interconnected. That is, one issue often touched upon more than one type of interest.

For example, the allocation of merit pay impacted the monetary benefits of people. Meanwhile, the allocation results carried strong implications for the differentiation of status in terms of role performance. Likewise, in micropolitics of curriculum and pedagogy, status also played its part. We have seen that Grade Head Deng dealt with pedagogical issues of different teachers in different ways (Story 4). In particular, she talked directly to novice teachers on pedagogical issues. But she consciously avoided offering pedagogical suggestions to senior teachers, for that would hurt their earned status in terms of role performance as teachers.

When examining the three types of interests together, we can see that status in terms of role performance was the central concern in the micropolitics in the schools under study. By contrast, money and issues of curriculum and pedagogy were of lesser concerns to the participants.

As mentioned before, research participants only reported a few cases of power plays around issues of curriculum and pedagogy. This indicated that what to teach and how to teach were of lesser concerns when the participants engaged in micropolitics. On the contrary, as shown before, participants often reported stories in which the concern on status played a big part in the way they handled work relations.

Compared with status, money seemed to be less important in school micropolitics.

Again, this is not to say that money was not important. Rather, what is meant is that money did not emerge as central a concern as status in the micropolitical efforts of participants.

One way to see that money was not the central concern in school micropolitics was to examine what people really cared about with regard to the evaluation results. Admittedly, better evaluation results often entailed more material benefits; higher status in the form of supervisors' recognition often brought people more responsibilities and thus more income. However, the data suggested that it was the status in terms of role performance, that is, the recognition from supervisors and peers, implied by the evaluation results that people cared the most about. In other words, when both status and money were at stake, status was the core concern when the participants engaged in school micropolitics. Principal Ma in HYM pointed this out clearly when he explained why the Class Heads cared about the daily evaluation results. Though good performers would gain a little more bonus, the Class Heads seemed to care more about the honor.

Although the bonus is not that much and the difference [among teachers in the amount of bonus] is not that big, teachers as intellectuals care a lot about the honor. Even though a teacher only gets a little less bonus than others, she will feel that she is lagging behind. [That's how] the bonus shows its effect. It is not just about several hundred RMM. Several hundred RMB is nothing in other industries. But now we are talking about the teachers. Because [they are] intellectuals, they care very much about honor. When they are ranked at the bottom, they feel pressured. As long as there is difference [in bonus], it creates pressure... (虽然钱不是很多差别也不是很大，但是作为老师群体知识分子来说，他还是蛮注重这个荣誉的。你就算有一点差别，他感觉到自己落后了，他也会有这个作用。不是几百块，几百块如果你其他行业的话你几百块算不了什么，但是他作为教师这个行业，因为知识分子他是很重视荣誉的，你排

Another example was about Teacher Chen in YFM. When she wrote to Principal Song to complain about the evaluation results, she compared herself with the supporting staff in the school.

Non-frontline teachers such as the Laboratory Staff got the average bonus of 1000RMB. I only got 928RMB. **I am a teacher who teaches so well. Am I even not comparable to the non-frontline teachers** *(just because the [overall] performance of my classes ranked the second and the third)? (实验员等不是一线的老师却拿了1000元的平均数，我却得到928元，我一个教学这么好的老师（因为所在的班考了第二名、第三名），难道比不上他们不是一线的老师吗？) (Teacher Chen, YFM, my emphasis)*

Clearly, what Teacher Chen tried to argue through the comparison was not that she deserved the little more monetary difference (72RMB). Rather, she was emphasizing her value as "a teacher teaching so well". Status in terms of role performance, not money, was her core concern here.

There was a second way to see that money was of lesser concern than status to people in the schools under study. That is, we could examine how people responded to evaluations that only implied difference in status. If money were the central concern, evaluations without monetary implications should be rather ineffective in motivating people. However, many examples suggested that was not the case. Informal recognition without monetary benefits were pervasively used and worked as well in motivating teachers. The story of Teacher Kang in HYM showed this. As mentioned before, Teacher Kang, when interviewed, asserted that she taught for students, not supervisors. But even she acknowledged that she felt happy and motivated when Principal Lan praised her for coming to work early. Clearly, no monetary benefits were implied by Principal Lan's praise. Still, Teacher Kang took

the praise seriously and felt encouraged by the status the praise indicated. In other words, Principal Lan's praise showed his recognition of Teacher Kang for her role performance as a teacher. Though the recognition had nothing to do with money, it impressed Teacher Kang so much that she remembered it after more than two years. If money had been Teacher Kang's central concern, she would not have been so touched by the praise.

In short, status in terms of role performance was the central concern in school micropolitics. Status-centered micropolitics characterized the micropolitics in the schools under study.

The centrality of status further meant that people's concern on status shaped the general features of their micropolitical strategies in other areas such as money. As pointed out above, people often needed to consider more than one type of interest when they deal with concrete issues. Both status and other interests entered their consideration. However, they tended to pay more attention to status; the central concern on status shaped their overall approach to the issues.

The example of Teacher Hao in HYM showed this well. As mentioned before, Teacher Hao and other representatives were asked to discuss the allocation plans for teachers' merit pay. This issue appeared to only have to do with money. But, Teacher Hao and other representatives must consider how their discussion would impact their status in terms of supervisors' recognition. In fact, this concern on status seemed to dominate their strategies. When they perceived that Principal Ni was annoyed by their vetoing the proposed plan, they simply signed on later plans proposed by Ni. When they perceived that the next principal, Principal Lan, welcomed genuine inputs, they were more willing to speak up during discussions. Given the centrality of status, the choices of Teacher Hao and other representatives in HYM were understandable. Though the allocation plan impacted their monetary benefits, they placed more importance on status in terms of supervisors' recognition. Therefore, they adjusted

their strategies according to the principal's leadership style. Whether they participated in open discussions on the allocation plan partly depended on whether they thought their participation would hurt their status.

Similarly, in micropolitics of curriculum and pedagogy, people placed much weight on status when they chose their strategies. With the concern on status, Grade Head Shen addressed pedagogical issues of different teachers in different ways (Story 4). Also, with the concern on status, Teacher Shen gave up the investigation into the flow of the donated money (Story 5). While in his heart he insisted that the investigation was a good way to teach students positive values, he would rather admit his "mistakes" and gave up. What he did prevented further damage to his status in terms of supervisors' recognition for his role performance.

This chapter has demonstrated the centrality of status in school micropolitics and shown the various strategies people used in the micropolitics. Compared with status in terms of role performance, money and issues of curriculum and pedagogy seemed to be of lesser concerns in school micropolitics, though they were also important in some occasions.

Based on the data, the next chapter seeks to account for the pattern of status-centered micropolitics in the public secondary schools under study in City G. Along the way, we will also better understand why people in the schools negotiated micropolitics the way they did. The relevant organizational features of the public school system in mainland China are considered in the discussion.[1]

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[1] It may be noticed that the discussion in Chapter 6 does not highlight the divisions of Communist Party of China in schools. The reason is that the participants generally reported that Party organizations did not play a significant role in their lives in the schools today. Though Party activities were going on in schools, people seemed to take test performance, instead of Party ideology, as their major concern. After all, the Party and the government expected the schools to deliver satisfactory results in tests. The lesser focus on Party was shown in the comments of Principal Song in YFM, who

was also the Party Secretary of the school. During the interview, I asked him: "To what extent do you use the role of Party Secretary in your work of school management?" He said: "Not much, to be honest. People's energy is always limited. I set up a role of helper in the Party Chapter [in the school]. The helper deals with Party affairs. Generally, we [the Party Chapter in the school] do things like developing potential candidates of Party members. Party guidelines are shown as government policies. We just need to follow the policies. (没多大作用，老实说。人的精力总是有限的。我设一个党支部干事，有什么事对口办。平时我们发展一下党员之类。党的方针落实为国家政策，我们做好就行了。)" Similar remarks were also made by teachers in this study.

Chapter 6: From "Iron Rice Bowl" to Performance-Based Evaluationism

6.1 Why micropolitics of status was central

6.1.1 "Iron rice bowl"

One factor could be used to account for why micropolitics of status is central in the public secondary schools under study in City G. The factor may be characterized by what has been called "iron rice bowl". It is one of the legacies of state socialism of mainland China before the "reform and opening-up" initiated by Deng in 1978. "Iron rice bowl" suggests that teachers in public schools in mainland China enjoy employment security. Once a teacher gets a job in a public school, she needs to worry little about being fired. She can rely on the job for nearly her whole life. Admittedly, since as early as the 1990s, Teachers Law has allowed schools to fire unqualified teachers. However, in practice, public schools in mainland China rarely fire teachers, as the principals in this study have indicated.

To fire an unqualified teacher, a school needed to submit one-meter thick supporting documents to Municipal Education Bureau. Delinquencies of the teacher needed to be put down; detailed evidences be kept track of. Few schools bothered the trouble. In addition, proposing to fire a teacher was generally regarded as causing to com problems for the government. The reason was that the teacher would exert great effort to complain to the government so as to protect her job. The complaint was seen as endangering the stability of the society. Given the situation, few schools made attempts to fire teachers.

Both administrators and teachers knew the above situation well. For example, Principal Tang in QSM emphasized that firing under-performing teachers would cause many problems; the school must find some other ways to deal with the problem. Principal Song in YFM also made similar remarks. The teachers interviewed generally believed that the risk of being fired was low. Teacher Hao in

HYM even mentioned a rule that schools could not fire teachers older than 45.

Given the difficulty to fire underperforming teachers, the schools had to find ways to make the most out of the teachers they had. One important way was to differentiate the status of the teachers and use higher status to motivate teachers for better performance. What happened in YFM was a good example.

As mentioned before, YFM implemented the Grade Responsibility System in the beginning of 2010-2011 academic year. Before the reform, teachers generally taught a higher grade as their students moved to the higher grade. In the new system, the grade leaders picked teachers from all teachers in the school. If a teacher was picked by a higher grade, she would enjoy higher status in the school. Those not picked by any grade were assigned to non-teaching posts such as logistics. Though the salary difference between non-teaching posts and teaching posts was small, many teachers felt that the relocation was a severe hurt to a teacher's status in terms of role performance as a teacher. Therefore, to maintain their status, teachers worked harder after the reform. As Principal Song observed, they obeyed work disciplines more carefully and put more effort in preparing for lessons. Actually, Principal Song consciously adopted the reform to address the problems caused by "iron rice bowl":

Actually, by picking teachers, I changed the past "iron rice bowl" to a "clay rice bowl". If you [teachers] do not perform well, your rice bowl may be broken. This is the most important thing. Teachers will have more self-discipline. Both self-discipline and heteronomy will be strengthened. Also, teachers' goals will be clearer, for the grades have systems of evaluation...（其实我这个教师的聘任实际上把过去的铁饭碗变成一个泥饭碗，你做不好，这个饭碗可能会打碎了，最关键这一点，教师的那种自律会加强，自律和他律都会加强，而且目标会更加明确，因为年级要进行一套评价的机制...) (Principal Song, YFM)

6.1.2 From "iron rice bowl" to performance-based evaluationism

In fact, to tackle the problems caused by the "iron rice bowl", various measures were used in the schools to differentiate people's status in terms of role performance. Performance-based evaluations were so pervasive that they constituted a way of management centering on evaluationism. This was particularly true for the management of teachers' work. Intensive evaluations brought much pressure for the teachers and made them very sensitive about their evaluation results, which indicated their status in terms of role performance. This also accounted for why status emerged as the central concern in micropolitics in the schools under study. The following discussion shows various evaluations going on in the public school system in mainland China.

Teachers were frequently evaluated according to how well their students performed in tests. Such kind of evaluation was done whenever a major exam took place. In every term, there were two to three school-wide phase exams (*duankao*, 段考). At the end of each term, there was a major exam. All the test results were monitored and compared. Several ratios were calculated based on the test results, including the percentage of the students whose score was higher or lower than certain level. If a student's score was higher than certain level (say, 80/100), the student would be called an excellent student. The percentage of excellent students in a teacher's class was called excellence ratio. Similar ratios were also calculated for the low score students. In the high school sector, given the paramount importance of CEE, people paid more attention to alignment ratio. The alignment ratio showed how well a class was positioned to meet its target in CEE based on the test just taken. The ratios calculated were in line with the criteria Municipal Education Bureau used to evaluate the schools. Once calculated, the ratios were made public to all the teachers in the school. Therefore, every teacher knew her ranking among teachers teaching the same subject in the same grade. For major tests such as the term-end exams and CEE, the schools were also clear about their rankings on every subject among all secondary

schools in the city.

Besides ranking of test results, another way that showed the evaluation of teachers' role performance was the allocation of positions within the school. There was an informal hierarchy among the teaching posts in the secondary school. Nearly all research participants knew the hierarchy well and used it as a point of reference when they discussed the status of others and their own. One dimension of the hierarchy was which grade a teacher taught. For both junior middle school and high school, students in the third grade needed to take graduation exams, the result of which would determine their opportunities for next level of education. Therefore, the closer to the third grade, the more challenges and responsibilities there generally were. In particular, teachers in the third grade were perceived as fighting in the forefront of the battlefield. Allowing a teacher to teach the third grade showed trust and recognition.

So, who should teach the third grade? In YFM, the Grade Head and two Vice Grade Heads of senior third grade selected who they wanted from all teachers in the school. In HYM and QSM, generally speaking, teachers teaching the senior second grade this year would teach the senior third grade next year. That is, teaches moved up to the higher grade with their students. However, if a teacher had been performing unsatisfactorily, she might stay in the senior second grade or even be assigned to teach the senior first grade.

In addition to grades, the other dimension of the hierarchy among teaching posts was what type of class a teacher taught. Take QSM as an example. The classes were divided into Olympic Competition Classes, Key Classes, Parallel Classes (or General Classes), and Arts and Athletic Classes. Students in Olympic Competition Class were to join the international and national level competitions in certain subjects. This meant that the subject teacher needed to have exceptional expertise. Key Classes were expected to deliver more students to universities through CEE. Parallel Classes

had student intake of average quality; thus they were expected to fulfill average targets for CEE performance. Arts and Athletic Classes emphasized the artistic and athletic development of students, which pointed to another channel to enter universities. Students in this stream still needed to join the CEE, but the requirements of CEE score for them were lower than those for students in the general stream. Therefore, teachers teaching the CEE-tested subjects in Arts and Athletic Classes faced less pressure.

Different demands of the classes created a hierarchy of teaching posts. If a teacher was allowed to teach Olympic Competition Class or Key Class, that would show her higher status. If a teacher was allocated to a Parallel Class, she would be seen as less recognized. If a teacher was allocated to an Arts and Athletic Class, her reputation would be even lower. Because the task allocation happened every year, it showed constant evaluation of teachers' role performance and indicated the status of teachers in the school.

Another way to show the evaluation on teachers' role performance was the distribution of awards. At the end of every academic year, many awards were distributed. These awards were of different levels, with different prestige. There were township level, municipal level, and provincial level titles and awards. The higher the level of the awards, the more prestigious they were. The titles and awards were important for teachers to apply for higher occupational grades.

