



Chapter 1

China's School Leadership: An Overview

The differences between school leadership in China and in other countries, especially in Western countries, can be largely attributed to their different sources of school leadership knowledge and different external and internal institutional environment for school leadership. To understand how China's school leadership unfolds in day-to-day practice and what knowledge underpins its leadership practice, it is essential to figure out the sources of China's school leadership knowledge and to examine the educational administration system and the school leadership system of China. Through an overview of China's school leadership, this chapter intends to provide readers with necessary background knowledge before they have access to and make sense of key terms of China's school leadership which will be explored and interpreted in following chapters.

1.1 The sources of school leadership knowledge

School leadership in China, in terms of practice, can be traced back to thousands years ago though the leadership practices of modern schools just started from the late 19th century. Examining the thousands years course of evolution, the contemporary knowledge base underpinned school leadership practice of China is largely shaped by four sources of knowledge which can be identified as the cultural heritage from ancient times, leadership knowledge from Western countries, practical knowledge of school management from Soviet Union, and the leadership tenets and principles of the Communist Party of China (CPC) (Zhang, 1990, p.16; CIES, 1991, p.1; Sun, 1993, p.22; Zhao, 1993, pp.611-612; Xiao, 1994, p.5; Mei, 1995, pp. 231-240; Wu & Feng, 1998, p. 164; Zhang, 2004; Xi, 2014, pp.373-379).

1.1.1 Cultural heritage from ancient times

The history of education in China began with the birth of the Bronze Civilization formed thousands years ago. For the next centuries, ancient Chinese ideologists and educationists contributed to the abundant literature about school education, within which some classic volumes known as Chinese cultural heritage were included. One of the volumes was *Xue Ji*, (formerly known as *Hsio Ki* [Record on the subject of education]) written by an unknown Chinese author in the 3rd century B.C. (Fu, 1983, p.1) and translated into English version by Scottish sinologist James Legge and published by Oxford University Press in 1885 (Legge,1885). The *Xue Ji* has

been acknowledged by Chinese academic community of education as the first Chinese book discoursing upon issues of educational administration and school management because the school system, admission policy, rules and schedule of a school day, the standards for student assessment, and the inspection system were introduced and discussed in this classic volume (Li et al., 1984; Zhang, 1990; Sun, 1993; Xiao, 1994; Mei, 1995; Wu et al., 2000). Moreover, a set of principles for teaching and learning proposed in *Xue Ji* has been inherited by generation after generation of Chinese educators and adopted usually by school leaders as reference for their practice of instructional leadership and teacher supervision in last thousands years. For example, the author of *Xue Ji* argued (Legge, 1885, p1):

However fine the viands be, if one do not eat, he does not know their taste; however perfect the course may be, if one do not learn it, he does not know its goodness. Therefore when he learns, one knows his own deficiencies; when he teaches, he knows the difficulties of learning. After he knows his deficiencies, one is able to turn round and examine himself; after he knows the difficulties, he is able to stimulate himself to effort. Hence it is said, **Teaching and learning help each other**; as it is said in the *Charge to Yueh*, 'Teaching is the half of learning.

This argument was summed up by later generations of educationists as a principle in education so-called JIAO-XUE-XIANG-ZHANG, which implies a couple of close but slightly different meanings in different contexts, such as “teaching and learning help each other”(when valuing the questioning from students to teachers during classroom instruction), “there is a reciprocal relationship between teaching and learning”(when emphasize on building a linkage between teachers’ lesson preparation and professional learning), and “teaching others benefits yourself”(when encouraging peer mentoring). Another well-known principle for teaching and learning is YIN-CAI-SHI-JIAO [teaching individual students in accordance with their different aptitudes and dispositions so as to help every student achieving their potential].The idea of YIN-CAI-SHI-JIAO was originally drawn from *The Analects*. In Book *X I* of *The Analects*, the conversation between Confucius and his students, Tzu-lu, Jan Ch’iu and Kung-hsi Hua was recorded (Waley, 1998, p. 137):

Tzu-lu asked, “When one hears a maxim, should one at once seek occasion to put it into practice?” The Master said, “Your father and elder brother are alive. How can

you whenever you hear a maxim at once put it into practice?" Jan Ch'iu asked, "When one hears a maxim, should one at once seek occasion to put it into practice?" The Master said, "When one hears it, one should at once put it into practice."

Kung-hsi Hua said, When Yu asked "When one hears a maxim, should one at once seek occasion to put it into practice?" you said, "You have a father and elder brother alive." But when Ch'iu asked, "When one hears a maxim, should one at once seek occasion to put it into practice?" you said, "When you hear it, put it into practice." I am perplexed, and would venture to ask how this was. The Master said, "Ch'iu is backward; so I urged him on, Yu is fanatical about Goodness; so I held him back."

In this conversation, Confucius implied that a teacher should modify his/her way of teaching to suit the characteristics of individual students. About one thousand and five hundred years later, Zhu Xi who was renowned as one of Neo-Confucian rationalists in Song Dynasty summed it up as one of principles for teaching, called YIN-CAI-SHI-JIAO when he annotated *The Analects* and commented on the teaching style of Confucius (Dong et al., 1985). In addition to discussion about skills of management and principles for teaching, the discussion or saying concerning the importance and influence of leaders' personal characters can be also found in Chinese classic volumes. A well-known saying from *The Analects*, for example, is that "[If] the ruler [leader] himself is upright, all will go well even though he does not give orders. But if he himself is not upright, even though he gives orders, they will not be obeyed." (Waley, 1998, p. 163) This saying implies that personal virtue of leaders could be more important than their leadership skills. It is noteworthy that these ancient Chinese claims or arguments about school management, teaching and learning, and leaders' virtue drawn from ancient Chinese classic volumes are still widely accepted by Chinese educators today. For example, the author of this book conducted two questionnaire surveys respectively in 2017 to principals and teachers in Chinese primary and secondary schools. The result of the first survey titled *Current Status of School Leadership and Management: A Survey of Principals* (hereinafter called *CSSLM2017-principals*) showed that 78.6 percent of the respondents STRONGLY AGREED with the questionnaire item of "The ancient teaching principles that have been handed down to the present (e.g. JIAO-XUE-XIANG-ZHANG[valuing the questioning from students to teachers during classroom

teaching], YIN-CAI-SHI-JIAO[teaching individual students in accordance with their different aptitudes and dispositions so as to help every individual achieving their potential],etc.) are still the teaching principles that schools require for teachers to carry out in their classroom instruction today.” while 19.4 percent of respondents AGREED with the same item. In the second survey titled *Current Status of Teachers' Work Condition and Environment: A survey of Teachers* (hereinafter called *CSTWCE2017-teachers*), 78.7 percent of the respondents STRONGLY AGREED with the item of “YIN-CAI-SHI-JIAO is a teaching principle I have always believed in, and I also try to implement it in the teaching practice.” while 18.0 percent of respondents AGREED with the same item (see Appendix A).

1.1.2 Leadership knowledge from Western countries

By historical literature reviewing, three major vehicles which conveyed modern leadership knowledge from Western countries to China can be identified. The first is Chinese government policy initiatives enacted in late 19th and early 20th century to promote educational change in China. The second is the Protestant and Catholics schools burgeoned in China at the turn of the 20th century. The third is the waves of Chinese to seek study in Western countries in early 20th century and from 1978 onwards (Chen, 1979, pp.175-194; Lü, 1987; Wang, 2000; Li, 2003; Li, 2004; Jiang, 2007; Liu, 2009; Wu & Liu, 2013).

