
THE PRACTICES OF DISTRIBUTED LEADERSHIP WITHIN AN INSTRUCTIONAL
REFORM ENVIRONMENT IN CHINA

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EdD

THE EDUCATION UNIVERSITY OF HONG KONG

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**The Practices of Distributed Leadership within an Instructional Reform Environment
in China**

by

RAO, Chun Ping

A Thesis Submitted to

The Education University of Hong Kong

in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirement for

the Degree of Doctor of Education

April 2016

STATEMENT OF ORIGINALITY

I, Rao Chun Ping, hereby declare that I am the sole author of the thesis and the material presented in this thesis is my original work except those indicated in the acknowledgement. I further declare that I have followed the Institute's policies and regulations on Academic Honesty, Copy Right and Plagiarism in writing the Thesis and no material in this thesis has been published or submitted for a degree in this or other universities.

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ABSTRACT

The Practices of Distributed Leadership within an Instructional Reform Environment in China

By Rao Chun Ping

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The objective of this case study was to identify and explain how distributed leadership in schools was shaped by the context of Chinese instructional reform policy and Chinese culture. This reform was an extension of a national curriculum reform in China starting from 2001, which borrowed educational ideas from the West. The reform caused cultural dilemmas for both school administrators and teachers, which brought difficulties for the implementation of distributed leadership in Chinese schools, although distributed leadership was promoted as one of the ideal leadership practices by the Chinese government and scholars. The research reported here was an in-depth qualitative case study of three primary schools in Nanshan District, Shenzhen. The central research question of this study was: How does context and culture influence distributed leadership in schools? To answer this question, three specific questions were posed to frame the research design: 1. What are the contextual influences on the practices of distributed leadership? 2. What are the cultural influences on the practices of

distributed leadership? 3. How is distributed leadership practiced within an instructional reform environment in China?

In-depth interviews of 34 participants of three case study schools were conducted, and the data were analysed together with documents and participant observations. The research presented a real-life picture of how context and culture at different levels influenced distributed leadership in Chinese schools in the background of an instructional reform. Contextual influences identified in this research were of three levels: a macro-level or national-level “New Curriculum Reform” launched in 2001; a meso-level or local level context of a district-level “Excellent Classroom Culture Construction” reform starting from 2009 in Nanshan District, Shenzhen; and a micro-level or school level context of different foci of the reform in each school. This research identified three levels of cultural influences on distributed leadership: societal culture shared by Chinese people; local Shenzhen culture; and school culture. The research outcomes suggested that distributed leadership was effectively implemented in Chinese culture and context, and the main reason may be that the culture of openness and reform in Shenzhen, and the harmony, collaboration, democracy and inclusiveness emphasized by the school culture of the schools, helped them to overcome cultural dilemmas and guarantee the effective implementation of distributed leadership. Leaders with typical Chinese characteristics in schools were identified and explained by terminology such as “soul leaders” (*líng hún lǐng xiù*, 灵魂领袖), “backbone teachers” (*gǔ*

gàn jiào shī, 骨干教师) and “master teachers” (*shī fu*, 師傅). Culturally-rooted leadership practices in Chinese schools such as “*shī tú jiē duì*” (master-disciple relationship, 师徒结对) and “*jiào yán*” (teaching and research, 教研) were acknowledged to be the most influential leadership routines and tools in Chinese schools. This research enriches the cultural knowledge base on distributed leadership and provides an empirical and contextualised understanding of school distributed leadership in schools in China. The research findings have significant implications for policy, practice and future research of distributed leadership in China and in other parts of the world.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Spillane's (2006) explicit explanation of distributed leadership offers specific and rich guidance for people interested in distributed leadership to delve deeper into the research. The categorization of distributed leadership by Gronn (2002) and Leithwood, Mascal, Strauss, Sacks, Memon, and Yashkina (2007) not only helps to show the complexity of distributed leadership, but also provides a perspective for people to observe and understand the possible effects of distributed leadership. The objectives of this study were to identify and interpret the context and culture that shaped the distribution of leadership in schools, and to explore how distributed leadership was practiced in Chinese schools.