Specifically, the performance evaluation of Class Heads demonstrated clearly that the school constituted a hyper-evaluative social context. A Class Head was responsible not only for students' academic performance but also for "moral education". The latter covered a variety of matters related to student discipline, extending from students' dressing, hair cut style, arrival time, whether they slept during classes, whether they put too much stuff on their desk, and so on.

On a daily basis, evaluation of every class was made. The school sent students to check every classroom. If they found any defect or violation, the score of the class would be deducted. Every day, around the closing time of the school day, the results of the evaluation for all classes were published on a blackboard. Every month, the results were summarized; a title of Civilized Class or Excellent Civilized Class was given to the class with the highest score. A flag accompanied the title. It was called a flowing flag, meaning that the flag did not stay in any specific class but flow to the one winning the highest score. By the end of the term and academic year, the evaluation results were summarized again. The final score of a class would impact whether the Class Head could win the title of Excellent Class Head and the level of awards she could win.

This system of evaluation for Class Head was familiar to every teacher. The reason was that if a teacher wanted to apply for higher occupational grades, they needed to perform the duties of Class Head for a number of years. In particular, many young teachers needed to meet the demand of the evaluation. When young teachers entered a school, they were usually asked to take the position of Class Head. The consideration was that Class Head was a very time-consuming job. Most young teachers, without family concerns, had a more flexible schedule.

Evaluations not only happened on the individual level, but also on the group level. Nearly all conceivable units in the school organization were evaluated: the grade, the subject team, the class team, the lesson preparation team, and the teacher office. Different titles and scores were allocated to the units, which impacted the bonus and promotion opportunities of teachers in the units. City G had been implementing Four Overall Responsibility System (四个整体负责制) for many years. It meant a teacher's evaluation result not only depended on her own performance, but also the overall performance of the grade, the class, and the subject team she worked in. After term end exams, the performances of grade teams, class teams, and subject teams were calculated and compared against other schools in the city. The ranking of a

team in the city impacted the evaluation score of every teacher in the team and further the salary of every teacher. As participants in the schools under study put it, this evaluation system emphasized the overall strength of the team: Only when the whole team performed well was it really good (大家好才是真的好).

In short, a public secondary school in mainland China was indeed a hyper-evaluative social context for those working in the organization[1]. Performance evaluations were everywhere, took on many forms, happened very frequently, and carried important implications.

6.1.3 Teachers were hyper-sensitive about status

Due to the intensive evaluations in schools, teachers were very sensitive about the evaluation results, which indicated their status in terms of role performance in the school. In an interview, Principal Ma in HYM described how much the Class Heads cared about the evaluation results.

> *The Class Heads care a lot about what evaluation scores their classes get every day and whether their classes can be evaluated as Civilized Class based on the scores over a month. They also care much about it if there are many students seriously violating school disciplines [which would negatively impact the evaluation scores of their classes]. They go and check the evaluation scores every day and learn what they can do [to improve their scores]. At least, they are taking it seriously...(班上任就很在意我那个班今天评的什么分，一个月算下来能不能评到文明班，很多学生严重违纪他都比较在意，每天都去看，每天都去了解怎么做，最起码他就是重视...) (Principal Ma, HYM)*

Class Heads performing well could get higher bonus, sometimes several hundred RMB, not a big portion in their total salary. It seemed that the honor implied by the

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[1] For administrators, there were usually evaluation plans similar to those for teachers. The salaries of administrators were also impacted by the results of evaluation on their work performance.

evaluations was what they really cared about.

> *Although the bonus is not that much and the difference [among teachers in the amount of bonus] is not that big, teachers as intellectuals care a lot about the honor. Even though a teacher only gets a little less bonus than others, she will feel that she is lagging behind. [That's how] the bonus shows its effect. It is not just about several hundred RMM. Several hundred RMB is nothing in other industries. But now we are talking about the teachers. Because [they are] intellectuals, they care very much about honor. When they are ranked at the bottom, they feel pressured. As long as there is difference [in bonus], it creates pressure...(虽然钱不是很多差别也不是很大，但是作为老师群体知识分子来说，他还是蛮注重这个荣誉的。你就算有一点差别，他感觉到自己落后了，他也会有这个作用。不是几百块，几百块如果你其他行业的话你几百块算不了什么，但是他作为教师这个行业，因为知识分子他是很重视荣誉的，你排在后边的话他就感觉有压力，有差别有压力...) (Principal Ma, HYM)*

In a context shaped by the performance-based evaluationism, nearly everyone took seriously the evaluation results and the status the results indicated. Hard it was to be immune to the social pressure of people judging each other. This was true even for those most detached. Teacher Liu's experience in YFM, described in Story 1, was a good example. As mentioned before, Teacher Liu worked hard and achieved excellent performance. But somehow, he did not get the awards he thought he deserved. He wrote to Principal Song to complain about the matter; Song did not change the allocation results but consoled him. Teacher Liu calmed down and gradually forgot about the matter. However, at the start of next term, many teachers around Mr. Liu discussed about the bonus allocation and commented on his performance. This unsettled Mr. Liu so much that he wrote to Principal Song again about the matter even though he knew that by the time the allocation result could not be changed. As he wrote in the email, he just wanted Song to understand him.

I have nearly forgotten all the past and returned to my own happiness. However, things did not go as we wished. From the term beginning to now, many teachers gossiped in front of me. Today, the bonus for excellent teaching in the last term was distributed. More colleagues gossiped! This unsettled me. (我本来已近忘掉了前尘，忘掉了往事，我也回到了自己的快乐！可是事与愿违，从开学到现在，不停地有老师在我面前说这说那！今天学校发上期的教学先进奖励，更多的同事又在说了！让我又有了一些不平静。) (Story 1: Teacher Liu's email to Principal Song in YFM, December 1, 2010)

Teacher Liu's story showed that the hyper-evaluative context constituted a fact, which impacted all persons involved, whether they liked it or not. In this social context, one was seduced, or even pushed, to fight for the status one thought one deserved. Therefore, micropolitics of status abounded.

6.1.4 The ambiguity in performance evaluations

To make things worse, there was essentially no clear rule to decide the allocation of the titles and awards. Admittedly, the schools under study did design and announce matrix and criteria for performance evaluations. However, teachers often felt that there was much ambiguity in the allocation of status. Given this ambiguity in rules, teachers often had to pay close attention to what impressions they left on supervisors, who controlled the allocation of awards and titles. In other words, supervisors, instead of rock-hard rules, seemed to dominate the allocation. Therefore, supervisors' recognition, that is, supervisor-granted status, became the center of attention in micropolitical efforts. This also helps us understand why teachers generally engaged in micropolitics of status in covert ways. After all, when supervisors' recognition played so important roles, it was not wise to overtly conflict with supervisors.

Several examples showed the ambiguity of rules in the allocation of awards, titles, and positions. As mentioned before, YFM implemented the Grade Responsibility System in the beginning of 2010-2011 academic year. In this arrangement, the Grade

Heads and Vice Grade Heads of each grade selected teachers from all the teachers in the school. While teaching posts in the senior third grade represented higher status, only some teachers got the posts. Some teachers were not selected by any grade and were assigned to non-teaching posts. That was regarded as a humiliation by many teachers. So why were some teachers selected to teach the senior third grade while others were not? Why were some teachers not selected by any grade at all? No clear answers to the questions were available.

> *What the principal meant [when he made the speech in the school-wide meeting] was like we [Grade Heads] are only responsible for explaining why we picked some teachers, but we are not responsible for explaining why we did not pick some other teachers…Why didn't you [Grade Head] pick me [a teacher]? As the principal put it, we [Grade Heads] have no obligations to explain [our reasons]. You [teacher] should think about it by yourself. Say two teachers are alike, why don't we pick one of them? You should reflect on yourself. There is no use in asking others [for the reasons]. You can only ask yourself. [You can only] think that way. (我们校长当时的意思就是说，我们只是负责解释为什么聘你，不负责解释为什么不聘你…为什么你不聘我，这像校长说的，这个没有义务去解释，你自己去思考。同样的两个老师为什么不聘你？你就要从自身去思考。责问别人没用。你只能责问自己，从这方面去考虑。) (Grade Head Ke, YFM)*

Teachers interviewed commented that ambiguity in the selection process created a sense of fear among teachers. The reason was that they had no idea how to make sure that they would be picked. What if the Grade Heads favored their close friends in the school? There was no way to prevent that. In this situation, teachers have to engage in micropolitics of status. That is, they had to give utmost attention to supervisors' recognition. One of their strategies, as discussed before, was to please the supervisors.

> *[A teacher may ask:] Why did not he [the Grade Head] pick me? There were no*

criteria. Why did he pick me? No criteria either. No rules. It is not because he did not pick me and I felt angry [that I say those words]. I never thought that way. I just suddenly realized that this arrangement [of Grade Head picking teachers] seems very dangerous. Because as it goes, every teacher has to bootlick the Grade Heads and try all means to please them. Teachers have to try their best to build up guanxi (relationships) with the Grade Heads. (你说他为什么不要我？没有标准。他为什么要我？也没有标准，没有制度。那我倒不是因为他没有选上我，我有什么脾气，我从来都没有这样想过，我只是突然意识到这种制度，好像比较危险。因为你这样发展下去，每个老师都要拍年级主任的马屁，千方百计去讨好他，千方百计去拉关系。) (Teacher Shen, YFM)

Another example of the ambiguity of rules in evaluations was reported by Teacher Shen in YFM. When he was a Grade Head before, he found it a tough issue to allocate the titles of Excellent Teacher. No clear guidelines were available.

All teachers have their test performance. When the test results come out, of course you can tell the difference between the best and worst teachers. Everybody knows that the best teacher is the best. But it's hard to tell the difference between the best, second best, and the third best. The one the supervisors like gets it [the title of Excellent Teacher]. Sometimes when I was in charge of allocating the titles of Excellent Teacher, I felt painful about this. No evaluation criteria. (任何一个老师，你的成绩出来以后，当然那最好的跟最差的，那是有区别的。谁都知道那个老师好，但是，第一好跟第二好的跟第三好的，那个就很难说。你说领导喜欢谁，就给谁。这个我有时候评优秀，我就很痛苦。没有这个评价标准。) (Teacher Shen, YFM, talking about his experiences when he was a Grade Head before)

The Grade Heads in other grades asked teachers to vote. Those who got the most votes got the titles of Excellent Teacher. Mr. Shen disagreed with this solution. In his opinion, a higher vote may have nothing to with a teachers' work performance.

What if he [the teacher who got the most votes] was just busy with building up guanxi every day? Today he may buy this teacher something to eat; tomorrow he may treat another teacher some wine. He built up guanxi [with other teachers]. Therefore, he got higher vote. I know some teachers are like this…(他或许他大天拉关系呢？今天给这个老师买点吃的，明天请老师去喝一坛酒，他去搞关系啊，他票数就多。我知道有这样的老师…) (Teacher Shen, YFM, talking about his experiences when he was a Grade Head before)

Therefore, Mr. Shen invented his own rule, favoring those more active in joining grade team activities. This rule was objected by some teachers, who complained to Principal Song that Mr. Shen used arbitrary criteria to allocate the titles. Principal Song intervened and told Mr. Shen that he should listen to the voice of teachers. Mr. Shen had to abandon his way and adopted voting.

Teacher Shen: Teachers complained to supervisors about [my way of award the titles of Excellent Teacher]. The supervisors accused me. I felt sad. I also chose to let teachers vote [to decide who get the titles]. So teachers voted and the result was clear. Well, no longer was there any trouble. Nobody complained to the supervisors any more.

Interviewer: You also turned to voting.

Teacher Shen: Well, I gave up. I did not know what to do.

(沈：被老师投诉了，被领导批评了，我也很难过，我也投票，一投票，出来，哎，没事了，没人去找了。

访谈者：您也用投票这个办法？

沈：哎，我屈服了，我没有办法了。) (Teacher Shen, YFM, talking about his experiences when he was a Grade Head before)

A further example showing the ambiguity of rules in evaluations was Teacher Liu's story in YFM. As discussed before, Teacher Liu worked hard and delivered solid

results. His performance was widely recognized among peers. When he wrote to Principal Song, Song also agreed that he achieved much. However, for several years, he did not get distinctive awards he thought he deserved. The reason, as offered by the Grade Head, was just that some other people needed to be favored.

> *When it was time to allocate the CEE bonus, I ranked among the last! Teacher Deng Zhao also ranked among the last. He taught a parallel class and performed better than others teaching parallel classes. When the Grade Head distributed the bonus, he said: "According to the allocation plan and test results, the bonus of you two is not the lowest. But I need to favor some people, so I made you two the lowest." The moment I heard that, I felt very disappointed. (最后发高考奖金的时候，我和同样平行班考的比别人好的赵福倒数！发钱级长说"本来按方案，按考试成绩你们不是最低的，但是我要照顾一些人，就把你们调成最低的！" 我当时听了，就觉得寒心！) (Story 1: Teacher Liu's email to Principal Song in YFM, December 1, 2010)*

Again, it was because of the lack of clear-cut rule that people had to care about the impressions they left on supervisors, who control the allocation of various resources and honor. Status in terms of supervisors' recognition emerged as the central concern in school micropolitics.

6.1.5 Accounting for the performance-based evaluationism

We have seen that the performance-based evaluationism in public secondary schools in City G contributed to the centrality of micropolitics of status in the schools. Why did the public secondary school system make so intensive performance evaluations on people working in the organization? To understand this, we need to examine government and parental expectations on schools and the competition among schools.

People in the public secondary schools knew well about government and parental

expectations on schools. The expectations focused on student performance in CEE. That is, what mattered most was how many high school graduates entered university and what level of university they entered. For junior middle schools, the general orientation was preparation of CEE. Therefore, test result was virtually the most important thing for both junior middle schools and high schools.

This is not to say that the schools did not care about student development in other areas such as artistic learning at all. Actually, YFM put great effort in helping students learn to play piano and violin, for artistic strength was another channel for students to enter universities. What is emphasized here is that the priority for the schools was certainly to deliver more students to universities. Other tasks were in line with this priority or at most auxiliary.

In fact, every year, the Education Bureau of City G assigned CEE targets to its high schools. The targets were largely based on the schools' past performance and their student intake. Given the clear and high expectations on test performance, it was not surprising to see that the schools designed intensive evaluations to monitor and motivate teachers. As shown above, a variety of efforts were made along this line: calculation and comparison of test results, creating and allocating honor and awards, selecting strong teachers to teach the senior third grade, maintaining student discipline, etc.

