

**School Principals in Mainland China:
Core Leadership Practices**

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A Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree of
Doctor of Philosophy
in
Education

The Chinese University of Hong Kong
September 2010

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Abstract

This study investigated the core leadership practices of Chinese school principals, how these practices are applied in schools and the contextual factors that relate to these core practices.

It aimed to unveil the practical knowledge shared by Chinese school principals in leading schools. This purpose derived from the specific context of Chinese school education and the international knowledge base of principalship. On the one hand, great importance has been attached to school principals with the implementation of educational reforms in China. The increasingly complex educational context calls for more comprehensive investigation into leadership practices of Chinese principals. On the other hand, few serious studies have delved into principal leadership practices in Chinese schools, compared with the substantial research conducted in Western societies. Thus, there is a need to conduct empirical research to explore the indigenous wisdom of Chinese school principals.

The general purpose consisted of three sub-purposes. First, it aimed to identify the core leadership practices of Chinese principals; second, to investigate how these practices are enacted; and, third, to discover the contextual factors that influence these practices. Accordingly, the study was guided by three broad research questions:

1. What are the core leadership practices of Chinese school principals?
2. How do Chinese principals enact the core leadership practices in schools?
3. Do certain contextual factors relate to these core leadership practices and their enactment?

The study adopted a mixed methods research approach, sequentially integrating a quantitative survey with qualitative interviews. The survey involved 572 practitioners working at secondary schools located in four cities in Mainland China. Valid data were analysed through statistical methods in SPSS 15.0 and LISREL 8.7. The interviews included six secondary school principals and fifteen other school members selected from the relevant focus groups. The qualitative data were analysed through three steps of coding (i.e. open coding, axial coding, and selective coding) in NVivo 8.7. Finally, findings from both methods were compared and combined.

The integrated findings suggested that:

Chinese school principals adopt six core leadership practices to perform their functions. These are:

- setting direction
- shaping school climate and core ideas
- developing people
- managing instruction and curriculum
- managing administrative affairs
- developing external relationships and resources

These six interrelated core leadership practices could be grouped into three classifications in accordance with their essential functions. The relationships between the different classifications indicate the theoretical pattern of how the core leadership practices work in schools. Based on this understanding, three specific patterns characterise the enactment of these core leadership practices.

- Chinese principals put emphasis on both student academic performance and holistic development.
- Chinese principals adopt a differential pattern of participative decision-making.
- Chinese principals apply the core leadership practices in a hybrid way that integrates visionary, democratic, exemplary, human-oriented and authoritarian leadership behaviours.

Three-levels of contextual factors relate to the core leadership practices of Chinese principals. These factors involve:

- personal conditions: professional knowledge, perceptions, pursuits and experience and personal capability, values, ethics and personality;
- internal school conditions: climate, resources and performance, functional units, other school members' conditions and views, and school type, size and location;
- external context: district authority, administration system, central government's policies, academic pressure, social expectations, local environment, educational conceptions, and mainstream leadership style.

Two integrative models are developed through pulling all the research variables together. These models demonstrate the interaction between the core leadership practices and the contextual factors.

These findings suggest the theoretical and practical implications of the study.

摘要

本研究探討了中國校長的核心領導實踐及其在學校中的運用，并探索了相關情境因素。研究旨在揭示中國校長在領導學校過程中共有的實踐知識。一方面，在中國的教育改革中，校長的作用日益凸現。然而，日趨複雜的教育環境對校長的工作不斷提出挑戰，這就要求我們對校長的領導實踐進行更為全面的研究。另一方面，西方社會對校長領導實踐已進行了大量研究，形成了一系列綜合實踐模型，與之相比，中國校長領導實踐的研究較為薄弱。可以說，中國校長的本土智慧需要更多的實證研究去挖掘。

基於這一目的，本研究主要圍繞以下三個問題展開：中國校長的核心領導實踐是什麼？中國校長如何在學校中運用這些領導實踐？情境因素是否關係到這些領導實踐及其運用？

本研究採用混合研究方法，順次使用問卷調查法和訪談法收集數據。其中，來自四個城市的 572 名中學教育工作者參與了問卷調查。有效數據通過 SPSS 15.0 和 LISREL 8.7 進行統計分析。訪談對象包括六位中學校長和十五位相關學校成員。質化數據分析採用三步編碼在 NVivo 8.7 中完成。經過比較綜合兩類研究發現，最終形成研究結論。

結果表明，中國校長的核心領導實踐主要有六項：確立方向、塑造學校氛圍和核心理念、發展學校成員、管理教學與課程、管理行政事務和發展外部關係與資源。這六項實踐相互聯繫，並可以據其功能歸為三大類。這三類之間的聯繫在理論上揭示了六項領導實踐如何發揮作用。在實際運用這些領導實踐的過程中，中國校長體現出三種具體的模式：既重視學生學業成績又強調學生全面發展；採用差序式的參與型決策方式；通過雜糅方式，綜合利用願景式、民主式、榜樣式、人本式和權威式領導行爲。與此同時，三類情境因素會影響校長的領導實踐。一是個人狀況，包括職業知識、觀念、追求和經驗，及個人能力、價值觀念、道德品質和個性特徵；二是學校內部情況，包括學校氛圍、資源和學業表現、校內職能部門、學校其他成員的狀況與觀念，以及學校類型、規模和位置；三是外部情境，包括地方教育主管部門、行政管理體制、中央政府的政策、學業壓力、社會期望、當地教育環境、教育觀念和主流領導作風。此外，研究提出兩大綜合模型，以闡明核心領導實踐和情境因素在實際中相互作用。這些研究發現顯示出本研究所具有的理論和實際意義。

Acknowledgement

To Professor Allan WALKER

My deepest appreciation goes first and foremost to my supervisor, Professor Allan Walker, for his constant guidance and encouragement. I am so lucky to have been one of his PhD students. He helped me build my academic research skills and walked me gently through all the stages of the thesis. Without his illuminating instruction and high standards the thesis would not have been completed. I have learnt from him how to conduct systematic research and, perhaps more importantly, a commitment to education and empirical research, and a real passion for life. Every bit of progress I've made over the past three years I owe to his help and encouragement. All I want to say is that - dear *shifu*, thank you!

致謝

當答辯委員們一個個起身和我握手，微笑著對我說：“Congratulations, Dr. HU!”，我才突然意識到三年的中大生活即將結束。交初稿時總覺得還早，可如今，時間留給我直抒胸臆的機會就只剩下這段話的空間了。回想三年來的朝夕相處，要感謝的人、讓我感動的事太多太多，自己有限的英文水平恐怕難堪重任。因此，這一次我要用久違的母語向各位老師、同學道一聲感謝！

首先，我最想感謝我的導師，Allan Walker 教授。記得當年初到香港，他第一次見我，問的不是學習而是生活，還笑呵呵地對我說：“Enjoy your life in Hong Kong!”從此以後，我的生活中便多了這樣一個良師益友。他是摯友，總是樂於分享生活中的點滴快樂；他又是嚴師，不斷提出各種問題啓發我的思考；他有時更像一個父親，為我取得的每一個小小進步而歡欣鼓舞。最讓人感動的是他在學業上對我的巨大幫助。作為一個非英語專業的學生，用第二語言寫博士論文對我來說絕對是個挑戰。然而，他總是樂觀地鼓勵我：“Don't worry!”，一點一點地耐心指導我。如果沒有他，也就沒有今天這洋洋灑灑的一大篇論文——雖然筆鋒依然稚嫩，但卻是我成長的見證。在此，請讓我說一聲：親愛的師父，謝謝您！

其次，我要感謝我的另一位導師，盧乃桂教授。記得最初是他在北京對我進行面試，還問了一個非常尖銳的問題，頓時讓我感到在中大學習所要面臨的挑戰。來到中大後，聽他的課，看他的文章，越來越被他的學識和風度所折服，日益感歎“高山仰止”。到了最後一年，當我被論文和工作雙面夾擊得焦頭爛額時，盧先生又不遺餘力地為我出謀劃策，不斷鼓勵我要相信自己。沒有他的支持和鼓勵，我也許就會被困難所阻擋，無法堅持到現在。盧先生，感謝

您的言傳身教和悉心培養。我知道，無論學生走到哪里，您都會一直守在這裏做我們最堅強的後盾！

再次，我要感謝對我論文具有重要幫助的關譽綱博士。她也曾是 Allan Walker 教授的博士生，按照中國人的傳統觀點，她應該是我的同門師姐。也許正是這個原因，她對我格外照顧。在學術研究中，她在自己擅長的量化統計方面對我進行指導。每次我有問題找她，她總是第一時間為我答疑解惑。每次見面，她都微笑著鼓勵我“加油”，叮囑我要保重。正是由於她的無私幫助，才使得我的論文得以順利完成。

第四，我還要感謝我的另一位老師，也是我的師姐，陳霜葉博士。當初就是她陪同 Allan Walker 教授一起去北京進行面試，向我敞開了教育學院的大門。來到香港後我才知道，她原來是我們的師姐，各方面都非常優秀，並最終留在中文大學任教。於是，她便成了我三年來心中的榜樣；而我也總能從她的卓越表現和真知灼見中獲得啟發。尤其是在此次論文答辯中，她對我的論文提出了一系列深刻而獨到的修改建議，加深了我對自身研究成果的理解。

此外，很多人都對我的論文研究提供了巨大幫助。沒有他們的無私幫助，我的論文也不可能完成。他們是北京師範大學的周作宇教授、李罡教授和程鳳春教授，廣東教育學院的王小棉教授，華南師範大學的王紅教授和童宏保博士，還有親愛的杜屏師姐、楊光師姐、張佳偉師姐和常建芳同學，以及參與研究的所有老師和校長，尤其是那 6 位接受訪談的校長。在此，表示衷心的感謝！

當然，我也要感謝所有陪我走過三年時光的同學們。不論是當年的老同學，錢海燕、徐慧璿、李宏利、柯政、陳啓山、劉揚、王曉莉、陳曉波、張佳偉、王豔豔、徐蘭、丁道勇、周金燕、黃斌、楊潔、徐華女等等，還是同年級的黃小瑞、楊蘭、王夫豔、陸慧菁、張僑平、鍾景迅、麥君榮，還是後來的新同學，李曉蕾、陸靜塵、李小青、陳建、董輝、黃顯涵、常建芳、王學學、鄭玉蓮、劉永廣等等，都見證我走過了人生中最重要的一段時光。能與你們相逢在中大教育學院這個大家庭裏，是我生命中最寶貴的記憶。

最後，還要感謝我的父母。雖然他們渴望唯一的女兒能夠守在身邊，卻總是微笑著放手，讓我自由飛翔。每當我需要支持的時候，又總是他們在身後給我力量、為我加油。沒有他們，我也許會放棄夢想，半途而廢。感謝父母的理解和支持，請原諒我一直遠在他鄉，女兒會在今後的時光裏多多陪在你們身旁。

三年的學習終於畫上了一個句號。然而一段故事的結束意味著下一段故事的開始，我期待著自己的下一站！

（文中所有姓名排列不分先後）

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Chapter 1 Introduction

The purpose of this study was to investigate the core leadership practices of school principals in Mainland China. The participants came from a number of secondary schools located in four Chinese cities. The intention derived from a contextual need to explore Chinese school principalship and aims to enrich contemporary scholarship in the field of principal leadership.

The principal is ultimately responsible for almost everything that happens in school and out. We are responsible for personnel – making sure that employees are physically present and working to the best of their ability. We are in charge of program – making sure that teachers are teaching what they are supposed to and that children are learning it. We are accountable to parents – making sure that each is given an opportunity to express problems and that those problems are addressed and resolved. We are expected to protect the physical safety of children – making sure that the several hundred lively organisms who leave each morning return, equally lively, in the afternoon. (Barth, 1980, p. 5)

As Barth describes it, school principals have to fulfil their multiple leadership roles through a variety of practices. A huge amount of research conducted in Anglo-American societies has explored these practices from which several core leadership practices of school principals have been concluded (Cotton, 2003; Cunningham & Cordeiro, 2009; Leithwood *et al.*, 2006b; Mulford, 2007; Robinson, 2007; Waters, Marzano, & McNulty, 2003).

In China, there is a consensus that principals play a critical role in promoting educational quality, school development and education reform (Wang, F., 2005; Wang, J., 2006; Wang, L., 2006; Wang, L., 2007). Accordingly, these formal school leaders take major responsibility for all aspects of school operation. At the same time, the educational context in which school principals work has been largely reshaped by a combination of influences – a mixture of international education reform trends, national societal environment, and ongoing education reform initiatives. The context makes being a school principal as highly challenging as it is important. As such, systematically theorising about the expertise of Chinese school leaders has the potential to inform their practice and understanding of school leadership.

Relevant academic literature is important for building a solid theoretical foundation upon which worthwhile research can be built. As noted, substantial research has been done in Western contexts, especially in Anglo-American societies (Walker & Dimmock, 2000). As a consequence, various leadership behaviours, styles or models have been identified and integrated into a repertoire of 'good practice' of principal leadership in terms of, for example, student learning, school effectiveness, and the success of education reforms (e.g. Cunningham & Cordeiro, 2009; Leithwood *et al.*, 2006b; Mulford, 2007; Robinson, 2007). By comparison, few serious studies of principalship have been conducted in Chinese schools. Perhaps partly because of this, many western conceptions and theories of school leadership have flowed into Chinese schools and increasingly influence school principals' practices in China (Zhang, 2008).

Owing to contextual distinction among different societies, the efficacy of simply borrowing external experiences is questionable (Dimmock, 2002; Hofstede, 2001; Lo, 2008; Spreitzer, Perttula, & Xin, 2005; Walker & Dimmock, 2002b). With this understanding, meaningful insights into Chinese principalship can be gained through collecting and analysing authentic leadership practices of local school leaders. Such exploration will help to reveal how principals work in Chinese schools and add further to both indigenous Chinese and international knowledge bases in the area.

This chapter clarifies the research problem and rationale. It has six sections. The first section expands the rationale of the study and argues the need to conduct research into the key leadership practices of Chinese school principals. The second section specifies the research purposes. In brief, it describes and analyses principal leadership practices in Chinese schools in order to inform both practice and theory. Accordingly, specific research questions are proposed in the third section. The fourth section justifies the importance and implications of the research and the fifth section discusses some limitations of this study. The final section presents a brief introduction to the remaining chapters.

Rationale of the study

This section outlines why it is important to study the core leadership practices of Chinese principals. The argument underpinning the study relates consciously to both the specific context of Chinese schools and what is known internationally about

'good practice' in terms of principalship. These two facets are introduced here and explained in the following section.

First, the increasingly complex educational context in China calls for a comprehensive investigation into principal leadership practices. Influenced by global education reform agendas, current Chinese education has been changed and reshaped by several rounds of reforms which aimed to move the Chinese school system toward decentralisation and quality-orientation (Preus, 2007). As a result, great importance has been attached to principal leadership in terms of guaranteeing educational quality and reform implementation. Thus, Chinese school principals have been burdened with more and more responsibility and accountability for all aspects of school work (Feng, 2006). At the same time, some long-standing traditions still influence the operation of individual schools. The job is made more challenging by the complex societal and educational environment in which Chinese school principals work. Against this intricate contextual backdrop, questions about how principals can lead their school successfully have become the essential concern of policymakers and school leaders themselves (Feng, 2005). A better understanding of the core practices of Chinese principalship is both timely and necessary in order to help Chinese principals 'respond successfully to a relentless influx of local events and broad external forces' (Scott, 2003, p. 42).

Second, recent advances in leadership theory and principal leadership research have opened the door to more in-depth investigation into principal leadership practices. Consistent with the general belief in leadership, principal leadership has been universally recognised as a pivotal factor in terms of student learning and school effectiveness (Day, Leithwood & Sammons, 2008; Leithwood *et al.*, 2006b; MacBeath & Dempster, 2009). As leadership research has focused more on a contextualised and holistic understanding of leadership practice, we have learned more about how context iteratively influences what leaders do and why they do what they do. Research has also shown clearly the complexity and the integrated nature of the principal's job (Gronn, 2009; Hallinger, 2005b; Hallinger & Heck, 1996; Spillane, 2005).

From this contextual perspective, principal leadership practices in Chinese schools may be different from those found in Western schools (Dimmock & Walker, 1998; Walker, 2004). Because of the relatively advanced status of Western research in the

field, however, indigenous insights and imported knowledge are not treated equally in China (Yang, 2005). Much recent literature and many studies of Chinese principalship from within China itself have followed imported theories and ideas (e.g. Sun & Wang, 2008). That being so, in-depth exploration of the key practices in leading Chinese schools will contribute to a sounder academic understanding of Chinese principalship.

Juxtaposition of the contextual and theoretical backdrops suggests the necessity of further empirical study of the core leadership practices of school principals within the complex educational context in China. Such research may best be conducted by 'indigenous researchers, and grounded in the local mental models of the actors' (Ribbins & Gronn, 2000, p. 43).

The following sections expand upon the two broad claims introduced above, and more detail is provided in Chapter Two and Chapter Three. The first part outlines the present educational environment in China and argues for the need to examine the core practices of principal leadership within the complex context. The second part traces the conceptual and research development of principal leadership and clarifies the theoretical underpinnings of the study.

Contextual Background

The contemporary Chinese educational context has been shaped by a mixture of international education reform trends, national societal conditions, and recent education reform agendas. In our area of interest these influences have converged on the importance of principal leadership in schools. At the same time, they have produced an increasingly complex and challenging context within which principals seek to exert their influence and make a difference.

The importance of principal leadership has been recognised internationally. This recognition has grown within a broader, global focus on education and national competitiveness (Brown & Lauder, 1997; Walker, 2003). Built upon a neo-liberalist¹ ideology, numerous educational initiatives have been launched by different countries to maintain and improve their education quality. Initiatives in the education sphere have clustered around decentralisation, accountability, marketisation and

¹ Neo-liberalism refers to a political movement that espouses economic liberalism as a means of promoting economic development and securing political liberty (see Harvey, 2005), which explicitly links education to economic productivity (Walker, 2003).

competitiveness, all of which have impacted on school administration (Henry *et al.*, 2001; Hui & Cheung, 2006). More administrative power has been devolved to the school level and principals have been required to be more accountable for student learning and school improvement (Mok, 2003).

In China, great importance has also gradually attached to principal leadership. Influenced by international educational trends, the Chinese government has initiated several rounds of education reforms. Many of these mirror the ideas prevalent in Western societies and aim to promote a designed national transition from a centralised planned economy to a decentralised market economy. In 1985, the *Decision of the Communist Party of China Central Committee on the Reform of the Educational System* explicitly indicated the start of a 'principal responsibility system', which repositions the school principal as the key leader who takes full responsibility for school operation (SEC, 1991). In 1995, the *Education Law* (NPC) legitimised the respective roles of the central government and individual schools in the educational funding system. School leaders are expected to raise extra resources for school development. A series of reforms and a set of innovative curriculum guidelines have also been enacted to shift Chinese basic education toward a decentralised and 'quality-oriented' system (Feng, 2006; Lo, 2000).

With these reform initiatives, specific administrative policies and systems have been implemented to officially consolidate and strengthen principal leadership at the school level. For instance,

- the 'principal responsibility system' has spread throughout the entire educational system (SEC, 1991);
- the central government has proposed successively a professional training scheme for new principals (SEC, 1989) and certain requirements for principalship (MoE, 1999);
- a new 'exemplary school' system², taking the place of the previous 'key school' system³, has been instigated in order to overcome the imbalance in resource allocation and encourage school leaders to be creative and transformative (SC, 1994); and

² All kinds of schools can apply for and be entitled to the 'exemplary school' for their breakthrough or achievements in promoting Quality Education. See Chapter Two for details.

³ A few excellent senior secondary schools are selected to be given priority in the assignment of teachers, equipment, funds and student recruitment. See Chapter Two for details.

- a ‘career-ladder’ system (*zhiji zhi*)⁴ has been implemented in certain experimental areas (e.g. Shanghai, Beijing) to motivate school principals (Shanghai Education Commission, 2006b).

All these efforts cater for the reform policies, being designed to strengthen the principal’s role as a school leader. This intention indicates an underlying proposition that principal leadership is crucial for school success and quality education.

These seemingly positive measures, however, do not decrease the complexity of the educational environment confronting Chinese school principals. In fact, they make it more complex. Despite Western influence, contemporary Chinese society, to a certain degree, remains rooted in its traditional culture and ideological collectiveness and is characterised by the political dominance of central government and the Party (Lin, 2008). Therefore, notwithstanding the public aims of decentralisation and empowerment, the government still plays a commanding role in Chinese education systems (Wong, 2006, 2007). This is apparent in a number of ways. Almost all principals of public secondary and primary schools are hand-picked by local/district governments; they thus share the same values or ideology expected by the system (Wong, 2006). Even though the decentralisation-oriented ‘principal responsibility system’ has been set up, Chinese school leaders are still inclined to meet the requirements of upper administrative levels rather than fulfil their accountability to other stakeholders (Qian, 2008). In some schools, principals continue to exert their authority arbitrarily on the campus where a paternalistic manner seems to be taken for granted (Li, S., 2005).

Furthermore, the shifting context challenges principals’ leadership capability to cope with multiple educational issues. Since principals are legally responsible for the entire school operation, they have to deal with all major aspects of school work. These include fundraising, community cooperation, internal human resources management, curriculum development, and student learning. According to the requirements of recent education reforms, principals are expected to prioritise school instruction and curriculum, involve others in school administration and change school education from an almost pure examination orientation to quality orientation.

⁴ This is a professional ranking system with a commensurate pay scale for school principals. See Chapter Two for details.

The reality, however, propels school leaders in a contrary direction. For example, increasing marketisation forces them to spend much of their time seeking extra resources and competing with other schools. In many ways, more weight is given to this marketing function rather than the educational role of principals (Li, S., 2005; Liu, 2005; Ma, Wang, & Yan, 2005). At the same time, many principals are not willing to hand power to others (Li, S., 2005). Likewise, quality education sometimes seems little more than an inspiring slogan. Student exam performance remains the foremost formal and informal determinant for assessing school effectiveness and principal leadership (Ma, Wang, & Yan, 2005; Wong, 2006).

The contextual setting reveals both opportunities and challenges for Chinese school principals. The importance of principal leadership has been clearly emphasised in education reform policies but there has not been sufficient material or professional support for principals confronting the new environment (Chu, 2009a). For example, principal development opportunities remain limited (Feng, 2003). Therefore, it seems necessary to collect more information about how principalship works in Chinese schools in order to form a deeper understanding and contribute to the growth of Chinese school leaders. The next part introduces more informative literature on school principal leadership.

Theoretical Underpinnings

The preceding contextual sketch points toward the need for research into the core leadership practices of school principals in China. This section establishes the theoretical groundwork by addressing the following questions:

- Why does this study focus on principal leadership?
- Why does this study focus on leadership practice?
- Why does this study need to be conducted in Chinese schools?

The importance of principal leadership has been established and supported by substantial research evidence. In leadership theory, leaders are seen as essential to organisational success (Hoy & Miskel, 2005; Northouse, 2007). Principal leadership has consistently been seen as a vital force driving school operation and management (Day, Leithwood & Sammons, 2008; Leithwood *et al.*, 2006b). This view has been empirically confirmed by the school effectiveness research spawned between the 1970s and the late 1990s (Yu, Leithwood & Jantzi, 2002). Such explorations affirmed the critical role of principal leadership in school instruction, staff

management, culture building, and, eventually, improving student learning (Leithwood & Duke, 1999; Leithwood *et al.*, 2004; MacBeath & Dempster, 2009). To some extent, demystifying principal leadership seems to be the 'holy grail' of academic inquiry in school administration (Gentilucci & Muto, 2007).

As a result of almost universal recognition of the importance of principals, more interest has focused on how principal leadership works. Numerous empirical studies have been conducted to define and detect good leadership practices of school principals in Western countries, especially Anglo-American societies (Hallinger & Heck, 1996; Cotton, 2003; Leithwood *et al.*, 2006b; Waters, Marzano, & McNulty, 2003). The research findings have identified a number of principal leadership practices which are essential for promoting student learning, school effectiveness and education reforms (Hallinger & Heck, 1996; Leithwood *et al.*, 2006b; Mulford, 2007; MacBeath & Dempster, 2009; Wang, S., 2004). Most of the early explorations, however, generated lists of standards, qualities, competencies, behaviour, or styles, which were too often seen as universally effective (Carroll, Levy, & Richmond, 2008; Walker & Quong, 2005). Such lists have been criticised for their decontextualisation and fragmentation (Glatter & Kydd, 2003; Goodson, 2005). These critiques suggest a need to develop a more integrative and contextual perspective of the world of school principals (Ribbins & Gronn, 2000).

As a consequence, Western researchers have focused increased attention on the contextual practices of school leaders. Different schools have provided practice-informed models of principal leadership. Depending on the perspective taken, instructional leadership, transformational leadership, and distributed leadership have been suggested as ideal practice models for Western school leaders. From both organisational and cognitive perspectives, Bolman and Deal (1993) affirm that effective school leaders exert influence on the structural, human, political, and symbolic frames of school organisation. Drawing on the work of Habermas,⁵ Sergiovanni (2000, 2009) asserts that principals should pay attention to both the lifeworld and systems world of their schools via five leadership forces (technical, human, educational, cultural, and symbolic) and exercise servant and moral leadership through centring upon the symbolic and cultural lifeworld in schools. In

⁵ Habermas (1987) provides a framework for a four-division structure located in the lifeworld (private and public spheres) and systems world (money-steered economic and power-steered administrative systems) for understanding human societies.

the light of complexity theory, Morrison (2002) argues for an integration of transformational leadership, transcendental and servant leadership, quantum leadership, and distributed leadership.

A recent cross-cultural empirical study, the International Successful School Principal Project (ISSPP), confirms the argument and provides a repertoire of core practices of principal leadership (Day & Leithwood, 2007; Day, Leithwood & Sammons, 2008; Leithwood *et al.*, 2006b). Using a mixed method design, the ISSPP study summarises the leadership practices of participant principals, integrates diversified empirical evidence, and classifies the core leadership practices into five broad dimensions. These are setting directions, understanding and developing people, redesigning the organisation, managing instructional programmes and coalition building, each of which comprises a variety of specific practices. Beyond overt principal leadership practices, the scholars further delved into manifold contextual factors that would latently induce or influence these practices (see Appendix 3.2.2). More detail on this research is presented in Chapter Three.

Two other international studies examined the 'good practice' of principal leadership across different countries, respectively focusing on system leadership⁶ (Pont, Nusche, & Hopkins, 2008) and leadership for learning⁷ (MacBeath & Dempster, 2009). The studies were both based on the findings of ISSPP and reached a number of conclusions similar to those claimed by Leithwood and his colleagues (see Leithwood *et al.*, 2006a). In comprehensive research into the assessment of learning-centred leadership behaviours of school principals (Porte *et al.*, 2006), the conceptual framework involved six components and six processes, which are also quite similar to the classifications in ISSPP and have been applied to Chinese schools (Cravens, 2008). The similarity suggests the merit of ISSPP and, to a certain extent, the universality of certain core leadership practices identified in the research.

However fruitful, such studies do not provide sufficient insight into whether the findings have currency in Chinese schools. Although some evidence has been

⁶ System leadership is the leadership practices of 'system leaders', who 'are those head teachers who care about and work for the success of other schools as well as their own' (Pont, Nusche & Hopkins, 2008, p. 22).

⁷ 'Leadership for learning is a distinct form of educational practice that involves an explicit dialogue, maintaining a focus on learning, attending to the conditions that favour learning, and leadership that is both shared and accountable. Learning and leadership are conceived of as "activities" linked by the centrality of human agency within a framework of moral purpose' (MacBeath & Dempster, 2009, p. 42).

collected within Chinese schools (e.g. the Chinese cases in ISSPP, see Wong, 2006), the quantity and quality of the data do not compare with those collected in Western contexts. Moreover, from the contextual perspective, leadership practices are influenced by societal cultures. This has been shown by numerous cross-cultural comparative studies of leadership and organisational behaviours (e.g. Dickson, Den Hartog, & Mitchelson, 2003; Hofstede, 2001; House *et al.*, 2004; Javidan *et al.*, 2006). Considering the distinct societal and educational contexts in China, regardless of the methods of research, simply transplanting Western conclusions without question may be risky, and even inappropriate (Dimmock & Walker, 1998).

The *status quo* of Chinese research into principalship in China, however, indicates that serious indigenous study is necessary. Many Chinese researchers appear inclined to accept and introduce overseas findings or theories as a sort of universal panacea (Yang, 2005). Among the limited empirical studies in the area, there is only a very small body that takes the context into account (e.g. Luo & Najjar, 2007). Most recent studies conducted in China still depend on Western perceptions of leadership through identifying decontextualised leaders' traits, competences, behaviours, or styles (e.g. Li & Zhang, 2006; Liu, Zhao, & Zhong, 2007; Sun & Wang, 2008; Zhang, F, 2001; 2002; Zhang, Y., 2002).

This does not mean that there is no literature which specifically explores Chinese school leadership. On the contrary, there is considerable writing in the area. Although it is useful, the problem with most of this work is that it is often presented in the form of biographical stories, descriptive introductions, and commentarial summaries of personal experiences of well-known school principals. Such writings have long characterised Chinese education research (Yang, 2005). There is certainly no shortage of good school leaders or exemplary practices associated with principal leadership in China, but there is a serious shortage of empirical research that builds theories upon authentic insights about principal leadership practice. In this sense, Chinese researchers ought to think systematically about indigenous insight into leadership practice before rushing to transfer external experiences.

In summary, more serious research is necessary if Chinese principal leadership practices are to be fully understood. A good start might be an exploration of the core leadership practices of Chinese principals. Such research should be conducted within Chinese schools and informed by those who exert or are influenced by the practices,

particularly school teachers and middle leaders. Western scholarship and research can certainly provide an informative guide or initial frame, but it must be treated as such, and not as some kind of universally applicable truth. Accordingly, this study is designed to explore the core practices of principal leadership in Chinese schools through synthesising existing Western and Chinese literature pertinent to the issue.

Research Purposes

The purpose of this study was to investigate the core leadership practices of school principals in Mainland China. Elmore pointed out that 'practice is not a personal attribute or characteristic of leaders; it is a collection of patterned actions, based on a body of knowledge, skill, and habits of mind that can be objectively defined, taught, and learned. ... In order to become a practice, patterns of behaviour must be objectified and separated from the individuals who use them' (2008, p. 44). 'But without a rich understanding of *how* and *why* they do it, our understanding of leadership is incomplete' (Spillane, Halverson, & Diamond, 2001, p. 23). Therefore, leadership practice can be perceived in three dimensions: *what*, *how* and *why*. Accordingly, the overall purpose could be broken into three sub-purposes.

First, the study aimed to identify the generic practices of school principals in Mainland China, i.e. what principals do in order to lead their schools. This sub-purpose targeted the '*what*' dimension and was to define the core leadership practices of Chinese principalship.

Second, it aimed to investigate how principals enact the core leadership practices in Chinese schools. This sub-purpose pointed to the second dimension. In other words, this study would also identify general and specific patterns characterising Chinese principals' application of the core leadership practices in their schools.

The third aim was to explain the emergence of the core leadership practices from a contextual perspective, i.e. why principals exhibit these core leadership practices in Chinese schools. This final purpose attempted to detect the possible reasons for these key leadership practices. 'Practice is embedded in the particular incentive structures and particular institutional settings in which it is used'(Elmore, 2008, p. 44). Therefore, the current research would also provide a contextual explanation for the identified core leadership practices of Chinese school principals.

The three sub-purposes formed an investigative sequence from description to explanation for the phenomenon in question. In what follows the research purposes and research questions are presented.

Research Questions

In accordance with the research purposes, the study was based on three broad research questions and relevant subsidiary questions. These are listed below.

Q1. What are the core leadership practices of Chinese school principals?

Q1.1 Do the leadership practices of Chinese school principals converge on a set of generic practices?

Q1.2 What specific practices compose these generic leadership practices?

Q1.3 What is the relationship between the different generic leadership practices?

Q2. How do Chinese principals enact the core leadership practices in their schools?

Q2.1 Are there any general patterns which characterise Chinese principals' enactment of the core leadership practices in their schools?

Q2.2 Are there any differences in the enactment of the core leadership practices between different Chinese school principals?

Q3. Do certain contextual factors relate to the core leadership practices of Chinese principals and the enactment of these practices?

Q3.1 Do personal factors relate to the core leadership practices of Chinese principals and the enactment of these practices?

Q3.2 Do any organisational factors relate to the core leadership practices of Chinese principals and the enactment of these practices?

Q3.3 Do any societal factors relate to the core leadership practices of Chinese principals and the enactment of these practices?

The first cluster of research questions aimed to identify the core practices of Chinese principals as they navigate a complex reform environment. This involved three specific aspects: the generic dimensions, the specific practices, and the relationship between different dimensions.

The second group was intended to describe how these core leadership practices are applied by Chinese principals in their schools. It aimed to bring sterile descriptions to life and involved the common and different ways that Chinese school principals enact the core leadership practices.

The third set of questions was meant to explore the contextual factors that may have an impact on these core leadership practices. Based on the literature review, a variety of potential contextual factors are divided into individual, organisational and societal levels.

Significance

Guided by the research purpose and questions, the study aimed to produce an initial repertoire of the core practices of principal leadership for Chinese schools and unveil some of the contextual underpinnings of these practices. This suggested the theoretical and practical significance of the study. Theoretically, it may contribute to the academic knowledge base of principal leadership at both national and international levels. Practically, it may help Chinese school leaders to improve their work and benefit the leadership development programmes for school principals in China.

Theoretically, as a contextually sensitive study, this work should enrich the knowledge base of Chinese principal leadership and further add to national and international academic understandings of principal leadership. In China, research too often tends to follow western conclusions and lacks indigenous exploration (Yang, 2005). The study attempted to understand empirically the indigenous expertise of Chinese school leaders by translating their authentic experiences into 'theoretical knowledge'. This could then be analysed for any 'wider significance' (Theobald, 1998). Thus the findings may help to construct indigenous academic understanding of Chinese principalship and add a much needed theoretical perspective to the dominant prescriptive studies on principal leadership in China.

Contextualised accounts of Chinese principalship have been largely absent from contemporary international principalship discourse. Yet indigenous wisdom does exist, albeit 'largely hidden in the shadows of the dominant Western paradigm that has guided the field' (Hallinger & Leithwood, 1996, p. 100). With a firmer contextual understanding of school principal leadership in China, the study may better enable a comparison between Western and Chinese insights and further enrich the international knowledge base of principal leadership.

In practice, the study may help Chinese school leaders improve their work and benefit leadership assessment and development through providing an indigenous

repertoire of the core leadership practices of Chinese school principals. The authentic insights gained through listening to the 'voices' of practitioners aimed to unveil the real story of principal leadership in Chinese schools. In this context, the study would provide authentic examples of leadership practices of school principals in China. Such tangible outcomes may help to inform everyday work and professional education or training programmes, especially in terms of leadership development for school principals and prospective school leaders in China.

Limitations

The study faces three basic limitations. First, there is a potential risk of over-reliance on Western knowledge because of the foundation of the framework. To date, most empirical studies in the area are conducted in Western societies. Therefore, there is a limited indigenous knowledge base upon which this study can be built. Thus, the investigation largely drew on Western concepts. The stance was at least partly managed through explicit contextual awareness and through a thorough review of the Chinese literature. Despite this, however, there remains a potential risk of over-reliance on Western conceptions.

Second, language issues might emerge from the mixture of Mandarin and English adopted in the study. In the survey, some translated items were included in the questionnaire. In the interviews, all the conversations were conducted in Mandarin but the final research report was written in English. This involved a considerable amount of translation between the two languages. Along with the translation, there was always the potential problem that expressions in one language could not find their exact equivalents in the other. Although the translation process was conducted with great care, there remained a risk of losing some nuances and intricacies. As a native Chinese, the researcher was not equally bilingual in both Mandarin and English. In fact, Chinese was still the dominant and preferred language in which the researcher could express herself more easily, comfortably and completely. In this instance, the researcher was not culturally neutral and thus the research findings might also, to a certain degree, bear the impact of culture.

Third, the research design could limit the generalisability of the empirical findings. As explicated in Chapter Four, the research mainly targets secondary school principals in the four Chinese cities. Although the arrangement was justified in Chapter Four particularly, it neglected the insights into principal leadership from

other types of schools, other levels of school education, or other districts. As an initial study of principal leadership practice in Mainland China, the research did not involve any dependent variables such as student achievement. Meanwhile, the quantitative data analysis was generally based on the individual level, i.e. treating individual respondents, instead of a school, as the unit of analysis. All these could limit the study's generalisability.

Structure of the Dissertation

The thesis is composed of eight chapters. This chapter introduces the contextual and theoretical rationale of the study and outlines the major and specific research aims and questions, as well as the significance and limitations of the study. The contents of the other chapters are briefly introduced below.

As specific contexts have a considerable impact on leadership practices, Chapter Two first maps the societal and educational context within which contemporary Chinese principals work. This contextual background involves different levels. The chapter begins with a brief introduction of international education reform trends. Many of these have influenced the current Chinese education context (Feng, 2006; Walker, 2003). Next, the macro social-political-economic context of China is described in order to capture the societal context confronting Chinese schools. Against this background, the specific educational context facing Chinese school principals is explicated.

Chapter Three presents a literature review on principal leadership practices in both Western and Chinese academic discourses. Western research in the field reconfirms the importance of principal leadership. A series of core practices and related contextual factors have been identified. Relevant evidence found in Chinese schools supports these arguments and calls for more academic attention to the indigenous expertise of school leaders working in China.

Chapter Four focuses on methodology. Since questions determine approaches (Punch, 1998, 2006), the chapter outlines the scope of the research to clarify the research questions. The chapter also provides a synthetic introduction to mixed methods research and points out its relevance to the study to justify the adoption of this research paradigm in the design the study. With regard to the mixed methods design,

the rest of the fourth chapter explicates the operational procedures and specific methods involved in the research.

Chapter Five presents the process of quantitative data analysis. The author processed the data collected in the main survey through relevant statistical techniques. The results confirmed the reliability and validity of the questionnaire used in the survey and produced a set of core leadership practices and three types of contextual factors.

Chapter Six lays out the three steps of coding used for the qualitative data analysis and the resultant findings. Based on the narratives collected in the interviews, this chapter aims to paint a more holistic picture of how the core leadership practices are enacted in real-life school contexts.

Chapter Seven integrates the major findings from the quantitative investigation and the qualitative research. Through integrating the two sets of findings, the author further confirmed the components and enactment patterns of the core leadership practices of the Chinese principals and their interrelationship and the relevant contextual factors which influence these practices.

Chapter Eight summarises the major findings of the study and provides further discussion. First, it revisits the research questions and process. Second, it reaches a series of conclusions to answer the research questions on the basis of the major findings. Third, it relates the findings to the literature and discusses the grounds for the core leadership practices and the enactment patterns identified in the study to gain a more in-depth understanding of Chinese principalship. Finally, it discusses the implications of the research findings for the national and international knowledge base of principal leadership and for the leadership practice of Chinese principals and their professional development, as well as for future research in the area.

Chapter 2 The Context

This chapter provides an analytic description of the context within which Chinese school principals lead. Tsui (2006, p. 2) has pointed out that contextualisation means 'incorporating the context in describing, understanding, and theorizing about phenomena within it'. This chapter attempts to map the societal and educational backgrounds within which Chinese school principalship is enacted. Chapter Three aims to locate the principalship in the discourse of leadership theories and also within the relevant empirical literature. These two chapters jointly depict the contextual and theoretical underpinnings of the study. As such, they aim to explain and justify the rationale of this study.

The major purpose of this chapter is to outline the context of school principalship in the Chinese mainland. In many ways, school education in China is fashioned through a mix of international education reform agendas, societal expectations and ongoing educational reforms. Thus, the major purpose of this chapter can be divided into three parts. First, it aims to outline the major international education reform trends. Second, it presents the societal and educational contexts defining Chinese school education at present. Third, it introduces the major education reforms and policies dominating the Chinese educational landscape. Together, the three areas suggest the challenging and complex context of Chinese school education and that this demands more in-depth empirical understanding of the principalship in China.

Accordingly, this chapter is organised around five sections. The first section briefly analyse the international educational context. The second and third sections respectively depict the macro societal environment and the historical antecedents of the present education system. The fourth section focuses on the specific education reform initiatives and policies that directly shape the present educational context in Chinese mainland. The final section summarises the context and reconfirms the necessity of more research into school principals in mainland China.

International Education Context

This section focuses on the major global trends that shape or influence education context worldwide, as well as in the Chinese Mainland. In an era of globalisation, cross-cultural borrowing of Western reform policies, most of them driven by neo-liberal agendas, have become a notable feature of many education initiatives in East Asian (Morrow & Torres, 2000; Walker, 2003). In order to better understand the

educational context in mainland China, therefore, it is necessary to first examine the broader international educational environment.

Over the past two decades (and earlier⁸), the term globalization has been used widely to describe “the intensification of worldwide social relations which link distant localities in such a way that local happenings are shaped by events occurring many miles away and vice versa” (Held, 1991, p. 9). The process blurs “national boundaries, shifting solidarities within the between nation-states, [which] deeply affect[s] the constitution of national and interest-group identities.”(Morrow & Torres, 2000, p. 29) Burbules and Torres (2000) point out that the crucial features of globalisation involve:

- in economic terms, a transition from Fordist to post-Fordist⁹ forms of workplace organisation; a rise in internationalised advertising and consumption patterns; a reduction in barriers to the free flow of goods, workers, and investments across national borders; and, correspondingly, new pressures on the roles of worker and consumer in society;
- in political terms, a certain loss of nation-state¹⁰ sovereignty, or at least the erosion of national autonomy, and, correspondingly, a weakening of the notion of the “citizen” as a unified and unifying concept, a concept that can be characterised by precise roles, rights, obligations, and status; and
- in cultural terms, a tension between the ways in which globalisation brings forth more standardisation and cultural homogeneity while also bringing more fragmentation through the rise of locally oriented movements....a third theoretical alternative identifies a more conflicted and dialectical situation, with both cultural homogeneity and cultural heterogeneity appearing simultaneously in the cultural landscape. (p. 14)

Due to the growing impact of globalisation, more and more people realise that many governance issues may be beyond the control of nation states. Governments throughout the world are eager for more cooperation with other nations in order to enhance their economic competitiveness (Mok, 2003). National and local politics and

⁸ According to Morrow and Torres (2000), there are at least three basic views with respect to the origins of globalisation. Some have asserted that it develops with the origins of human civilization that is more than five centuries old. A more influential theory links it with the origins of capitalism, culminating with the emergence of a global economy in the 16th century. A third perspective from the 1990s considered it a more recent phenomenon that dates from the mid-twentieth century or perhaps the last two decades. Here the focus is not the origin of the phenomenon, but rather its effects on global education environment.

⁹ Fordism denotes the system formulated in Henry Ford's automotive factories, in which workers work on a production line, performing specialized tasks repetitively. Contrasted with the Fordism, post-Fordism is used to signify the dominant system of economic production, consumption and associated socio-economic phenomena in most industrialized countries since the late 20th century. (see Baca, 2004)

¹⁰ The nation-state is a certain form of state that derives its political legitimacy from serving as a sovereign entity for a nation as a sovereign territorial unit. (see Winumier & Min, 2006)

policies are increasingly influenced by regional, international or supranational organisations such as the World Bank, OECD, UN, WTO and IMF¹¹ (Held *et al.*, 1999; Hobsbawm, 1994; Smith, 1995). The power of modern states is challenged as the role of nation states may decline (Mok, 2003). Meanwhile, the increasing global economy forces individual states to change both their roles and their constitutions to adapt to the external demands and pressures. Many states have started thinking about how to transform the ways they manage themselves (Mok, 2003). New approaches to maximising productivity and effectiveness have been sought for the purpose of improving the efficiency and effectiveness of the public service (Dale, 1997).

As a consequence, neo-liberal ideology has been held high internationally to a gamut of problem and issues. That can be traced to about 1978-1980 when 'neo-liberalism' was adopted by the newly-elected Thatcher and Reagan Governments¹² in the UK and the US. This was soon followed by a group of developed countries such as Australia, New Zealand, and Canada (Harvey, 2005). Accordingly, neo-liberal doctrines largely replaced the Keynesian welfare regime that prevailed in the third quarter of the 20th century (Panic, 1995). Contrasting with the Keynesian pursuit of economic nationalism¹³, two core principals are honored by the neo-liberal doctrine (Faulks, 2000, p. 75):

- the superiority of markets over politics in providing for human need, generating prosperity and enhancing personal freedom; and
- the need to defend individuals' market rights, including property rights, the right to assert one's inequality and the right to choose from a diversity of goods and services in the market place.

Hence, there was a fundamental change in the relationship between the state, the public sector and the market. Neo-liberal doctrines and the principle of market competition was reemphasised by the New Right government (Brown *et al.*, 1997, 6). Notions such as 'entrepreneurial government' became fashionable (Ferlie *et al.*, 1996), and the role of the government shifted from "provider of welfare benefits" to "builder of market" (Sbragia, 2000). Strategies of marketisation, devolution, choice and privatisation were implemented in most Western communities (Henry *et al.*,

¹¹ i.e., Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), United Nations (UN), World Trade Organisation (WTO), and International Monetary Fund (IMF).

¹² Margaret Thatcher was elected Prime Minister of Britain in 1979. Ronald Reagan was elected President of the United States in 1980.

¹³ The nation-state has both the power and the responsibility to 'deliver prosperity, security, and opportunity' (Brown *et al.*, 1997, p. 2).

2001). The responsibilities of the state were increasingly shared by other actors, including the market, the family, the third sector, and individuals (Peters, Marshall & Fitzsimons, 2000; Rhodes, 1997; Salamon, 2002). Managerialism and economic rationalism¹⁴ became increasingly popular not only as a governance philosophy but also as an effective means for public administration (Enteman, 1993; Hood, 2000; Deem, 2001; Pusey, 1991). Dempster (2001, p. 4) described these trends as follows:

- a reduction in government's role in service provision;
- downsizing and decentralising the public sector;
- deregulation of the labour market;
- the imposition of strongest feasible framework of competition and accountability in public sector activity;
- explicit standards and measures of performance and clear definition of goals, targets or indicators of success;
- a greater emphasis on output controls – a stress on results, not processes;
- moves to new forms of corporate governance;
- a shift from public funding to private sector provision (the privatisation agenda); and
- a reduction in the self-regulating powers of the professions.

Such trends have “caused dramatic changes to the character and functions of education in most countries around the world” (Mok, 2003, p. 3). Burbules and Torres (2000, p. 15) explicitly pointed out that “in educational terms, there is a growing understanding that the neo-liberal version of globalisation, particularly as implemented (and ideologically defended) by bilateral, multilateral, and international organisations, is reflected in an educational agenda that privileges, if not directly imposes, particular policies for evaluation, financing, assessment, standards, teacher training, curriculum, instruction, and testing.”

Central to the reform is decentralisation¹⁵. Despite the diversified strategies and outcomes visible in different countries, educational decentralisation has been a common initiative for governments around the world (Mok, 2003). It aims to dismantle centralised educational bureaucracies and to create improved educational systems, entailing significant degrees of autonomy on educational institutions to unleash their initiative, creativity and productivity and accomplish quality school

¹⁴ According to the managerialism, the performance of all organisations, including those in public sector, can be optimised by the application of corporate management skills and theory. The economic rationalism was used to describe the market-oriented economic policies (see Pusey, 1991). Both of them reflect the idea of neo-liberalism.

¹⁵ Decentralisation refers to both devolution and deconcentration (see Bryant & White, 1982; Stevens, 1994).

education (Hanson, 1998; Power *et al.*, 1997). With this purpose, school based management has been widely adopted as a mode of school autonomy. It is perhaps the most common reform initiative worldwide over the past decades (Moos & Møller, 2003).

Meanwhile, marketisation and privatisation¹⁶ have become two of the most popular policy strategies for the transformation of educational institutions (Mok, 2005; Mok & Currie, 2002). More types of agencies other than the state have been allowed to engage in education (Dale, 1997). The importance of parental choice and competition between various forms of provision has been stressed, and an “education market” or “quasi-market” has emerged in the West (Bridges & McLaughlin, 1994; Le Grand & Bartlett, 1993). During the process, many management practices used in the market or private sector, such as explicit and measurable standards of performance, have been introduced into school administration (Lindblad, Johannesson & Simola, 2002). Accordingly, school leaders are increasingly encouraged to manage with output controls, explicit standards and goals of performance, clear targets and indicators of success, preferably in quantitative forms (Dempster, 2000; Blackmore, 2004). As a result, the role of the state has gradually shifted from a direct provider of education service to an umpire and a regulator of the market (Chan, 2002; Sbragia, 2000).

This does not mean a weakening of state power. In fact, the state’s control of school education has actually tightened by virtue of a process of recentralization or centralised decentralisation (Mok, 2003). For example, the state can regulate the operation of school education *via* a recentralised curriculum and an emphasis on accountability (Mcinerney, 2003; Moos & Møller, 2003); by the establishment of certain regulatory mechanisms and/or assessment/quality assurance systems, the state can determine where the work will be done and by whom, and steer the development of educational institutions indirectly (Massen & van Vught, 1994; Neave, 1995; Whitty, 1997).

¹⁶ In broad terms, privatization points to the reduction of state intervention and the transfer of responsibility for production from the state to the non-state sector; marketisation signifies the development of market mechanisms and adoption of market criteria within the public sector (Mok, 1997a, 1997b).

In this sense, current reform initiatives in education signify the process of 'colonisation of the lifeworld' by the systemsworld¹⁷ (Habermas, 1987, p. 173). As Habermas (1981) affirmed, in the modern society, education is confronted by the imperatives of the medium steering systems and the task of inculcating and enhancing the fundamental structure of the lifeworld. With the increasing stress on efficiency, outcomes, productivity and performance, the systemsworld steered by the state and the market exerts more and more influence on schooling. Widened access, funding, accountability, quality, and managerial efficiency have become common concerns for school educations (Mok, 2003). This tendency also has an impact on the lifeworld and systemsworld inside of schools (Sergiovanni, 2000, 2009). More emphasis has been given to the systemsworld of schools, such as management designs and protocols, strategic and tactical actions, policies and procedures, whereas the priority has no longer been given to the lifeworld of schools (e.g., school goals, purposes, values, and ideals), which is supposed to be the heart of school administration (see Sergiovanni, 2000, 2009). This circumstance makes school principalship increasingly characterised by contradiction, tension and ambiguity (see Blackmore, 2004; Sergiovanni, 2000).

By virtue of increasing globalisation, this neo-liberal wave of education restructuring has influenced the education reforms and policies occurring in individual nation states around the globe (Lindblad, Johannesson & Simola, 2002; Papagiannis, Easton & Owens, 1992). Due to distinct social and educational contexts, however, the specific measures and impacts are not uniform in different countries (Mok, 2003). In order to better understand what happens to Chinese school education against such an international background, the following two sections outline the prominent changes occurring in Chinese society and the antecedent situation of the current basic education system in China. These changes appear very influential in principals' lives.

Societal Background of Contemporary Chinese Education

In accord with international trends, Chinese government has been influenced by neo-liberalism philosophies. Changes have taken place in its economy, politics and social cultures. This section briefly describes the transformation of the Chinese society as a way of displaying the broad societal background of school education in China.

¹⁷ According to Habermas's theory (1981), the power- and money-steered mechanisms could invade and reify the communicative action and rationality embedded in the lifeworld. When these mechanisms from systemsworld begin to dominate the lifeworld, colonization occurs.

With the largest population in the world - more than 1.3 billion – and rapid economic growth, China is acknowledged as one of the most important countries in the 21st century. However, it had not actively communicated with the outside world until the late 1970s when the 3rd Plenum of the 11th Congress of the Communist Party of China (CPC) decided to reorient China toward the market and implement ‘reform and opening-up’ policy (Yergin & Stanislaw, 1998). This shift coincided with the turn to neo-liberalism in Western countries (Harvey, 2005). Before that, China had isolated itself from the Western capitalist societies with a highly centralised ‘planned economic system (*jihuajingjitizhi*)’ where everything was under the state control and state-owned-enterprises dominated nearly all aspects of the domestic economic sector (Starr, 2001). After the adaptation of the reform policy, the idea of a market economy (*shichangjingji*) was introduced from the West to establish a ‘socialist market economy (*shehuizhuyi shichangjingji*)’ in China (Mok, 1997b; Yergin & Stanislaw, 1998). Hence, the importance of market and free enterprise was gradually recognised (Yergin & Stanislaw, 1998; Hayhoe, 1996), which led to several market-oriented innovations in agriculture and industry¹⁸. More recently, the Chinese Government has increased the efforts, such as edging into the WTO in order to integrate its economy into the global business system (Lejour, 2000). With this process, many Western notions, such as effectiveness, performance and competition, penetrated Chinese society and broke ‘the eating-out-of-the-big-pot (*chidaguofan*) egalitarianism’ and ‘iron-rice-bowl (*tiefanwan*)’ ideology¹⁹ which prevailed in the previous planned economic system (Harvey, 2005).

In order to adapt to the rapid development and economic globalisation, and simultaneously promote social and economic progress, the Chinese Government turned its attention to reforming public administration (Pittinsky & Zhu, 2005; Starr, 2001; Tsao & Worthley, 1995). Consistent with the neo-liberal transformation of its economic system, these reforms focused on the decentralisation and transformation of governmental functions, aiming to establish democratic politics, transform the role

¹⁸ The reform started from agriculture with the adopting of ‘household responsibility system’, which ensures that each family is responsible for the land it tills. In the mid-1980s, the reform came to the industry and ‘contract responsibility system’ was carried out. In the 1990s, the reform began to focus on restructuring state-owned-enterprises (SOEs) in order to make them more responsive to the requirements of market and competition. (see Yergin and Stanislaw, 1998; Hayhoe, 1996)

¹⁹ “The two idioms refer to the system of guaranteed lifetime employment in state enterprises, in which the tenure and level of wages are not related to job performance.” (Qian, 2008, p. 23)

of the government, and enhance the administrative efficiency (Zhang & Zhang, 2001). Through these initiatives, the Chinese government has gradually shaken off the bonds of the planned economic system and turned itself from an 'omnipotent government' into a 'limited government' whose major responsibility is the provision of public products and service (ibid). As a consequence, people began to reflect on the prior highly centralised, hierarchical administration system, so that public awareness of participation, competition, equity and responsibility has increased continuously (Zhang & Zhang, 2001; Starr, 2001).

However, as a society, China still maintains strong elements of its traditional culture. Unlike the rule-based capitalistic society²⁰ in the West, Chinese society is founded upon social relationships and interlocking social networks that comprise overlapping networks of people linked together through differentially categorised social relationships (Fei, Hamilton & Wang, 1992). These networks have four key features (p. 20-24):

- Networks are discontinuous. They do not link people together in a single systematic way; rather, networks center on the individual and have a different composition for each person.
- Each link in a Chinese person's network is defined in terms of a dyadic social tie (*gang*). These interpersonal ties are known in Chinese as *guanxi*²¹. Each tie consists of an explicit category of social relationship that requires specific, prescribed "ritual" (*li*) behavior.
- Networks have no explicit boundaries. Individuals do not sign up for "membership" in networks. Those ties are preset. A person is called upon to "achieve" the relationship by rising to the level of their obligations.
- The moral content of behavior in a network society is situation specific. People evaluate ongoing action by considering the specific relations among actors.

The philosophy of this society favors an aesthetic construction toward virtue rather than the foundational, metaphysical reality upheld in the Western societies (Lessem & Palsule, 1997). Action is determined 'by a nominalist consensus about what is acceptable and what "we" can work with.' (Lowe, 2003, p. 7)

These social norms are rooted in the traditional Confucian values represented by four closely connected virtues: the class system, obedience, doctrine of the mean and "renqing", and the idea of "Wulun" or "five cardinal relationships" (see, Fu, 2003).

²⁰ A system relies on verifiable public information and accepted legal processes.

²¹ *Guanxi* is conventionally translated into English as "relationship," but the term has many subtle meanings in a society whose social structure is created through strong and weak social relationships. In Mainland China, *guanxi* has sometimes taken on the pejorative meaning of illegal backdoor connections (see Fei, Hamilton, & Wang, 1992).

The class system and obedience refer to maintaining ancient rituals, proper ordering in society, and the observance of orders; doctrine of the mean and *renqing* are embedded in the pursuit of harmony and the order of hierarchical relationship (Dimmock & Walker, 1998); the five cardinal relationships imply that the role of an individual is defined by the bond between father and son, the duty between ruler and subject, the distinction between husband and wife, the precedence of the old over the young, and the trust between friends. These values set up the foundation for all ethics and moralities in Chinese social and personal life. Thus, Chinese people are inclined to a respect for authority and patriarchy and seniority and age, avoiding conflicts and uncertainty and stressing the superior's "face", interpersonal "*guanxi*" (relationship/network), collectivity, harmony and order (Child, 1994; Farh & Cheng, 2000; Hofstede, 1980a, 1980b; House *et al.*, 2004; Lin, 2008; Lowe, 2003; Pittinsky & Zhu, 2005; Walker, 2004).

Despite the transformation of the economic system, traditional Chinese culture has not faded from either consciousness or practice, even though it is not as visibly dominant. The co-existence of Chinese and Western values may also originate from a dialectic orientation²² of the Eastern archetype which values the transcendence of dualism and avoids imbalance and extremes (see Li, 2008, p. 415-417). In a sense, the suppressed traditions, blended with Western values, permeate through this increasingly westernised society (Liu, 2003; Starr, 2001).

At the same time, political control is a constant feature of Chinese society. The fundamental role of the market in resource allocation has not been brought into full play; the government retains many responsibilities and tries to play the role of social intermediary (Harvey, 2005). What emerged in China was a unique type of market economy that 'increasingly incorporates neo-liberal elements interdigitated with authoritarian centralised control' (Harvey, 2005, p. 120). In this sense, the present day Chinese society can be described as a mixture of the Western values, traditional culture and mainstream political ideology. A series of reforms aimed to change the old system of Chinese schooling. Unclosing the major antecedents of such a change will help to better understand the current context of Chinese basic education. The

²² From the dialectic perspective, "several opposing or contradicting propositions or truths can be explored simultaneously and judgment about them can be suspended until dialectic synergies produce better ideas." (Lowe, 2003, p. 7).

following section presents the historical context of the current school system in China.

Historical Context of Current School Education in Mainland China

This section provides the antecedent context of today's school education system in China. It involves two major antecedents: traditional thoughts of education and a description of the basic education system before 1985. The former is included in that many traditional views still play an important role in the current education system. The latter is included because it forms the target of the education reform taking place in China since the mid-1980s (see Hawkins, 2000)

Traditional Thoughts of Education

China has one of the oldest surviving educational systems in human history²³. Despite the pausing of the Chinese traditional education system, some elements have persisted throughout history even up to today (e.g. high-stakes testing, see Suen & Yu, 2006). There is a consistent emphasis on the political function of education and moral education and a firm belief in examination. These enduring traditions derive mainly from the Confucian theory of education and the civil service system. Both of these features drive the education system in ancient China and have profound influence on Chinese society (Cleverley, 1991; Sunoo, 1985; Suen & Yu, 2006).

Above all, education is supposed to serve the state. Ancient China is renowned for its heavy emphasis on education. The whole nation, from emperor to civilian, values education highly. However, the purpose behind the traditional education was exclusively to prepare administrators or governmental officials for the ruling class (Gu, 1981; Mao, Qu & Shao, 1979). This originated from the Confucian interpretation of the aim of education, which was "to train the government personnel to be above the people." (Sunoo, 1985, p. 35) From the Confucian perspective, education was an effective governing tool and the first responsibility of an educated man was to serve the state by participating in the government, so that the ideal product of the Confucian model of education was a noble man with both integrity and competence to run the country (Guo, 1987).

According to Confucius, however, moral education is more important than the intellectual education (Guo, 1987). Since the purpose of education was to serve the

²³ Chinese schools came into existence in the late Shang Dynasty (BC 1600-BD 1046) (Mao, Qu, & Shao, 1979).

government, loyalty to the nation and the ruler was cultivated through moral education. This view catered to the need of the imperial government. Confucianism therefore became embedded as the orthodox theory of schooling from the Western Han dynasty²⁴ (BC 202-AD 8). Down the centuries the Confucian theory of education became one of the foundations of public order and civilised life in ancient China (see Guo, 1987). As a result, ancient Chinese schools gave priority to the cultivation of morals. Qualified officials of the imperial government, as well as the curriculum, were centred on the Confucian classics which valued the moral qualities “above professional or technical skills.” (Cleverley, 1991, p. 16) Thus, Chinese intellectuals were educated to be loyal and dedicated to their nation to sacrifice their personal interests if necessary.

Confucian views were further strengthened by the centralised civil service examination system (*kejuzhi*) (Suen & Yu, 2006). This national testing system was adopted from the beginning of the Sui Dynasty (581-618) through the early Qing Dynasty (1644-1911) (Teng, 1966). Although the form of the exam varied slightly with the different dynasties, the goal, purposes and content of the exam remained largely the same. The main goal was to select officials for the government through a highly competitive national examination. The purposes of the exam were to limit the power of the nobility, and to promote the Confucian ideal of hierarchical order, moral governance, loyalty, submissiveness to authority, and social harmony (Teng, 1966). Exam content focused on the students’ “knowledge of nine classic texts of Confucian philosophy and history called the *Four Books and Five Classics (Sishu Wujing)*, on poetry, on the writing of official documents, and on national policy issues” (Suen & Yu, 2006, p. 49). All these helped the central government control and integrate intellectuals into the bureaucratic system (Sunoo, 1985).

Besides reinforcing Confucian ideals, the examination system led Chinese people towards a utilitarian perspective which valued education and examination - education and success on exams could bring personal accomplishment and honor to the family through success on exams. Through providing a link between scholars and officials, the imperial civil service examination enabled a man from humble origin to move up into the governing class (Cleverley, 1991). If one succeeded in the exam, he would

²⁴ The emperor Wu of the Western Han dynasty implemented a policy of abandoning all other schools of thoughts and worshipping Confucianism alone in BC134 (Mao, Qu, & Shao, 1979).

be rewarded with a government position. In addition to bringing a number of individual benefits, the position also provided "financial rewards, prestige, power, fame, and many advantages to the official's entire extended family and ancestry" (Suen & Yu, 2006, p. 48). Thus, success at the imperial examinations was traditionally rated as "one of four great episodes in a man's life²⁵" (Cleverley, 1991, p. 18).

As a consequence, the ancient education system was characterised by an orientation towards high-stakes testing and the focus on test-taking skills and results. According to Suen and Vu (2006), the civil service examination system consisted of three levels of exams: local district-prefecture exam for cultivated talent (*xiuca*), provincial exam for elevated scholars (*juren*) and metropolitan exam and palace exam for advanced scholars (*jinshi*). At the end of Qing dynasty, the exam was highly selective and competitive - only one candidate per million could go through all three levels of exams to be selected as *jinshi* - the highest level of scholarship (Suen & Vu, 2006). In order to pass the three exams and gain the associated benefits, many candidates concentrated on test-oriented training. This resulted in a number of unintended consequences, such as rote memorization, cheating, and some psychological and behavioral problems (ibid).

Along with the Confucian views of education, the exam endures in Chinese educational systems today. Even in the twentieth century, when the education system in semi-feudal and semi-colonial China was heavily influenced by western powers as the invaded, Chinese still regarded that "Chinese traditions as the essence, and Western learnings for its utility (*Zhongxue weiti, Xixue weiyong*)²⁶". After the People's Republic of China (PRC) was founded in 1949, these features remained in the new socialist education system. Moreover, there was an emerging trend of politicalisation based on mainstream political ideology. The following sub-section reviews the major features of Chinese schooling before the mid-1980s.

²⁵ The four great episodes in a man's life are: "sweet rain after a long drought; meeting an old friend in a strange place; the wedding night in the nuptial chamber; the sight of one's name on the golden placard." (Cleverley, 1991, p. 19)

²⁶ This slogan, posited by Zhang Zhidong, an important figure in modern Chinese politics, industry and education, means selectively learning from the West for practical purpose within the framework of China's traditional value system (Cleverley, 1991).

School Education System Before 1985

From 1949 to the late 1970s, China was isolated from most Western developed countries. The exception was a short period in the early 50s when China was modeled on the experience of the former Soviet Union (Mok, 2003). Under the circumstance, the Party-state²⁷ established a centralised education system (Ngok & Chan, 2003). Three features characterised the educational system: politicalisation in setting educational goals and curriculum, high-level centralisation of educational administration, and an exam-orientation in school education. These features not only reflected the new orientation of the socialist educational system, but also reinforced traditional Chinese focuses on the political function of education, students' moral development, and achievement on examinations.

First, politics and political ideology played an important role in setting goals and curricula for school education. In the new China, education continued to be used as an important means for achieving the goals set by the government (Yang, 2003). What differed from the past was that all decisions or actions about education made by the Communist Party of China (CPC) were mainly determined by their contributions to the goal of building China into a powerful socialist country (ibid). In the 1950s and the early 1960s, the Chinese government specifically identified another term to describe this goal – ‘four modernisations’²⁸, that is, “to build China into a powerful socialist nation with modernised industry, modernised agriculture, modernised defense, and modernised science and technology” (PLRCoCPC, 1993, p. 563).

According to the Party's interpretation of the function of education, “education must fill its political role, must serve the proletarian politically and also must be united with productive labor, and finally it must be carried out under the leadership of the Party.” (CNIER, 1983, p. 213) Therefore, the essential function of education was to train a “red and expert (*youhong youzhuanyuan*)²⁹” working class intelligentsia to achieve the four modernisations (CPCCC & SC, 1958). Accordingly, productive labor and political-ideological-moral education were added to the school curriculum. Students

²⁷ The term ‘Party-state’ is used to describe China's political system which is dominated by the CPC (Starr, 2001).

²⁸ The ‘four modernisations’ was first used by the former Premier Zhou Enlai in the *Government Work Report at the Third National People's Congress first meeting* on December 21, 1964 (Cao, 2006).

²⁹ This term was used to define a cultured, socialist-minded worker who is developed in an all-round way, both politically conscious (i.e., red) and well educated (i.e., expert) (see CPCCC & SC, 1958).

were taught to be loyal to socialism state and the Party from the beginning of their schooling. Training in socialist ideology became the upmost aim of schooling. The focus on political ideology reached its height during the Cultural Revolution (1966-1976) (see Cleverley, 1991). To a word, one of the major goals of school education at that time is to cultivate students' commitment to the socialist country.

Second, the Chinese government gradually established a highly centralised educational administration system. During the first three decades of the PRC, the education system was characterised by a unified system of planning, administration, curriculum, student enrolment and allocation of university places and employment (see Mok, 2003). All educational establishments were placed under the leadership of central education authority³⁰. Provinces, autonomous regions, and central-administered municipalities set education departments under the direction of local governments. In line with the directives or regulations issued by the central authority, these departments directly attended to local educational administration, involving ordinary administration, teaching staff, equipment, and financial management. Counties, cities, and municipal districts had their educational bureaus taking care of administrative work in secondary and elementary schools. With the hierarchical framework, the state assumed the responsibility for formulating educational policies, allocating educational resources, exerting administrative control, recruiting teaching staff and deciding on curricula and textbooks.

At the school level, the centralised system was somewhat tightened through ideological control and a cadre (*ganbu*)³¹-based personnel system (Huang, 2005; Lin, 1993). Each elementary and secondary school had a Party branch or committee headed by a secretary, the representative of the CPC. Important matters had to be submitted to the school Party committees or branches for decision. The secretary was appointed by a higher level communist authority and required to exercise leadership in all areas, from ideological control to school administrative affairs, from classroom teaching to school discipline. As a result, most school leaders appointed by local authorities served as both party secretary and principal, the chief administrator of the school. By this means, the specific operation of school education could be aligned

³⁰ The Ministry of Education was first established in 1949 by the government. In 1970, the MoE was abolished and a Leading Group of Science and Education was set up within the State Council. In 1975, the MoE was reinstated but replaced by the State Education Commission (SEC) in 1985. In 1998, the SEC was renamed MoE. (see Xiong, 2006)

³¹ 'Cadre' (*ganbu*) is a formal appellation of the governmental officials in China (Huang, 2005).

with the requirements and policies of the Party-state. Moreover, all school leaders were administered under the cadre system, a personnel system established by the central government to manage officials at different levels (Huang, 2005). School principals had nominal official ranks³² which were usually determined by the status of their schools and this, in turn, determined their income (Huang, 2005; Yang, 2004). Therefore, they usually worked as officials who give priority to the implementation of the policies issued by the central government. In this way, schools at all levels came under the control of the central government.

Third, the key school system and the national College Entrance Examination (CEE) (*gaokao*) system aggravated the dominant exam-orientation. In the early years of the new China, there were limited resources that could be used for the development of basic education. For this reason, policy-makers determined that educational resources had to be utilised in an efficient way - reserving quality educational resources for the subject areas, schools, and students who were identified as priorities of the socialist construction. As a result, a small number of schools were selected, re-organized, funded and transformed into the 'key schools' (*zhongdian xuexiao*) (Yuan, 1999). Within the state-controlled system, these key schools were usually assigned more financial resources, better teachers and students with higher scores on competitive entrance tests. The curricula were more test-oriented because the main purpose of key schools was to prepare the most promising students for higher education. This achievement-based selective mechanism led to a two-track school system which broadened the disparity between students and teachers from the schools holding different status (Yuan, 1999). This was so even though it supposedly improved the quality of secondary education overall, explored an effective school management strategy, and set examples for ordinary schools (Qian & Huang, 1987; Yuan, 1999).

Besides this selective classification system, the national CEE system also profoundly influenced school education. Since it was reinstated after the Cultural Revolution (1966-1976), this national examination has been held up as the most effective and fairest way of selecting intelligently qualified candidates for higher education (Kwong, 1983, Yang, 2003). As Chinese education was always highly selective, a good education was the key to an individual's socio-economic mobility (Bratton,

³² For a principal of a provincial/municipal key high school instance, his/her official rank was generally equal to that of the mayor of a county; for the principal working in a county/district key school, the rank was equal to that of a deputy mayor.

1979; Cleverley, 1991). This competitive exam was based on the principle that “before the system of grades, everyone is equal” (see Kwong, 1983). Thus, it provided people with an approach to higher education and to social and economic mobility (Niu, 1992). To a large degree, the CEE not only had an impact on basic education but also influenced the whole society by fashioning the purpose of basic education, creating opportunity for social mobility through education, and providing the society with talent enhancement (Bratton, 1979).

On the other hand, the selective exam system further intensified the traditional inclination for “exam prepping”. The whole basic education system in China became highly competitive and test-oriented. Teachers concentrated their teaching on examination materials and rote learning; school administration extended school hours, sorted and placed students into different tracks, overloaded students with extra assignments, and devoted the senior years to examination preparation (Liao, 1993; Niu, 1992; Yang, 2003). Furthermore, the key school system aggravated the competition in that if a student could not continuously enter key schools during the whole period of basic education, he or she was unlikely to be admitted to tertiary education (Kwong, 1983). This resulted in ferocious competition.

These issues typified the educational context before the structural reform starting in the mid-1980s. In the following twenty years or so, the basic education system in China was largely reshaped by several waves of education reform. The next section specifies these reform initiatives.

Current School Education in Mainland China

This section outlines the present context of Chinese basic education. A retrospect of the major policies and movements in Chinese school education over the past quarter-century indicates that, first, Chinese educational system, like those in many Western societies, has been reshaped by a series of neo-liberalist reforms conforming to the change in the Chinese society; second, the reform generally consists of two phases with three different focuses. The first phase, from the mid-1980s to the early 1990s, generally aimed to transform the over-centralised educational system into a more responsive enterprise to meet the needs of economic and societal reforms (Lo, 1999). The reform was centred on changing the structure and administration of school

education towards decentralisation and marketisation³³ (Hannum *et al.*, 2007; Hawkins, 2000; Tsang, 2000). In the second phase, achieving quality education became the central pursuit of the education reform since the early 1990s (Lo, 2002). Therefore, more efforts were made to improve educational quality, particularly through reforming the school classification system, school curriculum and examination system and school personnel system. The following two sub-sections respectively describe the major reform initiatives of the two phases.

Major Reform Initiatives Since 1985

This sub-section gives a brief account of the reform policies and initiatives implemented in Chinese basic education since the mid-1980s.

As market reform and the “open-door” policy were implemented in the late 1970s, post-Mao Chinese leaders increasingly realised the significance of education to China’s economic development and social progress. In the early 1980s, Deng Xiaoping pointed out that education was a foundation for economic growth and scientific improvement (Chen, 1999, p. 8). But the educational system at that time was “woefully inadequate to contribute to the new economic opportunities” (Hawkins, 2000, p. 443). With this understanding, Deng Xiaoping asserted that education must change to meet the needs of China’s modernisation, of the world and of the future. Accordingly, in May of 1985, the CPC convened a conference and released a general policy³⁴ initiating the education reform. From then on, the central authority promulgated a series of educational policies to match Chinese school education with the needs of the labor market and economic development (Hawkins, 2000). Table 2.1 summarise the major reform policies released by the central government since 1985.

Table 2.1 Major Education Reform Policies since 1985

Time	Documents	Major Initiatives
1985	<i>Decision of the Communist Party of China Central Committee on the Reform of the</i>	Achieving nine-year compulsory education by 2000; devolving financial and administrative authority to lower levels and reducing the rigid governmental controls over school; encouraging multiple financial channels and allowing non-state run (<i>minban</i> ³⁵) schools; reforming the

³³ By “marketisation” in the Chinese context, is meant a “process whereby education becomes a commodity provided by competitive suppliers, educational services are priced and access to them depends on consumer calculations and ability to pay” (Yin & White, 1994, p. 217).

³⁴ I.e., the *Decision of the Chinese Communist Party Central Committee on the Reform of the Educational System*.