1.1.2 .1 Chinese government policy initiatives of educational transformation

For a very long time, Chinese education system had been steady and exclusive from Western world. However, such a situation was broken by the first Opium War in 1840. Over the ensuing decades, the Western influence on Chinese education was gradually growing and the attitude of Chinese government towards Western education also changed significantly (Chen, 1979, pp.8-11; Lü, 1987). Almost all of government initiatives to transform feudal imperial education system into modern education system of China in the late 19th century and in the early 20th century were more or less with Western influence. In 1898, the Imperial University of Peaking (the predecessor of Peaking University) known as the first state-funded modern university and the cradle of modern higher education of China was founded with the guiding principle called ZHONG-XUE-WEI-TI, XI-XUE-WEI-YONG [upholding traditional Chinese values aided with modern Western management and technology] (Chen,1979, p.104). Unprecedentedly, the Imperial University of Peaking offered the programs of Law, Business, Sciences, Economics, Agriculture, and

Engineering & Technology which borrowed from Western universities though the university still maintained traditional Chinese classic literature learning as compulsory courses (Dong et al., 1985, p.191). In 1902, the Ren-yin School System, the first modern school system of China was issued by Qing government. From 1903 to 1922, another three school systems, Gui-mao School System, Ren-zi & Gui-chou School System, and Ren-xu School System were successively issued and substantively carried out in 1903, 1912, and 1922 by Chinese government. These four school systems largely copied from the school systems of western countries (ECCLEP, 1980, p. 25). With these educational initiatives, the Western knowledge of education governance and school management were consequentially introduced to China.

1.1.2.2 Christian-founded education institutions burgeoned in China

Although the history of Christianity in China can be traced back to Tang dynasty in 7th century, the Christian missionary activity had been restricted in next dynasties until 16th century when the establishment of the direct European maritime contact with China in the early 1500s. The first considerable wave of missionaries came to China was in 1840s after the Treaty of Nanking, Treaty of Wanghia, and Treaty of Whampoa were signed between Qing empire and Western powers. Under these treaties, the barriers of missionary activity in China were drastically removed since the extraterritoriality exempted Westerners from Chinese law and Chinese government had responsibility to protect Christian churches in China free from infringement. Besides the establishment of the clinics and hospitals, Christianity rapidly expanded to the field of education in China in early 20th century when Chinese government made an endeavor to transform feudal imperial education system into modern education system (Lü, 1987; Sun & Qu, 2015). The Christian-founded schools were burgeoning in China at the turn of the 20th century. A statistics of student number in Protestants-founded schools, for example, showed that the number of students in Protestants-founded schools increased from 5,975 to 245,049 between 1876 and 1920 (see Figure 1.1). According to the statistics in 1920s, the number of Protestants-owned primary and secondary schools in China was 6,890 and the number of Roman Catholics-owned primary and secondary schools in China was 6,133 (Dong et al., 1985, p.377). With the burgeoning of Christian-founded schools, the practical knowledge of Western school leadership and management inevitably introduced to the leadership work place in China though the school leadership knowledge in Western countries remained itself in “the prescription era” at that time. As a part of

government measures to promote indigenization of school leadership in China, *The Authenticating Procedure for Foreigner-owned Schools* enacted in 1925 by the government of Republic of China stipulated

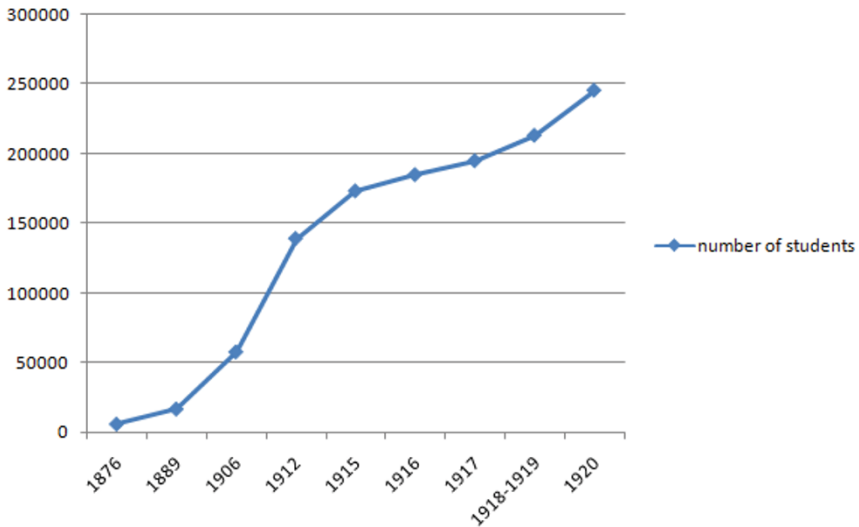


Figure 1.1 The increasing number of students in Protestants-founded schools in China (1876-1920)

Source: Chen (1979, p. 283)

that “the school principal should be a Chinese citizens, or a school must add a Chinese vice principal if the school has already had a foreign principal...The quota of membership of school board for Chinese members should be more than half if a school has its school board.” (Yang, 2010). This policy resulted in the emergence of hundreds of Western trained Chinese principals or vice principals who worked in Christian-owned schools and applied Western leadership knowledge in their day-to-day practice. In another development, a batch of Christian-owned, Protestants-owned in particular, institutions of higher education successively established during the first quarter of 20th century. These colleges and universities had significant and profound influence on the development of modern Chinese higher education during the first four decades of 20th century even though they were decomposed and integrated into various schools/colleges or departments of other Chinese universities in 1950s (see Table 1.1). Not exaggeratively, quite a

few today’s prominent universities in China actually stemmed from the Christian-founded institutions of higher education at the time. As one of the by-products of decomposing and integrating process, the Western knowledge regarding school leadership research was to some extent transferred into Chinese universities (Wu & Liu, 2013; Sun & Qu, 2015; Wu, 2017).

Table 1.1 List of Christian-founded Universities/Colleges in China

Name and Founding Year	Founder	Integrated by (in 1950s)
<i>Lingnan University</i> , 1904	Presbyterian Church in the USA	Sun Yat-sen University and South China University of Technology
<i>Hangchow University</i> , 1845	Presbyterian Church in the USA & American Presbyterians (South)	Zhejiang University, Fudan University, etc.
<i>St. John's University</i> , 1879	Episcopal Church in the USA	East China Normal University, Fudan University, Tongji University, Shanghai Jiao Tong University, etc.
<i>University of Nanking</i> , 1888	American Methodist Church in the USA	Nanjing University
<i>Soochow University</i> , 1901	Methodist Church in the USA	Jiangsu University (renamed Soochow University in 1982) and East China University of Political Science and Law
<i>Aurora University</i> , 1903	Society of Jesus in France	Fudan University, Shanghai Jiao Tong University, Tongji University, East China Normal University, etc.
<i>Cheeloo University</i> , 1904	Presbyterian Church in the USA & Baptists in the UK	Shandong University, Nanjing University, etc.
<i>West China Union University</i> , 1905	Five missionary organizations from the USA, the UK, and Canada	Sichuan University, Sichuan Agricultural University, etc.

Shanghai University, Baptists	East China Normal University and
1906	Fudan University
<i>Union Medical College</i> , 1906 London Missionary Society and other five missionary organizations from the USA and the UK	Peking Union Medical College, Tsinghua
<i>Hwa Nan College</i> , The Methodist Episcopal Church 1908	Fuzhou University
<i>Hsiang-ya Medical College</i> , 1914 Yale Foreign Missionary Society	Central South University
<i>Fukien Christian University</i> , 1915 The Methodist Episcopal Church, Congregational Church, Reformed Church, and Anglican Church	Fuzhou University
<i>Ginling College</i> , 1915 Presbyterian Church in the USA, The Methodist Episcopal Church, The Methodist Episcopal Church(South), American Baptist Churches, and Disciples of Christ	Nanjing University
<i>Yenching University</i> , 1919 Presbyterian Church in the USA, The Methodist Episcopal Church, Congregational Church, and London Missionary Society	Peking University, Tsinghua University, and China University of Political Science and Law
<i>Huachung University</i> , 1924 Episcopal Church in the London Missionary Society, Yale Foreign Missionary Society, and Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Society	Central China Normal University

Fu Jen CatholicBenedictine society of America
University, 1925

Beijing Normal University, Peaking
 University, Renmin University of
 China, Central University of Finance
 and Economics, and China University
 of Political Science and Law