This chapter provides an overview of the research and is divided into five sections. The first section discusses the research rationale of this study, including general rationale, contextual rationale and personal rationale. The second section introduces the research objectives and research questions. The third and fourth sections provide an overview of the research design, conceptual framework and methodology. The fifth section summarizes the original contributions of the research to distributed leadership. The last section explains the main structure of this thesis.

1.1 Research Rationale

1.1.1 General Rationale.

In recent years, the idea of distributed leadership has attracted great attention from educational leadership researchers internationally (Bolden, 2011; Harris, 2008; Tian, 2015). Government administrators and school leaders in Western countries in particular have acknowledged the importance of distributed leadership in education (Gronn, 2002; Hallinger & Heck, 2009; Harris, 2008, 2013a; Leithwood et al., 2007; Spillane, 2006). With support from schools and funding from the government, prominent scholars such as James P. Spillane (2006), Peter Gronn (2002), Alma Harris (2008, 2013a), Philip Hallinger (2009), and Kenneth Leithwood (2007) have made substantial contributions to the study of distributed leadership by conducting research in numerous schools in the United States, the United Kingdom, Canada, and Australia, and have found rich empirical evidence from these studies. They not only describe what distributed leadership implies for education (Harris, 2008, 2013a; Spillane, 2006) and the patterns of distributed leadership (Leithwood et al., 2007), but also begin to explore the relationship between distributed leadership and organizational change (Camburn & Han, 2009), and the relationship between distributed leadership and student learning outcomes (Hallinger & Heck, 2009), which are the core purposes of school education. In recent years, some researchers have also conducted some studies on distributed leadership in Asian contexts. Law, Galton, and Wan (2010) focused on the functions of distributed leadership on teacher development in school-based curriculum development teams in a primary school in Hong Kong, and found that teachers have undergone

professional development participating in the planning, experimenting and reflecting (PER) model of curriculum development. Ng and Ho (2011) examined distributed leadership in the process of information communication technology reform in a government school in Singapore, and concluded that distributed leadership for ICT implementation requires a combination of transformational leadership and instructional leadership. The research found that important leadership functions were distributed amongst senior administrators and middle-level administrators, and that these leadership functions had impact on one another. This finding provides evidence about how leadership is distributed among different levels of leaders to facilitate school change. Although distributed leadership is welcomed as a “new kid on the block” (Gronn, 2006, p. 1), researchers generally agree that there is still confusion and ambiguity about the meaning of distributed leadership (Bolden, 2011; Harris, 2007, 2013a; Hartley, 2010; Mayrowez, 2008). Empirical research on distributed leadership and its possible implications is increasing but is still relatively scarce (Angelle, 2010; Harris, 2013b).

1.1.2 Contextual Rationale.

The meaning of leadership varies in different cultures, and is a rather “elusive concept to define” (Dimmock & Walker, 2005, p. 11). As many researchers point out, it is necessary to understand distributed leadership in its context (Bolden, 2011; Spillane, Halverson, & Diamond, 2004; Woods, 2004). Scholars in Mainland China have also noticed the prominence and attention of distributed leadership in Western studies, and

have tried to introduce the background, patterns, and features of distributed leadership, and discuss the possible implications for education in China (Feng, 2012; Liang & Zhang, 2007; Rao, 2012). Walker, Hu, and Qian (2012) produced a literature review on Chinese principal leadership written in English and Chinese between 1998 and 2008 and found that most of the literature are non-empirical “prescriptions” (p. 5) about ways of how to become a successful principal and “commentaries” (p. 5) about the key concerns and problems facing principals. Western leadership theories such as distributed leadership are promoted as improved leadership practices for Chinese principals, but this kind of “import prescription” (p. 14) does not present relevant empirical evidence for these theories. The “lack of serious empirical research” (p. 31) into educational leadership in China remains true in the area of distributed leadership. Few empirical studies on distributed leadership conducted at Mainland schools have been conducted by Western or Chinese scholars. The need for such research motivates this study.

Understanding the relationship between distributed leadership and organizational development is significant for any organization, whether Western or Chinese. As Spillane (2006) pointed out, distributed leadership is a “lens” to understanding leadership practice. If it is not a “prescription” (p. 10) for better leadership, it is at least a “description” (p. 10) of how leadership works, and can help “to generate insights into how leadership can be practiced more or less effectively” (pp. 9-10). If “planful alignment” (Leithwood et al., 2007, p. 40) or “institutionalized practice” (Gronn, 2002, p. 430) of distributed leadership is achieved, the practice of distributed leadership will

have great potential for organizational change or development (Harris, 2009a). The significance of distributed leadership shown in Western studies may also be applied to Chinese contexts and culture.