³⁵ “The growth of *minban* education culminated in the Great Leap Forward in 1958, and kept its momentum in the popular education movements for “class struggles” during the chaotic period of the Cultural Revolution.” (Wang, 2002. p.113)

	<i>Educational System</i>	structure of secondary education, increasing vocational and technical education; gradually implementing principal responsibility system in schools and increasing the number and quality of teachers.
1986	<i>Compulsory Education Law of PRC³⁶</i>	Implementing the nationwide nine-year compulsory education (primary school education and junior middle school education) for which local authorities assume responsibility; adopting nearby enrollment and no charge for tuition; orienting the compulsory education towards all-round development of children and adolescents.
1993	<i>Outline of Educational Reform and Development in China</i>	Reaffirming the reform direction and principal responsibility system set by the 1985 decision; increasing the local authority's responsibility for basic education in terms of management and finances; further implementing the nine-year compulsory education and eradicating youth and adult illiteracy with a focus on human resources development; raising educational quality at all levels.
1995	<i>Education Law of PRC</i>	Affirming a governmental commitment to equality of educational opportunity; legitimising the respective roles of the central government and individual schools in educational funding system and encouraging schools to seek alternative financial channels.
1996	<i>Ninth Five-Year Plan for China's Educational Development and the Development Outline by 2010</i>	Further implementing education reforms and optimizing the educational structure; improving education quality and efficiency; establishing a socialistic education system framework with Chinese characteristics and oriented towards the 21st century.
1998	<i>Action Plan for Revitalizing Education towards the 21st Century</i>	Confirming a commitment to implementing compulsory education across the country; reiterating the move towards decentralisation and marketisation and the goal of achieving quality education; implementing trans-century quality education project and curriculum reform
1999	<i>Decision of CPCCC and SC on Deepening Education Reform and Promoting Quality Education in an All-round Way</i>	Implementing the strategy of 'rejuvenating the nation through science and education' (<i>kejiao xingguo</i>); promoting quality education at all levels; changing pedagogy to encourage students' independent thinking and creativity; promoting nine-year compulsory education in poor areas by increasing government funding; expanding upper-secondary and university enrollment; devolving more power to provincial government in developing higher education; carrying out various projects to cultivate highly creative personnel; developing non-state run (<i>minban</i>) education institutions.
2001	<i>Decision of SC on Reform and Development of Basic Education</i>	Prioritising basic education; improving administrative and financial system; deepening education reforms and promoting quality education; improving teacher education system and strengthening the reforms on school personnel system and running system.
2001	<i>Tenth Five-Year Plan for China's Educational Development</i>	Increasing the amount and improving the effectiveness of governmental financial input to education; seriously carrying out six educational projects, first of which is quality education project; further reforming education and instruction system; enhancing the quality of teachers and principals and deepening personnel system reform; transforming governmental functions and administering education with laws.
2004	<i>2003-2007 Action Plan for Revitalizing Education</i>	Improving the education at all levels; implementing new century quality education project and developing students in an all-round way.
2007	<i>Plan Guideline of Educational Development in the Eleventh Five-year Plan</i>	Implementing quality education in an all-round way; promoting educational development at all levels; improving the quality of teachers and developing school leaders and cadres; accelerating the construction of modern educational system and promoting learning society building; expanding international cooperation; improving subsidy system and ensuring the openness, fairness and equity of education.

³⁶ The *Compulsory Education Law* was revised in 2006. The new version further stipulated that county-level governments are mainly responsible for the compulsory education and students receiving compulsory education are enrolled on a catchment area and exempt from both tuition and incidental fees.

In line with the national market reform and the global neo-liberal ideology, these reform policies have fundamentally reframed the Chinese school education system in terms of orientation, financing, curriculum and management (Agelasto & Adamson, 1998). Two major focuses stand out during the reform. From the mid-1980s to the early 1990s, the transformation mainly targeted aligning the educational system with the newly formed market economy through decentralisation and marketisation (Hawkins, 2000). With the reform deepening, quality education then became the paramount driving force for change in China. This began in the early 1990s. These two facets are explicated below.

Reshaping Educational System for Market Economy

From the mid-1980s to the early 1990s, reform aimed to correct the over-centralised educational system and the dominant influence of political power and bureaucratism on school education in order to meet the needs of the emerging market economy (Chu, 2008; Pepper, 1993; Shi & Zhang, 2008). The specific measures were centred on diminishing the Party's influence on administrative matters, reducing the state's participation and rigid governmental control over schools, devolution of authority to local levels and increasing the pacer of the market in providing education. These led to a series of fiscal, structural and management reforms.

First, a more decentralised funding system for basic education was gradually established. Since the '*Decision*' in 1985 made the first step to devolve financial responsibility to lower levels, educational authorities at the county, township and village levels began to take charge of funding basic education. The *Compulsory Education Law* explicitly stipulated that "local authorities assume responsibility for compulsory education." (6th NPC, 1986) These reform documents suggested six basic methods for funding precollegiate education: subsidies provided by central authorities (the main source), urban and rural educational surcharges levied by local governments, tuition for non-compulsory education and incidental fees collected from students, income from school-run enterprises, contributions from industry and

social organisations and donation from community organisations and individuals, and establishment of educational funding (see Wang, 2009).

In 1995, the *Education Law* legislatively established this funding system which blended central and local governmental financial support with various alternative channels in the public and market spheres. For instance, school principals can raise school revenue by running school business; some high quality schools can charge the 'choice students (*zhexiaosheng*)'³⁷ for their admissions. "Although the bulk of the funding comes from state resources, the central government's role has been considerably reduced." (Hawkins, 2000, p. 447)

Second, the structure of basic education experienced a change close to the market-orientation. There were two major measures. One measure was to diversify educational services. The new policies "actively encourage and fully support social institutions and citizens to establish schools according to law and to provide the right guideline and strengthen administration" (CPCCC, 1993). Hence, a variety of non-governmental or semi-private schools have been established to compete with government schools at the precollegiate level (Tsang, 2001). The other measure was to promote vocational education in order to cultivate talent for the market economy. This type of education was thought to be better than general education to train young people for employment in industry (Tsang, 2000). Therefore, the secondary education was changed from a predominance of general education to an equal mix of general education and vocational education (CPCCC, 1985).

These steps not only helped the government to narrow the gap between limited educational resources and the public need to receive education, but also promoted the introduction of competition into the educational system (see Hawkins, 2000; Mok, 1999; 2003). As a result, an "internal market" or "quasi-market" has slowly developed in the Chinese educational system (Chan & Mok, 2001; Mok, 1997a, 1997b). In line with this, self-funded students emerged as customers in the education marketplace and some related issues, such as school choice³⁸ and arbitrary charges levied by schools (Chan & Mok, 2001; Tsang, 2000; 2001; Xu, 2009).

³⁷ Normally, students receiving basic education, especially the nine-year compulsory education, are required to attend schools in their district of residence. But parents still can pay a fee for their children so that they can enter some public schools in other districts and/or with higher entry threshold or non-government schools (see Tsang, 2000; 2001).

³⁸ See footnote 27.

Third, more administrative power was devolved to lower levels. With moves toward decentralisation and marketisation, the state has gradually retreated from direct control of school management and deliberately increased the responsibility and administrative power of lower level authorities and school leaders. As a result, local governments can define the school-entry age, school staff commitments and duties, teachers' salaries, the duration of basic education and structure of nine-year compulsory education and determine school curricula and textbooks, as well as supervise the operation of school education (Hawkins, 2000).

At the school level, the adoption of the principal responsibility system drew a distinct line between the duties and responsibilities of the principal and those of the Party secretary. Under this system, a school has one principal and one party secretary. The principal is in charge of the school's daily administration and can make decisions independently on such matters as student admission and teacher assignment without consulting the Party secretary (Delany & Paine, 1991). On the other hand, the Party secretary is responsible for keeping school education and administration conforming to the CPC's policies and organising various activities for the Party members (SEC, 1991). In a word, this system enables school principals to run schools with more autonomy.

By virtue of these reform initiatives, education was closely related to economic development in China. The central government gradually changed its approach to managing education, from direct control to indirect monitoring and supervision through legislation, funding, planning, assessment and providing advice. Local authorities and various social resources were motivated, mobilized and channeled to provide educational services. The previous highly centralised educational system has turned more decentralised and marketised (Ngok, 2007).

However, the reform did not make significant change with respect to the political and ideological control over schools and the exam-orientated tradition of Chinese education. School principals were included in the cadre system and thus worked like governmental officials (Qian, 2008). Ideology-based moral education continues to be given top priority in both personnel administration and school education, which is predominated by a uniform curriculum formulated by the central government (see Yuan, 2007). The key school system and the highly selective CEE still overarched the entire school education.

At the same time, new issues emerged. For example, district disparity became increasingly serious because of the process of decentralisation (Liu, 2009; Wang, 2009). In rich areas, the local governments could provide sufficient financial support for basic education, whereas many schools in poor rural areas could hardly get enough funds to pay teachers, purchase instructional materials, and improve school facilities (Tsang, 2002). The competition for quality educational resources led to two chronic problems: one-sided pursuit of promotion rate to a higher level of schooling and the overloading of students (Yang, 2003). In addition, the competition even caused some corruption in education, for example, unqualified students could be admitted to a higher level schooling or a key school through 'guanxi' or bribe-back door, personal relationship or kinship (see Yuan, 2007).

All these were harmful for the development of basic education in China. Policy-makers began to think about how to improve the educational system. As a consequence, improving educational quality became the major goal of education reform in the next stage.

Improving Schooling for Quality Education

Since the early-1990s, the notion of quality education, originally as an antithesis to 'examination-oriented education (*yingshijiaoyu*)', was proposed as the guiding principle of basic education reform. This term was first officially used in the *Advice of CPCCC on Further Reinforcing and Improving Moral Education in Schools* in 1994. In 1999, quality education came to the stage of 'full-scale promotion' (CPCCC, 1999). A series of reforms were initiated in the school classification system, curriculum and examination system and personnel system. Secondary education became a field which captured considerable attention from reformers all under the banner of quality education.

Exemplary school system

One early measure was to adopt a new 'exemplary school' system to replace the previous 'key school' system which concentrated the educational resources on a few elite schools. The new system was designed to identify quality education practices within all kinds of high schools, whether previously key or ordinary schools. These exemplary schools can exert their influence and lead other schools towards success. In 1994, the State Council (SC) explicitly posited that "by the end of 20th century ... nationwide priority is given to build about 1000 experimental, exemplary high

schools.”³⁹ In the next year, the SEC reconfirmed the strategic importance of developing exemplary schools on the basis of the previous key school system and emphasised that “all-level governments and educational administrations as well as all social circles should further prioritise and enhance the development of exemplary high schools by increasing resources input, improving school conditions, and motivating the exemplary schools.”⁴⁰

Hence, a bunch of exemplary or model high schools, many of which were original key schools, have been identified and developed by the local authorities all over the country, especially in Beijing, Tianjin, Shanghai and eastern coastal provinces, where the local governments are able to provide adequate resources to support the construction of exemplary schools. As required, these schools have to exhibit some breakthrough or extraordinary achievements in promoting quality education and meet high-standard criteria in terms of school physical environment and equipment (SEC, 1995). For instance, the total area of the campus should be no less than 25 m² per student for an urban school and 30 m² per student for a rural school; there should be a well-equipped library and enough facilities and apparatus for teaching and learning. Some qualified schools even have a gymnasium or an open air playground, a swimming pool or a skating rink. In some sense, the exemplary high schools, taking the place of the former key schools, become representative of the quality educational resources in contemporary China.

Curriculum and examination reforms

Accompanying the change in school classification, a profound transformation took place in school curriculum and examination system. In order to reduce students' workload and change the examination orientation in basic education, a new curriculum outline, *Compendium for Curriculum Reform of Basic Education (trial edition)*, was published in 2001 and amended in 2002 (see Feng, 2006; Lo, 2000).

This new framework aimed to shift the basic education curriculum:

- *From a narrow perspective of knowledge delivery in classroom teaching to a perspective concerned with learning how to learn and developing positive attitudes;*
- *From isolation among subjects to a balanced, integrative, and selective curriculum structure;*

³⁹ See SC, 1994.

⁴⁰ See SEC, 1995.

- *From imparting out of date and extremely abstruse content to teaching essential knowledge and skills relevant to students' lifelong learning;*
- *From students' passive learning to developing their capacities to process information, obtain new knowledge, analyse and solve problems, as well as communicate and cooperate with others;*
- *From exclusively viewing the function of curriculum evaluation to be identification and selection to paying attention to the other functions, i.e., the promotion of student growth, teacher development, and instructional improvement;*
- *From a centralised curriculum control to three levels of control system: central government, local authorities, and schools. (Feng, 2006)*

Consequently, a new type of comprehensive course (*zonghe kecheng*), which combines the contents of several subjects, was introduced into the school education. A three-level curriculum system has been set up, including national curriculum, local curriculum and school curriculum. Individual schools are supposed to develop school-based curriculum (*xiaoben kecheng*) according to their unique characteristics or the unique demands of local communities (MoE, 2001a).

These innovations were first implemented at the level of compulsory education in 38 pilot districts located in 27 provinces in 2001 and then expanded to the whole nation in the following three years (Song, 2002). In light of the positive effects⁴¹ and informative experiences collected in the prior phase, a new round of curriculum reform for general high schools started in four provincial districts in 2004. By 2009, the wave has engulfed 24 (of 31) provincial districts of China. In this sense, high school education seems to have become the centre of the latest curriculum reform in China.

Furthermore, two major exams conducted in the secondary education, municipal-level High School Entrance Exam (HSEE) and national-level CEE, were changed in accordance with the orientation of the curriculum reform. As the scores of these two entrance examinations are the most important determinant of the admission to high schools and colleges, they always act as a key 'lever' to adjust school instruction (Feng, 2006; Qian, 2008). Aiming to reduce the exam-orientation of school drilling and teaching, the MoE (2002) first officially stipulated that: within the nine-year compulsory education, students are enrolled on a catchment area basis⁴²; the HSEE should consider students' overall quality and individual differences and change the

⁴¹ After the implementation of curriculum reform for three years, there has been a positive tendency in learning and teaching process in the pilot districts (MoE, 2004b).

⁴² The nearby enrollment was reconfirmed by the *Compulsory Education Law* revised in 2006.

total-score-based admission system; besides the score on the exam, admission can be determined according to the record of student growth, social practice and social public service activities, sports and arts activities, and integrated practice activities.⁴³

As far as the CEE is concerned, the expanding of university enrollment since 1999 alleviated the pressure of entering higher level educational institutions, at least to some extent. From the beginning of this millennium, the time⁴⁴, frequency⁴⁵ and subject areas⁴⁶ of the exam have also been adjusted to reduce its competitiveness and lighten the burden imposed on high school students. Meanwhile, the original centralised exam system was gradually replaced by provincial determinations on exam contexts⁴⁷ (Shi & Zhang, 2008). And the government has gradually delegated the power of student enrollment to individual higher education institutions⁴⁸. In October 2009, Peking University, one of the top universities in China, proposed to add the 'nominations from secondary school principals⁴⁹' to the original CEE system. In 2010, the university will pilot the initiative in thirteen provincial districts, including Beijing and Tianjin, to recruit extraordinary students with all-rounded qualities or certain forte(s).

Personnel reforms

Another approach to improving school education was to change school personnel system. The reform mainly concerns two groups of people: principals and teachers.

⁴³ See MoE, 2002.

⁴⁴ In 2003, the CEE began to be held on June 7-9 instead of July 7-9.

⁴⁵ In 2000, the CEE began to be held twice a year (spring and summer) instead of once per year (summer) in pilot areas. Today only Shanghai still adopts this policy.

⁴⁶ Since 2002, the CEE has been restricted to four subject areas in a model of 3+X. Within the model, three subject areas are required, i.e., Chinese, Math, and English, and candidates are allowed to choose one or more additional subjects from the followings: Physics, Chemistry, Biology, Politics, History, and Geography - this decision is made in light of the requirements of a specific college. Before the reform, six subjects area will be tested according to the broad major division the examinees prefer. For students wishing to major in the arts, the exam involves Chinese, English, mathematics, geology, history, and politics. The other, for science majors, covers Chinese, English, mathematics, physics, chemistry, and biology.

⁴⁷ The exam context can be determined by the provincial authorities individually or collectively.

⁴⁸ In 2003, the government started a pilot program of 'independent enrollment of universities', involving 22 higher education institutions nationwide. These universities could control 5% of the planned quota to recruit qualified candidates.

⁴⁹ According to this plan, secondary school principals, who are qualified to recommend students to Peking University, can nominate outstanding students according to the quota. The number of this type of candidates is no more than 3% of the total number of the students that the university plans to recruit. The nominated and qualified candidates can directly participate into the interview, exempting from independent enrollment examination held by Peking University. If they pass the interviews, they can be admitted with a much lower score than the normal admission score. (See OA, 2009)

For school principals, more initiatives have been made to strengthen their professionalisation and leadership. A professional ranking system, career ladder system (*zhiji zhi*) with a new pay scale for principals was proposed in 1993 and first tried out in two districts (Jing'an and Luwan) in Shanghai in 1994. The system came into effect in one district in Beijing in 1996. After the innovation had been piloted in many cities⁵⁰, the State Council decided to actively promote the career ladder system nationwide and delegate local authorities to design their own implementation schemes (SC, 2001). Although different, the specific forms of the system in different pilot districts are all designed to abolish principals' official rank (i.e., the cadre system), separate the function of government from school affairs, and form an open, fair, competitive and merit-and-competence-based selection and reward mechanism to facilitate principals' professional growth and ultimately promote quality education (Huang, 2005). The *Implementation Advice on Deepening Personnel System Reform in Primary and Secondary Schools* (MoP⁵¹, 2003) restated the decision on abolishing the official rank system, promoting principal engagement system and implementing tenure system in schools.

Meanwhile, a three-level⁵² principal professional training system was established and managed by four levels of governments⁵³ (Chen, 2009). In fact, a professional training scheme was proposed by the SEC in 1989, with attached certification for school principals⁵⁴ (Feng, 2003). From then on, professional training has been increasingly related to principal selection, assessment and promotion. In the new century, emphasis has been further put on a national professional training program for 'backbone principals (*gugan xiaozhang*)' (see Chen, 2009). In these programs, a deal of Western leadership theories has been absorbed in the training contents (Chu, 2009). As a result, school leaders have been exposed to many Western leadership and managerial approaches such as learning organisation, distributed leadership and total quality management (TQM) (Feng, 2003, Chu, 2009). These novel methods are often introduced as good practices to facilitate the implementation of the education reform at school level. However, Western assumptions and values are embedded in these

⁵⁰ E.g., Shenyang, Dalian, Zhongshan, Guangzhou, Guiyang, Zhucheng.

⁵¹ The Ministry of Personnel (MoP) was merged into the Ministry of Human Resources and Social Security in 2008.

⁵² The system embraces qualification training, improvement training and advanced programs.

⁵³ I.e., national level, provincial level, municipal level and county level

⁵⁴ See SEC, 1989.

imported ideas and practices. The introduction of Western experience into Chinese schools might bring about some conflict between the imported theories and the traditional perception of leadership in China. This is discussed further in Chapter Three.

More autonomy was given to school principals in teacher recruitment and promotion. According to the *Implementation Advice on Deepening Personnel System Reform in Primary and Secondary Schools* (MoP⁵⁵, 2003), teacher engagement system (*pinrenzhi*) would be fully adopted in primary and secondary schools. Individual schools could advertise vacant positions, interview potential candidates and submit a list of qualified candidates to local education bureaus for approval. Furthermore, performance-based professional ranks and rewards were required to be implemented in schools (MoP, 2003). In secondary schools, teachers are divided into four ranks according to their achievements, that is, special, senior, first, and junior. Higher rank relates to higher recognition of their work and higher pay. With this system, teachers can be promoted or rewarded in light of their performance. This in turn enhanced principals' role as a reviewer of teacher performance.

Another responsibility vested in school principals was to facilitate teacher professional development. With the implementation of curriculum reform, more attention was paid to teacher education and professional development. A number of programs were designed to match the pre-service⁵⁶ and in-service professional development with the needs of the reform (MoE, 1999). To promote a three-level curriculum system, several national professional training programs have been redesigned and school-based professional training on curriculum development has been emphasised (Feng, 2006). Accordingly, teacher development increasingly becomes one of the critical concerns in school management.

Compared with the structural reform in the preceding period, the ongoing actions towards quality education reflect the efforts made by the Chinese government to resolve the chronic problems existing in Chinese school education. For example, the new curriculum and examination reforms directly aimed at the traditional focus on examination and overloaded student burden; the career ladder system were adopted

⁵⁵ The Ministry of Personnel (MoP) was merged into the Ministry of Human Resources and Social Security in 2008.

⁵⁶ For example, a '3+1' program was introduced to preparing teachers, i.e., three years of academic discipline-oriented education followed by one year of professional training (Shen, 1994).

to remove officialism as a result of long-lasting principal official ranks. Resulting from these reform initiatives, basic education in China today has developed into a system with more emphases on school accountability for teaching and learning, on student-centred teaching and learning, on specific school contexts, on individual needs and all-round development of students, and on teachers' and principals' professional qualification and development. The following section summarise the present context of Chinese basic education fashioned by the recent reform initiatives.

Summary

The review of the reform context suggests that Chinese school education has been transformed into a more decentralised and marketised system pursuing of quality education. This change echoes the international educational reform trends towards marketisation, decentralisation and accountability. All these pursuits were reemphasised and upgraded in the latest *Guidelines on National Mid- and Long- Term Education Reform and Development Planning (2010-2020)*. At the same time, traditional Chinese understandings about education and the political and ideological controls have enduring impacts on Chinese schooling. All these forces produce a complex and challenging context for school principals.

First, quality-oriented reforms have propelled Chinese basic education towards decentralisation and marketisation. Today, power and responsibility have been redistributed from the central government to local governments and communities and eventually to the school level (Tang & Wu, 2000). Schools in the basic education sector mainly get support from the local authorities, communities and individual students. The new curriculum system, the principal responsibility system and personnel system promise school leaders more autonomy in terms of school-based curriculum, daily administration, teacher development, recruitment and promotion.

Accompanying increased market involvement, schools are confronted with intensified competition. In order to stand out in the education market, schools have to secure an ever-increasing proportion of funding from all sorts of sources to improve school infrastructure and attract and retain talented students and teachers. For this purpose, many schools, especially high schools, are pressured to compete for the governmental designation of 'exemplary school' so that they can obtain more resources and keep their competitiveness.

However, traditional views and political ideology continue to influence Chinese education. First, success on selective examinations is still thought to be critical for a successful career and life. Although the university enrollment has been expanded since 1999, the quality universities, which are respected by both parents and potential employers, are still a small group (e.g. Peking University, Tsinghua University, etc.). Students still have to fight for the opportunity of receiving better education. The present system in China is still labelled as a system characterised by a focus on academic learning and test scores.

Second, although the process of decentralisation has reduced the Party-state's influence, the ideological and political controls over school education have not been substantially loosened. Nearly all educational policies and regulations begin with an overarching statement of the political clichés and ideological guidelines formulated by the CPC. Principal selection and various professional training programs give top priority to the content reflecting the political ideology (see Chu, 2009). The government still holds a great influence over funding, employment and deployment of teachers and principals, curriculum design and student enrollment. Such a system imposes a hierarchical administrative culture on the school organization, which emphasises positional authority and responsibility (Huang, 2005).

This educational setting provides both opportunities and challenges for school principals in China. On the one hand, the role of school principals becomes increasingly important. They are expected to shoulder the financial and personnel responsibilities, and facilitate schools to achieve better teaching and learning outcomes. Good principal leadership is regarded as crucial for school success and implementation of the quality education reform. Thus, a number of recent reform efforts have paid attention to principal leadership development (Chu, 2008). Compared with the increased emphasis on the principals' role in school administration, there is not enough material or professional support for principals to confront the complex and challenging environment. For example, principal development opportunities remain rate limited (Feng, 2003).

Therefore, it is necessary to collect more informative knowledge of how principals actually lead in Chinese schools through serious research. This contextual analysis is only a 'starting point' for such an investigation and leads to the following questions: What is leadership and what is leadership practice? What empirical studies have been

done that can help us understand the concept within Chinese school context? Chapter Three will tackle these two issues as it attempts to lay a conceptual foundation for the study.

Finally, the contextual description also provided some methodological suggestion of how an empirical study can be conducted. For example, it may focus on principals working in high schools in big cities. Targeting high schools may be useful given that many recent reform initiatives relate to the secondary education (e.g., exemplary school system, school curriculum reform, CEE reform). In addition, reform initiatives almost always start in places such as Beijing, Guangzhou, and other provincial capital cities where the educational environment may be representative of the complex reforming context of school education in Mainland China today. Chapter Four will further explain it.

Chapter 3 Literature Review

This chapter reviews and synthesises the literature relevant to exploring principal leadership practices in Chinese schools. The general purpose includes two aspects. First, the synthesis aims to provide a description of what is already known about the key leadership practices of school principals in both Western and Chinese academic communities. Such an informative summary will lay the theoretical foundation for this study and justify the demand for empirical research into principal leadership practices in Chinese schools. Second, it is to construct an investigative frame for the study on the basis of previous relevant empirical research. As such, the review will further clarify the research questions, offer conceptual lenses on the key variables, and suggest the promising research methods.

The reviewed literature involves the academic work in both Western and Chinese societies. On the one hand, the field of leadership and school leadership has been heavily dominated by Anglo-American paradigms and theories (Hallinger, Walker & Bajunid, 2005; Walker & Dimmock, 1998; 2002). It's impossible for a probe in the field to ignore what has been achieved in Western research. On the other hand, there is always a danger of assuming that Western perceptions of leadership and principalship are universal (Oplatka, 2004). Although some common or similar issues might confront educational administrators around the world, it is also important to consider leadership practices within non-Western settings (Dimmock & Walker, 1998). Therefore, this review is divided into two major sections. The first section synthesises the dominant Western understandings of leadership and empirical studies of principal leadership practices. The second section focuses on the findings emerging from the relevant literature on leadership practices of Chinese school principals.

In the first section, the synthesis of Western leadership literature suggests that leadership itself has been increasingly perceived as a contextual social activity (Hoy & Miskel, 2005). Accordingly, more and more efforts have been devoted to investigating contextual leadership practices of school principals in order to demystify how school leaders could make a difference in a given context (i.e., Bolman & Deal, 1993; Sergiovanni, 2000; 2009; Morrison, 2002). Relevant empirical evidence has confirmed the effects of principal leadership practices on several dependent variables and resulted in a set of core leadership practices which in

turn are influenced by multiple contextual factors (see Leithwood *et al.*, 2006). Although the robust research in Western societies sheds light on the investigation in the field, the pertinence of the Western findings to Chinese context still needs to be examined carefully due to the distinct social and cultural contexts in China.

The review of Chinese literature leads to the following claims. On one hand, Chinese scholarship in the field reconfirms the significance of the core practices found in Western societies (e.g., Li & Zhang, 2006; Sun & Wang, 2008; Cravens, 2008). On the other hand, Chinese principalship is always affected the distinct perception of leadership embedded in Chinese traditional culture (Wong, 2006; 2007). Simply transplanting Western experiences without questioning would be risky and inappropriate (Dimmock & Walker, 1998). However, the *status quo* of Chinese research in the field makes the situation more complicated. First, there is a marked lack of empirical studies in Chinese education discourse. The research is often presented in the form of biographic stories, descriptive introductions, or personal commentaries and reflections. Second, an awareness of the contextual differences is lacking in the limited empirical studies in China. Many researchers remain inclined to accept and introduce overseas theories as a sort of universal panacea (Yang, 2005). At to the methodology issue, quantitative and qualitative perspectives has been increasingly connected in the research. These arguments together indicate the promise of more holistic empirical research into authentic expertise of Chinese school leaders.

Principal Leadership Practices in Western Societies

This section aims to build the conceptual and empirical understandings of principal leadership in Western countries. It includes three sub-sections. The first subsection briefly outlines the knowledge of leadership in Western societies. With the theoretical development, this concept has increasingly been perceived as a dynamic social interaction embedded within a specific context (Hoy & Miskel, 2005; Northouse, 2007). More researchers have focused on the investigation into how leaders do in real-life context to find out 'contextualistic, interactionistic, and dynamic aspects' of leadership (Dhunpath, 2000, p. 545). Consistent with the contextual perspective, the third sub-section reviews recent empirical studies of principal leadership practices in Western context. Three themes emerge from the

analysis: effects of principal leadership, core leadership practices of school principals and contextual factors affecting principals' leadership practices.

Conceptual Understanding of Leadership

This sub-section sketches a brief overview of Western comprehensions of leadership in order to form a conceptual understanding of the core concept underlying this study. The review indicates that leadership can be generally perceived as a contextual influencing process through which leaders direct followers towards certain aims. This definition involves four conceptual components: leader, follower, aim and context. Therefore, leadership practice can be seen as contextual interactions among the four elements. This provides a conceptual foundation for the research into principal leadership practice.

As a universal activity evident in humankind, leadership is one of the most observed social phenomena (Burns, 1978; Antonakis, Cianciolo & Sternberg, 2004). Since the important role of leader was identified at the turn of the 20th century, people have never stopped pursuing a better understanding of this conception. But a universally accepted definition of leadership does not exist (Antonakis, Cianciolo & Sternberg, 2004; Yukl, 2006). A retrospect of its theoretical evolution demonstrates the conceptual diversity of leadership.

The earliest "Self-evident Theory" or "Great Man Approach" was based on the assumption that leaders were born, and that instinct was more important than training (Glasman & Glasman, 1997). A subsequent trait theory mainly concentrated on leaders' characteristics, personalities, traits, or intellectual abilities (e.g., Lord, DeVader & Alliger, 1986; Mann, 1959; Stogdill, 1948; 1974). Robert Katz's (1955) work addressed leadership as a set of developable skills, which laid the foundation for a comprehensive skill-based model of leadership (i.e., Mumford *et al.*, 2000). In these theories, there was only one hero, the leader, in their conceptual frameworks.

By the 1950s, the major emphasis of leadership theory shifted to examining the behaviors that make leaders effective and their consequent effects on the productivity and work satisfaction of subordinates. These focuses brought out a prominent taxonomy of task/initiating structure and relationship/consideration (e.g., Blake & Mouton, 1991; the Ohio State studies, see Hemphill & Coons, 1957; the studies in the University of Michigan, see Katz & Kahn, 1951; Misumi, 1985). The former

focuses on goal achievement; the latter aims to help subordinate feel comfortable with all types of relationships involved in their work (Northouse, 2007).

Based on the basic dichotomy of leadership behaviors, situational factors came into notice. Both situational leadership and contingent theory aimed to match the leadership styles with the demands of different situations (Fielder, 1966; Hersy & Blanchard, 1988). In path-goal theory, a variety of leadership styles (directive, supportive, participative, or achievement oriented) were included to explain how leaders motivate subordinates to productively accomplish their work, as well as be satisfied with their work (House & Mitchell, 1974). Leader-member exchange (LMX) theory particularly emphasized the exchange between leaders and their subordinates (e.g., Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1995).

Based on these early understandings, diverse leadership practices were proposed as synonyms for whatever the speaker means by “good” leadership (Leithwood *et al.*, 2006a), such as transformational leadership⁵⁷ (Burns, 1978; Bass, 1985; Kouzes & Posner, 1987; 2002), distributed leadership (Gronn, 2003; Spillane, Halverson & Diamond, 2001; 2004), substitute leadership, self-leadership and super-leadership (see Horner, 2003; Leithwood *et al.*, 2006a). Transformational and charismatic leadership were defined in terms of leader’s influence over their colleagues and the nature of leader-follower relations (Leithwood *et al.*, 2006a). They had strong intuitive appeal, emphasised the importance of followers and their growth, and attached great importance to morals and values (Northouse, 2007). Distributed leadership practice was thought to be a product of the interactions among school leaders, followers, and their situation (Gronn, 2003; Spillane & Orlina, 2005). Substitute leadership considered leadership as a property of organisations which either enhance or neutralise the influence of people attempting to function as leaders (Kerr & Jermier, 1978). Self-leadership theory contended that leadership is not confined to formally appointed leaders but exists within each individual, and that super-leaders will unleash the potential of followers to lead themselves (Manz, 1983). With the accumulated knowledge, “researchers are now in a position to integrate overlapping and complementary conceptualisations of leadership.” (Antonakis,

⁵⁷ Burns’ (1978) regarded transformational leadership as the transcendence of self-interest by both leader and led. Partly based on Burn’s work, Bass (1985) conceptualised the conception of transactional and transformational leadership. Kouzes and Posner (1987; 2002) also established a model of transformational leadership.

Cianciolo & Sternberg, 2004, p. 11) Miscellaneous conceptions have gradually agreed on that leadership can be generally defined as a contextual influencing process through which leaders direct followers towards certain aims. The broad understanding has been expressed in a number of definitions provided in recent comprehensive synthetic work in the field. Hoy and Miskel (2005) defined leadership as an interactive social influence process through which someone exerts influence over others to structure activities and relationships within a group or organisation. Northouse (2007) asserted that leadership is “a process whereby an individual influences a group of individuals to achieve a common goal.” (p. 3). A similar but more detailed statement was that “Leadership can be defined as the nature of the influencing process – and its resultant outcomes – that occurs between a leader and followers and how this influencing process is explained by the leaders’ dispositional characteristics and behaviors, follower perceptions and attributions of the leader, and the context in which the influencing process occurs” (Antonakis, Cianciolo & Sternberg, 2004, p. 5).

This holistic perception implies two propositions. First, leadership is an integration of four conceptual components: leader, follower, aim (i.e., outcome or goal) and context. All of them are dispensable for the influencing process. Different leadership theories usually place particular emphases on one or more aspects. For instance, trait theory and behavioral theory respectively relates to leader’s characteristics and behaviors (Antonakis, Cianciolo & Sternberg, 2004; Densten, 2008; Northouse, 2007). Contingency theory stresses situational factors (Hoy & Miskel, 2005). Particular attention is paid to the ‘follower’ in leader-member exchange (LMX) theory, implicit leadership theories, information-processing theory (Densten, 2008). At the same time, none of them can solely conceptualise leadership without other aspects. As a matter of fact, diverse theoretical schools inclined to absorb complementary ideas from each other. Even the most leader-centric trait theory is increasingly connected with other perspective to leadership (Densten, 2008).

Second, leadership is crystallised and actualised through interactions among four conceptual components. That means the four elements are related through interactive influencing process between each other. In other words, when one exerts leadership, he or she will influences goal setting, other persons and the context within which he or she leads. In turn, the expected aim, the people and the entire context will

interactively impact his or her practices. Such an interactive and integrative perspective is advocated in many new leadership theories (e.g., Densten, 2008; Morrison, 2002; Spillane & Orlina, 2005). This dynamic process can hardly be fully captured with an exclusive focus on decontextualised and static traits or competencies of the leaders, the state of the follower, or the specific situations confronting them. It requires an integrative way to interpret this contextual, interactive phenomenon.

The conception of leadership practice meets the requirement. Although different theorists have distinct definitions of practices⁵⁸, most theorists would agree that “practices are arrays of human activity” and that “activity is embodied and that nexuses of practices are mediated by artifacts, hybrids, and natural objects.” (Schatzki, 2001, p. 2) The concept denotes that various leading activities of leaders are directly shaped and influenced by the interactive links among leader, follower and context (Spillane & Orlina, 2005). This perspective is critical because “the strength of leadership as an influencing relation rests upon its effectiveness as activity.” (Tucker, 1981, p. 25) With this conception, leadership no more just amounts to leaders’ cognitions, problem solving, emotions, or other “traits”, but means “interactions among leaders and their situation” - “what is done in a particular time and place to act in response to what Bourdieu terms ‘the urgency of practice’ (1981, p. 310).” Therefore, a sound understanding of leadership practice involves multifold dimensions - “knowing what leaders do is one thing, but a rich understanding of how, why, and when they do it is essential if research is to make a meaningful contribution to understanding and improving leadership practice.” (Spillane & Orlina, 2005, p. 4-6)

With this understanding, principal leadership can be considered as a series of leadership practices enacted by school leaders within specific school contexts. A proper investigation into principal leadership practice means identifying *what* leaders do, describing *how* they do it, and finally finding out *why* they do that in their

⁵⁸ For example, “philosophical practice thinkers such as Ludwig Wittgenstein (1958), Hubert Dreyfus (1991), and Charles Taylor (1985: part one) contend that practices at once underlie subjects and objects, highlight nonpropositional knowledge, and illuminate the conditions of intelligibility. For the social theoretical brethren Pierre Bourdieu (1977; 1990), Anthony Giddens (1979; 1984), and the ethnomethodologists (see Lynch 1993), talk of practices bespeaks such desires as those to free activity from the determining grasp of objectified social structures and systems, to question individual actions and their status as the building-blocks of social phenomena, and to transcend rigid action-structure oppositions.” (Schatzki, 2001, p. 1)

schools (Elmore, 2008; Glatter & Kydd, 2003). In other words, principal leadership practice can be perceived at three levels. First, it can be identified as a set of activities or what Spillane, Halverson and Diamond (2004) called “tasks and functions”, which outline what leaders mainly focus on. Second, they can be addressed as specific descriptions of how the generic activities are enacted by leaders, that is, “the ways in which leadership tasks are enacted” (Spillane, Halverson & Diamond, 2004, p. 14). Third, these activities can be explained within a given context for they are the product of “what the actor knows, believes, and does in and through particular social, cultural,¹ and material contexts.” (ibid, p. 10) This view is supported by the theoretical understanding of principal leadership and the empirical findings presented in the following two sub-sections.

Theoretical Overview of Principal Leadership

This subsection reviews relevant literature on principal leadership in Western societies in order to frame a theoretical understanding of principal leadership practice in Western scholarship. As the leader is always seen as the most essential element in leadership theory, principal leadership has been universally acknowledged and emphasised in school administration (Day, Leithwood & Sammons, 2008; Leithwood *et al.*, 2006b). A huge amount of Western research has been conducted and provided different interpretations of ‘good practice’ of principalship. In accord with the recent advancement of leadership theory, diverse perspectives to principal leadership have increasingly developed towards integration. Accordingly, a more holistic framework has been constructed and adopted in many recent empirical studies. These statements are explained in this subsection.

As effective leadership is invariably emphasised as crucial to organisational success (Hoy & Miskel, 2005; Northouse, 2007; Yukl, 2006), principal leadership has been perceived as a vital force driving school operation and management (Day, Leithwood & Sammons, 2008; Leithwood *et al.*, 2006b). This view was empirically established in the intensive research into school effectiveness in the last three decades of 20th century (Yu, Leithwood & Jantzi, 2002). Those early explorations found that principal leadership play an important role in school instruction, staff management, culture building, and, eventually, improving student learning (Hallinger & Heck, 1996; Leithwood & Duke, 1999; Leithwood *et al.*, 2004). Hence, great interest has been given to studying the ‘good practice’ of principalship (Hallinger & Heck, 1996).

To a great extent, demystifying the secret of successful principal leadership is thought as the 'holy grail' of academic inquiry in school administration (Gentilucci & Muto, 2007).

Such investigations are influenced by the contemporary understandings of leadership. In early stage, lots of research was based on traits theory and focused on identifying some personalities or traits relating to school leaders' success and/or school effectiveness (Spillane, Halverson & Diamond, 2004). With the emphasis of leadership theory shifted to the behavior of the leader, more empirical studies were conducted to document various behaviors emerging from the leadership practice of school leaders. As a result, a number of lists of standards, traits, competencies, behaviors, or styles came out as seemingly universally effective approaches to good principalship (Carroll, Levy & Richmond, 2008; Walker & Quong, 2005).

Among these, there are two prominent practical models: instructional leadership and transformational leadership (Heck & Hallinger, 1999). Instructional leadership emerged in the early 1980s from school effectiveness research. It emphasise the leading role of school principals in school teaching and learning activities (Hallinger & Murphy, 1985; Hallinger, 2000). This model guided much research into effective principal leadership in the 1980s to early 1990s (Hallinger, 2003a). Transformational leadership was introduced to education since the late 1980s (Leithwood & Jantzi, 2005a). It focuses on stimulating a collaborative culture and developing organisational capacity to change and innovate (Leithwood & Jantzi, 1990; 1999; 2000a; 2000b). In the early to mid-1990s, the term was used to "signify an appropriate type of leadership for school take up the challenges of 'restructuring'." (Leithwood & Jantzi, 2005a, p. 31)

Like other behavior lists or models, each of the models has a set of leadership behaviors that are regarded to be 'best' for school principals without regarding their contexts. All these prescribed behaviors put a focus on the 'great leader', especially transformational leadership, which is often found not easy to exercise (Jackson, 2000; Sugure, 2005). Despite some accumulated empirical evidence of their effectiveness in terms of improving student learning, these perceptions of principal leadership are often criticised for their decontextualisation, fragmentation, and leader-centredness (Glatter & Kydd, 2003; Goodson, 2005; Spillane, Halverson & Diamond, 2004).

Responding to the critiques, a contextual perspective was gradually introduced into the field. More empirical studies were based on the contingency theory, which claims that school leaders should have a broad repertoire of leadership behaviors or styles and use them according to concrete situations (Spillane, Halverson & Diamond, 2004). The situational factors usually involved relations between leaders and followers, the extent to which the task is structured, and the readiness of the followers (Fielder, 1966; Hersey & Blanchard, 1977). Principal leadership could be achieved by connecting these aspects with proper leadership behaviors or styles. As a case in point, principals' task-oriented behaviors were more effective when teachers have limited experience and competence (i.e., immature followers); a blend of task- and relationship-oriented styles worked best with prepared members; and delegation was most effective with very 'mature' followers (Hersey & Blanchard, 1988).

However, such simple combinations between broad situational aspects and leadership behaviors could not fully exhibit the complex process of how leaders perceive the context and take actions. Thus, there was a shift in research focus to open the black box of how school leaders link their actions with situations. Some researchers interpreted the process from a cognitive perspective⁵⁹ (Leithwood, 1993). They found that "experts" principals, compared with 'typical' school leaders, were more capable to identify the problem situation, link it to past experiences, and find a solution (Leithwood & Steinbach, 1990; 1995). However, the focus on leaders' cognition, intentions and related values and beliefs may ignore organisational, cultural, and political factors that might influence what principals do in a given context (Cuban, 1993).

Echoing this criticism, institutional theory situated school leaders' thinking and actions in institutional sectors that provide norms, rules and definitions of the environment (DiMaggio & Powell, 1991). "Leadership is about preserving institutional legitimacy in order to maintain public support for the institution." (Spillane, Halverson & Diamond, 2004, p. 8) Upon the stance, Bolman and Deal (1993) affirmed that effective school leaders exert influence on the structural, human, political, and symbolic frames of the school organisation. Adopting Habermas' classification of lifeworld and systemsworld, Sergiovanni (2000, 2009) posited a

⁵⁹ Cognitive perspective focuses on how school leaders perceive their situation and work, and understand and order their response to experiences (Bolman & Deal, 1993).

similar conception of leadership forces in school organisations. He asserted that the school organisation consists of the two structures, both of which are influenced by principals *via* technical, human, educational, cultural, and symbolic leadership practices. He further suggested that school principals work as servant and moral leaders who centre on the symbolic and cultural lifeworld in schools. These arguments provided an insight into the implication of organisational structure for principal leadership. However, the over-emphasis on institutional factors implies a risk of being overly deterministic by not attending to the active influences of people's actions (Spillane, Halverson & Diamond, 2004).

Despite the diverse focuses, all these discourses on principal leadership are rested upon an assumption that the leader is the person who exerts leadership. This leader-centric stance has been intensively criticised in more recent Western literature in the area (Spillane & Diamond, 2007). One of the most influential conceptions is so-called distributed leadership. It provides a new way of thinking leadership practice of school principals that "decisions emerge from collaborative dialogues among individuals engaged in mutually dependent activities." (Cunningham & Cordeiro, 2009, p. 213) Driven by the work of Elmore (2000a; 2000b) and Spillane and Diamond (2007), the concept has gained increasing prevalence in school administration and has been thought as the approach to learning-centred leadership for school principals (Cunningham & Cordeiro, 2009; Hallinger & Heck, 2009). Embedded in American's democratic values, however, this type of leadership practice may not have relevance to schools in other societies with distinct societal norms and cultural traditions (see Leithwood & Day, 2007).

Consequently, more investigations in the field have been conducted cross different countries or societies from contextual and cultural perspectives. In fact, substantial comparative research into cross-cultural leadership has already verified the impact of societal culture on leadership practice (e.g., Dickson, Den Hartog & Mitchelson, 2003; Hofstede, 2001; House *et al.*, 2004; Javidan *et al.*, 2006). In the field of school leadership, such research is also growing. The empirical evidence has proved that the perception and practice of principal leadership are varied with different societal and cultural contexts (e.g., ISSPP). Hence, the societal and cultural differences have been internationally emphasised and considered in the research into principal leadership practice.

With this understanding, principal leadership is now regarded as the interplay among principals, school goals, staff and contextual factors, that is, aim-driven social interactions between a principal and the staff within a school context (Elmore, 2008; Glatter & Kydd, 2003; Spillane, Halverson & Diamond, 2004). Accordingly, principals' leadership practices are their intentional interactions with school members to respond to personal, organisational, and societal contexts (Leithwood & Day, 2007). This perception is consistent with the contextual and dynamic conception of leadership and leadership practice and has been confirmed in recent empirical research.

For example, in the recent cross-cultural research (i.e., ISSPP), a comprehensive research framework was constructed (see, Day & Leithwood, 2007). Within the framework, different variables were divided into two broad groups: specific leadership behaviors (i.e., independent variables) and various contextual variables, which were operationally treated as external antecedents, moderating variables, mediating variables, or dependent variables according to different theoretical underpinnings and research purposes (Leithwood & Day, 2007). These elements were connected *via* direct or indirect links which signified the complex and dynamic interactions among principals, staff, and the context and outcomes of school education. In other words, school leaders' practices would indirectly impact the eventual outcomes of school education through directly influencing some mediating variables in school life. At the same time, their practices would be affected by the relevant antecedents and enhanced or muted (mediated) by certain contextual factors. This interactive framework reconfirms the contextual nature of leadership practice.

Since leadership practice can be perceived from three dimensions, principal leadership practice can be broken down to three conceptual dimensions: *what*, *how*, and *why*. Therefore, the research into principal leadership practice aims to answer three questions: *what* principals do to lead their schools, *how* they enact their leading practices in schools, and *why* they employ these leadership in their schools (Elmore, 2008; Spillane & Orlina, 2005). Considerable empirical studies have been conducted around these themes in Western societies. These studies yield a great deal of informative findings, on which a knowledge base for this study can be partly built. The following sub-section analyses recent empirical findings of Western research into principal leadership practice.

Empirical Findings of Principal Leadership Practices

This sub-section exhibits recent empirical findings of the research into principal leadership practices in Western societies. Special weight is given to the work of high quality against conventional standards reported within the past decade (see Punch, 2005; 2006). The research findings are organised around the importance of principal leadership practice and the three generic foci of principal leadership practice (i.e., what, how & why). Resultingly, four arguments are posited. First, principal leadership practices affect student learning and school improvement. Second, various practices of principal leadership can be integrated into a repertoire of core leadership practices of school principals. Third, principal leadership practices involve diversified operational approaches. Fourth, multiple contextual factors affect the leadership practice of school principals. All the arguments are expanded on below.

Effects of Principal Leadership

With the gradually in-depth empirical research in the field, a number of studies in Western context have attempted to decipher the effects of principal leadership. Findings from this branch of Western empirical research indicate that principal leadership has indirect influences on the ultimate outcomes of school education through directly affecting a number of mediating variables.

Principal leadership is always thought to have an impact on student learning (Leithwood, Harris & Hopkins, 2008). Most empirical studies conducted in Western schools within the past ten years assess principal leadership against student academic achievement, especially those instruction-centered practices (e.g. Hallinger, 2003a). Some of them take student learning outcomes as the only dependent variable (e.g., Leithwood *et al.*, 2006b; Waters, Marzano & McNulty, 2003). Some studies also include certain predictors of student learning outcomes, such as student engagement (i.e., Leithwood & Riehl, 2003).

Most empirical research has confirmed the effects of principal leadership on the dependent variables. The relevant qualitative case studies conducted in some exceptional schools reported very large leadership effects on student learning and certain school conditions (Leithwood, Harris & Hopkins, 2008). A new head has been often found able to turn around struggling schools or schools in special measures (Murphy, 2008). Much more compelling evidence came from large-scale quantitative studies of the overall leader effect. According to Hallinger and Heck's

(1996, 1998) review, the overall effect of school leadership, mainly executed by principals, on student outcomes was small but educationally significant⁶⁰, which was second only to classroom teaching (Leithwood, Harris & Hopkins, 2008). Waters, Marzano, and McNulty (2003) also found that principals' advancement in their leadership practices⁶¹ would induce a 10 percentile point increase in pupil exam scores.

At the same time, the empirical evidence suggests that such effect is indirect and mediated by the classroom and school conditions (Hallinger & Heck, 1996). These mediators connect the leadership practice of school leaders with the outcomes of school education. On one hand, they were found directly influenced by principals' leadership practices; on the other hand, they could yield demonstrable improvements in student learning (Leithwood *et al.*, 2006a; 2006b). Therefore, instructional leadership advocators usually emphasised principals' direct involvement in school educational activities (Robinson, 2007). However, Davis *et al.* (2005) argued that principal leadership influences student learning through supporting effective teachers and implementing effective organisational processes. Based on these perceptions, some specific variables at classroom and/or school levels have been identified in the empirical research. For example, time on task, teacher capacity, quality of instruction/instructional climate, a curriculum rich in ideas and engaging for students, and monitoring student process (see Leithwood & Day, 2007, p. 8).

Synthesising the existing empirical evidence, Leithwood, Harris, and Hopkins affirmed that "school leaders improve teaching and learning indirectly and most powerfully through their influence on staff motivation, commitment and working conditions." (2008, p. 32) The influence was strongest on working conditions dimension, followed by staff motivation and then by their capacity to take actions. At the same time, the capacity for better performance made the most direct contribution to improved teaching practices. Similar results have also been found in the studies conducted separately in UK and US (see, Day *et al.*, 2006; Leithwood & Mascall, 2008).

⁶⁰ When considering all impacts together, leadership explains only 5%~7% of the variation in student learning across schools. After controlling the effects of student intake or background factors, this range signifies about 25% of the total across-school variation (12%~20%) explained by all school-level variables (Leithwood, Harris, & Hopkins, 2008)

⁶¹ I.e., the 21 responsibilities identified by Water, Marzano, and McNulty (2003).

Core Leadership Practices of School Principals

With the consensus on the importance of principal leadership, many empirical studies conducted in Western schools have identified a variety of specific leadership practices of school principals (Hallinger & Heck, 1996). Based on the diverse theoretical underpinnings forementioned, various patterns of principal leadership practice have arisen from the empirical research (Goleman, Boyatzis & McKee, 2002, Leithwood, 2004). Leithwood and Duke (1999) classified these models into six categories:

- Instructional leadership focuses on the role of school principals in coordinating, controlling, supervising, and developing school curriculum and instruction (Bamburg & Andrews, 1990; Hallinger & Murphy, 1985; Hallinger, 2000);
- Transformational leadership stresses stimulating a collaborative culture, inspiring members' commitment, and developing an organisation's capacity to innovate (Leithwood & Jantzi, 1990; 2000b);
- Moral leadership, which is concerned with the ethics and values aspects of leadership, as well as values conflicts;
- Participative leadership, which highlights group decision-making process, including "teacher leadership" and "distributed leadership";
- Managerial and strategic leadership, which encompasses a range of tasks or functions found in the classical management literature; and
- Contingent leadership that emphasises the uniqueness of the organisations and the contexts in which those organisations function.

Among the diversified models, there are three practical models that seem universally advocated by Western researchers in this field. They are instructional leadership, transformational leadership and distributed leadership.

Extensive research have investigated in the important role of the school principal as an instructional leader who primarily responsible for the quality and improvement of school teaching and learning (Hallinger, 2005a; Heck & Hallinger, 1999; Quinn, 2002). However, it was not until the early 1980s that several conceptualisations of instructional leadership emerged concurrently (e.g., Hallinger & Murphy, 1985; Leithwood, Beyeley & Cousins, 1990). Andrew & Socer (1987) contended that an effective instructional leader would perform at high levels in four areas – resource provider, instructional resource, communicator, and visible presence in the school. Leithwood (1994) regarded this conception as a series of behaviors which is designed to affect classroom instruction. Through synthesising existing research findings, Hallinger (2003c; 2005a) proposed a three-dimension instructional

leadership model, which involved defining the schools' mission, managing the instructional program, and promoting a positive school learning climate.

Influenced by the prevalence of transformational leadership in general leadership theory (see, Bass, 1985; 1997), this type of principal leadership practices, which stress support, care, trust, participation, and whole staff consensus, has also been said to contribute to the improvement of student learning outcomes through promoting organisational learning or a "collective teacher efficacy" (Mulford, Silins & Leithwood, 2004). As Mulford (2005) summarised, effective principals were found as transformational leaders who provide individual, cultural and structural support to staff, capture a vision for the school, communicate high performance expectations, and offer intellectual stimulation. Built upon Bass' (1985) two-factor theory, Leithwood and Jantzi (1999) constructed a model of transformational school leadership that involves six leadership and four management dimensions⁶². Many studies has specifically examined the effect of principals' transformational behaviors on student learning outcomes (i.e. Craig *et al.*, 2005; Day *et al.*, 2008; Day, Leithwood & Sammons, 2008; Gu, Sammons & Mehta, 2008; Penlington, Kington & Day, 2008; Griffith, 2004; Höög, Johansson & Olofsson, 2007; Jacobson *et al.*, 2005; LaRocque, 2007; Mulford, Silins & Leithwood, 2004; Silins & Mulford, 2007; Marks & Printy, 2003; Ross & Gray, 2006; West, Ainscow & Stanford, 2005).

More recently, the emerging distributed leadership perspective indicated that school leadership would exert a greater influence on schools and students when it is widely distributed (Leithwood, Harris & Hopkins, 2008). This approach to leadership breaks the stereotype of a single top leader in an organisation, and overlaps substantially with shared, collaborative, democratic and participative leadership concepts (Leithwood *et al.*, 2004). Some parallel concepts were advocated by other scholars, such as collective leadership in US (Gruenert, 2005), and democratic leadership in Denmark (Moos *et al.*, 2005). Although the understanding of distributed leadership varies from the normative to the theoretical, this concept generally assumes a set of practices that "are enacted by people at all levels rather than a set of personal

⁶² The leadership dimensions signify the transformational leadership practices, including "building school vision and goals, providing intellectual stimulation; offering individualised support; symbolising professional practices and values; demonstrating high performance expectations; and developing structures to foster participation in school decisions." (Leithwood & Jantzi, 1999, p. 474). And the transactional leadership is represented by the four management dimensions: staffing, instructional support, monitoring school activities, and community focus.

characteristics and attributes located in people at the top” (Fletcher & Kaufer, 2003). Both Gronn (2003) and Spillane (2006) have conceptualised two distinct forms of distributed leadership⁶³.

Bell, Bolam and Cubillo (2003) pointed out that “distributed forms of leadership among the wider school staff is likely to have a more significant impact on the positive achievement of student/pupil outcomes than that which is largely or exclusively top down”. Studies in England (Day, Leithwood & Sammons, 2008; Gu, Sammons & Mehta, 2008; Penlington, Kington & Day, 2008), Norway (Møller *et al.*, 2005), Australia (Gurr, Drysdale & Mulford, 2005; Mulford, Kendall & Kendall, 2004), and Sweden (Höög, Johansson & Olofsson, 2007) suggested that student performance would be improved when headteachers work through teams and involve a wide array of stakeholders in decision making. Based on Gronn’s (2003) conception, Leithwood and his colleagues (2007) developed a distributed leadership model and also found positive effects of the distributed leadership practice. However, they further concluded that the pattern of distributed leadership, and the structures, cultural norms, and opportunities for staffs to develop their leadership capacities depended heavily on the intentional work of principals, who enact critical direction-setting leadership functions (Leithwood *et al.*, 2007).

In recent empirical investigations, these models have been connected with each other. For example, Hallinger (2005) absorbed the notions of ‘shared sense’ and ‘school culture and values’ into his instructional leadership model. Leithwood *et al.* (2006a) added a fourth instructional aspect of ‘monitoring teaching and learning’ to the original transformational model (Leithwood & Riehl, 2003). On the basis of complexity theory, Morrison (2002) contends that principals can change schools into complex adaptive systems through combining the practices of transformational leadership, transcendental and servant leadership, quantum leadership, and distributed leadership.

Many comprehensive models emerge from recent synthetic work. As illustrated in Appendix 3.1⁶⁴, Cotton (2003) reexamined the empirical studies conducted

⁶³ One is “additive” pattern of leadership in which “many different people may engage in leadership functions but without much, or any, effort to take account of the leadership activities of others in their organisation.” (Leithwood *et al.*, 2007) The other one is a more holistic pattern, which Spillanes (2006) called “person-plus”, referring to consciously managed and synergistic relationship among different sources of leadership in the organisation.

during 1979-2000 and identified 26 basic administrative practices. Waters, Marzano, and McNulty (2003) developed a similar set of '21 responsibilities' for school principals. Robinson (2007) posited five general dimensions⁶⁵ to integrate various 'good practices' identified separately in empirical studies. Leithwood, Harris, and Hopkins (2008) further provided a four-dimension repertoire of core leadership practices of school leaders.

Based on the increasingly convergent taxonomies, the cross-cultural research (i.e. ISSPP) classified the 'core leadership practices' into five categories (Leithwood & Day, 2007). They are setting directions, understanding and developing people, redesigning the organisation, managing the instructional program, and coalition building. As exhibited in Appendix 3.2.1, each of the broad categories has several specific activities. These five categories of core leadership practices of school principal have been confirmed by a deal of the empirical research into school leadership.

- *Setting directions.* According to the goal-based theories of human motivation, people can be motivated by goals which they find personally compelling and challenging, but achievable (see Bandura, 1986; Weick, 1995; Leithwood & Riehl, 2003). Effective principals needed to capture a vision for the school (Mulford, 2005). Waters, Marzano, and McNulty (2003) found that such a practice was the most relevant leadership behavior in terms of improving student outcomes. Alig-Mielcarek and Hoy (2005), Hallinger (2003c), and McGuigan and Hoy (2006) particularly highlighted the importance of aiming for better student learning.
- *Understanding and developing people.* Generally, through devoting personal attention to employees and make full use of their capacities, leaders would help employees reduce frustration, increase enthusiasm, optimism and sense of mission, and eventually increase performance (McColl-Kennedy & Anderson, 2002). Therefore, good school principals should provide individual, cultural and structural support to staff and offer them intellectual stimulation (Mulford, 2005).
- *Redesigning the organisation.* Developing schools into learning organisations and professional learning communities has been found to contribute to staff work and student learning (Leithwood, Leonard & Sharratt, 1998; Louis, Marks & Kruse, 1998; Marks, Louis & Printy, 2000). Successful educational leaders would promote structural changes to establish positive conditions for teaching and learning (Louis & Kruse, 1995). Moreover, staff needs to be involved in the process of shaping the organisational context (Sleeger, Geijsel & van den Borg, 2002). As Leithwood and his colleagues claimed, "school leadership has a

⁶⁴ It includes the models provided by Cotton (2003), Hallinger (2003a), Waters, Marzano, and McNulty (2003), Robinson (2007), and Leithwood, Harris, and Hopkins (2008).

⁶⁵ They are goal setting, strategic resourcing, and ensuring an orderly and supportive environment, planning, coordinating and evaluating teaching and curriculum, promoting and participating in teaching learning and development (Robinson, 2007).

greater influence on schools and pupils when it is widely distributed.” (2006b, p. 12)

- *Managing the instructional program.* Many studies has proved the effects of this practice on student performance (Alig-Mielcarek & Hoy, 2005; Craig *et al.*, 2005; Gaziel, 2007; Kaplan *et al.*, 2005; Marks & Printy, 2003; McGuigan & Hoy, 2006; West, Ainscow & Stanford, 2005). Leithwood and Jantzi (1999) confirmed the effects of the instruction-focused leadership practices. Hallinger (2003c) further specified his instructional leadership model, which involves close attention to teachers’ classroom practices and the supervision of these practices.
- *Coalition building.* Evidence about political and corporate leaders suggested that “coalition building is one of the essential competencies of all leaders – in some ways, the defining one.” (Bennis, 2004, p. 335) Establishing alliances with organisations and agencies within the broader community would provide resources, expertise, new insights, and support for schools (Gurr, Drysdale & Mulford, 2005). Parent-school partnerships can help families and schools construct environments that facilitate student learning (Leithwood & Riehl, 2003).

Furthermore, a recent large-scale study of the assessment of leadership in education has constructed six component tasks and six key processes to measure the effectiveness of learning-centered leadership practices of school principals (i.e., the Vanderbilt Assessment of Leadership in Education (the VAL-ED), see Porter *et al.*, 2006, p. 3-4). Two dimensions are posited as follows:

- Core components of school performance: *High Standards for Student Performance*—individual, team, and school goals for rigorous student academic and social learning; *Rigorous Curriculum (content)*—ambitious academic content provided to all students in core academic subjects; *Quality Instruction (pedagogy)*—effective instructional practices that maximize student academic and social learning; *Culture of Learning & Professional Behavior*—integrated communities of professional practice in the service of student academic and social learning; healthy school environment with a focus on student learning is the central focus; *Connections to External Communities*—linkages to people and institutions in the community that advance academic and social learning; *Systemic Performance Accountability*—Leadership holds itself and others responsible for realising high standards of performance for student academic and social learning; individual and collective responsibility among the professional staff and students.
- Key processes of leadership: *Planning*—articulate shared direction and coherent policies, practices, and procedures for realizing high standards of student performance; *Implementing*—engage people, ideas, and resources to put into practice the activities necessary to realize high standards for student performance; *Supporting*—create enabling conditions; secure and use the financial, political, technological, human, and social capital necessary to promote academic and social learning; *Advocating*—act on behalf of the diverse needs of students within and beyond the school; *Communicating*—develop, utilize, and maintain systems of exchange among members of the school and with its external communities; *Monitoring*—systematically collect and analyze data to make judgments that guide decisions and actions for continuous improvement.

These elements points to the key areas and major actions of what and how school principals should do to improve teacher performance and student learning in schools. To a large extent, these essential tasks and behaviors reflect the requirements of the core leadership practices constructed in ISSPP, such as high standards for student learning and attention to the curriculum and instruction.

Some research in other Chinese societies find similar leadership practices in schools. A quantitative research into vice-principalship in Hong Kong secondary schools examines the core competency areas that pertain to the work of vice-principals and the way in which vice-principals perceive these areas to relate to school success (i.e., Kwan & Walker, 2008). With a questionnaire, the researchers identified seven competency dimensions, each of which contains several activities as Appendix 3.3 shows. Most of these dimensions and activities are similar to or even the same as the core practices identified in ISSPP. For example, the dimension of 'teaching, learning, and curriculum' and relevant activities are very similar to the practices in terms of 'managing the instructional program' in ISSPP.

In this sense, this kit of principal leadership practices amounts to "a recommendation to reconsider their [researchers'] inclusion among the core practices useful to leaders across many different contexts." (Leithwood & Day, 2007, p. 191) It not only integrates different elements of the core practices of principal leadership, but also reflects the major practical models identified in the relevant Western research (Leithwood & Day, 2007; Leithwood, Mascall & Strauss, 2009). In this sense, that comprehensive repertoire reflects the current understanding of how principals exert leadership in Western schools. Such a synthetic and flexible nature of the repertoire makes it adaptable to different school environments and research requirements and thus can be used to inform the research into principal leadership practice in different societies. It does not mean that all school leaders do all these things all the time. Instead, "the way a leader enacts each set of practices will certainly vary by circumstance (and likely by personal style, as well) (Leithwood & Day, 2007, p. 8).

Multiple Contextual Influences on Principal Leadership Practices

Respecting the contextual influence, Western empirical research has confirmed the impacts of multifold contextual factors on principal leadership practices. Some of them might be assigned antecedent variable status; some can enhance or mute leadership effects in a given leadership context (Leithwood & Day, 2007). These

factors usually exist within personal, organisational and societal contexts (Day *et al.*, 2008).

Personal context

Originating from the earliest traits theory, principals' personal situations would affect their leadership practices (Hallinger & Heck, 1996; Leithwood & Duke, 1999). Age, gender, years of experience, education, personality, values and capacities are all potential personal contextual factors (Leithwood, 2005). In Leithwood and Day's (2007) recent investigation, they identified two broad categories of personal factors that affect principals' leadership practices. The first category is principals' traits and dispositions, which contains:

- *Cognitive abilities*: flexible, and creative or lateral thinking
- *Personality*: openness, frankness, self confident, internal locus of control⁶⁶, innate goodness, other-centred, and humble toward job
- *Motivation*: inspiring and visionary, high energy level, determined, persistent, industrious, passionate, enthusiastic, strong emotional commitment, highly motivated, and achievement-oriented (self and others)
- *Social appraisal skills*: listens well, and sense of humor

The second category is principals' values and beliefs, which encompasses:

- *Basic human values*: respect for others, happiness (teachers' happiness and feeling of being valued)
- *General Moral Values*: honest, empathy, care, catholic values, equity and social justice
- *Professional values and beliefs*: role responsibility, consequences for students (for students best interests, believe in all students' potential), consequences for others (support all stakeholders)
- *Social and political values and beliefs*: dispersed knowledge and shared responsibility, participation of all stakeholders, shared vision between community and schools, commitment

Similar conclusions have been drawn in many other empirical studies. Some personalities identified involve self-confidence, responsibility and perseverance (Cotton, 2003), passionate, enthusiastic and highly motivated (Gurr *et al.*, 2003; Gurr, Drysdale & Mulford, 2005; Mulford & John, 2004), and emotional understanding (Day, 2004; 2005; Hargreaves & Fink, 2006). Self-efficacy⁶⁷ of the leader has also been emphasised in some studies (e.g., Höög, Johansson & Olofsson, 2007). In addition, effective school leaders are found more cognisant of their values and beliefs

⁶⁶ Locus of control refers to an individual's perception about the underlying main causes of events in his/her life. The concept was developed originally Julian Rotter in the 1950s (Renn & Vandenberg, 1991).

⁶⁷ Self-efficacy is the belief that one is capable of performing in a certain manner to attain certain goals (Ormrod, 2010).

and shape their practices with personal and professional codes of ethics (Møller & Eggen, 2005; Mulford, 2005). Some of them are found inclined to position-related influence for the benefit of the school community (Murphy, 2007) and some found to behave as role models (Gurr *et al.*, 2003; Mulford & John, 2004).

Organisational context

At organisational level, empirical evidence suggests that the influences might come from student background (Hallinger, Bickman & Davis, 1996; Seashore Louis & Miles, 1990); school location (Seashore Louis & Miles, 1990); school size (Howley & Bicke, 2002); levels of trust (Tyler & DeGoey, 1996); and school type (public or private schools) (Bryk *et al.*, 1984). Leithwood & Jantzi (2005b) have pointed out some positive influences within school context, i.e., prior student achievement, family educational culture, organizational culture, shared school goals, and coherent plans and policies. High academic press or emphasis often relates to students' better academic achievement (i.e. Alig-Mielcarek & Hoy, 2005; McGuigan & Hoy, 2006).

With the data collected from 8 countries, Leithwood and Day (2007) reconfirmed the influence of student background, school location, school size, mutual trust and respect between principals and teachers and/or teachers and students, governmental designation of schools, school levels (elementary, middle, secondary). Among these factors, school size and teacher trust are two particular important factors that can be altered by principals to enhance the effect of their work. However, teachers who have experienced are often resistant to the influence from school principals (Hargreaves & Fink, 2004). But students' positive perceptions of teachers' work would directly promote their participation in school, academic self-concept and engagement with school, and eventually improve their learning outcomes (Mulford, 2005).

Societal context

At societal level, the policy, professional, and cultural, contexts have been increasingly considered as important external factors that affect principal leadership practices (Leithwood, 2005). For instance, within a "results-driven" policy context which holds schools more publicly accountable for their performance, school leaders would be more intent on harnessing government initiatives to their school's priorities and broader educational values (Day & Leithwood, 2007). In a society with a democratic tradition, distributed leadership is more like a traditional value rather than something that needs to be developed (Leithwood, 2005). In a word, leadership

practice is more likely to be successful in the ways favored by the culture (Hofstede, 1998; 2001; House *et al.*, 2004). Compared with the large-size cross-cultural research in non-school context (e.g., House *et al.*, 2004), however, in-depth investigation into the influence of societal context is lacking in current Western empirical research into principal leadership practice.

Summary

This subsidiary section provides a review of the research into principal leadership practice in Western societies. First, a brief synthesis of Western leadership theory informs the conceptual understanding of leadership and leadership practices. According to recent development, leadership has been conceptualised as an influencing process based on interactions among the leader, follower, goal, and context. This perspective suggests that these components are interactively integrated in leadership practice. Their interactions posit three conceptual inquiries about leadership practice: what leaders do, how they enact these practices, and why they adopt these practices.

Second, a theoretical overview outlines the contemporary perceptions of principal leadership in Western context. With the pursuit of effective schools, the importance of principal leadership has been widely recognised. Consistent with the conceptual advancement of leadership theory, principal leadership is increasingly comprehended from a practice perspective. Accordingly, principal leadership practice can be perceived as the interactions among principals, staff members, school goal and school context. Different practical models have been constructed. These diversified patterns converge upon the contextual and integrative nature of principal leadership practice, which contains three research themes: what principals do, how they do it, and why they do that.

Third, relevant empirical evidence in Western literature leads to three arguments. First, principal leadership practices have an impact on student learning and school education. Second, various principal leadership practices can be grouped into a series of core leadership practices integrating multiple ways of enactment. Third, all these practices are influenced by multiple contextual factors at personal, organisational, and societal levels. These arguments reconfirm that principals can actively respond to the contexts in which they work and make a difference through their leadership practices (Leithwood & Day, 2007).

To sum up, all the claims deriving from the relevant Western literature recognise the interactive and contextual nature of principal leadership practice. Figure 3.1 demonstrates the consistency among the conceptual understanding, theoretical perception, and empirical findings of the research into principal leadership practices in Western societies. Through the core leadership practices, school principals can directly or indirectly influence a variety of variables within the school context. In turn, the contextual factors lay the foundation for principals' leadership practices and affect the operation of the core leadership practices.

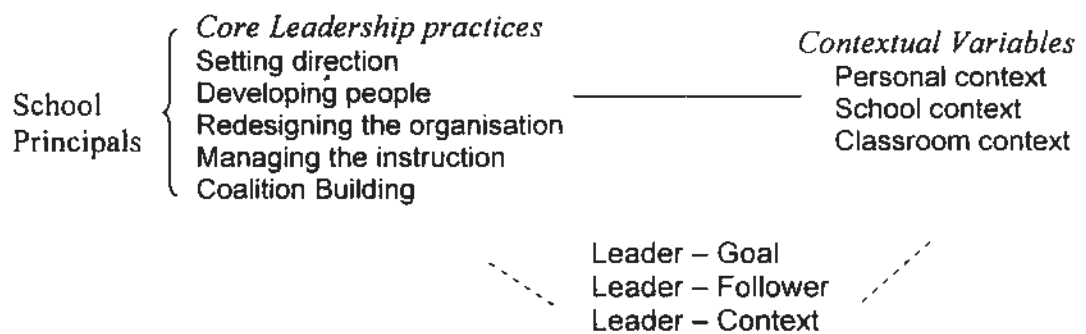


Figure 3.1 A diagram of Western scholarship of principal leadership practices. However, Western research does not provide adequate insight into what happens in Chinese schools. Taking the ISSPP as an example, although the dimensions of the core practices were said to be universal while the ways of enactment variable (see, Leithwood & Day, 2007, p. 8), the basic structure of the core practices and the rationale underlying the specific descriptions of the enactment are based on the prevalent Western leadership models. Even though the voices of a few Chinese samples have been involved, the enactment of the core practices is dominated by the approaches advocated by Western researchers, such as encourages collaborative decision making, teamwork and distributed leadership. Cross-cultural comparative research has suggested that societal cultures have great influence on leadership practice (e.g., Dickson, Den Hartog & Mitchelson, 2003; Hofstede, 2001; House *et al.*, 2004; Javidan *et al.*, 2006). From this perspective, only reliance on Western scholarship is inappropriate for a study aiming to address the issue in Chinese Mainland schools (Dimmock & Walker, 1998). Therefore, the following sub-section reviews relevant Chinese literature to grasp contemporary understanding of principalship in Mainland China.

Principal Leadership Practices in Chinese Mainland

This section summarises the research into principal leadership practice in China, particularly Mainland China. The review aims to present the contemporary academic understanding of school principal leadership in the Chinese society. It consists of three parts. First, it sketches Chinese traditional insight into leadership in order to lay a historical and cultural foundation for thinking leadership in Chinese society. Second, it outlines the *status quo* of principal leadership research in Mainland China. Third, it presents the knowledge of principal leadership practices in Chinese schools. The review leads to some common emphases and indigenous wisdom in terms of school principalship in China. At the same time, it suggests that neither a knowledge base nor an investigative framework for principal leadership research has been adequately developed in China. This demonstrates the significance of this study.

Traditional Understanding of Leadership

This section lays out some historical and cultural thinking of leadership in China. Due to the important role of societal culture in shaping leadership, Chinese view on leadership is influenced by the traditional understanding of leadership, which is quite different from Western societies (Hofstede, 2001). Thus, an account for Chinese traditional perception of leadership can help to uncover the deep leadership structure in Chinese Mainland.