Numerous observations and interviews demonstrated that participants in the schools under study were quite aware of the above-mentioned expectations from the government and parents. Talking about the operational context of YFM, Principal Song said:

> *What do the mass look at when they evaluate you [the school]? They still look at your performance in CEE...As long as the school has the task of CEE, people still look at how well you finish the task of sending students to higher level of*

education...If you perform worse than last year in CEE, people will say that the school is bad [and send their children to other schools]. To survive, we have to consider how people think and say. (那么人民群众评价你的话，看什么？他还是看你的高考...只要你有高考任务的学校，还是看你升学的任务怎么样...如果你今年比去年考差了，就说你不行。我们生存的话不得不要顾虑到这些舆论的东西。) (Principal Song, YFM)

Song also pointed out the dilemma principals faced:

Principals today feel painful about this [dilemma]. They are in the midst of the conflicts. If you cannot deliver [excellent] performance in CEE, people will curse you; the government will disapprove you; parents and student will not like you. But if you do not implement Quality Education, [in which you try to promote the overall development of students rather than just test performance,] you will feel guilty when you face your conscience, the conscience of an educator. You clearly know that education should not be like that [teaching to test]. So educators today are very painful. (当今的校长们是有这样一种痛苦，处在矛盾冲突风口浪尖，你拿不出高考成绩来，老百姓骂你，政府不满意你，家长、学生不喜欢你。但是你不推行素质教育，你良心上又过不去，教育工作者的良心，你明明知道教育不应该那样搞。所以现在的教育工作者是很痛苦的。) (Principal Song, YFM)

Clearly, Song took government and parental expectations on CEE very seriously. The first time I visited him was during the summer vacation of 2010, soon after the CEE results finalized. Once I entered his office, I noticed several boards placed besides the door of the office. Every board had a number written on it with big font. The number showed the amount of bonus the school received from township government with its exceptional performance in CEE. Also, in the exhibition area in front of the main building of YFM, the results of CEE were shown in the first poster.

In QSM, one could see similar emphasis on CEE performance. When I first visited the school in summer vacation of 2010, there was a red banner covering the top of the main gate. The words on the banner celebrated the school's top performance in the CEE just passed. Also, at the center of the first floor of the main building, a board was set up to show the detail results of the school in the CEE.

Another factor that contributed to the performance-based evaluationism in the secondary schools was the fierce competition among schools. Competition happened both in terms of reputation and student intake. The test performance of schools quickly impacted their reputation among parents, government officials, and educators. Usually, high schools published their performance in CEE in their school websites, easily accessible to parents and others. As for junior middle schools, their performances in major exams were calculated and ranked among all junior middle schools in the city. The ranking list was distributed to all principals of junior middle school and their direct supervisors in local educational authorities. Distribution of the ranking list intensified competition among schools for reputation. As one principal told me, when his school performed unsatisfactorily, he did not dare to sit in the front rows when he joined the year-end review meeting with other principals.

School reputation further impacted the flow of students, which was another aspect of the competition among schools. An introduction of some background of the public school system in City G is useful for understanding the competition among schools. City G was not a big place. Previously it was a county. In the early 1980s, it was upgraded to a city, but its area did not increase. With many bus routes, it was not difficult for students to travel in the city. According to official guidelines, a student should go to the junior middle school closest to her home. No similar restrictions existed for high schools. Despite the regulations, some families chose to send their kids to junior middle schools which are farther but more famous. When they chose high schools, the reputation of the schools in CEE was usually the most important thing to consider. Distance from home was much less important. Actually, most high

schools were boarding schools. Many students lived in the school and went back home once or twice a month.

In this context, secondary schools in City G faced real competition among themselves in terms of student intake. They must try their best to maintain their reputation by delivering satisfactory performance in CEE and other major tests. Only with good reputation in the tests could they attract the good students and achieve excellent results in the future. As Principal Song pointed out, bad reputation could kill a school: the students could easily move to other schools in the city. This competition for quality students had been intensifying in City G during the recent years. The reason was that several famous schools such as QSM had been expanding their size and recruiting more students. Therefore, the weaker schools must try even harder to attract and keep good students. Indeed, many participants in YFM reported that the quality of YFM's student intake had been decreasing over the past several years.

In sum, to address government and parental expectations on test results and to thrive in the fierce competition among schools, the public secondary schools were hyper-evaluative for nearly everyone involved. The various evaluations were instruments to monitor and improve teacher performance. Actually, in many ways, the pressure of external expectations and competition was directly translated to internal evaluations. For example, as mentioned above, using the excellence ratio and lower score ratio to evaluate teachers was in line with the way Municipal Education Bureau evaluated schools. Similarly, an important ratio QSM used to evaluate teachers was alignment ratio. Calculated based on the most recent test taken, the ratio showed how well the teacher's class was positioned to meet its target in the future CEE. Clearly, using this ratio in internal evaluations was consistent with government expectations.

6.1.6 Teachers' work as "*liangxinhuo*"

6.1.6.1 The concept of "*liangxinhuo*"

Another factor that could be used to account for why status was of central concern to people in public schools had to do with the peculiar nature of teachers' work. One thing frequently heard in interviews was that teachers' work was "*liangxinhuo*" (良心活, literally, "conscience work"). As the data suggested, the meaning of "*liangxinhuo*" had at least two aspects. To begin with, "*liangxinhuo*" indicated that teachers' work was hard to monitor and evaluate. This was due to several factors: the nature of the work, the norm of trusting teachers, and the departmentalization in the secondary school. These factors are detailed as follows.

First, the nature of teachers' work was such that it was difficult to specify the standard of the work. Principal Ma in HYM explained this clearly. He compared the work of a teacher and that of a factory worker:

Working as teachers, we work by conscience. It's not like something that can be specified by many rules and factory-like procedures. Let me give you a simple example. Say solving some thought problems of students. Say I talk to a student and try to solve some of her thought problems. Such a thing has no standard. For example, when I talk to you, how do I talk? How long do we talk? I may talk to you for five minutes, but I may also talk to you for one minute. It's also fine that I invite your parents [to the school] and we sit down together and talk...If you try to specify such a work with a factory rule, it's impossible...You cannot specify that a teacher should talk to a student for ten minutes, with how many sentences, in what way, and with what procedure...(作为老师这个行业，我们是凭良心的工作，不是说靠很多规范和工厂的程序去能够规定的了。我举个很简单的例子。就做学生的思想工作，比如说一个学生我跟你谈，做你的思想工作，你可能存在一些问题。就这样一个事情是没有标准的... 比如我跟你谈我怎么谈法，谈多长时间。我跟你谈五分钟可以，但是我跟你谈一分钟都可

以，我把你家长请过来坐下来一起谈也可以...如果这个问题用工厂的一个规范去规范他，这个是不可能的...你不可能规定一个老师跟学生谈十分钟谈多少句怎么谈法这个程序是怎么样的...) (Principal Ma, HYM)

Principal Ma's ideas were echoed by many other participants, including teachers, middle managers, and other principals. One example was Teacher Jia in QSM, a senior chemistry teacher in senior first grade. Discussing teachers' work, she made the following remarks:

I can prepare a lesson plan or just teach a class without a lesson plan. I can teach them deep knowledge or shallow stuff. Nobody can monitor you that closely. (我备课也能上，不备课也能上。我可以教得深点儿，也可以教得浅点儿。不可能管你那么细。) (Teacher Jia, QSM)

Second, the norm of trusting teachers suggested that it was inappropriate to closely monitor teachers' work. People in the Chinese schools under study generally respected teacher autonomy and judgment. The basic assumption seemed to be that teachers knew what they were doing and would do it in the best interests of the students. Others should refrain from interfering in teachers' work unless they were certain that the teacher was wrong. Therefore, monitoring teachers' work too closely would embarrass, even annoy, the teacher, who would feel distrusted. Teacher Shen in YFM put it this way:

Teachers are to manage others. How can they be managed by others?...Teachers are quality talents with personal thoughts. It does not make sense for them to be managed. (老师是管别人的，怎么能够让别人去管老师？...因为老师都是高素质人才，他都有他个人的思想。你去管他是很无聊的一件事。) (Teacher Shen, YFM)

Mr. Shen became clearer about the norm of trusting teachers only after he violated

the norm sometimes, though not intentionally. As mentioned before, he used to be a Grade Head in YFM. One of the responsibilities of Grade Head was to "walk and look" (*xunshi*, 巡视) during classes. This was to make sure that classes were going on according to school regulations. Once, Mr. Shen noticed that some students were sleeping while the teacher was lecturing. It was clearly against school rules. Mr. Shen did not want to stop the teacher from the lecturing. Therefore, he entered the room and waked the students up. The teacher was annoyed, thinking that what Mr. Shen did hurt her autonomy in the classroom. She said: "Even the supervisors would not enter my classroom to wake up the students, how dare you?" What the teacher said indicated that Mr. Shen was expected to follow the norm of trusting teachers even when school rules were clearly broken. This example showed how the norm of trusting teachers made it difficult to monitor teachers' work.

Third, secondary schools were generally departmentalized. That is, teachers taught different subjects and had expertise in different knowledge areas. Therefore, a subject teacher had authority in how to carry out her teaching on the subject. The authority was to be respected, particularly by those not teaching the same subject, be they peer teachers or administrators. This was also part of the reason why monitoring teachers' work was challenging. The following example demonstrated the point.

The example was about how Grade Head Deng in YFM dealt with teachers who did not prepare hand-written lesson plans before classes. According YFM's requirement, teachers should prepare hand-written lesson plans besides digital files. The reason was that occasionally the electricity was cut for the school. When that happened, digital lesson plans would not work. Still, some teachers did not prepare hand-written lesson plans. When Grade Head Deng noticed such cases, she did not talk to the teachers directly. Rather, she had to turn to the Heads of Lesson Preparation Team, who taught the same subjects with the teachers. She explained why in the interview excerpts below.

Interviewer: How do you ensure that teachers fulfill the requirement [of preparing hand-written lesson plans before classes]?

Grade Head Deng: It depends on the individual's conscience and sense of responsibility. We [Grade Heads] have no way to monitor it...[when we noticed that a teacher violated the requirement,] we could not talk to the teacher directly. We had to turn to the Head of Lesson Preparation Team.

Interviewer: Why couldn't you talk to the teacher directly although the school had the requirement?

Grade Head Deng: Because [as the saying goes] different trades are separated as by mountains. Maybe [the teacher would say that] for that class she did not need to write any lesson plan. Maybe [the teacher would say that] for that class she did not need to do things like this and that. So I'd better raise the issue to the Head of Lesson Preparation Team [who teaches the same subject with the teacher].

(访谈者：怎么样来保证这个要求会被落实呢？

邓主任：那就看各自的良心吧和那个责任感，就没有办法监控。...那我们这种情况不好去说的，只能跟备课组长去说。

访谈者：既然有了这个要求为什么还不好去说？

邓主任：因为隔行如隔山。这节课我就不应该写东西，或者我这节课我就不应该怎么怎么样，所以我应该是跟备课组长提出来...) (Interview with Grade Head Deng, YFM)

Together, the above three factors made it difficult for administrators or peers to closely monitor teachers' work. Therefore, people often had to rely on the self-discipline of teachers. This was one aspect of the meaning of "*liangxinhuo*".

Another aspect of the meaning of "*liangxinhuo*" was that a teacher was supposed to take her work seriously and conform to her conscience. The idea was that teachers were responsible for the growth of the younger generation. How a teacher carried out her work might impact to a great extent the future promise of her students. Therefore,

it was immoral for a teacher to act in an irresponsible way in her teaching. A teacher should follow the guide of her conscience and try her best to fulfill her duties. The participants used different words to express these ideas, but essentially they meant the same thing. Below are some examples of how the participants put it.

You know, you face those innocent kids. You must feel it right in your conscience. 你面对的是天真的孩子。你要对得起自己的良心。 (Teacher Jia in QSM, a senior chemistry teacher)

Working by conscience is to discipline yourself with the basic moral standard and value system of a person. (凭良心干事，就是有个人的一种基本的道德观，价值观，这约束着。) (Teacher Shen in YFM, a senior English teacher)

I must feel it right according to my basic principal of being a human being. I have my conscience. (我要对得起我这个做人基本的一个原则，有良心的。) (Teacher Zhang in YFM, a senior biology teacher)

6.1.6.2 How *"liangxinhuo"* encouraged micropolitics of status

The peculiar nature of teachers' work as *"liangxinhuo"* created incentives for both managers and the managed to engage in micropolitics of status.

For the administrators, *"liangxinhuo"* meant possible inconsistency in teachers' role performance. Due to the factors discussed above, it was difficult to closely monitor teachers' work. Not unusually, administrators had to let teachers discipline themselves and trust that teachers would do what their conscience suggested as the best. However, even though the individual teachers did conform to their conscience, there was no guarantee that what they chose to do was in line with school goals. Therefore, administrators needed to find ways to motivate teachers so that they would work along the lines preferred by the school. As the data suggested,

administrators consciously appealed to performance-based status differentiation as an important way to address the problem of inconsistency in teachers' work.

One example was Principal Ma in HYM. In a quotation cited before, Principal Ma compared the work of a teacher and that of a worker in factory. Through the comparison, he pointed out that it was difficult to specify the standard of, and thereby monitor, teachers' work. He was aware of the challenges of managing teachers and had been exploring solutions. One of his plans was to publicly praise those teachers performing well and give them awards. Clearly, Principal Ma's idea was to use status to motivate teachers so that teachers worked as expected.

Like administrators, teachers also engaged in the micropolitics of status. Part of the reason why the teacher cared so much about her status had to do with her work being "*liangxinhuo*".

As discussed above, "*liangxinhuo*" implied that a teacher was supposed to carry out her duties even though there was little external monitoring. She should conform to her conscience and follow the basic moral principals she personally believed in when she dealt with her work.

Therefore, when teachers' work was evaluated and status allocated, the teacher felt that she herself as a person was also evaluated. A negative result in the evaluation not only proclaimed that her work was unsatisfactory but also challenged her moral quality. Either she had not been really conforming to her conscience when doing work or her moral principals were wrong. Both scenarios were hard to accept for the teacher. Therefore, the teacher was driven to fight for the status she thought she deserved. She might not necessarily turn to overt ways. But strong emotions were often involved when she expressed her complaints. It was understandable: she was not only fighting for the honor and status but also convincing people that she was a good *person*.

The case might go to such an extent that she might continue the fight though there was little hope to get any awards. The experience of Teacher Liu in YFM described in Story 1 was just like that. At the start of the new term, all the awards for the last academic year were finalized; no change in the allocation results was possible. Teacher Liu was aware of that. Still, Teacher Liu wrote the second long email to Mr. Song "just to have a heart-to-heart talk" so that Principal Song would understand him better. In the email, he went to great lengths to demonstrate that he had *really* been doing what a good teacher should do.

> *Principal Song, **talking about this now, I really do not mean to gain anything. I just need a little understanding. I really want to talk more about it!** Can you read it carefully? (宋校长，现在说起这些，我真的不是再想得到什么了！我只是需要一点理解啊！我真的还想再说说！您能再认真看看吗？) (Story 1: Teacher Liu's email to Principal Song in YFM, December 1, 2010; original emphasis)*

6.2 Why micropolitics of money was peripheral

As discussed before, money was a lesser concern in micropolitics in the schools under study. Again, it must be emphasized that money was important. Money was just less important than status; it was not as central a concern as status in the micropolitics. Chapter 5 has shown this with examples. When both status and money were involved in evaluations, the participants seemed to care the most about the status indicated by money allocation, not the money itself. The significance of status was further demonstrated by the fact that praises without monetary benefits worked as well in motivating teachers.

Why was money of lesser concern in micropolitics in the schools under study? The data suggested several aspects of the local context that could help us understand the issue.

To begin with, as many participants pointed out, working in a public secondary school in City G provided one with enough income to live a handsome life. Second, most factors with regard to income were largely fixed, leaving little room for micropolitical efforts. On one hand, the total supply of monetary benefits was basically decided by the government, who allocated budget to public schools. The teachers interviewed suggested that they knew even the principal could do little to resize "the whole cake".