1.1.2 .3. The waves of Chinese to seek study in Western countries

The government-funded programs for Chinese to study in Western countries began with the Self-Strengthening Movement in Qing dynasty. Qing Empire of China successively sent 120 Chinese children to study in American schools from 1872 to 1875 and dozens of young men to the United Kingdom, France, Germany and other European countries to learned military technology from the Western countries. However, these Chinese students at the time did not study in Western institutions of higher education. In 1901, the Boxer Protocol was signed between the Qing Empire and eight Western powers after China was defeated by eight-power alliance in 1900. According to the Protocol, 450 million taels of fine silver (about US\$ 333 million at the exchange rate of the time) were to be paid as indemnity (known as Boxer Indemnity) over a course of 39 years to the eight powers involved. In 1908, the US Congress approved the President Theodore Roosevelt's proposal to remit a part of its share of the Boxer Indemnity (nearly US\$12 million) to create the Boxer Indemnity Scholarship Program for Chinese students to study in American universities and to establish Tsinghua University in China. Later, the UK and France also remitted a part of Boxer Indemnity and set up similar programs to support talented Chinese students to study in their universities while rest of powers were respectively remitting parts of the Indemnity to support banking, industry as well as railway construction in China. One of the outcomes of the "remit movement" yielded the first wave of Chinese students to study in Western, particularly American universities. By 1949, it was estimated that 15,000-20,000 Chinese had studied in American universities and about 1,000 Chinese had studied in British universities (Wang, 2000; Li, 2004). Most of Chinese students who returned from Western universities played key roles in founding departments of Mathematics, Science, and Social Sciences (including Education) in Chinese universities. Eighty percent presidents of Chinese universities at the time were graduated from American universities (Li, 2003; Jiang & Xu, 2007). Meanwhile, not a few returned students

founded schools at primary and secondary level and served as principals at the schools. Hence, both the practical and theoretical knowledge of school leadership with Western philosophy and methodology was spontaneously introduced to China by these returned students. On the other hand, more than ten books on school management and educational administration authored by Western scholars, such as *The Public School Administration* by E.P. Cubberley, was translated into Chinese and used as textbooks for university students studying in the field of education and for the trainees at teacher training institutions during the first half of the 20th century. Most of the translators were also the returned students (Hou, 2001; Zhang, 2015). The second wave of Chinese students to pursue overseas education emerged in the early 1980s after Chinese government decided in 1978 to take the reform and opening-up policy. Statistics from 1978 to 2007 showed that the number of Chinese who had experience of overseas study was 1210,000 and 26 percent of them (320,000) had returned China (Yuan et al., 2008). A part of returned students and young scholars who had studied in the field of educational administration at the North American, Australian and European universities later became key faculty members of educational administration in Chinese universities. They acted, more or less, as disseminators of Western knowledge on school leadership.

1.1.3 The practical knowledge of school management from Soviet Union

The knowledge of school management spread from Soviet Union to China by direct and indirect ways during the early 1950 to the year of 1960 (In 1960, Soviet government withdrew all experts from China). Soon after the People's Republic of China (P.R.C) was founded in 1949, the wave of Chinese seeking to study in Western countries went down sharply for ideological reason. Instead, the primary destination of overseas study for Chinese students was changed to the Soviet Union because the Soviet Union at the time was seen as a prime example of the most successful and advanced socialist country in the world. From early 1950s to the year of 1960, 8,310 government-funded Chinese students were sent to Soviet universities as degree-seeking or non-degree-seeking students. They not only studied in various fields at Soviet universities but learned a lot of practical knowledge of management by the organized visits of Soviet primary and secondary schools, factories, and local communities during weekends and university vacations (Liu, 2009; Bai & Liu, 2016). In the same period, some 7,000 Chinese engineers and technicians were sent to the Soviet Union to acquire experience of modern industry and management in Soviet factories (Meisner, 1977; Zheng, 2009). The late Chinese paramount leader Mao Zedong

(formerly spelt as Mao Tse-Tung) made a speech to Chinese students and engineering technical personnel in Moscow during his state visit to Soviet Union in 1957. In Mao Zedong's speech, there was a very famous saying which is repeatedly quoted later in Chinese political literature (Mao,1966, p. 288):

The world is yours, as well as ours, but in the last analysis, it is yours. You young people, full of vigor and vitality, are in the bloom of life, like the sun at eight or nine in the morning. Our hope is placed to you. ...The world belongs to you. China's future belongs to you.

It is clear that Chinese government had high expectations for the students and engineering technical personnel trained by Soviet Union. In fact, not a few students and young engineers later took leadership positions in all professions and trades of China. The most prominent example is former Chinese President Jiang Zeming and former Chinese Premier Li Peng who were trained in Soviet Union in 1950s. The knowledge brought back by Soviet-trained personnel, as it should be, influenced on Chinese leadership pattern in various fields. If this was only seen as indirect influence on China's school leadership, then the movement of learning from the education of Soviet Union (hereafter called "learning-Soviet-movement") was definitely the direct impact on the school management of China. The "learning-Soviet-movement" began from December 1949 when the 1st National Congress of Education was held in Beijing and called on Chinese education to borrow the advanced educational experience from Soviet Union. Following the National Congress of Education, the "learning-Soviet-movement" was pushed by relevant policies and government measures in three aspects of education restructuring, educational theory introduction, and approach to school management. In the early 1950s, the government set out the process of education restructuring by taking the education of the Soviet Union as an example. According to the *Decision by the State Council of the Central People's Government regarding School System Reform* issued by the State Council in 1951, the existing school system of 6-3-3(6 years primary,3 years lower secondary, and 3 years upper secondary) was changed to Soviet like 5-3-3 (5 years primary,3 years lower secondary, and 3 years upper secondary). The State Council also decided to establish a centralized system of educational administration and carry out the unified programs, unified syllabus, and unified textbooks in China's school education, which was obviously copied from the Soviet Union (State Council, 1951). Secondly, seven Soviet senior experts of education

were invited as educational consultants to the Ministry of Education, P.R.C. The consultants provided a wide range of consulting service by introducing Soviet experience and providing professional advice and suggestions to educational issues discussed at ministerial meetings, giving lectures and handling training programs for local education system leaders, school principals and teachers, and assisting faculty members of education at universities to develop textbooks through their inspection tours or regular visits of various provinces of China. Another 67 Soviet experts were invited in the same period to China to give lectures or hold training programs in Chinese universities (Zhou & Xu, 2002; Gu, 2004). On the other hand, 107 monographs and textbooks of education authored by Soviet educationists were translated into Chinese and published in China from 1950 to 1956. Among these 107 books, there were 12 monographs or textbooks titled School Management (Hou & Shi, 2013). With the advisory and training activities, the Soviet 3C and 2P pedagogy (teacher-centered, textbook-centered, and classroom teaching-centered with laying stress on lesson plan and planned lesson) was widely disseminated and applied in Chinese school context (Zhou & Xu, 2002; Huang, 2010). Thirdly, the widely disseminating Soviet theory of education and the frequent field observation and advisory comments of Soviet experts brought intense impact on Chinese school management at the time. As one of the consequences of the “learning-Soviet-movement”, both the pattern of school management and the conceptual framework and knowledge system underpinned management practice were shaped by Soviet educational experts. The influence of Soviet knowledge still works today though the close relationship between China and the Soviet Union was finished and the “learning-Soviet-movement” was terminated in 1960 when the Soviet Union decided to withdraw all experts from China. For example, the emphasis of principal’s regular participation in classroom observation or collective teaching study is too often recognized today as a part of indigenous tradition of Chinese instructional leadership at schools, but it is actually the legacy of the “learning-Soviet-movement” though it was a bit revised later in Chinese leadership practice. Finally, it is noteworthy that one of the remarkable features of Soviet knowledge of school management was primarily concerned with specific knowledge and skills encompassing process and aspects of school operation aside from arguing and elaborating the communist philosophy on education. For example, the way of school enrollment, class grouping and class size setting, teacher team building, process supervision on classroom teaching, library and archives management, utilization and maintaining of school

equipment and facilities, and the format of school report with statistics were described and discussed in details in the chapter “School Management and Leadership” of I.A. Kairov (И.А.Каирова)'s *Pedagogy* (Kairov, 1957), the best known and most widely circulated Soviet textbook of education in China in 1950s⁵. However, some elements of contemporary school leadership, such as setting direction, defining school vision, developing strategic plan, building learning community, enriching school-based curriculum, building good relationships with local community and wider society etc., were neglected in Kairov's *School Management and Leadership*. By and large, the knowledge introduced into China from the Soviet Union at the time was limited to practical knowledge of school routine management.