In Chinese history, there is not much particular discourse on leadership itself. Lots of relevant insights are about political leaders or rulers and scattered within numerous classic books⁶⁸. These traditional thoughts perceive leadership from a hierarchical perspective which is rooted in the profound Confucianism⁶⁹. As Child (1994) concluded, Chinese societies had a traditional respect for hierarchy, maintaining harmony, conflict avoidance, collectivism, face, social networks, moral leadership, and conformity. Both leaders and followers tend to accept authority associated with the position as 'natural' (Lam, 2003).

As a result, Chinese often define leadership with rulers' personal qualities to master officialdom (Guo, 2002). The traditional image of ideal Chinese political leaders

⁶⁸ E.g., *The Art of War* (Sun zi bing fa), 'Mensius' (Meng zi), 'History' (Shi ji), 'Reflections on history' (Zi zhi tong jian). School management was also mentioned in 'Learning' (Xue ji) (see Wu, 2000).

⁶⁹ Confucianism values power distance and relatively high level of societal collectivism, which highly stresses conformity to social norm and collective regulations (Bush & Qiang, 2002; Pittinsky & Zhu, 2005).

usually involves humanness (*ren*), ritual (*li*)⁷⁰, moral obligation, leading by inaction, freedom from distracting glory, wisdom and cunning (Guo, 2002; Pittinsky & Zhu, 2005). In an investigation into implicit conceptual structure⁷¹ of Chinese leadership, Ling, Chia and Fang (2000) found that Chinese leadership comprises four conceptual dimensions: personal morality, goal efficiency, interpersonal competence, and versatility. Among them, interpersonal competence and virtue are both considered as the most important features of leadership.

These traditional perceptions result in an 'omnipotent' image of Chinese leaders who are expected to integrate absolute authority, benevolence and morality (Chen, G., 2004). Farh and Cheng (2000) have conceptualised the combination as paternalistic leadership, which consists of authoritarian leadership, benevolent leadership, and moral leadership (see Appendix 3.4). Authoritarian leadership stresses leaders' authority and control over the subordinates; benevolent leadership requires leaders to display personal and long-term concern for subordinates' well being (Cheng *et al.*, 2004); moral leadership demands leaders to behavior in accordance with social norms and virtues and to set an moral example for others (Westwood, 1997). The conception is refracted in the principalship research in China. A simple example is a popular Chinese adage that 'a good principal, is a good school.' (see Chen, 2001a, p.72) The next two sub-sections will critically outline the *state quo* of principalship research in Chinese Mainland and specify the research findings relevant to principal leadership practices in Chinese schools.

The *Status Quo* of Principal Leadership Research

This sub-section provides a critical review on the contemporary principalship research in Mainland China. The review identifies two major problems and recent methodological development of the research into principal leadership in Chinese schools. The problems involve the lack of empirical studies and the over-reliance on Western leadership concepts and theories. In terms of the methodological issue, qualitative perspective has been accepted in the field. The three arguments are explained below.

⁷⁰ Leaders are expected to depend on social norms and ceremonies rather than on fear to establish social control (Guo, 2002).

⁷¹ i.e., implicit leadership, which is a covert conceptual structure regarding the definition of a leader and what a leader should be in the minds of people in a society (Bresnen, 1995; Kenney, Schwartz-Kenney, & Blascovich, 1996; Ling, Chia, & Fang, 2000).

First, lack of substantial empirical study remains a striking weakness of Chinese academic discourse in the field. Tang (1999) has reviewed 2389 papers on education management published from 1982-1999, only 5% (203) of them were based on empirical studies. Despite the improvement over the past decade, “China’s educational research relies overwhelmingly on the traditional Chinese way of argumentation.” (Yang, 2005, p. 76) A number of published articles are simply descriptive argumentation (e.g. Li, 2000; Li, 2008), introduction to new theories (e.g. Dong, 2006; Tang, 2001; 2006), illustration of some policies (e.g. Zhang, 2006) or personal reflections (e.g. Li, 2005). Among the relevant literature emerging during 1998-2008, over half of them (71 of 140) are introductory review or theoretical analysis without reliable empirical evidence. Of course, these descriptions provide some information about the work of Chinese principals. However, such falsely labeled research papers often lack theoretical contribution and tight logical reasoning and can not be verified without empirical evidence (Wang, 2004; Yang, 2005; Qian, 2008).

Second, the awareness of contextual differences is lacking in Chinese studies. Since the early 1990s, leadership research in China has been devoted to introduction of Western leadership theories (Cheng, Ying & Yu, 1994; Liu, 1994). Many novel and emerging concepts in Western leadership literature have been imported to China, for instance, curriculum leadership (Chen, 2005), instructional leadership (Chen, R., 2004), contingency leadership (Tang, 2001), shared leadership (Dong, 2006), transformational leadership (Zhang, 2008), distributed leadership and servant leadership (see Feng, 2004, 2005). The introduction of Western knowledge is indeed a real need for Chinese research in the field. However, the imported knowledge of leadership is highly contextualised and needs to be substantially modified when applied in China (Yang, 2005). But there is always a shortage of an indigenous perspective or a contextual awareness in the Chinese research. Many local researchers prefer using Western materials without question. For example, the *Leader Behavior Description Questionnaire* (LBDQ), developed in business area decades ago, is often used in the research conducted in Chinese schools (e.g. Sun & Xie, 2008).

Third, the qualitative stance has been gradually established and increasingly accepted by Chinese researchers. Traditionally, quantitative approach is often regarded as a

more advanced research paradigm and the international academic convention (Yang, 2005). Majority of Chinese researchers prefer quantitative methods from an objectivist view (Shi, 2004). This objectivist view has already been criticised in both Western and Chinese academic community. Among 68 empirical studies conducted between 1998 and 2008, 33 are quantitative research, 25 adopt qualitative approach, and 10 have a mixed research design. More and more researcher realise the limitation of the single use of this research approach. This is not to deny the role of quantitative investigation entirely. To the contrary, it aims to enhance the factual description of social phenomena with more in-depth and contextual interpretations. Chapter Four will discuss the methodological issue in more detail. Next sub-section specifies the research findings relevant to principal leadership practices in China.

Research Findings of Principal Leadership Practices

In Mainland China, there is also a consensus that principals play a critical role in driving educational quality, school development and education reform (Wang, 2005; Wang, J., 2006; Wang, L., 2007; Wang, L., 2006). Many non-empirical research papers have argued for the stance. Increasing empirical studies have been devoted to the research into Chinese principal leadership. These explorations provide some evidence pointing to principal leadership practices in Chinese schools. This sub-section synthesises the research findings in order to outline the authentic leadership practices of school principal in Chinese Mainland. Since a deal of Chinese literature in the field takes the form of prescriptive suggestions, factual descriptions, or reflective comments, both non-empirical papers and empirical studies are included in the review to gather indigenous insights into school principal leadership.

Principal leadership practices emerging from non-empirical research papers

The non-empirical pieces stress the critical role of principals in driving educational quality, school development and education reform (Du, 2004; Feng, 2006; Gao, 2002; He & Ying, 2003; Zhao, H., 2005). They took prescriptive, descriptive or commentary forms, or a combination of these. The dominant thrust was to tell Chinese school principals what they should do to be 'good' school leaders. Information gleaned through reviewing these papers provides insights into the reality of Chinese principals' work (See Appendix 3.5.1). Although such descriptions cannot strictly be classified as empirical, they built upon some first-hand observation and interview data.

Imported Leadership Practice

Much of the writing drew heavily on Western theories and perspectives. These were generally prescriptive and held up Western models as avenues to improve Chinese leadership practice (e.g., Feng, 2002; Gu & Meng, 2001). Writers introduced concepts including curriculum leadership (Chen, 2005), instructional leadership (Chen, R., 2004; Peng, 2006; Zhao, 2007), contingency theory (Tang, 2001; 2006), shared leadership (Dong, 2006), transformational and charismatic leadership (Chen, 2002; Chen, 2001b; Dong, 2006; Peng, 2006; Shi, M. Z., 2007; Zhang, 2008), distributed leadership and servant leadership (Feng, 2002, 2003, 2004, 2005; Hu, C., 2005). This trend, normally without any explicit contextualisation, suggests 'good practices' drawn from foreign theories as the way forward for Chinese principals. However, these papers did not provide much real evidence of the influence of such exercises on principal leadership practice.

The most common form of these papers is to provide detailed introductions to the theories or models popular in Western societies (sometimes current and sometimes quite outdated) and conclude with sketchy suggestions of the conditions and qualities needed for application (e.g., Hu, 2001; Wei, 2006). In general they provide no evidence of relevance and applicability of these imported practices. These papers appear high on rhetoric and idealism and, as such, may be difficult for principals to comprehend and apply.

Moreover, these prescriptions often convey contradictory messages. On the one hand, for example, some papers exhort management as a 'scientific' exercise (e.g., Xu, 1999) and schools are suggested to establish a quality assurance system against the ISO9001 standards (see Cheng, 2006). On the other hand, principals are often advised to become a human-oriented leader and to avoid the technical rationality (Chen, 2005, Sun & Xie, 2008), behave as a moral example and a servant (Zhang & Zeng, 2006), and make efforts to build school culture (Yuan, 2002; Fan & Wang, 2006) and school values (Shi, Z., 2007).

Focusing on Main Issues

The non-empirical literature also indicates where Chinese principals focus their attention. This provides at least an anecdotal perspective of principal leadership. A dominant concern relates to student academic achievement (Dong, 2006; Guo, 2006; Zhao, 2007). As one of the ultimate outcomes of school education, it is normally and

traditionally thought as the upmost indicator of the quality of education provided by schools and thus is always related to the assessment of school performance and principal leadership and the distribution of governmental financial support (Guo, 2006; Wang, S., 2005). In order to maintain high academic performance, some principals pay particular attention to attracting quality students through various marketing strategies such as media advertisements, open days, home visits, and bonus awards (Zhang, Li & Gu, 2005). School curriculum content can be summed up by the statement, 'what is to be examined is what is to be taught' (Dong, 2006).

Another concern is resource procurement – this has been seen as an important part of a principal's job since 1995, especially in ordinary schools (see NPC, 1995; Chapter Two). Principals appear very concerned about insufficient funding (Zhang, D., 2004), particularly those "whose schools are in remote areas and have minimal resources" (Hannum & Park, 2002, p. 7). As a result, they spend a lot of time lobbying local education authorities for more direct support or increased quotas of fee-paying students. They also actively seek donations from local enterprises and parents, and engage in business activities such as renting classrooms to outside organisations and/or individuals. Such activities are said to consume so much time that it distracts principals' attention from teaching and learning (Lin, 2000; Zhang, Li & Gu, 2005).

A further concern is intensive social networking or *Guanxi* (good relationships) (Yan, 2005). This is part of traditional culture which is also present in some of the literature (Bush & Qiang, 2002). In Chinese schools, as in society, establishing and maintaining *guanxi* with important school stakeholders and other influential figures seems particularly important for both individual and organizational success (Cai, 2000; Bai, 2006). Good relationships with local government agencies can provide schools with essential benefits, including financial support (Zhang, Li & Gu, 2005). Therefore, principals have to spend considerable time engaged in various formal and informal meetings with relevant local authorities and superiors to built and maintain *guanxi* (Li, S. F., 2005; Lin, 2000; Yan, 2006).

Comprehensive Expertise

In accordance with the traditional image of leaders, Chinese school principals are expected to be omniscient leaders in many prescriptive papers that enumerate multifold qualities, functions, responsibilities or capabilities of school principals (Chen, 2001a; 2004; Dong, 2004; Xu, 2005; Li & Chu, 2005; Zhang, D., 2004;

Zhang, 2005; Zhang, X., 2004; 2007). They are supposed to organize school instruction, supply instructional resources, evaluate instructional practices and build learning teams (Chen, R., 2004; Zhao, 2007). At the same time, they are required to fulfill their administrative functions, attend to school direction and the overall administration and human resources management, and above all, ensure the implementation of government guidelines and education policies (Cai, 2000; Li, 2008).

Large slices of the literature identify principal practice through, often flowery, descriptions of the day-to-day work and/or personal experiences of principals regarded as 'extraordinary' (e.g. Li, L., 2005). Such descriptions identify how these famous leaders make a difference. For example, Wei Shusheng, ex-principal of *Panjin Experimental High School* has been identified and portrayed as an omniscient leader who masters a repertoire of leadership skills, including target management, time management, space management, and efficiency management (Zhou, 2006).

The traditional role of the principal is shifting because of the flood of recent reforms – this appears to be becoming increasingly prominent in the non-empirical literature. Since the new curriculum reform was implemented in Mainland China, school principals have been given more autonomy in school management (Gao, 2002) and responsibility for developing school curriculum and improving school instruction (Du, 2004; Feng, 2006; Gao & Xu, 2006; He, 2007; Huang, 2008; Meng, 2008; Sun, 2007a; 2007b; Yu, 2004; Zou, 2007). With the application of new technology in school education, principals are required to effectively lead the development of information technology within their schools (Xiao, 2007; Liu, 2007).

A theme which endures even throughout massive reform demands is the importance of mainstream political ideology and its influence on the job of the principal. In Chinese Mainland, most public school principals are party members and work within the "cadre" system, in which one's political morals would be evaluated before he/she would be selected as a leader (Cai, 2000; Li, S., 2005; Wang, 2004). Furthermore, socialist ideology is always regarded as an essential component of the leader moral characters, which is the top dimension of headship requirements and training contents for mainland principals (Feng, 2003; Li, 2000a; 2000b; MoE, 1999; SEC, 1991; Zheng, 2006). Specifically speaking, they must serve people wholeheartedly, even at the expense of themselves; they must devote themselves to

the realization of moral education, work hard, and put collective interests in front of their individual benefits; they must abide by the Party's policies and the state's laws, maintain unity, be loyal and honest to the Party, resist against corruption, promote communist moral codes and be ready to sacrifice their lives at times of difficulties and danger (Jia, 2005; see SEC, 1991; MoE, 1999).

Principal leadership practices emerging from empirical Research

This review involves the empirical studies relevant to principal leadership practices in Chinese schools from 1998 to 2008. Most of them are presented in unpublished degree dissertations (41 of 69). Considering the limited number of empirical studies in Chinese Mainland, this body of empirical research is included in order to collect indigenous empirical evidence as much as possible. The review of the empirical research reaffirms the positive effects of principal leadership practices in Chinese schools. The empirical evidence indicates that the leadership practices of Chinese school principals combine imported models with indigenous patterns and relate to multiple contextual variables (See Appendix 3.5.2).

Positive Effects

Some positive outcomes have been identified and related with certain principal leadership practices in the empirical research. In some qualitative research, the designation of 'exemplary school' was considered as an outcome and indicator of effective principal leadership (Wong, 2006; 2007). In another quantitative study, Zhu (2005) found that there was a significantly positive correlation between principal leadership behaviors and school effectiveness. Tian (2005) confirmed a significant positive correlation between principal transformational leadership and teacher job satisfaction and teacher organizational commitment. Transformational leadership turned out to be a better predictor of leadership effectiveness.

In terms of the popular two-dimension model of leadership behavior (i.e., structure-initiating and consideration), both of them were reported to be significantly and positively related to teachers' job satisfaction (Sun & Wang, 2008). Zhang and Wu (2000, 2001) further confirmed that principals' consideration behaviors had a highly significant and positive impact on all dimensions of teacher job satisfaction and principals' structure-building behaviors were significantly and positively related with teachers' satisfaction at teaching, principal, colleague, promotion and the whole school work.

These positive effects of principal leadership practices demonstrate the important role of principal leadership in school education. Among these outcomes, however, student achievement seems to be seldom explicitly connected with principal leadership⁷². This might be because that principal leadership often indirectly influence student. All the outcomes of principal leadership directly or indirectly relate to student academic achievement (i.e., instruction, curriculum, school culture). In fact, Chinese have a traditional respect for knowledge and highly-selective examinations and tend to an over-emphasis on student test score (Wong, 2006). The ongoing education reform aims to transform the situation. Thus, Chinese researchers would rather avoid highlighting the point publicly. (see Chapter Two)

Adapted Western Models

According to the empirical evidence, many leadership models for school principals espoused in Western literature are adapted or selectively adopted by Chinese school leaders in practice. In some studies, transformational leadership stands out as a 'good practice' of school leaders (i.e., Hou, 2006; Tian, 2005). As stated above, this leadership approach and the related consideration-orientated leadership behaviors are both found positively related to teachers' job satisfaction and commitment (Sun & Wang, 2008; Tian, 2005; Zhang & Wu, 2000; 2001). These empirical explorations have identified similar core practices of transformational leadership, such as supporting consideration/inspiration, charismatic leadership, promoting cooperation, and intellectual stimulation (Tian, 2005); morale modeling, charisma, visionary and individualized consideration (Hou, 2007); and charisma/idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individual consideration (Bo, 2007; Li & Zhang, 2006; Zhang, 2005). Among these practices, some researchers found that the school leaders were not so good at 'charisma' (Hou, 2007). Some others pointed out that the sampled principals exhibit 'individual consideration' most while 'intellectual stimulation' least (Li & Zhang, 2006; Zhang, 2005).

At the same time, many principals have been reported to prefer what Bass (1997) called 'transactional leadership practices' (see Chi, 2007; Li & Zhang, 2006; Zhang, 2005). Most Chinese research into this type of leadership practice is based on Bass' three dimensions (1997, p. 134): contingent reward – leaders clarify expectations,

⁷² Only Wang, L.'s (2006) study related student achievement and development with principal leadership.

exchange promises and resources for support, arrange mutually satisfactory agreements, negotiate for resources, exchange assistance for effort, and provide commendations for successful follower performance; active management by exception – leaders monitor followers' performance and take corrective action if deviations from standards occur; passive management exception – leaders wait to take action until mistakes are brought to their attention.

Consistent with the actual preference for transactional leadership, recent measurement of principal leadership behavior suggests a consistent tendency among Chinese principals that they are inclined to work/performance or initiating structure rather than consideration or relation-building (Chi, 2007; Hu, X., 2005; Sun & Wang, 2008; Sun & Xie, 2008; Wang, 2004; Wang, F., 2005; Zhang & Wu, 2000). However, some school principals seemed more satisfied with their own leadership behaviors than the teachers in their schools (Wang, F., 2005).

Another increasingly prevalent conception is participative or distributed/distributive leadership (Bo, 2007). In the relevant empirical studies, school principals always express their recognition of the importance of the democratic leadership practice (An, 2006), whereas they do not believe in teachers' capability of participating in school management, and fear that the participative decision-making would compromise their authority (Lu, 2007). Similarly, some school leaders tended to exert their influence by virtue of hierarchical or positional power rather than professional power and their schools lacked openness, democracy and cooperation and operated with a hierarchical managerial structure, like a governmental agency (Wang, L., 2007).

That is also the case in terms of instructional leadership and curriculum leadership. Many school principals emphasise the central status of instruction and curriculum in school education, but just perceive their leading roles in these activities from an administrative perspective (Zhang, 2004). They were found more engaged in some indirect supporting activities rather than direct supervision and teaching evaluation, such as developing and communicating instruction objectives, guaranteeing curriculum quality as a curriculum leader, evaluating instruction effects, providing feedback, and mentoring (Zhang, 2004). Some school leaders gave more weight to administrative affairs than the activities promoting curriculum and instruction, team building, teacher professional development and teachers' participation in learning and training (Li, 2006; Wang, L., 2007). Moreover, considerable school principals

were found incapable to perform their leading roles in improving curriculum and instruction for they lacked effective strategies and adequate knowledge (Ma, Wang & Xie, 2008). Especially in rural area, quite a few principals were confused on their role in curriculum reform, and still adopted examination-oriented strategies and gave more priority to school physical construction (Ma, Wang & Yan, 2005).

With a sample of 1165 teachers, 18 principals and their supervisors of 19 Chinese schools, Cravens (2008) investigated the cross-cultural generalizability of the VAL-ED, the assessment instrument developed in the United States. She found strong cross-cultural alignment on the overarching goal of improving student learning through setting high standards, providing rigorous curriculum and quality instruction, and enhancing the professional learning culture in schools. The cross-cultural validity of the instrument could be partially confirmed through the examination of content and criterion validity. However, the findings also indicated that the existing framework and assessment content need to be modified according to the reality of Chinese school education, which has been reshaped by the recent reform pursuit of the balance between academic and social learning.

Indigenous Patterns

The empirical research provides some indigenous experiences of Chinese principals in leading schools. For instance, the paternalistic leadership practice can be found in many types of Chinese organisations, including schools (Cheng, Shieh & Chou, 2002). The principal is supposed to act morally as a role model, exert decisive authority, and cunningly make use of exchange and appraising tactics, and other school members should behave deferentially (Pittinsky & Zhu, 2005; Wong, 2006). With the traditional thoughts, some principals tended to the directive or top-down leadership style (Lu, 2007; Wong, 2007). In some Chinese school, principals' democratic leadership practices took the form of 'contrived collegiality'⁷³ – "no debate, no argument, the principal selects who would speak and ballots were held in relation to options put forward." (Ryan, Xiao & Merry, 1998, p. 178)

Meanwhile, Chinese school leaders always make efforts to play their role as a moral example and/or considerate servant (Bo, 2007; Hu, C., 2005; Jiang, 2006; Xu, 2007;

⁷³ Contrived collegiality has the following features: administratively regulated rather than spontaneous, compulsory rather than discretionary, geared to the implementation of the mandates of government or principal, fixed in time and place, and designed to have predictable outcomes (Hargreaves, 1994, p. 195-196).

✦

Zhang & Zeng, 2006). They would like to exhibit philanthropy, honesty, fairness, and cooperation-and-service orientation (Bo, 2007) and maintain good interpersonal leadership with other school members (Zhang, Y., 2002). Although some of these are typical practices of 'servant leadership'⁷⁴, conceptualised in Western context, the moral and servant leadership practices of Chinese principals were greatly affected by the mainstream ideology (Luo & Najjar, 2007). Following the prescribed political ideology is accentuated as the upmost prerequisite for Chinese school principals (Wang, 2004).

Empirical evidence explicitly indicates that politicisation of education has an impact on principals' leadership philosophies and practices (Luo & Najjar, 2007). Many of them worked like "governmental officials", who give priority to implementing various educational policies enacted by the government (Cai, 2000; Chen, 2007). Many schools operate with a hierarchical management structure, just like the government (Wang, L., 2007). Therefore, a number of Chinese school principals prioritise the responsibility to upper administration rather than the accountability to other stakeholders (Li, 2005; Qian, 2008; Yu, 2001; Yu & Liu, 2005).

Moreover, building school-government *guanxi* (good relationship) and gaining supports or designations from local and/or central authorities has become a vital practice of school principalship in China (Ryan, Xiao & Merry, 1998). That's largely because the government has been playing an important role in supplying and allocating financial and human resources for school education. In a study of principal job specifications (Qiao, 2003), principals first answered a questionnaire and reported six tasks: strategic planning, school work monitoring, class observation, self learning, fund raising and *guanxi* maintaining. In the follow-up interviews, the researcher found that principals were only concerned three major tasks: strategic planning, *guanxi* maintaining and fund raising. Regarding their answers in the survey, some principals explained that they just felt it necessary to emphasise the tasks 'principals are supposed to do'.

In fact, Chinese principals are supposed to be balanced leaders who can fulfill several key functions simultaneously. In a quantitative study, Tang, Cheng and Ying

⁷⁴ The servant leadership means that the leader is believed to take consideration of subordinates' well-being (Westwood, 1997).

(1999) investigated principal leadership behaviors with a five-dimension model⁷⁵ (structural, human, educational, political, & cultural). The five aspects respectively center on achievement-orientation and guiding school instruction and professional development, school structural construction and technical support, staff satisfaction and interpersonal relationship, internal and external relationships and conflicts, and motivation, school culture, and vision. The comprehensive kit almost covers every facets of school management, such as instruction, curriculum, internal structure, external relationship, and vision-building. The higher a principal's scores at all the five aspects, the better his or her leadership practice. As a result, 46% of the participants were identified as the balanced school leaders, while 10% were short of all the dimensions. In a latest research into principal professionalization, the conclusion also takes the form of a comprehensive list of what principals should do in schools (i.e., Chu *et al.*, 2009)

Relevant Contextual Variables

Along with these leadership practices, some empirical studies, usually the quantitative research, have also identified several contextual variables that influence these practices. These factors are located in individual, organisational and societal contexts.

The personal contextual factors involve some traits of individual principals, such as age, gender, years of teaching, years of principalship, and personality. These variables reflect a respondent's personal context and have been related with principal leadership practices in many quantitative studies. For example, in Dong and Geng's (2008) study, they divided principal leadership behaviors into two dimensions: "care to people" and "care to work". Their analysis showed that age and professional title of the principals related to the difference in their behaviors of "care to people", and their years of teaching and training times lead to the difference in both dimensions.

In Li and Zhang's (2006) study, a significant correlation was discovered between principal leadership behaviors and their gender, years of teaching, years of principalship, and education background. Specifically, female headmasters were found good at handling interpersonal relations and principals who have higher academic credentials prefer people-oriented leadership style (Wang, L. P., 2006).

⁷⁵ Cheng and Cheung (1999) have developed a principal leadership profile that involves the five dimensions.

Luo and Najjar (2007) confirmed that principals' education attainment level was positively related to both internal and external leadership practices and lack of leadership training and degree program in educational administration would compromise the effectiveness of principal leadership.

Research into Chinese principal competence model contended that outstanding principals are characterised of mission consciousness, initiative, analytical thinking, conceptual thinking, originality, and communicativeness (Hu, 2007; Liu, Zhao & Zhong, 2007; Wang, X., 2007). Excellent performance of principals is often found significantly correlated with certain personalities such as conscientiousness, agreeableness, extraversion, and openness (Guo, 2003; Ma, 2007).

Some organisational contextual factors, such as school location and school level (Li & Zhang, 2006) also have an impact on principal leadership practices. Lu (2007) asserted that principals in city are more inclined to democratic management than their counterparts in county or town. Wang L. (2006) found that high school principals do better than middle school headmasters in initiating structure and internal controlling. In Tang, Cheng and Ying's (1999) study, school climate and school efficiency were associated with different combinations of principal leadership behaviors. Furthermore, a teacher's gender, years of teaching, and position would influence his or her perception of the principal's leadership behaviors (Chi, 2007).

In addition, the influence of societal context has been posited in some studies. One prominent social contextual factor is the traditional culture of Chinese society. The GLOBE research program (House *et al.*, 2004) reaffirmed that many leadership theories developed in Western context, especially Anglo-American culture, may not be generalisable when used by leaders with different cultural backgrounds (Hofstede, 2001). As classified into "Confucian Asia" (House *et al.*, 2004), traditional social culture of Mainland China is mainly rooted in Confucianism. Based on the Confucius values⁷⁶, Chinese tend to respect authority and patriarchy, and seniority and age, avoid conflicts and uncertainty, and stress superiors' "face (*mianzi*)", interpersonal

⁷⁶ Confucius values are represented by four closely connected virtues: the class system, obedience, doctrine of the mean and "*renqing*", and the idea of "*Wulun*" or "five cardinal relationships" (see, Fu, 2003). The class system and obedience refer to maintaining ancient rituals and proper ordering in society and the observance of orders; doctrine of the mean and *renqing* are embedded in the pursuit of harmony and the order of hierarchical relationship (Dimmock & Walker, 1998); the five cardinal relationships imply that an individual's role is defined by the bond between father and son, the duty between ruler and subject, the distinction between husband and wife, the precedence of the old over the young, and the trust between friends.

“*guanxi*: (relationship/network)”, collectivity, harmony and order (see Child, 1994; Farh & Cheng, 2000; Hofstede, 1980a; 1980b; House *et al.*, 2004; Lin, 2008; Lowe, 2003; Pittinsky & Zhu, 2005; Walker, 2004).

Another evident factor at societal contextual is politics, which has consumed much attention of school leaders in China (Luo & Najjar, 2007). For Chinese schools, principals are usually appointed or hired by local educational authorities as the highest administrators and corporative representatives of schools (Yan, 2006). They normally are party members and work within the ‘*cadre*’ system (Wong, 2006, 2007; Lin, 2008). At the same time, the secretary of the school Party branch would be appointed by the local authority to ensure that the operation of the school conforms to the Party’s aims and policies. This person are usually treated as someone equal to, or even upper than, the school principal. In this instance, politicisation still has an impact on school administration (Ryan, Xiao & Merry, 1998), even though the principal responsibility system and the new ‘career-ladder’ system (*zhiji zhi*) have been implemented to decentralise school administration system and depoliticise the position of school principal.

Summary

Overall, principal leadership research in China has reconfirmed the importance of principalship in school administration. But the relevant studies overwhelmingly draw upon Western theories. A lack of empirical studies remains a striking weakness of the research into the principalship, despite the progress over the past decade. Given the underdeveloped state of the indigenous research in the area, there might be a risk associated with the trend of adopting Western leadership undefended (Dimmock & Walker, 2005).

Existing literature shows that principal leadership practices in Mainland China have some common as well as different priorities, compared with the findings in Western societies. Many Western leadership models have been introduced as ‘ideal’ leadership practices for Chinese school leaders in some descriptive and prescriptive papers. In this type of literature, principals are supposed to be omniscient leaders who master comprehensive expertise and succeed in dealing with the critical issues facing Chinese schools (i.e., student achievement, school finance and *guanxi*). The experience of reputed school principals echoes the omniscient image of Chinese school leaders. In this sense, there seems to be no lack of good principal leadership in

Chinese schools. What is really scarce might be the serious research into the authentic insights into school principalship in Chinese schools.

Such comprehensive expertise has also been identified in relevant empirical research. On one hand, Western leadership practices are adapted to Chinese school context in practice. On the other hand, indigenous patterns of principal leadership practices (e.g., paternalistic leadership, moral leadership) can be found in Chinese schools. In other words, both the depictive literature and empirical findings include two broad categories of principal leadership practices, imported and indigenous leadership practices, as Table 3.1 exhibits.

Table 3.1 Two Broad Categories of Chinese Principal Leadership Practices

	Non-empirical Literature	Empirical Research
Imported leadership practices	Transformational/charismatic leadership Distributed/shared leadership Instructional leadership Curriculum leadership Servant leadership Scientific management Contingency theory	Transformational/charismatic leadership Transactional leadership Distributed leadership Instructional leadership Curriculum leadership Performance/structure vs. consideration Servant leadership Teacher professional development
Indigenous leadership practices	Focusing on student achievement Seeking extra resources Networking & <i>guanxi</i> building Building school culture Shaping school values Implementing reform policies Exhibiting moral and ideological loyalty	Paternalistic/top-down leadership Building school culture Teacher professional development Internal administration Contrived collegiality Building school-government <i>guanxi</i> Fund raising Implementing reform policies Exhibiting moral and ideological loyalty

Combining these partly overlapped themes lead to six general practices in terms of principal leadership in Chinese schools. The six practices are:

- Building visions and goals;
- Forming school values/culture/climate;
- Managing instruction and curriculum and implementing reform policies
- Enhancing teacher professional development;

- Establishing school structure and policies, managing human resources, and encouraging positive interpersonal relationship;
- Developing external *guanxi* and seeking resources.

These generic practices integrate various principal leadership practices found in Chinese schools. They combine the core leadership practices endorsed by ISSPP (e.g., setting direction, managing teaching and learning, building school culture, etc.) with some indigenous practices (e.g., maintaining *guanxi*) and blend somewhat discordant leadership approaches, for instance, transformational and transactional approaches (Hu, J., 2005), participatory and top-down approaches (Luo & Najjar, 2007).

In addition, multiple contextual factors have been examined at the personal, organisational and societal levels, as summarised in Table 3.2. These variables work together to construct a specific leading context. Connected with the effects of principal leadership practices identified in the empirical studies, these contextual variables right reflect the interactive nature of leadership practice.

Table 3.2 Contextual Variables Relating to Principal Leadership Practices (PLPs)

	Contextual Factors	Contextual impacts	Effects of PLPs
Personal Context	Age, gender, education background	√	
	Yeas of teaching, years of principalship	√	
	Training/continued education	√	
	Knowledge & capacity	√	
	Personalities	√	
School Context	School location	√	
	School level/type	√	
	School designation	√	√
	School climate/culture	√	
	Financial & human Resources	√	
	Student achievement & development		√
	Teachers' gender, years of teaching & position	√	
	Teachers' job satisfaction & commitment		√
Societal Context	Other stakeholders	√	
	School effectiveness/progress		√
	Societal culture	√	
	Relevant administrative system	√	
	Political ideology	√	

An Initial Framework of Exploration

Based on the literature review, an initial research framework was constructed to guide this study. As Figure 3.2 shows, the framework integrated the Western

investigative scheme into principal leadership practices emerging from the existing Chinese research findings.

Potential Core Leadership Practices

- Setting direction
- Building school culture
- Developing people
- Managing instruction & curriculum
- Administering internal affairs & relationship
- Building external *guanxi* & seeking resources

Potential Contextual Variables

- Personal context
- School context
- Societal context

Figure 3.2 An Exploratory Research Framework

This exploratory research framework was formed upon two grounds. On one hand, Western research into principal leadership practices has provided an informative research map for the investigation in the area. It's built upon the relevant research findings and the integrative framework used in the cross-cultural research, ISSPP. Focusing on the core leadership practices of school principals, the framework embraced a variety of contextual influential factors at personal, organisation, and societal levels. This reflected the interactive nature of principal leadership in schools and matched the theoretical attention of principal leadership practice in this study. More importantly, many of these have been introduced to China as exemplary practices of school principals, such as setting direction, individual consideration. In fact, some indigenous research has also proved that there may be some transnational leadership behaviors that are applicable across cultures (see, Cheng, *et al.*, 2004) Therefore, absorbing the framework into this research might facilitate the exploration in Chinese schools, as well as help Chinese researchers get benefit from the robust findings in Western societies.

On the other hand, contextual distinction between the West and China makes the simple transplanting unadvisable. Therefore, the researcher examined indigenous insights and empirical evidence carefully in order to establish an initial knowledge base for the study. The review indicates that Chinese school principals not only exhibit some core practices identified in Western society (e.g., the findings of ISSPP), but also are characterised by some indigenous tactics (e.g., developing and maintaining *guanxi*). However, the core practices identified in ISSPP reflect Western perceptions of principalship, such as “encourages collaborative decision making, teamwork and distributed leadership” (see Appendix 3.2.1) They do not involve some Chinese ways of leadership, for example the paternalistic leadership. In other words, Chinese principals might exert their leadership through the practices that may

not be the same as those identified in Western schools. Thus, it is essential for Chinese researchers to understand “which are universal and which are culture specific” when applying Western leadership practices to Chinese organizations (Cheng *et al.*, 2004, p. 92). In this sense, coupling Western research framework with indigenous empirical evidence seemed to be an advisable approach to conducting the present exploratory study.

However, this framework was just formulated to initiate and guide the exploration, not a definite conclusion. The actual configuration of Chinese principals’ core leadership practices would be identified and demonstrated with empirical evidence emerging from this study. With this understanding, next chapter outlines the research approach and specific methods employed in the research.

Chapter 4 Methodology

The two preceding chapters sketched the practical and theoretical foundations of this study. This chapter clarifies the methodology of the research. Such clarification not only implies a thorough description of the methodology and methods employed in the research but, more importantly, justification for the choice and use of the approaches (Crotty, 1998). The justification lies in the research purpose and questions in that methods are used to serve research purpose(s) and answer research question(s) (Punch, 2006). Thus, the chapter aims to explicate the analytical boundary of the study and to report and justify the research paradigm, research design, procedures of data collection, and process of data analysis in the study.

The study targeted the core leadership practices of school principals in Mainland China, further divided into three subsidiary areas which led to the three foci of the research. These areas suggested that the study required the comprehensive description and more in-depth explanation of the target principal leadership practices. Considering the holistic research scope and recent advancements in research paradigms, this study adopted an integrative approach to knowledge, mixed methods research, in order to draw a sound inference through combining quantitative and qualitative research paradigms.

A pragmatist perspective was employed as the base of the study, and a questionnaire survey and in-depth interviews were conducted with a partially mixed sequential equal status design. Data analysis included two data processes, data reduction and data integration. Quantitative data were first analysed with proper statistical methods to answer the research questions. Then, qualitative data were analysed via three coding steps. The two types of data were integrated through transformation, information and combination to inform the research question. Figure 4.1 demonstrates the whole process.

The chapter has ten sections. The first section outlines the scope of the study and restates the research purpose and questions to clarify the research framework of the study. The second section explains and justifies the use of the mixed method research paradigm. The third and fourth sections respectively explicate the research design and sampling plan. Data collection is clarified in the fifth section and data analysis in the sixth. The seventh section provides an account of the research quality of the study

and the eighth section is about ethic considerations. The final two sections present major limitations of the research.

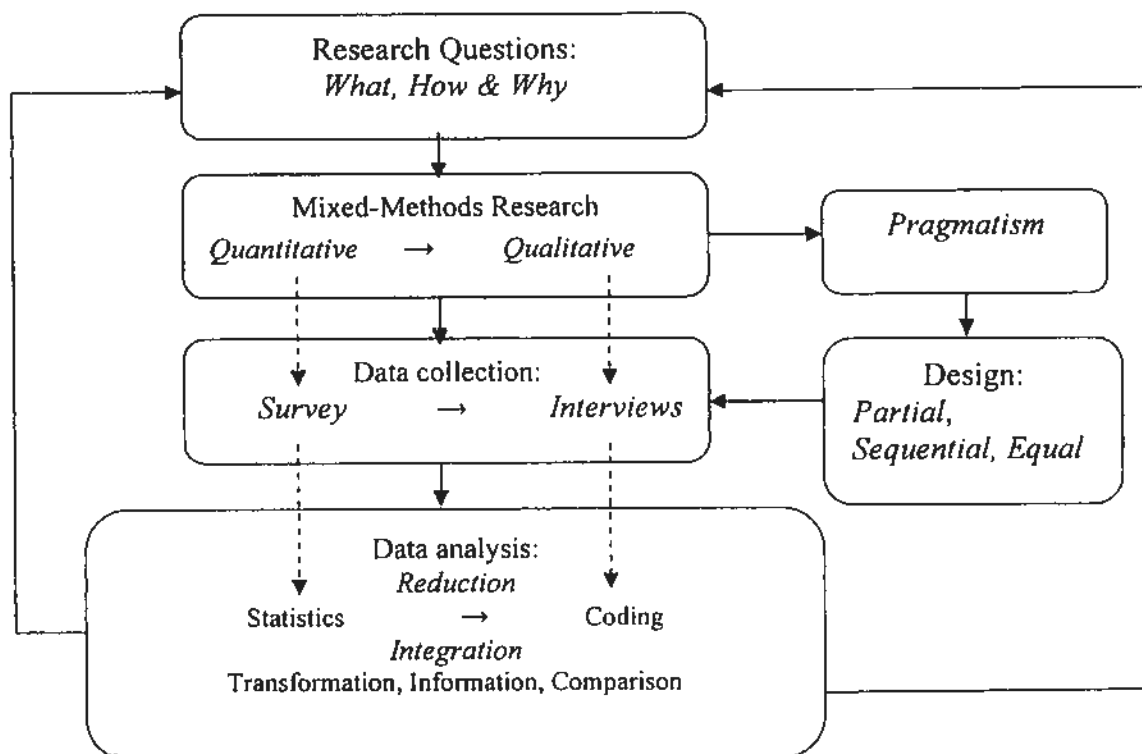


Figure 4.1 Operational Process of the Study

Scope of the Research

This section explains the research focuses and recaps the research questions in order to clarify the scope of the research. As contended in prior chapters, serious research on principal leadership in China is thin on the ground. Western findings cannot fully account for the practice of principalship in Chinese schools, owing at least partly to the societal and contextual distinctions between the two societies. Therefore, this study aimed to explore Chinese principalship through identifying and analysing the generic leadership practices of Chinese school principals.

The overarching purpose implied that the central concept underpinning the study is *leadership practice*. As stated in the literature review, leadership practice is an integrative conception of leadership, which conceives of leadership as a practice of social interactions embedded in a specific context (Carroll, Levy, & Richmond, 2008; Densten, 2008; Elmore, 2008; Spillane & Orlina, 2005). This concept represents a holistic perception of leadership, that is, *what* leaders do and *how* they lead as a result of multiple contextual influences that form or influence leaders' actions. Thus, the core leadership practices of school principals means the common things school

principals stress and do to lead their schools and the typical ways they enact these practices within their school contexts.

Accordingly, the overall purpose of the study was divided into three sub-purposes. First, it aimed to identify *what* are the core leadership practices of Chinese principals. Second, it sought to find out *how* Chinese principals enact these key practices in schools. Third, it attempted to understand *why* Chinese principals adopt these core practices in their schools. The three aspects encompass exploratory and explanatory enquiries into leadership practices of Chinese school principals which suggest three fundamental propositions. The three research focuses are specified in the following subsection.

Three Research Foci

Three research focuses composed the scope of the research. First, the leadership practices of Chinese school principals might converge on certain generic aspects. This might be attributed to some universal principles of leadership and the essential nature and structure of schools as social organisations (Leithwood *et al.*, 2006). These generic practices would describe the common activities that Chinese school leaders perform to lead their schools. As summarised in the literature review (see Chapter Three), the core leadership practices of Chinese principals might have the following six general dimensions:

- setting direction
- building school culture
- developing people
- managing instruction & curriculum
- administering internal affairs & relationship
- building external *guanxi* & seeking resources

Thus, the first step of this study was to explore whether these six practices could cover the core leadership activities of Chinese school principals and the relationship between them. The answers to these questions would compose a repertoire of the core leadership practices of Chinese school principals.

The second sub-purpose was to understand the enactment patterns of these key leadership practices. This purpose related to a second proposition that Chinese principals actually exert these core leadership practices in a uniquely different way

from their counterparts in Western schools. Enactment essentially means a way of doing things. In this study, it could be operationally defined as the patterned process in which Chinese principals apply the core leadership practices in schools. Thus, this sub-purpose pointed to an understanding of the basic mechanism or patterns characterising the core leadership practices when they are enacted in real-life situations. Existing literature has verified the diversity of the ways in which Chinese principals exert their leadership and the effect of societal culture on the enactment patterns of leadership practices. Therefore, the second focus of the study was to discern the theoretical and practical patterns exhibited by Chinese schools when they enact the core leadership practices.

The third sub-purpose was to explore contextual factors that affect these core practices. This interest derived from the proposition that principal leadership practices are shaped by the interactions among individual, organisational and societal variables. These interactions coexist with a structural order, each with its own form or forms (Goffman, 1983). Therefore, individual interpretations and contextual elements jointly influence and synthesise leadership perceptions and corresponding actions (Morrison, 2002). An in-depth understanding of principal leadership practice therefore naturally requires investigation of the effects of individual, organisational and social contexts on principals' leadership practices. The identified contextual factors are mainly located at the following three levels:

- *personal context*: age, gender, education background, years of teaching, years of principalship, training/continued education, knowledge and capacity, personalities;
- *school context*: school location, school level/type, school designation, school climate/culture, financial & human resources, teachers' gender, years of teaching & position, other stakeholders, school effectiveness/progress;
- *societal context*: societal culture, relevant administrative system; political ideology.

This study explored these potential contextual factors in order to provide a contextual explanation for the emergence of the core leadership practices of Chinese principals.

The triple research foci constituted a logical sequence from more obvious and measurable performance to deeper, more subtle grounds. The first two foci implied validation and exploration, that is, they not only targeted the validation of existing

research findings on principal leadership practices with Chinese samples but also aimed to discover new phenomena or patterns overlooked by previous Western and Chinese research. The final aim of the research involved both explanation and exploration in that it used existing theories and explored new knowledge, accounting for the research findings.

Recapping Research Questions

The scope of the research was consistent with the research questions proposed in Chapter One. These questions are recapitulated as follows.

Q1. What are the core leadership practices of Chinese school principals?

Q1.1 Do the leadership practices of Chinese school principals converge on a set of generic practices?

Q1.2 What specific practices compose these generic leadership practices?

Q1.3 What is the relationship between the different generic leadership practices?

Q2. How do Chinese principals enact the core leadership practices in their schools?

Q2.1 Are there any general patterns which characterise Chinese principals' enactment of the core leadership practices in their schools?

Q2.2 Are there any differences in the enactment of the core leadership practices between different Chinese school principals?

Q3. Do certain contextual factors relate to the core leadership practices of Chinese principals and the enactment of these practices?

Q3.1 Do personal factors relate to the core leadership practices of Chinese principals and the enactment of these practices?

Q3.2 Do any organisational factors relate to the core leadership practices of Chinese principals and the enactment of these practices?

Q3.3 Do any societal factors relate to the core leadership practices of Chinese principals and the enactment of these practices?

The first cluster of research questions pointed to the identification of the generic practices and their manifest activities characterising Chinese school principalship. The second group was intended to describe how these core leadership practices are commonly and differently enacted by Chinese principals in their schools. The last set of questions referred to the effects of the contextual factors at the three levels on relevant core leadership practices.

Research Paradigm

A paradigm is a conceptual model of a person's worldview⁷⁷ and the assumptions associated with that view which chiefly consist of ontology (nature of reality and truth), epistemology (nature of knowledge and the relationship between the knower and the would-be-known), and methodology (the process of research or obtaining knowledge) (see Denzin & Lincoln, 2005; Guba & Lincoln, 1994; Mertens, 2003). The paradigmatic perspective held by a researcher influences his or her perceptions of reality, the process of knowing, and the research methodology (Greene & Caracelli, 2003; Guba & Lincoln, 1994).

As Johnson, Onwuegbuzie and Turner assert, 'we currently are in a three methodological or research paradigm world, with quantitative, qualitative, and mixed methods research all thriving and coexisting' (2007, p. 117). This study adopted the 'third', holistic, way, a mixed methods approach. The following subsections explicate and justify the research paradigm and the specific perspectives underpinning the study.

Mixed Methods Research Paradigm

This subsection focuses on two issues: what comprises mixed methods research, and why the mixed methods research paradigm is used to direct this inquiry. The former question points to the definition of the so-called 'third' approach. The second one demands a justification of its relevance to the present investigation. Both answers are expanded as follows.

What is mixed methods research?

Generally speaking, mixed methods research has emerged and developed rapidly as a 'third' methodology or research paradigm which employs both qualitative and quantitative approaches to understanding social phenomena (Bryman, 2006; Creswell & Plano Clark, 2007; Greene, 2008; Johnson, Onwuegbuzie, & Turner, 2007; Tashakkori & Creswell, 2008; Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2003). This 'third' avenue is explained hereafter via a brief retrospective look at its generation and a synthesis of its defining characteristics.

⁷⁷ A worldview is an overarching framework of ideas and beliefs through which an individual defines the nature of 'world', their place in it, and their possible relationships with the world and its parts (Guba & Lincoln, 1994).

An emerging 'third' approach

Among the three research paradigms mentioned above, the quantitative approach is the oldest discourse and originates from an orthodox philosophy of scientific inquiry, positivism.⁷⁸ This paradigm holds that physical and social reality is independent from the inquirer and can only be known through unbiased observation (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000). Accordingly, the first research approach seeks to identify causal relationships through objective measurement and quantitative analysis (Firestone, 1987).

Since the 1930s, this view has been rethought and modified. The resultant view is called postpositivism, which reconciles the main criticisms of positivism and recognises that knowledge or reality is interpreted or constructed by the knower (Reichardt & Rallis, 1994; Denzin & Lincoln, 2005; Smith, 1994). But the deep roots of the philosophy stay within the positivist tradition that truth may be discovered or understood best with quantitative evidence found via replicable experiments/quasi-experiments, measurable variables, large samples, standard procedures and provable hypotheses (Mertens, 2003; Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2003).

At the same time, more qualitative paradigms, such as interpretivism and constructivism, have become established and popular in the social sciences (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005, Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2003). These paradigms together contend that social reality is constructed, researchers are subjectively immersed in the research, and the investigation is directed at a deeper understanding of what is happening in a smaller sample (Firestone, 1987; Gall, Borg & Gall, 1996). Accordingly, qualitative research normally adopts an interpretative or constructive perspective on its subject matter. This approach has gradually developed and now competes with quantitative orthodoxy (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994, 2005).

Polarisation of the two approaches has led to what was called 'paradigm war' in the 1980s (Smith, 1994; Denzin, 2008; Denzin & Lincoln, 2005; Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2003). Social researchers were almost forced to make a choice between the positivist-quantitative methodology and the interpretative-qualitative one, even at the risk of missing the information provided by the discarded approach (Howe, 1985). In this instance, some scholars began to think about ceasing rivalry and realising mutual

⁷⁸ Prevalent in the first half of the twentieth century, 'positivism' was first coined by Auguste Comte in the 1830s as synonymous with science or with positive or observable facts (Silverman, 2000).

dialogues (Denzin, 2008; Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2003). Gradually, quantitative and qualitative research methods were combatively used by some researchers (e.g. Campbell & Fiske, 1959; Smith, 1994; Denzin, 1978; Jick, 1979).

Consequently, from the 1990s, mixed methods research has gradually appeared as a third approach bridging the gap between quantitative and qualitative approaches (Denzin, 2008; Hanson *et al.*, 2005; Johnson, Onwuegbuzie, & Turner, 2007; Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2003). This new avenue has been interpreted from a different paradigmatic perspective (see Appendix 4.1), involving dialectic (all paradigms count), pragmatist (the end justifies the means), transformative-emancipatory (focusing on marginalised groups), and multi-paradigm perspectives (matching the paradigm with the research design) (Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2003). Despite the different paradigmatic positions, all these stances reflect the integrative orientation underlying the emerging research paradigm and its defining characteristics as follows.

Integrating quantitative and qualitative approaches

With the evolution of mixed methods research, different definitions have been posited to specify the concept. Greene, Caracelli, and Graham (1989) defined it as a research design that includes at least one quantitative method (designed to collect numbers) and one qualitative method (designed to collect words). Tashakkori and Teddlie (1998) pointed out that mixed methods studies combine qualitative and quantitative approaches in the research methodology of a single study or multi-phased study. More recently, Johnson and Onwuegbuzie (2004) saw mixed methods research as when the researcher mixes or combines quantitative and qualitative research techniques, methods, approaches, concepts or language into a single study.

Some of these interpretations regard this third approach in a more methodological sense, such as the collection and analysis of quantitative and qualitative data (e.g. Creswell & Plano Clark, 2007), but more contemporary writings in this area agree on a complete integration of quantitative and qualitative approaches (Hanson *et al.*, 2005; Bryman, 2007; Creswell & Plano Clark, 2007). Some rigorous definitions refer to 'a single study' only (Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004; Tashakkori & Creswell, 2007), whereas other views include 'a series of studies' or 'study phases' (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2007; Tashakkori & Teddlie, 1998). Such diversified comprehensions of mixed methods research tend to persuade researchers that it is better to keep an open mind about definitions because the paradigm is still evolving (Johnson,

Onwuegbuzie, & Turner, 2007; Tashakkori & Creswell, 2007). Thus, an acceptable way of defining mixed methods research might be to centre on its essential characteristic from a broad perspective.

With this understanding, one defining characteristic stands out, that is, integrating quantitative and qualitative approaches in a study. This is explicitly stated in recent definitions of the integrative approach. Tashakkori and Creswell (2007) explain that, in mixed methods research, the investigator collects and analyses data, integrates the findings, and draws inferences, using both qualitative and quantitative approaches/methods in a single study. Creswell and Plano Clark (2007) contend that mixed methods research focuses on collecting, analysing, and mixing both quantitative and qualitative data in a single study or series of studies. Johnson, Onwuegbuzie, and Turner (2007) confirm that a mixed method design is a plan for a scientifically rigorous research process comprised of a qualitative or quantitative core component that directs the theoretical drive. In this sense, mixed methods research by its nature is the synthesis of quantitative and qualitative research paradigms.

Therefore, this study defines mixed methods research as the integration of qualitative and quantitative approaches or methods in a single or multiphase study. This definition explicitly holds that a mixed methods research approach is actually the outcome of combining former rival paradigms rather than some newly created conception, separate from previous methodological views.

Why are mixed methods used in this study?

Adopting a mixed methods approach for this study was mainly based on two grounds. First, the integrative research paradigm was fundamentally determined by the complex nature of leadership and the integrative purpose of the research. Second, the approach was intrinsically built from an integrative perspective which provides a good chance of producing a better understanding of social phenomena. The following paragraphs expand this justification in greater detail.

The first argument is that the nature of leadership, the scope of the research and the research questions required an integrative research paradigm. First, leadership is essentially a complex, dynamic social phenomenon occurring within a certain context (Uhl-Bien, Marion, & McKelvey, 2007). Not only can it be observed as a set of perceivable leadership practices, but it can also be interpreted as a process of social interaction constructed by the people involved within specific contexts

(Densten, 2008; Lawrence, Lenk, & Quinn, 2009; Martinez, 2008). Nowadays school principals work in quite complicated organisational and societal contexts (Leithwood, 2005; Walker & Dimmock, 2002a), especially in China where great transformation has been taking place in society and school education (Feng, 2006). What constitutes an effective leader will not be properly understood unless examined holistically (Walji, 2009). Therefore, it seemed necessary to go beyond a single methodological perspective in order to form a contextual understanding of Chinese principal leadership practices.

Second, the broad scope of the research justified the integrative perspective, because the purpose and nature of an inquiry determine its research approach and methods (Creswell, 1994; Punch, 2005). The scope of this research not only embraced measurable leadership behaviours, but also recognised the interpretative nature of the real-life leadership practices as they are enacted within the complicated context. Accordingly, the research questions fashioned the queries into both tangible leadership practices of school principals and intangible enactment patterns and influences coming from specific contexts. Specifically, the first group of research questions was largely related to the findings of objective measurement whereas the second cluster required more constructive interpretations of the contextual phenomena. The answer to the third group used both methods, however.

The other reason for employing a mixed methods research paradigm was that the approach has an edge in terms of producing better answers to the research questions (Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004). As two main established research paradigms, quantitative and qualitative approaches have different, or even contradictory, orientations.⁷⁹ To a great extent, each alternative has irreplaceable strengths and compensatable weaknesses (Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004). Through bridging the schism between the two camps, mixed methods research offsets the disadvantages of adopting either approach separately, and provides better (stronger) understanding of research problems and complex phenomena (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2007; Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004; Johnson, Onwuegbuzie, & Turner 2007; Onwuegbuzie & Leech, 2004b; Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2003). Such an integrated pattern echoes the

⁷⁹ Quantitative research focuses on deduction, confirmation, theory/hypothesis testing, explanation, prediction, standardised data collection, and statistical analysis; qualitative research emphasises induction, discovery, exploration, theory/hypothesis generation, researchers as the 'instrument', and qualitative analysis (Onwuegbuzie & Leech, 2004b).

holistic perspective suggested by Habermas's (1971) theory of knowledge-constitutive interests⁸⁰ and may help researchers in the pursuit of emancipatory knowledge.⁸¹

Consequently, this approach is gradually becoming a new tradition in both educational and leadership research (Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004; Molina-Azorín, 2009; Niaz, 2008; Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2003). Particularly in principalship research, this approach is increasingly employed by researchers in the field (see Leithwood *et al.*, 2006a). Considering the aforementioned transformative-emancipatory stance embedded in the approach, a mixed method exploration would benefit the establishment of an original knowledge base of principalship in Chinese schools instead of one aping Western countries. As indicated in Chapter Three, both quantitative and qualitative approaches have been established in Mainland China and are increasingly combined in research. In this context, it seemed desirable to conduct an empirical study in Mainland China by integrating the two complementary research paradigms together.

Of course, this third approach is by no means flawless. It is difficult and demanding for a single researcher to carry out both qualitative and quantitative research. It is more expensive and time-consuming. Some of the details of mixed methods research remain to be worked out. As Teddlie and Tashakkori (2003) observed, however, this research paradigm is still in its 'adolescence' and so needs academic exploration and supportive application for further advancement. In view of this, the present study applied this emerging research paradigm.

Pragmatist Perspective

Once a quantitative or qualitative approach has been determined, the paradigm is normally explicit, expressing positivism or constructivism. As regards the mixed methods research paradigm, the concern is how different paradigmatic perspectives are integrated (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2003). In accordance with its scope, this study

⁸⁰ In Habermas's theory (1971), there are three human cognitive interests (technical, practical, and emancipatory) and the respective social media of work, language, and power. Coupling the human interests with social media leads to three types of knowledge and related means of knowing or scientific methodology (empirical-analytic, historical-hermeneutic, and critical social). This typology corresponds to three major paradigms of the mixed methods research: positivist-postpositivist, interpretative-constructivist, transformative-emancipatory (Mertens, 2003).

⁸¹ One paradigmatic foundation of the approach, the transformative-emancipatory position (Mertens, 2003), generally accords with Habermas's (1971) critical social methodology for emancipatory knowledge.

integrated quantitative and qualitative methodologies from a pragmatist perspective. The following subsection justifies this position.

First of all, the pragmatist perspective reflects the defining feature of mixed methods research: combining the best divergent approaches and methods for answers to the research question(s). The pragmatist calls for 'whatever philosophical and/or methodological approach [that] works for the particular research problem under study' (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 1998, p. 5). From this perspective, the research design and implementation are determined by the practical demands of one particular inquiry (Mertens, 2005; Rocco *et al.*, 2003; Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2003; Yardley & Bishop, 2008). The overriding aim is to make the 'best use' of research techniques and procedures for specific research problems or questions (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2003; Yardley & Bishop, 2008). In this situation, all methods are compatible and potentially useful as long as they help to make the data collection and analysis more accurate or the inferences more useful (Mertens, 2005; Patton, 1990; Rocco *et al.*, 2003; Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2003). This flexible perception of research methodology has been universally recognised as one of the major paradigmatic foundations of mixed methods research (Densten, 2008; Hall & Howard, 2008; Johnson, Onwuegbuzie, & Turner, 2007; Onwuegbuzie & Leech, 2004b; Rocco *et al.*, 2003; Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2003).

Second, the scope of the research required a pragmatic integration of the divergent research paradigms. This study was intended to investigate the core leadership practices of Chinese principals. As noted earlier, leadership practice not only points to the observable interactions among leaders, followers and contexts, but also involves the subjective matter constructed by relevant people within specific contexts (Antonakis *et al.*, 2004; Densten, 2008). Accordingly, both objective descriptions and contextual interpretations were included in the scope of the research. There were three foci: identifying the generic and specific practices, finding out specific patterns to describe the enactment of the generic practices, and exploring the underlying contextual factors. The first two foci exhibited an orientation towards generality, whereas the third one related to specific situations. As particularity and generality respectively point to the interpretivist/constructivist and positivist/postpositivist paradigms, the pragmatist position offers a flexible and purposive strategy of connecting the two paradigms, mixing them in line with the research questions. In

this way, the researcher could directly target the central themes of the research, as well as obtain more detailed information about the interactions between individual practices and the larger social context they share with others (Greene & Garacelli, 1997).

In sum, from the pragmatist angle, any means can be utilised to reach the ends; research methods should follow research questions in the way that offers the best chance to obtain useful answers (Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004; Punch, 2006). This enables researchers the flexibility to choose appropriate research methods to help them obtain pertinent answers to their research questions. Thus, this study built an integrative research design so that the quantitative and qualitative perspectives and relevant methods were combined in the light of the research scope and specific questions. The research design is presented in the following section.

Research Design

The research design sits between the research questions and the data and shows how the research questions will be connected to the data (Punch, 2005). Considering the research questions against the pragmatist principle, the study adopted a partially mixed sequential equal status design that draws on quantitative and qualitative approaches and priority was given to the former. This section explains the underpinning grounds and specific methods involved in the design.

Partially Mixed Sequential Equal Status Design

A mixed methods research design can be represented as a function of three dimensions: level of mixing, time orientation, and emphasis of approaches (Creswell & Plano Clarke, 2007; Leech & Onwuegbuzie, 2009). The first issue is to ascertain where the mixing of the qualitative and quantitative methods will occur. The second dimension determines whether the qualitative and quantitative stages should be conducted concurrently or sequentially. The third is to decide whether both the methods are given equal weight. This study employed the partially mixed sequential equal status from the pragmatist stance; research methods serve research questions.

First, the partially mixed design met the needs of the research questions. According to the extent of the mix of quantitative and qualitative techniques, the research design can be classified as a fully mixed design or a partially mixed design (Leech & Onwuegbuzie, 2009; Onwuegbuzie & Johnson, 2004). This research involved

exploring and explaining the key leadership practices of Chinese school principals. Within the study's remit there are three questions (i.e. 'what', 'how' and 'why' questions). All these questions could be answered through both approaches. Therefore, after the quantitative and qualitative data had been separately collected, the two types of data were pooled together in the process of data analysis in order to answer the research questions. This was a partially mixed design.

Second, the sequential design was required by the sequence of the research questions. As stated above, the research questions involved an investigation into measurable practices (*what* and *how*) and contextual explanations for the practices (*why*). Among various research methods, quantitative methods are usually utilised to measure phenomena objectively, test hypotheses, make generalisations, or construct relationships (Antonakis *et al.*, 2004). Thus, they were mainly used to identify the actions and approaches composing the core leadership practices and explore the potential contextual factors (i.e. the first and third questions). On the other hand, qualitative research would provide more in-depth understanding of the contextually rich phenomena (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005) because it is 'building a complex, holistic picture, formed with words, reporting detailed views of informants, and conducted in a natural setting' (Creswell, 1994, p. 2). Thus, it was mainly used to answer the second and third questions. In other words, the study applied quantitative investigation followed by qualitative research.

Finally, equal status was given to both paradigms. As described in the preceding section, quantitative research is based on a positivist philosophy which assumes social facts as objective realities apart from individuals' beliefs. Qualitative research is rooted in constructivist and/or interpretive paradigms, which hold that reality is socially constructed through individual or collective definitions of the situation (Taylor & Bogdan, 1984). Both of the methodologies have their own advantages and disadvantages in exploring social phenomena (Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004; Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2003). Therefore, the study gave them equal weight in order to produce a sounder understanding of the core leadership practices of Chinese school leaders.

Overall, this arrangement cohered with the explanatory sequential design described by Creswell and his colleagues (2003), which begins with a quantitative phase followed by a qualitative one. The first stage aims to identify major findings and the

next stage is to explain or enhance prior inferences. Within the design, a survey and follow-up interviews were sequentially conducted in this study.

Survey and Interviews

This subsection introduces the specific methods used in this study. Antonakis and colleagues (2004) have summarised the types of quantitative methods and qualitative methods employed in leadership research: a quantitative approach involves laboratory experiments, field experiments, field studies, and survey research and qualitative investigation comprises ethnography, grounded theory, case studies, phenomenological studies, and action research. This classification is consistent with other scholars' taxonomies of quantitative and qualitative methods (e.g. Punch, 2005; Mertens, 2005). Using this classification, this study was conducted in a non-experimental 'field' or natural environment consisting of a questionnaire survey and follow-up interviews.

Generally, the 'field study' was required by the contextual and complex nature of leadership practice. As Kerlinger (1986) contended, much research nowadays in the behavioural sciences involves non-experimental research in that there are many possible causes for human behaviours in non-experimental conditions. The researcher cannot have control over all the independent variables in complex real-life conditions, 'because their manifestations have already occurred or because they are inherently not manipulable' (Kerlinger, 1986, p. 348). Accordingly, majority research in leadership area is conducted in the real-life 'field' (e.g. Atwater, Dionne, & Avolio, 1999; Bass *et al.*, 2003; Wong, 2006). The literature review in Chapter Three also suggests that principal leadership practice needs to be examined within specific contexts. Accordingly, the quantitative and qualitative methods were applied in a real-life school context in Mainland China.

Specifically, a questionnaire survey was conducted in the quantitative investigation. Survey research is used to determine or describe the characteristics of a population or the relationship between variables by collecting data from a large number of people (Antonakis *et al.*, 2004; Punch, 2005; Mertens, 2005). This method permits generalisation based on 'standardised questions of large, representative samples of individuals' (Cohen & Manion, 1994, p. 38). Thus, it has been widely used in leadership research (Antonakis *et al.*, 2004) and the particular research field of principal leadership (e.g. ISSPP, see Leithwood *et al.*, 2006a; Li & Zhang, 2006; Luo

& Najjar, 2007). More importantly, it could help to collect opinions from a larger group of participants to provide pertinent answers to all the research questions of this study. It could not, however, provide a detailed description of the influence of the contextual factors on principals' leadership practices. Thus, qualitative interviews were conducted in the following phase to provide more information about the reality.

An interview has been defined as 'a conversation between researcher and informant focusing on the informant's perception of self, life and experience, and expressed in his or her own words' (Minichiello *et al.*, 1990, p. 87). During the process, interviewees can express their deeper feelings and tell real stories and interviewers can respond by using proper questions to help them clarify or expand their answers and explain questions when respondents feel perplexed (Drever, 1995, pp. 1 & 8). This process helps researchers to see situations as participants see them, so that the meanings interviewees attribute to a given situation become clearer (Sharp & Howard, 1996). The face-to-face communication also enables researchers to learn directly about respondents' initial reactions to the interview questions. This helps researchers to assess the candidness of respondents and the authenticity of their answers (Wang, T., 2004). Therefore, this method is regarded as a main vehicle for intensive collection of qualitative data (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005; Mertens, 2005; Punch, 2005). It fulfils the need for in-depth investigation into contextual reasons for the core leadership practices of Chinese school principals.

In sum, this study conducted a questionnaire survey followed by in-depth interviews. The survey aimed to identify, describe, and partly explain the target phenomena. The following interviews provided intensive description and potential explanation for the phenomena within real-life situations. The inferences deriving from the two types of data answer the research questions. Table 4.1 illustrates the research design and the functions and related research questions of the specific methods. Consistently with the methodological landscape, mixed sampling strategies were adopted to select participants of the study.

Table 4.1 Research Design

Research design		Functions
QUAN	Survey	Describing generic and specific practices; exploring contextual factors.
↓		
QUAL	Interviews	Describing the enactment and contextual influence; confirming and expanding prior inferences.

Sampling Scheme

A sampling scheme involves the determination of the research site and the utilisation of pertinent sampling strategies to select participants. This section clarifies *where* the study was conducted, *whom* it targeted, and *how* the participants were identified. The research site of this study included four cities. For optimal selection of the informants, two sampling strategies, purposive sampling and probability sampling, were used in accordance with the mixed methods research design.

Research Site

The research site is the specific context for the sampling and conduct of an investigation. This study was mainly conducted in Beijing, the capital city of China, and Guangzhou, the capital city of Guangdong province, as well as Zhengzhou, and Shenyang, two provincial capital cities of China. There were two major reasons for this decision.

First, to a great extent, school education in these cities could reflect the complex context facing contemporary Chinese school leaders, as pointed out in Chapter Three. Geographically, these big cities are respectively located in northeast, north, central and south China, Beijing and Guangzhou particularly being known for their abundant economic and human resources. In some senses, the societal context in these places is typically characterised by a mixture of the influences of the market, the government, the international exposure, and the traditional culture. The local authorities give priority to the development of local education system and the societies provide adequate support for school education. Therefore, the schooling in these cities, particularly Beijing and Guangzhou, has played the leading role in the recent national education reforms (see Chapter Two). In a sense, they could be considered as a miniature version of the current educational context on the Chinese Mainland. Since it is not possible for one study to cover all the principals in China, it seemed sensible to conduct the research in sites that typically reflect the current educational context in Mainland China.

Second, there were some personal and practical considerations. The researcher had spent three years studying for her master's degree in educational administration at Beijing Normal University. She had always wanted to do some in-depth educational research in Beijing because of her affection for this city and her special academic interest. Her three years as a research postgraduate in this city provided familiarity

with the local educational context and academic community. This would facilitate her approach to potential participants and the consequent research. In fact, it was a scholar in Beijing who helped the researcher to gain access to the samples in Shenyang. With respect to Guangzhou, there were two operational concerns. For one thing, it was convenient to conduct the research in Guangzhou owing to its geographical nearness. On the other, the researcher had access to the target population in Guangzhou so that it was feasible to conduct the research there. As regards Zhengzhou, it is the capital city of the researcher's hometown province and thus she could get in touch with some local schools through personal connections. The study gave final priority to sampling in Beijing and Guangzhou, however.

Sampling Strategies

Selection of a sampling scheme is closely related to the research questions, methods and related instruments, and the resources available (Maxwell & Loomis, 2003). Existing sampling techniques are mainly divided into two categories: probability sampling and purposive sampling (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 1998). Different sampling strategies are normally attached to distinct research paradigms and methods.

Probability sampling means selecting a relatively large number of units from a population, or from specific subgroups (strata) of a population, in a random manner where the probability of inclusion for every member of the population is determinable (Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2003). The goal of this sampling process is generalisation or the chance to extrapolate findings from a subset of a population or particular setting and apply them to a larger defined population of people. This strategy is normally associated with quantitative research.

Purposive sampling is based on the assumption that one needs to select a sample that is most likely to provide relevant and valuable information or to allow researchers to develop or test particular theoretical ideas (Maxwell & Loomis, 2003; Stake, 1978). The goal of this sampling strategy is to select participants who can supply rich information with respect to the purpose of the study (Kemper, Stringfield, & Teddlie, 2003; Patton, 1990). The sampling process is typically used in qualitative research.

Neither of them, however, is the sole domain of either research paradigm (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 1998). For a mixed methods study, all the sampling techniques can be used to answer the needs of the research design (Teddlie &

Tashakkori, 2003). Thus, this study matched different sampling techniques with the needs of the research and the types of specific methods, as shown in Table 4.2.

Table 4.2 Sampling Strategies

Sequential Mixed Methods Research	Sampling Strategies
Generally identifying potential participants	Purposive sampling (typical & information intensity)
Quantitative survey	Convenience sampling
	Cluster sampling
Qualitative interviews	Convenience sampling
	Volunteer sampling

The purposive sampling technique was first used to determine the target population because the research needed to be informed by proper participants. Above all, the research questions explicitly pointed to a focus on the core leadership practices of Chinese school principals. As the priority of sampling was given to Beijing and Guangzhou, the participants mainly came from schools in those cities, complemented by samples from two schools respectively located in Zhengzhou and Shenyang. According to the sampling strategy, the informants who could provide rich information about the research topic were principals, teachers and staff working in secondary schools.

First, Chinese secondary school principals work in a particularly challenging context. As Chapter Two indicates, students receiving nine-year compulsory education are now enrolled on a catchment area basis and post-compulsory enrolment is still highly competitive. The scores of municipal-level HSEE and national-level CEE are the most important determinant of admission to high schools and colleges and thus act as a key 'lever' in the adjustment of school instruction and administration (Feng, 2006; Qian, 2008). Partly resulting from these extremely selective exams, principals of Chinese secondary schools have to deal with more pressure from society and school stakeholders. As the results of the exams are also the ultimate determinants in evaluation of school performance, ensuring a good exam result is exceedingly important for Chinese secondary schools and their leaders. In addition, secondary schools often have a larger size and a more complicated organisational structure than those at lower levels. All these factors suggest that Chinese secondary school principals face considerable tensions and challenges in their leadership practice. Thus, their experience could be seen as representative of authentic expertise in leading Chinese schools.

Second, the involvement of other school members in the study could lead to a more complete perspective on Chinese principal leadership practices. Some indigenous research has indicated the divergent perceptions of principal leadership between principals and their staff in Chinese schools (e.g. Wang, F., 2005). In reality, as the major witness of their principals' leadership practices, school teachers and staff could offer a more objective perspective on how these principals lead in real-life situations. In this connection, involving other school members in the investigation might 'increase confidence in making generalizations to particular subgroups' (Patton, 2002, p. 243). The target population of this, therefore, study consisted of both principals and other school members from secondary schools in the four cities. The specific sampling techniques used in the survey and interviews are explained in the following section.

Other strategies were also used to gain access to the participants. Initially, internet resources, such as governmental websites, were explored to obtain information about school education in the sample sites. Meanwhile, the researcher consulted relevant scholars and practitioners about the potential participants and asked them for help to access the population. After locating the sample sites, the researcher contacted certain key persons via phone, e-mail and formal invitation to arrange the field study. After the survey and interviews, souvenirs were sent to these people to thank them for their help.

Data Collection

In the light of the sequential mixed methods research design, the data collection involved two phases: the questionnaire survey and the follow-up interviews. The survey was executed to capture the leadership practices characterising the principals working at the sampled schools and the relevant contextual factors that might influence their leadership practices. A pilot study was conducted before the main survey to pretest the instrument for the quantitative research. The interviews were intended to provide a deep understanding of the enactment and emergence of these practices in real school contexts. The following subsections explicate the operational procedures of the pilot study, the main survey and the follow-up interviews.

Pilot study

Before the main quantitative investigation conducted with a questionnaire, a pilot study was carried out in January 2010. It aimed to evaluate all the items and the scale

as a whole to check the content of the instrument and the operational process of data collection (Converse & Presser, 1986; De Vaus, 2002; Mertens, 2005; Punch, 2005). It was essential to ensure linguistic accuracy, since the questionnaire was based partly on the framework developed in English-speaking countries, whereas all respondents were native Chinese and might not understand English (see Mertens, 2005). In addition, this process could help the researcher gather relevant information to frame the qualitative research tool (Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2003).

Sampling. The pilot sample included two cohorts of participants. The first cohort was 37 trainees who participated in a training programme provided by South China Normal University in Guangzhou, involving principals and middle administration from secondary schools. The second cohort consisted of 226 participants, involving principals, teachers and staff from two secondary schools in Zhengzhou.

These participants were selected because they resembled those to whom the main questionnaire would be administered and thus could help to circumvent inappropriate questions, highlight particularly useful questions, uncover problems with language, and alert the researcher to any misunderstanding about Chinese principalship (see Mertens, 2005; De Vaus, 2002). As explained in the preceding section, the participants in this study were the principals and other school members of secondary schools in the four Chinese cities. Taking account of the limited time and resources, the researcher adopted a convenience sampling strategy to collect information from qualified participants who were easily accessible, as suggested by Kemper, Stringfield, and Teddlie (2003).