On the other hand, teachers only had occasional opportunities to make suggestions on how to allocate "the whole cake" among the staff. When the reform of Merit Pay System for Teachers started, the schools proposed allocation plans for teachers' merit pay and sought suggestions from teachers. Teachers did participate in the discussions, particularly when it seemed safe to express their opinions. However, once an allocation plan was passed, the structure of salary allocation was largely fixed, though minor revisions were possible. Then, what one could do to win higher salary was to follow the structure of salary allocation and work accordingly. Micropolitics did not help much any longer. In other words, only during some special periods did money emerge as a prominent issue in school micropolitics. By contrast, constantly status in terms of role performance demanded the attention of people in the hyper-evaluative social context of the public secondary school. Formal and informal evaluations happened frequently and nearly everywhere, keeping reminding people of their status in the school.

6.3 Why micropolitics of curriculum and pedagogy was peripheral

As mentioned before, the participants reported few cases of power play around issues of curriculum and pedagogy. During fieldwork, I had been keeping asking the participants how they pursued interests in the school organization. If what to teach and how to teach had been central concerns in school micropolitics, the participants should not have mentioned so few cases.

Why were issues of curriculum and pedagogy only peripheral in micropolitics in the public secondary schools under study in City G? One factor had to do with the nature of teachers' work as "*liangxinhuo*". As discussed before, various factors such as the departmentalization of the secondary school and the norm of trusting teachers made it difficult for administrators and peers to closely monitor teachers' work. Even when administrators had doubt in what the teacher did, they had to be very careful to deal with the issue. Usually, they would rather choose to neglect it or ask others to talk to the teacher. This partly accounted for why there were only a few cases of power play around issues of curriculum and pedagogy.

Besides, two other factors were also at play. To begin with, as the data suggested, people in schools generally agreed upon the pivotal importance of test results. Be they teachers or administrators, the participants indicated that they knew well about the operational context of the schools. Important aspects of the context, as discussed before, included the expectations from the government and parents and the fierce competition among schools. People in schools knew that fulfilling the expectations on test results was critical for the schools to survive and thrive. Whatever else they wanted to do or preferred to do, they must put test performance on the top of their agenda. Actually, test performance itself demanded huge energy, leaving most schools fully occupied with test preparation. In short, the participants in the secondary schools in City G generally shared the same goal of helping students get higher test scores. The shared perception of the overwhelming test pressure reduced the need for people to engage in micropolitics around issues of issues of curriculum and pedagogy. After all, what to teach and how to teach were largely determined by the major tests such as CEE.

A further factor that limited the instances of micropolitics of curriculum and pedagogy was teachers' general orientation toward work. It was an orientation of "finishing tasks", in the words of many teachers. The general attitude was to accept

what the supervisors asked one to do, just finish it, and go home. Survival and job security seemed to take precedence; setting goals and directions of work seemed to be a minor concern at best. Clearly, this attitude toward work tended to minimize resistance and micropolitics on curriculum and pedagogical issues of teaching. After all, teaching was the core task assigned by the school.

Several examples showed teachers' general orientation of "finishing tasks". For instance, Teacher Huang was a middle-aged teacher in HYM. When he talked about his way of working in the school, he mentioned twice the following phrase: "I'll do what you [the school] tell me to do." He was referring to carrying out administrators' orders, that is, administrators' expectations on his role performance as a teacher. Another example was Teacher Zhang, a senior biology teacher in YFM. She and her husband used to work in a school in northern China. They came to City G for higher salaries. Though they had worked in YFM for more than ten years, they still felt that they were outsiders. As Teacher Zhang indicated, many teachers in YFM had similar experiences and feelings with her. They were reluctant to make suggestions on school management, which they feared might bring them unnecessary troubles. Therefore, they just focused on getting the assigned tasks done. Though the school set up a public mailbox to collect opinions, only a few teachers wrote to it.

It is mostly students who write to the Principal Mailbox, not teachers...Many of us [teachers] came from other places. So, instinctively, people like it better if there are fewer troubles. Nobody wants to get more troubles...that's it, we do not ask for more...(但是校长信箱里边是学生写得多，老师基本上不写的...大家都是外来人，所以一般来说人的本能就是少一事就更好一些了，谁也不想惹更多的事...就这样，不会提更多的要求...) (Lesson Preparation Team Head Zhang, YFM)

Just as in YFM, in the other two schools under study, many teachers also came from other cities. To them, survival and material concern seemed central. They might

participate in micropolitics to gain higher status or more material benefits, which impacted their personal interests. However, they were less likely to resist management ideas on issues of curriculum and pedagogy. Classroom teaching was regarded more as a task that one should carry out if one wanted to survive and get paid; it had less to do with personal value and thus did not deserve all the troubles in micropolitics. To be clear, the distinction drawn here is only ideal-typical. In reality, even the most task-oriented teachers may still attach some personal values to classroom teaching.

In short, there seemed to be limited incentives for people in the secondary schools to engage in micropolitics around issues of curriculum and pedagogy. They generally agreed on the utmost importance of test performance; many teachers just treated classroom teaching as a task to fulfill. In addition, administrators were cautious about intervening in the "liangxinhuo" of teachers. Taken together, these factors helped us understand why issues of curriculum and pedagogy did not emerge as central micropolitical concerns in the public secondary schools under study in City G.

6.4 A summary

Why status emerged as the central micropolitical concern in the schools under study? This chapter provided initial answers. The answers were grounded in the data collected and touched on both the operational context of the schools and the peculiar nature of teachers' work.

the public secondary schools in City G were still seen as offering employment security. People's low motivation associated with the "iron rice bowl" could not meet the demand of performance expectations from the government and parents. To address the challenges, the public secondary schools in City G developed a way of management centering on performance-based evaluationism. Evaluations were pervasively used; they indicated people's status in terms of role performance as teachers or middle managers in the schools. This made people in the schools

hyper-sensitive about their status. Moreover, the ambiguity of performance evaluations meant that supervisors had much leeway in allocating the status. Therefore, people had to care much about how supervisors judged them. Supervisor-granted status emerged as the central concern in school micropolitics.

In addition, the nature of teachers' work as "*liangxinhuo*" contributed to the centrality of status in school micropolitics. On one hand, "*liangxinhuo*" generated possible inconsistency in teachers' role performance. This encouraged school administrators to use performance-based status differentiation to make teachers perform as expected. On the other hand, "*liangxinhuo*" encouraged teachers to engage in micropolitics of status. To the teacher, winning a satisfactory result in the evaluation meant not only gaining recognition for her work performance but also defending her moral righteousness.

To further understand the centrality of status, the chapter accounted for why money and issues of curriculum and pedagogy were of lesser concerns to the participants in school micropolitics. As pointed out, most factors that impacted the income of school staff were largely fixed; they were open to discussion only in special periods such as during salary reforms. This left little room for micropolitical efforts on money. As for issues of curriculum and pedagogy, the chapter accounted for their limited significance with the nature of teachers' work as "*liangxinhuo*", people's common understanding of the pivotal importance of test results, and teachers' orientation of "finishing tasks" in schools.

The discussion in this chapter also helped us understand why people negotiated school micropolitics largely in covert ways. In the context of performance-based evaluationism, people cared much about their evaluation results, which indicated their status. However, it was often supervisors, not clear-cut rules, that decided the evaluation results. Therefore, people tended to avoid direct conflicts with supervisors; covert ways were seen as more appropriate to negotiate a higher level of

supervisor-granted status. With status being the central concern, people also generally engaged in micropolitics of money and micropolitics of curriculum and pedagogy in covert ways. This was particularly true when the supervisors did not welcome different opinions.

Chapter 7 Conclusions

This chapter pulls together previous discussion and addresses the major concerns of the study. The chapter first provides an overview of the research process. Then it highlights five propositions based on the findings. Taken together, the propositions give a holistic picture of school micropolitics in the context of reforms for educational decentralization and accountability. In particular, the chapter argues that "status-centered micropolitics" depicts the main feature of micropolitics in the pubic secondary schools under study. Finally, the chapter explicates the implications of the study for researchers and practitioners in educational administration. Limitations of the study are also discussed.

7.1 An overview of the research process

The purpose of the study was to examine school micropolitics in the context of reforms for educational decentralization and accountability in mainland China. Several reasons argued for the importance of the study.

To begin with, reforms for educational decentralization and accountability have been prominent in mainland China since the 1980s (Communist Party of China, 1985; Ministry of Education, 2010), just like in western developed countries. Studies on school management in mainland China today cannot neglect the reform context.

Decentralization and accountability have been two underlying themes in educational administration reforms in mainland China. The reforms often came out as national policies, though in many regions the policies just remained on paper. As a typical and recent example, the reform of Merit Pay System for Teachers became a national policy in 2009. The reforms for educational decentralization and accountability shaped the operational context of schools in mainland China in important ways.

Students of school management in contemporary mainland China must consider the

reform context if our studies are to be relevant to practice. We need to understand how Chinese schools operated in the reform context. This is important for us to think about future policy making in mainland China.

To understand how schools operated in the reform context, a micropolitical perspective is particularly useful.

On one hand, a micropolitical perspective, though certainly not the only approach, is most relevant to the context of reforms for decentralization and accountability. The reason is that reforms for decentralization and accountability are closely related to issues of power. Studies in the west have pointed out the close link between decentralization and accountability reforms and power relations in schools (Blackmore, 2004; Whitty et al., 1998).

On the other hand, a micropolitical perspective is critical for understanding how schools operate as organizations (Bidwell, 1965; Clegg et al., 2006; Flessa, 2009; Hoyle & Wallace, 2005). Organizations bring together people with different interests to work toward a common goal. A micropolitical perspective focuses on this "organizing" (Weick, 1995) process and examines how the organization manages to do so. People in organizations are often reluctant to talk about micropolitics, but they cannot avoid it. They must deal with differences in interests among themselves.

Studying school micropolitics helps us see the mundane reality of school operation (Ball, 1987; Blasé, 1991). This realistic understanding is important for whatever efforts to improve schools. For example, many people agree that teachers are important for student achievement; therefore, they want to motivate teachers. By studying school micropolitics, we can know better what values teachers pursue and what impacts the allocation of the values. This way, we can be more effective in motivating teachers (Blasé & Anderson, 1995).

In short, we need to understand how schools in mainland China operated in the context of reforms for educational decentralization and accountability. A micropolitical lens fits this purpose well.

Despite its importance, the knowledge base of micropolitics in Chinese schools remains thin. Most articles on the issue are prescriptive with little empirical support (Guo, 2008).

Therefore, this study set out to unveil school micropolitics in the context of reforms for educational decentralization and accountability in mainland China. To be more relevant to practice, the study focused on public schools, the dominant majority in mainland China. Also, the study limited its inquiry to secondary schools. Compared with primary schools, secondary schools in mainland China usually face more accountability pressure; generally more departmentalized, secondary schools also create more need for people to use power to reconcile their differences in interests. Therefore, focusing on secondary schools fitted the research purpose, which was to examine school micropolitics in an accountability context.

Given that current research on the issue in China was thin, the study borrowed ideas from western scholars (Ball, 1987; Blasé, 1991; Willower, 1991). It synthesized relevant discussions and came up with a framework as an initial guide (see Chapter 4). Meanwhile, it had been noted that western-based theories and concepts might not be applied to Chinese settings (Dimmock & Walker, 2000). Therefore, the framework was only used to sensitize the initial data collection and analysis of the study. Great attention was paid to unearthing the indigenous meanings people in local Chinese schools attached to their interactions. The study tried to make a genuine effort to delve into the meaning world of the people and understand how they negotiated the micropolitics in the schools. Therefore, the researcher was alert to the "local concepts" used by the people.

To fulfill its purpose, the study adopted a qualitative approach. Specifically, the study used ethnography methods (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2007). The reason was that the study was about the micropolitical culture of the schools; ethnography methods befitted the purpose of interpreting the culture of a group (Geertz, 1973; Wolcott, 1987). Essentially, the study examined how people in the school organizations defined and dealt with their micropolitical interactions in the reform context. The perspectives of the people in dealing with the micropolitical interactions constituted the micropolitical culture of the organizations. To unveil the micropolitical culture, an ethnography eye helped.

The study chose to examine schools in City G, which had been a typical case at local level in terms of reforms for educational decentralization and accountability. Since 2003, City G had been a pioneer in implementing reforms for educational decentralization and accountability. Its reform initiatives included, among others, Performance-related Pay System for Teachers and Career-ladder-system for Principals.

Within City G, three schools were chosen as the research sites (Patton, 1990) with a cross-classification based on two dimensions. The first dimension was whether a school was a municipal school or non-municipal school. This might impact the way the school carried out the reform policies, made by municipal government, and in turn shaped the micropolitics in the school. The other dimension was whether the school was a weak competitor or strong competitor in the local marketplace. Studies suggested that a school's competitive position might impact power relations in the school (Ball & Maroy, 2009; Odden, 1995, cited in Whitty et al., 1998, p. 57). A sampling based on the two dimensions helped explore school micropolitics in various specific local situations.

Based on the above discussion, the research raised the following research questions and sub-questions:

1. What is micropolitics in   the public secondary schools in City G like?

    • What do people in the schools pursue in the micropolitics?

    • How do people in the schools negotiate the micropolitics?

2. Why is micropolitics in   the public secondary schools in City G the way it is?

    • Why do people in the schools pursue what they pursue in the micropolitics?

    • Why do people in the schools negotiate the micropolitics the way they do?

3. What are the commonalities and variations among the schools in terms of micropolitics?

Using ethnography, the study collected data through semi-structured, in-depth interviews and participant observation. Relevant documents were gathered. The study paid attention to including participants with various backgrounds (gender, subject, position, seniority, Party membership, teacher representative or not, etc). An analysis of the data suggested the main findings discussed in Chapters 5 and 6, which addressed question 1 and question 2.

7.2 Summary of the major findings of the research

7.2.1 Status-centered micropolitics

To summarize the findings, an option is to condense the ideas to short paragraphs. This tends to oversimplify the meaning of the findings. Indeed, you may have noticed that many local concepts and subtle relationships were pointed out in the findings. A brief summary of the points is more misleading than clarifying: the concepts will become void when they are separated from the context introduced and the examples attached. Similarly, the relationships may become hard to understand.

Therefore, instead of simply summarizing the points, I highlight five propositions

based on the findings. Linked together, the propositions give a general picture of school micropolitics in the context of reforms for educational decentralization and accountability in mainland China. They answer the main research questions of what the micropolitics in the schools is like and why people negotiate the micropolitics the way they do. I first state the five propositions and point out the logical connections among them. Then I discuss each of them in more detail. Before start, I must emphasize that the propositions only refer to the three schools under study. What I am doing here is inferring from the findings to the general pattern of micropolitics in the three schools under study.

The five propositions are as follows.

- P1: Micropolitics in the schools centers on status in terms of supervisors' recognition for one's role performance as a teacher or middle manager.

- P2: The central concern on status in terms of supervisors' recognition leads people in schools to negotiate school micropolitics in largely individual and covert ways.

- P3: The extent to which teachers voice their concerns in public is contingent upon whether they think doing that would harm their status in terms of supervisors' recognition.