As a Confucian country, China has the old tradition of “respecting teachers and attaching importance to education” (*zūn shī zhòng jiào*, 尊师重教), but traditionally the focus was more on the examination results of students in tradition (Guo, 2013). Since The Outline of Basic Education Curriculum Reform (Ministry of Education, 2001) was issued, China started a nationwide student-oriented “New Curriculum Reform” (*xīn kè gǎi*, 新课改) promoting “quality education” (*sù zhì jiào yù*, 素质教育). The reform has had significant influence on China’s basic education. Nanshan District, a coastal district of Shenzhen, China, is an active participant of the new curriculum reform. However, in the implementation of the reform, the district found that the problem of exam-oriented and teacher-oriented classroom teaching and learning had not been solved, and started a district-wide instructional reform “Excellent Classroom Culture Construction” (*zhuó yuè kè táng wén huà jiàn shè*, 卓越课堂文化建设) in 2009. This reform aimed to push all schools in the district to change teaching and learning from “teaching-oriented” to “learning oriented” (Pei, Hu, & Li, 2013, p. 141) and to develop the comprehensive quality of students. It encouraged teachers of different levels to actively participate in the implementation of the reform and make contributions to the reform. In the process of the reform implementation, the district adopted the strategy of using “basic patterns with variations” (Pei, Hu, & Li, 2013, p. 141), encouraging schools and teachers to make innovations and changes based on the

basic principles of the reform. Most schools in the district were involved, and some became prominent in successfully transforming classroom teaching and learning with the active participation of their teachers and students.

A full context introduction is discussed in Chapter 2.

1.1.3 Personal Rationale.

As the vice-principal of a school in Nanshan District and the executive principal of its Primary Section, the researcher is an active practitioner in the reform. By following the principal's direction and vision, I worked together with the heads of departments and teacher leaders to implement the reform. The Western idea of distributed leadership attracted my attention since it was introduced to me for the first time. This perspective of educational leadership emphasizes that leadership is not only practiced with leaders with formal positions, but also by informal leaders such as ordinary teachers. This is somewhat contradictory to the Chinese culture of high power distance. On the other hand, in the process of change, I found that very clear signs of distributed leadership in the reform in schools in Shenzhen, and that effects of distributed leadership were important in promoting it. Meanwhile, I also witnessed the successes of other schools in the reform, and was eager to learn more about their leadership in its implementation.

As an EdD student of The Education University of Hong Kong, and as a practitioner of school leadership, the personal role of the researcher motivated this study on distributed leadership. The ideas of distributed leadership broadened my horizons,

but also provided a solid guidance for my professional practice. I tried to apply it in the context of the schools where I worked, and in the practice of the reform, I worked with other school administrators and teacher leaders, and made substantial contribution to leading the change in classroom teaching and learning.

1.2 Objectives and Research questions

1.2.1 Research Problem.

As discussed in Sections 1.1.1 and 1.1.2, empirical research on distributed leadership is relatively scarce, and there remains a lack of serious empirical research on distributed leadership in Chinese schools. Although distributed leadership is becoming more and more popular in the West, studies on distributed leadership in Chinese schools are few, and the Chinese literature on distributed leadership is mostly prescription and commentaries rather than empirical research (Walker et al., 2012). Moreover, as China is a country with a high-hierarchical culture with high power distance (Hofstede, Hofstede, & Minkov, 2010), the practices of distributed leadership in schools may not be easy. With a Confucian tradition, people in Chinese schools tend to be obedient to social hierarchy, and may be more traditional and conservative toward change (Zhang, Lin, Nonaka, & Beom, 2005). Walker et al. (2012) found that distributed leadership was advocated in China by scholars to be one of the “ideals” of educational leadership, but principals “tend to pay lip service to these ideals” (p. 388). Dimmock and Walker (2002) concluded that China’s culture supports “a centralized model of leadership” in the principal, which is not favourable for the distribution of leadership in schools. In

the researcher's own experiences in schools in Shenzhen, however, the practices of distributed leadership are evident. To fill this research gap, this research provides an empirical qualitative study on distributed leadership in Chinese context and culture, and explores the practices of distributed leadership in schools in the context of reform and in a high-hierarchical culture of China. This study of distributed leadership in a context of instructional reform in Chinese schools can add empirical evidence for the field of distributed leadership, and shed more light on the meaning and implications of distributed leadership in different contexts and cultures.