Data collection. The pilot study contained two parts, a preliminary test (about 20 minutes) followed by a semi-structured interview (about 20 minutes), and a pilot survey (20 minutes). The preliminary test was used to confirm the face validity⁸² of the pilot questionnaire and obtain further information to refine the pilot scale and help the researcher to learn more about the target group. The first cohort of the pilot sample participated in the pretest and was asked to answer the preliminary questionnaire and comment on its relevance to the research topic, the clarity and legibility of the expression, and any other matters related to principal leadership practices. Their feedbacks were used to improve the quantitative instrument and help

⁸² Asking respondents whether the instrument looks valid to them is an important method of establishing face validity (Muijs, 2004).

the researcher to understand the target group (De Vaus, 2002). All the interviews were tape-recorded with the participants' permission.

After the necessary revision, the pilot questionnaire was retested with the second cohort of 226 participants⁸³ to examine the validity and reliability of the instrument. This led to 142 (62.8%) valid responses. Table 4.3 provides the demographic information about the participants in the pilot study.

Table 4.3 Respondents of the Pilot Study

	Frequency	Percent (%)
School		
School 1	133	58.8
School 2	93	41.2
Gender		
Male	80	35.4
Female	139	61.5
Missing	7	3.1
Position		
Teacher	182	80.5
Staff	16	7.1
Leader of teaching & research unit/the grade	10	4.4
Director of teaching & discipline/general affairs	5	2.2
Deputy secretary of general party branch	1	0.4
Vice-principal	2	0.9
Principal	1	0.4
Others	3	1.3
Missing	6	2.7
Total	226	100

Instrument. Before the pilot survey, the researcher had interviewed three principals in Beijing to obtain primary information about Chinese principalship in order to prepare the questionnaire. After that, the researcher developed the pilot questionnaire. This instrument was constructed on the base described in Chapter Three. This base combined the core leadership practices identified in recent cross-cultural research (e.g. ISSPP), the dimensions confirmed in the study of vice-principalship in Hong Kong, and the findings emerging from the relevant indigenous research (e.g. Liu, 2005). Since the target participants were native Chinese, all the items originating from Western and Hong Kong research were translated from English to Chinese.

⁸³ De Vaus (2002) regards 75 to 100 respondents as adequate for a pilot test and Mertens (2005) suggests that there should be 100 observations for each major subgroup and 20 to 50 for minor subgroups. Given the quantitative disparity between principals and teachers in reality, the sampling size is thought appropriate for the pilot study.

For the translated items, the translation procedures contained split translations and back translation⁸⁴ (Harkness, Van De Vijver, & Mohler, 2003; Mertens, 2005). Two translators separately translated their own sections. At a reconciliation meeting, the translators and a translation reviewer went through the questionnaire question-by-question to agree on the translation. Then the Chinese version was translated back into English and compared with the original in order to improve the accuracy and exactitude of the translation. After that, the translators reviewed the adjustment and finalised the diction in another reconciliation meeting. All the translators and reviewers were bilingual and had a good knowledge of the research topic and the specific research methods. Through these procedures the researcher could ensure the quality of the translation and minimise possible translative errors (Harkness, Van De Vijver, & Mohler, 2003).

All of the original items were developed on the basis of existing research findings (Appendix 3.6, see Chapter Three), involving a set of measurement items and demographic questions. After the original descriptions were formulated, these items were reviewed by another Chinese researcher in the field and adjusted accordingly. Then, a final version of this part was added to the translated content in a uniform format to form the pilot scale, which was structured according to the theoretical framework of this study (see Table 4.4). At the end of the questionnaire, several open-ended questions were asked for feedback on the questionnaire (see Mertens, 2005).

Table 4.4 Structure of the Pilot Questionnaire

Components	Dimensions
Background Information	<i>Demographical information:</i> gender, age and education background; <i>Professional information:</i> years of teaching, years of being a principal, position, training times; <i>Organisational information:</i> school size, school status, type and school location.
Core Leadership Practices	<i>Generic practices:</i> setting visions, building school culture, developing people, managing instruction & curriculum, administering internal affairs & relationships, and building external <i>guanxi</i> & seeking resources.
Contextual Variables ⁸⁵	<i>Personal level:</i> knowledge & capacity, personality; <i>Organisational level:</i> school culture & climate, resources, and influence

⁸⁴ The process of translating a document that has already been translated into a foreign language back to the original language, usually done to ensure the accuracy of translation and minimum translative errors (Harkness, Van De Vijver, & Mohler, 2003).

⁸⁵ The contextual factors that are treated as background information will not be repeated in this section; for instance, personal level factors such as age, gender, and education background, etc.

	of teachers and other stakeholders; <i>Social level:</i> societal culture, administration system & policy, political ideology.
Open-ended Questions	<i>Comments on the scale:</i> process, items, time, options, understandability & clarity, and suggestion for improvement; <i>Comments on the topic:</i> whether the questions reflect the facts and suggestions for improvement.

This instrument was adjusted according to the feedback on the preliminary test to ensure its content validity⁸⁶ and then examined with the second cohort of the participants in the pilot survey. All these respondents were required to respond to every item on a Likert-type six-point scale.⁸⁷ Principal leadership practices were examined with 'frequency' (1= not at all, 2=seldom, 3=sometimes, 4=many times, 5=often, and 6=always) and the contextual factors with 'influential level' (1=not at all influential, 2=slightly influential, 3=relatively influential, 4=very influential, 5=highly influential, and 6=extremely influential). If a behaviour or a contextual factor was given a higher rate, it implied that the behaviour was more often used by the Chinese school principals or the factor was considered more influential by the respondents.

The two scales of the questionnaire had different functions, however. The Involvement scale was the main scale of the instrument and was used to measure the extent of principal involvement in the listed leadership practices. Each item of the scale described a specific leadership practice. The scale of the extent of influence of the contextual factors was developed mainly to collect general information about the potential factors that might affect principal leadership practices. Each item included in this part was a general description of a potential factor according to the relevant literature. For example, the first item was 'Principal personality traits', a broad statement which did not point to any specific personalities. Thus, data gathered with this scale were largely used to generate a broad picture of the influencing factors within Chinese school context. Therefore, the quantitative analyse of this scale in the pilot study focused on its reliability.

⁸⁶ See data analysis in this subsection.

⁸⁷ The Likert-type rating scale is widely used in social research, especially when a questionnaire is used (Punch, 2005). Usually, the scale has five points but there is a problem in that respondents tend to prefer the middle category (Muijs, 2004). With the traditional pursuit of mean in Chinese societies, the tendency might be more evident when the respondents are Chinese. In this case, the scale was designed in the six-point form.

Data analysis. The role of a pilot test in quantitative research was mainly to refine the quantitative instrument (see De Vaus, 2002). Two indicators of the quality of quantitative instruments are validity and reliability (De Vaus, 2002; Muijs, 2004; Robinson & Shaver, 1973). Thus, both of them were analysed in this stage.

Reliability

Reliability essentially means the consistency and stability of the instrument (Punch, 2005). There are two forms of reliability: repeated measurement (or consistency over time) and internal consistency. The repeated measurement means the instrument has to measure the same time at different times. This form of reliability can be assessed by administration of the same instrument at two points in time, i.e. test-retest reliability (Muijs, 2004; Punch, 2005). The internal reliability 'relates to the concept-indicator idea of measurement' that is identified by the factor analysis (Punch, 2005, p. 95). In other words, it concerns consistency among the items composing one construct or the whole scale. This form of reliability estimation requires only one administration of the instrument (Punch, 2005).

Regarding the current study, assessing internal consistency was more appropriate in the light of the research purposes, as well as the limited time and access to the target population. Among different ways of assessing internal consistency, Cronbach's alpha coefficient (α) is the most recognised indicator used in quantitative data analysis (Pedhazur & Schmelkin, 1991). The coefficient is currently calculated in SPSS 15.0. This study used the measure to assess the internal consistency of the instrument. Specifically, $\alpha > 0.7$ indicates an acceptable level of reliability whereas $\alpha < 0.3$ implies low reliability (Robinson & Shaver, 1973).

Accordingly, the internal consistency of the pilot questionnaire was estimated first. Except for the dimension 'setting direction' (0.693), the Cronbach's alphas of the other dimensions of leadership practice, the main scale overall, and the scale of contextual factors were all over 0.8 (0.805–0.946), higher than the acceptable level of reliability.

The results further indicated that the alpha value of the dimension 'setting direction' would increase when one item⁸⁸ was excluded from this group of leadership practices. In fact, this item was found not consistent with the theoretical definition of

⁸⁸ The item was *determining school vision, goals and plans dictatorially*.

this dimension. Thus, the item was excluded from the first dimension and was reconsidered later. Similarly, there would be better internal consistency when three items⁸⁹ were respectively excluded from the relevant dimensions, but these items were not deleted and the dimensions were not fixed. The structure of the instrument was determined and revised during the following exploratory factor analysis. The internal consistency of the revised instrument was demonstrated by the estimates presented in the table below.

Table 4.5 Estimates of internal consistency reliability

	Cronbach's alpha
Leadership practices	
1. Building school culture and climate	0.917
2. Establishing authority (reverse)	0.891
3. Developing people	0.894
4. Developing external <i>guanxi</i>	0.846
5. Administering internal affairs	0.827
6. Managing instruction & curriculum	0.781
7. Setting direction	0.748
Total	0.938
Contextual factors	0.838

Validity

'Validity asks the question: are we measuring what we want to measure?' (Muijs, 2004, p. 65). There are three sides to validity: content validity, construct validity and criterion validity. The content validity refers to whether the manifest variables⁹⁰ (i.e. items of a questionnaire) target the latent variable⁹¹ which the research wants to measure. Comprehensive literature review, establishing face validity, or using a panel of experts may help to achieve content validity (Muijs, 2004; Pedhazur & Schmelkin, 1991). All of these were done in this study (i.e. literature review, preliminary test, and instrument development).

The construct validity 'examines the relationship among the constructs' (Harrington, 2008, p. 5). According to Cronbach and Meehl (1995), this concept refers to the examination of a measure of an attribute which is not measured directly or operationally determined, relating the structure of the scale to the theoretical

⁸⁹ These were *establishing a hierarchical professional development system in the school, rewarding teachers and students on the basis of their performances, and actively developing school-run business to gain more funds for school construction.*

⁹⁰ Manifest or observed variables are the variables or indicators a scale actually measures, e.g. an item of a questionnaire, or a measure attribute (Harrington, 2008; Muijs, 2004).

⁹¹ Latent variables or constructs are unobserved variables that cannot be directly measured (Harrington, 2008; Muijs, 2004).

knowledge of the concept measured. Factor analysis is normally used to determine the construct validity because it can detect the general dimensions or structure underlying the responses to a set of questions or observable variables (De Vaus, 2002; Pedhazur & Schmelkin, 1991). Thus, this analysis is thought to be an appropriate technique for quantitative data reduction without loss of the information that original variables provide (Punch, 2005). Two types of factor analysis are often used for this purpose: exploratory factor analysis (EFA) and confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) (Pedhazur & Schmelkin, 1991; Harrington, 2008). As they are mathematically related procedures, these two methods are usually used together to determine the construct validity of a measure (Harrington, 2008; Muijs, 2004; Pedhazur & Schmelkin, 1991).

Specifically, EFA is used to identify the underlying factors for a set of variables whereas CFA can be used to indicate 'whether a construct is unidimensional or multidimensional and how the constructs (and subconstructs) are interrelated' and 'to examine the latent (i.e. the unobserved underlying construct) structure of an instrument during scale development' (Harrington, 2008, p.7). Although EFA can generate the basic structure of the underlying factors, the method is often seen as a data-driven approach to identifying the latent variables so that EFA findings normally need to be confirmed by CFA testing (Harrington, 2008). In other words, EFA initially reduces the number of variables by finding the common factors among them without predetermined dimensions; CAF is appropriate for reduction within a pretested theoretical framework (Hau, Wen, & Cheng, 2004).

As the pilot questionnaire was meant to discover the structure underlying the measure and to refine the instrument, the exploratory factor analysis was run in SPSS 15.0 to identify the latent constructs and reduce the items at the same time. In this process, the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin measure of sampling adequacy (KMO) and Bartlett's test of sphericity were conducted⁹². The method of extracting factors was principal components and the eigenvalues of extracted factors was one. The

92 The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin measure of sampling adequacy is an index for comparing the magnitudes of the observed correlation coefficients to the magnitudes of the partial correlation coefficients. Large values for the KMO measure indicate that a factor analysis of the variables is a good idea. Another indicator, Bartlett's test of sphericity is used to test the null hypothesis that the variables in the population correlation matrix are uncorrelated. For example, when the observed significance level is below 0.0000, it can be concluded that the strength of the relationship among variables is strong and it is a good idea to proceed a factor analysis for the data. (see Norušis, 2007)

correlation matrix and the screen plot were displayed to help with factor selection. Varimax and listwise deletion were used in the operation.

The results showed that the KMO value (0.765) was desirable and the Bartlett's test confirmed the suitability of EFA operation (see Colman & Pulford, 2008). The total variance explained, the screen plot, and the rotated component matrix all suggested that there were seven latent factors. In other words, a seven-factor solution emerged from the EFA process. These seven factors were essentially consistent with the dimensions proposed in the exploratory research framework (see Appendix 4.5). Then, all the items were assessed in line with two criteria: high-factor loading and conformability to the theoretical framework. At the same time, several items were restated and added in the light of the feedback from the pilot participants and the advice of two Chinese scholars in the field. Based on the factors emerging from the factor analysis, a scale of the importance of these dimensions was added to the original questionnaire. The revised questionnaire was then used in the following main survey (see Appendix 4.3).

Main Survey

In this stage, the survey was administered to the target samples with the questionnaire pretested in the pilot study.

Sampling. Five hundred and seventy-two practitioners working at secondary schools participated in the survey.⁹³ These participants were selected via convenience sampling and cluster sampling techniques. Convenience sampling 'occurs where researchers have easy access to particular sites', which 'has obvious advantages in terms of cost and convenience' (Muijs, 2004, p. 40). This study was largely completed by the researcher alone. The access to the target population mainly depended on her personal connections. In this sense, convenience sampling was a reasonable way to approach the target population. In the study, this method was mainly used to collect data in secondary schools. During this process, school type/levels and location were taken into consideration to make sure the sample represented the real school conditions of the target population.

Cluster sampling was employed to collect data on the relevant training programmes. This method is appropriate when the sampling unit is a group which occurs naturally

⁹³ The number of participants met the requirement for sample size in the quantitative research (see De Vaus, 2002; Hau, Wen, & Cheng, 2004; Mertens, 2005).

in the population, such as a class (Maxwell & Loomis, 2003). Since the study would collect data from both principals and other school members of secondary schools, cluster sampling seemed a convenient way to collect data from the participants in these programmes and would reduce the administrative problems caused by more complicated sampling methods (Pedhazur & Schmelkin, 1991). Thus, the researcher collected data from all the trainees participating in certain professional development programmes designed by practitioners working in secondary schools.

Instrument. The formal instrument *Leadership Practice Questionnaire for Chinese School Principals* (see Appendix 4.3) was used to collect data in the main survey. This six-point scale comprised four parts. The first part was composed of the questions referring to basic background information. The second part related to the degree of importance of the generic leadership practices (i.e. the factors emerging from the EFA in the pilot study). The third main scale was the extent of involvement in the specific leadership practices. The final part was the descriptive scale of the extent of the influence of the relevant contextual factors.

Data collection. In the process of data collection, the researcher first gave a brief self-introduction to the participants and outlined the purpose and process of the survey to establish trust and credibility. Then, the questionnaire was distributed to the participants and it took about 30 minutes for them to complete it. The completed questionnaires were immediately collected only by the researcher to ensure their confidentiality.

Interviews

Interviews were conducted to collect the qualitative data after the survey. In this phase, the researcher focused on probing the authentic descriptions of the key leadership practices exercised by the principals of the sampled schools and the contextual factors affecting these practices.

Sampling. Twenty-one informants were selected through the convenience sampling and volunteer sampling methods. There were six school principals, seven vice-principals, four teaching directors, and four teachers. The researcher directly asked the principals participating in the survey to take part in the interviews and allow the researcher to interview other school members. Of course, not all the principals accepted the invitation. In this case, the volunteer sampling technique was adopted.

This method applies when researchers ask people to volunteer to take part in the research (Muijs, 2004). In other words, the researcher conducted the interviews in the schools whose principals accepted all the arrangements of the qualitative investigation. This measure not only enabled the interviews to include enough informants, but also ensured that these informants were cooperative and willing to share their stories. During this process, school type/levels and location were taken into account in order to make sure the sample could represent the real school conditions of the target population as much as possible.

Instruments. An *Interview Protocol* (see Appendix 4.4) was constructed from the research questions to facilitate the interviews. This tool was used only to guide the conversation to keep core issues addressed. All the questions were carefully formulated in open-ended format to avoid interviewees being led and to promote a non-threatening atmosphere and a lively discussion between the participants (Patton, 2002). Both the wording and ordering of the questions were contextually flexible.

Data collection. Before conducting the interviews, the researcher explained the research purpose and process, addressed the terms of confidentiality, and clarified the respective roles of informants and researcher. After the interviewees had given permission for the tape-recording of the interviews, semi-structured interviews (one to two hours) began. The issues covered and the main questions asked were decided prior to the interviews but the interview protocol did not necessarily determine the conduct of the conversations (see Drever, 1995). Depending on the reply of the informants, different follow-up questions were posed accordingly. This format allowed the researcher sufficient freedom to explore particular issues of concern whereas some degree of structure kept the core themes in focus so that the researcher was able to obtain comparable data across interviewees (Bogdan & Biklen, 1992).

As mentioned above, all the interviews were recorded with the consent of the informants. Meanwhile, a notebook was used as an alternative or used to record key words from the participant responses or any notable changes in facial expression and body language. After the interviews, all recordings were transcribed verbatim and then the transcripts were sent to the respondents for checking, amendments and additions as necessary. Once the transcripts were verified, they were used for coding and analysis.

Data Analysis

As Onwuegbuzie and Teddlie (2003) contended, the data analysis of mixed methods research represents a more comprehensive analytical technique that permits researchers to use the strengths of both quantitative and qualitative analysis techniques for certain purpose(s), such as triangulation, complementarity, development, initiation, and expansion. They further constructed a seven-stage model comprising data reduction, data display, data transformation, data correlation, data consolidation, data comparison, and data integration. Among these stages, data reduction, data display, data transformation, and data integration are generally applicable whereas data correlation, data consolidation, and data comparison are three parallel processes that can be used flexibly according to research purposes.

More recently, Bazeley has made a summary of the various strategies for integrating data:

- Intensive case analysis
 - Employment of the results from analysis of one form of data in approaching the analysis of another form of data (referred to by some as typology development)
 - Synthesis of data generated from a variety of sources, for further joint interpretation
 - Comparison of coded or thematic qualitative data across groups defined by categorical or scaled variables (matched, where possible, on an individual basis)
 - Pattern analysis using matrices
 - Conversion of qualitative to quantitative coding to allow for descriptive, inferential, or exploratory statistical analysis
 - Conversion of quantitative data into narrative form, usually for profiling
 - Creation of blended variables to facilitate further analysis
 - Extreme and negative case analysis
 - Inherently mixed data analysis, where a single source gives rise to both qualitative and quantitative information, such as in some forms of social network analysis
 - Often flexible, iterative analyses involving multiple, sequenced phases where the conduct of each phase arises out of or draws on the analysis of the preceding phase
- (2009, p. 205.)

This list largely reflects all the phases after data display in terms of Onwuegbuzie and Teddlie's model (2003). For example, the 'comparison of coded or thematic qualitative data across groups defined by categorical or scaled variables' is equal to the data comparison in the seven-step model; both 'conversion of qualitative to quantitative coding' and 'conversion of quantitative data into narrative form' belong to data transformation, and the 'creation of blended variables to facilitate further

analysis' essentially amounts to data consolidation. In this sense, these stages could be seen as closely related and can be integrated together.

The current study mainly aimed pragmatically to use quantitative and qualitative methods to achieve paradigmatic complementarities. Therefore, the pertinent components of Onwuegbuzie and Teddlie's model (2003) could be used to guide the data analysis. Since data reduction and display both focus on reducing different types of data, the two phases were combined together. The following stages are generally organised around how to integrate the different types of data. Thus, all these phases were combined into the data integration. In this way, the defining stages of mixed methods data analysis could be retained and enough flexibility could be obtained. More importantly, the two steps met the needs of the research questions. As explicated in the research design, the quantitative survey and qualitative interviews were conducted sequentially in order to answer the research questions. The quantitative and qualitative data did not join together until this stage. The sequence naturally implied the two phases of data analysis.

Consequently, the two broad steps, data reduction and data integration, were formulated to direct the process of data analysis in this study. To put it simply, the quantitative and qualitative data were analysed separately and then pooled together for further integration. Through this process, all three questions were answered, with the proper inferences emerging from the two forms of data analysis. Table 4.6 provides a summary of the data analysis and research questions. The following subsections explain the specific steps involved in the process.

Table 4.6 Summary of Data Analysis and Research Questions

Research Questions	Data Analysis				
	Reduction		Integration		
	Statistics	Coding	Transform	Inform	Combine
Q1. What	√	√	√	√	√
Q2. How	√	√	√	√	√
Q3. Why	√	√	√	√	√

Data Reduction

The first stage referred to 'reduction of whatever forms of data were gathered at the data collection stage' (Onwuegbuzie & Teddlie, 2003, p. 373) into appropriate and simplified 'gestalts or easily understood configurations' (Miles & Huberman, 1994, p. 11). In other words, the quantitative and qualitative data were reduced separately via respective analytic techniques.

Quantitative Data

To answer the research questions, the quantitative data were processed with two software packages, SPSS 15.0 and LISREL 8.7, according to standardised quantitative analytical procedures (Miller & Salkind, 2002; Onwuegbuzie & Teddlie, 2003). The numerical information emerging from the process was displayed in the form of tables and graphs, the usual way to display quantitative data (Mertens, 2005). Table 4.7 displays the statistical strategies used in the analysis of the numerical data. These statistical techniques are explained below.

Table 4.7 Summary of Statistical Operations

Research questions	Statistical operations	Functions
Validity & reliability of the Involvement scale	Cronbach's alphas (α) Exploratory factor analysis Confirmatory factor analysis	Internal consistency Construct validity
Q1 Generic practices	High-order factor analysis Descriptive analysis Cluster analysis Correlation analysis & full-model factor analysis	Confirm core leadership practices Describe specific practices Identify different groups Explore and confirm interrelationship
Q3 Contextual factors	Descriptive analysis	Describe & identify factors
Q3 Background variables X Involvement in core leadership practice & overall level of involvement	Correlation analysis Descriptive analysis t-test & ANOVA	Identify the relationship Describe background information Identify the relationship

Since the main survey involved the use of a questionnaire, the validity and reliability of the instruments needed to be assessed (Punch, 2005). As in the pilot study, the construct validity and internal consistency were estimated to evaluate the quality of the measure. Specifically, Cronbach's alphas were computed to measure the internal consistency of each latent construct.⁹⁴ EFA and CFA were used to validate the theoretical framework underlying the structure of the instrument, as the main survey was intended to identify and confirm the latent constructs of the measure. The EFA was conducted in SPSS 15.0 and CFA was run in LISREL 8.7. Both of them are widely used for conducting EFA and CFA in social science research (Punch, 2005; Hau, Wen, & Cheng, 2004). Particularly, the CFA process involved two functional

⁹⁴ See Data Analysis in the pilot study.

models developed from the original simple model. They were the high-order model and the full model. The factors emerging from these models signified and validated the generic constructs of the core leadership practices of the sampled Chinese principals. In this process, the following statistical methods were used for further analysis.

Descriptive statistics are universally used to 'describe or indicate several characteristic common to the entire sample' (Mertens, 2005, p. 402), involving mean, standard deviation, frequency distributions, etc. (Punch, 2005). With SPSS 15.0, descriptive statistics were run to display the characteristics of the sample, the extent of the importance and involvement of the core practices and the respondents' perceptions of the degree of the influence of the contextual factors on these practices.

Correlation coefficient is an indicator of the relationship between two variables (Muijs, 2004). It varies with the kind of variable used. In this study, the manifest variables could be generally treated as continuous variables,⁹⁵ which 'vary in degree, level or quantity rather than categories'⁹⁶ (Punch, 2005, p. 86). In this study, different variables were related to identify the relationship between them through this operation. For two continuous variables, the correlation coefficient is Pearson's r , which can be calculated with SPSS. The criteria for the strength of the relationship are as follows: $<0./-1$ – weak, $<0./-3$ – modest, $<0./-5$ – moderate, $<0./-8$ – strong, $\geq +/-0.8$ – very strong (Muijs, 2004).

Cluster analysis is a method used to classify data objects into mutually exclusive unknown groups based only on information found in the data that describes the objects and their relationships. The goal is that the objects within a group are similar to one another and different from the objects in other groups. The technique is often used to discover a system of organising observations, usually people, into groups (see Stockburger, 1998). For this study, this method was used to discover the potential groups according to the reported extent of principal involvement in the six core leadership practices.

T-test and ANOVA. The t-test is designed to test the difference between means of a continuous variable between two groups. Analysis of variance (ANOVA) is a

⁹⁵ According to a more stringent criterion, rating scale points to ordinal variables (i.e., Muijs, 2004).

⁹⁶ I.e. discrete variables, categorical variables, discontinuous or nominal variables, such as gender, school type.

method used to compare the mean score of a continuous variable or an ordinal variable with many scale points between a number of groups (Muijs, 2004; Punch, 2005). The independent variable has to be nominal or ordinal. Both of them can be easily calculated in SPSS and a cut-off point of <0.05 is usually used as a rule of thumb to determine whether or not the relationship is significant (Muijs, 2004). In the study, the two tests were used to find out the effects of different background variables on the principals' involvement in the core leadership practices.

Multiple linear regression (MLR) is used to look at 'the relationship between one dependent variable and one or more predictors' (Muijs, 2004, p. 160). This method is developed for use in non-experimental research and aims to relate different variables. It requires the dependent variable to be continuous whereas the predictor variables can be continuous, ordinal, or nominal.⁹⁷ MLR was performed in SPSS 15.0 to detect the relationships between involvement in the individual core leadership practices and the overall level of involvement. The process generated several important indicators, adjusted R square, b, and beta. The adjusted R square indicates how well a model is likely to fit with the population (Muijs, 2004). There is a rough guide: <0.1 – poor fit, $0.11-0.3$ – modest fit, $0.31-0.5$ – moderate fit, and >0.5 – strong fit. The b coefficient indicates the value that dependent variables will change by if the independent variable changes by one unit. The beta is a standardised coefficient for effect comparison, varying between zero and one, the strongest effect.

Qualitative Data

In this study, the collected qualitative data were analysed to help with in-depth understanding of the core leadership practices and the relationship between these practices and the contextual factors. The analysis process 'occurs throughout the data collection process' (Mertens, 2005, pp. 420-421). Owing to the diverse methods for analysing social life, different techniques can be used to analyse qualitative data (Punch, 2005). Among these methods, the best one needs 'to be systematic, disciplined and able to be seen (and to be seen through, as in "transparent") and described' (Punch, 1998, p. 195). Given this requirement, the study borrowed three coding tools commonly associated with the grounded theory analysis tradition. The decision was made because they are well-established and systematic coding

⁹⁷ In regression analysis, nominal or discrete variables, which express group membership or categories, need to be transformed into binary or dummy variables (Hardy, 1993; Muijs, 2004; Punch, 2005).

strategies that help to ensure standardisation and rigour in the process of qualitative data analysis. During the process, the researcher used the qualitative data analysis software, NVIVO 8.7, to conduct the analysis.

The typical strategy in grounded theory analytic process involves three coding steps: open coding, axial coding, and selective coding (Mertens, 2005; Punch, 2005; Strauss & Corbin, 1990). The initial coding is typically descriptive and of low inference, whereas the latter codings integrate data by using higher-order concepts. The first open coding pertains to 'the naming and categorizing of phenomena through close examination of data' (Strauss & Corbin, 1990, p. 62). The process is to identify categories of data and their related properties and dimensions (Punch, 2005; Mertens, 2005). Operationally, the researcher separated interview transcripts into discrete parts, compared them for similarities and differences, and gave each part a label that stood for a specific theme. The codes were identified through looking for repetitions and words or phrases that carried special meanings for the participants, and then the related concepts were grouped into categories. As Strauss and Corbin (1998) recommended, the open codes and memos were written on the side of the transcripts and all the emerging concepts or categories were regarded as provisional.

The following axial coding is a process in which fractured data obtained through open coding are put back together 'in new ways by making connections between the category and its sub-categories' (Strauss & Corbin, 1990, p. 97). This step aims to relate a main category with properties, dimensions and minor affiliated categories with a theoretical memo (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). In this study, axial coding was used to make connections among the different categories of the contextual factors to find patterns, consistency and/or inconsistency among them. At the same time, it contained 'constant interplay between proposing and checking' (Strauss & Corbin, 1990, p. 111). *

Finally, the selective coding was utilised to select the core category, systematically relate it to other categories, validate those relationships, and fill in categories that needed further refinement and development (see Strauss & Corbin, 1990). The objective of this coding phase was to integrate and pull together the developing analysis. The coding techniques were the same as those in the earlier coding steps, but at a higher level of abstraction (see Strauss & Corbin, 1990; Mertens, 2005;

Punch, 2005). All the qualitative information involved was presented with suitable formats selected from variform qualitative data displays, such as 'matrices, charts, graphs, networks, lists, rubrics, and Venn diagrams' (Mertens, 2005, p. 373).

Data integration

Data integration took place after the two types of data were individually processed. This process was used to generate sounder understanding of the leadership practices identified in the study. In this stage, different kinds of data were 'integrated into a coherent whole or two separate sets of coherent wholes' (Onwuegbuzie & Teddlie, 2003, p. 377). According to the strategies listed by Bazeley (2009), this study adopted three strategies to integrate different forms of data. Through this process, quantitative and qualitative data were pulled together to generate a more complete picture of how Chinese school principals lead their schools under a variety of contextual influences.

First, data transformation were utilised to facilitate further processing (Onwuegbuzie & Teddlie, 2003). This strategy involved qualitisng quantitative data and/or quantitising qualitative data (Onwuegbuzie & Teddlie, 2003). For quantitative data, factor analysis was used to generate descriptive themes or dimensions from numerical information (Onwuegbuzie, 2001; Onwuegbuzie & Teddlie, 2003), owing to the natural function of this technique, as stated earlier. For the qualitative data, the researcher adopted a common strategy of counting emerging themes or calculating the frequency of categories (Onwuegbuzie & Teddlie, 2003; Tashakkori & Teddlie, 1998). Second, the sequence of data collection implied that a typology development strategy was applicable. In the study, the dimensions emerging from the preceding quantitative data were used to help code the qualitative data. Third, the different types of data were combined in order to generate a more complete picture of the relevant issues (Onwuegbuzie & Teddlie, 2003). The combination was relevant to the core leadership practices of the sampled school principals and the contextual factors identified in the prior analysis.

Quality of Mixed Methods Research

In terms of research quality, quantitative and qualitative methods have their own criteria, such as the internal and external validity of quantitative research, and the credibility and transferability of qualitative research. As the mixed methods research integrates the two approaches, the quality criteria of the mixed methods research

need to be a set of bilaterally applicable terms. Combining the divergent nomenclatures, Teddlie and Tashakkori (2003) developed a set of indicative terms for mixed methods research, involving data quality, inference quality, and inference transferability. These terms transcend the quantitative and qualitative orientations, offering a common nomenclature to denote the quality of mixed methods research. Therefore, this study employed these double-edged concepts to discuss the research quality.

Data quality indicates the extent to which the data are regarded as 'acceptable/trustworthy' or adequate to represent the 'theoretical phenomena or the attributes under study' (Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2003, p. 694). The term describes the validity, trustworthiness, reliability and dependability of the research. Thus, research must be conducted under certain established procedures in terms of both quantitative and qualitative research paradigms.

This study was designed to mix sequentially the questionnaire survey and in-depth interviews with consistent concentration on the research questions. This ensured 'consistency within aspects of the same measure or observation' and 'consistency between different procedures for measurement or observation of the same phenomenon' (Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2003, p. 694). The prolonged engagement of the researcher with the respondents through multiple data collection approaches provided an opportunity for data triangulation (Patton, 2002; Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2003). Furthermore, the study carefully observed the principles of conducting quantitative and qualitative research and preserved a record of the questionnaire development, interview protocol and audio records, field notes, and coding notes to achieve an 'audit trail'; all are recommended for strengthening the reliability of the data (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 319).

Inference quality indicates the accuracy with which conclusions have been drawn from a study (Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2003), i.e. 'whether the inferences meet the minimum criteria to be defensible/credible' (p. 694). The concept essentially amounts to the internal validation of quantitative research and the credibility of qualitative probes, involving two components: design quality and interpretative rigour. The former concerns the quality and rigour of the procedures implemented and the consistency within the design and the latter refers to the defensibility of the

results or findings interpreted from the data (Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2003). The criteria integrate the standards of evaluating quantitative and qualitative research.

With regard to the current study, the quantitative survey strictly observed the principles of quantitative research in sampling, data collection, and statistic analysis. The audit trail process, data collection triangulation, and the researcher's prolonged engagement particularly helped to improve the inference quality (Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2003). Moreover, 'peer debriefing' and 'thick description' are also acknowledged as good strategies for improving inference quality (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Tashakkori & Teddlie, 1998; Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2003). Accordingly, the researcher invited the participants and bilingual colleagues to review the interview transcripts and interpretations, and a description of the context in which the inferences were made was clearly presented in the research process (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

Finally, Teddlie and Tashakkori (2003) consider inference transferability as an umbrella term that refers to the quantitative term 'external validity' and the qualitative term 'transferability'. The concept is used to determine 'whether the conclusions may be extrapolated beyond the particular conditions of a specific study' (Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2003, p. 37). The external validity of quantitative research relates to population, setting, and time, whereas the transferability of qualitative research refers to the transferability of the results from the sending context to the receiving context (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

In this study, the questionnaire survey was planned according to the quantitative research principles in terms of instrument development, pretesting requirement, sampling (techniques and size), data collection procedures, and statistical analysis techniques. These considerations helped to ensure the inference transferability of the quantitative research findings. For the qualitative interviews, the thick description of the context was used to enhance the transferability of the inferences as Lincoln and Guba (1985) suggested.

Ethical Considerations

The study involved participants' personal views so that voluntariness, privacy, and confidentiality were important ethical considerations. Great efforts were made to

obtain informed consent from the participants and protect their privacy and the information they supplied.

Before the pilot and main studies, an invitation (Appendix 4.2) was sent to each potential participant in which there was an assurance that all of their identifying information (such as names of institutions or people) would be protected. The participants were also informed that their participation in this research was voluntary and did not relate to any performance evaluation. All participants could withdraw from the study at any time without penalty and avoid answering questions to which they did not want to respond. Each of them would receive a copy of their interview transcript and would have an opportunity to make comments or corrections.

The data were collected directly by the researcher. All personal information was only accessed by the researcher, who did not disclose any information that was prejudicial or disadvantageous to the participants. In the stages of data analysis and data presentation, the identity of each informant was allocated a pseudonym with an English letter. Consequently, no individual or workplace could be identified by name or description in the dissertation.

In addition, the cultural and social backgrounds of the participants were also taken into consideration. The participants consisted of the principals and the staff working in the selected secondary schools in the four Chinese cities. Their perceptions of leadership were deeply influenced by Chinese societal culture and the local context. The researcher respected their dignity, self-esteem, values, ideas, and concerns and endeavoured to understand their viewpoints in a non-threatening and unassuming way. With these considerations in mind, the researcher conducted the mixed methods research as described above. The collected data were analysed via the methods stated in this chapter.

Chapter 5 Analysis of the Quantitative Data

As designed, this study was based on both quantitative and qualitative data collected through the mixed methods research approach. The quantitative data were analysed *via* the relevant statistical techniques in SPSS 15.0. This chapter presents the analysis process of the qualitative data in five sections. The first section gives a brief description of the profile of the respondents. In the second section, the validity and reliability of the questionnaire used in the survey were established through two-step factor analysis and internal consistency assessment. The third and fourth sections present the major findings of the qualitative investigation, including the core leadership practices and the relevant contextual factors emerging from the analysis. The last section summarises the contents of this chapter.

Outline of the Respondents

Through the survey, a total of 572 responses were collected from the participants. Among them, 408 (71.33%) respondents provided valid data. The valid data were sorted out and prepared for the statistic analysis⁹⁸. Table 5.1 presents a summary of the demographic characteristics of the participants who provided valid responses.

Table 5.1 Background Information of the Respondents

	Frequency	Percent
<u>Gender</u>		
Male	140	34.3%
Female	257	63%
Missing	11	2.7%
<u>Age</u>		
20-25	26	6.4%
26-30	101	24.8%
31-35	82	20.1%
36-40	72	17.6%
41-45	70	17.6%
46-50	27	6.6%
51-55	16	3.9%
56-60	10	2.5%
Missing	4	1%
<u>Years of Teaching</u>		
<5	61	15%
5-10	118	28.9%
11-15	81	19.9%

⁹⁸ In the questionnaire, respondents were asked to provide specific information about years of teaching, years of being the principal in the present school and in other schools and the number of these schools, as well as times of professional training in 2009 and the numbers of vice principals, students, and teachers of the present school. To better present the information, the researcher transformed the original continuous data into interval data in SPSS 15.0.

16-20	62	15.2%
21-25	41	10%
26-30	19	4.7%
31-35	8	2%
36-40	16	3.9%
>40	1	0.2%
Missing	1	0.2%
<u>Highest Academic Degree Obtained</u>		
Associate Degrees	23	5.64%
Bachelor Degrees	338	82.84%
Master's Degrees	37	9.07%
Doctor's Degrees	2	0.49%
Missing	8	1.96%
<u>Present position</u>		
Teacher/ Administrative/Supportive Staff	317	77.7%
Leader of teaching & research unit/the grade	29	7.1%
Director of teaching & discipline/general affairs	16	3.9%
Vice principal/Deputy Secretary of General Party Branch	10	2.5%
Principal/Secretary of General Party Branch	16	3.9%
Missing	20	4.9%
Total	408	100%

In light of the summary, majority of the participants were female and in their thirties or forties. Most of these educational practitioners had a bachelor degree or above and had worked for no less than five years in schools. The average years of teaching were more than thirteen (13.62). Some of them had been teaching for more twenty years. Most participants (75.49%) indicated that they had taken part in professional training activities or programs at least once in 2009. The average times of profession training in the last year was nearly six times (5.96). Some participants (73 out of 408) indicated that they had participated in the professional training more than ten times in the last year. All the participants were working in secondary schools located in Beijing (221, 54.2%), Guangzhou (96, 23.5%), Zhengzhou (46, 11.3%) and Shenyang (45, 11%).

Moreover, the information about the schools in which these respondents work was collected in the survey. Table 5.2 shows a summary of certain organisational conditions of the schools. Majority of the participants came from non-exemplary schools. More than half worked in comprehensive secondary schools⁹⁹ and in cities.

⁹⁹-There are three major types of public secondary schools in China: junior, senior and comprehensive secondary schools. The comprehensive secondary schools provide both senior and junior secondary education. Some of them also include primary education.

In most of the schools, the number of vice principals was less than three. There was only one comprehensive secondary school which had eight vice principals.

Table 5.2 School Information¹⁰⁰

	Frequency	Percent		Frequency	Percent
<u>School status</u>			<u>No. of students</u>		
Non-exemplary school	310	76%	<500	14	3.4%
Exemplary school	98	24%	500-999	141	34.6%
<u>Schooling type</u>			1000-1499	82	20.1%
JSS	91	22.3%	1500-1999	30	7.4%
SSS	97	23.8%	2000-2499	4	1%
CSS	220	53.9%	2500-2999	38	9.3%
<u>Location</u>			≥3000	97	23.8%
Rural areas	24	5.9%	Missing	2	0.5%
Suburban areas	142	34.8%			
Urban areas	242	59.3%	<u>No. of VPs</u>		
<u>No. of teachers</u>			1	102	25%
0-99	73	17.9%	2	102	25%
100-199	231	56.6%	3	166	40.7%
200-299	18	4.4%	4	24	5.9%
300-399	37	9.1%	5	12	2.9%
400-499	47	11.5%	8	1	0.2%
Total	406	99.5%	Missing	1	0.2%
Missing	2	0.5%			
Total	408	100	Total	408	100

With a brief understanding of the respondents, the following sections focus on the reliability and validity of the instrument used in the survey and the findings emerging from the quantitative data analysis.

Validity and Reliability of the Questionnaire

The survey was conducted with the questionnaire pretested in the pilot study as elaborated in Chapter Four. The main scale of the questionnaire was the 'Involvement in specific leadership practices'. Based on the feedback gotten from the participants in the pilot study, several new items were added to the original scale in light of the relevant literature (see Chapter 4). Therefore, the validity and reliability of the revised scale needed to be reexamined. This process also aimed to refine the instrument because the questionnaire had been roughly examined only once in the pilot study. Consequently, the valid data were used to estimate the reliability and validity of the scale.

¹⁰⁰ JSS= junior secondary school, SSS=senior secondary schools, CSS=comprehensive secondary school, VP=vice principal.

Before these statistic operations, missing data had to be treated in a proper way. Many methods have been developed to handle missing data. Among various methods, listwise deletion, pairwise deletion, and mean substitution¹⁰¹ are three traditional techniques that are commonly employed and easily implemented in quantitative data analysis. But these methods have to be used conditionally and might lead to biased estimation and thus they are not highly recommended in light of the recent literature (see Davey & Savla, 2010; Graham *et al*, 2003). Instead, several modern approaches, such as Multiple Imputation (MI), Expectation Maximization (EM) and Full Information Maximisation Likelihood (FIML), have been developed as better ways to deal with missing data (see Davey & Savla, 2010; Graham *et al*, 2003).

As far as this study was concerned, there were 128 (31.37%) cases with missing entries in the valid dataset. Using the listwise deletion would cause a great loss of information. Besides, all items of the main scale were expected to be correlated with each other. These suggested a more sophisticated method to process the missing entries. For this purpose, EM was adopted in the analysis in that the method is able to make use of information from all cases and correct bias in parameter estimates (Davey & Savla, 2010). Additionally, it's easy to conduct the operation in SPSS 15.0. Thus, all missing values in the valid dataset were treated through EM before the other statistical operations.

Validity of the Main Scale

As shown above, the questionnaire was administered to different groups of practitioners working in different types of secondary schools in China. The participants included teachers, middle management, and school principals. Therefore, the responses to the Involvement scale actually reflected their perceptions of how often their school leaders engage in the leadership practices listed in the scale.

The questionnaire mainly consisted of three scales: Importance of general practices, Involvement in specific leadership practices, and Influence of contextual factors. The validity of each scale was considered in line with their major functions. The first scale, Importance of General Practices, was directly built upon the structure of the Involvement scale. The seven items included in the scale targeted the broad

¹⁰¹ In the method of listwise deletion, an entire record is excluded from analysis if any single value is missing. For the pairwise deletion, the cases will be excluded from any calculations involving variables for which they have missing data. Mean substitution is to replace all missing data in a variable by the mean of that variable. (see Davey & Savla, 2010)

dimensions of the principal leadership practices identified in the pilot study. It mainly aimed to confirm the importance of these generic leadership practices. Thus, the validity of this part was actually based on the validity of the main scale of this questionnaire.

The final scale, Influence of contextual factors, was formed mainly to collect general information about the potential contextual factors relevant to school principalship in China. Each item included in this part was a general description of the contextual factor emerging from the literature. For example, the first item was 'Principal personality traits', a broad statement without pointing to any specific personalities. Thus, data gathered with this scale were largely used to generate a broad picture of the influencing factors within the specific context of Chinese schools. In this sense, the author mainly focused on the reliability of this part.

As the main body of this instrument, the Involvement scale was structured upon the research framework and designed to measure the extent to which Chinese principals engage in these leadership practices. The validity of this scale was established through the two-step factor analysis as stated in Chapter Four. First, an exploratory factor analysis (EFA) was implemented in SPSS 15.0 to explore the potential constructs. Second, a confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was conducted in LISREL 8.7 to validate the structure identified in the first step.

For the operation, the valid data were randomly split into two halves as suggested by Byrne (1998). One half was used in the process of EFA and the following CFA was applied to the other half. Each case was given a number. Then, the dataset was split into two equal groups: cases with even numbers and cases with uneven numbers. The resultant size of the split set was considered to be justifiable given the total sample size (Gorsuch, 1983; Hau, Wen & Cheng, 2004; Norušis, 2007).

Exploratory factor analysis

First, the cases with even numbers were used for the exploratory factor analysis. In this process, Principal Components method was used to extract underlying factors with a Varimax approach to rotation. The operation was driven by the rule of thumb that there are as many factors as there are eigenvalues equal to or greater than 1.0. The results involved a correlation matrix of the items, KMO Measure of Sampling Adequacy, and Bartlett's Test of Sphericity. A screen plot was included to help the

researcher identify the proper number of potential constructs. Items with factor loadings lower than 0.35 were suppressed.

Consequently, an initial ten-factor solution was generated as shown in Appendix 5.1. The KMO value (0.941) was desirable and the Bartlett's test results ($\chi^2=12201.865$, $df=2145$, $P=0$) confirmed the applicability of EFA. These ten factors explained 70.974% of the total variance. However, some factors (e.g., Factor 1 & 2) involved too many items while some others only had one or two items (e.g., Factor 9 & 10). Three items fell under two or three factors with nearly equal factor loadings (i.e., *awarding the opportunity of professional development to the staff with outstanding performance*, *rewarding staff on the basis of their performances*, and *encouraging teachers to develop school-based professional programs*). There was one factor which pulled two naturally unconnected items together and thus couldn't make sense (i.e., *forming a hierarchical and obedient climate within school* and *keeping a good personal relationship with officials in charge of local educational administration*). These suggested that the ten-factor structure needed to be refined and a better solution might result from the deletion of these confusing items.

Accordingly, a second nine-factor solution was attained through the same EFA operation without the aforesaid five items. In this solution, one item had a relatively large loading cross two factors (i.e., *encouraging healthy competition*) and another one formed a factor by itself (i.e., *trusting teachers' capability of teaching and delegating power to teachers regarding class teaching*). In order to refine the structure, these two items were excluded in a third EFA operation.

This process led to an eight-factor solution as shown in Table 5.3. These eight factors could explain 69.448% of total variance. Each of them could be labeled in light of the items with a larger loading. Accordingly, the first factor was labeled as building school climate. Factor Two could be regarded as managing administrative affairs. The following three factors respectively referred to the practices of establishing authority, developing external relationships/*guanxi*, and setting direction. Factor Six pointed to developing people and the seventh factor was composed of the practices aiming to manage teaching and learning. The last factor signified the practice of seeking resources.

Table 5.3 The Eight-factor Solution for the Involvement Scale in EFA

Items	Factors
-------	---------

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
Maintaining a harmonious interpersonal relationship and climate within school.	0.711							
Playing an exemplary role in all respects.	0.696							
Exhibiting high morals and dedication to school education.	0.68							
Considering teachers' and students' needs while implementing instruction and curriculum reforms.	0.678							
Encouraging other school members to participate in decision-making.	0.659							
Supporting all staff to participate in professional development activities.	0.658							
Creating a supportive environment.	0.648							
Advocating a moral-based school culture.	0.633			0.363				
Considering different needs of the staff in terms of professional development.	0.63	0.392						
Sharing personal professional experience with colleagues.	0.624							
Encouraging group work within school.	0.602			0.443				
Actively taking part in principal professional development activities.	0.588							
Building effective channels to facilitate communication between school members.	0.583							
Centring on teaching and learning in school to protect teachers' teaching from distraction.	0.58							
Consulting with School Union on major decisions.		0.721						
Improving staff welfare and working conditions.	0.387	0.688						
Considering individual needs of different staff to motivate them to work hard.	0.378	0.676						
Leading school through collective management and decision-making.	0.384	0.673						
Involving teachers when making policies concerning school instruction and curriculum.		0.667				0.397		
Disciplining subordinates with a human-orientation.	0.445	0.662						
Consulting with Teacher Congress on major decisions.	0.382	0.66						
Consulting with parents on school instruction and curriculum.		0.654						
Consulting with the Party Branch on major decisions.		0.631		0.365				
Making decisions in a participative way.	0.365	0.627						
Sharing leadership power through delegating subordinates.		0.612						
Providing sufficient resources for school instruction and curriculum development.	0.427	0.549						
Leading innovations in school instruction and curriculum.	0.406	0.499				0.375		
Reinforcing the hierarchical administrative structure.		0.473						0.423
Restricting the discussion within the options set by the principal and rejecting other's ideas or critiques in decision-making.				0.893				
Making all decisions authoritatively in school administration.				0.867				
Excluding critical staff from decision-making and discussion.				0.866				
Making and implementing school instruction and curriculum policies from top to down, without consulting with teachers.				0.784				
Determining whether a staff can participate in professional development and the type of training				0.746				

programs from top to down, without listen to staff's voices.				
Determining school goals and plans dictatorially.			0.587	
Publicising school major developments and achievements.			0.730	
Establishing and maintaining school image and reputation.	0.361		0.643	
Prioritising the implementation of superiors' educational policies and tasks.			0.627	
Paying attention to current and emerging educational policies to assess the external environment.		0.385	0.600	
Keeping a good work relationship with local educational authorities and the concerned officials.		0.351	0.589	
Coordinating various public relationships to promote school development.		0.398	0.531	
Setting a shared goal for school development.			0.656	
Involving other school members in designing the goal.			0.649	
Involving other school members in school planning.			0.629	
Explicitly setting goals for student academic achievement.		0.37	0.577	0.367
Advocating a moral-based goal of school development.		0.471	0.522	
Assessing strengths and weaknesses of the school.		0.37	0.509	
Setting priorities for different school plans and objectives.		0.386	0.448	
Delegating front-line teachers to design school-based curriculum.				0.56
Promoting ordinary staff's and teachers' awareness and capability of participating in school leadership and administration in profession development.		0.47	0.427	0.548
Establishing a hierarchical professional development system.			0.356	0.548
Supporting teachers' bottom-up innovations.			0.368	0.54
Promoting middle and above management's awareness and capability of participating in school leadership and administration in profession development.		0.4	0.404	0.507
Assessing teaching effects and learning progress against student test scores.				0.682
Setting specific standards and expectations for teaching and learning.				0.638
Stressing the tasks and standards of school teaching and learning.				0.637
Focusing on the change of students' exam performance.			0.441	0.594
Getting extra resources through the connections of students' parents.				0.808
Getting extra resources from social organisations and individuals.				0.772
Applying for government funds to support school development and construction.		0.358	0.409	0.473
Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy (0.943)				
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity: Chi-Square=10842.138 (df=1711, P=0)				

Confirmatory factor analysis

Then, the structure identified in the exploratory factor analysis was retested through confirmatory factor analysis with the other half of the dataset (i.e., the cases with

uneven numbers). All factors were allowed to freely correlate. The fitness of the model was assessed using traditional Minimum Fit Function Chi-Square (χ^2), Degree of Freedom (df), Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA), Non-Normed Fit Index (NNFI), and Comparative Fit Index (CFI). According to Byrne (1998) and Hau, Wen, and Cheng (2004), a good model has to meet the following requirements: low χ^2 and high df or a small ratio of χ^2 to df (about 2.00-3.00), a small RMSEA value (less than 0.08, a value below 0.05 is better), and a large value in terms of NNFI and CFI (over 0.9).

In course of the confirmatory factor analysis, a series of models were developed from the initial eight-factor model (i.e., M0). Table 5.4 displays the parameter estimates of these models. The process of modification was further explained.

Table 5.4 Fit Statistics of CFA Models

Models	df	χ^2	RMSEA	NNFI	CFI	Notes
M0	1624	3425.1(P = 0.0)	0.079	0.97	0.97	The eight-factor model from EFA
M1	1624	3413.30(P=0.0)	0.083	0.97	0.97	Adjusting M0 according to the designed structure of the scale
M2	1511	3140.85(P=0.0)	0.080	0.97	0.97	Excluding two items from M1
M3	1511	3112.64(P=0.0)	0.074	0.97	0.97	M2 with the calibration dataset
M4	1511	3992.22(P=0.0)	0.073	0.98	0.98	M2 with the full dataset
M5	1120	3229.21(P=0.0)	0.079	0.98	0.98	A high-order model developed from M4 by deleting two factors

The initial model (M0) confirmed the eight-factor solution emerging from the exploratory factor analysis with the validation dataset. However, this model was slightly different with the designed structure of the scale presented in Chapter Four, particular regarding the factor of managing administrative affairs. Four items originally belonging to the practice of developing instruction and curriculum fell under these two dimensions. For example, the item, *leading innovations in school instruction and curriculum*, was designed to embody the practice of developing school instruction and curriculum. In this model, it was integrated with a number of practices concerning school internal administration with a comparatively small factor loading. This seemed inconsistent with the meaning of the statement *per se*. That's also the case for the other three items. At the same time, the modification indices suggested that it would be much better to put the item of *applying for government funds to support school development and construction* under the factor of developing external relationships rather than the dimension of seeking resources.

Given that the CFA process was used to test the structure of the scale, M1 was developed through modifying M0 in light of the designed structure of the scale and the relevant modification indices. As a result, the four items mentioned above were relocated into the factor of managing teaching and learning. These were *providing sufficient resources for school instruction and curriculum development, leading innovations in school instruction and curriculum, involving teachers when making policies concerning school instruction and curriculum, and consulting with parents on school instruction and curriculum*. Meanwhile, the item of *applying for government funds to support school development and construction* was replaced under the factor of developing external relationships as the modification indices suggested.

But the fit statistic of M1 turned slightly worse as displayed in the table above. The modification indices implied that the model would be better when two items were excluded. These were *reinforcing the hierarchical administrative structure and assessing teaching effects and learning progress against student test scores*. Both of them had a relatively small factor loading but a large value of measurement error, especially the latter¹⁰². This suggested that the variance of the two indicators might be largely caused by the measurement error rather than the related latent constructs. In other words, these two indicators didn't fit in with the structure of M1 well and thus were deleted.

The deletion led to the following M2. This model generally met the foresaid criteria used to evaluate the fitness of CFA models. Then, the structure was verified with the calibration dataset (i.e., M3) and finally validated with the full dataset (i.e., M4). Consequently, the Involvement scale could be seen as composed of these eight dimensions. According to the specific items under each factor in M4, the eight dimensions could be relabeled as shown in Table 5.5.

Table 5.5 The Eight-factor Model

Factors	Items	Loading
Setting direction (SD)	4. Involving other school members in school planning.	0.81
	2. Involving other school members in designing the goal.	0.79
	6. Assessing strengths and weaknesses of the school.	0.78
	5. Setting priorities for different school plans and objectives.	0.77
	1. Setting a shared goal for school development.	0.73
	3. Explicitly setting goals for student academic achievement.	0.7

¹⁰² The factor loading and measurement error of the two indicators were respectively 0.26 and 0.93, and 0.46 and 0.79.

	7. Advocating a moral-based goal of school development.	0.67
Shaping school climate (SSC)	24. Considering different staff's needs of professional development.	0.84
	18. Playing an exemplary role in all respects.	0.83
	19. Maintaining a harmonious interpersonal relationship and climate within school.	0.82
	14. Considering teachers' and students' needs while implementing instruction and curriculum reforms.	0.81
	15. Encouraging group work within school.	0.8
	17. Exhibiting high morals and dedication to school education.	0.8
	16. Advocating a moral-based school culture.	0.79
	11. Creating a supportive environment.	0.77
	9. Building effective channels to facilitate communication between school members.	0.77
	10. Encouraging other school members to participate in decision-making.	0.77
	23. Sharing personal professional experience with colleagues.	0.73
	21. Supporting all staff to participate in professional development activities.	0.72
	22. Actively taking part in principal professional development activities.	0.67
	12. Centring on teaching and learning in school to protect teachers' teaching from distraction.	0.66
Developing people (DP)	28. Promoting ordinary staff and teachers' awareness and capability of participating in school leadership and administration in profession development.	0.87
	29. Promoting middle and above management's awareness and capability of participating in school leadership and administration in profession development.	0.83
	27. Supporting teachers' bottom-up innovations.	0.81
	26. Delegating front-line teachers to design school-based curriculum.	0.75
	31. Establishing a hierarchical professional development system.	0.7
Managing instruction & curriculum (MIC)	35. Leading innovations in school instruction and curriculum.	0.85
	34. Providing sufficient resources for school instruction and curriculum development.	0.82
	36. Involving teachers in policy-making in terms of school instruction and curriculum.	0.77
	37. Consulting with parents on school instruction and curriculum.	0.73
	39. Stressing the tasks and standards of school teaching and learning.	0.62
	38. Setting specific standards and expectations for teaching and learning.	0.6
Managing administrative affairs (MAA)	40. Focusing on the change of students' exam performance.	0.55
	45. Leading school through collective management and decision-making.	0.87
	44. Making decisions in a participative way.	0.84
	47. Consulting with School Union on major decisions.	0.84
	48. Consulting with Teacher Congress on major decisions.	0.83
	51. Disciplining subordinates with a human-orientation.	0.82
	52. Improving staff welfare and working conditions.	0.8
43. Considering individual needs of different staff to motivate them to work hard.	0.77	
Developing	46. Consulting with the Party Branch on important decisions.	0.75
	49. Sharing leadership power through delegating subordinates.	0.72
Developing	59. Paying attention to current and emerging educational policies	0.84

external relationships (DER)	to assess the external environment.	
	61. Coordinating various public relationships to promote school development.	0.83
	58. Publicising school major developments and achievements.	0.79
	57. Establishing and maintaining school image and reputation.	0.75
	62. Keeping a good work relationship with local educational authorities and the concerned officials.	0.73
	64. Applying for government funds to support school development and construction.	0.61
Seeking extra resources (SER)	60. Prioritising the implementation of superiors' educational policies and tasks.	0.49
	65. Getting extra resources from social organisations and individuals.	0.88
Establishing authority (EA) (reverse)	66. Getting extra resources through the connections of students' parents.	0.8
	54. Making all decisions authoritatively in school administration.	0.88
	55. Restricting the discussion within the options set by the principal and rejecting other's ideas or critiques in decision-making.	0.85
	56. Excluding critical staff from decision-making and discussion.	0.81
	42. Making and implementing school instruction and curriculum policies from top to down, without consulting with teachers.	0.78
	32. Determining whether a staff can participate in professional development and the type of training programs from top to down, without listen to staff's voices.	0.71
	8. Determining school goals and plans dictatorially.	0.63

Among the eight factors, six dimensions were highly correlated with each other, which suggested that they might compose a high-order construct (see Hau, Wen & Cheng, 2004). The correlation matrix is displayed below. As the table shows, except two factors, seeking extra resources and establishing authority, there was a strong interrelationship among the other six factors.

Table 5.6 The Correlation Matrix in M4

	SD	SSC	DP	MAA	MIC	DER	SER	EA
SD	1							
SSC	0.87	1						
DP	0.78	0.87	1					
MAA	0.75	0.87	0.84	1				
MIC	0.81	0.85	0.89	0.86	1			
DER	0.74	0.77	0.72	0.73	0.79	1		
SER	0.28	0.26	0.36	0.35	0.35	0.37	1	
EA	0.38	0.48	0.36	0.45	0.3	0.3	-0.19	1

With this understanding, a high-order model (i.e., M5) was tried through integrating the six correlated factors (i.e., first-order factors) into a high-order factor. The fit statistics listed above confirmed that there was a high-order factor synthesising the six general dimensions of principal leadership practices. Combined with the descriptive inferences presented in the following section, the high-order factor could

be label as 'core leadership practice (CLP)'. Figure 5.1 illustrates the structure of the high-order model.

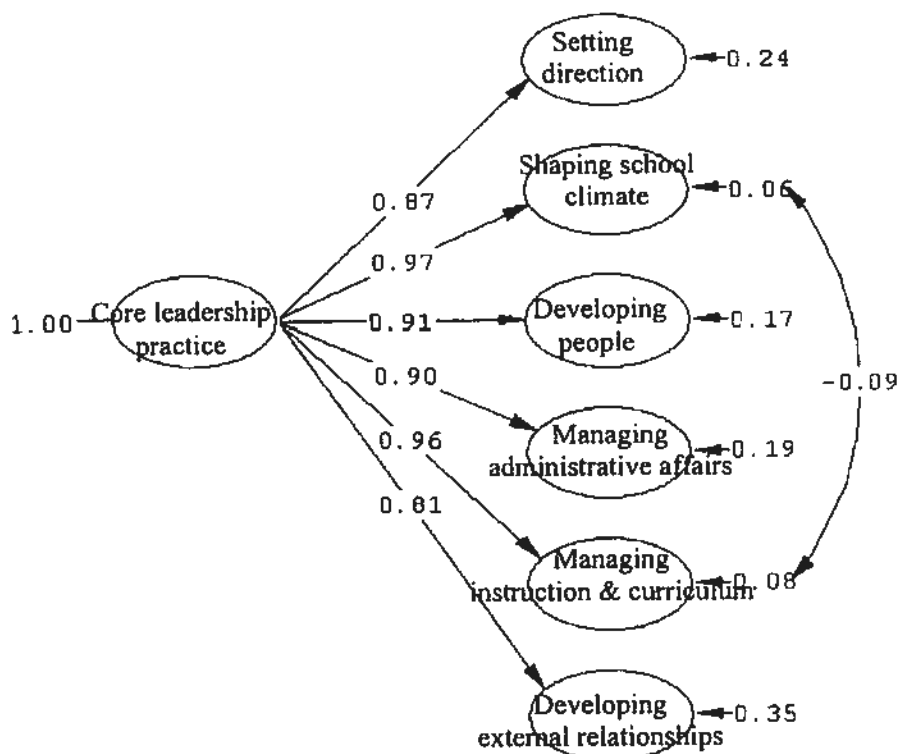


Figure 5.1 The Structure of the High-order Model (M5)

Reliability of the Instrument

The structure of the Involvement scale was identified through factor analysis as presented in the prior sub-section. Regarding the Importance scale, it was constructed to confirm the importance of the generic principal leadership practices in Chinese schools. Each item of this scale pointed to one general dimension underlying the specific leadership practices included in the Involvement scale. Therefore, there was no need to identify any constructs underlying these general practices.

For the Context scale, the main aim was to find out the practitioners' perception of the extent of influence of the potential contextual factors on the leadership practices of Chinese principals. Since the qualitative interviews were designed as the major means of the investigation into the contextual influence, at this stage, the focus was placed on collecting descriptive information about the degree of impact of all the potential factors listed in the scale. These factors were naturally located in principals' personal context, internal school context and external society as displayed in Chapter Three. Accordingly, the items in this scale were simply divided into the three broad levels.

With this understanding, the internal consistency reliabilities of the three scales and the relevant dimensions were examined with Cronbach's Alpha in SPSS 15.0. Table 5.7 presents the results. As shown, the internal consistency ranged from 0.829 to 0.979, all of which were over 0.8. This suggested a strong internal consistency reliability of all the three parts and the relevant dimensions.

Table 5.7 Internal Consistency Reliability

	Cronbach's Alpha
Importance of general practices	0.883
Involvement in specific leadership practices	0.975
Involvement in the core leadership practices	0.979
Shaping school climate	0.953
Managing administrative affairs	0.942
Setting direction	0.898
Developing people	0.893
Developing external relationships	0.883
Managing instruction and curriculum	0.878
Seeking extra resources	0.829
Establishing authority (reverse)	0.902
Influence of contextual factors	0.955
External context	0.925
Personal perceptions and traits	0.929
Internal school context	0.919

To sum up, this section confirms the validity and reliability of the instrument used in the study and identifies the constructs underlying the main scale of the questionnaire, the Involvement scale. These latent structures were generally consistent with the exploratory research framework established in Chapter Three. The analysis further resulted in a high-order concept of core leadership practice which synthesised six generic leadership practices as presented above. In the following section, this construct is further confirmed and explained through descriptive analysis.

Confirming and Describing the Core Leadership Practices

Based on the previous factor analysis, this section aims to further confirm and describe the core leadership practices emerging from the high-order factor analysis *via* descriptive analysis, correlation analysis, cluster analysis, and multiple linear regression (MLR).

Validating the Core Leadership Practices

As operationally defined in Chapter Four, the core leadership practices of Chinese principalship are the practices commonly stressed and exercised by Chinese school leaders in leading their schools. Therefore, two descriptive indicators could be used

to assess leadership practices of Chinese school principals. One was the degree of the importance that school principals attach to the practice in everyday work and the other was the extent of their actual involvement in the practice. The practice of both high importance and high involvement could be seen as the core leadership practice exercised by Chinese school principals.

In this study, the relevant information was collected from the practitioners *via* the Importance scale and the Involvement scale in the survey. In the course of validating the Involvement scale, a high-order factor was identified as a synthetic concept integrating six generic leadership practices. Thus, the means of the related items in the Importance scale and the means of these six core categories emerging from the Involvement scale were calculated and correlated with each other in order to demonstrate that these leadership practices were both emphasised and commonly exercised by Chinese school principals from the view of the sampled practitioners. Table 5.8 presents the results.

Table 5.8 Importance and Involvement for the General Leadership Practices

General Leadership Practices	Means of Importance	Means of Involvement ¹⁰³	Correlation between Importance & Involvement ¹⁰⁴
Setting direction	5.08	4.50	R= 0.415(**)
Shaping school climate	4.91	4.46	R= 0.497(**)
Developing people	5.01	4.37	R= 0.457(**)
Managing instruction & curriculum	4.88	4.47	R= 0.412(**)
Managing administrative affairs	4.57	4.36	R= 0.295(**)
Developing external relationships	4.49	4.69	R= 0.330(**)

According to the two groups of means, the six general leadership practices included in the high-order model got high scores on the both scales. This suggested that these six general practices were perceived as important for Chinese principalship and often adopted by these school leaders. For each of the six generic practices, there was a significant positive correlation between the two variables. In other words, a high rating of the importance of one leadership practice was accompanied with a high score of principal involvement in the practice.

In the high-order factor model, the synthetic factor symbolised the common ground underlying the six broad leadership practices (i.e., the six first-order factors) and the

¹⁰³ In SPSS, the mean can be calculated by adding relevant item scores together and then dividing the aggregate score by the number of the variables located in the category.

¹⁰⁴ **Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

related specific leadership activities (i.e., indicators under each first-order factor). The results of the descriptive analysis and correlation analysis above indicated that all the six dimensions of principal leadership practice were both highly emphasised and often employed by the principals in the sampled schools. In other words, great importance and active involvement were two commonalities shared by the six general leadership practices. Thus they could be seen as the core leadership practices recognised by the participants. Accordingly, the high-order factor was labeled as 'core leadership practice'. This six-dimension model confirmed the six generic leadership practice posited in the exploratory research framework presented in Chapter Three.

Describing the Core Leadership Practices

The six core categories of principal leadership practices and the relevant specific activities composed a repertoire of the core leadership practices performed by the Chinese school leaders in the sampled schools. To further describe these leadership practices, the author ran descriptive analysis, correlation analysis, and cluster analysis in SPSS 15.0.

First, the mean scores of principal involvement in these leadership practices were computed. The results are presented in the following table.

Table 5.9 Means of the Involvement in Core Leadership Practices of Six Dimensions

Leadership Practices	Means
<i>Developing external relationships</i>	4.69
Establishing and maintaining school image and reputation.	4.93
Publicising school major developments and achievements.	4.82
Keeping a good work relationship with local educational authorities and the concerned officials.	4.73
Prioritising the implementation of superiors' educational policies and tasks.	4.70
Paying attention to current and emerging educational policies to assess the external environment.	4.62
Coordinating various public relationships to promote school development.	4.61
Applying for government funds to support school development and construction.	4.44
<i>Setting direction</i>	4.50
Setting a shared goal for school development.	4.70
Explicitly setting goals for student academic achievement.	4.64
Advocating a moral-based goal of school development.	4.60
Assessing strengths and weaknesses of the school.	4.51
Involving other school members in school planning.	4.41
Involving other school members in designing the goal.	4.39
Setting priorities for different school plans and objectives.	4.28
<i>Managing instruction and curriculum</i>	4.47
Focusing on the change of students' exam performance.	4.75
Stressing the tasks and standards of school teaching and learning.	4.75

Setting specific standards and expectations for teaching and learning.	4.56
Leading innovations in school instruction and curriculum.	4.52
Providing sufficient resources for school instruction and curriculum development.	4.43
Involving teachers in policy-making in terms of school instruction and curriculum.	4.17
Consulting with parents on school instruction and curriculum.	4.13
<i>Shaping school climate</i>	4.46
Exhibiting high morals and dedication to school education.	4.82
Actively taking part in principal professional development activities.	4.68
Supporting all staff to participate in professional development activities.	4.67
Playing an exemplary role in all respects.	4.66
Encouraging group work within school.	4.63
Maintaining a harmonious interpersonal relationship and climate within school.	4.59
Advocating a moral-based school culture.	4.58
Sharing personal professional experience with colleagues.	4.55
Considering different needs of the staff in terms of professional development.	4.32
Considering teachers' and students' needs while implementing instruction & curriculum reforms.	4.27
Creating a supportive environment.	4.26
Encouraging other school members to participate in decision-making.	4.16
Building effective channels to facilitate communication between school members.	4.15
Centring teaching and learning in school to protect teachers' teaching from distraction.	4.14
<i>Developing people</i>	4.37
Delegating front-line teachers to design school-based curriculum.	4.59
Supporting teachers' bottom-up innovations.	4.52
Promoting middle and above management's awareness and capability of participating in school leadership and administration in profession development.	4.45
Promoting ordinary staff and teachers' awareness and capability of participating in school leadership and administration in profession development.	4.20
Establishing a hierarchical professional development system.	4.10
<i>Managing administrative affairs</i>	4.36
Consulting with the Party Branch on major decisions.	4.63
Disciplining subordinates with a human-orientation.	4.44
Consulting with Teacher Congress on major decisions.	4.40
Sharing leadership power through delegating subordinates.	4.40
Consulting with School Union on major decisions.	4.34
Leading school through collective management and decision-making.	4.33
Making decisions in a participative way.	4.25
Improving staff welfare and working conditions.	4.25
Considering individual needs of different staff to motivate them to work hard.	4.20

As shown, the practices aiming to develop external relationships were most often exercised by the leaders of the sampled schools. This type of leadership practices mainly described how Chinese school principals handle the relationship with the public and the government. Particularly, great efforts were made to establish a positive school image and promote school achievements to the public. In terms of the government, these school principals primarily engaged in relationship maintenance and policy implementation, as well as funds application.

Following the external relationship building was the practice of setting direction. Under this category, goal-setting and planning were two basic approaches. The goal was often shared by other school members and involved an explicit expectation of student performance, and a moral orientation. The plan for school development was often based on the existing school conditions. For the both processes, the participation of other school members was allowed in practice but not as often as goal-setting and planning.

The third core leadership practice was to manage instruction and curriculum. Generally, there were two major activities, developing instruction and curriculum and supervising teaching and learning. But the latter was practiced more often than the former in real-life situations. Although there was not an obvious test-orientated assessment within these schools, the principals indeed emphasised the standards of teaching and learning and took measures to monitor student exam performance. As for developing school curriculum, leading reforms and supplying resources appeared to be a more significant than listening to other stakeholders' voice.

The fourth core leadership practice, shaping school climate, was largely realised through two approaches. One was building a supportive climate mainly through showing consideration and supporting staff professional development, participation and communication. The other was setting an example, which was more often performed by the school leaders than the former. Consistent with the leader image highly praised in Chinese society, the leaders of the sampled schools paid particular attention to setting themselves as a good example in terms of moral conduct and professional growth and to establishing a moral-based and harmonious climate within school.

Developing people was the fifth core leadership practice. Empowerment was the key word in this respect. The school leaders were reported to delegate front-line teachers to design school-based curriculum and support their bottom-up innovations. More importantly, efforts were made to enhance other school members' awareness and capability of participating school administration. Nevertheless, a hierarchical system of professional development was said to exist in schools.

The last core leadership practice referred to the activities dealing with internal administrative affairs. This practice involved three major actions: consulting,

considering and sharing. For making important decisions, the principals would consult with the Party Branch, Teacher Congress, and School Union. For motivating the staff, these school leaders were inclined to show consideration and improve working benefits and conditions. In general, there was an orientation toward collective or democratic decision-making in this core category of Chinese principal leadership practices.

In addition, the descriptive analysis indicated that the mean score of the practices under the factor of establishing authority ranged from 2.78 to 2.93 and the mean score of the two practices under the factor of seeking extra resources were 3.74 and 3.63 (see the relevant items in Table 5.5). All the mean values were far less than those of the practices involved in the repertoire of the core leadership practices. These results reconfirmed the essential status of the leadership practices identified in the high-order model.

In a word, the leadership practices exercised by the principals in the sampled schools converged on these six core areas, which were closely correlated with each other. Table 5.10 displays the correlation matrix included in the completely standardised solution of the high-order model (M5). The high positive correlation between the core leadership practices reconfirmed the validity of the Involvement scale used in the study.

Table 5.10 The Correlation Matrix of the Core Leadership Practices

	Setting direction	Shaping school climate	Developing people	Managing administrative affairs	Managing instruction & curriculum	Developing external relationships
Setting direction	1					
Shaping school climate	0.85	1				
Developing people	0.80	0.88	1			
Managing administrative affairs	0.78	0.87	0.82	1		
Managing instruction & curriculum	0.84	0.84	0.87	0.86	1	
Developing external relationships	0.71	0.78	0.73	0.73	0.78	1

To further understand the leadership practices of the schools principals reported by the participants, two-step cluster analysis was run in SPSS 15.0 to differentiate the

emerging patterns of the core leadership practices. The six dimensions identified in the high-order factor model were treated as variables. As a consequence, three clusters were generated as displayed in the following table. According to the profiles, the three clusters were differentiated by the mean scores of the six core leadership practices.