1.1.4 Leadership Tenets and Principles of CPC

The Communist Party of China (CPC) has been the only ruling party since the founding of People's Republic of China (PRC) in 1949. In the past seventy years, the leadership tenets and principles of CPC has been embedded in government policies about school education, the programs for school leadership appraisal, as well as training programs for school principals. Therefore, it is no surprising that the leadership tenets and principles of CPC can be viewed as one of knowledge sources of China's school leadership.

1.1.4.1 The Leadership Tenets

The leadership tenets of CPC were created and built chiefly by Mao Zedong who was one of the thirteen founders of CPC, the chief founder of PRC and had been the Party's supreme leader from 1935 to 1976. Chinese President Xi Jinping, also General Secretary of Central Committee of CPC (CCCPC), referred in 2014 the concepts of SHI-SHI-QIU-SHI [seeking truth from facts], QUN-ZHONG-LU-XIAN [the mass line]⁶ and DU-LI-ZI-ZHU [independence] as three basic tenets featuring the enduring spirit of Mao Zedong Thought (Xi, 2014). In explanation of the concept of *seeking truth from facts*, Mao Zedong said, “‘Facts’ are all the things that exist objectively, ‘truth’ means their internal relations, that is, the laws governing them, and ‘to seek’

⁵ Dr. I. A. Kairov (И. А. Ка и р о в а, 1893–1978) was Minister of Education of Russian Federation (1949–1956) and Head of Soviet Academy of Educational Sciences (1946–1967). The *Pedagogy* authored by Kairov and his colleagues was translated into Chinese as the most widely used textbook of various training programs for Chinese educators and university students in 1950s. Several editions of the *Pedagogy* were successively published in China and circulated millions copies at the time.

⁶ The term “mass” in CPC’ s terminology is roughly equivalent to the term “members of public” in Western terminology.

means to study. We should proceed from actual conditions inside and outside the country, the province, county or district, and derive from them, as our guide to action, laws which are inherent in them and not imaginary, that is we should find internal relations of the events occurring around us.” (Mao, 1966, p. 231-232). As one of the tenets of the “Party’s thinking, working and leading approach” (Xi, 2014, p. 27), the concept of *seeking truth from facts* encourages Chinese leaders at different levels to attach importance to the method of investigation and study in leadership practice. Mao Zedong once argued that everybody at any levels of leadership should investigate conditions at the lower levels when he/she engages in practical work. “You can’t solve the problem? Well, get down and investigate the present facts and its past history! When you have investigated the problem thoroughly, you will know how to solve it. Conclusions invariably come after investigation, and not before.” (Mao, 1966, p. 233). This argument is popularly summed up as a saying of “no investigation, no right to speak” in Chinese leadership practice, including school leadership practice. When Mao Zedong described *the mass line*, the second leadership tenet of CPC, he asserted that “in all practical work of our Party, all correct leadership is necessarily ‘from the masses, to the masses’. This means: take the ideas of the masses (scattered and unsystematic ideas) and concentrate them (through study turn them into concentrated and systematic ideas), then go to the masses and explain these ideas until the masses embrace them as their own, hold fast to them and translate them into action, and test the correctness of these ideas in such action...so as to form correct ideas of leadership---such is the basic method of leadership.” (Mao, 1966, p.128) In his comment on the tenet of *the mass line* in 2014, Xi Jinping referred it as CPC’s lifeline and a cherished tradition that enables CPC vitality and combat capability and called on to implement it in all leadership practices (Xi, 2014). As for the concept of *independence*, it won’t be discussed in this book because it is the tenet of CPC regarding the diplomatic relations with other countries.

1.1.4.2 Leadership principles

The “principles” here refer to the key principles underpinning leadership approach of CPC. Among the principles, one of most frequently mentioned principles is *democratic centralism*. Mao Zedong expounded his view on *democratic centralism* that “within the ranks of the people, democracy is correlative with centralism and freedom with discipline. They are the two opposites of a single entity, contradictory as well as united, and we should not one-sidedly emphasize one to

the denial of the other. Within the ranks of the people, we cannot do without freedom, nor can we do without discipline; we cannot do without democracy, nor can we do without centralism. This unity of democratic and centralism, of freedom and discipline, constitutes our democratic centralism. Under this system, the people enjoy extensive democracy and freedom, but at the same time they have to keep within the bounds of socialist discipline.” (Mao, 1966, p. 254-256) In leadership practice, the *democratic centralism* is typically embodied in a leadership method so-called collective leadership. Mao Zedong pointed out, “the Party committee system is an important Party institution for ensuring collective leadership and preventing any individual from monopolizing the conduct of affairs....All important problems (of course, not the unimportant, trivial problems, or problems whose solutions have already been decided after discussion at meetings and need only be carried out) must be submitted to committee to discussion and the committee members present should express their views fully and reach definite decisions which should then be carried out by the members concerned.” (Mao, 1966, p. 104-105) In the process of decision making at the committee meetings, the *democracy* or *freedom* refers to the views expressed fully by all members while the *centralism* refers to the right and responsibility of the secretary, the chairperson of the committee, to synthesize and sum up the views of members after their discussion. However, the relation between the secretary and the committee members is one in which the minority must obey the majority at the final decision made by voting. Then the minority must support the final decision passed by the majority. If necessary, the minority can bring up the matter for reconsideration at the next meeting, but apart from that it must not act against the decision in any way. In this respect, *discipline* means that both the members and the secretary must obey such a rule (Mao, 1966). As a matter of course, this principle has profound influential on school leadership practice and carried through the process of school decision making in China.

1.2 Educational administration system

In China, the educational administration system has the most direct and powerful influence on the school leadership practice. By examining the four-tier system of administration and the autonomy and accountability maintained for school leadership, it is believed that one can have a general understanding one of the most influential aspects of school leadership’s external environment in China.

1.2.1 A four-tier system of administration

The existing system of educational administration in China is established according to the *Education Law of People's Republic of China* enacted in 1995. The Article 14 and 15 of the Law stipulates that: (National People's Congress, 1995):

Article 14 The State Council and all local People's government at different levels shall supervise and manage the educational work according to the principle of management by different levels and division of labor with individual responsibility. Secondary and lower education shall be managed by the local People's government under the leadership of the State Council. Higher education shall be managed by the State Council and the People's government of province, autonomous region or municipality directly under the central government.⁷

Article 15 The department of the State Council in charge of educational administration⁸ shall be responsible for the educational works of the whole country, make overall plans and coordinate the management of educational undertakings of the whole country. The departments in charge of educational administration under the local People's government at and above the county level⁹ shall be responsible for the educational works within the jurisdiction of the respective administrative region.

The content of these two articles have not changed since 1995 though the Law was amended in 2009 and 2015. Under the stipulation of these two articles, the system of educational administration for primary and secondary schools is a four-tier system in which the Ministry of Education (MOE) is at the top of the system and followed by provincial education departments (PEDs), prefecture-level-city education bureaus (PLCEDs) and county education bureaus (CEBs)¹⁰ (see Figure 1.2). Actually, the hardcore of Article 14 and 15 is the phrase "management

⁷ According to mainland China's administrative division stipulated by the Constitution of PRC, the 22 provinces (e.g. Guangdong Province, Jiangsu Province, etc.), the 5 autonomous regions (e.g. Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region, Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region, etc.) and the 4 municipalities directly under the central government (e.g. Beijing, Shanghai, etc.) are at the same administrative level.

⁸ It refers to the Ministry of Education.

⁹ (1) It refers to the Department of Education at provincial level and the Education Bureau at prefecture level and at county level. (2) In large or mediate-sized cities, the lowest educational administration body is District Education Bureau (DEB) which will be mentioned frequently in following chapters. The administrative level of the DEB in cities is the same as that of the County Education Bureau (CEB) in rural areas.