1.2.2 Objectives

The main objectives of this case study were: (a) to identify and explain the context of an instructional reform in China influencing the distribution of leadership in schools; (b) to identify and explain important Chinese cultural factors influencing the distributed leadership in schools; and (c) to explore how leadership is practiced in the schools with the influence of the context and culture.

1.2.3 Research Questions

The central research question of this study was: How does context and culture influence distributed leadership in schools? To answer this question, three specific questions were posed to frame the research design:

1. What are the contextual influences on the practices of distributed leadership?
2. What are the cultural influences on the practices of distributed leadership?

3. How is distributed leadership practiced within an instructional reform environment in China?

To answer these questions, interviews were carried out with 34 principals, vice-principals, department heads, teacher leaders and young teachers in three primary schools in Shenzhen. The study identifies school culture and external and internal context of these sample schools, and explains the effects of context and school culture on the reform and the distribution of leadership of the schools.

1.3 An Overview of Conceptual Framework and Methodology

The research design and conceptual framework were closely connected with the research questions, and centred around three dimensions to identify and explain distributed leadership in the sample schools: (a) contextual influences; (b) cultural influences; and (c) practices of distributed leadership. Chapter 3 of this dissertation gives a full explanation of the conceptual framework.

The research adopted a qualitative multiple-case design. Three schools, which were respectively located in the northern, middle and southern areas of Nanshan District, Shenzhen, were selected as the case study schools. The students of these three schools came from three different types of families: poor peasant workers, low-income local residents and well-educated rich elites. Interviews of 34 principals, vice-principals, department heads, subject heads, teacher leaders and followers of these three sample schools were conducted. All interviews were recorded and then transcribed. To strengthen the validity of the case studies, the study used multiple methods of data

collection, including other sources of evidence such as documentation. Data collected from interviews were all recorded and transcribed verbatim. Notes from document analysis, observations and transcripts from interviews were all imported into qualitative computer software Atlas.ti Version 7.5.4 for coding and interpretations. A detailed discussion of the research methodology is presented in Chapter 4.

1.4 Significance of the Research

1.4.1 Significance for Policy

Although distributed leadership is promoted in China by government and scholars as one of the “ideals” of school leadership, principals tend to ignore the initiative (Walker & Qian, 2012). One of the reasons is that it is thought to be a borrowed idea from Western research. This research provides empirical evidence of distributed leadership in Chinese schools, and shows that distributed leadership was practiced differently in Chinese context and culture. It suggests that context and culture have great influence on distribution of leadership, so it is important for policy makers and education administrators to understand context in promoting borrowed ideas from Western research, and to allow for flexibility at the local level.

1.4.2 Significance for Practice

Understanding distributed leadership improves leadership efficiency. Just as Spillane (2006) concluded, although it is not a “prescription” for better leadership in itself, it might be a “means to prescription” (p. 10), the way with which people might

find “prescription” or solutions. The research found that the practices of distributed leadership varied greatly with contexts and culture, but that contributed a lot to school change (Camburn & Han, 2009; Harris, 2009a). This research provides school leaders in China and in Shenzhen with some “means to prescription”, which can help them find ways to achieve better school leadership in issues such as how to find, encourage and support formal and informal leaders to exert important influence on the reform, how to find suitable strategies suitable to school context and culture and distribute relative tasks accordingly, and how to cultivate a cooperative, participative and harmonious school culture for the development of distributed leadership.