Table 5.11 Cluster Profiles

Cluster	Setting Direction		Shaping school climate		Developing people		Managing administrative affairs		Managing instruction & curriculum		Developing external relationships	
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
1	3.33	0.70	3.25	0.61	3.14	0.69	3.08	0.77	3.47	0.68	3.85	0.74
2	4.54	0.62	4.51	0.47	4.44	0.55	4.37	0.59	4.48	0.53	4.63	0.65
3	5.46	0.39	5.44	0.37	5.34	0.51	5.43	0.43	5.32	0.43	5.48	0.37
Combined	4.50	1.01	4.46	0.98	4.37	1.03	4.36	1.09	4.47	0.90	4.69	0.87

For the third cluster, the mean score varied between 5.48 and 5.32, which was consistently high against the six-point rating used in the Involvement scale. This signified a high involvement in all the six core leadership practices. As to the second group, the value ranged from 4.37 to 4.63, lower than the third cluster but higher than the first one of which the six mean scores were between 3.08 and 3.85. Accordingly, these two clusters could be respectively labeled as medium involvement and low involvement in the core leadership practices. This implied that the participants reported three levels of principal involvement in the core leadership practices.

However, the six core leadership practices might not equally contribute to the difference in the general level of principal involvement in the core leadership practices. Thus, the researcher employed multiple linear regression technique to investigate which of the six core leadership practices would cause such differences. In operation, the six generic leadership practices identified in the high-order model were treated as independent variables and the overall level of the involvement, i.e., the cluster variable, was taken as dependent variable. Table 5.12 presents the relevant statistics.

Table 5.12 Summary of MLR Results

	Unstandardised Coefficients		Standardised Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
Setting direction	0.18	0.03	0.228	6.502	0
Shaping school climate	0.17	0.04	0.212	4.743	0
Developing people	0.15	0.03	0.202	5.518	0
Internal administration	0.17	0.03	0.234	6.175	0
Managing instruction &	0.04	0.03	0.051	1.356	0.176

curriculum					
Developing relationships	0.10	0.03	0.11	3.767	0
Model Summary	R=0.922	R ² =0.851	Adjusted R ² =0.848	F=380.596(P=0)	
			SE of the Estimate=0.303		

Among the six core leadership practices, there were five practices that contributed to the difference in the general level of principal involvement in the core leadership practices. Except the practice of managing instruction and curriculum, the other four core leadership practices all significantly related to the involvement level. It suggested that this general practice did not help with the differentiation of school principals according to their involvement in the core leadership practices. This model exhibited a strong fit with the dataset (Adjusted R²>0.5, see Muijs, 2004). Thus it can be seen that the general level of the reported principals' involvement in the core leadership practices mainly varied with their involvement in the five generic leadership practices. The following section focuses on the influence of the contextual factors on these core leadership practices.

Influence of Contextual Factors

As stated above, the scale of contextual factors was used to get a general picture of the respondents' perceptions of significant contextual factors that could impact principal leadership practices in school. Thus, the descriptive analysis was first used to display the extent of impact of each potential contextual factor perceived by the participants. Then, the correlation analysis, t test, and ANOVA were employed to find out those relating to the core leadership practices identified from the dataset.

Describing Potential Contextual Factors

The potential contextual factors were naturally divided into three groups as show below. For each group and the relevant variables, the mean score of the degree of influence was calculated through descriptive analysis in SPSS 15.0. Table 5.13 displays these values.

Table 5.13 Means of the Influence Degree of the Contextual Factors

Personal perceptions and traits	4.77	External context	4.26
Principal's capability of leadership	4.96	Academic competition and pressure in basic education	4.74
Principal's perception of leadership	4.87	Policies and interventions of local educational authorities	4.62
Principal's understanding of his/her responsibilities	4.85	Existing principal responsibility system	4.55
Principal's perception of education	4.83	Educational guidelines and reform policies of the central government	4.52
Principal's understanding of the	4.74	Existing principal selection and	4.36

professionalism of principalship		assessment systems	
Principal's personality traits	4.38	Principal promotion system	4.35
		Ongoing principal career ladder system	4.27
		Servant leadership style advocated by the Party and the government	4.25
Internal school context	4.21		
Existing school climate and culture	4.52	Hierarchical administration system of the government	4.22
Resources available for school development	4.52	Previous cadre system in school personnel administration	4.05
Other school leaders' perceptions of leadership	4.39	Leader image in Chinese traditional culture	3.95
Other school members' views on school administration	4.19	Western ideas of leadership with an orientation toward participation and power sharing	3.83
Supervision and intervention of school Party Branch	4.09	Leadership ideas and conceptions in business area	3.63
Supervision and intervention of Teacher Congress	3.91		
Supervision and intervention of school Union	3.85		

From the results, all the three groups of the contextual factors would affect the core leadership practices of the Chinese school principals. The mean scores of the degree of influence were all over four against the six-point rating scale, which denoted a relatively large degree of the influence. As perceived by the respondents, the largest influence came from the principals' personal context, mainly involving their personal perceptions and traits, and the impact from the external context was slightly larger than that of the internal school conditions.

In terms of personal perceptions and traits, the most influential factors reported by the participants were the variables relating to several essential understandings of education and principalship and the capability of being a school leader. By comparison, the personality traits were not regarded as much significant as the other factors in this category.

In the following dimension of 'external systems and policies', the academic competition and pressure and the district educational authority were considered as two most powerful forces that affected the performance of the sampled school principals. Following them were the principal responsibility system and the policies of the central government. Other relevant administrative systems, such as principal selection, evaluation, and promotion systems, career ladder system, and even the governmental administration system, were also thought as influential external factors. As for the previous cadre system, the impact seemed relatively small, compared with the other system factors. The least powerful source of the external influence was a

variety of leadership conceptions or theories, especially those prevalent in business area or originating from Western societies. Compared with those popular ideas of leadership, the indigenous perceptions of good leaders seemed more relevant to the principal leadership practices, particularly the leadership style advocated by the Party and the government.

The internal school context was perceived as the third major category. Among the relevant factors, the organisational climate and the available resources seemed as two paramount factors concerning Chinese school principals. According to the respondents, other school leaders and ordinary school members also had an impact. But the supervision and intervention of certain functional units seemed less powerful than the other variables under this dimension.

Furthermore, the three dimensions were interrelated with each others according to the result of correlation analysis shown in Table 5.14. From the table, the external context was positively related with the other two types of contexts. The strongest positive relationship was found between the external context and the internal school context, followed by the correlation between the internal school context and the personal perceptions and traits.

Table 5.14 Correlation Matrix of the Three General Dimensions of the Contextual Factors

	Personal perceptions & traits	Internal school context	External context
Personal perceptions & traits	1		
Internal school context	0.614(**)	1	
External context	0.588(**)	0.710(**)	1

After forming the general picture of the influencing factors in the context, the researcher examined the relationship between these factors and the core leadership practices identified in the prior section. The following sub-section presents the analysis process.

Connecting Contextual Factors with Core Leadership Practices

In this sub-section, correlation analysis, t test, and ANOVA were used to understand the relationship between the contextual factors and the core leadership practices. First, the contextual factors and six core practices and the overall level of involvement were connected together *via* correlation analysis. Table 5.15 displays the correlation coefficients.

Table 5.15 Correlation Coefficients¹⁰⁵

	SD	SSC	DP	MAA	MIC	DER	Overall
Principal's personality traits	0.308(**)	0.263(**)	0.303(**)	0.271(**)	0.304(**)	0.375(**)	0.322(**)
Principal's perception of education	<u>0.424(**)</u>	0.374(**)	<u>0.404(**)</u>	0.348(**)	0.333(**)	<u>0.456(**)</u>	<u>0.405(**)</u>
Principal's perception of leadership	0.391(**)	0.358(**)	0.366(**)	0.279(**)	0.307(**)	<u>0.439(**)</u>	0.364(**)
Principal's capability of leadership	0.327(**)	0.272(**)	0.290(**)	0.220(**)	0.241(**)	0.383(**)	0.298(**)
Principal's understanding of his/her responsibilities	0.385(**)	0.293(**)	0.347(**)	0.232(**)	0.302(**)	<u>0.413(**)</u>	0.329(**)
Principal's understanding of the professionalism of principalship	0.388(**)	0.339(**)	0.365(**)	0.316(**)	0.353(**)	0.392(**)	0.355(**)
Existing school climate and culture	0.371(**)	0.377(**)	<u>0.429(**)</u>	0.321(**)	0.356(**)	0.376(**)	<u>0.401(**)</u>
Resources available for school development	0.382(**)	0.366(**)	0.391(**)	0.334(**)	0.355(**)	<u>0.401(**)</u>	0.396(**)
Other school leaders' perceptions of leadership	0.386(**)	0.359(**)	<u>0.411(**)</u>	0.314(**)	0.378(**)	0.292(**)	0.365(**)
Other school members' views on school administration	0.348(**)	0.368(**)	0.399(**)	0.346(**)	<u>0.403(**)</u>	0.297(**)	0.377(**)
Supervision and intervention of school Party Branch	0.377(**)	<u>0.402(**)</u>	<u>0.452(**)</u>	<u>0.402(**)</u>	<u>0.419(**)</u>	0.363(**)	<u>0.421(**)</u>
Supervision and intervention of school Union	0.368(**)	0.393(**)	<u>0.438(**)</u>	<u>0.429(**)</u>	<u>0.435(**)</u>	0.333(**)	<u>0.432(**)</u>
Supervision and intervention of Teacher Congress	0.353(**)	0.395(**)	<u>0.435(**)</u>	<u>0.457(**)</u>	<u>0.440(**)</u>	0.345(**)	<u>0.439(**)</u>
Academic competition and pressure in basic education	0.236(**)	0.217(**)	0.218(**)	0.195(**)	0.237(**)	0.372(**)	0.222(**)
Hierarchical administration system of the government	0.280(**)	0.330(**)	0.365(**)	0.294(**)	0.383(**)	<u>0.420(**)</u>	0.328(**)
Leadership ideas and conceptions in business area	0.127(*)	0.164(**)	0.208(**)	0.184(**)	0.279(**)	0.240(**)	0.200(**)
Leader image in Chinese traditional culture	0.104(*)	0.122(*)	0.171(**)	0.134(**)	0.201(**)	0.209(**)	0.159(**)
Western ideas of leadership with an orientation toward participation and power sharing	0.181(**)	0.209(**)	0.280(**)	0.251(**)	0.288(**)	0.229(**)	0.234(**)
Servant leadership style advocated by the Party and the government	0.365(**)	<u>0.422(**)</u>	<u>0.465(**)</u>	<u>0.420(**)</u>	<u>0.443(**)</u>	0.383(**)	<u>0.418(**)</u>
Educational guidelines and reform policies of	<u>0.430(**)</u>	<u>0.430(**)</u>	<u>0.465(**)</u>	<u>0.433(**)</u>	<u>0.441(**)</u>	<u>0.411(**)</u>	<u>0.443(**)</u>

¹⁰⁵ SD=setting direction, SSC=shaping school climate, DP=developing people, MIC=managing instruction and curriculum, MAA=managing administrative affairs, DER=developing external relationships, Overall=overall level of principal involvement in the core leadership practices (i.e., the cluster variable emerging from the cluster analysis)

the central government							
Policies and interventions of local educational authorities	0.324(**)	0.312(**)	0.364(**)	0.289(**)	0.320(**)	<u>0.414(**)</u>	0.350(**)
Existing principal responsibility system	0.314(**)	0.335(**)	0.339(**)	0.319(**)	0.339(**)	<u>0.412(**)</u>	0.353(**)
Existing principal selection and assessment systems	0.258(**)	0.290(**)	0.311(**)	0.311(**)	0.288(**)	0.364(**)	0.305(**)
Principal promotion system	0.206(**)	0.237(**)	0.266(**)	0.265(**)	0.245(**)	0.333(**)	0.254(**)
Previous cadre system in school personnel administration	0.242(**)	0.279(**)	0.339(**)	0.346(**)	0.344(**)	0.286(**)	0.289(**)
Ongoing principal career ladder system	0.253(**)	0.282(**)	0.315(**)	0.307(**)	0.348(**)	0.358(**)	0.270(**)

In general, the degree of influence of all the contextual factors had a significant positive correlation with the extent of involvement in the six core leadership practices. But most correlation coefficients suggested a moderate relationship ($0.3 < r < 0.5$). For the three items referring to certain conceptions of leadership, the correlation was quite weak ($0.1 < r < 0.3$). This was consistent with the results of the descriptive analysis that, among all the contextual factors, the conceptions of leadership had the smallest impact on the leadership practices of the Chinese principals.

In terms of the other contextual factors, however, the strength of the relationship differed. Since the correlation coefficients of these contextual variables ranged from 0.3 to 0.5, a cut-off point of 0.4 was used to identify the factors that had a relatively stronger relationship with the core leadership practices (i.e., $r > 0.4$).

At the personal level, three variables stood out, including *principal's perception of leadership*, *principal's perception of leadership*, and *principal's understanding of his/her responsibilities*. The first one positively was correlated with the principal involvement in the practices of setting direction, developing people, and developing external relationships, as well as the overall level of principal involvement in the core leadership practices.

At the school level, seven contextual variables had relatively larger correlation coefficients. These were *existing school climate and culture*, *resources available for school development*, *other school leaders' perceptions of leadership*, *other school members' views on school administration*, *supervision and intervention of school Party Branch*, *supervision and intervention of school Union*, *supervision and intervention of Teacher Congress*. Particularly, the last three variables referring to

the supervision of the functional units within schools consistently had a positive relationship with the overall level of involvement and three core leadership practices, developing people, and managing administrative affairs, managing instruction and curriculum.

In terms of the external context, there were five factors, involving *educational guidelines and reform policies of the central government, servant leadership style advocated by the Party and the government, hierarchical administration system of the government, policies and interventions of local educational authorities, and existing principal responsibility system*. The first factor pointing to the influence of the policies of the central government was positively related with all the involvement variables, followed by the variable referring to the influence of the mainstream leadership style, which was positively correlated with five involvement ratings as shown in the table above.

Considering each of the involvement variables, there was a stronger relationship between the influences of the contextual factors at all the three levels and the following three involvement variables: developing people, developing external relationship, and overall level of involvement. All of them positively were correlated with seven or eight contextual factors as shown above.

For setting direction, the influence of two contextual factors had a strong positive relationship with principal involvement in this practice. These were *principal's perception of leadership* and *educational guidelines and reform policies of the central government*. For shaping school climate, three contextual variables were prominent, including *supervision and intervention of school Party Branch, educational guidelines and reform policies of the central government, and servant leadership style advocated by the Party and the government*.

For managing administrative affairs and managing instruction and curriculum, they were both correlated with five contextual factors within the internal school context and the external context, i.e., *supervision and intervention of school Party Branch, supervision and intervention of school Union, supervision and intervention of Teacher Congress, educational guidelines and reform policies of the central government, and servant leadership style advocated by the Party and the government*. In addition, the latter was positively related with the influence of *other school members' views on school administration*.

Third, t test, correlation analysis, and ANOVA were employed to detect the effect of the demographic variables on the reported overall level of principal involvement (i.e., cluster variable emerging from the prior cluster analysis) and the extent of principal involvement in the six core leadership practices. These statistical operations were applied in accordance with the nature of the background variables shown in the first section of this chapter. These demographic variables were inputted as independent variables or grouping variables and the involvement variables were treated as dependent variables.

T test was run in SPSS 15.0 to examine two dichotomous variable, gender and school status. No difference was found between the participants from exemplary schools and non-exemplary schools. But there was a significant difference between female and male respondents in the rating of the overall involvement level and the extent of involvement in four core leadership practices as shown in Table 5.16.

Table 5.16 Summary of the T-test

	Female	Male	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Effect size ¹⁰⁶
Setting direction	4.5838	4.3555	2.168	395	0.031	0.23
Developing people	4.4407	4.2247	1.99	395	0.047	0.21
Managing instruction & curriculum	4.6035	4.2166	3.908	237.62	0	0.43
Developing external relationships	4.7716	4.5016	2.975	395	0.003	0.31
Overall level of involvement	2.1	1.94	2.03	395	0.043	0.21

According to the mean scores of the two groups, female respondents gave a higher rating than male participants with respect to principal overall involvement in the core leadership and the extent of involvement in setting direction, developing people, managing instruction and curriculum, and development external relationships. The effect of the gender was strongest on the perceived extent of involvement in managing instruction and curriculum.

Then, the interval and continuous background variables were related with the six core leadership and the overall involvement level through correlation analysis. These included age, years of teaching, times of professional training in 2009, and the numbers of vice principals, teachers, and students. Only age, years of teaching, training times, and the number of students were found significantly related with those involvement variables. The results are displayed in the table below.

¹⁰⁶ i.e., *Cohen's d*, $d = (\text{Mean for group A} - \text{Mean for group B}) / \text{Pooled standard deviation}$, $d > 1 = \text{strong effect}$ (see Muijs, 2004).

Table 5.17 Summary of the Correlation Analysis

	Setting direction	Shaping school climate	Developing people	Managing administrative affairs	Managing instruction & curriculum	Developing external relationships	Overall level of involvement
Age					-0.142(**)	-0.112(*)	
Years of teaching					-0.136(**)	-0.118(*)	
Training times	0.145(**)						0.109(*)
No. of students	-0.110(*)						

At the personal level, age and years of teaching both had a significant negative relationship with the rating of principal involvement in two generic practices, managing instruction and curriculum and developing external relationships. The times of professional training in which the respondents took part in the last year was significantly and positively related with their judgement about how often the principals generally engage in the core leadership practices and specifically make efforts to set school direction. At the school level, the number of students had a significant negative correlation with the reported extent of principal involvement in setting direction. All the correlations (<0.3) were not strong against the criteria mentioned in Chapter Four.

Finally, ANOVA was operated to investigate the rating difference relating to the ordinal and nominal background variables, which involved the highest academic degree obtained, present position, type of education, and school location. Estimates of effect size were also displayed in the output. Except the highest academic degree obtained, all the other three variables were found related with the difference in the ratings of the involvement variables.

In more specific terms, the participants at different positions in schools had varied opinions on the principal involvement in shaping school climate ($F=3.096$, $P=0.016$, Eta Squared¹⁰⁷=0.031) and managing administrative affairs ($F=2.766$, $P=0.027$, Eta Squared=0.028). But both of the effects were weak as the results suggested. The outcomes of the post hoc test indicated that a significant difference in the reported extent of principal involvement in the two practices was only found between two groups of the respondents, ordinary teachers and staff and school principals (15) and Party secretary (1). The ratings given by the latter group were both higher than those offered by the former.

¹⁰⁷ The estimate of effect size for ANOVA in SPSS, 0-0.1=weak effect, 0.1-0.3=modest effect, 0.3-0.5=moderate effect, and >0.5=strong effect (Muijs, 2004).

In terms of the type of school education and school location, there was a significant difference in all the involvement ratings. Table 5.18 exhibited the relevant statistics.

Table 5.18 The Statistics of ANOVA

	Type of school education			School location		
	F	Sig.	Eta Squared	F	Sig.	Eta Squared
Setting direction	27.476	0.000	0.119	14.068	0.000	0.065
Shaping school climate	16.001	0.000	0.073	6.838	0.001	0.033
Developing people	14.318	0.000	0.066	9.906	0.000	0.047
Managing administrative affairs	19.034	0.000	0.086	13.038	0.000	0.06
Managing instruction & curriculum	23.237	0.000	0.103	11.445	0.000	0.053
Developing external relationship	27.093	0.000	0.118	9.597	0.000	0.045
Overall level	28.222	0.000	0.122	11.379	0.000	0.053

The post hoc test indicated the specific differences. Respecting the type of school education, all the ratings given by the participants from high schools were always significantly higher than those made by the respondents working in the other two types of secondary schools. Against these indicators, the respondents from comprehensive secondary schools gave a significantly higher rating in terms of principal involvement in the core leadership practices than the samples of junior secondary schools, except that there was no significant difference in their opinions on the principal involvement in shaping school climate. The effects of this variable on shaping school climate, developing people, and managing administrative affairs were weak while the impacts on the other four dependent variables were moderate.

As far as the school location is concerned, a significant difference was found between the participants sampled from rural schools and those from schools located in suburban and urban districts. The former always provided the lowest rating among the three groups in terms of all the involvement variables. But for setting direction and developing external relationships, the ratings given by the practitioners from suburban schools were significantly higher than those offered by the participants working in urban schools.

Overall, this section connects the potential contextual factors with the core leadership practices emerging from the quantitative data. Through combining all the inferences developed in this chapter, a summary of the quantitative data analysis is presented in next section.

Summary

This chapter displays the analysis process of the quantitative data collected through the survey. The background information of the samples is provided in the first

section. With the valid dataset, the researcher employed a number of statistical methods to conduct the analysis and attained a series of findings.

First, the validity and reliability of the instrument used in the survey were tested and verified. The validity of the three scales was established according to their functions. Two-step factor analysis was used to validate the main scale, 'Involvement in specific leadership practices'. As a result, eight factors were identified for the Involvement scale (see Table 5.5) and then developed into a six-dimension high-order model (see Figure 5.1 & Table 5.9). These constructs were consistent with the items involved in the scale of 'Importance of general leadership practices' and the dimensions proposed in the exploratory framework of this study. All the scales exhibited strong internal consistency reliability.

Second, the six core leadership practices were further confirmed and described by means of descriptive statistic, correlation analysis, cluster analysis, and multiple linear regression. Base on the descriptive analysis and correlation analysis, the six dimension identified in the high-order model were confirmed as 'core leadership practices' employed by the sampled school principals. These practices were highly correlated with each other. Ranked from the largest extent of involvement to the smallest, these practices could be listed as follows: developing external relationships, setting direction, managing instruction and curriculum, shaping school climate, developing people, and administering internal affairs. Through cluster analysis, the reported extent of principal involvement in the six core leadership practices could be divided into three general levels: low, medium, and high. The MLR results further indicated that the general level of principal involvement in the core leadership practices would vary with the difference in the involvement in five of the six core practices, without the practice of managing instruction and curriculum.

Third, a number of contextual factors composed three major sources of the influence on principal involvement in the core leadership practices. The three broad groups of the contextual factors were personal perceptions and traits, external context, and internal school context. Among them, the personal perceptions and traits had the strongest impact, followed by the external context, while the internal school context appeared as the least powerful force. Then, the contextual factors were connected with the core leadership practices through correlation analysis. According the correlation coefficients, the most significant contextual factors were principal's

perception of education, supervision of school functional units, policies of the central government, and the leadership style advocated by the Party and the government.

Furthermore, t test, correlation analysis, and ANOVA were used to identify the background variables that related to the involvement ratings. These operations resulted in several factors that affected the participants' ratings of certain involvement variables. These factors included gender, age, years of teaching, present position, training times, the number of students, type of school education, and school location.

Chapter 6 Analysis of the Qualitative Data

This Chapter presents the analysis of the qualitative data collected *via* a series of semi-structured interviews built around the research questions of this study. Face-to-face interviews were conducted with principals and other school staff. Each respondent was interviewed individually and was asked to identify the most important leadership practices of the principal, how the principal performed and whether and what contextual factors they believed impacted on these practices. The information collected from the participants was transcribed and analysed in NVivo 8. As explained in Chapter Four, three stages of coding were used for the analysis, included open coding, axial coding, and selective coding. First, open coding was used to identify initial categories emerging from the data. In the axial coding stage, the fractured data were put back together to make connections between the category and its sub-categories. The exploratory research framework established in Chapter Three was used to construct the synthetic categories. This process identified six core principal leadership practices and a series of contextual factors that accounted for these practices. Finally, selective coding was employed to re-examine the cases in order to identify the inter-relationships among the core categories and the patterns underlying the core leadership practices. The diagram below illustrates the procedure employed for the qualitative data analysis.

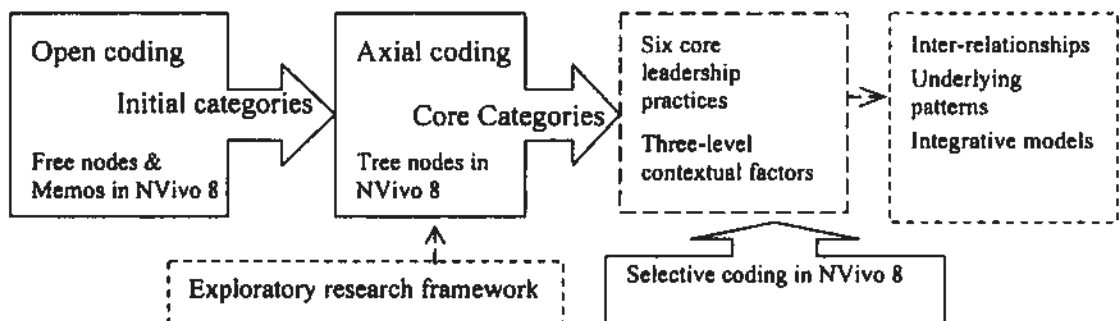


Figure 6.1 Overall Process of Qualitative Data Analysis

The chapter has five sections. The first section provides a brief description of the respondents. The next three sections specify the major inferences which flowed from the three stages of coding. The final section presents a summary of the chapter.

A Brief Description of the Respondents

The qualitative part of the study set out to investigate the lived experiences of twenty-one school leaders through in-depth interviews. There are six school principals, seven vice principals, four teaching directors, and four teachers. All

worked in public secondary schools located in Beijing and Guangzhou. The leaders¹⁰⁸ were selected within the sample available in the field study. Within these schools the other respondents were selected from different focus groups in the staff, including vice principals, middle management and/or front-line teachers¹⁰⁹. As clarified in Chapter Four, the study was to investigate the core leadership practices of Chinese school principals. A brief description of principals who formed the focus of investigation is shown in Table 6.1.

The table shows that all the principals were middle-age males and have worked in schools for more than twenty years. This seemed acceptable as experienced male principals form the overwhelming majority of principals in Chinese secondary. All the principals had higher education degrees. Two masters degree. Four principals started their principalship before 1999 when the Quality Education reform was implemented in earnest in China. Specifically, Principals B, C and F could be classified as veteran principals because they have worked as a principal for more than fifteen years, while principals A and D were appointed within the previous three years. Principal E has worked as a school principal for eleven years.

Respondents encompassed principals of three types of secondary schools: junior secondary schools (1), senior secondary schools (2), and comprehensive secondary schools (3). There were three exemplary schools and three ordinary schools. As appears standard in China, principals from the exemplary schools were widely recognised and those from ordinary schools relatively unknown (Qian, 2008). Principals came equally from urban and suburban schools; four schools were located in Beijing and two were in Guangzhou.

The following sections present the findings of the qualitative analysis.

¹⁰⁸ They were numbered in alphabetical order as shown in Table 6.1. In the thesis, the letters used to label the principals were also used to denote the corresponding schools.

¹⁰⁹ In most schools, the research was allowed to select one or more persons from each focus group. But in school A, the research was not permitted to interview other staff. In addition, a teaching director and a teacher from another ordinary school participated in the interviews individually without their principal being included.

Table 6.1 A Brief Description of the Selected School Principals

No.	Gender	Age	Years of teaching	Academic degree	Brief description of principalship experience	School type	Location & city
A	Male	41-45	20	Master	Worked as vice principal in another secondary school before 2007; transferred and assigned as principal of the present school by the local educational authority in 2007; also assumed deputy secretary of the Party Branch in the present school	A complete secondary school & exemplary school	Urban, Beijing
B	Male	51-55	37	Bachelor	Had worked as principals in other four schools from 1984 to 2001; transferred and assigned as principal of the present school by upper administration in 2002	A senior secondary school & ordinary school	Suburban, Beijing
C	Male	41-45	21	Bachelor	Has worked as principal of the present school since 1995; also worked as secretary of the Party Branch in the present school	A senior secondary school & exemplary school	Suburban, Beijing
D	Male	51-55	33	Master	Promoted to be principal of the present school in 2009	A complete secondary school & exemplary school	Urban, Beijing
E	Male	46-50	28	Bachelor	Had worked as principal in another school from 1999 to 2001; succeeded in the external competition for principalship of the present school in 2002	A junior secondary school & ordinary school	Urban, Guangzhou
F	Male	46-50	29	Bachelor	Had worked as principals in other three schools from 1990 to 2004; transferred and assigned as principal of the present school by upper administration in 2005	A complete secondary school & ordinary school, which was applying for the title of National Exemplary School	Suburban, Guangzhou

Open Coding – Generating Initial Categories

In the first stage, initial codes were established as free codes in NVivo 8. The researcher first divided all interview transcripts into discrete parts, gave each of these parts a label representing a specific leadership practice or theme, and made memos to keep track of the associations between different codes. For example, a teaching director in School C stated that ‘in terms of teacher development, our principal has paid particular attention to teachers’ changes in classroom instruction and teaching methods since the implementation of the New Curriculum Reform (老師發展方面，新課程改革以來，我們校長特別關注老師在課堂教學和教法上的一些改變).’ This action by Principal C was clearly classified by the respondent as a measure of developing teachers. At the same time, the practice related to the improvement of classroom teaching and happened within the specific reform context. Thus, these two points were recorded as memos.

Using the process described above a number of code labels were developed for each action taken by the principals. Next, the labels clustering around a similar issue or theme were put together to form a variety of initial categories. These were the raw categories as identified by the respondents. Table 6.2 displays these initial themes and vivo-generated frequencies.

Table 6.2 Initial Categories

Categories	Frequency of Sources ¹¹⁰	Frequency of References ¹¹¹	Percent of References
<i>Leadership Practices</i>			
Setting shared vision or long-term goal	13	48	7.44%
Facilitating student learning and development	17	59	9.15%
Developing teachers	13	53	8.22%
Planning for school development	14	50	7.75%
Making major decisions democratically	16	47	7.29%
orienting the school according to the reality	15	45	6.98%
Focusing on the improvement of teaching and learning	14	44	6.82%
Establishing personal thoughts as school core ideas	11	31	4.81%
Prioritising student exam performance	10	23	3.57%
Constructing a unified understanding of schooling	12	18	2.79%
Seising external opportunities	10	17	2.64%
Managing staff with a human orientation	8	16	2.48%

¹¹⁰ Frequency of Sources refers to how many participants mentioned the point in their interviews.

¹¹¹ Frequency of References signifies how many times the point was mentioned by the respondents in their interviews.

Coordinating internal relationships	7	15	2.33%
Seeking extra resources	9	14	2.17%
Developing cadres	7	14	2.17%
Attaining policy support from upper educational administration	8	13	2.02%
Developing themselves	6	13	2.02%
Raising funds	6	12	1.86%
Delegating lower management to handle routine work	4	9	1.40%
Improving organisational culture or climate	7	8	1.24%
Developing school-based curriculum	6	8	1.24%
Promoting a balanced thinking of schooling	4	8	1.24%
Emphasising the importance of developing people	6	6	0.93%
Getting others' opinions	4	6	0.93%
Listening to teacher voice	3	6	0.93%
Centring on teaching and learning	4	5	0.78%
Keeping a good public relationship	4	4	0.62%
Promoting character education	2	4	0.62%
Getting parents' support	3	3	0.47%
Serving the community	3	3	0.47%
Visiting other schools	1	2	0.31%
Making decisions collectively	1	1	0.16%
Total		645	100%
Contextual Factors			
Upper educational authority	18	56	14.93%
Teacher conditions	17	43	11.47%
Non-power factors	14	40	10.67%
Educational policies and reforms	14	31	8.27%
Existing educational administration system	14	30	8.00%
Student characteristics	12	29	7.73%
Organisational climate	12	22	5.87%
Social environment	10	22	5.87%
Local educational environment	12	17	4.53%
Cadre conditions	8	17	4.53%
Positional responsibilities	8	12	3.20%
School performance and rank	5	10	2.67%
Educational conceptions	6	9	2.40%
Principalship experience	7	8	2.13%
Physical environment	4	7	1.87%
Positional power	3	7	1.87%
Parents' conditions	4	6	1.60%
Significant progress	3	3	0.80%
Financial situation	2	3	0.80%
Personal background	2	3	0.80%
Total		375	100%

As can be seen in the table, several leadership practices and contextual factors stood out from these categories. For example, setting vision or long-term goals appeared as a common principal practice. Using this approach, six leadership practices were mentioned repeatedly by a number of respondents. These included facilitating student learning and development, developing teachers, planning for school development, making major decisions democratically, orienting the school according to the reality, and focusing on the improvement of teaching and learning. These categories of leadership practices indicate the major concerns of the school principals involved in this segment of the study.

Six categories of contextual factors emerged. These were district educational authority, teacher conditions, non-power factors, educational policies and reforms, existing educational administration system and student characteristics. Among these contextual factors, the impact of district educational authority seemed to be the most powerful force driving the work of the principals. The contextual categories suggested that the way these principals lead their schools was influenced by multiple contextual variables. These inferences laid the foundation for the axial coding.

Axial Coding –Developing Core Conceptions

In this stage the initial categories were reorganised according to the interconnections between each other as recorded in the memos. This process consisted of two procedures. First, the initial categories were re-structured with the research framework described in Chapter Four. Second, different categories were assessed and adjusted according to the frequency of reference. The first sub-section below presents this process. The second and third sub-sections explained the emerging categories.

Reorganising Initial Categories

First, the exploratory research framework constructed in Chapter Three was reviewed as a way to help with the reorganisation of the initial categories within an existing theoretical structure. For example, selected principals were reported to have implemented strategies to facilitate students learning and development, develop teachers, develop cadres, and promote self-development. Although these practices differed in terms of the target group and specific actions, they shared an overarching theme – how to develop people working in the school. This was consistent with the

general dimension of ‘developing people’ proposed by the exploratory framework. Accordingly, these four initial categories were grouped under this generic dimension. Using this process, the fifty-six initial categories were classified into seven dimensions of principal leadership practices and three types of contextual factors *via* the tree nodes in NVivo 8. Table 6.3 presents these reorganised categories.

Table 6.3 Reorganised Categories

Categories	Frequency of Sources	Frequency of References	Percent of References
<i>Leadership Practices</i>			
Setting direction	21	132	25.10%
Setting shared vision or long-term goals	14	52	
Planning for school development	14	52	
Orienting the school according to the reality	15	51	
Developing people	18	116	22.05%
Developing students	17	58	
Developing teachers	13	51	
Developing cadres	7	14	
Developing themselves	6	12	
Improving instruction and curriculum	19	78	14.83%
Focusing on the improvement of teaching and learning	14	45	
Prioritising student exam performance	10	23	
Developing school-based curriculum	5	7	
Listening to teacher voice	3	6	
Promoting character education	2	4	
Shaping core ideas and concepts	19	74	14.07%
Establishing personal thoughts as school core ideas	10	29	
Achieving a unified understanding	15	25	
Improving organisational culture or climate	5	5	
Obtaining others’ opinions	1	3	
Managing internal administrative affairs	18	70	13.31%
Making major decisions democratically	15	39	
Centring on teaching and learning	9	20	
Managing staff with a human orientation	8	17	
Coordinating internal relationships	8	16	
Developing external relationships and resources	17	56	10.65%
Seeking resources	11	27	
Seising external opportunities	10	16	
Attaining policy support from upper authorities	6	10	
Keeping a good public relationship	3	3	
Serving the community	3	3	
Total		526	100%
<i>Contextual Factors</i>			
<u>Internal conditions</u>	21	148	43.92%
Teacher conditions	17	42	

Student characteristics	12	30	
Cadre conditions	8	17	
Organisational climate	10	16	
School performance and rank	5	10	
Financial situation	5	8	
Physical environment	4	7	
Parents' conditions	4	6	
Significant progress	3	3	
<u>External environment</u>	21	116	34.42%
The upper educational authority	18	57	
Educational administration system	13	30	
Educational policies and reforms	13	24	
Social environment	8	19	
Local environment	11	17	
Educational conceptions	6	9	
<u>Personal traits and perceptions</u>	18	73	21.66%
Non-position power	14	40	
Positional responsibilities	8	12	
Principalship experience	7	8	
Position power	3	7	
Personal preferences	2	5	
Personal background	2	3	
Total		337	100%

According to this framework, different principal leadership practices identified as important fit into the six core categories of leadership practices. The relevant contextual factors were grouped into three synthetic categories. In other words, important leadership practices identified by the respondents fit quite neatly into these six generic categories of principal leadership practices. These practices were mainly influenced by the three groups of contextual factors.

Next the frequency and percentages of references were reorganised into these categories. Setting direction and developing people were most commonly mentioned by the respondents. The other groups of practices exhibited varied frequencies of repetition. Of these, from the highest to lowest ratings of reputation were improving instruction and curriculum, shaping school core ideas and concepts, managing internal administrative affairs, and developing external relationships and resources. Among the three groups of contextual factors, internal conditions and external environment were respectively the first and second most frequently mentioned. Principals' personal traits and perceptions were mentioned less often than these.

Since the study aimed to identify the core leadership practices of principals and the major contextual factors, the target categories were taken as those most frequently mentioned by most of the respondents. With this understanding, the reorganised

categories were refined into a more compact repertoire focused on the leadership practices and contextual factors as most reported by the respondents. Table 6.4 displays the refined categories.

Table 6.4 Refined Categories

Categories	Frequency of Sources	Frequency of References	Percent of References
<i>Leadership Practices</i>			
<u>Setting direction</u>	21	132	25.10%
Setting shared vision or long-term goals	14	52	
Planning for school development	14	52	
Orienting the school according to the reality	15	51	
<u>Developing people</u>	18	116	22.05%
Developing students	17	58	
Developing teachers	13	51	
Developing cadres	7	14	
Developing themselves	6	12	
<u>Improving instruction and curriculum</u>	19	78	14.83%
Focusing on the improvement of teaching and learning	14	45	
Prioritising student exam performance	10	23	
Developing school-based curriculum	5	7	
<u>Shaping core ideas and concepts</u>	19	74	14.07%
Establishing personal thoughts as school core ideas	10	29	
Achieving a unified understanding	15	25	
Improving organisational culture or climate	5	5	
<u>Managing internal administrative affairs</u>	18	70	13.31%
Making major decisions democratically	15	39	
Centring on teaching and learning	9	20	
Managing staff with a human orientation	8	17	
Coordinating internal relationships	8	16	
<u>Developing external relationships and resources</u>	17	56	10.65%
Seeking resources	11	27	
Seising external opportunities	10	16	
Attaining policy support from upper authorities	6	10	
Total		526	100%
<i>Contextual Factors</i>			
<u>Internal conditions</u>	21	148	43.92%
Teacher conditions	17	42	
Student characteristics	12	30	
Cadre conditions	8	17	
Organisational climate	10	16	
School performance and rank	5	10	
Financial situation	5	8	
<u>External environment</u>	21	116	34.42%
The upper educational authority	18	57	
Educational administration system	13	30	
Educational policies and reforms	13	24	
Social environment	8	19	

Local environment	11	17	
Educational conceptions	6	9	
<u>Personal traits and perceptions</u>	18	73	21.66%
Non-position power	14	40	
Positional responsibilities	8	12	
Principalship experience	7	8	
Total		337	100%

Accordingly, these six leadership practices could be taken as the core leadership practices of the principals involved in the interviews. The three types of contextual factors could be seen as the main sources of contextual influences. Within each category, the more specific indicators differed in terms of their perceived importance. The following two sub-sections specify in detail to present their meanings according to the respondents.

Understanding Six Core Leadership Practices

This sub-section expands on the specific components of each emerging category to clarify and enrich them and so allow hypothesising of the practical implications of the core leadership practices and contextual factors.

Setting direction

All respondents mentioned this principal leadership practice, including all the principals involved. As Principal D asserted, ‘the direction of school-running - where to go, that’s the core issue for a school (學校的辦學方向——向何處去，這是一個學校的核心問題).’ A teacher directly pointed out that ‘being a principal is to set a direction (校長就是定一個方向).’ All the leaders involved gave priority to this gross practice and provided three interrelated actions taken by the principals in this regard.

First the principals attempted to set shared visions and/or long-term goal. Principal F stated that ‘I’m more concerned about the vision or goal and direction of school development – where the school will be led and what kind of school it will be like (我關注得比較多的是學校發展的願景或者目標和方向——也就是這個學校到底把它帶到哪個地方去，辦成一個什麼樣的學校).’ Furthermore, ‘this vision has to be fully supported by teachers. [For this purpose], of course, the administrative cadres should agree on it first (這種願景要得到老師們的全力支持，當然首先要行政幹部統一思想),’ said the Party Secretary of School F. To form the unity of thinking, the principal and the leadership team had to play a major role in promoting and modelling the vision, especially when it came to innovation. Principal F suggested, ‘once your key

leadership team aims at this direction, at the beginning phase, you cannot just stand by on the bank or on the dyke to command instead of entering the water (只要你的核心團隊認准了這個方向，在最初級的時候就不能站在岸上、站在堤上指揮，不下水)。”

Second, in order to establish the shared vision or goals, these principals consciously built upon a solid understanding of reality. Principal A explained his practice:

The first thing [I do] is to continuously judge the status of our school development, how the school runs at present, what goes well and what doesn't, what is going on in the surrounding areas and its development trends, and where our school is under such circumstances. (第一個就是不斷地判斷學校發展的狀況，現在運行得怎麼樣，哪些地方運行得很好，哪些地方運行得還有問題，然後現在周邊的發展怎麼樣，發展的趨勢是什麼，在這種背景下我處于什麼樣的狀態)

The same principal elicited feedback from teachers, students and parents through multiple channels. These included school-wide surveys conducted by the Research Office, regular group meetings with students and teachers, personal interviews with teachers and non-scheduled meeting with students and parents, In the similar ways, these principals strived to better understand the school situation, clarify priorities and seek breakthroughs for school development.

Third, principals engaged in planning in order to realise the shared vision or goals of school development. As Principal D contended:

If you want to bring your thoughts into effect, you have to grasp the overall course of school development. This means that there is a need of a well-designed plan for the school. This plan ought to reflect the basic approaches and strategies employed for school advancement. (要把你的想法落實下來，就需要對學校發展的整體思路有所把握。這就是說學校需要有一個像模像樣的規劃。這個規劃應該反映出這個學校推進的基本路徑和策略)

According to the respondents, the planning process usually involved several steps: proposing initial schemes, discussion with the leadership team, consulting with teachers, forming short-term aims and delegating to lower management to design working plans. During this process, school leaders such as Principal C and D, would visit other excellent schools to learn about their experience with the leadership teams.

Developing people

Eighteen respondents identified this aspect as an essential component of principalship. Respondents commenting on Principal A affirmed that 'school

development ultimately depends on the development of students and the development of teachers, these three aspects of development ought to be united (學校的發展最終落實到學生的發展和教師的發展，這三者應該是統一的).’ Principal C believed that people were the determinant of school success. This category involved four generic dimensions: developing students, developing teachers, developing school cadres¹¹² and principal self-development.

In terms of student development, student happiness and all-round development were highlighted by most of the principals. According to Principal D,

Lots of activities in our school seem to be not relevant to the College Entrance Examination or High School Entrance Examination, but they touch children’s hearts and are indeed good for them to form ideals, outlook on life, and basic values. I think this relates to children’s sustainable development in future and lifetime happiness and is a kind of non-intelligence factors education. (很多活動跟高考、中考好像沒關係，但是它觸及孩子的心靈，它對孩子理想、人生觀和基本價值觀的形成其實都是非常好的。我覺得這是關注了孩子們今後的可持續發展和一生的幸福，是一種非智力因素的教育)

At the same time, great importance was attached to student academic performance because of pressures to gain entrance to good quality schools or universities. For example, the vice-principal at School C explained that, ‘No school can avoid the promotion rate. Generally speaking, [our] principal spends most of his energy on Senior Grade Three¹¹³ (升學率，任何學校都回避不了。一般來講，校長的精力主要都放在高三這塊).’

All the leaders involved stressed the essential role of teachers in successful school development. They were mainly concerned about two aspects: professional development and staff motivation. To promote teacher professional advancement, school-based professional training was universally implemented in a way called

¹¹² ‘Cadre’ (*ganbu*) is a formal appellation of the governmental officials in China (Huang, 2005). Here it refers to school administrative staff at different levels, involving the leader of each grade and teaching and research unit, director of teaching and discipline and general affairs, vice principal, deputy secretary and secretary of the (General) Party Branch, and principal. Among them, vice principal, deputy secretary and secretary of the (General) Party Branch, and principal are regarded as school-level cadres who are appointed by the district educational authority. Before the personnel reform, school administrative staff was incorporated in the governmental cadre system. After the reform, the appellation remain widely used in school system, although the government attempted to reduce the influence of this system (see Chapter 2) In the interviews, all the respondents used this term and thus it was kept in here in order to reflect the reality as authentic as possible.

¹¹³ Principal C worked in a high school, in which final-year students, i.e., Senior Grade Three, would take part in the CEE (*gaokao*).

'going out, bringing in (走出去, 請進來)'¹¹⁴. In many schools, support policies provided teachers with the resources to participate in professional activities organised by external authorities, local institutions or other organisations. Peer mentoring and personal coaching were often used to facilitate the growth of young teachers.

Principals emphasised intrinsic motivation. Principal A believed that spiritual motivation was more important than material incentive for teachers and thus worked hard to enhance the values teachers held about their work. Principal D attempted to motivate teachers' potential and passion. Principal F organised extra-curriculum activities to, "help teachers feel pleased, warm and happy in the school". Such strategies aimed to develop the "whole teacher", not just the professional.

Principals committed considerable effort to develop school administrative cadres. As Principal C argued, "it needs several fundamental elements to build a well-known or brand school, one of which is the first-class administration, that is to say, to have a good cadre team (要把一個學校辦成名校或者品牌學校需要幾個因素, 一個是要有一流的管理, 也就說要有很好的幹部隊伍). This doubled as a practical strategy principals used to maximise their own limited time and energy. Principal A admitted that 'between teachers and cadres, I pay more attention to the working state of the cadres because of my limited energy...It is the cadres that I lead directly (在教師和幹部裏面, 我更關注的是, 幹部的工作狀態, 因為我的精力有限.....我直接抓的還是幹部隊伍).' Therefore, targeted guidance was often provided to their school cadres. Principal D invited outside specialists to lecture the cadre on ways to more effectively execute their work. Principal F managed to 'continuously train these people through individual cases in the course of school administration (在管理過程中, 通過案例不斷地去培訓這些人)' and helped novice cadres adapt to their new positions by providing relevant professional books at no cost.

In addition to facilitating the personal professional growth of others, these principals exhibited an awareness of self-development. Principal F pointed out that 'a school principal must have a knowledge of pedagogy, psychology, educational psychology, student psychology, and teacher psychology... you have to learn every thing. If you

¹¹⁴ As principal C described, 'going out is to broaden [teachers'] horizon and bringing in is to invite experts come to school to conduct training (走出去就是擴大視野, 請進來就是請專家進行培訓).'

don't have such professional qualities, you cannot work as a principal or you won't work efficiently (校長他必須懂教育學、心理學、教育心理學、學生心理、教師心理……你什麼都要學，你這方面的專業素質不具備，校長就沒法做，或者就做得沒有效率)'. Principal E also indicated that he was fond of extensive reading. From a similar view of principal self-learning, Principal B forced himself to become familiar with theories of educational thought, in part to help him justify his arguments rather than depend on hollow slogans (自己得學習，對自己認可、接受的教育思想得盡可能地多瞭解，起碼能自圓其說，不是空殼、空口號). Both the vice principal and a teacher from this school confirmed his self-description and regarded their principal as "good at learning".

Shaping core ideas and concepts

Nineteen of the twenty-one respondents noted that one most important function of the principal was to lead provide advanced ideas and concepts. Principal C claimed that learning advanced ideas or scientific concepts for better school operation, when in line with local realities, was an essential component of a successful school. This view was generally shared. A vice principal in School E confirmed that 'it is the school-running concept and management rather than material conditions that plays a major role (硬件不是主要的，主要是辦學理念和管理)'. Thus, most of the selected principals committed considerable effort to provide 'an ideological guidance (思想上面的一種引領)' (Principal E), particularly through establishing their personal thoughts as core school ideas and achieving a unified understanding within the school.

In practice, the core ideas guiding schools were built mostly upon the thoughts proposed by the principals. Principal B stated that 'it is me who first understands and have an idea. I'll inculcate and instil [my thoughts into teachers' minds] (我先懂，我先知道。我灌，我推)'. The vice principal working with this principal explained further:

The principal has been thinking about school education and instruction management for a long time... In terms of school-running ideas, he puts what he have been thinking about into practice again in our school...we cadres and teachers are mainly here to follow out our principal's ideas of school running. (對學校的教育教學管理方面，校長有自己長時期的思考。……辦學思想上，他是把過去他自己形成的一些東西在我們這兒進行重新的實踐。……我們幹部和教師都是以貫徹校長的辦學思想為主)

He adopted a vivid metaphor to describe it:

The cadre team of one school ought to work like a band. The principal is the conductor and the other cadres play different instruments, such as violin, trombone or cello. Although individual persons play their own instruments, all of them have to be in tune with the principal (一個學校的幹部隊伍應該像一個樂隊一樣，校長是指揮，其他的幹部你可以是小提琴、長號，或者大提琴什麼的。雖然每個人各有自己演奏的東西，但還是要吹校長這個調)。

With such core ideas, the next step was to form a unified understanding within the school. As Principal B affirmed:

In a fundamental sense, true unity means a unified educational idea shared by all school members. Once this unity is accomplished, other managerial measures would become secondary practices and the faculty can be seen as united and the goal of school running can be thought as unified and achievable. (真正的、根本意義上的團結一致，是在共同的教育思想上的一致。這樣的一個一致性以後，其他的管理都是次要的，都可以認為是教職工是團結一致，可以認為是學校的辦學目標是一致的目標，可以達成)

School unity was brought around through a top-down approach. First, they would convey their ideas and consult with the leadership team and middle management in administrative meetings. After getting consensus at the first level, they would promote the idea to front-line teachers and other school members through an All Staff Assembly, the Teacher Representative Congress and various workshops. Meanwhile, the principals would make use of various school documents to clarify and communicate their ideas. During this process, the principals normally asked teachers for their opinions. In most cases, however, the discussion was restricted to wording refinement or slight modifications.

Principals were conscious of the role of school culture or climate and made every effort to build a proper atmosphere. Principal E was aware of the effect of school culture on leading school cadres. He stressed that 'the birds of the same feather flock together. Various conflicts and problems will be complicated in certain school culture and climate. If you guide well, it might be good (物以類聚，人以群分。各種矛盾和問題在這個文化氛圍裏會很複雜。引導得好，它可能就好。)' Through reflecting on his own leadership practices, Principal C believed that a democratic atmosphere was important for school development and indicated that he would make efforts to 'create a good educational ambiance to enable teachers and parents to care

about the school and involve students in school planning (營造一個良好的教育的氛圍，讓老師們、家長們都來關心學校，也讓學生都參與進來)’. Specifically, ‘we’ll listen to the view of students and teachers, as well as some critiques and advice from the society. We should these in a timely manner and absorb these opinions to make a good plan [for our school] (在民主進程上，多聽取學生的意見，多聽取老師的建議吧，包括社會的一些批評啊、建議啊，我們都要及時地採納吸收進來，以便把這個規劃做好)’. In practice, Principal D built a special team to construct the school culture. Principal F organized a variety of extra-curriculum activities to realise his idea of ‘making teachers and students feel happy in this school (讓老師和學生在這個學校裏感到很幸福)’.

Improving instruction and curriculum

Improving instruction and curriculum was a central function of the principals. A teaching director from School C stated that ‘the quality of school instruction is [one of] the concerns on which the principal spend most of his energy...because education quality is the life force of a school (投入最多精力的就是學校教學質量的問題……因為教育質量就是一個學校的生命力)’. Improving curriculum and instruction embodied three general activities: focusing on the improvement of teaching and learning, developing school-based curriculum and prioritising student exam performance.

The principals focused energy and strategy on the quest for improved teaching and learning across the school. A teacher at School E pointed out that ‘if school principals really want to accomplish something in education area, they absolutely should focus on teaching and learning (如果真的想在教育領域有所發展，肯定要注重教學)’. In order to ensure the quality of teacher teaching, the principals spent a considerable amount of time in classrooms observing and, attending group discussions to directly monitor school instruction and guide teachers. Some principals introduced innovations in classroom teaching. For example,, Principal E implemented ‘small class teaching (小班教學)’ in the school.

Other principals paid particular attention to how students learned. Principal B explained that he, and other principals, organized a variety of activities, including demonstration classes, to help improve student learning. Regardless of the strategies employed all principals agreed with the sentiments of Principal E when he stated that

'the first priority of a school should be given to classroom teaching all the time (一間學校，不管什麼時候都應該把課堂教學擺在第一位).'

School-based curriculum development was another major approach to improving education quality. Principal F believed that:

It's not enough for a school to only have a good classroom [teaching]. If you want interested children, keep the school long-lasting, and become a well-known school, it's necessary for the school to have its own characteristic curriculum. (光有課堂還不行，你要吸引孩子們、保持一個學校長久不衰、真正地成爲一個名校，它必須要有它特色的課程)

Principal C held the same view and had developed approximately seventy courses for offer within his school. The development of courses is a requirement of the curriculum reform. The development of courses to enrich the curriculum was seen as a way of establishing a school's identity. According to Principal D, 'the most fundamental concern [for a school] is to truly embark on the way of intensive development, forge its own characteristics, and promote its education quality (真正地走教育內涵發展之路，辦出自己的特色，提升自己的教育品質，這才是最根本的問題).' These school-based courses reflected the characteristic of the school and were thus considered curriculum as 'the core issue of school education' (學校教育的核心問題——課程).

However, at the same time as stressing the importance of curriculum development the principals had to stay focused on exam performance. Principals F admitted that increasing student test scores remained 'what all school principal will do, and so do I...This is what I have to do...if I don't pay particular attention to the High School Entrance examination or the College Entrance Examination, I would get fired in one year (任何一個校長都要做的，我也是這樣做的……這是我必須要做的……如果不搞統考，不搞高考，一年我這個校長就滾蛋了).' Working in a high school, Principal C was also concerned about the test score and promotion rate. He spent most of his time and energy on the final year students, 'equipping this grade with excellent teachers and giving it preferential policies, including awarding policies for the College Entrance Examination. In general, priority is given to the final grade (給高三配備一些優秀教師，給一些特殊的政策，包括高考的一些獎勵政策，這都要傾向高三一些).' Even in the exemplar school led by Principal D, which is known for its excellent academic performance and high quality education, the school leader was

said to be most concerned about student academic achievement and final exam performance.

Managing internal administrative affairs

At a more operation level, leaders recognized the importance of managing the day to day running of the school. Most of these practices related to how to make decisions work through their staff. This involved four major components: making major decisions democratically, centring on teaching and learning, managing staff with a human orientation, and coordinating internal relationships.

First, the most prominent leadership practice was making major decisions democratically. One of the manifestations of this was that principals communicated and consulted regularly with teachers about important issues, especially those relevant to their immediate interests such as performance related pay and outside training opportunities. Principal B pointed out that he mainly used the 'the bottom-up approach to motivate teachers and enhance their confidence (由下到上主要是爲了激勵老師，鼓舞老師的自信心)'. Consultation tended to involve teacher representatives only - but targeted those who were familiar with the real situation in the school. As Principal B said about this that, 'respecting them is respecting the entire teacher group (尊重他們就是尊重整個教師集體).' Most of the principals were 'aware of exerting collective power in school management, because this is the guarantee of a good job (意識到在管理中發揮集體的力量，因爲這是最終做好工作的保障).' (Principal A) Thus, many major decisions were actually made by the leadership team using a form of 'collective decision-making (集體決策)'.

Second, principals emphasised that internal school administration should be linked to the school's educative function. As principal A affirmed:

Teaching and learning are the centre of administration, that is to say, all kinds of administrative work should centre upon school education and instruction...how good the administrative work is depends on how well it serves the central work of the school. (教學是行政的中心工作，就是說，各個方面的行政工作都是圍繞著教育教學工作展開……這些工作判斷它做得好不好，也是看它爲中心工作服務的力度)

Administrative work included basic administrative functions and the optimisation of internal resources and student safety. Principals generally delegated lower

management to handle routine work. For example, Principal C's appointed his vice principal to oversee staff training and principals did the same of operational planning. Third, principals worked to maintain a human face. Principal D described his school as having 'a good cultural environment and is very flexible and harmonious. I have been making efforts to lead the school with a human orientation and weaken the rigid way of managing through "control, pressure and restraint" as much as possible (人文環境很好，很寬鬆、很和諧，那種強硬的“管、壓、卡”痕迹，我現在是儘量在淡化，儘量以人爲本)'. He further explained that 'in fact, individual intellectuals always pursue self-actualisation. As long as the environment is good and the direction is right, teachers will understand and support your work (其實知識分子，每個人都有一種自我實現的追求。只要是環境好，方向把握好，老師們都能夠理解并且支持你的工作)'. Principal E realised that 'teachers have multiple needs, including spiritual needs, material needs, methodological guidance, physical needs, family needs, etc. (老師的需求也是多層次的，精神上面的，物質上面的，方法上面的指導，身體方面、家庭方面的等等)'. To meet these needs, he said, 'I'll do whatever I can, in spite of my own limited capability (雖然我個人的能力有限，但只要我能做的就盡力去做)'.

Another importance aspect of internal administration was the coordination of internal relationships within the school, particularly the interpersonal relationships between the principal and teachers and between the principal and other leaders. Principals normally communicated with teachers through a number of formal channels, such as staff meeting, group learning activities and classroom. When there was a conflict or disagreement, personal conversations were often used to solve the problem (e.g., Principals C and E). In terms of the relationship with other school leaders, Principal F highlighted the role of having a 'harmonious leadership team (和諧的領導團隊)' and compared it to the team composed of the Master and his three apprentices in the *Journey to the West* (《西游記》).

Principals also endeavoured to maintain a good relationship with the Party secretary. In Chinese schools the secretary is in charge of cadre management (黨管幹部). Principal E explained frankly, 'I'll adopt, as much as possible, some ideas and suggestions proposed by the secretary to establish his authority. I never ever let him lose face – I definitely would not do such a stupid thing (書記的一些意見和想法能夠

採納的時候我會儘量去採納，樹立他的一種權威，我從來不會去殺他的面子——我肯定不會去做這樣的蠢事)。” However, Principal B thought it unnecessary to appoint another person as the secretary and he believed that the principal could assume this responsibility.

Developing external relationships and resources

Principals sought to acquire additional resources through developing close, productive relationships with people and agencies outside the more immediate school boundaries. Both relationships and additional resources were seen as key to successful schools. The key relationship appeared to be with district and government officials, whose support was absolutely essential. A vice principal from School D explained.

In general, for a principal of a key high school in Beijing, a large portion of his energy is spent in maintaining school social connections. These connections can provide a good environment for the school to survive. Such an environment includes the policy environment and another big issue, funding, because administrative allocation for education is relatively limited, as well as various public relations. Thus, the principal may often be busy dealing with these issues – this is related to the overall social conditions in China. (一般來說在北京重點中學的正校長，他的精力大概有一大部分是在維護學校的社會關係上。社會關係的價值在於為學校的生存提供了一個比較好的環境。這種環境包括政策環境，和一個比較大的問題——經費——因為教育的行政撥款是比較有限的，還包括各種社會公共關係。所以，很多時候校長可能會忙於這些方面——這跟整個中國的社會現狀有關)

A large part of a principal's job was to raise funds for school and teacher development. Government funding for school in China is generally insufficient for more than the most basic functions and it is universally accepted, and in fact encouraged, for schools to aggressively seek funds from within and outside of the system. The lack of sufficient resources was considered a problem in all the schools involve in the study. As Principal D said, 'the money provided by the state largely amounts to one third of the total expenditure of our school. The other two thirds need to be raised by ourselves (國家給的錢也就相當於我們學校總開支的大概三分之一，三分之二靠自籌).' A vice principal in the same school complained that 'as a matter of fact, funding is a big problem for all units. The funds always can't match up with what we want to do (對於現在所有的單位，經費都是一個挺大的問題。學校的經費和想幹的事情總是不匹配的).' Thus, Principal D organised a 'funds-raising team (聚財

小組)’ to get extra money for the school. Principal F spent much time ‘lobbying’ (游說) the concerning officials in order to acquire the resources necessary to develop his school into a national exemplary school. While seeking funds from the government, Principal F made full use of the local network to supplement standard funding and less tangible support— such as from parents, private corporations, other schools and academic institutions.

Attaining resources involved more than just raising money. Principals also scanned the environment for worthwhile programmes to import, public forums to highlight the school and a range of educational expertise. Principal A suggested that “when a principal can bring opportunities and resources to the school, he/she will win the trust from other cadres and teachers (校長能够給學校帶來機會和資源，就會贏得其他的幹部和老師的信任).’ Therefore, during a new round of curriculum reform in Beijing, he signed his school up for a youth development program called ‘Soaring Plan (翱翔計劃)’. His school also cooperated with the Institute of Psychology of the Chinese Academy of Sciences to set up a ‘Gifted Child Class (少年班)’ to enrol exceptional students. ‘All these are new opportunities for our development (這都是我們發展的新的機遇),’ he explained. In line with government policy schools also internationally exchange with overseas schools in order to, ‘recruit international students and promote cultural communication and conversation between the West and China (招收更多的外國留學生，促進中西文化的交流與對話).’

The third leadership strategy involved principals in attaining policy support from higher educational authorities. As stated in previous chapters, the government plays a dominant role in the Chinese education system. All the principals admitted the importance of the support from authorities for their school’s survival and development. A vice principal in school D confirmed this, ‘school development needs policy support. If you don’t get the policy support, it will be quite difficult for you to carry out innovative programs or ideas (學校發展需要一些政策的支持。你實施一些改革的項目和想法，沒有政策的支持就很難做).’ A teaching director in this school also commented:

After all, the principal’s power is limited. Sometime, outside or superior policies may temporarily not allow him to do what he wants to do. In this case, our principal will actively communicate with the superior, committee of education, and educational office directors to get their

support. (校長的權力畢竟還是有限的。有些時候，外部或上級的政策，可能暫時不允許他做自己想做的。這樣的時候，校長通常就會積極和上級領導、教委、辦事處領導溝通，獲得他們的支持)

For Principal E, such support was essential for the ongoing 'small class teaching' reform he initiated in school. As he said, 'as long as you give me this broad policy and allow me to do this, I will certainly try my best to do it (你只要把這個大的政策給我，讓我去做這個事，我就肯定會努力去做)'. The teaching director of his school even said that 'fortunately, the superior learnt about our situation in recent years and permitted us to carry out this experiment (幸好這兩年上級也知道了，就同意我們搞這個實驗).'

Understanding Three-level Contextual Factors

Three-level contextual factors emerged as the major sources of the influence on the core leadership practices of the selected Chinese school principals. These contextual elements are explicated in this sub-section.

School internal conditions

Among the three categories of contextual factors, the internal conditions seemed to be the most influential. All respondents attached great importance to the impact of internal school conditions on principal leadership practices. As one of the vice principals from Principal D's school affirmed, "The principal is very important in our school because he is supposed to have an idea first. Such an idea is based on an overall awareness of the history, present and future of this school (在我們學校，校長非常重要，因為校長首先要有想法，而這種想法是基于對學校歷史、現在和將來的一個整體的把握當中提出的)'. These internal organisational factors mainly consisted of teacher conditions, student characteristics, organisational climate, cadre conditions, school performance and status, and financial situation.

Factors related to teachers appeared most important (17 of 21). One aspect was often mentioned in the interviews, the age profile of staff. For example, Principal B and his vice principal both mentioned the influence of age. Since most teachers in their school were very young, the principal felt respected (比較尊重我) and was seldom directly confronted by the teachers (直接、主動來頂著我的人很少). But the vice principal indicated that these less-experienced teachers had difficulty in disciplining students and improving their performance. Thus, the principal thought that the

teachers could hardly find time and energy to think more about school development and ultimate mission.

When the principals aimed to implement innovations and improve classroom teaching, such as Principal B and E, the emphasis would be put on teachers' consciousness and capability of execution, habitual teaching approaches, and unwillingness to change. Furthermore, Principal F and the Party Secretary of his school both stressed that teachers' understanding of education, professional pursuits, dedication, and team spirit would affect the realisation of the school vision (教師對教育的認識、自身的追求、敬業精神、團隊精神，會影響你的願景的實現). Principal D paid particular attention to teacher participation in school planning because:

Every teacher [in the school] is concerned about school long-term development... [They] do not merely impart knowledge or teach what the book says, which is a simple, low-level requirement of an educational practitioner. They all have further career pursuits. (每個老師都是非常關心學校的長遠發展的……不是簡單地教書或者照本宣科，這種簡單的、低層次的對一個教育工作者的要求。他們都是很有事業追求的)

A central contextual influence was the shape and quality of the 'student intake' (生源). Principal D set up a 'recruitment team' (招生小組) in order to recruit more talented students. Most of the principals were worried about the poor quality of the students enrolled in their schools, particularly in ordinary schools. The vice principal from School B called it a 'congenital deficit' (先天不足); meaning that the students were low achievers before enrolling and had a very weak grasp of fundamentals upon which he school could build. The teaching director in School E also complained:

Students are like water. "The water that bears the boat is the same that swallows it up." [So] the student intake is quite important. Why do we have been lagging behind other schools in recent years? It's just because the students coming to our school are those who are rejected by the other schools that select students before us and these students can go nowhere – but the compulsory education require them to go to school, thus what comes to our school is the fifth batch of students (學生就像水，“水能載舟，亦能覆舟”，學生的生源很重要。我們為什麼這兩年落在別的學校後面？就是因為我們所來的學生都是其他學校挑完的，他沒地方去了——而義務教育必須解決他的讀書問題，所以來的是第五批)。

At the same time, 'schools are powerless in terms of student intake (學校對生源無能為力)', lamented a vice principal, 'student allocation in compulsory education is controlled and mandated by the local bureau of education. Parents can determine

whether their children come or not – as long as I have money, power, and connections, I'll let my children go to good schools (現在義務教育都是硬性規定，學生的安排是教育局規定，來不來是家長的自由——我有錢、有能力、有關係，就跑到好的學校)'. Thus, the job of school leaders was to try and turn around the quality of their students. As Principal C explained, 'low input but high output – students come in with low calibre but finally leave school with high quality (低進高出——低口徑進來的學生，最後高素質地出去).'

These school leaders were also affected by the state of the school cadres. A teaching director saw this influence as having a negative effect of principal leadership in her school.

From 1998 and in the following several years, [the principal] focused on school teaching and learning and the school had been continuously developed into new stages every year. Overall, the leaders within the leadership team were able to cooperate with each other. Although there were some frictions, they all aimed to promote the development of this school. After re-electing the leader group, a new vice principal came into office and began to scramble for power and profit...School management was in chaos and the leader group was in a state of internal strife. The principal knew it but was helpless...he himself was scared to death - although he did say it, everybody could see it – his showed it on his face. In such a state, could a principal think about school development seriously? Absolutely couldn't. (從 98 年開始的這幾年都挺關注教學，學校一年一個臺階，在不斷發展變化。總體領導班子之間工作還是比較配合的，摩擦肯定會有，不管怎樣說，大家還是都忙著都使勁。學校的總體方案有一種主流。後來領導班子進行改選，副頭來了之後，就開始爭權奪利了。……學校的管理處于一個混亂的狀態，領導班子處于互相鬥爭的狀態。校長很清楚，但很無能為力……他自己就天天嚇得要命——雖然不說，但是大家都能看出來——臉色都不對。人處于這樣的一個狀態，一個校長還能認真的去研究學校的發展嗎？肯定不能)

This demonstrated the great influence that the cadre conditions could have on the principal, which also reinforced the importance these principals attached to the practice of building a cooperative leader group (領導班子).

The forth in-school factor was organisational climate. School climate refers to the organisational environment within which principals lead. Many principals emphasised the impact of climate on their leadership. Principal E considered it as an important but complicated issue because it 'might not work in the way you want (不是你想怎麼樣它就會怎麼樣的)'. In School B, the school climate was generally harmonious and the staff was inclined to be obedient to their principal. Few people

would directly or actively confront the principal. Thus, his ideas usually dominated the school and were widely accepted by staff.

School performance and status was a major internal contextual influence on principal leadership practices. As principal F said,

Before 1995, this school was shabby and third-rate. Two students entering higher education per year would be ok. There was only one class in the Senior Grade Three and one class in each grade. The municipal authority just required us to make one student enter the higher educational institution. Between 1995 and 1998, the number ranged from five to ten. The only thing that needs you to do is to make it and accomplish the task. [So] No one would like to come to this school... At that time, the officials in the Bureau of Education always said that "if you don't work harder, I'll transfer you to that school."... [Thus], our school was even not a district school... Nothing could meet the criteria, such as conditions and facilities of school running, grounds, teaching quality, etc. (95 年以前，這學校就是破破爛爛的。一年能考上 2 個本科就 OK 了。那時候高三一個班，每個年級一個班。每年市裏面給我們的任務就是考上 1 個本科生。95 年到 98 年就是考上 5-10 個本科生。你考上，完成任務了，就可以了。沒什麼人來讀書……當時教育局領導有句話就是：“你再不好好搞，把你調到那個學校去”。那個時候我們學校連區級都不是……什麼都不夠條件：辦學條件也不夠，辦學設備也不夠，場地也不夠，教學質量也不夠)

To change the situation, Principal F applied for the Municipal Green School in 2005 and he believed that a higher status was a breakthrough for the school. After getting the status, the school attracted more and more attention from the district educational authority and local community. Then, the principal focused on the improvement of student performance and meanwhile succeed in applying for the Provincial Green School. In the next three years, the student exam performance of this school became one of the top schools in the district and the school was further entitled National Green School. Now, the internal environment seemed particularly good for the school development and the principal is applying for the National Exemplary School. This typically reflected the importance of school performance and the related status, which signified the quality of school education and was closely related with the resources individual schools could get.

The availability of funds was an important contextual influence. Some principals indicated that they did not worry additional funds (e.g., Principal F)

but most were concerned about the disparity between government financial input and actual school expenditure. Principal E explained:

For schools in Guangzhou, it seems that they should “get the money anyway”, but there is actually “an acute lack of money” in these schools. The maintenance of school equipment needs a lot of money. [For instance], one bulb in our operation rooms or platforms costs two or three thousand *yuan*. How long does one bulb last? It may last for one year or one and a half, I reckon. In this period of time, how much will it cost to get fifty or sixty bulbs changed? In addition to this, there are hundreds of computers. If I do the maintenance once a year, about one hundred *yuan* for each computer, it will consume hundreds of thousands *yuan*. Besides, we have to pay for utilities, etc. I feel that the input of the municipal government to education is quite inadequate at present. (像廣州這些學校，表面上應該說“不差錢”，可實際上學校“很差錢”。這些設備的維護維修，費用比較重。我們學校的操行間或者平臺，一個燈泡就是兩三千塊錢。一個燈泡能用多長時間？估計一年到一年半。一年到一年半我光換燈泡，五六十個燈泡要多少錢？要十幾萬。這是一個，還有幾百台電腦。每一年去維護一次，一台電腦至少要一百塊錢左右，又是十幾萬塊錢。還有水電費什麼的。我感覺現在廣州對教育的投入是很不夠的)

External environment

Outside influences were another major influence on principal leadership. This influence was derived from five specific external elements. These were district educational authority, educational administration system, educational policies and reforms, social environment, and local environment.

The district educational authority involved the municipal and district Bureau of Education or Educational Committee, as well as the relevant administration office set up by some state-run corporations to supervise affiliated schools (e.g., School C)¹¹⁵. These agencies are usually in charge of district administrative functions such as school and principal evaluation, administrative examination and approval for school programs, policy-making for local educational development, student-intake quota allocations, selection and appointment of school-level cadres, buildings and facilities, financial allocation, and teacher and cadre professional development. In short, the district education authority is overall responsible for the provision of policies, human resources, financial resources and material resources. Thus, it greatly influenced the school leaders' work. As Principal E said, ‘what influences my practices most is the superior policy. If the policy from the upper authorities does not support you, it’s

¹¹⁵ In China, large state-run corporations or institutions are allowed to set up primary and/or secondary schools to educate their personnel's children.

quite difficult for a school principal to do or keep doing what you want to do (最影響我的做法的是上級的政策。你上面政策不支持你的時候，你作為校長自己的一些想法，很難做的或者是做不下去)。

The second influence was the educational administration systems themselves. These systems included financial allocation system, exam-oriented school and principal evaluation system, administrative examination and approval system, and principal responsibility system (PRS). We have already established the lack of financial resources from the system. In terms of the exam-oriented evaluation system, a teacher commented that ‘teaching and learning concerns school principals most because it is the pass rate and promotion rate that are used for school evaluation (校長最關心的是教學，因為考察一個學校的是及格率和升學率)’. This suggested that the main criterion used in the existing school evaluation system was student academic performance, which seemed as the major reason for the priority given by the principals to school teaching and learning. Besides, Chinese school leaders had little autonomy running their schools, even though the responsibility for managing the school had been devolved to the school level through the PRS. As Principal F noted,

Even for some small things, such as school-wide small projects, building a gate, or building school culture, you cannot make your own decision and have to get it examined and approved by some departments – but the officials in charge know little about it, what can be done? Why do we have so many schools that follow the same pattern and look like the same? This is bound up with our systems that keep all in control. Now, Premier Wen said, “let educationalists run schools”. How can we make it? We can’t. Educationists need a relatively free and autonomous environment, which is anything but such a rigid administration system. (學校搞個什麼小小建設、建個校門、搞個校園文化建設，這麼小的東西，你都不能當家作主，有的部門還要審批——審批的人也不懂，能辦成什麼事？為什麼我們這麼多學校千篇一律、千校一面？它與我們的體制密切相關，全要管的。現在我們溫總理說“教育家辦學”，怎麼出教育家？出不了。教育家必須要出在一個相對自由、自主的一個環境裏面，按照這樣嚴格的管理體制出不了教育家)

The third external contextual influence was the education policies and reforms implemented by the central government. The recent curriculum reform was considered the most significant influence on school management. Most respondents confirmed the positive effects of the reform on their schools. The teaching director from School C pointed out that their principal had paid particular attention to changes in classroom instruction and teaching methods since the implementation of

the New Curriculum Reform. Principal A believed the reform could lead education toward a more student-centred approach to teaching. So school administration must adapt to this trend (它會使中國的教育向著更符合學生需要的方向發展。那對學校管理來說，就是必須要適應這個發展的趨勢)。

Compared with the influence of the local authorities, however, the impact of reform was relatively mild. Principal E explained.