¹⁰ A county education bureau (CEB) in rural area and the district education bureau (DEB) in urban

by different levels and division of labor with individual responsibility”. In the domain of primary and secondary education, the MOE plays a national leadership role in establishing strategic plans, policies, and general guidance for educational reform and development nationwide, formulating the rules and regulations for setting-up of schools, determining the professional standards and requirements for teachers and principals, setting the benchmark for state curricular and teaching and learning in primary and secondary schools, implementing inspection and evaluation the quality of local school education, particularly, the quality of the nine-year compulsory education, and publishing statistics with educational information of the nation (MOE, 2015a). The PEDs have the legal authority to establish provincial policies about school education both accordance with the MOE policies and depending on provincial conditions since there is uneven economic and social development between eastern coastal provinces and western inland provinces and autonomous regions. The PLCEDs, as administrative agencies of a PED, take charge of promoting and supervising the implementation of provincial education policy in its prefecture in which several counties included. The PEDs simultaneously grant the authority to CEBs to substantially handle the day-to-day operation of local primary and lower secondary education, the educational stages within the scope of nine-year compulsory education, by setting out local administrative measures and developing specific regulations in implementing the policies of MOE and PEDs. The authority granted to CEBs’ is largely in light of the county-centered financing system for nine-year compulsory education established after the State Council promulgated the *Decision on Reform and Development of Basic Education*¹¹ in 2001. Under the county-centered financing system, CEBs should be the major agent to provide and handle the countywide compulsory education and to take responsibilities to allocate funds for school operation and to supervise and evaluate school performance while both central and provincial governments should enhance transfer payments towards county-level governments. (State Council, 2001; Du & Sun, 2016). Some school leaders tend to view the policies of MOE and PEDs as too distant and too abstract to make much difference in their schools and just to be concerned with what national and provincial decisions handed down by their CEBs. In this regard, the policy and management measures of the CEBs, in comparison with that of MOE and PEDs, have the biggest and most direct impacts on

areas are at the same administrative level.

¹¹ Basic Education in China refers to the K-12 education.

school leadership practice in 253,736 primary and secondary schools (MOE, 2017) since CEBs are the local education authorities closest to school site.

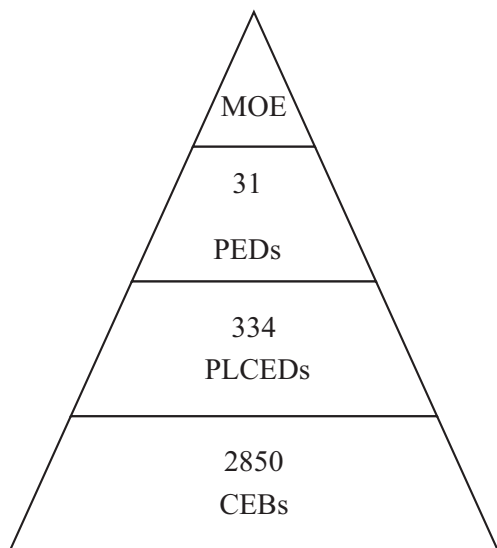


Figure 1.2 The four-tier system of educational administration in China

Source: National Bureau of Statistics (NBS). (2016).

1.2.2 Autonomy and accountability for school leadership

Although schools in China have been operating under a centralized system of educational administration thus far, decentralization has been one of the focal themes in the country's educational reform agenda in last three decades. As a result, primary and secondary schools have much more autonomy than 30 years ago. To make it easier to understand the status quo of school autonomy in China, the author chose three European economies, Germany, England and France as a comparison. The information provided in Table 1.2 comes from the publication of Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA) in European Commission, *Key data on education in Europe 2009* (EACEA, 2009) whereas the information provided in Table 1.3 and 1.4 comes from the results of the questionnaire survey of the principals at compulsory schools in 14 provinces (municipalities and autonomous regions) of China. From the results of the questionnaire, there are three kinds of answers to each item: full autonomy, limited autonomy and no autonomy, but the proportion of the three kinds of answers is different. Taking the item "selection for

teaching vacancies” as an example, 77.1% of the respondents said that they had no autonomy, which was consistent with the current policy that the recruitment of teachers was handled by the county education bureau /district education bureau (CEB/DEB). But why did 18.7% of the respondents say "limited autonomy" and even 4.2% say "full autonomy"? (see Table 1.3) By subsequent interview with some principals, it is learned that the different answers were largely due to the different management styles of some CEBs/DEBs. For example, the principals would regard that they had "limited autonomy" if a CEB/DEB respected individual schools' proposal for teacher recruitment which submitted in advance to the CEB/DEB. And a small number of prestigious schools, in some counties or districts school system, were often given priority to select the candidates they preferred. For the principals of these schools, they of course recognized that they had "full autonomy" in "selection for teaching vacancies" (Feng, 2018). This fact suggests that the "full autonomy", "limited autonomy", and "no autonomy" should not be seen as "categorical variable" respectively, but rather they should be seen as "continuous variable". With this in mind, the author believes that it is appropriate to use Mean (M) and Standard Deviation (SD) instead of Percentage (%) to present the status quo of school autonomy in China. By doing so, we got the results of the survey of Chinese principals shown in Table 1.4. It suggests that the public compulsory education schools (at the stage of ISCED 1 and 2) of China have greater discretion in making decisions regarding choice of teaching methods, setting internal assessment criteria of pupils, and operating expenditure while the schools have less discretion in making decisions on loans, leasing of school premises for out-of-hours activities, selection for teaching vacancies, dismissal of teachers, and choice of text books (see Table 1.4). In contrast with three European economies, China's schools have greater autonomy in using of private funds to employ teaching staff and non-teaching staff than the schools in Germany and France, while the autonomy of China's schools in these affairs is close to that of schools in England. On the other hand, China's schools have less autonomy in choice of text books, choice of teaching methods, criteria for grouping pupils for compulsory learning activities, and decisions about whether pupils should repeat a year than the schools in Germany, England and France (see Table 1.2 and 1.4). Perhaps, contrast between school autonomy in China and in the European economies can help us to get a rough profile of the autonomy for China's school leadership.

As the other side of the coin, school autonomy is always accompanied by the introduction of

accountability for school leadership. In China, school evaluation is conducted each school year. Despite numerous exceptions across the 31 PEDs and thousands of CEBs/DEBs within them, a three-step pattern of school evaluation prevails. As the first step of school evaluation, school leaders and their staff engage in annual self-reflection based on certain pre-established criteria formulated by local CEB/DEB and submit school self-evaluation report to the CEB/DEB. Secondly, it is the on-site evaluation of an expert team organized by the CEB/DEB, including listening to the school work briefing, classroom and other work place observation, examining school policy and managerial documents, interviewing with representatives of stakeholders, etc. Finally, the experts share, at a feedback meeting, overall evaluation and detailed comments on school performance with the school leadership team and discuss the possible ways of school improvement in the future. The evaluation report worked out by the expert team will submit to the CEB/DEB. On the other hand, the leadership appraisal is also conducted by local CEB/DEB at the end of each school year. The leadership appraisal is a way by which a school leader's annual job performance and productivity are reviewed encompassing leadership capacity, personal morality and self-discipline, and work achievements. The outcome of leadership appraisal, together with school evaluation report, will be documented as one of key references to determine a leader's promotion, job rotation, demotion, and even termination in the future.

Table 1.2 School autonomy in public sector (ISCED 1 and 2) of three European economies

Areas of school autonomy	Degree of school autonomy in three economies		
	GERMANY	ENGLAND	FRANCE
Human resources			
1. Selection for teaching vacancies	NA	FA	NA
2. Selection for substituting absent teachers	FA	FA	LA
3. Dismissal of teachers	NA	FA	NA
4. Duties and responsibilities of teachers	NA	FA	NA
5. Offering additional salary payments for overtime work	FA	FA	LA
6. Offering additional salary payments for non-contractually stipulated duties and responsibilities	NA	FA	LA
Financial resources			
7. Operating expenditure	NA	FA	LA

8. Acquisition of computer equipment	LA	FA	LA
9. Funding (seeking donations and sponsorship)	NA	FA	FA
10. Leasing of school premises for out-of-hours activities	NA	FA	FA
11. Loans	NA	LA	NA
12. Use of private funds to acquire immovables	NA	FA	NA
13. Use of private funds to acquire movables	NA	FA	FA
14. Use of private funds to employ teaching staff	NA	FA	NA
15. Use of private funds to employ non-teaching staff	NA	FA	NA
Teaching content and processes			
16. Content of the compulsory minimum curriculum	NA	NA	NA
17. Curricula content of optional subjects	LA	FA	LA
18. Choice of teaching methods	FA	FA	FA
19. Choice of text books	FA	FA	FA
20. Criteria for grouping pupils for compulsory learning activities	FA	FA	LA
21. Setting internal assessment criteria of pupils	LA	LA	LA
22. Decisions about whether pupils should repeat a year	FA	FA	FA

Source: EACEA (2009).