1.4.3 Significance for Research

The research provides an “etic” study that stimulates “emic elaborations” (Leung & White, 2004, p. 29), which refers to instances when indigenous studies are “stimulated” by a theoretical framework borrowed from other literature. This study of distributed leadership in Chinese contexts and culture is an indigenous emic research in China, but based on an etic theoretical framework borrowed from Western literature (Gronn, 2002; Leithwood et al., 2007; Spillane, 2006). This study presents how distributed leadership is performed in the context of an instructional reform and in Chinese culture. It shows that contextual influences and cultural influences greatly shaped the practices of distributed leadership. It provides vivid case examples of how distributed leadership for reform implementation occurs in real-life Chinese school contexts, and the results of the study will have significance on the study of distributed

leadership in China and in other contexts because it proves the generally accepted claim that distributed leadership is a “contextually situated exploration” (Bolden, 2011, p. 263), and prompts future researchers on distributed leadership to focus more on the contextual and cultural features of their studies.

1.5 The Structure of the Thesis

The thesis has seven chapters. Chapter 1 introduces the research. Chapter 2 examines the context of the research at three levels: macro-level or policy-level context, meso-level or local-level context, and micro-level or school-level context. It also highlights some important cultural features and practices closely related to the context. Chapter 3 provides a review of the literature on distributed leadership and the influence of context and culture. It discusses relative theoretical and empirical studies in both Western and Chinese literature and presents a conceptual framework developed from research questions and the literature review. Chapter 4 focuses on the methodology of the research, justifies the multiple-case study approach of the research methodology, discusses the sampling logic, and introduces the means of data collection and analysis. Chapter 5 presents the findings about the contextual and cultural influences on distributed leadership in schools with analysis of the data collected. Interview data were analysed together with cultural and contextual factors of schools and the reform. Chapter 6 discusses findings about how distributed leadership was practiced in Chinese schools, including ways of arrangement and implementation of distributed leadership, patterns of distributed leadership, and routines and tools. Chapter 7 summarizes the

main findings and draws conclusions to the research questions about the distributed leadership shaped by the context of instructional reform and culture. It also explores the implications of the research findings and conclusions for policymakers, for the leadership practices of schools, and for the research of distributed leadership and educational leadership, and for future studies on distributed leadership.

CHAPTER 2

CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTIONAL REFORM IN CHINA

This chapter introduces the main context of this research: curriculum and instructional reform in China. It was mainly developed from published books, peer-reviewed articles, newspaper reports, and government official websites. It is divided into four sections: Section 1 focuses on “New Curriculum Reform” (*“xīn kè gǎi”*, 新课改) launched by the central government of China and introduces this policy-level context of China education reform; Section 2 concentrates on Excellent Classroom Construction Reform (*zhuó yuè kè táng wén huà jiàn shè*, 卓越课堂文化建设), an instructional reform launched by Nanshan District, Shenzhen, and shows the local context of Shenzhen and Nanshan; Section 3 introduces the relationship of school leaders to the reform, and discusses two important contexts closely related to the implementation of the reform: “Principal Accountability System” (*xiào zhǎng fù zé zhì*, 校长负责制) and the organizational structure of Chinese schools related to the reform.

2.1 National-level reform: “New Curriculum Reform” of China

2.1.1 “Quality Education” and “New-Century Quality Education Programme”

China has a long history as a centralized examination-oriented education system (Guo, 2013). With economic development and openness to the outside world, China started to promote “*sù zhì jiào yù*” (quality education, 素质教育) and to turn to student-

oriented education, emphasizing “over-all improvement of basic qualities of all learners for all-round development in moral, intellectual, physical and attitudinal, aesthetical and skills/competence dimensions” (Zhou & Zhu, 2007). “*Sù zhì jiào yù*” has become the guiding principle of China’s educational reform (Walker et al., 2012). In China, “*sù zhì jiào yù*” is mostly advocated in “basic education”, which includes a 3-year pre-school education, 6-year primary education, 3-year junior high school and 3-year senior high school education. China adopts a system of nine-year compulsory education (6-year primary education and 3-year junior high school education) since Compulsory Education Law was passed in 1986, and most of the educational reforms in basic education focus on compulsory education.