Policies from the central government can't compare with those from our upper educational authorities because the central government is too far away. The policies are good, for example, implementing quality education, how long has it been [since this policy was proposed]? [It has been for] several decades. But is it really that hard now to carry out the policy in schools? No. It is local authorities, such as the Bureau of Education and district government, that don't want to do that. They don't care because those officials have never ever studied how a human being ought to be taught. Thus, when they talk about policy, they also advocate quality education. But when they assess your performance, they only focus on student test scores. (中央政策不如管我們的教育部門的政策，因為中央隔得太遠了。中央的政策是好的，比如說推行素質教育，多少年了？幾十年了。但是現在到下面，真的那麼難嗎？不是的。就是下面這一幫人過不了關，教育局也好，區政府也好，他不管你的，那些人他不管你的原因就是他們根本沒有去研究過人究竟應該怎麼去教。所以他去談政策的時候，他也說要搞素質教育，但是他評你的時候，就看學生的考試成績怎麼樣)

In addition to the policy context, the social environment was an important influence on how principals lead their schools, especially in promoting student academic achievement. The teaching directors in School C pointed out that 'the society and the students' parents are more concerned about student performance on the entrance exam (社會和家長更關心的是他的升學成績)'. Another teacher director from School E contended that 'In practice, output is the key to the development and social recognition of a school... If your [school] always comes first in examinations, it will naturally be well-known in the society (在實際操作過程中，一個學校能否發展，能否得到社會認同，關鍵還是看你出口……如果你考試成績名列前茅，社會自然會很認同)'. Such expectations from parents and the society impelled the principals to attach particular importance to student achievement. As one of the vice principals working with School D commented,

I think what concerns [our principal] most may be still the teaching quality and student achievement. Students' ultimate performance on the entrance examination ought to be critical, because many parents focus on

this, which also decide the fortune of a school (我覺得可能最關心的還是教學質量，學生的學習成績。學生最後的升學成績，應該是很關鍵的，因為很多家長關注這個，這也決定著學校的命運)。

Against this broad societal context, the more immediate local context was also a major influence on principal leadership. The vice principals from Schools C and D and the teaching director of School F complained about 'the fierce competition between different schools (學校之間的競爭很激烈)', which produced great pressure on school principals. Furthermore, the principals always attached importance to what's advocated by the local government. For example, Beijing Municipal Government called for more internationalisation. Accordingly, both Principals C and D emphasised international exchange in the goals they set for their schools. Principal C 'prepare to set up an international department at an appropriate time in future, recruiting international students from overseas, to promote the cultural communication between the West and China (今後還準備在適當的時候，開設國際部，找一些國外的留學生，從而促進中西文化的交流)'. Principal D's school has been carrying out such plans for many years, he said, 'there would be hundreds of overseas children [coming to our school] each semester and we'll send hundreds of children abroad every term (每個學期總得有幾個百個國外的孩子，我們每個學期也要出去幾百個孩子)'.

Local economic conditions were related to the resources the local government could provide. The vice principals in Schools B and E stressed the effect of the local economic development level on school development. One stated that the economic development level of the district in which his school located 'was relatively lower than in Beijing Municipal. The suburban counties were more restricted economically (在北京市是屬於比較落後的，就北京市郊區縣來說，也是相對經濟比較落後的)'. Therefore, the shortage of money seemed as a big issue for the principal. For principal E, the situation seemed to be grimmer. According to his vice principal, the school was located in a district 'which is quite poor (是比較窮的)'. As far as he knew, 'it lives by selling lands. After demolition and planning, the local government will sell the land to real estate developers at a price several times higher than the cost (它就是靠賣地生存，拆遷完畢之後，規劃好之後，以幾倍的利潤賣給發展商)'. Accordingly, the principal was worried about whether his campus would exist in future.

Within the broad reform context and the local environment, prevalent educational conceptions also affected educational practitioners. 'For example', the vice principal from School D said.

Before the curriculum reform, there was no concept of curriculum in schools. Since [the reform] has led to the new curriculum and given the power [of developing curriculum] to schools, [we] need to research and develop curriculum and implement school-based curriculum, which certainly is a big challenge for schools. This challenge is not only for schools, but teachers, as well as the school management, because new assessment and new curriculum development is different from the original national curriculum. It will bring lots of new requirements for school administration. (新課程改革之前，學校是沒有課程概念。現在有了新課程，給了學校這種權力，就要研究開發課程，實施學校的課程，當然對學校是很大的挑戰。這不僅是對學校，對老師，在管理上也是，因為新的評價，新的課程開發和原來的國家課程還是有差異的。它會在學校管理方面帶來很多新的要求)

But not all leaders recognised the influence of the innovative ideas advocated in the reform on their school education. Rather, they emphasised other views or conceptions. For example, based on his school's situation Principal E proposed a model of small class teaching following a visit other schools. Principal B claimed that that his thoughts were largely influenced of Sukhomlinsky¹¹⁶. At the same time, he seemed to disagree with the reforms advocated students returning from overseas. He said bluntly that 'I don't like those overseas returnees – applying the experience from such small countries as Netherlands and Finland to China (那幫海歸派我也不待見——拿荷蘭、芬蘭，定點大的地方的經驗上中國這兒套來).' Thus, he insisted that:

The ideas from outside and upper authorities, including the curriculum reform, hardly make a difference to me, which just enrich and confirm my thoughts and practice. So much for them [the overseas returnees], isn't it? These people never actually run a school. They just focus on research. That's all. How much money the state spends! I've already made my school accept these ideas and do not plan to change, except some absorption, integration and enrichment. (外界、上級政策這些東西，包括課改，對我就幾乎沒啥影響，也就是豐富我點，印證一下我這種提法對，我沒走樣。他們也不過如此，對不對？這些人一個學校都不管理，就蹲著那兒片去搞研究，也就這點事，國家花多少錢。我讓我這個學校早認可這些東西，就不準備變了，也就是吸收、融合、豐富)

¹¹⁶ Vasyl Olexandrovykh Sukhomlynsky (September 28, 1918 – September 2, 1970) was a Ukrainian humanistic educator in the Soviet Union who saw the aim of education in producing a truly humane being.

This tendency seemed consistent with the gradually reduced influence of the education reform policies mentioned above.

Personal traits and perceptions

The third category of the contextual influences related to principals' personal traits and perceptions. Eighteen respondents suggested that the effect of certain personal traits and perceptions on leadership practices. These personal factors involved three major types: non-power factors, positional responsibilities and principalship experience.

First, a number of non-power factors were highlighted by most of the respondents (14 of 18). As Principal A interpreted,

“Non-power” factors encompass a principal’s understanding of school education, professional pursuits, personal values and moral integrity, capability of being a principal, and the relevant professional knowledge. All these are something other than administrative positions. (“非權力”的因素包括你的教育理念，理想追求，你的價值觀和本身的人格，你處理自身業務的知識和能力等等，這些都是屬於行政職務以外的東西)

Principal D pointed out that ‘school-running ideas should reflect your own understandings of education and basic education, as well as different stages of education, such as junior and senior secondary education (辦學思想裏面應該體現你對教育的理解，對基礎教育的理解，對於初中、對於高中這樣不同學段的教育的理解).’ Principal A gave priority to principals’ ‘motivation and pursuit of actively serving other teachers and students (主動地為學校為其他老師為學生服務的動機和追求).’ As he said, ‘first and foremost, a principal should have his/her own ideals, pursuits and beliefs (首先做校長，應該有理想，有追求，有人生信念).’ Principal F agreed with him and articulated his own pursuit and that ‘no matter whether I am a teacher or a school principal, I’ll definitely become the best and become a well-know educationalist (我無論是做老師還是做校長，我肯定要把它做成最棒的，我要成名成家).’ Being such an educationist should stand up to scrutiny and judgment in terms of morality and conduct (在德行方面能夠經得起推敲，經得起大家評判). This was part of Principal E’s charisma, according to his teaching director. A key element of this charisma was the principals’ capability. The teaching director and another teacher from School F confirmed that their principal was capable of leading the

school with vision and foresight. Such capability originated from and could be enhanced *via* a continuous renewal and expansion of their professional knowledge.

Positional responsibilities were regarded as the ultimate determinant of principals' leadership practices. Principal A affirmed that

[For principals], the first thing is to "do what your responsibility asks you to do." In other words, do your duty. A basic requirement of this position is that you as a principal cannot just be like the other teachers. Instead, you have to complete what a school principal ought to accomplish. (第一個就是“在其位必須謀其政”，就是說盡責。作為這個崗位工作的一個基本要求，你作為校長，就是不能像其他老師那樣。那你就完成你這個校長應該完成的)

Principals' personal experience has an impact on their leadership practices. All the selected principals had worked for more than twenty years. Some of them had been principals for many years (e.g., Principal B, C and F). This experience helped them develop a better and sounder understanding of education and principalship. For example, as a veteran principal, Principal F began his principalship at the age of twenty eight. Since then, he paid attention to summarising his own experience. 'Although he was transferred to Guangzhou from outside, he knows what is needed for the children here and for the community, through comparing the difference between the two areas,' said the teacher from his school. Principal D had more than thirty-years teaching experience. One of his vice principals thought this as the most important influence on his principalship. As he explained:

Our principal started his career being a teacher. He has been a grade leader, teaching director, and the vice principal in charge of teaching and learning. He totally grows up by himself within the school. During this process, he keeps in touch with the outside world at all levels. Thus, he could develop a basic comprehension of education and a clearer knowledge of the *status quo* of the school. So he could play a leading role in our school. In this sense, [such experience] is the most important [factor]. (我們校長，是從老師做起，做過年級組長，做過教學主任，做過教學副校長。他完全是在學校自己成長起來的。在成長過程中，在和外界各個層面的接觸中，他就會形成對教育的一種基本認識以及對學校現狀一個更清醒的認識，所以他在學校裏起到的作用是非常大的。所以這是首要的)

Based on the core leadership practices and main contextual factors which emerged from the axial coding stage, the researcher employed a selective coding technique in order to further examine the inter-relationship among these categories and the practical patterns of the core leadership practices used by these principals in their

schools. In other words, the following coding stage was used to help answer how these core leadership practices and contextual factors relate with each other and how different principals exercise core leadership practices in their schools.

Selective coding – Identifying Relationships and Patterns

In this phase, the researcher reconsidered the conceptual categories developed in the axial coding stage (Strauss & Corbin, 1990; Mertens, 2005). First, the investigation focused on the inter-relationships between different conceptual categories. Second, it aimed to identify the common patterns underlying the core leadership practices to explain how these practices were commonly enacted by these principals in school. As a result, three underlying patterns emerged from the analysis. These included balance between quality education and exam orientation, differential involvement in decision-making, and hybrid between democratic procedures and top-down, values-driven authority. Third, two latent models were developed through comparing and synthesising the core leadership practices used by different school principals.

Inter-relationships

Three parts make up the analysis of the inter-relationships among the conceptual categories. First, the analysis was conducted to capture the inter-relationship between the core leadership practices. Second, relationships between the major contextual influences across the three levels were investigated. Third, the contextual factors and the core leadership practices were connected to form a synthetic understanding of the contextual influences on the core leadership practices of these Chinese school principals.

Within core leadership practices

The qualitative data suggested that the six core leadership practices were closely related with each other. In light of the specific leadership practices presented in the prior sub-section, the six core leadership practices are connected with each other as shown in Figure 6.2.

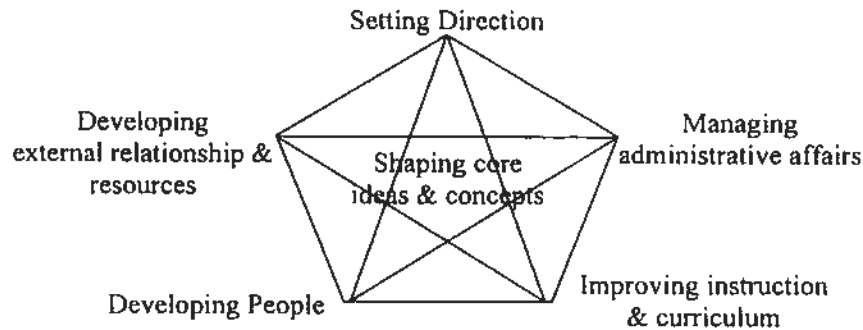


Figure 6.2 Inter-relationships of Core Leadership practices

Setting direction seemed to work as the overarching leadership practice driving school work. The practice was used to decide ‘where to go (向何處去)’, more specifically, ‘the vision or goal of school development (學校發展的願景或者目標和方向)’. Such vision or goals of school development appeared to affect other core leadership practices. For example, Principal F set the vision of his school as ‘let the school bring everyone happiness and hope (讓學校帶給每一個人幸福和希望)’, which implied a concern for the development and wellbeing of the people in this school. With this understanding, he made efforts to improve the overall quality of education, promote teacher professional growth, transforms teachers’ perceptions of learning and classroom teaching and organised a variety of extra-curriculum activities to ‘enable students and teachers to feel comfortable and interested in this school (讓師生們感覺到在這個學校很舒服，很有意思).’ Meanwhile, he actively communicated with the outside to get resources and district support to help the school progress. This suggested that this practice might play a leading role in driving school operation.

Second, shaping core concepts of school running seemed to aim to provide an ideological foundation for the other core leadership practices. According to the respondents, the core ideas of running school set by the principals usually involved a series of perceptions of the essential functions of school organisations, all-round development of students, quality of school teaching and learning and priorities of school administration. The direction of school development was also built on the core ideas which were purposively shaped by school leaders. For example, the vice principal in School B indicated that his principal just ‘puts what he has been thinking about into practice in our school (是把過去他自己形成的一些東西在我們這兒進行重新實踐).’ All respondents also agreed that ‘teaching and learning are at the centre of administration (教學是行政的中心工作).’ In terms of student development and the

quality of school education, the respondents commonly advocated a balanced view. As Principal E stated,

We aim at quality, not only pursue scores; but quality education doesn't discard scores. What matters is how we embody the nature of education and humanity and let our school education serve for student lifelong development in the course of seeking high scores. (我們追求質量，不僅僅是追求分數；搞素質教育也不是不要分數。關鍵是我們如何在追求分數的過程中，讓我們更加體現我們教育的本質，更加體現我們的人性，更加體現我們的教育為學生一生的發展服務)

In addition, the practice of shaping core ideas and concepts was also used to develop teachers. The teacher from School B indicated that '[our principal] plays an important role in promoting our thinking and understanding. After he forms his own ideas, he will instil his thoughts into our minds, and enable us to accept it and then gradually do what he want us to do (在提高我們思想認識方面也起到一個挺大的作用。他有他自己的思想之後，他把這套思想慢慢地灌注給我們，讓我們慢慢接受它，接受它之後慢慢按他的去做)'. In this sense, shaping core ideas set the tone within school and guided external relationship building, which was often used to serve the central work of school.

As remaining four core categories of principal leadership practices were used to operationalise and support the principals' visions or goals of school development. These practices usually centered on improving instruction and curriculum and developing people. From the view of the respondents, these two aspects were representative of the nature of school education. A vice principal from School D said that:

As a social organisation, the primary function of the school decides that the principal ought to focus on teaching and learning. Schools are a place used to cultivate students. School education is a specific way of cultivating people in a particular historical period. (學校這個社會組織，它的基本功能決定了校長要關注教學。學校是培養學生的一個基本場所。學校教育是一種特定的歷史時期的特定的培養人的方式)

Furthermore, improving instruction and curriculum and developing people were closely associated with one other. The former signified the essential activities of school organisations and the latter involving the ultimate aim of schooling, 'cultivating people (培養人)'. Therefore, promoting teacher and other staff development was always considered as a powerful approach to quality instruction

and curriculum and ultimately to student development. In the interviews, most respondents suggested that the principals paid more and more attention to teacher development in that ‘teachers are the main force of education and teaching (教師隊伍是教育教學的主體力量)’ and ‘school development depends on teachers (學校的發展得依靠老師).’

Consequently, both internal administration and external connection building were centred on school teaching and learning. As Principal A contended, ‘all kinds of administrative work should be centred upon school education and instruction...how good the administrative work is depends on how well it serves the central work of the school (各個方面的行政工作都是圍繞著教育教學工作展開……這些工作判斷它做得好不好，也是看它為中心工作服務的力度)’. Maintaining social connections, was valued in that it helped to ‘provide a good environment for the school to survive (為學校的生存提供了一個比較好的環境)’, which involves the policy environment, funding and public relations. In light of the qualitative data presented in the preceding section, such a perception was recognised as a basic understanding of school administration by the selected school principals. The practices of managing internal administrative affairs and developing external relationships and resources were commonly performed by the school leaders as a means of supporting school teaching and learning and facilitating the achievement of school vision or goals.

Within contextual factors

The inter-relationships between the three types of contextual factors are illustrated simply in Figure 6.3. Generally, schools and individual principals interacted with one another within the external context.

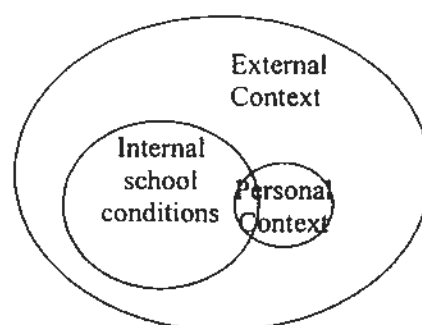


Figure 6.3
Inter-relationships of Contextual Factors

The district educational authority appeared the most powerful factor for individual schools and the principals as it's responsible for administrative examination and approval of school programs, policy-making for local educational development,

student-intake quota allocation, selection and appointment of school-level cadres, school construction, financial allocation and teacher and cadre professional development, as well as local school and principal evaluation. These aspects directly related to the critical conditions in school, such as student intake, financial conditions, teacher conditions, cadre conditions, physical conditions, etc. To a great extent, the decision made by the district educational authority determined the fortune of local schools. The vice principal working in School E pointed out,

The overriding factor is the school-running direction set by the superior. This school resulted from the mergence of two good schools. But there was no improvement after the mergence. The physical conditions of the school couldn't meet the standards and the requirements of any rank. So you could only fall in the lowest class. [The superior] had planned to conduct reconstruction, but the municipal authority didn't permit it and then the plan stopped... Superior decisions are quite critical. We've also seen the development process of other schools which were originally not well-known. After they got supportive policies and favoured student intake, these school changed for the better. (最主要還是上級的領導的一個辦學方向。我們這個學校原來是兩間比較好的學校合并起來的，但是合并之後就沒有什麼起色，學校很多硬件沒有達標，什麼等級都沒評上。什麼等級都不是，你就淪落到最後的等級了。之前說要搞改造，後來說市里不通過，又不搞了。.....上面的決定很重要。我們也看到其他學校的發展，原來名聲不是很響的學校，生源一側重，政策一扶持，學校就起來了)

Besides, the main criteria used for this selection and evaluation could affect principals' perception of what to prioritise. The existing principal responsibility system provided specific requirements for what principals should think about and do. The cadres appointed by the superior could cause unexpected problems for the principals. As Principal E complained,

It's impossible for us mainland school principals to fix on who will work around you, especially in relation to the secretary and deputy secretary of the Party Branch. You have no power to determine whether they can work in your school, sometimes it's even them who can decide your fortune. (我們大陸的校長，不可能把你身邊的人搞定，特別是書記、副校長，這些人的生殺大權根本不在你手上，甚至你的生殺大權在他手上)

Meanwhile, ongoing education reforms and local educational developments continuously challenged the school leaders' understanding of education and management. As one of the vice principals from School D asserted,

Either the national curriculum reform or the requirements for the development of the whole school education, including the newly issued 'Guidelines', will slowly – my personal understanding – and gradually

return to something concerning the education *per se*, to which we did not pay enough attention. Then, the more it returns to the education itself, the higher requirements for school there will be. (國家的課程改革也好，對於整個學校教育的發展要求也好，包括綱要的出臺，會慢慢地——我個人理解——又逐漸地回歸到教育本身的一些東西，我們以前在這個方面是有欠缺的。那麼越回歸到教育本身，對學校的要求就越高)

However, the expectations of society and parents still focused on student test scores and thus impacted principal leadership practice. Principal F indicated explicitly that 'all [high school principals] want to focus on the National College Entrance Exam because people won't swear at me if students get high scores (都想搞高考，考出好成績，老百姓不罵我)'. Additionally, educational conceptions also partly shaped school leaders' ideas for managing schools. Principal B indicated that 'I don't have much thought. I mainly absorb ideas from the major educationalists (我自己沒什麼思想，主要是接受教育大家的思想)'.

The local economic situation affected the resources available for individual schools, especially those located in poor districts. As noted, Principal E's school was located in a district living by selling lands. Partly for this reason, the vice principal of this school said that:

Our campus will disappear sooner or later...From the perspective of timing, geographical convenience and human relationship, this school hangs by a thread. If it couldn't find its own characteristics to develop now, it will be pulled down and teachers will be dismissed. (我們這個校區肯定遲早會沒有……從天時地利人和來看，現在再沒有自己的特色去發展，這間學校岌岌可危，拆了就拆了，解散就解散了)

Within the broader context, the principals' personal context and the internal school conditions interacted with each other. On one hand, principals' personal traits and professional perceptions influenced school conditions and the internal atmosphere. For example, Principal E believed that 'a leader should keep a certain distance from the masses. If a leader is too close to the masses, it will cause an effect that the people around you would divide into small groups (我認為一個領導跟群眾之間應該有一定的距離。領導和群眾關係太近了就必然會導致周圍的人三五成群)'. He felt satisfied when he found that 'now, the people in this school, from top to bottom, are a little afraid of me (現在從上到下這幫人都有點怕我)'.

On the other hand, school conditions will influence principals' perceptions. For instance, Principal B was said as an experienced school leader who always proposed

new ideas and instilled them into teachers'. According to him, 'such a top-down approach is based on the conditions of this school. Teachers are less concerned about this aspect than me. So I have to play a leading role [in thinking] (由上到下，是基于這個學校的條件。老師在這個方面關注的不如我多一些，所以我就發揮點引領作用)'. From this point, it can be suggested that school conditions mainly provided the necessary information about where principals need to exert leadership rather than actually change their personal context. In practice, principals' personal influences facilitate change under certain school conditions through various leadership activities.

Between core leadership practices and the contextual factors

Based on the analysis above, the core leadership practice and the contextual factors were combined together. Figure 6.4 demonstrates the integrated framework.

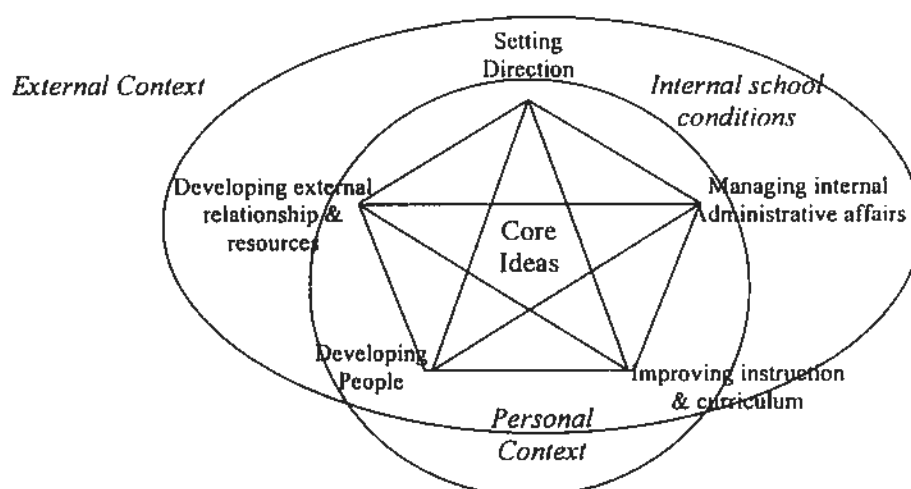


Figure 6.4 Inter-relationships between Core Leadership Practices and Contextual Factors

At the personal level, the principals' perceptions of education were closely associated with the two overarching leadership practices of setting direction and shaping core ideas or concepts in schools. 'School vision and guidelines are dominated by the principal's thinking (學校的理念、大政方針是校長主導),' said the vice principal of School C. The practice of shaping core ideas *per se* included a step of establishing principal's personal thoughts as school core concepts.

Personal understandings of principalship responsibilities greatly influenced how the principals perceived the practice of developing external relationships and resources. Both Principal B and E held that the government should provide adequate resources to schools and principals should not be responsible for developing external relationships and seeking resources. On the contrary, Principal D and F gave priority

to this practice and thought highly of its role in school development. Furthermore, personal values and moral were said important for school leaders to set a good example for other school members to improve the organisational climate. By this token, principals' personal contextual factors had an immediate impact on how the core leadership practices were exercised by the principals.

The internal conditions composed the specific or immediate context in which principals exercise the core leadership practices. This context was considered by respondents as the most important factor determining what principals would and could do. Among various organisational factors, student characteristics, especially student intake, were seen as essential reason for what principals did to improve student learning. For example, in Principal B's school, the students mainly came from the lowest layer in terms of their scores on high school entrance examination. Therefore, the principal tried to improve student learning methods and their capability of self-management to transform their learning habits. In addition, teacher and cadre conditions and the related organisational climate were important contextual elements relevant to the approaches the principals used to enhance staff capacity.

Other important factors involved school performance and status and financial situation. As described in the prior section, the former was closely related to the short-term goals and strategies adopted by the principals to promote school development, and the latter had an immediate effect on the practice of winning resources. With this understanding, a school's internal context directly determined whether the principal adopted these core leadership practices.

The external environment worked as a general background in which individual schools operate. The impact of the external environment, particularly the district educational authority, directly drove the school leaders to attach importance to developing external relationships and resources. As mentioned above, the existing educational administration system directly related to school operation and principal responsibilities. Through affecting the school and the leader, this external factor indirectly influenced the core leadership practices. As for the ongoing curriculum reforms, it largely reshaped people's perception of school instruction and curriculum. However, the expectation from social, parents and local authorities still focuses on student exam performance. This might be the reason for the principals' efforts to

keep balance between quality education and exam orientation in their practice of improving instruction and curriculum. Besides, the local conditions would affect the resources available for school development and the educational conceptions related to school principals' ideas of running school. In this sense, the external context probably exerted an indirect influence on the core leadership practices through affecting school conditions and principals' personal context while some external factors might directly affect certain practices.

Underlying Patterns of Core Leadership Practices

In this sub-section, three common patterns underlying the core leadership practices are identified through synthesising the common characteristics across different categories of the core leadership practices used by different case principals.

Balance between quality education and exam orientation

The core leadership practices suggested a pursuit of keeping balance between quality education and exam orientation. This view was particularly obvious when school principals engaged in the practices of improving instruction and curriculum and developing students.

As far as the vision was concerned, all the selected school leaders advocated the implementation of quality education and the all-round development of students. Principal D stressed the non-intelligence factors of student development, which 'touch children's hearts and are indeed good for them to form ideals, outlook on life, and basic values (對孩子理想、人生觀和基本價值觀的形成其實都是非常好的)'. He believed that 'this relates to children's sustainable development in future and lifetime happiness (這是關注了孩子們今後的可持續發展和一生的幸福)'. In School C, the core idea shared by the school members was to "lay a solid foundation for student lifelong development and all-round development (為學生的終身發展和全面發展奠定堅實的基礎).

At the same time, the exam orientation accompanied this quality-oriented view and was practiced in schools. Just in Principal C's school, the vice principal told another story,

"Quality education doesn't affect the promotion rate" is a very nice sentence but is not easy to achieve. It is often the case that you have to raise the promotion rate first and then you can say it confidently. If you

can't make it, nobody will believe whatever you say. (“素質教育不影響升學率”，這是非常好聽的一句話，但是做到也不是很簡單。往往是你首先升學率高了，你再說起這些話來，你就底氣硬了。如果你升學率上不去的話，你怎麼說都沒人相信)

Principal E provided his opinion about the quality of school education, which typically reflected a balanced view shared by most principals involved.

We aim at quality, not only pursue scores; but quality education doesn't discard scores. What matters is that how we can reflect the nature of education and humanity and let our school education serve for student lifelong development in the course of seeking high scores. (我們追求質量，不僅僅是追求分數；搞素質教育也不是不要分數。關鍵是我們如何在追求分數的過程中，讓我們更加體現我們教育的本質，更加體現我們的人性，更加體現我們的教育為學生一生的發展服務)

This situation might originate from the coexistence of large-scale education reform toward quality education and the entrenched exam-oriented evaluation system, plus dominant social expectations. Principal E explained that it's the local authorities that hinder the implementation of quality education because 'when they assess your performance, they only focus on student test scores (他評你的時候，就看學生的考試成績怎麼樣).' The teacher director from his school further pointed out that the social expectations was still firmly on exam performance 'If your [school] always come first in examinations, it will naturally be well-known in the society (如果你考試成績名列前茅，社會自然會很認同).' This orientation might explain why a variety of quality education reform policies were said to be difficult to be completely carried out in the schools.

Differential involvement in decision-making

According to the qualitative data, the selected school leaders generally adopted a participative or collective decision-making process when they engaged in setting direction, shaping core ideas, determining major internal affairs, or sometimes carrying out school innovations. Such a process was said to involve all school members, from the key leadership team to ordinary teachers.

In fact, the decision-making process of these school leaders was more like a practice of differential involvement conducted through a hierarchical approach. Differential was used to describe the social relationships within Chinese society (Fei, Hamilton &

Want, 1992). Here, it means that the school principal determines the degree of involvement of different groups of school members in making decisions according to how close they are. In other words, different groups of school members would be treated differently due to their different status and positions.

The key leadership team was always highly involved in decision-making process from the beginning. There might be two reasons. First, this group of people was closest to the school principal. Principal A said that ‘it is the cadres that I lead directly (我直接抓的還是幹部隊伍).’ Thus, they seemed to be more easily to get attention from the school leader. Second, the major school-level cadres were appointed by outside authorities and had the power to deal with a specific aspect of school work. The principal’s idea could not be implemented smoothly unless it’s accepted by these key school leaders. As Principal E argued, ‘the group of administration leaders, the group of Party members, the group of section managers, once these people assent to [my decisions], what else can those ordinary teachers do (行政班子一幫人，共產黨員一幫人，科長一幫人，這些人穩固了，下邊的這幫老師能怎麼樣)?’

Accordingly, when these school leaders needed to make major decisions, they would first consult with the key leadership team. This cohort of school leaders would discuss the principal’s proposal together and achieve consensus. When they have different opinions, according to Principal A and C, ‘the school principal could make a determination when there is disagreement...If the dissension cannot be solved, the issue would be set aside temporarily (意見不統一的時候，校長會起到選擇抉擇的作用……如果分歧太大，一般就是把這個方案暫時擱置，不會很快做決定)’ or ‘reported to upper authorities to decide (提交給上級部門決定)’.

After getting the agreement from the leadership team, the relevant plans or schemes would be introduced and explained to teachers. Meanwhile, their suggestions would be collected. However, collected teachers’ opinions seemed to be not as essential or powerful as those of the leadership team members. Most school principals suggested this process was mainly used to ‘enhance teachers’ self-confidence (鼓舞老師的自信)’, ‘let them feel a sense of ownership (覺得自己是學校的主人)’, or ‘develop specific action plans (形成更具體的方案)’. Besides, teachers were mostly involved in the issues highly relevant to their immediate interests, such as performance related

pay, bonus distribution, and outside training opportunities. As for school development, all the respondents indicated that it's the principal's job.

Principal B summarised his practice as an approach 'mainly from top to bottom, supplemented with a bottom-up manner...Such a top-down approach is based on the conditions of this school. Teachers are less concerned about this aspect than me. So I have to play a leading role (由上而下爲主導，輔之以由下到上.....由上到下，是基于這個學校的條件。老師在這個方面關注的不如我多一些，所以我就發揮點引領作用).'

Hybrid between democratic procedures and values-driven authority

Related to the differential involvement pattern of decision-making, the core leadership practices of these principals seemed to be a blend of democratic procedures and top-down, values-driven authority. In other words, it's a mixture of democracy with the subtle imposition of the principals' dominant educational beliefs.

On one hand, all the respondents suggested that the principals always adopted a participative or collective way of consulting with other school members when they engaged in setting direction, shaping core ideas and determining major internal affairs, especially those directly relating to teachers. Principal E supported this approach because 'when you will make a decision, you must first consult with other people. Then, you can make your decision without burden (你要決策一個東西的時候，你一定先去爭求意見。你先徵求了意見，再來決策，執行的時候你就沒負擔了). Similarly, other principals emphasised the importance of 'collective decision-making' and practiced these democratic procedures to include other school members in school administration. Principal D spent a lot of time to let teachers discuss the school plan and made some modification in light of their suggestions. Thus, they seemed to be democratic leaders who always considered other opinions.

At the same time, these school principals owned the above-mentioned values-driven authority. Regarding the leadership practice of shaping core ideas, a unity of the core idea or concept of running school was universally pursued by the school leaders. This unity was normally built upon principals' personal thoughts. Many respondents, such as the vice principals in Principal B's school and the vice principal in Principal D's school, indicated that the major ideas, decisions and development steps of their school were 'dominated by the principals' thoughts' (以校長的想法爲主導). In Principal E's school, the teaching director also admitted that 'the core concept and

innovations of our school are mainly proposed by the principal because he is the school leader who represents the school. No ideas would come into effect unless he advocates them (學校的理念和改革主要是由校長提出來的，因為他是學校的領導人，他代表學校，只能通過他來提倡才會有效果)。

In this sense, the process of consultations seemed more like a process of legitimisation and information rather than truly participative decision-making. Through this process, principals' personal ideas could be formally recognised by all school members and implemented as required. The vice principal from School B mentioned the role of the All Staff Assembly as another channel of collecting others' opinions but he also indicated that 'the principal would clarify his own thoughts. If there is no disagreement, we just follow it (領導把自己的想法說清楚，沒有反對的，就執行吧)。Principal F specified how he achieved such unity:

First, the school leader or major leaders must have a clear idea...After getting my own thoughts clear, I'll first articulate it repeatedly to my key team, i.e., administrative cadres that why we will do this, on what basis, what difficulties or obstacles we will be confronted with, and what will hinder our students, teachers and parents. That is to say, unify the thinking of the key team. Then, I'll extend my influence to a second level, that is, our section managers, subject leaders, grade leaders, and teachers in charge of a class, by interpreting my thoughts over and over again. (首先，學校的領導者或者是主要的領導者必須要有一個清晰的思路。.....我把我的理念理清以後，首先在我們的核心團隊，也就是行政幹部裏面反復地陳述，我們為什麼會這樣做？我們這樣做具備了什麼樣的基礎？做這個東西，我們會遇到什麼樣的困難？或者說我們會有什麼樣的障礙？我們學生、老師、家長會有什麼障礙？也就是說，要把這個核心團隊的思想統一。那麼統一以後，我再輻射到第二個層面，就是我們科長、學科長、級組長、班主任這個層面，反復地詮釋我這個東西)

There might be two reasons for this hybrid pattern. First, setting direction and shaping school core ideas were usually thought as a part of the job responsibilities of Chinese school principals. One of the vice principals working at school D took this point of view: 'If you're in this position, this is your basic job responsibility; if you are not in this position, you don't need to think. It may be useless, even though you think about it (首先是位置最重要，你處在這個位置，這是你最基本的工作職責；你不在這個位置，可能你不用想，你想這些可能也沒有用)。

The other reason could be attributed to the teacher conditions or underestimated teachers' capabilities. Both Principals B and F agreed on that:

If you really require a teacher to actively think about the development direction of a unit or a school, he wouldn't do that. It is the same as a company. The employees are more likely not to do such things. However, if your leadership team proposes some thoughts, he will think whether these things are feasible or not. (老師他這個群體職業，真的要一個老師主動思考一個單位或者一個學校的發展方向，他不會做這件事。它跟一個企業一樣，企業員工更多不會做這事情。但是你這個管理團隊裏面思考的東西，提出來以後，他會思考，可不可行。但是你讓他提出來，或者提出更多的東西，可能不會很多)

Potential Models Integrating Context and Leadership Practices

Although there were several common patterns underlying the performance of these principals, the school leaders actually gave priority to different components of the six core leadership practices. According to the data analysis, two models could be developed as the action patterns of the core leadership practices exercised by different school principals involved in the qualitative investigation. The two models were labelled the survival model and the development model and are illustrated in Figure 6.5.

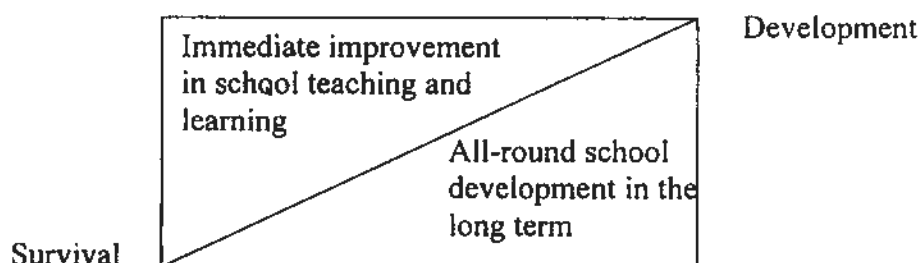


Figure 6.5 Survival-model and Development-model

The two models were mainly different in the focus of the entire school work. The survival model prioritised immediate improvement in order to ensure that the school could meet the basic requirements on student performance and thus continue to get necessary support for school operation or survival from the government. The development model aims at all-round school development and growth, beyond the just the improvement of teaching and learning.

Accordingly, the case principals can be divided into two cohorts. Those falling under the survival model included Principal B and E. The other four leaders were grouped under the development model. According to their difference in performing the six core leadership practices, these two models could be further specified in the following table.

Table 6.5 Major Differences between Survival-model and Development-model

	Survival Model	Development Model
Core leadership Practices		
Setting direction	Centring exclusively on teaching and learning	Centring on school long-term development
Developing people	Serving the needs of improving teaching and learning	Students all-round development, Teachers and cadres full development
Improving instruction and curriculum	Being more concerned about how to improve classroom teaching and student learning results	Balancing exam orientation with quality education
Shaping core ideas and concepts	Focusing on innovative ideas of school instruction and curriculum	Clear mission statement and more diverse approaches to the mission
Managing internal administrative affairs	More authority-orientation	More democratic consultation
Developing external relationships & resources	Unwillingness to take action	Active involvement
Contextual Factors		
Internal conditions	Facing survival issues Poor student Brain drain or lack of experience Cadre issue Poor performance and lower rank	Better students Steady teacher and cadre groups Good internal climate Excellent performance and higher rank
External environment	Lack of extra resources Low level of local economic development	Being rich in external resources Support from the upper authorities
Personal traits & perceptions	Negative opinion on external relationship building	Positive view on external relationship building

Survival-model

The core of the survival-model is improving teaching and learning for a better student performance, which was usually driven by the need of school survival. That's the case in terms for the schools led by Principal B and E. Both of them were reported as ordinary schools with the students mainly from the group of low-achievement on the entrance exams. The vice principal at School E explicitly indicated that their school might be closed if there was no change. Improving student performance seemed to be the most efficient and effective way to break through.

Therefore, both of the principals oriented their leadership practices towards improving school teaching and learning. Principal E began to implement an instruction innovation of 'small class teaching (小班教學)' in his school from this

year. Principal B proposed a number of classroom teaching principals and organised a variety of activities and demonstration classes to help students improve their learning methods. They both agreed on that 'the first priority of a school should be given to classroom teaching all the time...This is an unshirkable responsibility of a school principal (一間學校，不管什麼時候都應該把課堂教學擺在第一位……這是做校長的一個不可推卸的責任),' said Principal E.

With this priority, the goal of school development was directly related to the improvement in teaching and learning; the core concept of school-running was constructed mainly upon principals' thinking about classroom teaching and learning. Thus, top-down authority seemed more important than other school members' participation. Principal B said that 'it is me who first understand and have an idea. I'll inculcate and instil [my thoughts into teachers' minds] (我先懂，我先知道。我灌，我推).' As he pointed out,

Teachers are not able to know these by themselves. They have a lot of work to do. Most of them are quite young and can hardly the immediate job in hand. This forces me to learn more and seize every opportunity to instil [my thoughts] from top to bottom. I'll also summarise and promote the good practice from teachers, even though it's not mature at that time. It's mainly from top to bottom and supplemented with a bottom-up manner...Such a top-down approach is based on the conditions of this school. Teachers are less concerned about this aspect than me. So I have to play a leading role. (憑老師知道這些個？他們工作業務忒忙，年輕老師又特別多，眼前的、手前的活都幹不過來啊。逼得我自己多學，不失時機地利用各種機會，各種時空往下推。也反過來總結老師一些先進的做法，哪怕當時不成熟，再推廣。是由上而下為主導，輔之以由下到上……由上到下，是基于這個學校的條件。老師在這個方面關注的不如我多一些，所以我就發揮點引領作用)。

Principal E also admitted that:

Usually, I would not make any determination by myself. Once I make a decision, teachers will understand that this is what you have to do no matter whether you want to do it or not. Because [they know that] this principal works in this way. [I've] never set specific requirements, but once [I] ask them to do certain work, they won't reject. (一般我輕易不自己做什麼結論。一旦當我要做這個結論的時候，老師就知道這個事你做也得做、不做也得做。因為這個校長就是這樣，從來不會跟你做個明確的要求，一旦這個方面的工作要做，他也不會反對)

From their view of point, teacher development should serve the needs of improving school teaching and learning. They both emphasised teachers' consciousness and

capability of executing school teaching innovations, and the transformation of teachers' habitual teaching approaches and unwillingness to change. Due to the limited resources, however, they seemed to be not able to provide much internal training opportunities or resources for their teachers and cadres.

For the internal administration, the main function was also to serve the needs of school instruction improvement. To some extent, the principals' authority seemed to get reinforced. For example, after two or three rounds of discussion and modification of the school teaching reform plan, Principal E 'began to be adamant (開始強硬了)' and told the Party members in a meeting that:

From now on, there is no discussion about doing it or not. We've already discussed this issue. Now we need to think how we do it and do it well, and what difficulties there will be in the course of carrying out the reform. From now, I don't want to hear any negative voice or see any negative behaviours from any Party members. Now, I'm raising this requirement from a political perspective. (從現在開始不存在什麼做不做，做不做前面已經討論了，現在是怎麼樣做，怎麼樣把這個事情做好，在做的過程中有什麼困難。從現在開始所有的共產黨員我不希望聽到任何一個消極的說法，也不能有任何消極的行爲。我現在是從政治的角度提這個要求)

Following the meeting, he repeated this speech in a meeting with section managers. As he said, 'the group of administration leaders, the group of Party members, the group of section managers, once these people assent to [my decisions], what else can those ordinary teachers do (行政班子一幫人，共產黨員一幫人，科長一幫人，這些人穩固了，下邊的這幫老師能怎麼樣)?'

However, both of them complained about some problems within the teachers and school cadres. Principal B expressed some dissatisfaction with the Party secretary and suggested that the secretary intervened in his work. He also pointed out that the teachers in his school were too young to think more about school education. Principal E found some bad influence from other school leaders but have difficulty to change it due to existing school leader appointment system. One female teacher in his school expressed her worry about the outflow of the excellent teachers.

Although their schools were not rich in resources, neither of them regarded the practices of external relation building as a major concern or a necessary task. Principal B said '[I] have to do that although [I'm] not willing to do (不得已而爲之).' Principal E explicitly indicated that 'I am not willing to do this thing (我不願意做這

個事情).’ That might result from their belief that the government should provide adequate resources to schools and principals should not be responsible for developing external relationship or seeking resources. Besides, they thought that this practice would cause some dilemmas for principals because it would take lots of time and energy to deal with the complicated external relationships. There was also a contextual factor that both the schools were located in the district at a low level of economic development. As expressed by the vice principals from these two schools, the local economic situation related to the insufficient financial input of the government into school education.

Development-model

Compared with the two struggling school principals, the other four school leaders seemed not that worried about their student performance, although some of them still expressed the worry about student intake (i.e., Principal C, D & F). But improving student performance was not an urgent task. These school leaders put more emphasis on making a blueprint for school long-term development.

As stated in the prior sections, Principal F was ‘more concerned about the vision or goal and direction of school development – where the school will be led and what kind of school it will be like (關注得比較多的是學校發展的願景或者目標和方向——也就是這個學校到底把它帶到哪個地方去，辦成一個什麼樣的學校).’ The first thing for Principal A was to ‘continuously judge the status of our school development, how the school runs at present, what goes well and what doesn’t, what is going on in the surrounding areas and its development trends, and where our school is under such circumstances (第一個就是不斷地判斷學校發展的狀況，現在運行得怎麼樣，哪些地方運行得很好，那些地方運行得還有問題，然後現在周邊的發展怎麼樣，發展的趨勢是什麼，在這種背景下我處于什麼樣的狀態).’ Both Principal C and D spent much time in making a strategic development plan for their schools.

Therefore, they usually had a clear understanding of the core concept or mission of their schools. For example, Principal D provided the school-running idea of his school, ‘Be human-based, serve the society, seek development, and pursue excellence (以人爲本、服務社會、追求發展、追求卓越).’ Principal F proposed the idea of ‘letting the school bring everyone happiness and hope (讓學校帶給每一個人幸福和希望)’ as the mission of his school. With this understanding, he organised a number of

extra-curriculum activities as he thought these activities as 'the easiest thing to do, as well as the easiest way that enables students and teachers to feel that they lives in a comfortable and interesting school (最容易做的，也是最容易讓師生們感覺到在這個學校很舒服，很有意思)'.

Accordingly, they treated school education and people development in a more comprehensive way. Although they were all aware of the importance of student achievement, they made great efforts to keep balance between the exam-orientation and student all-round development. For instance, Principal D emphasised non-intelligence factors education for children. Principal F endeavoured to organise extra-curriculum activities to help students feel happy in the school. Besides, a school-based professional training system was universally implemented in a way called 'going out, bringing in (走出去，請進來)'. Within this system, various external training opportunities were provided for teacher and cadre development.

In school internal administration, the leadership practices of these principals exhibited a democratic orientation. They seemed to believe in their teachers more. In Principal's D school, 'there was a good cultural environment, very flexible and harmonious (人文環境很好，很寬鬆，很和諧),' in which he 'have been making efforts to lead the school with a human orientation and weaken the rigid way of managing through "control, pressure and restraint" as much as possible (那種強硬的“管、壓、卡”痕迹，現在是儘量在淡化，儘量以人爲本).' Principal A argued for exerting the collective power in school management, 'because this is the guarantee of doing a good job ultimately (因爲這是最終做好工作的保障).' Thus, many major decisions of these schools were actually made by the leadership team in a way of 'collective decision-making (集體決策)'.

As for the external relationships and resources, all of these school leaders held a positive opinion and were an active practitioner. Principal A believed that "when a principal can bring opportunities and resource to the school, he/she will win the trust from other cadres and teachers (校長能够給學校帶來機會和資源，就會贏得其他的幹部和老師的信任).' Principal C and D both engaged in getting extra educational resources for developing school-based curriculum and staff development. In addition, Principal D particularly organised a 'funds-raising team (聚財小組)' to get more funds for his school. Principal F spent much time 'lobbying' (游說) the concerned

officials for the necessary financial input to develop his school into a national exemplary school. At the same time, he was actively in contact with local organisations and attained their financial support. As he argued,

As a matter of fact, there are many reasons for that many schools are short of funds. One is the inadequate input into education. For another thing, it's not enough for our school principals to strive for social support. We build a high fence wall in our schools. How can we push the fence wall over? Only if you push the fence wall over, you can open your eyes and expand your resources. (其實很多學校缺乏經費，有很多的原因。一個是教育投入不夠，一個是我們校長爭取社會支持不夠，我們把學校，把圍牆建得太高了。怎麼樣推倒圍牆？推到圍牆辦學校，你才會視野更加開闊，資源更加廣闊)

This view directly contradicted the opinion held by the two principals who exercised the survival model. To some extent, such divergent views might be the most obvious difference between the two models.

According to the relevant narrative presented earlier, the school led by Principal F was just an example that broke through the survival situation and moved into the development model. Before 1995, the school was quite shabby and the student performance was rather low. Thus, the officials of the Bureau of Education even said that 'if you don't work harder, I'll transfer you to that school (你再不好好搞，把你調到那個學校去)'. To change the situation, Principal F worked with his leadership team and actively applied for the Municipal Green School when he took the position in 2005. From then on, he school became better and better. As noted, he actively engaged in all the core leadership practices, particularly in seeking extra resources for the school development.

Form the forgoing, the development-model school principals exhibited more positive opinions and diverse actions in terms of the core leadership practices. It might originate from the contextual factors. For these schools, student achievement seemed to be no more a problem. The teachers and cadres were willing to cooperative with each other. All these principals suggested that their school climates were quite good and harmonious. Besides, three of them were exemplary school and the other one was applying for the status of national exemplary school. Furthermore, both the local environment and upper authorities were said to be supportive for the schools development. To an extent, there seemed to be a situation that these with

accomplishments and reputation tend to snowball and those with meagre accomplishments have greater difficulty achieving accomplishments.

Summary

This chapter presents the process of the qualitative data analysis. The target respondents were first introduced in the first section. Then, three-step coding techniques were used for the analysis. The first open coding was to identify initial categories emerging from the data. The second axial coding was employed with the research framework built in Chapter Three. This process led to the six core leadership practices and three-level contextual factors. Finally, the selective coding was adopted to re-examine the cases in order to identify the underlying patterns. The major inferences were summarised as follows.

First, leadership practices of school principals in Mainland China can be classified into six core categories:

- *Setting direction* – setting shared vision or long term goals of school development, which is based upon the *status quo* of the school, and making a general plan to actualise the vision or goals.
- *Developing people* – promoting student all-round development, including academic achievement, facilitating professional growth of both teachers and school cadres through various approaches, and enhance self-development in order to keep a conceptual leading status.
- *Shaping core ideas and concepts* – establishing personal understanding of school education as the core ideas of school running, and achieving a school-wide recognition of the core concepts through unifying thinking and building supportive organisational ambiance.
- *Improving instruction and curriculum* – continuously improving teacher and learning and developing school-based curriculum with a focus on student exam performance.
- *Managing internal administrative affairs* – centring on school teaching and learning, making major decisions in a democratic way, showing consideration for other school members, and building harmonious interpersonal relationships within school.
- *Developing external relationships and resources* – winning resources and getting supportive policies for school development and grasping external opportunities to achieve a significant progress.

Second, the contextual factors that influence these leadership practices can be grouped into three types:

- *Internal conditions*: teacher conditions, student characteristics, organisational climate, cadre conditions, school performance and status, and financial situation.

- *External environment*: the upper educational authority, educational administration system, educational policies and reforms, social environment, and local context.
- *Personal traits and perceptions*: non-power factors, positional responsibilities and principalship experience

Third, the identified core leadership practice and major contextual factors were connected together to reveal the inter-relationships within and between the core categories. As a result, setting direction was found to guide the other practices and core idea shaping provided the ideological foundation for the other practices. Within the contextual factor, the school context provided a guide for principal leadership practices and the personal context would affect the school through these practices. Both of them were influenced by the broader external context. Related to the core leadership practices, the former two had a direct impact on the core leadership practices of the school leaders while the latter mainly had an indirect effect on these core leadership practices.

Finally, the core leadership practices of the selected Chinese school principals exhibited three underlying patterns and two different models. For the patterns, first, these principals attempted to keep balance between exam-orientation and quality-orientation. Second, they adopted differential involvement in decision-making. Third, they employed a hybrid leadership approach that combined democratic mechanism with top-down, values-driven authority. For the models, different case principals could be divided into survival-model and development-model which were built upon the actual situations of their schools.

In the following chapter, these inferences would be combined with those emerging from the quantitative data analysis to develop a sounder understanding of the core leadership practice of Chinese school principals, how they perform these practices, and what contextual factors relate to their core leadership practices.

Chapter 7 Integrated Findings

After the two types of data were separately analysed, a series of integrated findings could be attained *via* a combination of the findings emerging from the both forms of data. Three strategies were adopted to combine different forms of data in this study.

First, data transformation was applied to the individual types of data. For the quantitative data, factor analysis was used to generate descriptive themes or dimensions from the numerical information (see Onwuegbuzie, 2001; Onwuegbuzie & Teddlie, 2003). For the qualitative data, the strategy was to count emerging themes or calculate the frequency of categories (see Onwuegbuzie & Teddlie, 2003; Tashakkori & Teddlie, 1998). Second, due to the sequence of data collection and analysis, the dimensions developed in the quantitative data were used to help code the qualitative data. These two procedures were completed in the process of data analysis as presented in Chapters Five and Chapter Six.

Finally, the findings derived from the two types of data were combined together in order to generate a more complete knowledge of how Chinese school principals lead their schools under a variety of contextual influences. In general, the quantitative and qualitative findings were mutual confirmed. Such a triangulation between different types of empirical evidence led to a number of integrated findings presented in this chapter.

There are three sections composing this chapter. The first two sections present the major findings emerging from the both forms of data, including the core leadership practices, the contextual factors, and the relationship between them. The final section provides a summary of the chapter.

Core Leadership Practices

On the basis of the combination between the quantitative and qualitative findings, the leadership practices of the sampled principals appeared to converge on six generic categories. These six core categories included:

- Setting direction
- Shaping school climate and core ideas
- Developing people
- Managing instruction and curriculum
- Managing administrative affairs

- Developing external relationships and resources

These core categories of the principals' leadership practices were inter-related with each other and could be further classified into three groups in light of their essential functions. These were:

- Directional leadership practices
- Functional leadership practices
- Supportive leadership practices.

The combination further confirmed the three practical patterns identified in the qualitative investigation. These patterns were:

- Dual emphases on academic performance and holistic development
- A differential pattern of participative decision-making
- Hybridisation of multiple leadership styles

This section presents these findings.

Six Core Categories

As stated above, the two forms of data converged on six generic categories of principal leadership practices. According to their inter-relationships, the six core categories could be classified into three clusters.

The integration of quantitative and qualitative findings confirmed that the school principals involved in the study commonly employed six core groups of leadership practices. Both the quantitative and qualitative data suggested a number of core leadership practices exercised by these school leaders. Through data transformation, these practices could be categorised into six generic dimensions shared by the both types of data as shown in Appendix 7.1.

These common generic dimensions were based on the structure of the core leadership practices identified in the quantitative investigation and helped the author make the combination between the quantitative and qualitative findings. For the qualitative findings, all the themes were treated in accordance with their relation with the items under the corresponding dimensions deriving from the quantitative data.

Some qualitative themes related to the items already included in the quantitative framework. They were merged with the counterpart items to produce better statements. For example, according to the qualitative findings, 'setting shared vision or long-term goals' was a specific action under the generic dimension of setting

direction. It's similar to the practice of *setting a shared goal for school development* under the same dimension in the quantitative repertoire. Thus, the two were combined together to form a better description of this specific leadership practice, that is, *setting shared vision or long-term goals for school development*.

Meanwhile, some of the themes complemented the dimension established in the quantitative investigation. Accordingly, they were added to the relevant quantitative categories. For instance, the practice of 'planning for school development' emerged from the qualitative data as one of the major means of setting direction. But it's not included in the quantitative repertoire. Thus, this theme was added to the original dimension of 'setting direction'.

At the same time, a few qualitative themes were not consistent with the classification suggested by the quantitative structure. A typical example was the practice of 'developing themselves', which was regarded by the respondents as a sub-theme under the generic practice of developing people. In the quantitative repertoire, some relevant practices, such as *actively taking part in principal professional development activities*, were grouped into the practice of shaping school climate. In this case, the quantitative items were adjusted in light of the natural meanings of the concerned items and dimensions and the qualitative findings. Thus, the items pointing to principal self-development were moved from the original dimension to the category of 'developing people'.

As a result, a combined repertoire of the core leadership practices of the sampled school principals could be constructed in the table below.

Table 7.1 An Integrated Repertoire of the Core Leadership Practices Identified in the Study

Generic Practices	Specific Practices
Setting direction	Setting shared vision or long-term goals for school development. Advocating a moral-based goal of school development. Planning for school development. Orienting school according to the reality. Assessing strengths and weaknesses of the school. Involving other school members in school planning. Involving other school members in designing the goal. Setting priorities for different school plans and objectives.
Shaping school climate and core ideas	Improving organisational culture or climate. Creating a supportive environment. Advocating a moral-based school culture. Considering teachers' and students' needs while implementing instruction & curriculum reforms. Considering different staff's needs of professional development. Encouraging other school members to participate in decision-making.

	<p>Supporting all staff to participate in professional development activities.</p> <p>Building effective channels to facilitate communication between school members.</p> <p>Maintaining a harmonious interpersonal relationship and climate within school.</p> <p>Centring on teaching and learning to protect teachers' teaching from distraction.</p> <p>Establishing personal thoughts as school core ideas</p> <p>Exhibiting high morals and dedication to school education.</p> <p>Playing an exemplary role in all respects.</p>
Developing people	<p>Developing students in an all-round way.</p> <p>Improving student academic achievement.</p> <p>Delegating front-line teachers to design school-based curriculum.</p> <p>Supporting teachers' bottom-up innovations.</p> <p>Promoting middle and above management's awareness and capability of participating in school leadership and administration in profession development.</p> <p>Promoting ordinary staff and teachers' awareness and capability of participating in school leadership and administration in profession development.</p> <p>Establishing a hierarchical professional development system.</p> <p>Consciously strengthening one's own knowledge and capacity to perform the job.</p> <p>Actively taking part in principal professional development activities.</p> <p>Sharing personal professional experience with colleagues.</p>
Managing instruction and curriculum	<p>Focusing on the improvement of teaching and learning.</p> <p>Leading instruction and curriculum innovations in school.</p> <p>Developing school-based curriculum.</p> <p>Providing sufficient resources for school instruction and curriculum development.</p> <p>Involving teachers in policy-making in terms of school instruction and curriculum.</p> <p>Consulting with parents on school instruction and curriculum.</p> <p>Stressing the tasks and standards of school teaching and learning.</p> <p>Prioritising student exam performance.</p> <p>Focusing on the change of student exam performance.</p> <p>Setting specific standards and expectations for teaching and learning.</p>
Managing administrative affairs	<p>Centring teaching and learning in school administration.</p> <p>Making major decisions democratically</p> <p>Consulting with the Party Branch on major decisions.</p> <p>Consulting with Teacher Congress on major decisions.</p> <p>Consulting with School Union on major decisions.</p> <p>Sharing leadership power through delegating subordinates.</p> <p>Leading school through collective management and decision-making.</p> <p>Making decisions in a participative way.</p> <p>Coordinating the relationship with the Party secretary.</p> <p>Building a harmonious leadership team.</p> <p>Forming a good relationship with teachers through multiple communication channels.</p> <p>Managing staff with a human orientation.</p> <p>Improving staff welfare and working conditions.</p> <p>Considering individual needs of different staff to motivate them to work hard.</p>
Developing external relationships and resources	<p>Establishing and maintaining school image and reputation.</p> <p>Publicising school major developments and achievements.</p> <p>Seising external opportunities.</p> <p>Keeping a good work relationship with local educational authorities and the concerned officials.</p> <p>Attaining policy support from upper authorities.</p> <p>Prioritising the implementation of superiors' educational policies and tasks.</p> <p>Paying attention to current and emerging educational policies to assess the</p>

external environment.

Coordinating various public relationships to promote school development.

Applying for government funds to support school development and construction.

Seeking resources from other organisations located in the community.

Seeking resources from the students' parents.

The core leadership practices consisted of six general categories: setting direction, shaping school core ideas and climate, developing people, managing instruction and curriculum, managing administrative affairs, and developing external relationships and resources. This structure reconfirmed the construct validity of the questionnaire used in the survey.

The practice of setting direction was mainly achieved through goal- or vision- setting and planning on the basis of an internal SWAT analysis. To shape the school climate and core ideas, the principals mainly engaged in building culture, unifying thinking, and setting an example. For developing people, the emphasis was placed on the balanced development of student academic and non-academic achievement, teacher professional development, staff capacity enhancement and school leaders' self-development. In terms of school instruction and curriculum, these principals always made efforts to improve the quality of teaching and learning, carry out instructional innovations, and develop school-based curriculum, as well as raise student exam performance. For the internal administration, the sampled principals focused on the supportive function of school administration, adopted democratic measures in decision-making and considerate behaviors in school management, and worked on building a harmonious leadership team. With respect to developing external relationships and resources, building and maintaining good relationship with the district authorities stood out as an important practice from the both types of data.

Inter-relationship

The integration further demonstrated the inter-relationship of these six core categories of Chinese principal leadership practices and suggested another way to understand their functions and associations.

First, a full-model factor analysis was performed in light of the qualitative findings. The two types of data both suggested the six core categories of principal leadership practices were inter-related with each other. Particularly, the qualitative findings provided more specific information about how these six core dimensions might be connected with each other. As stated in Chapter 6, setting direction appeared to work

as an overarching practice and shaping core ideas and climate laid the ideological foundation. Moreover, the practices aiming to develop school instruction and curriculum were closely related with people development and always regarded as the central work driving school administration and external relationship building.

With this understanding, the researcher constructed a model to capture the interrelationships among these core leadership practices *via* the full-model factor analysis. The statistics indicated that the structural model fitted the data ($\chi^2=3211.07$, $df=1118$, $P = 0.0$, $RMSEA=0.079$, $NNFI=0.98$, $CFI=0.98$). This model demonstrated the specific relationships between the different core categories of the leadership practices identified in the quantitative investigation. The connections took the form of a pathway indicating the effect of one variable on the related variable(s). The structure of the model is illustrated in Figure 7.1.

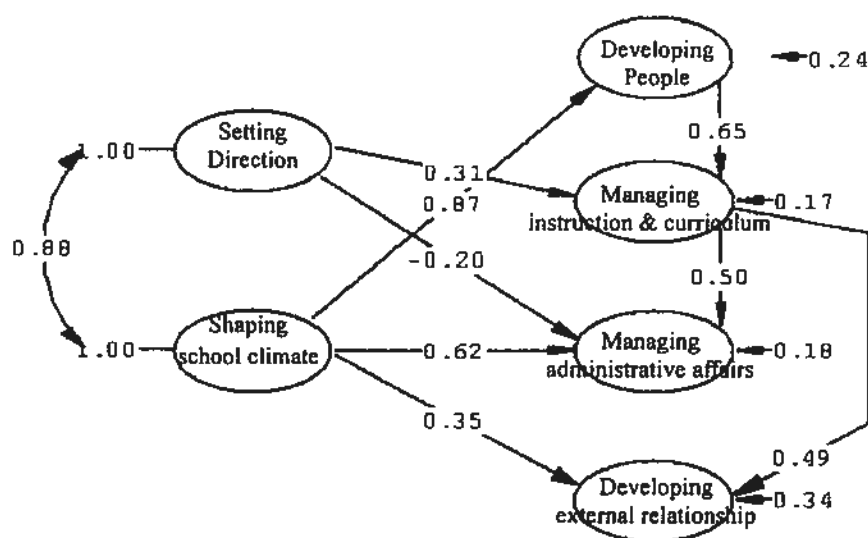


Figure 7.1 The Structure of the Full Model

Accordingly, the relationships between each core categories can be depicted as follows. Shaping school climate and core ideas interacted with setting direction and had an impact on developing people, managing administrative affairs, and developing external relationships and resources. Setting direction had a positive effect on the practice of managing instruction and curriculum but exerted a negative influence on the leadership practices used for internal administration. Managing instruction and curriculum affected the internal administration and external relationships building. At the same time, this dimension was influenced by another generic dimension, developing people.

In the qualitative investigation, a more general network of the core leadership practices was built on the relevant narratives without pointing out the direction of the influences. Through integrating the inter-relationships formed in the full model above with the qualitative network, these six generic categories could be connected together as exhibited in Figure 7.2. In the figure, solid lines with arrows refer to the paths identified from the both types of data and dashed lines signify the connections constructed in the qualitative data analysis only.

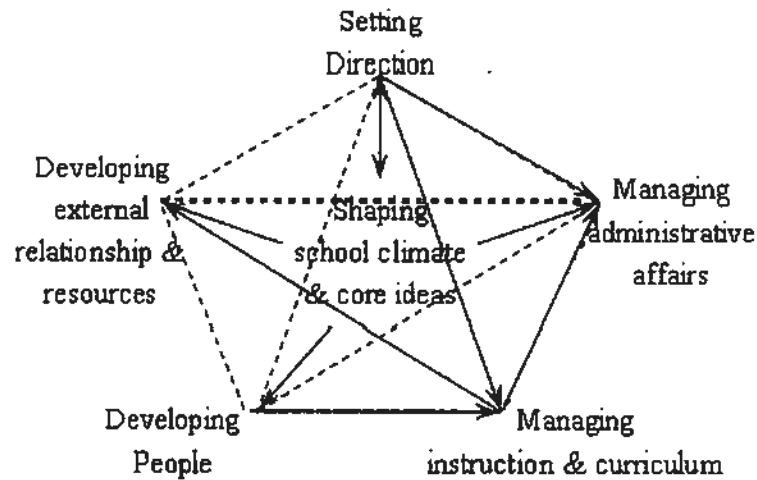


Figure 7.2 Inter-relationships among the Core Leadership Practices

The integration further resulted in a set of new classifications of the core leadership practices. First, the qualitative findings indicated that setting direction worked as the overarching leadership practice and building school climate and core ideas functioned as the ideological foundation for school leadership. In other words, the main role of these two practices was to point out the direction of school development and guide the other aspects of school education. The full model built in this section confirmed the leading role of the two generic practices. As shown above, these two practices were closely correlated with one another and related to the other four core leadership practices. In this sense, they could be together labeled as directional leadership practices.

Second, the qualitative analysis suggested the central status of school teaching and learning. In the interviews, the practices of developing people and managing instruction and curriculum were considered as representative of the nature of schooling and were closely associated with each other. In the full model, developing people had a direct impact on the practice of managing instruction and curriculum, which related to the other two generic practices of managing administrative affairs

and developing external relationships. From this point of view, these two practices represented the essential function of school education and thus could be labeled as functional leadership practices.

Related to the second point, the third classification was labeled as supportive leadership practice, including managing administrative affairs and developing external relationships and resources. In the interviews, the respondents indicated that ‘all aspects of school administration should centre on education and instruction (各個方面的行政工作都是圍繞著教育教學工作展開),’ and maintaining school external connections was to ‘provide a good environment for the school to survive (為學校的生存提供了一個比較好的環境).’ In the quantitative model presented above, these two generic practices were directly influenced by the practice of managing instruction and curriculum, through which the practice of developing people might exert certain impact. In this sense, both of them could be seen as a sort of supportive leadership practices.

With this understanding, it can be suggested that the sampled school principals usually set the direction of school development through the directional leadership practices and drove the school toward the orientation through the functional leadership practices, with the assistance of the supportive leadership practices. Figure 7.3 illustrates the inter-relationships among the three classifications of core categories of the leadership practices identified in the study.

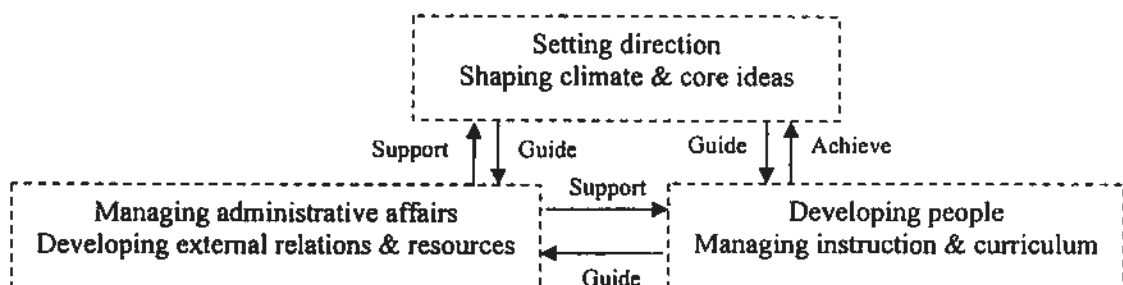


Figure 7.3 Inter-relationships among the Core Categories with Different Functions

To some extent, the triangle reflected a general way of how Chinese school principals lead their schools. Underlying this broad approach, three specific patterns were further confirmed through linking the quantitative results with the qualitative findings. The following sub-section explicates these patterns in detail.

Practical Patterns

Three practical patterns, first proposed in the qualitative data analysis, were reconfirmed through integrating the quantitative results with the qualitative findings.

These patterns were:

- Dual emphases on academic performance and holistic development
- A differential pattern of participative decision-making
- Hybridisation of multiple leadership styles

Dual emphases on academic performance and holistic development

One of the common findings from the quantitative and qualitative data analysis was that the principals put emphasis on both student academic performance and holistic development.

The qualitative data analysis indicated that principals tried to balance student exam achievement with all-round development. This view was explicitly expressed in the interviews and appeared in many of the identified leadership practices, particularly in the functional leadership activities such as improving instruction and curriculum and developing students. As shown in Chapter Six, all the selected school leaders advocated the implementation of quality education and the all-round development of students as a part of school vision or the mission of their schools. Accompanying this quality-oriented view, however, the exam orientation was actually practiced by these school leaders by giving priority to promoting student exam performance. Principal E's opinion typically reflected this balanced view shared by these Chinese school leaders:

We aim at quality, not only pursue scores; but quality education doesn't discard scores. What matters is that how we can reflect the nature of education and humanity and let our school education serve for students' lifelong development in the course of seeking high scores. (我們追求質量，不僅僅是追求分數；搞素質教育也不是不要分數。關鍵是我們如何在追求分數的過程中，讓我們更加體現我們教育的本質，更加體現我們的人性，更加體現我們的教育為學生一生的發展服務)

Such dual emphases were also apparent in the quantitative findings. According to the results presented in Chapter Five, explicitly setting goals for student academic achievement was regarded as one important component of setting direction for the school. Moreover, the practice of managing instruction and curriculum included two-sided orientations: school-based development and performance-based supervision.

The former aimed to enhance the school-based curriculum development and innovations, which was largely consistent with the tenets of quality education. The latter, which was reported to be practiced more often than the former in real school situations, was used to monitor and improve teacher teaching and student performance, particularly student test scores. This visible test orientation, blended with the prevailing quality orientation, composed one of the major practical patterns of the principal leadership practices identified in this study.

A differential pattern of participative decision-making

Both the quantitative and qualitative data analysis suggested that the Chinese school leaders adopted a participative or collective approach to making decisions. Based on a more in-depth interpretation of the qualitative findings, however, this participative decision-making process was conducted in a differential pattern as described in Chapter Six.

In course of the quantitative data analysis, many specific behaviors embodying the participative way of decision-making were identified by the participants as the components of several core leadership practices. Specifically, the principals were reported to involve other school members in school planning or designing school goals, involve teachers to make policies concerning school instruction and curriculum, encourage other school members to participate in decision-making, lead school through collective management and decision-making, and make decisions in a participative way. From the qualitative data analysis, similar leadership practices of the school principals were found in terms of setting direction, shaping core ideas, determining major internal affairs, and sometimes carrying out school innovations.

However, the qualitative data suggested that this participative process of decision-making seemed to be conducted in a differential pattern through a hierarchical approach. The school principals determined the degree of involvement of different groups of school members in making decisions according to the distance between them and the group members. In other word, different groups of school members would be treated differently due to their different status and positions which decided how far they were from the school leader.

Accordingly, when the school leaders needed to make major decisions, they would first consult with the key leadership team. This cohort of school leaders would

discuss the principal's proposal together and achieve consensus. Then, the relevant plans or schemes would be introduced and explained to teachers and their opinions would be collected. In the study, this process appeared in a number of the leadership practices and often involved three functional units in Chinese schools (i.e., Party Branch, school Union, Teacher Congress). This might explain the comparatively strong positive relationship between the influence of these functional units and principal involvement in the practices aiming for developing people, managing administrative affairs, and managing instruction and curriculum, as found in the quantitative investigation.

Nevertheless, these procedures were said to be mainly used to 'enhance teachers' self-confidence (鼓舞老師的自信)', 'let them feel a sense of ownership (覺得自己是學校的主人)', or 'develop specific action plans (形成更具體的方案)'. Besides, teachers were mostly involved in the process of discussing issues highly relevant to their immediate interests, such as performance related pay, bonus distribution, and outside training opportunities. Thinking about school development was always thought as the principal's job. As one school principal described, the approach to school leadership was 'mainly from top to bottom, supplemented with a bottom-up manner (由上而下為主導，輔之以由下到上)'.

Hybridisation of multiple leadership styles

The integration of the quantitative and qualitative findings further suggested that the Chinese school principals enacted the core leadership practices in a hybrid way that integrates visionary, democratic, exemplary, human-oriented and authoritarian leadership behaviors.

In the quantitative investigation, setting direction stood out as one of the core categories of Chinese principal leadership practices. The fact *per se* reflected the tendency toward the visionary leadership. The practices of goal-setting and planning were two major manifestations of this type of leadership practice. The democratic leadership style was embodied in a variety of specific leadership activities used by the school leaders to set direction, manage instruction and curriculum, and manage administrative affairs. For instance, the activities involved in the participative decision-making process presented above, consulting with parents on school instruction and curriculum, sharing leadership power through delegating subordinates,

and consulting with the Party Branch, Teacher Congress, and School Union on major decisions. Furthermore, setting an example, especially in terms of moral, was often used as one of the major means of shaping school climate. The participants also pointed out a number of human-oriented leadership practices relating to school climate building and internal administration, such as considering different staff's needs of professional development, considering teachers' and students' needs while implementing instruction and curriculum reforms, disciplining subordinates with a human-orientation, and considering individual needs of different staff to motivate them work hard.