Note: FA refers to full autonomy; LA refers to limited autonomy; NA refers to no autonomy.

Table 1.3 China's school autonomy in teacher recruitment

Items	选项	Percentage
1. Selection for teaching vacancies	FA	4.2
	LA	18.7
	NA	77.1
TOTAL		100.0

Source: Feng, (2018).

Note: FA refers to full autonomy; LA refers to limited autonomy; NA refers to no autonomy.

Table 1.4 School autonomy in public sector (ISCED 1 and 2) of China

Items	M	SD
Human resources		
1. Selection for teaching vacancies	2.71	.531
2. Selection for substituting absent teachers	2.22	.760
3. Dismissal of teachers	2.79	.452
4. Duties and responsibilities of teachers	2.08	.595
5. Offering additional salary payments for overtime work	2.43	.628

6. Offering additional salary payments for non-contractually stipulated duties and responsibilities	2.46	.625
Financial resources		
7. Operating expenditure	1.97	.564
8. Acquisition of computer equipment	2.10	.496
9. Funding (seeking donations and sponsorship)	2.39	.653
10. Leasing of school premises for out-of-hours activities	2.77	.528
11. Loans	2.78	.535
12. Use of private funds to acquire immovables	2.49	.659
13. Use of private funds to acquire movables	2.44	.667
14. Use of private funds to employ teaching staff	2.36	.713
15. Use of private funds to employ non-teaching staff	2.26	.769
Teaching content and processes		
16. Content of the compulsory minimum curriculum	2.27	.711
17. Curricula content of optional subjects	2.22	.652
18. Choice of teaching methods	1.45	.613
19. Choice of text books	2.74	.522
20. Criteria for grouping pupils for compulsory learning activities	2.13	.708
21. Setting internal assessment criteria of pupils	1.81	.691
22. Decisions about whether pupils should repeat a year	2.60	.618

Source: Feng, (2018). The autonomy of compulsory education schools in China: An empirical analysis. *Journal of Chinese Society of Education*. 10, 55-60.

Note: FA=1; LA=2; NA=3.

1.3 School leadership system

The current school leadership system in China is different from that in Western countries because of the influence of a fundamentally different cultural and political context, although the modern school leadership system in China was established by borrowing some relevant experience from Western countries. We are afraid that some peculiarities of China's school leadership system may be strange or even mysterious to outsiders. Because, in a large sense, it is hard to make out the kernel (the most central part) of China's school leadership without understanding what the *Principal Responsibility System*¹² [XIAO-ZHANG-FU-ZE-ZHI] is and how the CPC organizations work at schools. However, it is necessary to have a glimpse of the organizational structure of China's schools before examining the Principals Responsibility System.

¹² In some literature, it is also called the Principal-in-Charge System or Principal Accountability System, but the "Principals Responsibility System" is used by the official published English version of Compulsory Education Law of the People's Republic of China (http://en.moe.gov.cn/Resources/Laws_and_Policies/201506/t20150626_191391.html).

1.3.1 School organizational structure

School organization in China generally has a hierarchical, pyramid structure in which a top down and clear chain of command is set: School leadership team at the top, the middle managers in the middle, then the lower managers, and the ordinary teacher, office staff and ancillary workers at the bottom. The school leadership team consists of the principal and vice-principals, the Party secretary (there is an associate Party secretary in some large-sized schools), and the chairperson of School Trade Union. The principal is the chief leader in a school leadership team and is, in the light of the school size, assisted by one or more vice-principals. The vice-principal's position is secondary to the principal with regard to school routine leadership and management. The vice-principals generally perform specific leadership duties whereas the principal has the ultimate responsibility for the school as a whole. The middle managers include the directors of Office for Moral Education (OME), Office for Curriculum & Instruction (OCI), Office for Scientific Research & Teacher Development (OSR&TD) and Ancillary Services (AS). The heads of Grade Units (GUs) and heads of Teaching-Study Groups (TSGs) together with the heads of Lesson Preparation Groups (LPGs) act as the lower managers. Conventionally, the principal with vice-principals take responsibilities to supervise the directors of OME, OCI, OSR&TD and AS, and the directors are respectively responsible to manage the daily operation of moral education, curriculum and instruction, general service and support affairs and coordinate the intra school research projects and teacher development. The Party organization at school chaired by the Party secretary is responsible for steering the work of School Trade Union (STU), Women's Federation (WF), the Communist Youth League (CY)/ Young Pioneers (YP). But since 2016, the Party organization has taken over the responsibility to lead the moral education of school according to a renewed definition of the role of the Party organization at school (Organization Department of CCCPC and PCMOE, 2016). The head of Grade Unit (GU) is responsible for the administration affairs about a certain grade (e.g. the grade of year one) whereas the head of subject-based Teaching-Study Group is responsible for professional affairs of a subject. For example, the Teaching-Study Group of Mathematics is responsible for ensuring the quality of teaching and learning of Mathematics by supervising the performance of the Lesson Preparation Group of Mathematics at every Grade Unit (e.g. from year 1 to year 6 in a primary school, or year 7 to year 9 in a junior high school) and organizing school wide teaching study activities for all Mathematics teachers. The subject and grade-based Lesson Preparation Group is the branch of the

Teaching-Study Group at a certain grade (e.g. the Lesson Preparation Group of Mathematics at year 1). The Lesson Preparation Group is responsible for ensuring the quality of teaching and learning of a subject by supervising performance of individual teachers at the same grade and organizing teaching study activities for teachers of the same subject at the same grade. So, it is an intermediary management between Teaching-Study Group and subject teachers. In practice, the organizational structure of schools is not entirely uniform in China, because every school has the right to arrange its own middle and lower management. However, the organizational structure most commonly adopted is shown in Figure 1.3.

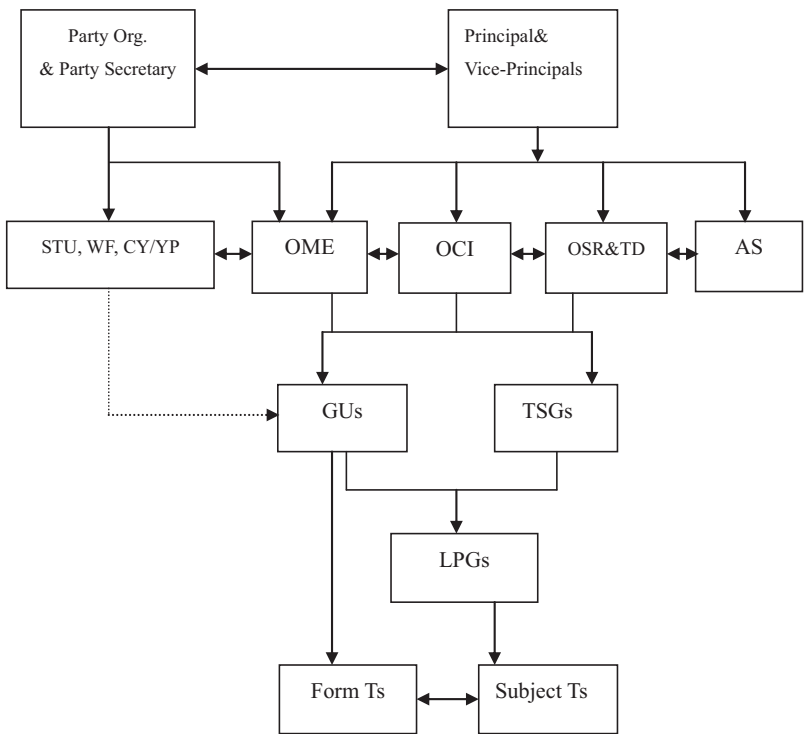


Figure 1.3 Common organizational structure of a school

Note: STU= School Trade Union.

WF= Women's Federation at school level (WF is responsible for defending women's rights and interests, promoting equality between men and women, and also concerning about the welfare of children).