- P4: Nourishing and sustaining the motivation and commitment of teachers requires supervisors to show proper recognition for the role performance of the teachers, that is, to grant the teachers the status they think they deserve.

- P5: The context of increasing performance pressure from governmental and parental expectations and competition among schools fosters performance-based status differentiation in the schools as a way to motivate teachers.

The main idea put forth by this study is status-centered micropolitics, which is indicated by proposition one. It means that status, not money or issues of curriculum and pedagogy, is the central concern in school micropolitics. To repeat, status means

one's relative standing symbolically recognized by supervisors (*lingdao*, 领导) and co-workers for one's role performance as a teacher or middle manager in a school. While people also care about money and sometimes issues of curriculum and pedagogy in micropolitics, they seem to put status on the top of their concerns.

The centrality of status is critical for us to understand the overall feature of micropolitics in the schools under study. In other words, proposition 1 is the basis, the logical reason behind all the other four propositions. It is like the root of the tree.

For example, it is because the centrality of status that people engage in school micropolitics individually and covertly. In other words, the central concern on status shapes the strategies of people in school micropolitics. As defined, status is mainly about supervisors' recognition of an individual. In other words, status is about how much recognition an individual gets from supervisors. If one is not satisfied with the status given by supervisors, she usually pursues a higher status in an individual way rather than collectively. Also, an open conflict with supervisors is generally not welcomed by supervisors and reduces supervisors' recognition of one. Therefore, in micropolitics of status, individual and covert strategies are mostly used. People's central concern on status also shapes the features of micropolitical strategies they use in other areas such as money. That is, when people pursue interests in micropolitics of money, they also often do it in an individual and covert way. After all, collective and overt strategies can easily hurt one's relationship with supervisors and harm one's status in terms of supervisors' recognition, which is one's central concern.

Likewise, proposition 1 is the logical basis for propositions 3, 4, and 5. Teachers sometimes choose to voice their opinions publicly, sometimes not. Whether a teacher chooses to express her opinion in public discussions is contingent upon whether doing that will harm her status in terms of supervisors' recognition. Also, whether she chooses to work hard is contingent upon whether she gets the status she thinks she deserves. In addition, given the centrality of status, it is easy to understand that to

respond to the context of increasing performance pressure, schools use performance-based status differentiation to motivate teachers.

In short, proposition 1 is the core proposition. Status-centered micropolitics characterizes the micropolitics in the public secondary schools under study. The five propositions are discussed in more detail as follows. Most ideas and examples drawn on in the discussion have appeared in Chapters 5 and 6.

7.2.2 Proposition 1

P1: Micropolitics in the schools centers on status in terms of supervisors' recognition for one's role performance as a teacher or middle manager.

The centrality of status was shown in various ways. For example, when the participants dealt with the intricacies of work relations, status was their top concern. They tried to protect others' status and saw it as a taboo to "make petty reports", that is, to disclose someone's delinquencies and errors in role performance to supervisors. Hurting others' status was regarded as severe hurt. Note that the centrality of status did not mean that all teachers actively engaged in the micropolitics of status all the time. Rather, what was meant was that status was a salient aspect in people's concerns. Even those least engaged in the micropolitics were impacted by micropolitics of status. Teacher Kang in HYM was a good example. In the interview, she emphasized that she worked for the students, not the principal. Still, when Principal Lan praised her, she felt happy and motivated.

Compared with micropolitics of status, micropolitics of money was peripheral. To be clear, money was important. It was just not the central concern in people's micropolitical efforts. Admittedly, money sometimes emerged as a central issue. For example, occasionally, the participants in the schools under study were encouraged to express their opinions about the allocation plans for teachers' merit pay. But over the long term, money did not occupy the primary attention of people in school

micropolitics. One contributing factor was that the salary structure was basically fixed. Like money, issues of curriculum and pedagogy were peripheral in the micropolitics of the schools under study. The participants only reported a few micropolitical plays related to issues of curriculum and pedagogy.

Chapter 6 showed why status was the central concern in school micropolitics and why money and issues of curriculum and pedagogy were less central. It pointed out that expectations from the government and parents and the competition among schools had shaped the performance-based evaluationism in the public secondary schools in City G. The performance-based evaluationism was seen to further lead to the centrality of status in the schools. The chapter also discussed how the nature of teachers' work as "*liangxinhuo*" encouraged both the managers and the managed to engage in micropolitics of status. Ambiguity in performance evaluations and employment security of teachers also contributed to the centrality of status.

7.2.3 Proposition 2

P2: The central concern on status in terms of supervisors' recognition leads people in schools to negotiate school micropolitics in largely individual and covert ways.

This proposition depicts the general feature of strategies people use in school micropolitics.

People generally engaged in micropolitics of status in an individual way. Teacher Liu's email to Principal Song in YFM, shown in Story 1 illustrated this well. At the beginning of his first email, he apologized for going to the principal's office to complain about the results of award allocation. In particular, he apologized for doing that together with Teacher Han. In Teacher Liu's words:

First, I am sorry to disturb you. This afternoon, I went to talk with you about the

trivial matters, and I did that together with Teacher Han! (首先很抱歉打搅您，今天下午去找您说了这些琐碎的事，而且是和韩老师一起去找的您！) *(Story 1: Teacher Liu's email to Principal Song in YFM, July 6, 2010)*

The email suggested that it was unusual to complain about evaluation results together with another teacher. In other words, the norm seemed to be that people pursue their interests in micropolitics of status individually.

In micropolitics of money, generally speaking, people also pursued their interests individually. Actually, when the participants talked about salary matters, they used the term "*qieshen liyi*" (切身利益, literally, interests that impact one's body). Seldom did they use the term to refer to other matters. The term indicated that salary was largely an individual concern. When evaluating allocation plans for merit pay, the participants generally calculated how the plans would impact their own salaries. Decisions of supporting or vetoing the plans were also made largely on an individual basis. No stable and formal form of collaboration united teachers together. Teacher Teng in YFM was a good example. Though she disliked the allocation plan proposed by administrators, she still was about to vote for it. The reason was that she thought a veto would be useless if only she vetoed the plan. She did not change her idea until she had some occasional discussions with her colleagues at the school-wide meeting (see Table 5.1, school-wide meeting on January 14, 2011).

Engaging in school micropolitics covertly meant avoiding conflicts with supervisors, at least in public. In micropolitics of status, most of the strategies employed by the participants were covert: working hard, not to fight for honor, withdrawing work effort, complaining to the principal in private conversations and individual correspondences, etc. Also, in micropolitics of money, most of the strategies used by the participants were covert: complaining behind administrators, complaining through trusted intermediaries, complaining to the principal in private correspondences, dissenting in anonymous voting, etc. Note that dissenting in

anonymous voting was a covert strategy since it did not expose the identity of the dissident.

The centrality of status leads to people's individual[1] and covert strategies in school micropolitics. Status mainly has to do with supervisors' recognition of one as an individual. This suggests that people generally pursue higher status in an individual way rather than collectively: it does not make sense to win individual status with collective effort. The other contributing factor is the relativity of status. That is, one's higher status means lower status of others. This hinders the collaboration among teachers. The choice of covert strategies is also understandable, for overt strategies may hurt one's relationship with supervisors and lower one's status in terms of supervisors' recognition.

When we understand the centrality of status in school micropolitics, we also understand how the formal institution of teacher collaboration becomes useless. The only formal institution for teacher collaboration in micropolitics is Teacher-Staff Representative Meeting. It allows teachers to vote on major decisions proposed by school management team. On the surface, this gives teachers an opportunity to collaborate and exchange ideas. They can even veto the proposals they disagree with. But in practice, the institution easily becomes useless. Teachers in all the three schools under study generally pointed out that Teacher-Staff Representative Meeting was just a form lack of substance. It was just a way to legitimate the decisions

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[1] Blasé and Anderson (1995) point out a "predominantly individualistic political orientation in teachers" (p. 96) in the U.S. schools they have studied: "Teachers seemed to operate quite individually (almost anarchistically), in their political relations with principals: there was little evidence of collective consciousness or collective action" (Blasé & Anderson, 1995, p. 95). Though this pattern appears similar to the individualistic political orientation of teachers in this study, the reasons behind could be quite different. Actually, Blasé and Anderson (1995) briefly mention several explanatory factors for the pattern they have found in the U.S. teachers. Among the factors, status, as defined in this study, is not included. Careful comparative studies are needed to assess to what extent teachers in Chinese schools and U.S. schools share the pattern of individualistic political orientation. Such studies are also needed if we are to account for the similarities and differences between the micropolitical orientations of Chinese teachers and U.S. teachers.

already made by the management.

The centrality of status helps us see how the Teacher-Staff Representative Meeting loses its use for micropolitical collaboration among teachers. Given the centrality of status, teachers would rather pursue their interests individually and covertly instead of negating the principal's idea in open forums. Therefore, it is unusual for teachers to collaboratively veto the principal's proposal at the Teacher-Staff Representative Meeting. This was particularly true when the principal was present at the meeting and teachers voted by raising hand, which had long been the case in the schools under study. For example, in HYM, Teacher Hao once led teacher representatives to veto a plan when the principal, Principal Ni, happened not to join the meeting. But the next day, Ni looked annoyed. Principal Ni joined all the following Teacher-Staff Representative Meetings; Teacher Hao and others never vetoed the plans proposed by Ni again. As Teacher Hao commented: "Who dares to annoy the principal? (谁敢得罪校长啊？)" This example was particularly telling, for Teacher Hao was vocal, as the interview with him suggested. You can imagine what a less vocal teacher would have done.

7.2.4 Proposition 3

P3: The extent to which teachers voice their concerns in public is contingent upon whether they think doing that would harm their status in terms of supervisors' recognition.

We have seen several examples of this before. To continue Teacher Hao's example just mentioned, when he perceived that expressing opinions would hurt his status in terms of principal's recognition, he chose to simply sign on whatever plans proposed by Principal Ni with little discussion. Later on, Ni was relocated to another school and Mr. Lan became the principal of HYM. Lan did not join the Teacher-Staff Representative Meetings and was seen by teachers as a democratic leader. In this situation, Teacher Hao and other representatives had more discussions at the

Teacher-Staff Representative Meetings. Another example was Teacher Teng in YFM. Before the meeting at which teachers vetoed the allocation plan for merit pay proposed by administrators (see Table 5.1, school-wide meeting on January 14, 2011), she and other teachers did not discuss much about the allocation plans even in private talks. After the veto, she felt that the school wanted to hear teachers' genuine inputs. In her words, "You [administrators] let us talk, right?" As she indicated, teachers became more willing to express their opinions in office discussions.

This proposition suggests that the teacher adapts to the micropolitical orientation of supervisors. In other words, the teacher does not have a fixed attitude of voicing her opinions or not. She actually adapts to how supervisors would respond to her suggestions. Her central concern is whether expressing her opinions would hurt her status in terms of supervisors' recognition. This echoes what Blasé and Anderson (1995) have found in U.S. schools. As they indicate, teachers in the U.S. schools in their study adapt their micropolitical strategies to the micropolitical orientation of the principals.

the present data indicate that principal openness and closedness were directly related to a relatively open micropolitical orientation and a closed orientation in teachers, respectively. (Blasé & Anderson, 1995, p. 94)

7.2.5 Proposition 4

P4: Nourishing and sustaining the motivation and commitment of teachers requires supervisors to show proper recognition for the role performance of the teachers, that is, to grant the teachers the status they think they deserve.

This is also due to the centrality of status. When the teacher is not satisfied with the status she gets from supervisors, a usual strategy is passive resistance. The participants referred to this strategy as "*yingfu*" (应付, deal with something in a superficial way). The proposition shows how the centrality of status is invoked in the

"organizing" process (Weick, 1995) of the school. Only when people feel that they get the status they think they deserve will they be motivated. Only then will the organization work as an organization. Otherwise, it is just a collection of people who do not carry out the functions. In other words, status is the underlying logic of the "organizing" process in the Chinese schools under study.

We have seen some examples that support this proposition. Once, Teacher Mao in HYM was not satisfied by the results of evaluation on his work performance. In his words, the principal "did not recognize my work". Therefore, Mao just dealt with his duties in a superficial way. Later on, his old classmate, Mr. Ma, became the principal of HYM. Mr. Ma appreciated Mao's capability an asked him to be a Grade Head. Mao's motivation seemed to come back.

Another example was Teacher Liu in YFM. In his email to Principal Song, he went to great lengths to demonstrate that he deserved higher status in the form of honor or awards. He asked Principal Song to reconsider the result of evaluation on his performance so that he would be as motivated as before.

> *Last, I really hope that you give me and some other teachers an answer so that I can forget about this issue. In the future, I will continue to go by my nature, work hard, and finish every task carefully. But I hope that you can help me regain the motivation to work as hard as I did before. (最后我真的望您，给我也给一些老师一个回复！让我真真的快忘掉此事，我以后会按我的本性继续拼命认真做好每一项工作！但也望您帮我找回一如既往认真做事的心！) (Story 1: Teacher Liu's email to Principal Song in YFM, December 1, 2010)*

What Teacher Liu implied was that his motivation in work would be hurt if he did not get a fair evaluation of his performance.

7.2.6 Proposition 5

P5: The context of increasing performance pressure from governmental and parental expectations and competition among schools fosters performance-based status differentiation in the schools as a way to motivate teachers.

This is also understandable, given the centrality of status. To handle the increasing performance pressure, schools need to find ways to motivate teachers to work harder. Since status is teachers' central concern, schools make more use of status differentiation. Performance-based evaluations serve as the basis for the status differentiation so that teachers work hard to deliver good performance.

All the three schools under study had been facing increasing performance pressure in the recent years. One source of the pressure was the government. Since 2003, the Education Bureau of City G had been promoting a series of accountability policies. For example, the Action Plan to Invigorate Junior Middle Schools proposed to rank the performance of the schools according to a set of indices (The Government of City G, 2004). The Public Recruitment of Principals and the Career-ladder-system for Principals also increased the performance pressure for principals. Another source of increasing pressure came from school competition. Several famous schools, including private schools, had been expanding. This intensified the competition for quality students. As Principal Song in YFM commented, poor performance in major tests might even threaten the survival of a school.

To address the challenges of increasing performance pressure, all the three schools were found to be making more use of performance-based status differentiation to motivate teachers. In HYM, Principal Ma had been considering a more comprehensive rewarding plan for teachers while a merit pay system for teachers was already in place. As he indicated, the idea was to praise the good performers in prominent ways. In YFM, a title of *"gongxun jiaoshi"* was created in 2003. Since

then, the title was awarded to only two to four teachers every year. In 2009, the school adopted the Grade Responsibility System, which allowed grade leaders to pick teachers from all teachers in the school. Those teachers who were not picked by any grade were sent to non-teaching posts, which was considered as a severe hurt to the teachers' status. As shown before, Principal Song used the reform to break the "iron rice bowl" of teachers. He knew well that the concern on status would drive teachers to work harder after the reform. In addition, starting from the beginning of 2010-2011 academic year, Principal Song issued Execution Reports. In the reports, he publicly praised and criticized the teachers for their role performance through internal email system. Similarly, since 2005, QSM devised the ladder comprising "Education New Star", "Education Famous Teacher", and "Education Expert" for teachers to encourage better role performance.