Similar to the quantitative findings, the qualitative data also suggested that the selected Chinese school leaders paid particular attention to setting school vision and long-term goals and planning. They always exhibited a democratic style of leadership when they engaged in setting direction, shaping core ideas and determining major internal affairs, especially those directly relating to teachers. Most of these principals explicitly stressed the importance of 'collective decision-making (集體決策)' and made use of a set of democratic procedures to involve other school members in school administration. Additionally, human-based management was regarded as an essential component in terms of managing internal administrative affairs.

Contrary to the almost one-sided praise of the principals' democratic leadership practices suggested by the quantitative data, the qualitative data revealed a kind of top-down, values-based authority and the related leadership practices exercised by these Chinese principals. Many respondents indicated that the major ideas, decisions and development steps of their schools were 'dominated by the principals' thoughts' (以校長的想法為主導). This kind of authoritarian leadership practice worked in an unobtrusive way. A vice principal participating in the interviews compared this to 'playing individual instruments but being in tune with the principal (各吹各的號, 要吹校長的調).' To a certain degree, consulting other school members was more like a process through which the principals' personal ideas could be legitimised and accepted by other school members.

In order to better understand the emergence of these core leadership practices, the researcher turned to the findings concerning the contextual factors that were reported

to have an impact on the principalship in Chinese schools. The following section presents the relevant findings.

Contextual Factors

Findings emerging from the both forms of data consistently identified three major sources of the contextual influence on the leadership practices of the sampled Chinese principals and their inter-relationships. More importantly, the connection between the contextual factors and the core leadership practices were further confirmed in course of the data integration.

Three Major Sources

As shown in Appendix 7.2, the contextual factors identified through the two types of investigation converged on three natural dimensions: personal conditions, internal school conditions, and external context. Under these dimensions, there were many common or similar factors emerging from the two forms of data. The integration was similar to the process of synthesising the leadership practices derived from the two types of data. Considering the descriptive function of the Influence scale, however, the results of descriptive analysis and correlation analysis in the quantitative data analysis (see Table 5.13 and Table 5.14) was used to examine each of the items. Consequently, the contextual factors were categorised into the three natural sources of the contextual influence on the core leadership practices identified in the study. Table 7.2 exhibits these contextual factors.

Table 7.2 Contextual Factors Identified in the Study

Major Sources	Specific Factors
Personal Conditions	Principal's capability of leadership Principal's perception of leadership Principal's perception of education Principal's understanding of positional responsibilities Principal's understanding of the professionalism of principalship Principal's professional pursuits Relevant professional knowledge Principal's personal values and morals integrity Principal's personality traits Experience in principalship
Internal school conditions	Existing organisational climate and culture Available resources and financial situation Teacher conditions (age, experience, capability, ideas, pursuits, & spirit) Student characteristics (e.g., student intake) Other school leaders' perceptions of leadership Cadre conditions (e.g., cadre cooperation) Supervision and intervention of school Party Branch

	Supervision and intervention of Teacher Congress
	Supervision and intervention of school Union
	Other school members' views on school administration and relevant individual factors (i.e., gender, age, years of teaching, position, training times)
	School performance and status
	Basic conditions (i.e., type of education, school size, location)
External Context	Academic competition and pressure in basic education
	Supervision of the district educational authority
	Administrative examination and approval system
	Financial allocation system
	Existing principal responsibility system
	Existing school and principal evaluation systems
	Ongoing principal career ladder system
	Educational guidelines and reform policies of the central government
	Hierarchical administration system of the government
	Previous cadre system in school personnel administration
	Exam-oriented social evaluation on school education
	Parents' expectations of the outcomes of school education
	Competition among local schools
	New trends of local education development
	Local economic conditions
	Prevalent educational conceptions
	Servant leadership style advocated by the Party and the government

At the personal level, *principal's capability of leadership* was rated as the most influential factor by the participants in the survey (see Table 5.13). But the correlation analysis suggested a stronger positive relationship between *principal's perception of education* and the practices of setting direction, developing people, and developing external relationship, as well as the overall level of involvement in the core leadership practices (see Table 5.14) The relevant qualitative data also indicated the important role of the principal's perception of education in the process of building a unified idea of running school.

For the internal school conditions, organisational climate and available resources, particularly the financial situation, were all regarded as important in the both types of data analysis. In addition to the items identified through the quantitative data analysis, more specific elements composing school context were provided by the quantitative data, such as teacher conditions (age, experience, capacity, ideas, pursuits and spirit), student characteristics (student intake), cadre conditions (cadre cooperation), and school performance and rank.

Respecting the external context, a number of factors were commonly identified from the both forms of data, including the academic competition and pressure in basic education, the supervision of the district educational authority, the existing

educational administration system (i.e., financial allocation system, principal responsibility system), the reform policies from the central government, and the governmental administration system. Moreover, the qualitative data analysis led to more external factors such as societal expectations, competition and development trends in local education system, local economic conditions, and prevalent educational conceptions. Among these factors, the last element, educational conceptions appeared not as powerful as the other factors, for example, principal B didn't think highly of the prevalent conceptions advocated by the overseas returnees and used to guide the educational reforms.

In the questionnaire, there were three items referring to the relevant conceptions of leadership. These were *leadership ideas and conceptions in business area*, *Leader image in Chinese traditional culture*, *Western ideas of leadership with an orientation toward participation and power sharing*. According to the results of descriptive analysis, all the three items were rated as the least influential factors among the external variables (see Table 5.13). In the correlation analysis, the weakest relationship was also found between these items and the involvement variables (see Table 5.14). In the qualitative data analysis, none of these conceptions were mentioned by the respondents. By this token, these three conception variables were not significant contextual factors which could act on the leadership practices of the Chinese principals and thus were excluded from the three general types of the contextual factors.

Inter-relationship

The quantitative data indicated that the three general types of the contextual factors were associated with each other (see Table 5.14). The strongest significant positive relationship was found between the external context and the internal school context (0.710), followed by the correlations between the internal school context and the personal perceptions and traits (0.614) and between the external context and the personal perception and traits (0.588). These relationships suggested that the influence from the external context might act on the leadership practices through affecting the individual and organisational conditions.

The argument was further confirmed and explained by the qualitative data. According to the qualitative findings, the external context provided a broad

background for both organisational and personal contexts. Within the broad context, principals' personal conditions interacted with the school context. As stated in the prior chapter, school conditions provided necessary information about the existing situation of the school so that principals could exert their leadership on the right place. In turn, principals' personal conditions would directly or indirectly change the school context through the enactment of their leadership practices. Based on the combined analysis, the relationships among the major contextual factors under the three dimensions could be demonstrated in Figure 7.4.

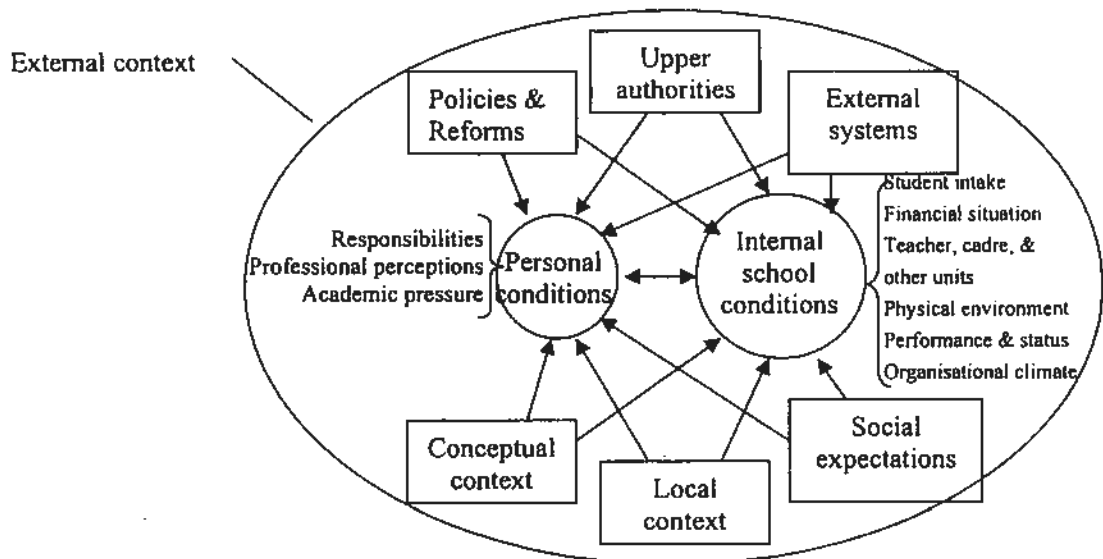


Figure 7.4 Inter-relationships among the Contextual Factors

From the foregoing, a more comprehensive understanding of how the contextual factors work could be built upon the following findings. First, school principals' personal conditions and school internal conditions were affected by the broader external context. Thus, the external context might have an indirect impact on principal leadership practices through affecting their personal conditions and the internal school situations. At the same time, principals' personal conditions and internal school context would interact with one another. With this understanding, the following sub-section associates these contextual factors with the principal leadership practices identified in the study.

Interactions between Contextual Factors and Core Leadership Practices

This section conjoins the relevant quantitative and qualitative findings together to elaborate on the relationship between the contextual factors and the core leadership practices identified in the study. The combination led to a synthetic framework of the

interaction between the contextual factors and the core categories of the principal leadership practices in the sampled Chinese schools. In this process, two integrative models were further developed into a more complex structure that demonstrated the interactions between the context and the principal leadership practices in real-life situations.

Through correlation analysis (see Table 5.15), the quantitative investigation identified a set of the contextual factors that had a relatively strong positive relationship with principal involvement in the six core categories of the identified leadership practices ($r>0.4$). In the qualitative exploration, a number of contextual were related with the core leadership practices (see Chapter 6). Through summarising the major results, an integration of the two types of findings was achieved as shown in Table 7.3. Overall, all the three groups of the contextual factors could be related with the core leadership practices, except that personal factors were not strongly or particularly related with the practices of managing administrative affairs and managing instruction and curriculum.

Table 7.3 Summary of the Relationship between Contextual Factors and Core Leadership Practices

	Core Leadership Practices ¹¹⁷						Overall
	SD	SCC	DP	MAA	MIC	DRR	
<i>Quantitative data analysis</i>							
Principal's perception of education	+		+			+	+
Principal's perception of leadership						+	
Principal's understanding of his/her responsibilities						+	
Existing school climate and culture			+				+
Resources available for school development						+	
Other school leaders' perceptions of leadership			+				
Other school members' views on school administration					+		
Supervision and intervention of school Party Branch		+	+	+	+		+
Supervision and intervention of school Union			+	+	+		+
Supervision and intervention of Teacher Congress			+	+	+		+
Hierarchical administration system of the government						+	
Servant leadership style advocated by the Party and the government		+	+	+	+		+
Educational guidelines and reform policies of the central government	+	+	+	+	+	+	+
Policies and interventions of local educational authorities						+	
Existing principal responsibility system						+	

¹¹⁷ SD=setting direction, SCC=shaping school climate and core ideas, DP=developing people, MIC=managing instruction and curriculum, MAA=managing administrative affairs, DRR=developing external relationships and resources, Overall=overall level of principal involvement in the core leadership practices (i.e., the cluster variable), "+"=positive relationship in correlation analysis, "√"=relationship identified in the qualitative data analysis.

<i>Qualitative data analysis</i>					
Principal's perception of education	✓	✓			
Principal's values and moral integrity		✓			
Positional responsibilities	✓			✓	✓
Principalship experience		✓			✓
Teacher conditions			✓	✓	
Student characteristics, particular student intake			✓	✓	
Cadre conditions			✓	✓	
Organisational climate		✓			
School performance and rank	✓			✓	
Financial situation					✓
The district educational authority	✓		✓	✓	✓
Educational administration system				✓	✓
Educational policies and reforms		✓	✓	✓	✓
Social and parents' expectations			✓	✓	
Local environment	✓				✓
Prevalent educational conceptions		✓			

At the personal level, principal's perception of education stood out as a prominent factor from the both types of data. In light of the combined findings, school leaders' understanding of education was related with setting direction, shaping school climate and core ideas, developing people, developing external relationships and resources, and overall level of involvement. Particularly, principals' understanding of positional responsibilities related closely to their involvement in developing external relationships and resources. This relationship was especially manifest in the two models developed in the qualitative data analysis (see Chapter 6).

Within the school, the three functional units, the Party Branch, school Union, and Teacher Congress, appeared as important forces that influenced the principals' involvement in developing people, managing administrative affairs, and managing instruction and curriculum, as well as their overall level of involvement. Additionally, school climate and available resources, particular the financial situation, were identified through the both types of data analysis. The latter was always linked with the practice of developing external relationships and resources. In the interviews, student characteristics, especially student intake, were emphasised as the grounds for the principals' efforts to improve school instruction and curriculum. School performance and status were found closely related with the aims, priorities and strategies of school development. Teacher and cadre conditions were said as related

with the practices aiming to develop people and improve school teaching and learning.

In the quantitative analysis, some personal features of the participants related to their assessment on the principal involvement in the core leadership practices, including gender, age, years of teaching, present position, training times, the number of students, type of school education, and school location (see Chapter 5). Since most of the participants were teachers and staff. These features could be seen as representative of the personal conditions of other school members. Except the effect of gender, however, all these relationships or effects were relatively weak.

In terms of the external context, the influence of the government was evidently powerful. Three government-related factors were confirmed by the both types of data. These were the supervision of district/local educational authority, the relevant educational administration system (e.g., principal responsibility system), and the educational guidelines and reform policies of the central government. The qualitative findings further indicated that these external factors might have a direct impact on some of the identified leadership practices while indirectly affecting some others through interacting with the personal and organisational variables as suggested in the prior section and Chapter Six. Many external factors, particularly the district educational authority, were reported to directly influence school leaders' endeavors to develop external relationships and resources.

Through combining the contextual factors with the three classifications of the identified principal leadership practices as stated above, a synthetic framework could be constructed as Figure 7.5 illustrated.

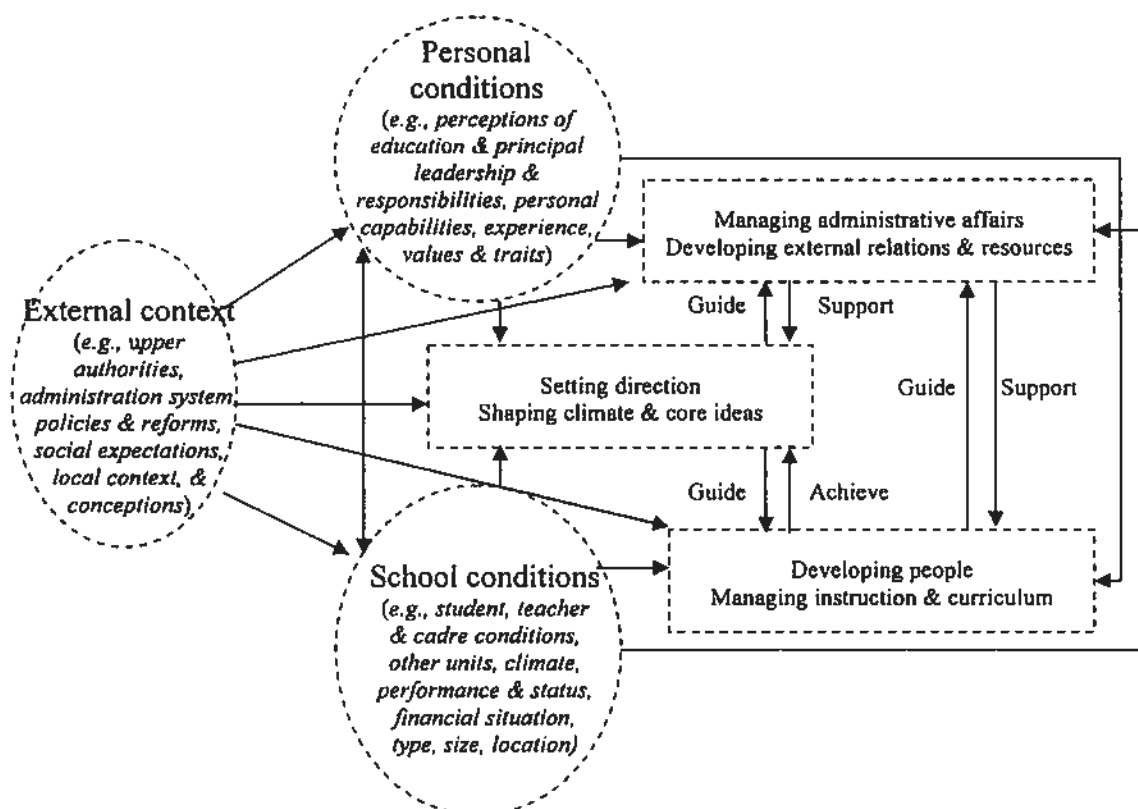


Figure 7.5 The Synthetic Framework

This framework demonstrates the working mechanism of the contextual influences on the inter-related principal leadership practice identified in the study. With this framework, the author reconsidered the quantitative and qualitative data relevant to the application of the core leadership practices in real-life situations and reconfirmed the two practical models proposed in the qualitative data analysis.

Integrated Models: Survival and Development

This section presents two integrated models of the application of the core leadership practices in real-life situations. The two models were survival model and development model. Originating from the qualitative findings, these two models combined the practical experience of the case principals with the statistical results emerging from the quantitative data analysis. With the two models, different elements involved in the study were integrated together in real-life situations and composed a more complete picture of how these Chinese principals applied the core leadership practices to their schools.

Different practical emphases

One of the most significant distinctions between the two models was the focus of the core leadership practices. Associating the qualitative findings with the classifications of the core leadership practices stated in this chapter, it can be seen that the survival model put emphasis on the functional leadership practices, whereas the development model pointed to a full involvement in all these leadership practices for the long-term development of schools.

Under the survival model, the core leadership practices of school principals were centred on the functional leadership practices. According to the qualitative data analysis, there were two case principals who could be categorised under this model. In order to achieve an immediate progress in school performance, they usually concentrated themselves on improving classroom teaching and student learning (see Chapter 6). Notably, neither of the school leaders would like to develop external relations or seek extra resources even though there was indeed a lack of resources in both of the two schools.

Compared with the two principals described above, the other four school leaders were inclined to the development model, which implied a more complete use of all the three types of the principal leadership practices. Thus, the guiding role of the directional leadership practice was recognised. As the qualitative data suggested, all these school principals made great efforts to set vision or make a blueprint for the school in the long run and to ensure student all-round development (see Chapter 6). Particularly, these school principals actively engaged in one of the supporting leadership practices, developing external relationships and resources. According to the quantitative finding, there was a positive relationship between the times of training received by the participants and the reported principal involvement in setting direction and in external relationship building

From the foregoing, one major difference between the two models was that the survival model placed the focus on the functional leadership practices and the development model supported a full involvement in all the types of core leadership practices. This difference was particularly obvious regarding the practice of developing external relations and resources. In the quantitative data analysis, the overall level of principal involvement in the core leadership practices would vary

with the change in the involvement in five core categories of the identified leadership practices, except the practice of managing instruction and curriculum. In this sense, from the survival model to the development model, the overall level of principal involvement in the core leadership practices would improve with the increase of the involvement in more diverse leadership practices other than managing teaching and learning.

Varied enactment patterns

The first section of this chapter presents three common enactment patterns of the core leadership practices identified in the study. In practice, these patterns would slightly vary with the different models employed by the school principals. The major difference lay in their actual actions concerning the balance between the student performance improvement and all-round growth and the participation of other school members in decision-making.

As shown in Chapter Six, the school leaders under the survival model had to pay close attention to student academic performance even though they might be more willing to promote student all-round development. Meanwhile, they seemed to prefer to establish a top-down, values-based authority in order to carry out their ideas or innovations in an efficient and effective way. To the contrary, the school leaders under the development model seemed to be more concerned about student all-round development as stated earlier. Moreover, these school principals exhibited more willingness to involve other school members in decision-making (see Chapter 6).

Distinct leadership contexts

With the synthetic framework constructed in the prior sub-section, the difference between the two models might derive from the specific situation facing the school leader. The specific context involved principal personal conditions, school conditions, and external conditions.

As indicated in the qualitative data analysis, the two groups of school leaders held divergent views on the practice of developing external relationships and resources (see Chapter 6). This explained the quantitative finding that principals' personal understandings of education and their responsibilities would affect their involvement in this leadership practice (see Table 7.3).

Furthermore, the qualitative data suggested that the different views might originate from certain organisational factors and external context. Consistent with the quantitative results, the four principals under the development model all came from high schools and comprehensive schools where the principal were reported to be more fully involved in the core leadership practices. Within these schools, the staff were said to be supportive and cooperative and the school climate was quite good and harmonious. The school leaders appeared more willing to fully engage in a variety of leadership practices and support the development of other school members. It supported the positive effect of the existing school climate on the reported involvement in developing people and the reported overall level of involvement as indicated in the quantitative data analysis.

Taking account of the external context, there seemed to be a tendency that schools with accomplishments and reputation tend to snowball and those with meager accomplishments have greater difficulty achieving accomplishments. This demonstrated the positive correlation between the influence of the external context and the influence of school conditions identified in the quantitative data analysis.

Moreover, the narrative data suggested that the school leaders would hold a more positive opinion and take more active actions to get help from outside when the external environment was more supportive (see Chapte 6). It reflected the positive relationship between the influence of external context and the impact of the personal perceptions and traits as found in the quantitative data analysis. Thus, the internal school situation and the external context could be presented as a set of coordinates as shown in Figure 7.6.

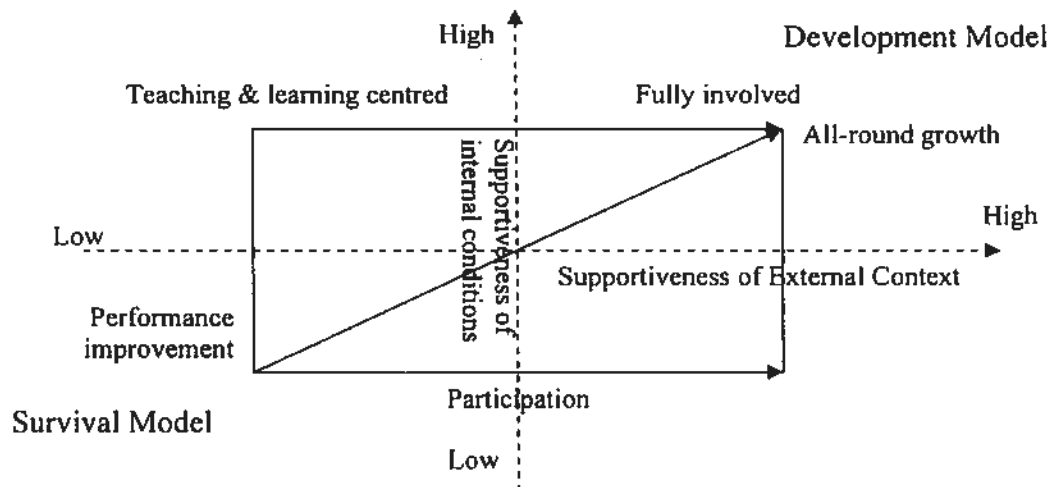


Figure 7.6 Integrated Survival- and Development-model

Summary

This chapter presents a number of integrated findings developed through the combination and comparison between the quantitative and qualitative data analysis. The major findings are recapitulated as follows.

First, six core categories of Chinese principal leadership practices were confirmed and an integrated repertoire was constructed by combining the quantitative and qualitative findings. On the basis of the qualitative findings, a full-model factor analysis of the six core categories of the identified leadership practices suggested that these practices played different roles in Chinese principalship. Based on their functions and interactions, the six core categories could be further grouped into three classifications: directional leadership practices, functional leadership practices, and supportive leadership practices. Moreover, three practical patterns of the core leadership practices were reconfirmed through integrating the pertinent quantitative and qualitative data. The three patterns included the twofold emphases on academic performance and holistic development, the differential pattern of participative decision-making, and the hybridisation of multiple leadership style.

Second, three major sources of the contextual influence on the principal leadership practices were identified in the study, involving principals' personal conditions, school internal conditions, and external context. These three broad types of the contextual factors were interrelated with each other. Through linking them with the identified principal leadership practices, a synthetic framework was constructed as shown in Figure 7.5. Additionally, two integrative models were further confirmed in

course of the finding integration and illustrated how the Chinese school leaders enact the core leadership practices in conformity with specific contextual needs.

Chapter 8 Conclusions and Discussion

This chapter aims to address the research questions, draw a number of conclusions, and present further discussion. It pulls together the major findings of the study and attempts to make sense of them in terms of both the Chinese context and the broader international literature.

The chapter consists of five sections. The first section restates the research questions and research process. The second section draws a series of conclusions which summarise the major research findings. The third section provides further discussion about the major findings of the study through connecting them with the relevant literature. The fourth section links the findings and discussion with the societal and educational context in contemporary China, and three propositions are developed as follows:

- The core leadership practices of Chinese school principals share similar focuses and functions with principals elsewhere. At the same time, these core leadership practices exhibit particular patterns and emphases when they are enacted within the Chinese societal context.
- The educational context has a powerful impact on principal leadership practices. To a large extent, the core leadership practices are employed by Chinese school leaders as pragmatic solutions to the conflicting requirements in the reform context, within which local educational authorities play an important role.
- Good principals in Chinese schools base their leadership practices on the school reality and lead schools toward development through making full use of all six core leadership practices, particularly developing external relationships and resources. In turn, better school conditions can help principals perform these core functions.

The practical and theoretical implications of this study are presented in the final section.

An Overview of the Study

The purpose of this study was to investigate the core leadership practices of school principals in Mainland China. More specifically, it aimed to unveil the authentic expertise shared by Chinese school principals in leading schools.

This broad purpose derived from the specific context of Chinese school education and the international knowledge base of 'good practice' of principalship. On the one hand, the increasingly complex educational context in China calls for a comprehensive investigation into principal leadership practices. After several rounds of education reform, more and more importance has been attached to school leaders and questions about 'good practice' of principal leadership have become the essential concern of policymakers and school leaders themselves (Feng, 2005).

On the other hand, few serious studies have delved deeply into principal leadership practices in Chinese schools compared with the substantial research conducted in Western societies (Day, Leithwood, & Sammons, 2008; Leithwood *et al.*, 2006b; MacBeath & Dempster, 2009). That being the case, there is a need to conduct empirical research to explore the indigenous repertoire of core practices of principal leadership in Chinese schools. Thus, the study reported here endeavours to contribute to this largely underdeveloped knowledge base.

The overall purpose of the study consisted of three sub-purposes. First, it aimed to identify the core leadership practices of school principals in Mainland China. This formed the basis of the first broad research question. Second was to investigate how these core leadership practices are exercised or enacted by Chinese school leaders. This targeted the practical patterns and real-life stories of the application of the core leadership practices in Chinese schools. The second broad research question flowed from this sub-purpose. The third sub-purpose was to provide a contextual explanation for the emergence of the core leadership practices. As Elmore (2008) stated, 'practice is embedded in the particular incentive structures and particular institutional settings in which it is used' (p. 44). The third broad research question was developed from this sub-purpose. From description to explanation, the three sub-purposes reflected the logical sequence of the investigation.

In accordance with the research purposes, the investigation was guided by the following set of research questions:

Q1. What are the core leadership practices of Chinese school principals?

Q1.1 Do the leadership practices of Chinese school principals converge on a set of core categories?

Q1.2 What specific practices compose these core leadership practices?

Q1.3 What is the relationship between the different core leadership practices?

- Q2. How do Chinese principals enact the core leadership practices in their schools?
- Q2.1 Are there any general patterns which characterise Chinese principals' enactment of the core leadership practices in their schools?
 - Q2.2 Are there any differences in the enactment of the core leadership practices between different Chinese school principals?
- Q3. Do certain contextual factors relate to the core leadership practices of Chinese principals and the enactment of these practices?
- Q3.1 Do personal factors relate to the core leadership practices of Chinese principals and the enactment of these practices?
 - Q3.2 Do any organisational factors relate to the core leadership practices of Chinese principals and the enactment of these practices?
 - Q3.3 Do any societal factors relate to the core leadership practices of Chinese principals and the enactment of these practices?

The first cluster of research questions pointed to the identification of the core practices characterising Chinese school principalship. The second group of questions described how these core leadership practices are enacted by Chinese principals in their schools. The third group of the questions referred to the effects of the three levels of the contextual factors on the core leadership practices.

To address these questions, the study adopted the mixed methods research approach. This approach was chosen because it was considered congruent with the purpose of the study and would lead to a better understanding of the phenomenon under investigation. Accordingly, both quantitative and qualitative methods were employed to collect and analyse data. A questionnaire survey and interviews constituted the chief data collection methods.

The survey was mainly conducted in two cities in Mainland China, Beijing and Guangzhou. Supplementary data were collected from two secondary schools in Zhengzhou and Shenyang. The participants included 572 practitioners working in secondary schools, including principals, vice-principals, middle management, and teachers. The number of valid responses was 408 (71.3%). With SPSS 15.0 and LISREL 8.7, a series of statistical methods were used to analyse the valid data.

The interviews involved 21 respondents, among whom there were six secondary school principals. These school leaders were treated as the target cases and the other

respondents were purposely selected from the relevant focus groups within their schools, involving vice-principals/Party secretary, middle management, and/or front-line teachers. All interviews were conducted face-to-face within the schools where specific school settings were observed and data were collected efficiently and accurately. After the interviews, all the records were transcribed verbatim and three steps of coding (i.e. open coding, axial coding, and selective coding) were employed to analyse the qualitative data in NVivo 8.

The investigation generated a number of findings concerning the central themes underlying the research questions. In the first three chapters, the inferences emerging from the two research approaches were first presented individually and then combined. The major findings of this study are summarised in the following section to answer the research questions.

Conclusions

The leadership practices of Chinese school principals can be classified into six core categories. Each of them is comprised of a set of specific leadership practices as displayed in Table 7.1.

1. Setting direction
2. Shaping school climate and core ideas
3. Developing people
4. Managing instruction and curriculum
5. Managing administrative affairs
6. Developing external relationships and resources

These core leadership categories are interrelated, as shown in Figure 7.2. According to their different roles in school administration, they can be grouped into three correlated classifications:

- *Directional leadership practices*: setting direction and shaping school climate and core ideas
- *Functional leadership practices*: developing people and managing instruction and curriculum
- *Supportive leadership practices*: managing administrative affairs and developing external relationships and resources

The directional leadership practices guide the other core practices. The functional leadership practices represent the fundamental functions of school education. The supportive leadership practices aim to facilitate the other core categories, particularly the functional leadership practices. Accordingly, the six core leadership practices can be interrelated, as Figure 7.3 demonstrates.

When the core leadership practices are actually applied in schools, three practical patterns characterise Chinese principals' enactment of these leadership practices.

- Chinese school principals emphasise both student academic performance and holistic development
- Chinese school leaders adopt a differential pattern of participative or collective decision-making and treat different groups of school members in accordance with their different status and positions in decision-making
- Chinese school principals apply the core leadership practices in a hybrid way that integrates visionary, democratic, exemplary, human-oriented, and authoritarian leadership behaviours

In the process of enacting the core leadership practices, a number of contextual factors from principals' personal conditions, internal school conditions, and external context may affect Chinese principals' specific leadership activities (see Table 7.2). The three major types of contextual factors interact with one another and relate to the core leadership practices identified in the study.

As illustrated in Figure 7.5, principal personal conditions interact with the internal school conditions within the external context. Internal school conditions lay the foundation for the core leadership practices. Principals' personal views can act on the school conditions through their leadership practices. Both the personal and organisational conditions are influenced by the external context.

In terms of the specific contextual impact, different factors exert different amounts of influence on the identified core leadership practices.

- At the personal level, many influential factors are 'non-power factors', which have nothing to do with positional authority, particularly principal's perception of education. Principals' understanding of positional responsibilities and their capability of leadership are also important personal factors that relate to the core leadership practices.

- Within the school, student intake has a great impact on the functional leadership practices of the school leaders. Other important factors include the resources available for school development, existing school climate, other functional units, and teacher and cadre conditions.
- In respect of the external context, there are strong impacts coming from the district educational authority, existing educational administration, educational guidelines and reform policies of central government, and the servant leadership style advocated by the Party and the government.

From this contextual perspective principals from different schools may apply the core leadership practices in different ways. Two integrative models, the survival model and the development model, demonstrate the difference between the two groups of Chinese school principals when they apply the core leadership practices in real-life situations (see Figure 7.6). The difference mainly lies in the school priority and the orientation toward involving other school staff in the process of making major decisions. Table 8.1 summarises the differences.

Table 8.1 Main Differences between Survival Model & Development Model

	Survival Model	Development Model
Priority	● Improvement in school teaching and learning, particularly student academic performance	● School long-term development and all-round development of all school members
Orientation	● Autocratic	● Participative

Essentially, it is the distinctive school situations that lead to differences in the principals' involvement in core leadership practices and how they exercise these practices. As pointed out earlier, the various school priorities mainly resulted from the disparity between the two groups of schools in terms of student performance, which is largely caused by the different sources of students. Additionally, a supportive external context may help the principals to employ more fully the six core leadership practices, especially in terms of developing external relationships and resources. Similarly, when the internal school conditions appear more supportive, school leaders may be more willing to involve other staff in decision-making.

Discussion

This section relates the major findings of the study to the relevant literature in order to provide further understanding of the principalship in Chinese schools.

Six core leadership practices

In the study, six categories of principal leadership practices were identified as the core leadership practices of the Chinese school principals involved in the study. The categories not only verified the exploratory research framework of the study constructed in the third chapter, but also confirmed the applicability of certain leadership practices identified in many relevant empirical studies (e.g. Kwan & Walker, 2008; Leithwood, Harris, & Hopkins, 2008). Each of these core categories is explained as follows.

Setting direction is used to clarify the aim of school development, mainly including vision/goal setting, planning and analysis of the situation. This generic practice was seen as the essential function of school principals by both the principals and other school members in the study. This perspective was congruent with the argument that providing direction is one of the essential functions of school leadership (Leithwood & Riehl, 2003; Leithwood *et al.*, 2006a). Particularly, goal-setting and planning were universally employed by the sampled school principals. Both practices have been emphasised in many recent empirical studies (e.g. Cotton, 2003; Chu *et al.*, 2009b, Kwan & Walker, 2008; Leithwood & Riehl, 2003; Mulford, 2005). Also, the vision or goals often embodied a moral pursuit, which reflected the traditional emphasis on moral education in Chinese society (see Guo, 1987; Cleverley, 1991).

As the research findings indicated, the school principals involved other school members in the process of setting direction. This is consistent with the conclusions of other empirical studies that Chinese school principals recognise the importance of democratic leadership practice (e.g. An, 2006). At the same time, the goals of or plans for school development were usually based on the actual school situation. Such a practical orientation seemed to be embedded in this core category of the leadership practices of the sampled Chinese principals, but has not often been touched on in the literature.

Shaping school climate and core ideas relates to the organisational culture and a collective perception of education which lay the ideological foundation for the other

core leadership practices. There are three basic activities: building organisational climate, setting example, and shaping core ideas. The latter two appeared to be particularly important for the Chinese schools in the study. This core category of principal leadership was described by Leithwood, Harris, and Hopkins (2008) as one aiming to redesign the organisation. Consistently with the emphasis on school culture and core values in Chinese literature (see Yuan, 2002; Fan & Wang, 2006; Shi, Z., 2007), it was highlighted as a major leadership practice by the participants of this study. Meanwhile, setting a moral and dedicated example was identified as one of the main approaches to influencing other school members. This has often been found in empirical research on both Western and Chinese schools (e.g. Bo, 2007; Gurr *et al.*, 2003; Jiang, 2006; Mulford & John, 2004). It also reflected the traditional image of a moral leader which is always advocated in Chinese society (Chen, G., 2004; Child, 1994).

More importantly, great attention was given to establishing a unified idea of running schools. All the principals participating in the study believed that a good school leader should achieve an ideological unity in the school and usually employed this kind of leadership practice to clarify the school mission and guide the entire school operation. It is probably rooted in the traditional pursuits of harmony, collectivism, conflict avoidance, and conformity in Chinese societies (Child, 1994). This phenomenon has not, however, been seriously explored or explained in existing empirical research.

Developing people aims to promote the growth of all school members, including students, teachers, cadres, and the principal. It is largely based on a unified understanding of education shared by school members and impacts on how principals manage school instruction and the curriculum. Similarly to the previous findings (e.g. Kwan & Walker, 2008; Leithwood, Harris, & Hopkins, 2008; Chu, 2009b), this dimension involved a series of leadership behaviours aiming to facilitate teacher professional development and enhance staff capacity. Most of them embodied the transformational leadership advocated by Leithwood and Day (2007), such as providing individual support and challenging the present situation. At the same time, a hierarchical professional development system was reported in the study.

Moreover, the qualitative research indicated that the sampled Chinese principals gave priority to student development, in terms of both all-round growth and improved

academic achievement. This represented one of the major concerns of Chinese principals in the current reforming context as stated in Chapter Two and Chapter Three. On the one hand, there is a dominant focus on student academic performance because it always relates to school and principal assessment and governmental financial support (Dong, 2006; Guo, 2006; Zhao, 2007; Wang, S., 2005). With the implementation of quality education, on the other hand, promoting students' all-round development has been recognised as an ultimate goal of school education (see Qian, 2008). In this study, the school principals tended towards a balance between all-round development and exam orientation in developing students.

Managing instruction and curriculum targets the central work of schooling, teaching and learning, which largely directs principals' efforts to managing administrative affairs and developing external relationships and resources. In general, it confirmed the importance of school instruction and curriculum emphasised in Hallinger (2003) and Kwan and Walker (2008). This set of leadership practices integrated the managerial practices found in the instructional leadership model (Hallinger, 2003) and the model of transformational school leadership (Leithwood & Jantzi, 1999, 2005a, 2005b).

Differently from some research findings in Chinese schools (e.g. Zhang, 2004), the principals were involved in a variety of activities aiming to provide direct supervision over teaching and learning, especially in the ordinary schools where the students needed more help with learning (i.e. Principals B & E). Also, particular attention was paid to the development of a school-based curriculum, the participation of other staff in decision-making, and the improvement of students' exam performance. According to the data, the first two aspects are advocated in the current educational reforms and the last one is a constant focus of school education in China. The feature is congruent with one prominent characteristic of the practice of developing people in that priority is still given to student achievement. This commonality reconfirmed the close connection between these two core leadership practices and their central status in school operation.

Managing administrative affairs involves a series of leadership practices concerning internal administration. This cluster of principal leadership practices was essentially consistent with the corresponding dimension established by Kwan and Walker (2008) and involved some transformational leadership practices which were categorised into

the practice of 'managing the teaching and learning programme' in the four-dimension model proposed by Leithwood, Harris, and Hopkins (2008, p. 30). The data further suggested that the administration of the sampled schools was largely oriented by the needs of classroom teaching and student learning. To some extent, this conflicted with the negative effect of some similar leadership activities of Chinese principals on school instruction as found in some indigenous research (Li, 2006; Wang, L., 2007; Zhang, 2004).

Moreover, a democratic process of decision-making was often found in these schools. Great importance was also attached to harmonious interpersonal relationships. This conformed to the traditional emphasis on harmony and relationship in Chinese societies (Bush & Qiang, 2002; Hofstede, 2001; Lo, 2008). Particularly, the school leaders stressed their cooperation with the Party secretary in school management because the Party secretary is an important school-level leader who is in charge of school cadre management and is normally appointed by the district educational authority. The post is a unique feature of the present basic education administration system in China but has not often been discussed in existing literature in the field.

Developing external relationships and resources focuses on two issues, external relationships and school resources, both of which are quite important to Chinese school leaders. In the study, this type of leadership practice was most often used to support school instruction and curriculum development. Similar practices have been identified in the empirical studies conducted at home and abroad (e.g. Chu, 2009b; Kwan & Walker, 2008; Leithwood, Harris, & Hopkins, 2008). That identified in this study, however, was based on authentic perceptions of Chinese school principalship, particularly in terms of seeking resources from multiple channels and keeping a good relationship with the district educational authority. As a matter of fact, these two practices related to another two major concerns of Chinese school leaders, as stated in Chapter Three, and reconfirmed the argument that resources procurement is important for school operation and development and keeping a good relationship with local authorities is critical for school principals in winning more resources in China (Hannum & Park, 2002; Qian, 2008; Yan, 2005; Zhang, D. J., 2004; Zhang, Li, & Gu, 2005).

It is worth noting that insufficient funding not only bothered the principals 'whose schools are in remote areas and have minimal resources' (Hannum & Park, 2002, p.

7), but was also highlighted by some practitioners from a well-known school which is located in a wealthy district in Beijing. In addition, this practice appeared to be the most controversial practice identified. In the interviews, two principals recognised its importance but expressed their dislike of the practice whereas the other four thought highly of this type of principal leadership practice and were actively involved in its activities. None of these points have been investigated in depth in the relevant research.

Three function-based classifications

Apart from the identification of the core leadership practices of Chinese principals, the study further explored the interrelationship of the identified core leadership categories. As a result, the six core leadership practices could be categorised into three interrelated classifications in the light of their different functions. As stated above, both direction setting and idea-centred climate building belong to directional leadership practices which are mainly used to guide the entirety of school work. The functional leadership practices target the central work of schooling, people development and teaching and learning. The supportive leadership practices refer to internal administration and external relationship and resources development, through which school leaders can act on a variety of stakeholders and the context both inside and outside schools to perform their functions and realise school goals.

These three classifications compose a triangular system which displays how the core practices of principalship work in Chinese schools (see Figure 7.3). The structure embodies the holistic and interactive perception of leadership contended in recent literature that leadership can be seen as an influencing process crystallised through interactions between the leader, follower, aim and context (see Densten, 2008; Morrison, 2002; Spillane & Orlina, 2005). In this sense, the triangle not only demonstrates the interrelationship between the core principal leadership practices identified in Chinese schools, but also reflects a general mechanism underlying the enactment of the core leadership practices of school principals. In other words, these three classifications clarify a basic approach through which school principals exert their leadership and fulfil their functions. Therefore, the triangular structure appears to be a theoretical framework for understanding how principal leadership works in schools.

Such an understanding of the core practices of principalship has been seldom touched upon in previous research. Although many researchers have realised that the dimensions of the core practices are universal and the ways of enactment variable (Leithwood & Day, 2007), they do not provide a general framework for perceiving and interpreting the varied enactment process of the similar set of core leadership practices of school principals in different contexts. The three classifications proposed here shed light on the issue. The triangular framework can be seen as a dynamic archetype of how core leadership practices work in schools. Accordingly, the enactment of the core principal leadership practices in a particular is a variant type of the basic interactions among the three function-based classifications. Thus, the enactment process of the core leadership practices may vary in the different contexts in terms of the specific patterns of practice.

Three enactment patterns

On the basis of the general understanding of principalship enactment above, the study further identified three specific patterns characterising the process in which the six core leadership practices are enacted by Chinese principals. They are briefly presented below.

- Dual emphasis on academic performance and holistic development
- A differential pattern of participative decision-making
- Hybridisation of multiple leadership styles

First, practical emphasis was placed on both academic performance and holistic development at the same time. As specified in the first two chapters, this view appeared in most of the core leadership practices identified, particularly the functional leadership activities. From a contextual perspective, such dual emphasis seemed to be a pragmatic solution to what Qian (2008, p. 202) called 'the tension between producing high exam performance and more holistic student development', which might be one of the primary dilemmas confronting Chinese principals in the reform era. On the one hand, schools faced pressure to enhance student academic achievement, and on the other they were required to promote student all-round development by the current educational reform policies (Feng, 2006; Qian, 2008). This is discussed in the next section.

Second, the Chinese school leaders adopted a differential pattern of participative decision-making to determine major issues inside schools. In the survey, a series of democratic procedures were identified. In the interviews, the school leaders were also reported as making important decisions in a democratic or collective way. This manner of decision-making has been increasingly considered as good practice in the ongoing curriculum reforms (Feng, 2006) and been recognised by both scholars in this area and practitioners in Chinese schools (see An, 2006; Bo, 2007).

According to the narrative from the principals themselves, however, such a participative leadership style was actually conducted in a differential pattern (see Chapter 6). Different groups of school members were treated differently in accordance with their status and positions that decided how far they were from the school leader. Thus, the participative decision-making was performed in a hierarchical approach, with a decreasing influence from the leadership team through middle management to the grass-roots teachers and staff. This confirmed the top-down leadership style identified in other empirical studies in Chinese schools (e.g. Lu, 2007; Wang, L., 2007; Wong, 2007). It is also similar to what Ryan, Xiao, and Merry called 'contrived collegiality'; 'the principal selects who would speak and ballots were held in relation to options put forward' (1998, p. 178). This phenomenon may be rooted in Chinese society founded upon social relationships and interlocking social networks that comprise overlapping networks of people linked together through differentially categorised social relationships (Fei, Hamilton, & Wang, 1992).

As a matter of fact, it is the embodiment of 'democratic centralism',¹¹⁸ which is advocated by the CPC and the government as a basic organisational doctrine and mode of operation that defines the methods of political decision-making and governance (Burns, 1999; IOSCPRC, 2005). In this sense, this pattern actually reflects the impact of politicisation of education on principals' leadership philosophies and practices (Luo & Najjar, 2007). Most of the principals involved in the study completely agreed with this manner of decision-making. Some of them (e.g. Principal B, see Chapter 6) explicitly indicated that teachers would not think about

¹¹⁸ Enunciated originally by Vladimir Lenin, the principle stresses that the Party members have the freedom to discuss and debate matters of policy and direction, but must support the final decision once it is reached through a majority vote. Individuals must obey the Party or the organisation, the minority must obey the majority, and the lower levels of organisations must obey those at the upper level.

school development and thus the principal should take charge of making decisions (Lu, 2007). To some extent, these principals run schools similarly to government administration, although they are not governmental officials (Wang, L., 2007).

Third, multiple leadership styles were found in the process through which the principals applied the core leadership practices. In general, the hybrid pattern integrated visionary, democratic, exemplary, human-oriented, and authoritarian leadership behaviours. Specifically, the practice of setting direction reflected the visionary leadership practice included in the transformational leadership model (see Leithwood & Jantzi, 2005a, 2005b). As mentioned earlier, democratic leadership behaviours, particularly collective decision-making, were performed by the school leaders. Setting an example, especially in terms of morality, was one major means of shaping school climate. A human orientation or consideration was emphasised with respect to developing people, building school climate, and managing administrative affairs. At the same time, authoritarian leadership practice seemed to work in a subtle way, achieving the unity of thinking on the basis of personal thoughts rather than positional power. These behaviours are particularly congruent with the paternalistic leadership found in Chinese organisations (see Farh & Cheng, 2000).

Additionally, the hybrid pattern turned out to be able to satisfy the teachers. Most teachers expressed their admiration for their principals' professional knowledge and capability and spoke highly of the principals' personal pursuits and values, democratic leadership style and consideration for other school members. To some extent, they seemed more concerned about whether there was a procedure to involve them in the discussion rather than how deeply they were involved or whether they had a say in making the final decision. Thus, an interesting phenomenon was found in the interviews in that many other stakeholders expressed their satisfaction with the school leaders' democratic leadership behaviours while indicating that most of the critical decisions concerning school development were actually made by the principals. Some teachers held that it is the principal's job to make decisions and they just needed to follow the directives. This reflects an ingrained respect for hierarchy and positional authority and a traditional belief in leaders in Chinese society (Child, 1994; Lam, 2003). It is also consistent with the above-mentioned principle of 'democratic centralism' - freedom of discussion, unity of action (Lenin, 1906).

Three-level contextual factors

The core leadership practices and the primary enactment patterns were mainly determined or influenced by three types of contextual factors: personal conditions, internal school conditions, and external context. The findings confirmed the conclusions of other empirical studies, such as Day *et al.* (2008), and Leithwood and Day (2007). Two integrative models based on real-life stories further proved the interaction between the contextual factors and the core leadership practices.

At the personal level, the factors included principals' capability for leadership, understandings of leadership, education, positional responsibilities, and professionalism of principalship, professional pursuits and knowledge, personal values and morals, personality traits, and experience of principalship. The findings were consistent with a deal of relevant empirical evidence (see Hallinger & Heck, 1996; Leithwood, 2005; Li & Zhang, 2006; Ma, 2007) and the two broad categories of personal factors¹¹⁹ identified by Leithwood and Day (2007).

Among the personal factors, principals' perceptions relevant to their personal and professional values and beliefs were found to be influential in the study. For example, the principals' perception of education seemed to be one of the most influential factors in the personal context according to the quantitative investigation. It was also reported as the major source of the core idea guiding school operation in the qualitative exploration. In addition, the principals' personal values and morals were often related to their exemplary leadership practice in the interviews. These findings largely proved the great influence of personal and professional values and beliefs on school leaders' practices (Møller & Eggen, 2005a; Mulford, 2005).

Compared with the influence of personal perceptions and values, the influence of principals' personality traits seemed less powerful as perceived by the participants. This finding was slightly different from the persistent emphasis on some personality traits of school leaders (e.g. Guo, 2003; Gurr, Drysdale, & Mulford, 2005; Ma, 2007; Mulford & John, 2004). Also, in the qualitative investigation, principals' professional perceptions were regarded as closely related to their professional experience, which not only pointed to the duration of principalship but referred to the entire teaching and principalship career of individual principals. This confirmed but

¹¹⁹ The two categories are principals' traits and dispositions and principals' values and beliefs (see Chapter 3 for details).

went beyond the simple correlation between principal leadership behaviours and the years of teaching and years of being a principal found in other empirical studies conducted in Chinese schools (e.g. Li & Zhang, 2006).

For the internal school conditions, the relevant elements included organisational climate and available resources, student characteristics (e.g. student intake), teacher and cadre conditions, views on school administration and relevant individual factors, supervision of the functional units, school performance and rank, and some basic conditions. Most of the factors were consistent with the findings of previous empirical studies. For example, Ying (1999) found that school climate was associated with different combinations of principal leadership behaviours and Qian (2008) argued for the importance of winning resources for Chinese schools and the great influence of school performance and status. In the interviews, student intake was considered as a critical factor, which was similar to the effect of prior student achievement identified by Leithwood and Jantzi (2005b)¹²⁰. The connections between the reported involvement in the core leadership practices and certain school background variables (e.g. type of education, school size, and location) confirmed the findings of some relevant research (e.g. Chi, 2007; Li & Zhang, 2006; Lu, 2007; Wang, L., 2006). Several personal factors of the participants (e.g. gender, years of teaching, position) had a weak positive relationship with their assessment of principal performance. These factors were essentially consistent with the personal features identified by Chi (2007).

At the same time, there were several particular findings. Regarding the rating given by the participants in different positions, a significant difference existed between the principal and the ordinary teachers. The former always gave higher ratings than the latter. Also, age and training times were slightly related to the participants' perceptions of their principal's involvement in the core leadership practices. Cadre cooperation was particularly emphasised by the participants in the study. The supervision of three functional units in Chinese schools was found to be positively related to certain core leadership practices and they were often involved in school administration. These have not been substantially investigated in the relevant research.

¹²⁰ As Leithwood and Jantzi (2005b, p. 186) stated 'a consistent pattern of results suggesting that transformational leadership effects are augmented by prior student achievement, family educational culture, organizational culture, shared school goals, and coherent plans and policies.'

The external factors consisted of academic competition and pressure in basic education, supervision of the district educational authority, existing educational administration systems (e.g. principal responsibility system, financial allocation system), education policies and reforms, governmental administration system, social and parents' expectations, and local educational development and various prevalent conceptions of education and leadership. These findings confirmed Leithwood's (2005) assertion that the policy, professional, and cultural contexts are important external factors that affect principal leadership practices. Among the external factors, the academic competition and pressure in basic education was rated as the most influential. This reflected the actual educational context confronting Chinese school leaders, as depicted in Chapter Two and as suggested by the related literature (see Dong, 2006; Guo, 2006; Qian, 2008).

Furthermore, the district educational authority, the reform guidelines and policies of central government, and the existing educational administration systems stood out as powerful sources of external influence, especially in terms of developing external relationships and resources. This was congruent with Qian's (2008) argument that principals' power of managing schools was still circumscribed by government agencies through various administrative systems and standardised evaluation criteria.

Existing conceptions of education have an impact but seemed less influential than the other external factors stated above. In the interviews, some respondents stated that there was a gap between the various theories they had learnt in professional training programmes and the reality of school operations. In the quantitative research, the influence of the relevant notions of leadership was neither large nor significant, except for the servant leadership style advocated by the Party and the government. For one thing, the phenomenon demonstrated the powerful influence of the politicisation orientation on school administration (see Qian, 2008; Ryan, Xiao, & Merry, 1998). For another thing, it reminded people to rethink the relevance and applicability of various popular conceptions and theories of leadership to Chinese schools, especially those introduced from Western societies (see Chapter 3). This reconfirmed the need to explore the practical knowledge of Chinese principalship rather than import more innovative conceptions from elsewhere.

Two integrative models

Integrating all the relevant elements, two models, the survival model and the development model, were developed in the study to demonstrate how principals enact the core leadership practices differently in different situations. As stated in the conclusions, school leaders in the survival model mainly focused on school teaching and learning in order to improve student performance; when it came to the development model, the principal appeared to pay more attention to long-term school development and all-round student development.

From a contextual perspective, the divergent orientations were largely caused by the different situations facing the schools. In the survival model, the schools enrolled low-achieving students and were confronted with certain internal problems. Against the present student-performance-based evaluation system, the performance and status of these schools were relatively lower than those with high-achieving students. Some of them even stood at the edge of a precipice (e.g. School E). Thus, improving student performance seemed to be the best or even the only way out. By comparison, schools in the development model were more likely to attract students with higher achievement (e.g. Schools A & D) and had a healthier internal context and a better performance and school status. Therefore, there was room for these principals to think more about long-term school development and all-round student growth. This typically demonstrated the powerful influence of the organisational factors found in the study.

Furthermore, the difference between the models embodied the impact of the district educational authority and local environment. In China, district educational authorities usually control student-intake quota and financial allocations and are in charge of approving local school programmes and construction and school staffing and evaluation. Thus, the internal conditions of the schools involved in the study were largely determined by the relevant district educational authorities. This demonstrated the dominant role of the government in the Chinese education system (Qian, 2008).

In addition, the principals' involvement in the practice of relationship development and resources procurement was affected by their personal perceptions. As stated earlier, the principals in the development model were much more positive and thus more actively engaged in this sort of leadership practice than those in the survival

model. All these principals, however, were aware of the importance of developing relationships and resources for their schools within the existing Chinese educational administration system. What differed were their personal attitude and the resultant actions. On the one hand, these reconfirmed the great influence of the external system on the principals' leadership practices. On the other hand, they implied the mediating role of the individual comprehensions of education and positional responsibilities, as displayed in the synthetic framework (see Figure 7.5). More in-depth discussion about the two models is presented in the third proposition in the next section.

Propositions

This section draws the discussion of the findings together to form a number of propositions. These propositions seek to capture the dynamic interrelationship between the findings. These help to define the uniqueness of school leadership in China. Three propositions are developed through connecting the findings with the societal and educational context in contemporary China (see Chapter 2). These are listed below.

- The core leadership practices of Chinese school principals share similar focuses and functions with principals elsewhere. At the same time, these core leadership practices exhibit particular patterns and emphases when they are enacted within the Chinese societal context.
- The educational context has a powerful impact on principal leadership practices. To a large extent, the core leadership practices are employed by the Chinese school leaders as pragmatic solutions to the conflicting requirements in the reform context within which local educational authorities play an important role.
- Good principals in Chinese schools base their leadership practices on the school reality and lead schools toward development through making full use of all six core leadership practices, particularly developing external relationships and resources. In turn, better school conditions can help principals perform these core functions.

Proposition 1: The core leadership practices of Chinese school principals share similar focuses and functions with principals elsewhere. At the same time, these

core leadership practices exhibit particular patterns and emphases when they are enacted within the Chinese societal context.

Overall, the core leadership practices identified in the study involved certain universal themes identified in many Western studies and exhibited some unique characteristics rooted in Chinese society.

Universal focuses and functions

As illustrated in the preceding sections, the research findings confirmed certain universal focuses of principal leadership practices stressed in Western research (e.g. Kwan & Walker, 2008; Leithwood, Harris, & Hopkins, 2008). As stated in the discussion of the findings, all six core leadership practices emerging from the present investigation have been identified in the relevant empirical studies conducted in Western schools. Most of these practices exhibited the feature of transformational leadership advocated by Leithwood and Day (2007).

These universal themes reflected the essential functions of schools and principals and the nature of leadership (see Leithwood *et al.*, 2006). As regards school education, one respondent (a vice principal from School D) pointed out a typical understanding of schooling shared by many Chinese practitioners, that is:

As a social organisation, the primary function of the school decides that the principal ought to focus on teaching and learning. Schools are a place used to cultivate students. School education is a specific way of cultivating people in a particular historical period. (學校這個社會組織，它的基本功能決定了校長要關注教學。學校是培養學生的一個基本場所。學校教育是一種特定的歷史時期的特定的培養人的方式)

The view was consistent with the perception of education underlying the instructional leadership model proposed by Western scholars (see Hallinger & Murphy, 1985; Hallinger, 2000). Such a consensus between the different societies implies that school leaders have to deal with all aspects relevant to schooling in order to achieve the ultimate aim of school education. As quoted at the beginning of the thesis, 'the principal is ultimately responsible for almost everything that happens in school and out' (Barth, 1980, p. 5). In the interviews, all the principals agreed that it was their responsibility to take charge of all important aspects of schooling.

Respecting the nature of leadership, leadership could be seen as an influencing process crystallised through interactions among the leader, follower, aim and context (see Densten, 2008; Morrison, 2002; Spillane & Orlina, 2005). Thus, the principal

leadership practice was a manifestation of the interactions between the four conceptual components of leadership in a school context. As argued earlier, the three function-based classifications embraced all the conceptual components of leadership, composing a triangular structure of the core leadership practices of principals in Chinese schools. The structure captured the essential functions and underlying interrelationship of the core leadership practices and thus could be regarded as a theoretical framework for understanding how the core practices of principal leadership work in schools. In this sense, it can be seen that the similarity between Western findings and the conclusions of the present study also lie in the essential functions of the principal leadership practices *per se*.

Indigenous patterns and emphases

At the same time, the research identified some unique features of the core leadership practices in Chinese schools. These characteristics were embodied in a number of unique leadership practices employed by the Chinese school principals and the particular patterns of how the core leadership practices were enacted in real-life situations.

In terms of the core leadership practices, shaping school climate and core ideas emerged as one of the main categories of Chinese principalship practices. Great emphasis was placed on forming school core ideas and setting a moral and dedicated example for other school members. As explained earlier, the core ideas were actually based on the principals' personal thoughts. The principals were reported as inclined to build hierarchical professional development systems in schools. Regarding the internal administration, attention was paid to building harmonious interpersonal relationships, especially in terms of cooperation with the Party secretary. As contended in the first section, these authentic tactics reflected the traditional respect for hierarchy, maintaining harmony, conflict avoidance, collectivism, face, social networks, moral leadership, and conformity in Chinese society (Bush & Qiang, 2002; Chen, G., 2004; Child, 1994; Hofstede, 2001; Lin, 2008; Lo, 2008).

Furthermore, these school leaders attached great importance to good relationship (*guanxi*) with the outside world, particularly the district educational authority and superiors. In the interviews, all the principals, including the two who were not willing to seek resources (e.g., Principals B & E), admitted that it's very important

for Chinese principals to be able to get support from upper authorities and other connected officials. The practice partly originates from the cultural context of Chinese society which is founded upon social relationships and interlocking social networks within which individual persons are linked with each other via *guanxi* (Fei, Hamilton, & Wang, 1992). It also partly results from the existing educational administration system, in which the government retains considerable responsibility and power (Qian, 2008). Consequently, keeping good *guanxi* with critical stakeholders, particularly government officials, is one of the primary social action codes for the principals of Chinese public schools (Qian, 2008).

More evidence was found in the enactment patterns of the core leadership practices identified in the study. In the light of the differential pattern of participative decision-making, school decisions were made through a hierarchical approach. At the same time, the sampled Chinese school principals blended various leadership styles, some of which were the so-called 'good practice' of principalship and some of which exhibited the features of paternalistic leadership (see Farh & Cheng, 2000; Leithwood & Duke, 1999). According to the qualitative data, these approaches not only helped school leaders to prompt school members to work together but also enhanced teachers' job satisfaction, their sense of being respected and their self-confidence.

As leadership practice is more likely to be successful in the ways favoured by the culture (Hofstede, 1998; 2001; House *et al.*, 2004), the reason for the effectiveness of these patterns might be that they fit the increasingly variegated societal context in Mainland China. As outlined in Chapter Two, contemporary society and the education system in China have been undergoing a dramatic transformation in the age of globalisation. Many Western concepts of school management and leadership have been imported to Chinese schools and accepted by Chinese practitioners (e.g. Dong, 2006; Feng, 2004, 2005). At the same time, Chinese traditional culture and perceptions of leadership still play an important role (Lin, 2008). The traditional image of paternalistic leaders is still embedded in people's minds (Cheng, Huang, & Chou, 2002; Cheng, Shieh, & Chou, 2002; Li, S., 2005). People tend to believe in the 'omnipotent' image of leaders and expect them to be paternalistic leaders who can control the situation, consider followers' needs, and conduct themselves with honour (Farh & Cheng, 2000).

In some senses, the hybrid leadership pattern commonly found in the sampled schools was a subtler way of exerting principal authoritarian leadership. Although the specific configuration of the combined leadership practices appeared to be different between the school leaders in the two models, the inclination towards the establishment of authority seemed to be the same. As found in the study, the survival model related to the principals' greater involvement in establishing their authority whereas the other development model identified greater participation by other school members. The relevant respondents from the schools in the latter model, however, still indicated that the major decisions and/or core ideas of the schools were dominated by the principals' ideals.

These unique traits of Chinese principalship demonstrated that the process of enacting principal leadership practices was essentially a contextual manifestation of basic interactions among the three function-based classifications. The combination of the core leadership practices appeared similar to those found in other societies but the enactment process was largely shaped by the specific context of Chinese society.

Proposition 2: The educational context has a powerful impact on principal leadership practices. To a large extent, the core leadership practices are employed by the Chinese school leaders as pragmatic solutions to the conflicting requirements in the reform context within which local educational authorities play an important role.

Besides the effect of societal culture, the influence of the education context was another driving force underlying the core leadership practice and the related enactment patterns. As described in Chapter Two, a series of education reforms have been implemented in China and have changed the education system. Nevertheless, the ongoing transformation caused a number of tensions that 'simultaneously pressure principals to meet new systemic requirements while also satisfying existing, more time-honored norms and expectations' (Qian, 2008, p. 202). To a degree, the core leadership practices and the enactment patterns were the pragmatic solutions of Chinese principals to the conflicting requirements in the present educational context.

Reform requirements vs ingrained expectations

As found in the study, the Chinese school principals put the practical emphasis on both student academic performance and their holistic development. This view

appeared in most of the identified core leadership practices, particularly functional leadership activities. Such dual emphasis could be seen as a pragmatic solution to what Qian (2008, p. 202) called 'the tension between producing high exam performance and more holistic student development'.

On the one hand, current educational reform policies, particularly the latest curriculum reform, require Chinese school leaders to promote student initiative, creativity and all-round development (Qian, 2008). In the study, a number of the identified leadership practices relating to school instruction and curriculum were consistent with this pursuit of quality education reform, such as developing school-based curriculums and promoting teachers' professional development. In the interviews, all the school leaders expressed their approval of the ideas underlying the ongoing curriculum reform and indicated that they made efforts to facilitate all-round student development through improving school instruction and curriculums.

On the other hand, there is a rooted focus on student academic performance in Chinese society and the education system (Dong, 2006; Guo, 2006; Zhao, 2007; Wang, S., 2005). Schools faced pressure to enhance student academic achievement because 'society and the students' parents are more concerned about student performance in the entrance exam (社會和家長更關心的是他的升學成績)' (Principal C). As the respondents suggested, the district educational authorities still focus on student test scores when they assess school and principal performance and determine the financial allocation. Although the quality education reform has greatly changed the educational environment in China, the disconnection between the reform and the entire evaluation system made many pursuits of the reform more like a grand-sounding slogan. This was particularly a problem for low-status schools. In the study, two low-status schools were placed in the survival model. Their fortune essentially depended on student performance because they both enrolled students with lower academic achievement but faced similar or the same requirements and expectations from parents and the authorities. Thus, the school leaders dared not reduce the emphasis on student learning outcomes. For the schools in the development model, particularly the exemplary schools, the situation seemed better as they usually boasted comparatively high-achieving students and did not have to expend additional effort to prepare the students for exams. Thus, these principals could spare more time

for diversifying the school curriculum and initiating extra-curricular activities. Even so, they still had to make sure that the students would do well in exams.

Professional leaders vs official executives

The Chinese school leadership had to play two largely conflicting roles of professional leader and official executive concurrently. The study identified a number of professionally-oriented leadership practices, such as self-development and experience sharing, supporting professional development, and leading instructional innovations. At the same time, a differential pattern of collective decision-making was universally adopted by the school leaders. As stated above, this pattern was the embodiment of 'democratic centralism', a primary political principle of policymaking in China (Burns, 1999; Friedman, 1995). In order to keep a balance between the two types of roles, the school principals usually combined these leadership practices to perform their functions. Such a situation essentially resulted from the great influence of the government and politics on education administration and the recent efforts to reduce the political impact on the school system.

As elaborated in Chapter Two, recent education reforms were oriented toward decentralisation and thus school principals have been given more autonomy to manage schools. A series of personal system reforms were implemented to strengthen principals' professional awareness, knowledge and capacity. In this research, all the sampled school principals recognised the importance of their role as the professional leader and attached great importance to the staff's and their own professional development. Partly for this reason, building an advanced perception of education within school was highlighted by those practitioners.

At the same time, there is still a strong influence of government and political ideology on school administration (Wong, 2006, 2007). In this study, district educational authorities were reported to have a strong impact on school operation and thus their operational mechanism would inevitably affect the administration of individual schools (see Qian, 2008). In the interviews, the concept of 'cadre' was universally used by the respondents. The phenomenon per se demonstrated the profound influence of the cadre system, which is exploited by the government in terms of its officials, on school personnel management. Moreover, most principals explicitly agreed that they were governmental employees whose duty was to manage

the school for the government. Therefore, they exhibited an orientation towards upper accountability (see Qian, 2008).

'Good practice' of principalship vs paternalistic leadership

The differential pattern of participative decision-making and the hybrid leadership styles also embodied the pragmatic inclination. As found in the study, these two enactment patterns were elaborately practised by the principals to exert their influence while meeting teachers' individual needs and requests to participate in school administration. Both of them worked well in the Chinese schools considered.

For the participative approaches to leadership, such practices conformed to the ideas underlying the ongoing educational reform, most of which belong to a set of leadership conceptions prevalent in Western schools, such as transformational leadership and participative and distributed leadership (see Dong, 2006; Feng, 2004, 2005). Hence, more and more educational practitioners have accepted these concepts and demanded more participative decision-making and democratic ways of school administration. This was evident in the present study in that most respondents were aware of the significance of collective decision-making (集體決策) and the importance of 'exerting collective power in school management, because this is the guarantee of a good job' (在管理中發揮集體的力量，因為這是最終做好工作的保障).

To a certain degree, however, Chinese traditional perception of leadership is embedded in people's minds (Cheng, Huang, & Chou, 2002; Cheng, Shieh, & Chou, 2002; Li, S., 2005). Within most of the schools involved in the investigation, the typical top-down approach still dominated the process of decision-making and teachers and staff generally believed in the principals' capability to make the right decisions. In most cases, teachers were merely involved in discussing administrative issues relating to their immediate interests, such as performance related pay, bonus distribution, and external training opportunities. In this context, the principals could actually establish authority through a set of apparently democratic procedures whose main function was to help school leaders unify the think of other school members. Moreover, human-oriented leadership practices and the role of the principal as a moral example were both emphasised by the respondents. All these elements embody the indigenous leadership style identified in Chinese organisations, i.e. paternalistic

leadership (see Chapter 3). In this sense, these Chinese principals appeared to integrate a variety of leadership practices in a paternalistic way.

The foregoing suggested that the Chinese school leaders had a good understanding of what would make their followers feel respected and involved and what would work in a Chinese school context. Such practical knowledge gave them a pragmatic stance in determining their leadership practices. In other words, these Chinese principals would follow what is actually useful rather than what sounds good. Partly for this reason, the influence of the relevant conceptions of leadership was rated as least powerful in the survey.

Proposition 3: Good principals in Chinese schools base their leadership practices on the school reality and lead schools toward development through making full use of all six core leadership practices, particularly developing external relationships and resources. In turn, better school conditions can help principals perform these core functions.

In the light of all the statements above, a good principal in a Chinese school seemed to be a capable school leader who could make full use of all the core leadership practices through a pragmatic way of integrating imported conceptions with indigenous expertise to meet diverse requirements in the present educational context. Through combining this image with the two integrative models built in the study, the author developed a further understanding of the interaction between the principal and the school.

Effect of the principal on school development

The typology confirmed the critical role of a good principal in promoting school development through applying all the core leadership practices, particularly developing external relationships and resources. Although the school leaders were categorised in different models, all the core leadership practices were more or less implemented in their schools. What differed were the central target and the development phase. Against the coordinate system shown in Figure 7.6, the survival and development models seemed to compose a continuum involving different phases of school development. In other words, through increasingly engaging in all the core leadership practices, the principal might be able to develop the school from the lower-level survival model to the higher-level development model. Along with the

process, the internal school conditions and external context would improve. This theoretical argument could be demonstrated in the real-life story of Principal F, who transformed his school from the worst-performing to a well-regarded local school. Therefore, it can be expected that after solving a difficult situation, the principals originally grouped in the survival model will pay more attention to the application of all the core leadership practices.

In this process, the practice of developing external relationships and resources would play an important role in facilitating school development. This practice was one of the major indicators used to differentiate the two models. As described above, this kind of activity was a basic social norm in Chinese society. To some extent, it was seen as a kind of manifestation of a principal's capability - 'when a principal can bring opportunities and resources to the school, he/she will win the trust from other cadres and teachers (校長能够給學校帶來機會和資源，就會贏得其他的幹部和老師的信任)' (Principal A). The effect was actually reinforced by the reality that there was a universal lack of money in Chinese schools. Thus, this practice appears to be an essential component of the core leadership practices employed by successful principals in Chinese schools (see Qian, 2008).

Such an image of good school principals is essentially consistent with the function-based classification of the core leadership practices identified in the study. According to the three classifications, a good principal ought to be able to handle all six core leadership practices in the light of their functions. Against this theoretical image, however, the good principal recognised in Chinese schools appeared to attach more importance to the practice of developing relationships and resources. In the classification, however, this practice was only regarded as one of the supportive leadership practices and was supposed to be led by the directional and functional leadership practices. From this perspective, it can be seen that the image of a good principal was actually reshaped by the practical needs emerging from the educational context on the Chinese mainland.

Effect of school conditions on the principal

The two integrative models further implied that school conditions would in turn influence the leadership practices of the principals. As contended above, the difference between the two models mainly resulted from the divergent situations

facing the schools. In fact, all these school leaders oriented their schools in line with the school reality. This is an exact component of the practice of setting direction. Particularly, their different views on the practice of developing external relationships and resources were affected by the distinct school conditions. As demonstrated in the first two chapters, the internal conditions of the development model schools were generally better than those schools in the survival model in terms of student intake and performance, teacher quality, cadre cooperation, organisational climate, and school performance and status.

Combining the internal school conditions with the external context, there seemed to be an effect of mutual reinforcement that made the strong become stronger and the weak become weaker, especially with respect to attracting external curriculum resources. In other words, it was much easier for a better school to get more attention and resources from the district educational authority and social organisations and individuals because of their excellent performance and high status. By contrast, it is quite hard for the schools in the survival model to obtain sufficient resources and substantial support from the outside. Such circumstances might reinforce the principals' original attitudes toward seeking resources and expanding network. As suggested earlier, however, principals are inclined towards more involvement in all the core leadership practices with the improvement of school conditions.

This understanding implied a need to rethink the adage that 'a good principal is a good school' (see Chen, G., 2001a, p. 72). In a sense, it is a good school that catalyses the emergence of a successful principal. From this perspective, it is worth thinking about another question: is it possible that a good principal could emerge from a disadvantaged or low-status school? The answer might be 'Yes'. In the study, there was one case principal (i.e. Principal F) who could be seen as such a leader, since he had transformed his school from the lowest status to a relatively high status. The example implied that a good principal could still make a difference through his/her leadership practices even though the school conditions were not so supportive.

The understanding of the interaction between the capability of the principal and the supportiveness of school conditions led to four theoretical quadrants as shown in the following figure.

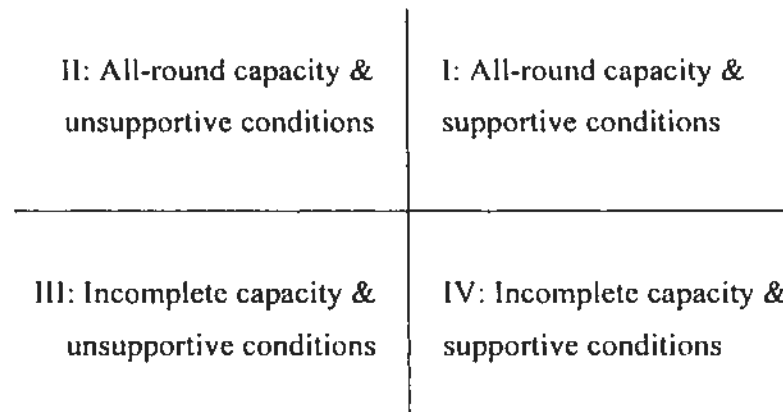


Figure 8.1 Four Quadrants of the Interaction between Principals and School Conditions

Principals could be generally divided into two groups according to whether they were able to engage in all the six core leadership practices. School conditions could also be classified into two broad categories: supportive conditions and unsupportive conditions. The four quadrants signify the four combinations of principal capacity and the supportiveness of school conditions.