In the early 2000s, a “New-Century Quality Education Programme” was launched in China, and curriculum reform in basic education is taken as the “key in the over-all implementation of quality education” (Zhou & Zhu, 2007, p. 21). This programme has tremendous influence on schools, school administrators, teachers, students and parents, and is known as “*xīn kè gǎi*” (新课改, New Curriculum Reform). In 2001, the Ministry of Education in China issued the Basic Education Curriculum Reform Outline (Ministry of Education, 2001) and stipulated specific objectives of “New Curriculum Reform”:

1. Change simple knowledge delivery into helping students become active learners;

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2. Change isolation among subjects into a balanced, integrative, and selective curriculum structure;
 3. Change out-of-date and abstruse curriculum content into essential knowledge and skills in relation to students' lifelong learning;
 4. Change from making students learn passively into developing their capacities to process information, obtain new knowledge, analyse and solve problems, and to communicate as well as cooperate with others;
 5. Change the functions of identification and selection of curriculum evaluation into evaluation on student growth, teacher development, and instructional improvement; and
 6. Change from centralization in curriculum control into decentralization. Three levels of curriculum control (central government, local authorities, and schools) are set to strengthen the relevance of the curriculum to local situations.

In this document, a three-dimensional objective (*sān wéi mù biāo*, 三维目标) of the new curriculum is listed and it has become the guiding principle of every Chinese school teacher in classroom teaching and learning: knowledge and skills (*zhī shì yǔ jì néng*, 知识与技能), processes and approaches (*guò chéng yǔ fāng fǎ*, 过程与方法), and affection/attitude and values (*qíng gǎn /tài du yǔ jià zhí guān*, 情感/态度与价值观).

To promote this massive curriculum reform, a series of policy documents and the development of curriculum standards and textbooks were formulated. These include: the Basic Education Curriculum Outline Programme (2001), A Curriculum Framework of Compulsory Education (2001), Education Ministry Notification on School Evaluation and Examination System Reform (2002) and the Development of school Textbooks for Each School Subject (2003). From 2001, experimentation in curriculum reform was launched, and each province could choose an experimental area of basic education curriculum reform. The experimentation started in 38 national-level experimental areas, and was then extended to 500 counties/districts.

2.1.2 Positive outcomes and problems of New Curriculum Reform

The influence of this nationwide large-scale curriculum reform on schools and teachers of basic education has been deep and significant. Feng (2006) summarized four positive outcomes of this reform:

1. The government has changed the style of administration and started to collect opinions and information about the curriculum reform nationwide (p.136). An example is the establishment of the website “The New Century Curriculum Network (NCCN)” by Ministry of Education’s Centre of Curriculum for Basic Education to collect relative information about curriculum reform nationwide.

2. There are more local and school-based curricula in schools than in the past.

In some schools in Shanghai, for example, 20% of the courses are local school curriculum.

3. Innovative approaches in teacher development have been established. The curriculum reform brings more opportunities for teachers' professional development (Guo, 2012). An example of the widely accepted new approaches in teacher development is "Distinguished Teacher Workshop" (*míng shī gōng zuò shì*, 名师工作室), named after a local experienced and excellent teacher. The district provides a studio with funding and these "distinguished teachers" (*míng shī*) usually mentor promising young teachers in the district.

4. A positive tendency in the learning and teaching process is emerging. An example is that teachers started to reflect upon their classroom and teacher-student relationship to become more harmonious.

Feng also pointed out five problems the curriculum reform encountered:

1. The curriculum standards are not flexible enough. It is very necessary for the government to make the curriculum standards more flexible to adapt to different contexts.

2. Teacher workloads have increased. Teachers are required to become educators, learners, innovators, researchers, and their roles in the reform need clearer definition. Although teachers welcome professional development opportunities, most of them complain about the extra working hours to participate in the reform (Guo, 2013).

3. Students' interest and parents' voices are somewhat ignored.

In the reform, teachers are encouraged to develop their own instruction materials, but some teachers may ignore the students' interest and cause harmful results for the students. Some schools have experienced radical reform, but they tend to ignore the opinions of parents, and may bring results that the parents do not want to see.

4. School leaders experience cultural dilemmas. In Feng's opinion, the three problems listed above are "explicit" problems relatively easier to be solved, but cultural dilemmas and problems are "implicit" problems neglected by the government and need more attention. Dello-Iacovo (2009) mentioned that foreign observers are often perplexed with "the apparent widespread support for *sù zhì jiào yù* (素质教育) ideals in theory coupled with widespread resistance in practice" (p. 248). Many new concepts advocated in this curriculum are borrowed from Western literature, such as inquiry-based learning, cooperative learning, Constructivism, and Multiple Intelligence Theory, and it is not easy for the school leaders to understand and accept these borrowed ideas with different cultural backgrounds.