With schools making more use of performance-based status differentiation to motivate teachers, the administrators seemed privileged. Recall that status was mainly about supervisors' recognition. More use of performance-based status differentiation meant that the administrators got more say in evaluating teachers' work performance. The reform of Grade Responsibility System in YFM was a good example. If a teacher wanted to keep her status, she needed to work hard to leave a good impression on grade leaders. Sometimes, teachers even flattered the grade leaders. Teachers in the three schools under study generally reported that they felt pressured and powerless; they did not see themselves as an important party in most school decisions. As Teacher Teng in HYM commented: "We have always been working hard and taking our work seriously. Now we have to work even harder."

7.2.7 Comparing among the schools
The three schools under study generally shared the pattern of micropolitics described by the above five propositions. As mentioned before, the sampling of the three schools was partly based on western literature. Several western studies suggest that a school's market position may impact power relations in the school (Ball & Maroy,

2009; Odden, 1995). However, the study did not find significant differences among the three schools in terms of the pattern of micropolitics. Be they strong or weak competitors in the local marketplace, the schools displayed a similar pattern of status-centered micropolitics.

Also, whether a school was a municipal school or not seemed not to impact the pattern of school micropolitics. Admittedly, there were some differences in the way different schools carried out the reform policies made by municipal government. For example, YFM chose to set up a Leadership Team and a Drafting Team to devise the allocation plan for teachers' merit pay. The former comprised eight administrators, while the latter eight teacher representatives. Similar arrangement was not seen in HYM or QSM. However, the differences between municipal schools and non-municipal schools seemed to have little influence on how micropolitics was negotiated in the schools.

7.3 Implications of the study

7.3.1 Implications for knowledge base of school management in mainland China

First, this study is one of the few starting steps to build up the knowledge base of school micropolitics in mainland China. As mentioned before, current empirical knowledge base on the issue is thin. Given the importance of micropolitics for us to understand school organizations, the knowledge base of school micropolitics is critical if we are to advance our inquiries on Chinese schools.

Unlike some studies that only tell anecdotal stories (Wang, 2010), this study highlights the general pattern of school micropolitics in the Chinese schools as status-centered micropolitics. The study also comes up with a set of propositions. Taken together, the propositions provide a general picture of school micropolitics in the context of reforms for educational decentralization and accountability. The study also links the feature of micropolitics in the schools under study with contextual factors such as government and parental expectations, the competition among

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schools, and the nature of teachers' work as "*liangxinhuo*". This helps us understand why micropolitics in the Chinese schools under study is constituted the way it is.

Second, the study has produced indigenous understanding of people's lives and work in Chinese school organizations. It takes a qualitative approach and delves into the meaning world of the people. This way, the study understands what people in the schools mean by terms such as "*lingdao*" and "*liangxinhuo*". Such understanding is important for us to make sense of what is going on in the school organizations. Indeed, the indigenous understanding is the base for us to build up contextualized theories effective for improving school management (Dimmock & Walker, 2000).

Third, the study pushes us to reevaluate the importance of material incentives in educational leadership in Chinese schools. Past research seemed to highlight material incentives as an important way for principals to motivate teachers. For example, Delany and Paine (1991) studied Chinese schools in the context of fiscal decentralization in the 1980s. As they noticed, fiscal decentralization passed financial burden to principals. Therefore, principals had to create school income in various ways such as operating school factories. However, during this process, principals also enjoyed more power since they could use the income created to attract and motivate quality teachers. Qian (2009) and Hu (2010) seemed to continue the theme. For example, Qian (2009) indicated that winning resources might be seen as a core leadership function of Chinese principals. Shanghai principals in her study "believed teachers were driven by material rewards" (Qian, 2009, p. 217). They were found to motivate teachers mainly "by winning more resources to give teachers additional monetary rewards" (Qian, 2009, p. 217).

However, this study leads us to reassess the significance of money in educational leadership in Chinese public schools. As emphasized by the study, money is an important concern in school micropolitics, but not the central concern. It is the status indicated by the results of money allocation that people care the most about. In other

words, it is not money itself but people's interpretation of money allocation that matters. We have seen many examples of this before. For instance, the Class Heads in HYM checked the evaluation results of their classes every day. Admittedly, good performers would get a little more monetary reward than poor performers. However, as Principal Ma explicitly pointed out, it was not the monetary difference that the Class Heads cared about but the honor indicated by money allocation.

To repeat, this study suggests that status-centered micropolitics depicts the general pattern of micropolitics in the Chinese schools under study. It highlights status, not money, as the central concern in school micropolitics. This way, the study pushes us to take another look at using money to motivate teachers in Chinese public schools. While recognizing that money is important, the study alerts us to think more about how people interpret the results of money allocation.

Fourth, the study helps us better understand the dynamics behind the level of teacher participation. As discussed before, some studies touch on power relations in Chinese schools. Many of them point out that the dominant style of decision making in the schools is top down; teachers do not participate as much as they desire (Chen & Liu, 2003; Jin, 2007; Wong, 2006). This study shows that the level of teacher participation is not a fixed thing. The pattern of status-centered micropolitics suggests that the level of teacher participation partly depends on how teachers perceive the result of their participation. If they perceive that participating in school management and expressing their opinions hurt their status in terms of supervisors' recognition, they are less likely to voice their concerns. In other words, teachers adapt their strategies to what supervisors do.

7.3.2 Implications for future research

This study points out some fertile areas for future inquiries. They are stated as follows.

First, micropolitical strategies deserve more attention. Besides the strategies shown in this study, are there any other strategies? What are the conditions for using this or that type of strategies? How are micropolitical strategies connected to the interaction patterns that are not obviously micropolitical such as collegial and personal communication? Techniques such as social network mapping (Scott, 2000) can aid the exploration.

Second, it is important to examine the role of other parties in school micropolitics such as students, parents, local community, and local educational authority. This study focuses on the micropolitics among school practitioners. It is important to analyze how the different parties are connected and interact.

Third, future research should inquire into micropolitics in schools in other sectors and geographical areas. This study points out the pattern of status-centered micropolitics in public secondary schools in City G. Does this pattern hold in schools elsewhere and in other sectors such as primary schools and private schools? It is worthwhile to test the propositions and relationships raised in this study in other samples.

For example, it would be useful to study the schools in poor areas and see whether the pattern of status-centered micropolitics still holds. City G is a relatively more developed city in mainland China; teachers in City G generally get handsome pay for their work. This seems to have reduced the importance of money in school micropolitics and contributed to the centrality of status. Studying schools in poor areas can help us better evaluate the significance of money in school micropolitics in mainland China.

Similarly, future research can explore school micropolitics in primary schools. Compared with secondary schools, primary schools are less departmentalized. Also, they generally face less performance pressure, for their graduates do not need to take

high-stakes tests in a system of nine year compulsory education. To what extent do the above differences lead to different patterns of micropolitics in primary schools? Comparing the features of school micropolitics between primary schools and secondary schools can improve our understanding of what shapes school micropolitics.

Likewise, investigating micropolitics in private schools can teach us more about the link between teachers' employment security and the centrality of status in school micropolitics. In private schools, teachers do not enjoy as much employment security as teachers in public schools do.

A fourth line of future inquiry is to assess the extent to which the pattern of status-centered micropolitics is due to the particular policy context in City G. This study highlights status as the central concern of people in micropolitics in the public secondary schools in City G. Also, the study tries to account for the pattern of status-centered micropolitics with contextual factors such as the local polices. Still, we need to ask: how much is the pattern of status-centered micropolitics due to the particular context of reforms and policies in City G? Future comparative studies are needed to examine the link between the pattern and the policy context of schools. For example, we can compare schools in mainland China and schools in Britain and Australia. Comparing what people think and do in schools within different specific contexts, we can gain deeper understanding of what shapes school micropolitics.

A fifth line of inquiry is on why issues of curriculum and pedagogy are of lesser concerns in micropolitics in the schools under study. This study argues that people in the sample schools generally agree upon the pivotal importance of test performance. This shared perception seems to have reduced the power struggles among people on issues of curriculum and pedagogy. Other factors such as teachers' work as *"liangxinhuo"* seem to have also contributed to the lesser significance of issues of curriculum and pedagogy in school micropolitics. So, how important is each factor?

We need' to assess this through comparative studies. For example, we can compare schools in mainland China with schools in other countries which do not impose so huge pressure of test performance on schools. This can help us evaluate the effect of test preparation on school micropolitics.

Sixth, it is worthwhile to assess to what extent the pattern of status-centered micropolitics in the Chinese schools under study is due to the peculiar nature of Chinese culture. In other words, how powerful is a cultural explanation?

As this study has shown, teachers in the schools under study often expressed their opinions through trusted intermediaries. This is similar to what Dimmock and Walker (2005) have found among teachers in Hong Kong, which generally shares the characteristics of Confucian culture with mainland China. Meanwhile, the teachers in this study also displayed behavior patterns similar to what teachers in other cultures do. For example, the teachers in the Chinese schools under study adapted to the micropolitical orientation of supervisors. This is similar to what Blasé and Anderson (1995) have found among teachers in an American culture.

So, to what extent is status-centered micropolitics due to something called "Chinese culture"? Does the pattern also hold in other cultures? After all, it is dangerous to give easy credence to cultural explanations that tend to neglect the agency of people (Becker, n.d.). Instead of being cultural dupes, people may well use their cultural knowledge to fulfill their interests. Comparisons within and across cultures are needed to ascertain whether and to what extent culture shapes school micropolitics.

7.3.3 Implications for practice

First, the findings of this study help Chinese educational practitioners reflect on their work lives. Teachers and administrators in Chinese public schools negotiate micropolitics every day. The study highlights the centrality of status in the micropolitics; it suggests that the centrality of status impacts the micropolitical

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strategies of people. Also, the study shows how school micropolitics is shaped by factors such as the schools' operational context and the nature of teachers' work. This way, the study helps people in schools gain a holistic view of their work lives and take another look at what they have been doing in micropolitics. They can know better what is going on in the power plays and be more effective in addressing the concerns of other parties. For example, when administrators want to motivate teachers, they should consider how their motivation plans would impact teachers' status.

Second, the findings of this study can be incorporated to preparation programs and passed to future practitioners. As Ouyang (2000) asserts, micropolitical knowledge is badly needed to help starting practitioners to survive and thrive in Chinese school organizations. Micropolitics is real. It is better to consider it than to deny it in preparation programs.

Third, the study contributes to future policy making in mainland China. The study highlights the pattern of status-centered micropolitics in public secondary schools in mainland China. Policy makers need to consider how people in schools would, from a status perspective, interpret policies. That, not the policies on paper, shapes what people do in schools and becomes the implemented policies in practice.

One typical example was the reform of Merit Pay System for Teachers in 2009. On the surface, it was about the allocation of material benefits. However, when it was translated into practice, people in schools attached strong implications of status differentiation to the reform. We have seen this from various stories in the schools in City G. Usually, it was not the absolute monetary difference but the different status indicated by the results of money allocation that influenced people. To design more effective policies, policy makers are advised to take into account the pattern of status-centered micropolitics in schools.

Fourth, the study highlights the challenges of empowering teachers in the context of mainland China. Many people believe that teachers matter the most for school performance and should be given more power in school management. This study points out a key challenge in empowering teachers in mainland China. The challenge is status-centered micropolitics.

In status-centered micropolitics, teachers care the most about their status, which is mainly about supervisors' recognition of their role performance. This mentality makes it difficult for teachers to resist the directives of supervisors. This happens even though there is a formal institution of collaboration for teachers, the Teacher-Staff Representative Meeting. Proposition 3 cautions that when teachers perceive that expressing opinions in public hurts their status, they are less likely to express genuine opinions. The Teacher-Staff Representative Meeting can easily become useless.

Efforts to empower teachers need to address the challenge brought by status-centered micropolitics in schools. What happened in City G in 2010 suggested some ways to address the challenge. In the reform of Merit Pay System for Teachers in 2010, the government of City G explicitly required that schools should have their allocation plans for merit pay passed by teachers voting anonymously. This allowed the teachers to express opinions without worrying about their status in terms of supervisors' recognition. Indeed, in YFM, teachers once vetoed the allocation plan proposed by school leaders (see Table 5.1, school-wide meeting on January 14, 2011), which rarely happened before. Similarly, policy can require that administrators should not be present at Teacher-Staff Representative Meetings. The absence of administrators encouraged teachers to voice their concerns, as the interview with Teacher Hao in HYM suggested.

7.4 Limitations of the study

Though the study holds important implications for research and practice, it has

several limitations.

First, certain data was not accessible. Micropolitics is a sensitive issue. Sometimes people are reluctant to share what they do and think in micropolitics. In HYM, I tried in vain to observe the Executive Meetings where the principal and other administrators discussed the allocation plans for merit pay. In QSM, I did not get a copy of the final allocation plan for merit pay though I heard about its content from the interviewees.

Still, the data collected was seen to be adequate to infer about the general pattern of micropolitics in the schools under study. In all the three schools, I conducted in-depth interviews with people in various roles and carefully observed people's daily interactions for a prolonged period. In both YFM and QSM, I managed to observe nearly all the internal meetings. In particular, I experienced the critical, last stage of designing allocation plans for merit pay in YFM (see Table 5.1). In HYM, where I did not observe the Executive Meetings, I collected abundant relevant documents from its internal website.

A second limitation had to do with the use of self-reports. A major source of data was interviews in which participants reported their past activities and their perceptions and feelings. However, the participants might not remember past things accurately. Also, they might purposefully not to share the things they knew.

While the use of self-reports introduced the risks, it was seen not to hurt the overall trustworthiness of the study. As mentioned before, I made great efforts in building up personal relationships with the interviewees. The efforts seemed to help. Generally speaking, interviewees welcomed the study and responded to my questions with extended and detailed answers. Indeed, when I was about to end the interviews, many of them told me sincerely that they usually did not share as much as they just did with me. Whenever possible, the reports of interviewees were checked with one

another and with documentary evidence and observational data. The themes discussed before such as "*liangxinhuo*" were validated with data from multiple sources.

A third limitation was about the sampling of schools in the study. As discussed before, the study used a cross-classification table (see Figure 4.1) to sample the schools. However, one cell in the table was missing. The cell represented a municipal school which was a weak competitor in the local marketplace. No such a school was available in City G. In such a school, would the pattern of status-centered micropolitics hold? This study could not say anything for sure on this. The answer awaits a new study to be conducted elsewhere in mainland China.

A fourth limitation of this study was that it only examines micropolitics within schools. That is, the study focused on how people in the school organization, the principal, the middle managers, and the teachers defined and dealt with their power relations. On one hand, it did not touch upon micropolitics among schools. A possible example of micropolitics among schools is that two schools cooperate to drive another school out of the local competition. Cases such as this were out of the scope of inquiry of this study. On the other hand, the study did not probe into the link between micropolitics at the school level and micropolitics at higher levels such as district level. District and higher level governments may play important roles in shaping what is going on in schools. This deserves attention in mainland China, where the government still retains much authority over schools.