According to the findings of this study, Principal F could be placed in Quadrant II whereas the other three principals in the development model appeared to belong to Quadrant I. Quadrant I seems particularly to represent an ideal or perfect image of a good principal in Chinese schools. Thus, principals in other quadrants might make efforts to move into this quadrant. The experience of Principal F demonstrated just such a transformation. The two principals in the survival model could be located in Quadrant III as they were both unwilling to develop relationships and seek resources and worked in low-status schools. They appeared to aim at the fourth quadrant, however, instead of the first quadrant because they wanted to improve school situations without changing their priorities.

It can be seen that good school conditions demonstrate the existence of a good principal although they do not necessarily produce a good principal. It prompts further inquiry: what kind of school leader can be seen as a good principal? is it necessary for a good principal to be willing or able to exercise all the core leadership practices? From the quadrants, it seems that good principals might lie in all the four quadrants as long as they make efforts to improve school conditions to facilitate the realisation of the ultimate goal of school education.

Implications of the Study

This section points out the major implications of the study for the academic knowledge base of principalship in Chinese schools, for Western research in the field, for principal leadership practice and development, and for future research.

Implications for Theoretical Knowledge of Chinese Principalship

This study is one of the few attempts at an empirical understanding of the core leadership practices of Chinese school principals and their enactment patterns and captures the contextual influences that underlie these overt leadership practices. The research findings may enrich the indigenous knowledge base of Chinese principalship in the following ways.

First, the study reveals the authentic expertise of Chinese school principals in leading schools. Since continuous education reform has greatly changed the basic education system in China, being a principal in a Chinese secondary school has become increasingly demanding. The research findings showed that school principals had to equip themselves with multiple types of knowledge and skills to handle all aspects of school work and be capable of meeting various requirements or dilemmas in the reform context. Although there appeared to be considerable hindrances to their role as a school leader, the Chinese principals still found pragmatic ways creatively to exploit a variety of leadership practices to perform their functions and promote student growth and school development. Thus, these core leadership practices compose the practical knowledge of being a principal in Chinese schools. Beyond the prevalent theory importation and dominant prescriptive studies in the Chinese literature, this may add a needed dimension to the existing research into school principalship in China.

Second, the study not only attests to the applicability of certain cross-cultural principal leadership practices in Chinese schools but also discloses the particular characteristics of Chinese principal leadership practices rooted in the unique societal context in China. As the research findings suggested, the expertise of Chinese principals combined the leadership practices found elsewhere (e.g. ISSPP) with the indigenous knowledge of the system and society. On the one hand, it demonstrates that there is a basic consensus about the nature of school education and principal leadership. For instance, the three function-based classifications provide a theoretical

framework for understanding how Chinese principals work in schools. On the other hand, they provide a set of indigenous practices and enactment patterns, such as unification of thinking, the differential pattern of participative decision-making, and the practice of developing external relationships and resources.

Third, the study discerns the contextual grounds for the principal leadership practices in Chinese schools, which may benefit the theoretical knowledge base of Chinese principalship. As contextually sensitive research, this study provides a series of contextual interpretations for the rationale underlying the core leadership practices of Chinese school principals. The integrative framework and models (i.e. Figure 7.5 and Figure 7.6) construct a theoretical understanding of the connection between contextual factors and core leadership practices and the interrelationships between different contexts and practices. Such contextualised accounts of practical knowledge are largely lacking in Chinese principalship discourse. Consequently, this study will further add to the indigenous theoretical understanding of how principals lead schools in the contemporary reform era. Together with cross-cultural leadership dimensions, the contextual understanding of Chinese school principalship would shed light on the international comparative understanding of principal leadership practices.

Implications for Western Leadership Research

The study may facilitate comparison between Western and Chinese insights and further enrich the international knowledge base of principal leadership.

First, the study confirms the cross-cultural core practices of school principalship. As argued in the literature review, recent international research projects have identified a number of generic practices or functions of school principals (e.g. ISSPP). This study integrated the findings of cross-cultural research with the empirical evidence emerging from Chinese indigenous studies. The resultant six core leadership practices of Chinese schools largely echoed what has been found internationally. This lays the foundation for a cross-cultural comparison of how these common themes are interpreted by the practitioners from different societies.

Second, the study provides indigenous insights of Chinese practitioners into principal leadership practices and a contextual explanation for authentic expertise. A firmer contextual understanding of principalship in China has been lacking in contemporary

international principalship discourse. With an awareness of the contextual nature of principal leadership, the investigation unveiled a series of authentic focuses and patterns of Chinese principalship practices and placed these practices within specific leadership contexts. For example, forming a unified perception of school education was always emphasised and exercised by the Chinese principals. A good knowledge of the educational context enabled the Chinese principals to use diversified leadership practices in a pragmatic way. Thus, many democratic procedures were blended with indigenous paternalistic leadership practices and a differential pattern of participative decision-making was employed to involve others in the process and obtain agreement and support from the staff. All these elements appeared to help school leaders to implement their strategies more efficiently and effectively. Such authentic expertise will strengthen the international knowledge base of culture-specific practices of principalship and help to add a Chinese perspective to the dominant Western outlook on how school leaders work.

Third, the study provides empirical support for the emerging conception of principal leadership practice. Consistent with the understanding of leadership practice, principal leadership has been more and more perceived from a practice perspective in recent large-scale international research (e.g. Porter *et al.*, 2006). Based on this conception, the study identified the core leadership practices of Chinese school principals and the influencing factors in the context. As stated above, the function-based classification of the identified core leadership practices demonstrated the interaction between the conceptual components of leadership practice: leader, follower, aim, and context. From this perspective, the general classification established in the study may help Western researchers to gain a better comprehension of the working mechanism of principal leadership. As argued above, the three classifications pointed to the essential roles and the underlying interrelationship of the core leadership practices found in the study. They composed a theoretical framework for understanding the operation of principal leadership practices. Since such a framework has never been constructed on empirical evidence in Western research, this theoretical structure provides a more in-depth insight into how principal leadership works in schools and would inform future investigations into principalship in Western societies.

Implications for Principal Leadership Practice and Development

The study presents the practical knowledge shared by Chinese school leaders. This knowledge may help Chinese practitioners to improve their job and facilitate the improvement of principal leadership development in Chinese schools.

As regards the principals, the research findings may enrich their professional knowledge and help them to work better as school leaders in real-life situations. The six interrelated generic leadership practices and the relevant specific practices identified in the investigation composed an indigenous collection of the core leadership practices of Chinese school principals. Authentic insights were gained through listening to the 'voices' of different types of practitioners working in Chinese secondary schools. Therefore, these practices may help Chinese school principals to reflect on their everyday work. Moreover, linking the three classifications of the core leadership practices with the two integrative models would enable school leaders to rethink the developmental status of their schools and the practical priorities of their leadership practices, and enable them to evaluate their own strategies and school situations in more depth and seek proper solutions to contextual issues or tensions.

Also, these findings would benefit the improvement of principal professional development programmes, particularly principal leadership development. Current principal professional training programmes are usually delivered by normal university professors and government officials. Professors are responsible for teaching various theories concerning education and leadership and officials are in charge of informing principals of new policy directives, but these could hardly match the real conditions of schools and the principals (Chu, 2009a). As found in the study, the contextual variable referring to the relevant conceptions of leadership seemed to be powerless in terms of their impact on what principals did in schools. In the interviews, some respondents explicitly complained about the gap between theoretical doctrines and their practical work. From this perspective, such programmes need more practical insights into Chinese principalship. As a manifestation of the practical wisdom of Chinese principals, the research findings would bring more practical knowledge to the contents and design of professional development programmes. As regards programme providers, the research findings

would inform them about how Chinese principals work in real-life situations and help them to combine theory with practice in Chinese schools.

Implications for Future Research

As an exploration of the authentic leadership practices of Chinese school principals, the study adopts a mixed methods research approach in order to achieve a more complete understanding of the research topic. In the light of the research process and findings, the author makes suggestions for further research in the area.

First, further investigation can be conducted to improve the research design. For example, the questionnaire can be refined into a more compact one and the sample size can be increased to improve the generalisation of the research findings. Case study can be used to investigate specifically how Chinese principals enact the core leadership practices in a specific school context. Female school principals and principals working at other levels of education, such as primary education, can be included in the research to test further the applicability of the core leadership practices and the contextual factors identified in this study. Similarly, principals from other areas in China can be involved to explore whether the geographic difference has an influence on the core leadership practices of Chinese school principals.

Second, future research could explore the relationship between core leadership practices and other significant variables. As the research findings indicated, some personal factors, such as age, gender, position, training, etc., would affect teachers' perception of their school leaders' leadership practices. Furthermore, there was a significant difference in the rating of principal involvement in the core leadership practices between the teachers and the principals. Given this understanding, more in-depth investigation can be conducted to investigate the potential factors that influence teachers' perceptions of principal leadership practices or cause the difference between their opinion and principals' self-assessment. In the interviews, the respondents always related these core leadership practices to student academic performance and all-round development. Therefore, further exploration may connect these core leadership practices with the indicators of student achievement and all-round growth to identify the leadership practices that could affect these two variables.

Fourth, more effort could be made to apply the mixed methods research approach to school leadership research. To an extent, this research demonstrates the advantage of

this integrative research approach in ensuring research quality. Through integrating quantitative structures and narrative interpretations, the research generated a function-based classification of the core leadership practices and a more comprehensive framework and thus resulted in a sounder understanding of the research findings (see Chapter 7) than those produced by either approach separately (see Chapters 5 and 6). The triangulation between different research methods enabled the researcher to draw more cogent and thorough conclusions. All these factors suggest that the third approach is a promising research paradigm for investigation in this field. Of course, this approach requires a good knowledge of both types of research methods and the relevant techniques for collecting and analysing the two forms of data. The process would consume a great deal of time and energy, but it is exactly this challenging process that is more likely to inspire the researcher's creativity and lead to a more complete understanding of a social phenomenon or a new research direction.

Limitations of the Study

As exploratory research, the study has at least three major limitations.

First, it is limited to the perspective of a small sample of educational practitioners in the four cities, particularly the two developed cities, Beijing and Guangzhou. Given the vast geographic disparity across the country, the core leadership practices identified in the study might not be applicable to other regions. Although the mixed methods research approach was adopted in order to make up for the limitation as much as possible, this problem still exists. Considering the huge territory and large population of China, however, it is essentially impossible for a single researcher to develop generalisations about the theme throughout the nation.

Second, the study is limited to the number of principals involved in the qualitative investigation and the method used to collect qualitative data. There were only six male principals participating in the qualitative interviews. Although the researcher made efforts to ensure that they were selected from different backgrounds and other stakeholders were included, the data collected from the respondents were quite limited owing to the small number of principals and the lack of female principals. In this sense, the typology developed from the qualitative data remains crude and needs to be proved in further research with more principals included. Also, the qualitative

data were collected mainly through face-to-face interviews. Even though the quantitative data were collected through surveys, some information may be missing that could be attained via other methods, such as case study.

Third, the use of mixed methods needs to be improved. Although labelled as mixed methods research, the study simply combined a questionnaire survey with face-to-face interviews. The research findings emerging from the individual types of investigation were integrated in three steps as described in Chapter Four. This study simply served as a starting-point for the application of the mixed methods approach in Chinese principalship research. Therefore, the research could be further improved by absorbing more diversified methods or adopting a better research design.

Conclusion

This study is a serious effort to unveil the indigenous expertise of school principals in Mainland China. The major findings include six interrelated core leadership practices, three practical patterns, three-level contextual factors, and two integrative models. All of these represent the practical knowledge of Chinese school principals and may benefit both national and international scholarship of core leadership practices of school principals. Practically, these findings may help Chinese practitioners to reflect on and improve their own leadership practices and shed light on the improvement of principal leadership development programmes. This contextual exploration is nothing but a starting-point, however, for more in-depth investigation into a wide range of issues related to Chinese principalship.

Appendices

Appendix 3.1 Comprehensive models of principal leadership practices

Cotton (2003)	Waters et al. (2003)	Hallinger (2003)	Leithwood et al. (2008)	Robinson (2007)
<p>Goal:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Visions/goals focused on student learning • High expectations for students learning <p>Leader characteristics:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Emotional support • Self-confidence, responsibility & perseverance • Visibility/accessibility <p>Empowerment:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communication/interaction • Shared leadership/staff empowerment • Collaboration • Teacher autonomy • Support risk taking • Professional development • Role modeling <p>Instruction:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • High level of student learning • Instructional leadership • Discuss instructional issues • Classroom observation/ feedback • Instructional time • Monitoring student progress & sharing findings • Use student data for program improvement • Continuous improvement <p>Context:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Safe & orderly school environment • Supportive school climate • Recognition of student & staff achievement • Symbolic actions • Parent/community involvement 	<p>Goal:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establishes goals & keeps them in attention • Fosters shared beliefs, sense of community, cooperation <p>Leader characteristics:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Knowledge of curriculum • Ideals/beliefs • Flexibility • Situational awareness • Awareness of personal aspects of staff <p>Empowerment:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inspires/leads innovations • Recognizes/rewards individual accomplishment • Informs staff about best practice & fosters discussion • Contacts/interacts with teachers & students • Involves teachers in design & implementation of important decisions/policies <p>Instruction:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establishes standard operating procedures/routines • Provides necessary materials • Design & implement curriculum, instruction & assessment practices • Monitors school effectiveness & student learning • Protects teachers from distraction <p>Context:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Advocates for school to all stakeholders • Actively challenges the <i>status quo</i> • Recognizes school accomplishments & acknowledges failures 	<p>Defining school mission:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Framing school goals • Communicating school goals <p>Creating positive school climate:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Providing incentives for learning • Providing incentives for teachers • Maintaining high visibility • Promoting professional development • Protecting instructional time <p>Managing instructional program:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Supervising & evaluating instruction • Coordinating curriculum • Monitoring student progress 	<p>Building vision & setting directions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Building shared visions • Fostering acceptance of group goals • Demonstrating high-performance expectations <p>Understanding & developing people:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Providing individualized support/consideration • Fostering intellectual stimulation • Modeling appropriate values & behaviors <p>Redesigning organisation:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Building collaborative cultures • Restructuring/reculturing the organisation • Building productive relations with parents & community • Connecting the school to its environment <p>Managing teaching & learning:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staffing teaching program • Providing teaching support • Monitoring school activity • Buffering distractions 	<p>Establishing goals & expectations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Setting, communicating & monitoring learning goals, standards & expectations • Involvement of staff and others <p>Strategic resourcing:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Aligning resources to teaching goals • Provision of appropriate expertise through staff recruitment <p>Planning, coordinating & evaluating teaching and curriculum:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Classroom visits • Formative and summative feedback to teachers • School-wide coordination • Alignment to school goals <p>Promoting & participating in teacher development:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participating in formal/informal teacher professional learning <p>Ensuring orderly & supportive environment:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reducing external pressures & interruptions • Establishing an orderly & supportive environment both in & out of classrooms

Appendix 3.2 Findings of the International Successful School Principal Project

Appendix 3.2.1 Core practices of principal leadership

Categories of Practices	Explanations
<p>Setting Directions Builds shared vision, sense of direction and clear goals*; Sets and continuously raises standards and expectations*; <i>Analyzes context, clarify problems that need to be addressed*; establishes improvement plans*;</i> <i>Articulates a set of core personal values.</i></p>	<p>This core practice has been constantly emphasised by Western researchers (Cotton, 2003; Leithwood <i>et al.</i>, 2008). Its importance is based on Bandura's (1986) theory of human motivation¹²¹ (Leithwood & Day, 2007; Robinson, 2007). It's often linked with student learning, particularly academic outcomes (e.g. Alig-Mielcarek & Hoy, 2005; McGuigan & Hoy, 2006). So setting goals in schools always involves an aim for improving student learning (Leithwood, 2005; Vanderhaar, <i>et al.</i>, 2006).</p>
<p>Understanding and Developing People Provides individual support & consideration*; Provides intellectual stimulation*; builds individual capacity and commitment*; challenges current teaching practices*; Facilitates school-wide professional learning*; Models values and practices; Visible in the school much of the time; <i>Builds trust.</i></p>	<p>The practice mainly requires school leaders to exercise transformational leadership behaviors. These practices are to enhance staffs' capacity, not only their knowledge and skills but their disposition to persist in applying the knowledge and skills in challenging circumstances (Leithwood & Day, 2007). The capacity building practices aim to improve staffs' performance through strengthen their efficacy¹²².</p>
<p>Redesigning the Organization Encourages collaborative decision making, teamwork and distributed leadership; Builds productive (open, participatory) school culture; Creates supportive structures/environment for collaboration; Builds productive relationships & networks with a range of stakeholders outside the school; <i>Helps create safe, secure environment.</i></p>	<p>The practices of this category point to establishing the conditions of work and organizational infrastructure so that the staff can make the most of their motivations and capacities. The effects of this broad category of practices can be found in many empirical studies (e.g., Gray, 2000; Harris & Chapman, 2002). Its significance can also be understood through the lens provided by Bandura's (1986) theory of human motivation¹²³.</p>
<p>Managing the Instructional Program Monitors progress and engages faculty in critical reflection on their practices*; Hires appropriate staff*; Provides adequate resources*; Buffers school and class from outside distractions; <i>Introduces productive forms of instruction to staff*.</i></p>	<p>This set of leadership practices bring together managerial practices found in both Hallinger's instructional leadership model (2003) and the model of transformational school leadership developed by Leithwood and Jantzi (1999; 2000; 2005). As forementioned, evidence about this category of leadership practices can be traced back to the research on effective schools (e.g., Reynolds, 1998).</p>
<p>Coalition Building <i>Participates in government decision making organizations*;</i> <i>Participates in professional organizations and networks;</i> <i>Builds coalitions with groups in community;</i> <i>Establishes good working relations with district staff.</i></p>	<p>The practices aiming to build the coalition among a variety of stakeholders are "the essential competencies of all leaders - in some ways, the defining one... [leaders'] power is a consequence of their ability to recruit the talent of others to the collective enterprise." (Bennis, 2004, p. 335)</p>

"*" denotes the principal leadership practices found in sample schools in Chinese Mainland.

¹²¹ People are motivated by goals they hold to be personally important, as well as challenging but achievable. Clear goals help people make sense of their work and find a sense of self-identity within the circumstances. (see Leithwood & Day, 2007)

¹²² According to socio-psychological theory (Bandura, 1986), people are motivated to persist at tasks when they feel efficacious. This sense of efficaciousness is powerfully influenced by the mastery experiences that are normally associated with individual capacity. Building capacity will lead to a sense of mastery so that high efficacy can be achieved.

¹²³ "People are motivated when they believe the circumstances in which they find themselves are conducive to accomplishing the goals they hold to be personally important." (Leithwood & Day, 2007, p. 7)

Appendix 3.2.2 Contextual Factors

Antecedents	<i>Internal antecedents</i>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Traits & dispositions: cognitive, abilities, personality, motivation, social appraisal skills;• Values & beliefs: basic human values, general moral values, professional values & beliefs, social & political values & beliefs.
	<i>External antecedents</i>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• State or national policy• National culture
Mediators	<i>Classroom level</i>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Time on task• Quality of instruction/instructional climate• Curriculum
	<i>School level</i>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Safe and orderly climate• Staff participation in school-wide decision making,• School culture• Teacher's organizational commitment
Moderators	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Student background• School location• School size
	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Mutual trust and respect between leaders and teachers and/or teachers and students• Government vs. non-government designation• School level (elementary, middle, secondary)

Appendix 3.3 Job competency dimensions identified in Kwan and Walker's (2008) research

External Communication and Connection	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Attending meetings with government officials ● Completing various kinds of report required by the EMB ● Consulting with school supervisor(s) ● Attending meetings with the school board ● Responding to parent inquiries ● Responding to community inquiries ● Attending parent-teacher association meetings ● Encouraging parents to participate in school activities ● Preparing written information about the school and events
Quality Assurance and Accountability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Undertaking evaluation activities for school-based curriculum projects ● Collecting student assessment data ● Reviewing teaching and learning outcomes ● Attending various panel meetings ● Preparing school self-evaluation ● Reviewing public examination results ● Monitoring test and examination outcomes ● Reviewing student assignments in different subjects ● Observing the classroom teaching of colleagues
Teaching, Learning, and Curriculum	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Organising school-based curriculum development activities ● Selection of text books and instructional materials ● Preparing timetables for the school curriculum ● Promoting a learning-centred focus ● Direct supervision of students across the school ● Resolving student behavioral problems across the school ● Organising and supervising co-curricular activities ● Contact with parents regarding student problems across the school ● Consulting with teachers about specific students ● Formulating curriculum policies for the school
Staff Management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Orientation of staff ● Assignment of work to staff ● Supervising and reviewing performance of teachers ● Recruitment of teachers ● Recruitment of support staff ● Handling grievances amongst teachers ● Handling grievances amongst support staff ● Reviewing the performance of support staff
Resource Management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Preparing the school budget ● Making decisions about the purchase of school equipment ● Monitoring the condition of the school building ● Monitoring the condition of school equipment ● Allocating funds amongst various budget accounts ● Preparing proposals for application for government funds
Leader and Teacher Growth and Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Planning training and development programmes for teachers ● Mentoring beginning teachers ● Advising teachers on professional development opportunities ● Matching professional development activities with school development needs ● Attending courses, seminars, conferences, or workshops for own professional development ● Professional sharing with colleagues in school ● Professional sharing with peers in other schools
Strategies Direction and Policy Environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Formulating long-term school plans ● Maintaining an updated knowledge of current and emerging education-related policies ● Regularly assessing the environmental changes affecting the school ● Regularly assessing the internal strengths and weaknesses of the school ● Setting priorities for different school plans and objectives ● Attending school meetings ● Using student assessment data in school planning

Appendix 3.4 Paternalistic leadership scales (Cheng *et al.*, 2004)

Benevolent leadership

1. My supervisor is like a family member when he/she gets along with us.
2. My supervisor devotes all his/her energy to taking care of me.
3. Beyond work relations, my supervisor expresses concern about my daily life.
4. My supervisor ordinarily shows a kind concern for my comfort.
5. My supervisor will help me when I'm in an emergency.
6. My supervisor takes very thoughtful care of subordinates who have spent a long time with him/her.
7. My supervisor meets my needs according to my personal requests.
8. My supervisor encourages me when I encounter arduous problems.
9. My supervisor takes good care of my family members as well.
10. My supervisor tries to understand what the cause is when I don't perform well.
11. My supervisor handles what is difficult to do or manage in everyday life for me.

Moral leadership

1. My supervisor never avenges a personal wrong in the name of public interest when he/she is offended. (reversed)
2. My supervisor employs people according to their virtues and does not envy others' abilities and virtues.
3. My supervisor uses his/her authority to seek special privileges for himself/herself. (reversed)
4. My supervisor doesn't take the credit for my achievement and contributions for himself/herself.
5. My supervisor does not take advantage of me for personal gain.
6. My supervisor does not use *guanxi* (personal relationships) or back-door practices to obtain illicit personal gains.

Authoritarian leadership

1. My supervisor asks me to obey his/her instructions completely.
 2. My supervisor determined all decisions in the organisation whether they are important or not.
 3. My supervisor always has the last say in the meeting.
 4. My supervisor always behaves in a commanding fashion in front of employees.
 5. I feel pressured when working with him/her.
 6. My supervisor exercises strict discipline over subordinates.
 7. My supervisor scolds us when we can't accomplish our tasks.
 8. My supervisor emphasizes that our group must have the best performance of all the units in the organization.
 9. We have to follow his/her rules to get things done. If not, he/she punishes use severely.
-

Appendix 3.5 Principal leadership practices in Chinese literature
Appendix 3.5.1 Major themes in non-empirical literature

Themes	Non-empirical papers
Comprehensive Expertise	Cai (2000); Chen, G. (2001a; 2004); Chen, R. (2004); Dong (2004); Du (2004); Feng (2003a; 2003b; 2006); Gao (2002); Gao & Xu (2006); He (2007); He & Ying (2003); Huang (2008); Jia (2005); Li (2000a; 2000b); Li, L. (2005); Li, S. (2005); Li (2008); Li & Chu (2005); Liu (2007); Meng (2008); Sun (2007a; 2007b); Wang (2004); Xiao (2007); Xu (2005); Yu (2004); Zhang, D. (2004); Zhang (2005); Zhang, X. (2004; 2007); Zhao, H. 2005; Zhao (2007); Zheng (2006); Zhou (2006); Zou (2007)
Raising student achievement	Dong (2006); Guo (2006); Wang, S. (2005); Zhang, Li & Gu (2005)
Acquiring additional resources	Hannum & Park (2002); Lin (2000); Zhang, D. (2004); Zhang, Li & Gu (2005)
Building and maintaining <i>guanxi</i>	Bai (2006); Bush & Qiang (2002); Cai (2000); Li, S. (2005); Lin (2000); Yan (2005); Yan (2006); Zhang, Li & Gu (2005)
Importation without application	Chen (2005); Chen (2002); Chen (2001b); Chen, R. P. (2004); Cheng (2006); Dong (2006); Fan & Wang (2006); Feng (2002; 2003b; 2004); Gu & Meng (2001); Guo (2001); Hu (2005); Peng (2006); Shi, M. (2007); Shi, Z. (2007); Sun & Xie (2008); Tang (2001; 2006); Wei (2006); Xu (1999); Yang (2005); Yuan (2002); Zhang (2008); Zhang & Zeng (2006); Zhao (2007)

Appendix 3.5.2 Findings in empirical research

Guiding instruction & curriculum	Chen, M., 2007; Chen, X. 2007; Cravens, 2008; Jiang, 2006; Jiang, 2007; Li, C. H., 2006; Liu, 2005; Ma, Wang & Xie, 2008; Ma, Wang & Yan, 2005; Tang, Cheng & Ying, 1999; Wang, J., 2006; Wang, L., 2007; Wang, X. L., 2007; Zeng, 2004; Zhang, C. L., 2004; Zhu, 2005
Building school culture	Bo, 2007; Cravens, 2008; Jiang, 2007; Tang, Cheng & Ying, 1999; Zhu, 2005
Managing internal affairs & maintaining external relationship	Cravens, 2008; Hu, 2007; Li, C. H., 2006; Li, Xu, & Li, 2006; Lin, G., 2007; Liu, 2005; Liu, Zhao & Zhong, 2007; Luo & Najjar, 2007; Qian, 2008; Qiao, 2003; Ryan, Xiao & Merry, 1998; Tang, Cheng & Ying, 1999; Wang, J., 2006; Zeng, 2004; Zhang, 2006; Zhao, Y., 2007; Zhu, 2005
Transformational vs. transactional leadership practices	Hou, 2006; Hu, J., 2005; Li & Zhang, 2006; Lin, 2005; Lin, 2007; Liu, Zhao & Zhong, 2007; Qian, 2008; Tian, 2005; Wang, S., 2007; Zeng, 2004; Zhang, 2005; Zhang, Z., 2004; Zhao, Y., 2007; Zuo, M., 2006
Distributed/participated vs. paternalistic/top-down leadership practices	An, 2006; Bo, 2007; Lin, 2005; Lin, 2007; Lu, 2007; Ryan, Xiao & Merry, 1998; Wang, J., 2006; Wang, L., 2007; Wang, T., 2004; 2007; Wong, K., 2005; 2006; 2007; Zeng, 2004; Zhang, Z., 2004; Zuo, M., 2006
Work/structure vs. people/consideration behaviors	Chi, 2007; Dong & Geng, 2008; Geng, 2002; Hu, X., 2005; Lu, 2002, 2007; Shen, 2007; Sun & Wang, 2008; Tang, Cheng & Ying, 1999; Wang, F., 2005; Wang, L., 2006; Wang, S., 2004; Yu, 2001; Yu & Liu, 2005; Zeng, 2004; Zhang, 2002; Zhang & Wu, 2000; 2001; Zhu, 2005
Influence of political ideology and governance	An, 2006; Chen, X. 2007; Hu, 2007; Jia, 2007; Lin, G., 2007; Luo & Najjar, 2007; Qian, 2008; Wang, L., 2007; Yu, 2001; Yu & Liu, 2005
Servant/moral leadership practices	Jiang, 2006; Jiang, 2007; Wang, S., 2004; Xu, 2007; Yang, 2004; Zuo, M., 2006; Zuo, M., 2006
Contextual factors	<i>Personal:</i> Gender (Jiang, 2007; Li & Zhang, 2006; Lin, 2005; Lin, 2007; Zhang, 2005;

	<p>Zeng, 2004)</p> <p>Age (Dong & Geng, 2008; Geng, 2002; Li & Zhang, 2006; Zhang, 2005)</p> <p>Education background (Li & Zhang, 2006; Lin, 2005; Lin, 2007; Luo & Najjar, 2007; Wang, L., 2006; Zhang, 2005)</p> <p>Years of teaching (Dong & Geng, 2008; Geng, 2002; Li & Zhang, 2006; Zhang, 2005)</p> <p>Years of principalship (Li & Zhang, 2006; Lin, 2005; Lin, 2007; Ma, 2007; Zhang, 2005)</p> <p>Personalities (Guo, 2003; Jiang, 2007; Ma, 2007; Zeng, 2004)</p> <p>Knowledge & capacity (An, 2006; Hu, 2007; Jia, 2004; Li, L., 2006; Liu, Zhao & Zhong, 2007; Wang, X., 2007; Zhang, 2006; Zhao, 2007)</p> <p>Training (Dong & Geng, 2008; Geng, 2002; Li & Zhang, 2006; Zhang, 2006; Zhang, 2005; Wang, S., 2007)</p> <p><i>Organisational:</i></p> <p>School location (Li & Zhang, 2006; Lu, 2007; Zhang, 2005)</p> <p>School level/type (Li & Zhang, 2006; Qian, 2008; Wang, L. P., 2006; Zhang, 2001; Zhang, 2005)</p> <p>School climate/culture (Lin, 2005; Lin, 2007; Tang, Cheng & Ying, 1999; Zeng, 2004)</p> <p>School resources (Qian, 2008; Qiao, 2003; Wang, S., 2007)</p> <p>Teachers' genders, teaching lengths and positions (Chi, 2007)</p> <p>Other stakeholders (Qian, 2008)</p> <p>Governmental designation (Lin, 2005; Lin, 2007; Wong, 2006; 2007; Qian, 2008; Zhang, 2006)</p> <p><i>Social:</i></p> <p>Administrative system (Jiang, 2006; Lin, G., 2007; Zhang, 2006; Zhang, Z., 2004)</p> <p>Societal culture (Lin, G., 2007; Wang, T., 2004; 2007; Qian, 2008; Zeng, 2004; Zhang, Z., 2004)</p> <p>Political ideology (Luo & Najjar, 2007; Ryan, Xiao, & Merry, 1998; Tang, Cheng & Ying, 1999; Wong, 2006; 2007; Zhang, 2004)</p>
Positive effects:	<p>School effectiveness (Jia, 2004; Zhu, 2005), Organisational progress (Liang, 2004; Wang, 2007)</p> <p>Teacher commitment & job satisfaction (Sun & Wang, 2008; Tian, 2005; Zhang & Wu, 2000; 2001)</p> <p>Student achievement & development (Wang, L., 2006)</p>

Appendix 3.6 A Repertoire of Principal Leadership Practices in Chinese Mainland

Practices	Sources
Setting school vision <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Establishing a shared vision ▪ Involves teachers in vision-designing ▪ Setting priorities for different school plans and objectives ▪ Setting goals for student achievement in school planning ▪ Assessing internal strengths and weakness of the school 	Leithwood & Day, 2007 Kwan & Allan, 2008; Leithwood & Day, 2007; Chu <i>et al.</i> , 2009 Cheng <i>et al.</i> , 2004
Building school culture <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Conveying personal values and beliefs to build the school culture ▪ Setting up effective communication channels to strengthen mutual understanding with other school members ▪ Creating a supportive and safe environment ▪ Building a participatory and open culture within school 	Bo, 2007; Kwan & Allan, 2008; Leithwood & Day, 2007

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Encouraging collaboration and team spirit ▪ Encouraging other school members to participate in school decision-making ▪ Encouraging all forms of competition 	Pre-pilot interviews
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Establishing a moral-based culture ▪ Being exemplary in terms of moral ▪ Being exemplary in terms of dedication to school education ▪ Being exemplary in terms of political ideology ▪ Maintaining a harmonious climate within school ▪ Forming a hierarchical and obedient climate within school 	Cheng <i>et al.</i> , 2004; Luo & Najjar, 2007; Ryan, Xiao & Merry, 1998
Developing people	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Encouraging all staff to participate in professional development activities. ▪ Actively taking part in principal professional development activities to set a model for staff. ▪ Matching professional development activities with school development needs ▪ Providing all teachers with the opportunities of professional development and giving them relevant advice. ▪ Providing substantial support and individual consideration for teachers to attend various professional development programs ▪ Considering different staff's needs of professional development. ▪ Professional sharing with colleagues in school ▪ Encouraging and supporting staff to participate in designing school-based professional programs ▪ Encouraging staff's bottom-up proposals for professional development ▪ Cultivate staff's awareness and capability of leadership through training and empowerment ▪ Relating professional training opportunity with performance and taking it as a kind of award for better performance ▪ Considering staff's personal needs in professional development and helping them with their personal difficulties and problems ▪ Establishing a hierarchical professional development system in the school ▪ Determining staff's participation in professional development programs and their types in a top-down manner 	<p>Kwan & Allan, 2008; Leithwood & Day, 2007; pre-pilot interviews</p> <p>An; 2006; Kwan & Allan, 2008; Tian, 2005</p> <p>Bass, 1997; Li & Zhang, 2006 Cheng <i>et al.</i>, 2004</p>
Managing instruction and curriculum	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Promoting a shared inclination to changing school instruction and curriculum according to the reform policies ▪ Focusing on teaching and learning and protecting teacher teaching time from outside distractions ▪ Setting expectations and standards for teaching ▪ Providing adequate resources for school instruction and curriculum improvement ▪ Attending to the needs of students and teachers while carrying out various innovations in terms of instruction and curriculum ▪ Exhibiting extraordinary competency, capability and knowledge of instruction and curriculum ▪ Introducing new or productive forms of instruction and curriculum into school ▪ Delegating front-line teachers to design school-based curriculum ▪ Encouraging bottom-up innovations ▪ Fully trusting and empowering teachers regarding school instruction and curriculum ▪ Consulting with parents on school curriculum and instruction ▪ Focusing on the tasks and standards of school teaching and learning ▪ Monitoring student learning outcomes, particularly the results of tests and examinations ▪ Assessing teaching and learning with student test scores 	<p>Chen, M., 2007; Chen, X. 2007; Kwan & Allan, 2008; Leithwood & Day, 2007; pre-pilot interviews</p> <p>Kwan & Allan, 2008; Lin, 2005; Lin, 2007; Tian, 2005</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Taking measures to correct problematic cases in teaching and learning ▪ Rewarding teachers and students on the basis of their performances ▪ Formulating school curriculum and instruction policies in a top-down manner without a discussion with teachers 	Cheng <i>et al.</i> , 2004
Administering internal affairs and relationship	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Inspiring and motivating staff with individual consideration ▪ Inspires and motivate performance with consideration ▪ Exercising a participative way of decision-making ▪ Forms a leadership team ▪ Discussing major decisions with school Party branch, union and teacher congress, and accepting their supervision ▪ Delegating subordinates and advocating shared leadership ▪ Awarding or penalising staff according their performance ▪ Balances administration & instruction ▪ Adopts contrived collegiality ▪ Disciplining subordinates with human-orientation ▪ Improving working conditions and creating a comfortable working environment for all school staff ▪ Being visible on campus much of the time and available to help staff solve various problems ▪ Exhibiting altruistically and modestly ▪ Promoting harmonious interpersonal relationship among staff ▪ Reinforcing the hierarchical administrative structure ▪ Dictatorially making all decisions relevant to school administration ▪ Restricting the discussion within the options posited by the principal and rejecting others' ideas or critiques in decision-making ▪ Excluding critical staff from the decision-making process and relevant discussion 	Leithwood & Day, 2007 Pre-pilot interviews & Pilot 1 Dong & Geng, 2008 Cheng <i>et al.</i> , 2004; Ryan, Xiao & Merry, 1998
Developing external <i>guanxi</i> and seeking resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Setting up and maintaining school image and reputation ▪ Promoting major development and achievement of school to outside ▪ Maintaining an updated knowledge of current and emerging educational policies and assessing external environment of school ▪ Giving priority to implementation of superior educational policies and tasks ▪ Sparing no efforts to apply for government funds to support school development and construction ▪ Actively development school-run business to gain more funds for school construction ▪ Actively participating in social activities to get extra resources from various organizations and individuals ▪ Promoting school construction and development through the social connection of students' parents ▪ Coordinating all kinds of external <i>guanxi</i> to protect school education and administration from outside distractions ▪ Keeping a good personal <i>guanxi</i> with local authorities and the officials through various approaches ▪ Keeping a good working <i>guanxi</i> with local authorities and the officials through various approaches ▪ Building coalitions with groups in community ▪ Responding to community inquires ▪ Making efforts to get extra resources from various organizations 	Cheng <i>et al.</i> , 2004 Kwan & Allan, 2008; Luo & Najjar, 2007; Qian, 2008; Qiao, 2003; Ryan, Xiao & Merry, 1998 Pilot 1 Kwan & Allan, 2008; Leithwood & Day, 2007; Luo & Najjar, 2007; Qian, 2008;

Appendix 4.1 Paradigmatic Foundations of Mixed Methods Research (Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2003)

Issue	Dialectics	Pragmaticism	Transformative-emancipatory Paradigm	Multi-paradigm
Ontology	Complex reality and increasingly pluralistic society	Truth made by events, not inherent in an idea	Contextual reality within multiple political, cultural, historical, and economic values	Complex phenomena and interconnected reality
Epistemology	Better understanding comes from juxtaposition of different views.	Knowledge is constructed toward a destination.	Interaction, understanding, and trust between researchers and participants	Good match between paradigm and design leads to understanding.
Methodology	Synergistic use of different methods	Free choice of the methods that help to answer research questions.	Mixed methods used to address the concerns of diverse groups	Decide the match between paradigm and design

Appendix 4.2 Invitation Letter

English:

Participation in HU Rongkun's PhD Research

Dear _____,

I am Hu Rongkun, a PhD candidate of the Department of Educational Administration and Policy at The Chinese University of Hong Kong. I am writing to ask for your consent to taking part in my PhD study of principal leadership practices in Chinese schools.

This study aims to find out what Chinese principals commonly do to lead their schools, how they enact these generic actions in their schools, and why they employ these leadership practices within their schools. The research targets the high school principals in Beijing and Guangzhou. As you belong to the target population, your participation is quite important for this study.

The research will be conducted through a mixed methods approach, involving two phases. The first stage is a questionnaire survey, which will take about 15 minutes; and then the research will invite some school principals to take part in the follow-up interviews, which will last for about one hour. With informants' consent, the researcher will tape-record the interviews.

I understand that confidentiality and anonymity are vital principles in this exercise. I could pledge to strictly conform to them: no names of the research participants and concerned schools will ever be disclosed.

Time is indeed a very precious resource to you, so I am much indebted to you for your kind assistance.

If you could accept to participate in the interviews, I will be very grateful.

You can contact me through the following ways:

Tel: 13811419774 (Beijing), 852-68714499 (Hong Kong)

E-mail: hurongkun@cuhk.edu.hk

Yours sincerely,
HU Rongkun

Chinese:

尊敬的_____校長：

您好！

我是香港中文大學教育行政與政策系的博士候選人胡榮坤，在此誠摯邀請您參與我的博士研究。

該研究旨在瞭解在我國當前的社會背景和教育環境下，校長領導學校的核心實踐，即：他們在實踐中領導學校的基本行為和方式，以及導致或影響他們領導實踐的環境因素。據此，本研究選擇以北京和廣州兩地的高中校長為研究對象，對其核心領導實踐進行分析。您的參與將對此研究的具有重要意義。

本研究採用混合研究方法，將通過問卷調查和深度訪談相結合的方式進行。研究分為兩個階段：首先是問卷調查，填寫問卷時間大約為15分鐘；之後將研究者將邀請校長參與後續的訪談，時間大約1個小時，在獲到受訪校長同意的情況下，研究者將對訪談內容進行錄音。

本研究將嚴格遵守研究倫理的要求，保護相關個人資料和訪談內容。

感謝您在百忙中考慮我的邀請。

如您能接受邀請，參與後續研究，我將不勝感激。

您可以通過以下方式聯繫我：

北京：13811419774

香港：852-68714499

電郵：hurongkun@cuhk.edu.hk

此致

敬禮

胡榮堃

Appendix 4.3 Leadership Practice Questionnaire for Chinese School Principals

English:

Dear principal and teacher:

Thanks for your participation in this survey. This survey aims to investigate the core leadership practices of Chinese principals and potential contextual factors that influence these practices. Your participation is very important for the research. This questionnaire is only designed to study the fact in terms of principal leadership practice in Chinese schools, rather than the assessment of principal performance. All questions are answered anonymously. No answer is particularly better than the others. The information you give us on this questionnaire is confidential. No one will see your answers except the researcher and no person will be identified with his/her particular information. Complete confidentiality is assured. It is important that you be candid in your answers.

Researcher

I Background Information

- Gender: Male Female
- Age: 1. <20 2. 20-25 3. 26-30 4. 31-35 5. 36-40
6. 41-45 7. 46-50 8. 51-55 9. 56-60 10. >60
- Years of teaching: _____ years Years of having been and/or being a principal: _____ years
- Education background:
 2/3-year college graduate 4-year college graduate with a bachelor's degree
 Postgraduate with/for a master's degree Postgraduate with/for a doctor's degree
- Present position: Teacher Administrative/Supportive Staff
 Leader of teaching & research unit Leader of the grade
 Director of teaching & discipline Director of general affairs
 Vice principal Deputy Secretary of the Party Branch
 Principal Secretary of the Party Branch
- Times of professional training in 2009: _____ times
- Type of the present school: 1. Non-exemplary schools 2. Exemplary schools
 1. Junior secondary school 2. Senior secondary High school 3. Comprehensive school
- School location: 1. Rural area 2. Suburban area 3. Urban area
- School size: the numbers of vice principals (), students (), and teachers ()

II Importance of Generic Leadership Practice

The following items refer to the major leadership practices of Chinese principals. Please indicate how important these are in the leadership practices of your school principal, through picking one number for each item in line with the following scale.

1=not important at all 2=slightly important 3=relatively important
4=important 5=very important 6=extremely important

Setting direction for school development

Building school culture and climate

Promoting staff development

Managing school instruction and curriculum

Managing internal administrative affairs

Developing external relationships and resources

Establishing authority

III Specific Leadership Practices

The following items describe the leadership practices of Chinese school principals. Please indicate how often these practices occur in real-life situations according to your knowledge, through picking one number for each item in line with the following scale.

1=not at all 2=seldom 3=sometimes 4=many times 5=often 6=always

Setting a shared goal for school development

Involving other school members in designing the goal

Setting a shared goal for school development

Involving other school members in school planning

Setting priorities for different school plans and objectives

Assessing strengths and weaknesses of the school

Advocating a moral-based goal of school development

Determining school goals and plans dictatorially

Building effective channels to facilitate communication between school members

Encouraging other school members to participate in decision-making
 Creating a supportive environment
 Centring on teaching and learning in school to protect teachers' teaching from distraction
 Trusting teachers' capability of teaching and delegating power to teachers regarding class teaching
 Considering teachers' and students' needs while implementing instruction and curriculum reforms
 Encouraging group work within school
 Advocating a moral-based school culture
 Exhibiting high morals and dedication to school education
 Playing an exemplary role in all respects
 Maintaining a harmonious interpersonal relationship and climate within school
 Forming a hierarchical and obedient climate within school
 Supporting all staff to participate in professional development activities
 Actively taking part in principal professional development activities
 Sharing personal professional experience with colleagues
 Considering different staff's needs of professional development
 Encouraging teachers to develop school-based professional programs
 Delegating front-line teachers to design school-based curriculum
 Supporting teachers' bottom-up innovations
 Promoting ordinary staff and teachers' awareness and capability of participating in school leadership and administration in profession development
 Promoting middle and above management's awareness and capability of participating in school leadership and administration in profession development
 Awarding the opportunity of professional development to the staff with outstanding performance
 Establishing a hierarchical professional development system
 Determining whether a staff can participate in professional development and the type of training programs from top to down, without listen to staff's voices
 Encouraging healthy competition
 Providing sufficient resources for school instruction and curriculum development
 Leading innovations in school instruction and curriculum
 Involving teachers in policy-making in terms of school instruction and curriculum
 Consulting with parents on school instruction and curriculum
 Setting specific standards and expectations for teaching and learning
 Stressing the tasks and standards of school teaching and learning
 Focusing on the change of students' exam performance
 Assessing teaching effects and learning progress against student test scores
 Making and implementing school instruction and curriculum policies from top to down, without consulting with teachers
 Considering individual needs of different staff to motivate them to work hard
 Making decisions in a participative way
 Leading school through collective management and decision-making
 Consulting with the Party Branch on important decisions
 Consulting with School Union on major decisions
 Consulting with Teacher Congress on major decisions
 Sharing leadership power through delegating subordinates
 Rewarding staff on the basis of their performances
 Disciplining subordinates with a human-orientation

Improving staff welfare and working conditions
 Reinforcing the hierarchical administrative structure
 Making all decisions authoritatively in school administration
 Restricting the discussion within the options set by the principal and rejecting other's ideas or critiques in decision-making
 Excluding critical staff from decision-making and discussion
 Establishing and maintaining school image and reputation
 Publicising school major developments and achievements
 Paying attention to current and emerging educational policies to assess the external environment
 Prioritising the implementation of superiors' educational policies and tasks
 Coordinating various public relationships to promote school development
 Keeping a good work relationship with local educational authorities and the concerned officials
 Keeping a good personal relationship with officials in charge of local educational administration
 Applying for government funds to support school development and construction
 Getting extra resources from social organisations and individuals
 Getting extra resources through the connections of students' parents

IV Contextual Factors

Please indicate the extent to which the following factors influence the leadership practices of Chinese school principals, by picking one number for each item in line with the following scale.

1=not at all influential 2=slightly influential 3=somewhat influential
 4=very influential 5=highly influential 6=extremely influential

Principal's personal traits
 Principal's perception of education
 Principal's perception of leadership
 Principal's capability of leadership
 Principal's understanding of his/her responsibilities
 Principal's understanding of the professionalism of principalship
 Existing school culture and climate
 Resources available for the school development
 Other school leaders' perceptions of leadership
 Other school members' views on school administration
 Supervision and intervention of school Party branch
 Supervision and intervention of school Union
 Supervision and intervention of Teacher Congress
 Academic competition and pressure in basic education
 Hierarchical administration system of the government
 Leadership ideas and conceptions in business area
 Leader image in Chinese traditional culture
 Western ideas of leadership with an orientation toward participation and power sharing
 Servant leadership style advocated by the Party and the government
 Educational guidelines and reform policies of the central government
 Policies and interventions of local educational authorities
 Existing principal selection and assessment systems
 Principal promotion system
 Previous cadre system in school personnel administration
 Ongoing principal career ladder system

Chinese:

校長領導實踐問卷

尊敬的校長/老師：

您好！

感謝您能抽出時間填寫問卷。此問卷旨在調查我國中小學校長的領導實踐和可能的影響因素。作為學校教育的實踐者，您對校長的領導實踐具有直接或間接的瞭解。因此，您的參與對此次調查具有重要意義，同時您也可以據此思考我國中學校長的領導實踐。此問卷僅是對事實的探究，並非對校長的考核或評價，下列所有題目和選項均無好壞優劣之分，敬請您如實填寫。問卷採用匿名答題方式，用時約 10-15 分鐘。您提供的所有信息將完全保密，僅供研究使用，決不會洩漏給其他人員。相關報告僅呈現整體趨勢，不會出現個人信息。

課題組

I 背景信息

1. 您的性別： 男 女
2. 您的年齡：
 1. <20 周歲
 2. 20-25 周歲
 3. 26-30 周歲
 4. 31-35 周歲
 5. 36-40 周歲
 6. 41-45 周歲
 7. 46-50 周歲
 8. 51-55 周歲
 9. 56-60 周歲
 10. >60 周歲
3. 您的教齡：_____ 年，
曾任校長或擔任本校校長的時間：_____ 年（請現任校長或曾經擔任過本校或他校校長者填寫）
4. 您的最高學歷：
 1. 大專
 2. 本科畢業（學士學位）
 3. 碩士學位/碩士研究生
 4. 博士學位/博士研究生
5. 您的職務是：
 - 校長
 - 校黨委/總支/支部書記
 - 副校
 - 校黨委/總支/支部副書記
 - 教導/教務主任
 - 總務主任
 - 年級組長
 - 教研組長
 - 教師
 - 行政/教輔人員
6. 在 2009 年，您參加各級各類專業發展培訓的總次數：_____ 次
7. 您目前所在學校的規模：副校長數：_____ 人 學生數：_____ 人 教師數：_____ 人
8. 您目前所在學校的類型： 1. 非示範校 2. 示範校
9. 您目前所在學校是： 1. 僅初中 2. 僅高中 3. 完全中學（初中+高中）
10. 您目前所在學校位于： 1. 農村 2. 城市郊區 3. 城市

II 領導實踐的重要性

下列各題指出了我國中小學校長領導的主要實踐內容，請您根據所在學校校長的工作情況，判斷下列各項內容在校長領導實踐中的重要程度，并據此在1-6之間選擇一個數字。各題項和選項均無好壞優劣之分，請如實回答。

	毫不重要	有點重要	比較重要	很重要	非常重要	極其重要
1. 確立學校的發展方向	----- 1	2	3	4	5	6
2. 建設學校文化氛圍	----- 1	2	3	4	5	6
3. 促進教職員工的發展	----- 1	2	3	4	5	6
4. 管理學校教學與課程	----- 1	2	3	4	5	6
5. 管理校內行政事務	----- 1	2	3	4	5	6
6. 發展校外公共關係與資源	----- 1	2	3	4	5	6
7. 樹立自身領導權威	----- 1	2	3	4	5	6

III 領導實踐的具體行爲

下列各題描述了我國中小學校長的各項領導實踐，請您根據所在學校校長的工作情況，判斷下列各項在實際中出現的程度，并據此在1-6之間選擇一個數字。各題項和選項均無好壞優劣之分請如實回答。1-6依次代表：

1=從未如此 2=很少如此 3=偶爾如此 4=多次如此 5=經常如此 6=總是如此

▪ 建立共同的發展目標。	-----	1	2	3	4	5	6
▪ 與學校其他成員一起設計學校發展目標。	-----	1	2	3	4	5	6
▪ 明確提出學生學習成績的發展目標。	-----	1	2	3	4	5	6
▪ 與學校其他成員一起制定學校發展規劃。	-----	1	2	3	4	5	6
▪ 指明學校各項事業發展的優先順序。	-----	1	2	3	4	5	6
▪ 分析學校的優勢和劣勢。	-----	1	2	3	4	5	6
▪ 強調以道德爲本的發展目標。	-----	1	2	3	4	5	6
▪ 學校發展目標和規劃由校長一人獨斷決定。	-----	1	2	3	4	5	6
▪ 建立有效的溝通渠道，以促進學校成員之間的交流與溝通。	-----	1	2	3	4	5	6
▪ 支持學校其他成員參與決策。	-----	1	2	3	4	5	6
▪ 營造具有支持性的學校氛圍。	-----	1	2	3	4	5	6
▪ 要求學校各項工作以教學中心，確保教師教學不受其他事務干擾。	-----	1	2	3	4	5	6
▪ 充分相信教師的課堂教學能力，并完全放權。	-----	1	2	3	4	5	6
▪ 在實施教學與課程改革時，考慮師生的需要。	-----	1	2	3	4	5	6
▪ 鼓勵學校成員進行團隊合作。	-----	1	2	3	4	5	6
▪ 倡導以道德爲本的學校文化。	-----	1	2	3	4	5	6
▪ 愛崗敬業，品德高尚。	-----	1	2	3	4	5	6
▪ 處處發揮模範帶頭作用。	-----	1	2	3	4	5	6
▪ 營造人際和諧的學校文化氛圍。	-----	1	2	3	4	5	6
▪ 形成層級分明、服從權威的學校文化氛圍。	-----	1	2	3	4	5	6
▪ 支持所有教職員工參與專業發展活動。	-----	1	2	3	4	5	6
▪ 積極參與校長專業發展活動。	-----	1	2	3	4	5	6
▪ 分享自己的專業發展心得。	-----	1	2	3	4	5	6
▪ 考慮不同教職員工的專業發展需要。	-----	1	2	3	4	5	6
▪ 鼓勵教職員工自主開發校本專業發展項目。	-----	1	2	3	4	5	6

▪ 授權一綫教師開發校本課程。	-----	1 2 3 4 5 6
▪ 支持教師自下而上的創新。	-----	1 2 3 4 5 6
▪ 在專業發展中，注重提高普通教職員工參與學校領導與管理的意識和能力。	-----	1 2 3 4 5 6
▪ 在專業發展中，注重提高學校中層以上管理人員的領導與管理能力。	-----	1 2 3 4 5 6
▪ 把參加專業發展培訓作為對業績突出者的獎勵。	-----	1 2 3 4 5 6
▪ 建立層級化的專業發展體系。	-----	1 2 3 4 5 6
▪ 自上而下決定教職員工能否參加專業培訓及其種類，教師沒有發言權。	-----	1 2 3 4 5 6
▪ 鼓勵教學上的良性競爭。	-----	1 2 3 4 5 6
▪ 為學校教學和課程發展提供充足的資源。	-----	1 2 3 4 5 6
▪ 引領學校教學與課程的創新。	-----	1 2 3 4 5 6
▪ 讓教師參與制定學校教學與課程方面的政策。	-----	1 2 3 4 5 6
▪ 參考家長對學校教學與課程的意見。	-----	1 2 3 4 5 6
▪ 對教師教學和學生成績提出具體的標準和要求。	-----	1 2 3 4 5 6
▪ 強調教學所要達成的任務和標準。	-----	1 2 3 4 5 6
▪ 關注學生考試成績的變化。	-----	1 2 3 4 5 6
▪ 用學生的考試成績來衡量教學的效果和學生的進步。	-----	1 2 3 4 5 6
▪ 自上而下制定并推行教學與課程方面的政策和方案，不會徵求教師的意見。	---	1 2 3 4 5 6
▪ 關心不同員工的個體需要，激勵他們努力工作。	-----	1 2 3 4 5 6
▪ 采用參與型決策方式，領導學校各項事務。	-----	1 2 3 4 5 6
▪ 通過集體管理與決策方式，領導學校各項事務。	-----	1 2 3 4 5 6
▪ 重大決策參考校黨委/總支/支部的意見。	-----	1 2 3 4 5 6
▪ 重大決策參考校工會的意見。	-----	1 2 3 4 5 6
▪ 重大決策參考教代會的意見。	-----	1 2 3 4 5 6
▪ 向下級授權，進行分權領導。	-----	1 2 3 4 5 6
▪ 依據教職員工的工作績效進行獎懲。	-----	1 2 3 4 5 6
▪ 管理下級時以人為本。	-----	1 2 3 4 5 6
▪ 改善教職員工的福利待遇和工作條件。	-----	1 2 3 4 5 6
▪ 建立層級分明的行政管理結構。	-----	1 2 3 4 5 6
▪ 在行政管理方面，校長一人說了算。	-----	1 2 3 4 5 6
▪ 決策時所討論的內容僅限于校長提出的方案，其他人的提議不予考慮。	-----	1 2 3 4 5 6
▪ 不讓總提意見的同事參與決策與討論。	-----	1 2 3 4 5 6
▪ 樹立和維護學校的形象與聲譽。	-----	1 2 3 4 5 6
▪ 對外宣傳學校的重大發展和取得的成績。	-----	1 2 3 4 5 6
▪ 關注現有和最新的教育政策，對學校外部環境進行評估。	-----	1 2 3 4 5 6
▪ 以執行上級教育政策、完成上級下達的任務為第一要務。	-----	1 2 3 4 5 6
▪ 協調各種外部公共關係，以促進學校的建設與發展。	-----	1 2 3 4 5 6
▪ 與當地教育管理部门及其官員保持良好的工作關係。	-----	1 2 3 4 5 6
▪ 與當地教育管理部门的官員保持良好的私人關係。	-----	1 2 3 4 5 6
▪ 申請政府撥款來資助學校的各項建設。	-----	1 2 3 4 5 6
▪ 從其他社會組織和人士那裏獲得額外的資源。	-----	1 2 3 4 5 6
▪ 通過學生家長的社會關係，獲得學校的建設與發展的資源。	-----	1 2 3 4 5 6

IV 影響因素

下列各項列出了可能對我國校長領導實踐產生影響的因素，請您在1-6之間選擇一個數字，表明它們的影響程度。

	毫無影響	有點影響	比較有影響	很有影響	非常有影響	極其有影響
▪ 校長的個性特徵 -----	1	2	3	4	5	6
▪ 校長的教育理念 -----	1	2	3	4	5	6
▪ 校長的領導理念 -----	1	2	3	4	5	6
▪ 校長的領導能力 -----	1	2	3	4	5	6
▪ 校長對自身職責的認識 -----	1	2	3	4	5	6
▪ 校長對自身專業性的認識 -----	1	2	3	4	5	6
▪ 學校已有的組織文化氛圍 -----	1	2	3	4	5	6
▪ 學校所能獲得的資源 -----	1	2	3	4	5	6
▪ 領導班子其他成員的領導理念 ----	1	2	3	4	5	6
▪ 學校其他成員對如何治校的看法 ----	1	2	3	4	5	6
▪ 校黨委/總支/支部的監督和干預 ----	1	2	3	4	5	6
▪ 校工會的監督和干預 -----	1	2	3	4	5	6
▪ 教代會的監督和干預 -----	1	2	3	4	5	6
▪ 基礎教育中的升學競爭與壓力 ----	1	2	3	4	5	6
▪ 層級分明的政府行政管理體制 ----	1	2	3	4	5	6
▪ 商業領域的領導理念 -----	1	2	3	4	5	6
▪ 我國傳統文化中的恩威并施的領導形象	1	2	3	4	5	6
▪ 西方社會強調的參與和分權的領導理念	1	2	3	4	5	6
▪ 黨和政府提倡的公僕領導作風 ----	1	2	3	4	5	6
▪ 中央政府的教育方針與政策 ----	1	2	3	4	5	6
▪ 地方教育管理部门的政策和干預 ----	1	2	3	4	5	6
▪ 現行校長負責制對校長的要求 ----	1	2	3	4	5	6
▪ 現行的校長遴選和評價標準 ----	1	2	3	4	5	6
▪ 現行的校長晉升制度 ----	1	2	3	4	5	6
▪ 原有學校幹部管理制度對校長的要求	1	2	3	4	5	6
▪ 逐步推行的校長職級制對校長的要求	1	2	3	4	5	6

—— 完 ——

感謝您的參與！

Appendix 4.4 Instrument of Interviews

English:

No.:

Interview Protocol

Date: Time: Venue:

A. Ask the informant for the permission for using the tape-recorder.

May I tape-record the interview?

YES/NO (Circle the answer. If it is YES, set up the recording device; if it is NO, the interviewer will take notes.)

B. Ask the informant to explain or further describe how contextual factors influence his/her leadership practices?

- In your practice, what things do you think are most essential for you to lead your school?
- How do you exert your leadership in terms of these essential things?
- What contextual factors do you think determine or influence your leadership practices?
- What leadership practices are influenced by these contextual factors? How do these factors influence your leadership practices?
- Which of them could determine your leadership practices?
- Which of them just have an impact?

Chinese:

編號:

訪談大綱

日期: 時間: 地點:

A. 就訪談錄音問題徵求受訪者的同意

問: 能否對此次訪談進行錄音?

答: 可以/不可以。(在相應答案上畫圈。如果受訪是同意錄音,則打開錄音設備;如果受訪者不同意,訪問者則在訪談過程中記錄筆記。)

B. 請受訪者就其領導實踐和情景因素對其實踐的影響進行解釋和說明。

- 在您的實際工作中,您認為有哪些事情/方面對您領導學校是最重要?
- 就這些重要的方面而言,您是如何做的?
- 您認為有什麼情景因素決定或影響了您的這些實踐?
- 這些因素影響了您的哪些領導實踐?如何影響?
- 哪些因素起到決定作用?
- 哪些因素會有影響?

Appendix 4.5 Results of the EFA in Pilot Study

	Factors						
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
9.Communication	0.774						
16.Moral	0.753				0.314		
13.Support participative decision-making	0.747						
17.Dedication	0.698	0.315	0.338				
15.Moral-oriented school culture	0.667						
10.Supportive school climate	0.644						
18.Political ideology	0.639		0.425				
37.Reform and consideration	0.617						
19.Harmonious culture	0.606		0.366		0.308		
12.Team cooperation	0.591		0.319				
35.Teaching-and-learning centred	0.591						
32.Consideration in professional development	0.579	0.527					
11.Participative and open culture	0.564	0.351					
59.Available to help	0.546	0.377			0.314		
24.Support professional development	0.522	0.428					
38.Expert in instruction and curriculum	0.513	0.482					
60.Altruistic	0.51	0.379			0.412		
25.Professional opportunity and advice	0.502	0.486					
61.Harmonious interpersonal relationship	0.496	0.329			0.449		
36.Support I&C improvement	0.473	0.333				0.424	
42.Trust teachers	0.469						
6.Moral-based goals and visions	0.45				0.358		
23.Professional development planning	0.376	0.352			0.307		
30.Leadership capability cultivation	0.363	0.673					
40.School-based curriculum development		0.66					
27.Professional experience sharing		0.616					
39.I&C initiatives	0.334	0.572		0.387			
51.Personal consideration	0.32	0.571					
28.Teachers' self-developed program		0.545					
26.Different needs of professional development	0.481	0.54					
55.Participative decision-making in administration	0.337	0.519			0.42		
43.Consult parents		0.492	-0.319				
31.Training as award	0.325	0.448	-0.314				
21.Encourage professional development	0.338	0.444					
41.Encourage bottom-up innovation		0.442					
33.Hierarchical professional development system	-	-0.439					
22.Self-development	0.377	0.399			0.307		
64.Limited options			0.82				
65.Exclude disagreement			0.795				

50.Top-down policy in I&C					0.747
34.Exclude teachers' voice in professional development					0.675
7.Authoritarian determination on school vision	0.353				0.651
63.Dictatorial decision-making		0.314			0.65
20.Hierarchical and obedient climate					0.535
76.School-run business					-0.53
75.Parents' connections		0.315			-0.517
73.Applying for government's financial support					0.49
67.Promote school development					0.776
71.Good working relationship with authority & officials					0.698
74.Social activity		0.373			-0.308
68.Educational policies					0.673
72.Good personal relationship with authority & officials					0.639
47.Measure improvement with test scores					-0.433
69.Implement policies					0.575
70.Coordinate external relationship	0.396				-0.34
66.School image					0.526
49.Performance orientation					0.448
48.Correction measures					0.445
8.Build school values					0.418
55.Participative leadership					0.428
58.Improve working conditions					0.356
57.Human orientation	0.387				0.386
62.Hierachical administration structure					0.364
56.Performance-based award					0.312
53.Leading team					0.708
54.Supervision of the Party Branch, Union and Teacher congress					0.653
44.Teaching standard and requirement					0.626
46.Monitor test scores					-0.61
45.Teaching tasks and standards					0.597
14.Encourage competition					0.304
2.Participative vision-designing					0.543
3.Prioritise tasks					0.52
1.Shared vision					0.721
5.SWOT analysis					0.707
47.Student learning goals					0.659
					0.509
					0.772
					0.65
					0.63
					0.442
					0.36
					0.427

Appendix 5.1 The Ten-factor solution for the Involvement Scale in EFA

Items	Factors									
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Involving teachers when making policies concerning school instruction and curriculum.	0.742									
Consulting with School Union on major decisions.	0.737									
Consulting with parents on school instruction and curriculum.	0.718									
Considering individual needs of different staff to motivate them to work hard.	0.707	0.355								
Leading school through collective management and decision-making.	0.705	0.364								
Improving staff welfare and working conditions.	0.684	0.359								
Making decisions in a participative way.	0.67									
Consulting with Teacher Congress on major decisions.	0.654	0.359								
Disciplining subordinates with a human-orientation.	0.654	0.423								
Sharing leadership power through delegating subordinates.	0.636									
Providing sufficient resources for school instruction and curriculum development.	0.585	0.39	0.386							
Consulting with the Party Branch on major decisions.	0.582	0.391								
Promoting ordinary staff's and teachers' awareness and capability of participating in school leadership and administration in profession development.	0.562	0.452								
Leading innovations in school instruction and curriculum.	0.545	0.373								
Promoting middle and above management's awareness and capability of participating in school leadership and administration in profession development.	0.506	0.368								
Supporting teachers' bottom-up innovations.	0.478				0.37					
Reinforcing the hierarchical administrative structure.	0.475					0.386				
Establishing a hierarchical professional development system.	0.467								0.43	
<i>Awarding the opportunity of professional development to the staff with outstanding performance</i>	0.427	0.41								
Maintaining a harmonious interpersonal relationship and climate within school.		0.698								
Playing an exemplary role in all respects.		0.67								
Considering teachers' and students' needs while implementing instructional and curriculum reforms.	0.362	0.667								
Encouraging other school members to participate in decision-making.	0.368	0.662								
Supporting all staff to participate in professional development activities.		0.642								
Exhibiting high morals and dedication to school education.		0.638								
Creating a supportive environment.	0.393	0.632								
Considering different needs of the staff in terms of professional development.	0.453	0.605								

Sharing personal professional experience with colleagues.	0.602		
Advocating a moral-based school culture..	0.599	0.363	
Building effective channels to facilitate communication between school members.	0.43	0.57	
Actively taking part in principal professional development activities.	0.566	0.382	
Encouraging group work within school	0.564	0.476	
Centring on teaching and learning to protect teachers' teaching from distraction.	0.563		
<i>Encouraging teachers to develop school-based professional programs.</i>	0.374	0.382	0.352
Publicising school major developments and achievements.		0.751	
Establishing and maintaining school image and reputation.		0.699	
Paying attention to current and emerging educational policies to assess the external environment.	0.415	0.626	
Keeping a good work relationship with local educational authorities and the concerned officials.	0.357	0.560	
Coordinating various public relationships to promote school development.	0.443	0.536	
Encouraging healthy competition	0.373	0.451	0.517
Prioritising the implementation of superiors' educational policies and tasks.		0.502	0.447
<i>Rewarding staff on the basis of their performance</i>	0.408	0.394	0.411
Restricting the discussion within the options set by the principal and rejecting other's ideas or critiques in decision-making.		0.874	
Making all decisions authoritatively in school administration.		0.866	
Excluding critical staff from decision-making and discussion.		0.844	
Making and implementing school instruction and curriculum policies from top to down, without consulting with teachers.		0.771	
Determining whether a staff can participate in professional development and the type of training programs from top to down, without listen to staff's voices.		0.755	
Determining school goals and plans dictatorially.		0.581	
Setting a shared goal for school development.		0.654	
Involving other school members in designing the goal.		0.639	
Involving other school members in school planning.		0.636	
Explicitly setting goals for student academic achievement		0.58	0.358
Assessing strengths and weaknesses of the school.	0.423	0.555	
Advocating a moral-based goal of school development.		0.516	
Setting priorities for different school plans and objectives.	0.386	0.352	0.497
Assessing teaching effects and learning progress against student test scores.			0.685
Setting specific standards and expectations for teaching and learning.	0.391		0.67
Stressing the tasks and standards of school teaching and learning.			0.617

Focusing on the change of students' exam performance.				
Getting extra resources through the connections of the students' parents.		0.495	0.538	
Getting extra resources from social organisations and individuals.	0.353			0.794
Applying for government funds to support school development and construction.		0.432		0.48
Trusting teachers' capability of teaching and delegating power to teachers regarding class teaching.			0.415	0.627
Delegating front-line teachers to design school-based curriculum.	0.376			0.42
<i>Keeping good personal relationship with officials in charge of local educational administration.</i>				0.635
<i>Forming a hierarchical and obedient climate within school.</i>		0.461		0.612

Appendix 7.1 Core Leadership Practices Identified in the Two Types of Data Analysis

Quantitative findings		Qualitative findings	
Developing external relationships and resources	Establishing and maintaining school image and reputation.	Seeking resources	
	Publicising school major developments and achievements.	Seising external opportunities	
	Keeping a good work relationship with local educational authorities and the concerned officials.	Attaining policy support from upper authorities	
	Prioritising the implementation of superiors' educational policies and tasks.		
	Paying attention to current and emerging educational policies to assess the external environment.		
	Coordinating various public relationships to promote school development.		
Setting direction	Applying for government funds to support school development and construction.		
	Setting a shared goal for school development.	Setting shared vision or long-term goals	
	Explicitly setting goals of student academic achievement.	Planning for school development	
	Advocating a moral-based goal of school development.	Orienting school according to the reality	
	Assessing strengths and weaknesses of the school.		
	Involving other school members in school planning.		
	Involving other school members in designing the goal.		
	Setting priorities for different school plans and objectives.		
	Leading innovations in school instruction and curriculum.	Focusing on the improvement of teaching and learning	
	Providing sufficient resources for school instruction and curriculum development.	Prioritising student exam performance	
Managing instruction and curriculum	Involving teachers in policy-making in terms of school instruction and curriculum.	Developing school-based curriculum	
	Consulting with parents on school instruction and curriculum.		
	Stressing the tasks and standards of school teaching and learning.		
	Focusing on the change of student exam performance.		

Setting specific standards and expectations for teaching and learning.	
Shaping school climate and core ideas	<p>Considering teachers' and students' needs while implementing instruction & curriculum reforms.</p> <p>Establishing personal thoughts as school core ideas</p> <p>Creating a supportive environment</p> <p>Achieving a unified understanding</p> <p>Encouraging other school members to participate in decision-making.</p> <p>Improving organisational culture or climate</p> <p>Building effective channels to facilitate communication between school members.</p> <p>Centring teaching and learning in school to protect teachers' teaching from distraction.</p> <p>Exhibiting high morals and dedication to school education.</p> <p>Actively taking part in principal professional development activities.</p> <p>Playing an exemplary role in all respects.</p> <p>Maintaining a harmonious interpersonal relationship and climate within school.</p> <p>Advocating a moral-based school culture.</p> <p>Sharing personal professional experience with colleagues.</p> <p>Encouraging group work within school.</p> <p>Considering different staff's needs of professional development.</p> <p>Supporting all staff to participate in professional development activities.</p>
Developing people	<p>Delegating front-line teachers to design school-based curriculum.</p> <p>Supporting teachers' bottom-up innovations.</p> <p>Promoting middle and above management's awareness and capability of participating in school leadership and administration in profession development.</p> <p>Promoting ordinary staff and teachers' awareness and capability of participating in school leadership and administration in profession development.</p> <p>Establishing a hierarchical professional development system.</p> <p>Developing students</p> <p>Developing teachers</p> <p>Developing cadres</p> <p>Developing themselves</p>
Managing administrative affairs	<p>Consulting with the Party Branch on major decisions.</p> <p>Making major decisions democratically</p> <p>Disciplining subordinates with a human-orientation.</p> <p>Centring internal administration on teaching & learning</p> <p>Consulting with Teacher Congress on major decisions.</p> <p>Managing staff with a human orientation</p> <p>Sharing leadership power through delegating subordinates.</p> <p>Coordinating internal relationships</p> <p>Consulting with School Union on major decisions.</p> <p>Leading school through collective management and decision-making.</p> <p>Making decisions in a participative way.</p> <p>Improving staff welfare and working conditions.</p> <p>Considering individual needs of different staff to motivate them to work hard.</p>

Appendix 7.2 Contextual Factors Emerging from the Two Types of Data Analysis

Sources	Quantitative Findings	Qualitative Findings
Personal Conditions	Principal's capability of leadership Principal's perception of leadership Principal's understanding of his/her responsibilities Principal's perception of education Principal's understanding of the professionalism of principalship Principal's personality traits	Non-power factor (i.e., perception of education, professional pursuits, personal values & moral, capability of leadership, professional knowledge) Positional responsibilities Principalship experience
Internal school conditions	Existing school climate and culture Resources available for school development Other school leaders' perceptions of leadership Supervision and interventions of school Party Branch Supervision and interventions of Teacher Congress Supervision and interventions of school Union Other school members' views on school administration & relevant factors (i.e., gender, age, years of teaching, position, training times) Basic conditions (i.e., type of education, school size and location)	Teacher conditions (i.e., age, experience, capability, ideas, pursuits & spirit) Student characteristics (e.g., student intake) Cadre conditions (e.g., cooperation) Organisational climate School performance and rank Financial situation
External Context	Academic competition and pressure in basic education Policies and interventions of local educational authorities Existing principal responsibility system Educational guidelines and reform policies of the central government Existing principal selection and promotion system School and principal evaluation systems Ongoing principal career ladder system Servant leadership style advocated by the Party and the government Hierarchical administration system of the government Previous cadre system in school personnel administration Leader image in Chinese traditional culture Western ideas of leadership with an orientation toward participation and power sharing Leadership ideas and conceptions in business area	The district educational authority Educational administration system (i.e., financial allocation system, school & principal evaluation system, administrative examination & approval system, principal responsibility system) Educational policies and reforms Social and parents' expectations Local environment Prevalent educational conceptions

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