CY= The Communist Youth League (the student organization for secondary school students).

YP= Young Pioneers (the student organization for primary school students).

OME= Office for Moral Education (“Moral Education” is often used synonymously with “Civic Education” in Western Countries)

OCI= Office for Curriculum & Instruction.

OSR&TD= Office for Scientific Research & Teacher Development.

AS= Ancillary Services.

GU=Grade Unit.

TSG=Teaching-Study Group.

LPG = Lesson Preparation Group.

Form T=Form Teacher.

Subject T=Subject Teacher.

1.3.2 Principal Responsibility System

The role of China’s school principal over a substantial period of time had been an agent to convey the will of the superior authority and to fully implement government instructions on school education and seldom taken the responsibility for school development planning until the nation-wide educational reform was launched after the publication of the *Decision of the CCCPC on the Reform of the Educational System* in 1985. With the progress of the reform, the government both delegated part of power to schools in managing human resources, financial resources, teaching content and processes, and in developing school charter as well as intramural rules and regulations (Liu, 2005; Cao & Hui, 2009). The CCCPC called on for the first time in 1985 that the Principal Responsibility System (PRS) would be gradually adopted as school leadership system for all primary and secondary schools across the country (CCCPC, 1985). In 1993, CCCPC and State Council reaffirmed that the PRS shall be adopted in primary and secondary schools (CCCPC and State Council, 1993). The PRS became the statutory leadership system for the compulsory education schools in 1986 when the *Compulsory Education Law of the People’s Republic of China* clearly stated, “A school shall adopt the principal responsibility system” (National People’s Congress, 1986). Although the rationality as well as the appropriateness of the PRS has been questioned and challenged over the past 30 years (e.g. Feng, 2003; Chen, 2006; Sun et al., 2013; Wang & Lin, 2017), this system is likely to continue to be implemented since there would not be better system to replace it in the foreseeable future.

The framework of the PRS is made up of four pillars: the local education authority (i.e. CEB

or DEB) is responsible for supervising the leadership of local schools; the principal is the ultimate leader for the school as a whole; Party organization chaired by the Party secretary is responsible for monitoring and assurance; teachers and supporting staff involve in the process of major policy decision through the School Staff Congress (Yan, 1998; Xiao, 2000). Namely, we will get the profile of the PRS if we can understand the roles of local education authority, principal, Party organization at school and School Staff Congress within the framework of the PRS.

1.3.2.1 The role of local education authority

Since the *Decision of the CCCPC on the Reform of the Educational System* set out the PRS in 1985, China's schools have been granted much greater degree of autonomy than 30 years ago. Moreover, the recent government policy concerning the relationship between local authority and schools has tended to further grant greater autonomy to schools (CCCPC, 2013; General Office of CCCPC and General Office of the State Council, 2017). It seems that the general trend of educational governance reform over the ensuing years would be decentralization. On the other hand, it seems that the tendency for decentralization results in the management style change of local education authority. For example, in the survey of *CSSLM2017-principals*, 42.1 percent of the respondents STRONGLY AGREED with the questionnaire item of "I have the chance to have one-on-one communication with the Education Bureau director at least once a semester" while 24.5 percent of respondents AGREED with the same item (see Appendix A). In *Interview2018-Principal*, 15 out of 17 interviewees said that it is normal in today's school leadership practice for the principal to seek timely support from the director of CEB/DEB without hesitation by the communication on telephone, through WeChat, or making an appointment to meet with the CEB/DEB director when he/she encounters the challenges beyond his/her ability to address (see Interview 2018- Principal in Appendix B). But ten to twenty years ago, it was not easy for a principal to communicate directly with the CEB/DEB director since such a communication would have to be arranged by the director's office. In a sense, it can be seen as a sign of a reduction in the bureaucracy of the local education authority. Moreover, the emotional needs of principals are also respected by the local education authority. The CEB/DEB director sometimes takes the initiative to meet with a principal to give timely leadership advice and emotional support when the principal is confronting with a hard time and suffering from a frustration in his/her leadership practice. Nevertheless, the local authority still maintains great substantive power in supervising and

managing school leaders by school leadership accountability although the role of local education authority is not as strong as it used to be.

1.3.2.2 The role of principal

Although a school leadership team usually consists of the principal, the party secretary, vice-principals, and the chairperson of School Trade Union, the principal is the most, not one of the most, important and powerful figure in a school leadership team. Perhaps, we can confirm the significance of the principal's role by examining following four aspects of the role function. Firstly, a principal, in the framework of PRS, is the legal representative of his/her school. According to the *General Provisions of the Civil Law of the People's Republic of China*, the legal representative of a legal person (e.g. school) is the principal person in charge of exercising civil rights and fulfilling civil obligations on behalf of the legal person according to law (National People's Congress, 2017). It apparently demonstrates the unique importance of the principal's role in a school. Secondly, the "principals of schools", under Article 30 of *Education Law of the People's Republic of China*, "shall be held responsible for teaching and learning activities and administration." (National People's Congress, 1995). In China, leadership for teaching and learning has long been viewed as the core work of school leadership. In such a context, it means, since the law gives the principal leadership responsibility of teaching and learning, a principal is the supreme leader handling the core business of his/her school. Thirdly, according to the policy regarding the mechanism of decision making in PRS, the school major issues (e.g. developing or revising school charter, formulating school development plans, annual and semester work plans and curriculum plans; setting out major reform initiatives or new rules and regulations; change of intra school institutions and posts; appointment or removal of middle managers or other important personnel arrangements; approval of the action plan for teacher development; discussing and deciding annual budget, final accounts and the plan of large expenditure; examining the appraisal scheme of teachers and supporting staff associated with the performance related pay; formulating school policy concerning enrollment and graduation; supervising school major infrastructure projects etc.) should be decided by the XIAO-WU-HUI-YI [School Affairs Meeting]. The participants of the School Affairs Meeting usually include the principal and vice-principals, the Party secretary and associate secretary, and the chairperson of School Trade Union. The principal, anyway, is the chairperson and the final decision maker at the School Affairs Meeting (ODSMPC,

SMCEHA and SMEC, 2010). Finally, the most recent policy about the Party organization at school advocated to "place the both role of the principal and the Party secretary on one shoulder" (Organization Department of CCCPC and PCMOE, 2016). Namely, the policy encourages a principal to hold the concurrent post of Party secretary when the principal himself/herself is the member of CPC. In this case, the principal is definitely the paramount leader in his/her school.

1.3.2.3 The role of Party organization at school

The "Party" (usually using initial with capital letter) in China's political context refers exclusively to the Communist Party of China (CPC). The Party organization at school is named "Party branch" in small-sized and medium-sized schools, or named "general Party branch" in the large-sized schools. In the framework of PRS, the primary role of the Party organization at school is basically defined as monitoring and assurance (CCCPC, 1985). That is to monitor whether the school major decisions conform to the educational policies and to assure that the school decisions will be carried fully out by mobilizing the Party members of the school to play active roles in implementing school decisions. In 2016, the role of the Party organization at schools was comprehensively elaborated as, "the Party organizations at primary and secondary schools are the basis for the Party's overall work and combat effectiveness in schools. They play a central role in politics, take full responsibility for the Party's ideological, organizational, work style, anti-corruption and honesty-building, and system construction, steer the direction of school development, participate in deciding major issues and monitor their implementation, support and ensure that principals exercise their powers according to law, lead moral education and ideological and political work in schools, cultivating and practicing socialist core values, safeguarding the legitimate rights and interests of all stakeholders, and promoting the sound development of schools" (Organization Department of CCCPC and PCMOE, 2016). As we stated earlier, some peculiarities of China's school leadership system may be mystified to outsiders. One of the peculiarities is no other than the establishment of the Party organization in every school. In fact, the way of establishing the Party organization at school is learned from CPC's successful experience in building of CPC's army in the Chinese Second Civil War (also called the Agrarian Revolutionary War) during 1927 to 1937. When Mao Zedong, the founder of CPC and CPC's army talked with British journalist James Bertram in 1937 and in 1957, he recalled that "the system of Party representatives and of political departments, adopted for the first time in China,

entirely changed the complexion of these armed forces.” (Mao, 1966, p. 134). Mao said to James Bertram that the political work of the CPC’s army “is guided by three basic principles. First, the principle of unity between officers and soldiers, which means eradicating feudal practices in the army, prohibiting beating and abuse, building up a conscious discipline, and sharing weal and woe—as a result of which the entire army is closely united. Second, the principle of unity between the army and the people, which means maintaining a discipline that forbidding the slightest violation of the people’s interests, conducting propaganda among the masses, organizing and arming them, lightening their economic burdens and suppressing the traitors who do harm to the army and the people— as a result of which the army is closely united with the people and welcomed everywhere. Third, the principle of disintegrating the enemy troops and giving lenient treatment to prisoners of war. Our victory depends not only upon our military operations but also upon the disintegration of the enemy troops.”(Mao, 1966, p. 136-137). Mao also pointed out on another occasion, “the Party branch is organized on a company basis”.¹³ This is an important reason why the Red Army has been able to carry on such arduous fighting without falling apart” (Mao, 1966, p. 136). Obviously, the idea of building a Party branch in a school is the same as that of the Party branch is organized on a company basis. This is one of typical examples that partial China’s school leadership knowledge is sourced from the leadership principles of CPC.