A fifth limitation was generalizability. The study examined school micropolitics in public secondary schools in City G in the specific reform context. Based on the data, the study highlighted the pattern of status-centered micropolitics in the schools under study. Also, it pointed out the factors leading to the pattern such as government and parental expectations and the nature of teachers' work. Many of the factors seem to also exist in other areas of mainland China. This prompts us to think that public

secondary schools in other areas of mainland China may also share the pattern of status-centered micropolitics. However, the findings of this small scale, in-depth study were only about what was going on in the specific context. Before further inquiries such as large scale quantitative studies test the propositions, no generalizability can be claimed.

7.5 Concluding remarks

Ball (1987) acknowledges the challenges in micropolitical studies of schools:

> *Some of the areas that I have begun to explore have been virtually untouched by previous studies of schools. They concern, in some respects, as Hoyle points out, 'an organisational underworld' (1982, p. 87), which it is difficult to gain access to. Issues are touched upon which many teachers would prefer to deny or ignore, quite understandably. Hoyle also suggests that 'There may be good reason for the academic neglect of micro-micropolitics. It is perhaps considered slightly unrespectable, or too self-indulgent' (p. 88). (Ball, 1987, p. xi)*

Still, Ball insists on the importance of studying school micropolitics:

> *Yet to deny the relevance of micro-micropolitics is in effect to condemn organizational research to be for ever ineffectual and out of step with the immediate realities of life in organizations. (Ball, 1987, p. xi)*

It is in this spirit that this study is done. Micropolitics has been found to be rich and complex in British (Ball, 1987) and American (Blasé & Anderson, 1995; Malen, 1995) schools; it seems just as rich and complex, if not more so, in the Chinese schools under study. This study contributes more by suggesting the large territory of the unknown than by showing the known. It barely touches the tip of the iceberg.

Appendices

Appendix 1: Interview schedule
Interview schedule: The principal (in Chinese)

访谈提纲：校长

A) 个人信息

您从哪一年开始在这所学校任职？

到这所学校之前您的经历是怎样的？能否按照时间顺序说说您担任过的职务？

B) 教育改革背景：分权与问责

近些年来哪些教育改革让您印象深刻？

对下列改革政策，您有哪些印象？

- 2003 年教师和校长聘任制改革
- 2004 年校长职级制改革
- [仅初中]《2004 年振兴初中行动计划》
- 2003 年教职工分配制度改革
- 2010 年绩效工资制改革

C) 利益、角色定义与扮演

自我利益

您觉得怎样才是一位好校长？您特别看重哪些方面？

要在您的工作中实践这些方面，就来自于教师们的方面而言，有哪些促进或阻碍的因素？[教师=带课教师]

您是如何尝试增加那些促进因素、减少那些阻碍因素的？您是如何决定那样处理的？

****理念利益*

您认为学校教育的目的是什么？

要评价一所中学的办学成果，您觉得哪些方面特别重要？

您是如何形成这种看法的？

您觉得您学校的教师们是怎么看待这个问题的？为什么您这样觉得？

在这个问题上的看法大家有哪些不一致的地方？您是如何处理的？

您是怎样决定那样处理的？

教师们有什么反应？

物质利益

您觉得现在教师的工资待遇水平怎么样？

您是如何处理您所在学校教师的工资待遇的？您是如何决定那样做的？

教师们是怎么看的？他们是怎么做的？

D）互动

微观政治互动 / 期望

您觉得怎样才是一位好教师？您特别看重哪些方面？

作为校长，您对教师有哪些期望？您是出于哪些考虑而这样期望的？

您是怎样去影响教师们以实现这些期望的？您是如何作出那些决定的？

教师们有哪些反应？

您觉得教师们对您有哪些期望？您是怎样形成这种看法的？

您如何看待这些期望？

在您看来，教师们是怎样来影响您的工作的？

您是如何反应的？您是如何决定那样反应的？

在您看来，您和教师们的关系上，有哪些方面比过去变得更好了或不那么令人

满意了？

控制范围

您觉得在哪些事情上教师应该能自主作决定？

您觉得在哪些学校事务上教师应该参与决策？

在那些事务上，您认为教师们以什么方式参与决策比较适当？

您会在什么情况下征求教师们的意见？您是怎样做的？

E）学校组织特征的影响

教职工代表大会是怎样的角色？

教职工代表是怎样产生的？

他们会参与哪些决策？以什么方式参与？

校内党组织是怎样的角色？

年级和学科教研组是怎样的角色？

中层管理者是怎样的角色？

Interview schedule: The principal (in English)

A) Personal information

When did you become the principal of this school?

Can you tell me your experiences before that? Can you list the positions you have taken, from the earliest to the latest?

B) The context of reforms for educational decentralization and accountability

Which reforms over the recent years impressed you much?

What are your impressions about the following reform policies?

- Contract-based Teacher Employment Reform (2003)

- Public Recruitment of Principals (2003)

- Career-ladder-system for Principals (2004)
- Action Plan to Invigorate Junior Middle Schools (2004) (for junior middle schools only)
- Performance-related Pay System for Teachers (2003)
- National Merit Pay System for Teachers (2010)

C) interests, role definitions, role performance

self-interests

What is your idea on "a good principal"? What are the most important qualities of a good principal?

When you try to actualize these qualities in your work, what facilitating/constraining factors have you encountered from teachers?

How did you try to increase the facilitating factors and reduce the constraining factors? How did you decide to deal with them that way?

ideological interests

What is the purpose of schooling in your eyes?

What are the important things you think we should look at when we evaluate the performance of a secondary school?

How did you form that view?

In your eyes, how would teachers in your school think about the purpose of schooling? Why do you think that way?

What are the discrepancies in people's views on this issue? How did you handle the discrepancies?

How did you decide to handle them the way you did?

How did teachers respond?

vested interests

How do you evaluate the current salary level of teachers?

How did you deal with the salary issues in your school? How did you decide to deal with them that way?

How did teachers see it? What did they do?

D) interaction

Micropolitical negotiations / expectations on teachers

What is your idea on "a good teacher"? What are the most important qualities of a good teacher?

As a principal, what are your expectations on teachers? Out of what considerations do you expect that way?

How did you try to influence teachers to realize your expectations? How did you decide to do it the way you did?

How did teachers respond?

In your eyes, what are teachers' expectations for you? How did you form that view?

How do you evaluate teachers' expectations?

In your eyes, how did teachers try to influence your work?

How did you respond? How did you decide to respond the way you did?

In your opinion, is there anything that gets better or less satisfactory than before in your relationship with teachers?

spheres of control

In your opinion, what are the things teachers should be able to decide all by themselves?

In your opinion, on what school matters should teachers participate in decision making?

In your opinion, what are the proper ways for teachers to take part in these decisions?

Under what circumstances did you seek teachers' opinions? How did you do it?

E) School organizational features

What is the role of Teacher-Staff Representative Meeting?

How did the teacher-staff representatives come to be representatives?

What decisions do the representatives participate in making? In what ways?

What is the role of Communist Party of China organization in the school?

What are the roles of middle managers?

What are the roles of teaching and research units at the grade level and in different subjects?

Interview schedule: Teachers (in Chinese)
访谈提纲：教师

A)个人信息
您从哪一年开始在这所学校任职？能否按照时间顺序说说您教过的年级与科目、担任的职务？
到这所学校之前您的经历是怎样的？

B)教育改革背景：分权与问责
近些年来哪些教育改革让您印象深刻？
对下列改革政策，您有哪些印象？
- 2003 年教师和校长聘任制改革
- 2004 年校长职级制改革
- [仅初中] 《2004 年振兴初中行动计划》
- 2003 年教职工分配制度改革
- 2010 年绩效工资制改革

C)利益、角色定义与扮演

自我利益

您觉得怎样才是一位好教师？您特别看重哪些方面？

要在您的工作中实践这些方面，有哪些促进或阻碍的因素？

您是如何尝试增加那些促进因素、减少那些阻碍因素的？您是如何决定那样处理的？

理念利益

您认为学校教育的目的是什么？

要评价一所中学的办学成果，您觉得哪些方面特别重要？

您是如何形成这种看法的？

您觉得您学校的其他教师是怎么看待这个问题的？为什么您这样觉得？

您觉得您学校的校长是怎么看待这个问题的？为什么您这样觉得？

您在这个问题上的看法与其他人有哪些不一致的地方？您是如何处理的？

您是怎样决定那样处理的？

其他人是怎么处理的？

物质利益

您觉得要做好您的工作需要哪些物质条件，比如办公设备、资金支持、教室安排、时间安排等？

您是如何争取获得这些条件的？

您是如何决定那样做的？

其他教师是怎样看和做的？

您觉得现在教师的工资待遇水平怎么样？

您觉得哪些具体的地方需要改进，比如评价办法、提升办法等？

具体到您所在的学校，您能举一些具体例子吗？

您是如何尝试改善自己的工资待遇的？您是如何决定那样做的？

其他教师是怎样看的？他们是怎样做的？

D) 互动

微观政治互动／期望

您觉得校长对您的工作有哪些期望？您是怎样形成这种看法的？

您如何看待这些期望？

在您看来，校长是怎样来影响您的工作的？

您是如何反应的？您是如何决定那样反应的？

其他教师呢？

您觉得怎样才是一位好校长？您特别看重哪些方面？

作为教师，您对校长有哪些期望？您是出于哪些考虑而这样期望的？

您是怎样去影响校长以实现这些期望的？您是如何作出那些决定的？

校长是如何反应的？

其他教师是怎样去影响校长的？

在您看来，教师们和校长的关系上，有哪些方面比过去变得更好了或不那么令人满意了？

控制范围

您觉得在哪些事情上教师应该能自主作决定？

在哪些情况下您会觉得自己的自主权没被尊重？

您觉得在哪些学校事务上教师应该参与决策？

您是如何争取和保障自己的决策权的？关于这方面，能举些您工作中的具体例子吗？

您是如何决定使用哪种教科书和教辅材料的？

您是如何决定使用哪种教学方式和学习活动的？

您是如何决定教学大纲、进度安排、难度水平的？

如何决定您带现在这个班和科目的？

E）学校组织特征的影响

教职工代表大会是怎样的角色？

教职工代表是怎样产生的？

他们会参与哪些决策？以什么方式参与？

校内党组织是怎样的角色？

年级和学科教研组是怎样的角色？

中层管理者是怎样的角色？

您觉得哪些人是中层管理者？哪些人特别关键？您是怎样形成这种看法的？

Interview schedule: Teachers (in English)

A) Personal background

When did you start to work in this school? Can you list the grades and subjects you have taught and the positions you have taken, from the earliest to the latest? What were your experiences before you join this school?

B) The context of reforms for educational decentralization and accountability

Which reforms over the recent years impressed you much?

What are your impressions about the following reform policies?

- Contract-based Teacher Employment Reform (2003)
- Public Recruitment of Principals (2003)
- Career-ladder-system for Principals (2004)
- Action Plan to Invigorate Junior Middle Schools (2004) (for junior middle schools only)
- Performance-related Pay System for Teachers (2003)

- National Merit Pay System for Teachers (2010)

C) Interests, role definitions, and role performance

self-interests

What is your idea on "a good teacher"? What are the most important qualities of a good teacher?

When you try to actualize these qualities in your work, what facilitating/constraining factors have you encountered?

How did you try to increase the facilitating factors and reduce the constraining factors? How did you decide to deal with them that way?

ideological interests

What is the purpose of schooling in your eyes?

What are the important things you think we should look at when we evaluate the performance of a secondary school?

How did you form that view?

In your eyes, how would other teachers in your school think about the purpose of schooling? Why do you think that way?

In your eyes, how would the principal in your school think about the purpose of schooling? Why do you think that way?

What are the discrepancies in your ideas and others' ideas on this issue? How did you handle the discrepancies?

How did you decide to handle them the way you did?

How did others deal with the discrepancies?

vested interests

To do your work well, what material conditions do you need, like office facilities, funding support, classroom, and time?

How did you try to get the conditions?

How did you decide to do it that way?

How did other teachers see it? What did they do?

How do you evaluate the current salary level of teachers?

What improvements do you think we should make with regard to aspects such as the evaluation on teachers' performance and the promotion criteria for teachers?

Can you give me some specific examples in your school?

How did you try to improve your salary level? How did you decide to do it that way?

How did other teachers see it? What did they do?

D) interaction

Micropolitical negotiations / expectations on the principal

In your eyes, what are the principal's expectations on you? How did you form that view?

How do you evaluate the expectations?

In your eyes, how did the principal try to influence your work?

How did you respond? How did you decide to respond the way you did?

What is your idea on "a good principal"? What are the most important qualities of a good principal?

As a teacher, what are your expectations on the principal? Out of what considerations do you expect that way?

How did you try to influence the principal to realize your expectations? How did you decide to do it the way you did?

How did the principal respond?

In your opinion, is there anything that gets better or less satisfactory than before in your relationship with the principal?

spheres of control

In your opinion, what are the things teachers should be able to decide all by themselves?

In your opinion, on what school matters should teachers participate in decision making?

Under what situations will you feel that your autonomy is not respected?

How did you try to safeguard your right in decision making? Can you give me some specific examples on this?

How did you decide what textbooks and supplementary materials to use in your teaching?

How did you decide what instruction mode and learning activities to use in your teaching?

How did you decide your teaching plan, teaching progress, and level of depth of content?

How are decisions regarding which classes and courses you teach made?

E) School organizational features

What is the role of Teacher-Staff Representative Meeting in the school?

How did the teacher-staff representatives come to be representatives?

What decisions do the representatives participate in making? In what ways?

What is the role of Communist Party of China organization in the school?

What are the roles of middle managers?

What are the roles of teaching and research units at the grade level and in different subjects?

Who are the middle managers? Which middle managers are particularly important?

Appendix 2: Observation guide

Observation guide: Conference

How were the time and place of the conference decided?

How often is the conference held?

What are the conference materials? How were they made? What are the features of the conference materials in terms of their content and forms? When did the participants get the materials?

What is the agenda of this conference? How was it decided?

Who are the participants? How was this decided?

When did the participants know that they are going to join the conference? How much did they know about the agenda and purpose of the conference before the conference?

What is the seating plan in the conference room? How far is each seat away from others? How was it decided?

What do the participants dress in the conference?

What was the sequence of speaking? How long did each one speak? How was the sequence and time of speaking decided?

Were the speeches interrupted? Whose speeches were/were not interrupted? How were the interruptions made? How did the interrupted speaker respond?

The non-verbal signals of the speakers (facial expressions, eye contact, other obvious or subtle movements, tone) and word choices

The non-verbal signals of the speakers (facial expressions, eye contact, other obvious or subtle movements, tone) and word choices

What issues and words did the speakers emphasize? How did they show the emphasis (e.g., tone, body movements, pause)? What reasons did they use to justify what they emphasized?

On what issues did the participants have different opinions? How did they deal with their differences?

What is the decision of the conference? How was it made?

What are the follow-up actions? Who are going to execute them? When are they expected get the follow-up actions done? How were the follow-up actions, the person to follow up, and the time requirements decided?

Are there any conference records?

- If not, why?
- If yes,
  - Who took the record?
  - How was that decided?
  - What got recorded?
  - How were conference records maintained and used?

After the conference

- How do the participants evaluate the conference?
- How do the participants evaluate the way decisions were made in the conference?
- How do the participants evaluate their own roles in the conference?
- Who are talking to whom immediately after the conference? What are they talking? How do they talk?
- In the opinions of the participants, how did the presence of the researcher impact the way they interacted in the conference?