5. It is not clear whether the curriculum reform should proceed rapidly or gradually.

According to Feng (2006), principals and teachers are pressed to produce quick and visible achievements in the reform, but the progress is actually slow. Feng thinks that a reform should be a "gradual process" (p. 141) rather a radical and quick transformation expected by the government.

These positive outcomes and problems listed by Feng (2006) are worth noticing. On one hand, they show that the reform has achieved success in providing new ideas and practices for Chinese schools and educational administrators and changing examination-oriented learning into student-oriented learning. On the other hand, Feng (2006) calls attention to the importance of context and culture in the reform. As the ideas are mostly borrowed from Western literature, they need to be adapted to local context and culture to exert their influence and achieve effects. This nationwide reform has changed the ideas of Chinese school leaders on teaching, learning and management, and has great influence on school leadership in China.

2.1.3 The importance of New Curriculum Reform for principals and teachers of Chinese schools

“New Curriculum Reform” has become one of the most important national education policy guiding the teaching, learning and management of Chinese basic education. After more than a decade’s implementation, the ideas of the reform have become deeply rooted in the minds of education officials, principals, teachers, students and parents. Students are gradually accepted as the centre of teaching and learning. There are difficulties, confusion, and incompatibility, and as Feng (2006) pointed out, there are cultural conflicts in applying ideas borrowed from Western literature in teaching and learning, and in school management. But after a more than a decade’s practice, principals and teachers have tended to adapt to the concepts of the reform, and understand “the connections and differences between the new curriculum and indigenous philosophical and educational traditions” (Guo, 2013, p. 97). The national-

level curriculum reform has changed principals and teachers' concept of teaching and learning and their practices in school management and classroom teaching. It is significant for Chinese school leadership and management, for it points out the direction and objective for principals and teachers. School leaders should pay great attention to the introduction and adaptation of new ideas into their school teaching and learning. This brings challenges for school leaders, for they need not only find the direction of the reform, but also inspire and lead others to actively participate in the reform.

2.2 District-level reform: “Excellent Classroom Culture Construction” (*zhuó yuè kè táng wén huà jiàn shè*, 卓越课堂文化建设)

2.2.1 Basic Information of Shenzhen and Shenzhen Education

The national New Curriculum Reform has greatly influenced the schools of China. Shenzhen, a modern coastal city in the south of China, is one of the cities that actively participates in the reform and makes great progress.

Shenzhen became the first special economic zone of the country in 1980. It is regarded as “a touchstone for China's reform and opening-up policy” (quoted from the website of Shenzhen Government: <http://english.sz.gov.cn/gi/>). As a State-level innovative city, Shenzhen is often referred to as “the window of China's reform”, and it is among the Chinese cities that enjoy the highest degree of opening up. Shenzhen is famous for its migrant culture, and the great majority of its residents come from other parts of the country. As a city of migrants, Shenzhen is open-minded, tolerant and innovative. It is the only city in Guangdong Province where Mandarin is the dominant

language, because of its huge migrant population from all over the country. As a modern developed city famous for reform, Shenzhen education takes the lead in the country, and is taken as the priority of Shenzhen's development. Reform and innovation are taken as "the root and soul" of Shenzhen Education (Shenzhen Education Bureau, 2015).

As the national curriculum reform started in 2001, Nanshan District of Shenzhen became the only national-level "experimental area" in Guangdong Province. In 2002 and 2003, the other five districts of Shenzhen joined the provincial-level experimental areas and the curriculum reform was implemented in all compulsory education schools in the city. In 2004, the city started the curriculum reform in senior high schools. Now the curriculum reform is at the stage of "comprehensive promotion". In 2015, the Shenzhen Education Bureau released its Shenzhen Compulsory Education Curriculum Reform Research Report and summarized the main effects and problems of Shenzhen's curriculum reform. The main effects include: (1) the concepts of new curriculum reform are widely accepted; (2) The system of New Curriculum is basically established; (3) The professional level of teachers has improved significantly; (4) Classroom instruction has made great changes; (5) Developmental assessment is widely practised; (6) The spiritual growth of students have achieved a satisfactory change; (7) Comprehensive curriculum construction is promoted steadily; (8) The potentiality and capability of primary and secondary school has developed dramatically; and (9) The comprehensive effects of experimental areas are obvious. The Report also listed the problems and difficulties in Shenzhen's curriculum reform in curriculum implementation and

construction, teacher development, developmental teacher assessment, professional guidance and support in curriculum reform, the curriculum reform of non-government schools, and students' overloaded schoolwork. As a city of reform, Shenzhen is proactive in implementing this nationwide educational reform, this set a solid foundation for school administrators and teachers to accept the ideas of reform and actively participate in the reform.