1.3.2.4 The role of School Staff Congress

According to the official definition, the School Staff Congress (SSC) is the basic form for school staff (teachers, office staff and ancillary workers) to participate in the democratic management and supervision of the school according to law (MOE, 2011). Establishment of the SSC is a government mandatory requirement for every school where the PRS is adopted as school leadership system. In the framework of PRS, The SSC primarily fulfils seven functions which includes (MOE, 2011):

1. Listening to the principal’s report on the formulation or revision of the draft of the school charter, and put forward suggestions of amendments.
2. Listening to the principal’s report on school development plan, major reform initiatives, and solutions to major problems, and put forward suggestions of amendments.

¹³ The “company” here refers to a unit in the army that is usually part of a battalion or regiment.

3. Listening to the reports of annual school work, financial work, and School Trade Union work, and make comments and suggestions in terms of the reports.
4. Discussing the appraisal scheme associated with performance related pay and other matters about interests of school staff.
5. Reviewing the results of handling of proposals submitted by previous session of the SSC.
6. Conducting leadership team appraisal according to relevant regulations and arrangements of local education authority.
7. Supervising the implementation of school charter, rules and regulations and decisions, and putting forward rectification opinions and suggestions.

The School Trade Union is the working body of the SSC during adjournment period of the SSC. That is why the chairperson of School Trade Union is one of school leadership team members and has the right to attend the School Affairs Meeting.

1.4 Conclusion

This chapter has presented an overview of school leadership in China by focusing on the sources of school leadership knowledge, administration system, and school leadership system of the country. The knowledge base of China's school leadership is a mixture of four knowledge sources. The cultural heritage from ancient China, as one of the sources, is widely acknowledged in Chinese educational academia (Sun & Zhu, 1993; Mei, 1995; Wu et al., 2008). The second knowledge source of China's school leadership, which is also widely accepted, is conveyed from Western countries with Chinese government initiatives of educational transformation at the turn of the 20th century, the Christian-founded education institutions burgeoned in China in the first quarter of the 20th century, and two waves of Chinese to seek study in Western universities in the first half of the 20th century and 1980s onwards (Feng, 2002; Dong, 1985 ; Mei, 1995). In contrast with the first and second source, The influence of Soviet knowledge on China's school leadership has not been given due attention though there has been a large body of literature concerning the "learning-Soviet-movement" occurred in 1950s. The overlooking of Soviet influence on China's school leadership is partially because the courses of school management and educational administration had been completely excluded, since 1950s, from China's teacher education and leadership development programs of universities as well as leadership training institutions until 1978 (Feng, 2002). However, the practical knowledge of Soviet school management was actually

embedded in the Soviet pedagogy and disseminated widely in China's schools in 1950s. In this regard, it is reasonable that the practical knowledge of school management from Soviet Union should be viewed as the third knowledge source of China's school leadership. Last but not least knowledge source is the leadership tenets and principles of CPC which has profoundly affected on the policies and requirements for leadership preparation, selection, development, and appraisal since the founding of PRC in 1949 and incarnated, in a sense, a mind set as well as a set of conventional rules in leadership practice. Although the multi-source mixed knowledge can enrich the knowledge base of China's school leadership, it, sometimes, can cause the tensions in school leadership practice as well because of the conflicting perspectives and assumptions from different sources. For example, Hallinger provided a perspective with respect to school leadership role that "By leadership role, I refer to the principal's active role in fostering development and improvement of the school as an educational institution" (Hallinger, 2003, p. 4). Regarding what is about "the school as an educational institution", there are conflicting assumptions between different sources of leadership knowledge. Some Western scholars tend to hold the assumption that a school ought to be a learning community or a community of practice (Sergiovanni, 2001; Leithwood et al., 2006; Hargreaves & Fink, 2009). They contended that "community building is must become the heart of any school improvement effort (Sergiovanni, 1994, p.xi)." And a community does not "require heroic or hierarchical leaders, but leaders who can help design a culture in which leadership is distributed in an emergent and benevolent way- so the community engages in robust dialogue, in an evidence-informed and experience-grounded manner, about the best means to promote the goals of deep and broad student learning for all" (Hargreaves & Fink, 2009). This Westernized assumption about what schools ought to be like, however, seems to be considerably discrepant from the Chinese assumption sourced from leadership knowledge of CPC. As we all know, CPC is a party emerged and grew up from the revolutionary years as a highly disciplined and tight knit organization. Not unnaturally, "highly disciplined" and "tight knit" is viewed as key factors to ensure organizations, including school organization, to be successful. Furthermore, a highly disciplined and tight knit school organization, based on the leadership perspective of CPC, would be most likely to need a heroic leader with strong leadership capacity to set school vision and to lead school members to fulfill the dreams and wishes of school stakeholders. This could be used to explain why it is so carefully for Chinese government to set

rigorous principles and procedures for school principal preparation and selection in China (cf. Chapter 2). For school leadership, the underlying assumption about the nature of school organization is so important that “purposes, data collection and analysis procedures, roles of participants, and the uses made of information all will vary depending on this assumption” (Leithwood et al., 2006, p. 17). If the leadership behavior shaped by the assumption based on CPC leadership knowledge worked well in any leadership contexts, it would be a lot simpler. Yet, the thing is not as simple as it seems to be. A school principal may find that it would lead him/her to a difficult situation if he/she holds the “highly disciplined” and “tight knit” perspective when he/she addresses the challenge emerging from the process of team building among professionals or teaching quality improvement. Thus, he/she may be going to adopt the leadership behavior based on the assumption of school as a community. However, most principals, superficially speaking, recognize a school as a professional community (see *CSSLM2017-principals* in Appendix A), but his/her actual leadership behavior may be still with the characteristics which is more fit for a “highly disciplined” and “tight knit” organization. In school leadership practice, one of possible outcomes of the tension caused by such conflicting assumptions and perspectives would decrease the coherence of leadership behavior and style.

The second focus of this chapter is the system of educational administration as well as autonomy and accountability for school leadership. China's school leadership is working within a four-tier administrative framework by which various political, economic and cultural demands and constraints are integrated into educational policies. Superficially speaking, the major task of school leadership under a centralized administrative system may be just to implement existing policies and regulations with little discretion. However, the degree of autonomy of China's schools seems not to be much lower than that of German, English, and French schools (see Table 1.2 and 1.4). Rather, China's school even has more discretion than German, French schools in using of private funds to employ teaching staff and non-teaching staff, while the autonomy of China's schools in these affairs is close to that of schools in England. This fact reminds us that it would be questionable to examine the literature or analyze the data regarding China's school leadership by a linear way or with a stereotype about China's education. And, of course, the autonomy is accompanied by accountability for school leadership in China. The outcome of school evaluation together with the outcome of leadership appraisal will be significant influence on schools' social

reputation and school leaders' personal career.

Finally, we explore the school leadership system of China by presenting the school organizational structure and examining the four-dimension-framework of the Principals Responsibility System. Although some peculiarities of China's school leadership system may be strange or even mysterious to outsiders, we believe that it is not very difficult to understand China's school leadership system after examining the dimensions of the Principals Responsibility System.

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