Observation guide: Daily talk

Who were talking? Who else were present?

What were the formal and informal relations among those talking?

Where did they talk? When?

How long did the conversation last?

Hong long did each participant talk with different people?

How far did the participants stand/sit away from each other? Where did each one stand/sit?

How did that change during the talking? How did the change happen?

What was the central issue in the conversation?

What was the sequence of speaking? How long did each one speak? How was the sequence and time of speaking decided?

Were the speeches interrupted? Whose speeches were/were not interrupted? How were the interruptions made? How did the interrupted speaker respond?

The non-verbal signals of the speakers (facial expressions, eye contact, other obvious or subtle movements, tone) and word choices

The non-verbal signals of the speakers (facial expressions, eye contact, other obvious or subtle movements, tone) and word choices

What issues and words did the speakers emphasize? How did they show the emphasis (e.g., tone, body movements, pause)? What reasons did they use to justify what they emphasized?

On what issues did the participants have different opinions? How did they deal with their differences?

How did the conversation ended?

How did the participants evaluate this conversation/this kind of conversation?

How often do they talk this way?

In the opinions of the conversation participants, how did the presence of the researcher impact the way they interacted?

Observation guide: Teachers' office

How large is the space? How many parts is it separated into?

How large is each part?

What are the positions of each part?

Are the parts connected with one another?

Who are the members of this space? Who will be regarded as a stranger when entering this space?

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To what extent are this space open to strangers? What are the rules of allowing strangers into the space?

What are the public materials in the space? How are they placed? Who maintain the materials?

Are there any signs and symbols in the space?

Are there any posters, notices, decorations, or pictures in the space?

What is the seating plan in the space? How did people decide who got which seat?

How far are the seats away from each other?

To what extent are the seats separated from each other?

What are the things on the desks? How are they placed?

Are there any signs or symbols on the desks?

What are the nearby rooms, spaces, or sites?

Appendix 3: Backgrounds of research participants

Table A.1 *Research Participants, by Gender*

Gender	HYM	YFM	QSM	Total
Female	2	7	5	14
Male	9	11	12	32
Total	11	18	17	46

Table A.2 *Research Participants, by Years of Teaching Experience*

Years of Teaching Experience	HYM	YFM	QSM	Total
1-5		4		4
6-10	2	2		4
11-15	1	2	2	5
>15	8	8	11	27
Not Available		2	4	6
Total	11	18	17	46

Table A.3 *Research Participants, by Years of Working in the Sample School*

Years of Working in the School	HYM	YFM	QSM	Total
1-5	2	5		7
6-10	3	6	6	15
11-15	3	2	6	11
>15	3	4	4	11
Not Available		1	1	2
Total	11	18	17	46

Table A.4 *Research Participants, by Teaching Subject*

Subject	HYM	YFM	QSM	Total
Biology		2		2
Chemistry	1	·	3	4
Chinese	1	2	1	4
English	1	2	1	4
Geography		2	1	3
History			2	2
Math	2	2	1	5
Music		2		2
Painting	1			1
physical education		1		1
Physics	1	1	1	3
Politics	3		3	6
Not Available	1	4	4	9
Total	11	18	17	46

Table A.5 *Research Participants, by Being a Teacher-Staff Representative or Not*

Teacher-Staff Representative	HYM	YFM	QSM	Total
Y	2	5	13	20
N	9	13	4	26
Total	11	18	17	46

Table A.6 *Research Participants, by Being a CPC Member or Not*

CPC Member	HYM	YFM	QSM	Total
Y	3	4	10	17
N	8	4	5	17
Not Available		10	2	12
Total	11	18	17	46

Story 1: Teacher Liu in YFM complained to Principal Song about the results of evaluations on his work performance

<u>Teacher Liu's email to Principal Song, July 6, 2010</u>

宋校长：

您好！首先很抱歉打搅您，今天下午去找您说了这些琐碎的事，而且是和韩老师一起去找的您！…

来到扬帆中学工作的 8 年，勤勤恳恳，多做事，认真做事，几乎把所有时间耗在扬帆中学！哪怕是下班时间，在学校工作的时间我坚信我是很多，很夸张的！总是以校为家，和和气气做人，认真教学生，开心与同事相处！

…

高考完后，平行班中我算考得很好的，班级纪律表现也是最好的！可是奖金却差不多最后了，我谦虚，我觉得以后做出更大成绩就好！哪怕同龄的年轻人笑我以校为家，工作拼命过了头！

10 届校长您信任我，给了我理科实验班！我更加努力了，我想我一定要做出些成绩，才能对得起这份信任！偏偏肠胃得了一些怪病，可我坚持了，还多做事，备课组长，分析年级的成绩出来还不吃饭，加班加点的搞出来，不要说多少次晚修后，周末和学生谈话做工作！

…

我生病，天天痛苦要死，没耽误工作！功夫不负有心人，学生爱戴我，评价给我高分，高考出成绩，给我争气。指标分下来 23 个，最多，我心平气和接受，最后考了 32 个，<u>无论总数，还是超额数都居全级最好！</u>我是有付出，有成绩，有热情的！

可是评价那！一开始什么奖都没有！我比差的，没完成的，不要说超标的，不认真工作的都差，他们都有！后来像施舍一样补了个镇优，我好心寒啊！要说年轻，我不年轻了，XX 和 XX 都比我小，可他们出成绩也受肯定啊！

...

像我们这种镇级中学，我这种小科日理科老师以后的评高之路将有多艰难！所以以后再想出这样的成绩，恐怕不可能啦，那怕累死！所以我珍惜这次出了成绩的机会，我不敢让，我真的没办法！我真的不在乎那些奖金，但我真的在乎肯定和荣誉！我真的是有一些上进心的！

我真的望您能考虑一下，得到我迷惑的答案！...

Principal Song's email to Teacher Liu, July 27, 2010

尊敬的刘宏老师：

您好！首先向您道歉，因为这是一封迟到的复信，相信已经让您失望。因为期末那段日子...实在是百事缠身...

一直以来，你在我的印象中，是一个说话不多工作踏实的青年教师，你热爱教育，安心工作，心地善良。...高三的这一年，你带病坚持工作，高考成绩也较好。根据年级三人小组的评优，你最后得到的荣誉是市级兼镇级优秀教师。虽然市级优秀是自然当选，但也是一个肯定。学校和年级组对你的工作过程和绩效都是持肯定态度的。但是在年级评优中，不得不考虑到尽可能让更多的人都得到表彰，所以荣誉不可能太集中到某一个人身上。在历年的评优中，都存在这种情况。

因为评优的事不开心，我非常的理解你。因为我也曾经年轻，我也曾经受过类似的委屈。你在乎它，说明你至少还是在追求进步，在乎别人如何评价。就荣誉的问题，我愿意把自己的经历和体验和你分享交流。

...

在荣誉面前，是"让"还是"争"？是一种人生境界。是否采取"让"的态度，就是被某些人说的傻瓜？我是不以为然的。如果我们太计较太认真，就会生出很多抱怨烦躁痛苦。我的看法，去"争"，甚至"据理力争"，心里始终忿忿不平，争的结果必然是大家都不痛快，争来了或是争不来，最后的结果，都是让人感觉不好，或是此君得理不让人，或是此君无理取闹。

如果我们用很洒脱的态度去"让"，就会让出一片灿烂的星空，让出高尚的人

格魅力，心情会非常的轻松，非常的幸福。究竟"让"是傻瓜，还是"争"是傻瓜？

　　…

　　在工作面前，愿意挑重担、啃硬骨头的人；在名利面前，耐得住寂寞，能受委屈、愿意吃亏的人，是大家伙都非常尊重敬佩的人。在我们的身边，有很多这样的人，我们应该"见贤思齐"，向他们学习。这样，大家都会开心、轻松、幸福、和谐！

　　…

Teacher Liu's email to Principal Song, December 1, 2010

尊敬的宋校长：

　　您好！

　　您在我心中一直是一个睿智的领导者，繁忙而成功的教育管理者，也是敦厚的长者！可是也许正因为这样您和我之间的就难免有不小的距离，而造成你对我的了解不是十分多！而产生些不同的想法！我还是想向您这位和蔼可亲的人谈谈心，<u>只和您谈谈心</u>！

　　我本来已近忘掉了前尘，忘掉了往事，我也回到了自己的快乐！可是事与愿违，从开学到现在，不停地有老师在我面前说这说那！今天学校发上期的教学先进奖励，更多的同事又在说了！让我又有了一些不平静。

　　有人见到我说"<u>刘功勋</u>，你的化学考的好，你的班级考的最好，期奖金很多哦？"我苦笑（心中想我不过中等）！有些人说"小刘，你上期考的不咋样哦，年级不到 40 个老师，你排十几名哦！"还有好多年轻班主任说"叫你傻吧，自己白痴，干的那么认真，那么好，身体搞成这样，结果那？自己笨，我可不会那样！"还有人说"谁让你干事多，懒一点不行啊！有人不喜欢的！"等等。

　　好几个年轻班主任…老是让我教他们班主任的事…我都悉心耐心去帮，去教！但是他们一说我的高三评价，"都是真让人<u>泄气</u>！"。宋校长，<u>现在说起这</u><u>些，我真的不是再想得到什么了！我只是需要一点理解啊！我真的还想再说说！</u>您能再认真看看吗？

　　我不知道您是否还记得我前面给您写的信没有，您认真看没有？我从小性格

就是个很少言，极为内向的人。02年参加工作前，爸妈就不停嘱咐我："孩子你能踏实拼命工作我不担心，可你不会说话，不善打交道，着实让人担心！不要见到长者或领导就吓的不知所以然，就知道低头做事，傻傻做事！要知道和他们说说话，要会说话。不然不礼貌，这样让人产生不好想法！就算你没啥想法在认真工作，人家看到你不理人难免也会乱想！"这话，去年暑假回家，爸妈说我性格咋还这样，没有改进！

04年我换年级…当了5班班主任，高二到高三换成化学2班，从高一到高三我带的班级从来清洁纪律都是最好的！月月优秀文明班，在同类班级中成绩也是最好的！最后高考平行班考的最好！

…

您可以去问一下，以前搭档的老师，他们都说成绩还是刘宏弄得仔细认真！

…

早上7点就到学校，晚上几乎天天10点40才回家，中间根本就不离开学校！不好好吃不好好睡！我的身体能不坏吗，就是从那时开始的！年级的很多事，级长忙不过来，我都去抢着做，有做的漏了或需要建议的我平时都留心，给出好建议，认真做好，这方面您可以问级长！所以到高三下期周一到周日，我从没休息够完整半天，更不要说一天了！

就这样，从高一每次我教的化学都考得数一数二，最后我带的化学2班"差班"<u>全班考上大学</u>，化学2班我教的化学<u>最接近一层次班</u>，<u>对年级做事最多</u>的，最后发高考奖金的时候，我和同样平行班考的比别人好的赵福倒数！发钱级长说"本来按方案，按考试成绩你们不是最低的，但是我要照顾一些人，就把你们调成最低的！"我当时听了，就觉得寒心！但后来想想算了，高三好不容易辛苦完了，算了吧！懒得计较！

07年轮回，又从高一开始，我有兢兢业业做事，教学成绩，带班成绩，从高一到高三都是顶呱呱！可为什么，高二级长有叫我让优秀，高三在考的<u>最好的</u>情况下不评任何奖励，在求他的情况下！得到的答案是，他也没办法，校长们决定的，他也无可奈何，他去争取补一个！

<u>**难道这些真的是您决定的吗？**</u>我想您那么忙，管着全校，应该不会吧！难道老实人，就要次次吃亏，<u>一届一届的被人玩</u>！做的多，做的好，就招人不喜

欢！一届3年，一辈子工作的的时间有几个三年！

……

最后我真的望您，给我也给一些老师一个回复！让我真真的快忘掉此事，我以后会按我的本性继续拼命认真做好每一项工作！但也望您帮我找回一如既往认真做事的心！

Story 2: Mr. Shen in YFM explained his motives to Principal Song

<u>Mr. Shen's email to Principal Song in YFM, March 9, 2010</u>

尊敬的宋校长：

您好！

昨天会议上很多话是说给我听的，我很难过。因为我的思维方式和思想境界与您相比，相差太远，所以经常犯错，给您惹麻烦。但，不管怎么说，我还是想把自己的真实想法说出来。

第一点、那个学生就是上个学期在厕所里吸烟被您捉住，不但不听管教而且还想攻击您的那个人（听宁主任说的，可能您自己早就忘记了）；

他攻击了原班主任潘老师之后，不但没有丝毫悔改之意，还威胁现任班主任尹凤，称之为下一个袭击目标。我只是向您汇报一下而已。

在此之前，我一直都记得您的教诲，都很冷静。班主任不愿意去派出所接人，您让我去，我也去了，并且对学生一直很友好。

在我发现您也很生气，准备打学生的时候（其实是我判断失误，您根本就没有那个意思），我很意外：要打也是我来打，绝不能让校长出手！绝不能让校长犯错误！

于是，我就吓唬了那小子一下——这种人，不吓唬一下恐怕以后还会惹出大乱子！

……

是我的错，但我本意是想为您出一口气，绝没有想到要故意给您添乱的意思。

第二点、当我听到办公室老师们议论纷纷，甚至点名道姓骂您的时候，我是

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急，只是想向您汇报一下真实的情况。绝没有半点想假扮"老师利益的代表者"的意思。我可以不向您汇报吗？

总之，别人可以误会我，可以攻击我，但我只希望您能"了解"我，了解我的真实意思。仅此而已。

　　此致

敬礼！

您的麾下：沈家江

2010 年 3 月 9 日星期二

Story 3: Execution Reports issued by Principal Song in YFM

执行力通报

2010 学年度第 1 号

今天是开学第一天，全校师生精神面貌良好，教学秩序井然。但是仍然出现不应该出现的情况：

上午第一节课，初一（8）班英语课没人上课。责任人：田强。

上午第 4 节课，高一（9）班陈小虎、邓华逃课到篮球场玩耍。责任人：狄安娜。

对执行力出现问题的初一年级和高一年级提出批评。

校长：宋山

2010-9-1

执行力通报
2010 学年度第 2 号

　　今天上午第二节课下课铃响，课间操音乐刚起，有五六位男生聚集在高一楼旁的风雨长廊吸烟。当时我和齐松主任正从新音乐楼出来。这几个男生闻声四散而逃，我们二人追不上，这时丁一克老师、宁湖主任等也闻声前来围堵，但他们跑的飞快，一会儿就不见了踪影。丁一克老师判断他们肯定躲到厕所，结果在厕所里抓到 2 位男生。

　　在此，对丁一克老师提出表扬。丁一克老师的积极行动充分体现了"四个一致"的执行力！只要我们每个老师都做到"四个一致"，学校的整体执行力就一定会大大提高。歪风邪气会越来越少！

　　聚众在校园某个角落吸烟，相信他们不是第一次。昨天出现的逃课到球场玩耍，相信也不是第一回。新的国际交流中心和音乐楼落成，我们的管理范围不断扩大，我们一定要预见到我们管理的死角和盲点，加强管理，消火隐患。

<div align="right">

校长：宋山

2010-9-2

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