2.2.2 Basic information of Nanshan District.

As one of the cities actively participating in the curriculum reform, Shenzhen has made substantial progress in the reform, and Nanshan District, one of the central city districts of Shenzhen, is the most prominent in the reform.

In January, 1990, the State Council of China approved the establishment of Nanshan District, Shenzhen. It is located in the west of Shenzhen, connected to Hong Kong by Shenzhen Bay Bridge, facing Hong Kong's Yuen Long across the sea.

Nanshan District is the richest district of Shenzhen. Shenzhen's High-tech Science & Technology Park is located in this district with many world-famous companies. Nanshan District is the only national-level "Experimental Area" of New Curriculum Reform in Guangdong Province. It is also the first "District with Strong Education of Guangdong Province" (*jiào yù qiáng qū*, 教育强区, an honour awarded by Guangdong Province to districts within Guangdong) and is considered to be Shenzhen's "Highland of Education and Research" (*jiào yù kē yán gāo dì*, 教育科研高地). Nearly 20 universities and research institutes are located in Nanshan District,

including Shenzhen University, South University of Science and Technology of China, Shenzhen Polytechnic, and research institutes of Shenzhen University City. It is also acknowledged to be a district with good “internationalization”, for “global inhabitants” from more than 80 countries around the world live and work in this district and it has six international schools, which offer education for expatriate children.

Currently, there are 162,000 students and 14,700 teachers in Nanshan District’s kindergartens, primary and secondary schools. There are 83 primary and secondary schools (including 14 private schools), and 180 kindergartens (including 5 public kindergartens). Principals and teachers of the district are usually excellent teachers from other cities all over the country, and they are open-minded and more democratic. Parents of Nanshan District are mostly well-educated and have high expectations for their children’s education.

The Compulsory Education Law stipulated that basic education at primary and secondary levels shall be decentralized to provincial and county levels, and the educational investment in Nanshan Education is mainly supported by Nanshan District government. The local government secures adequate funding for Nanshan Education. The total educational investment of Nanshan district reached CNY 2,500,000,000 in 2014, and exceeded 3,000,000,000 in 2015 (quoted from the official website of Nanshan Education Bureau).

2.2.3 “Excellent Classroom Culture Construction” (*zhuó yuè kè tang wén huà jiàn shè*, 卓越课堂文化建设) Reform of Nanshan District.

As a pioneer in curriculum reform, Nanshan Education has paid great attention to two important parts of the reform: instructional reform and diversified curriculum-based school education. In 2004, Nanshan District started to make reflections and summaries about the implementation of the reform, and found that the practices of the new curriculum were not as efficient as advocated in the curriculum reform, although the concept of the reform were widely accepted. The district then started to focus on the efficiency of classroom teaching and learning and micro-details of classroom teaching through an instructional reform named “Excellent Classroom Culture Construction” (*zhuó yuè kè tang wén huà jiàn shè*, 卓越课堂文化建设) (Long, 2011).

By the end of 2008, some schools in the districts had made explorations on constructing “instructional modes” consistent with the concept of new curriculum reform. The Education Bureau then decided to make experiments on instructional reform in some subjects in experimental schools. In 2011, with the experience and achievement in experimental schools, the district started to promote the reform in the whole district and emphasize the importance of “Classroom Culture Construction”, and the year 2011 became “Year of Excellent Classroom Culture Construction”. In 2012, the district focused on the “balanced and deepened” promotion of the reform, and 2013 is regarded as “Year of Consolidating Excellent Classroom Culture Construction” (Pei, 2013; Zeng, 2012).

The strategies of this district-reform can be summarized as follows (Long, 2011; Pei, 2013; Zeng, 2012):

1. Emphasizing “construction of classroom culture” rather than “construction of classroom teaching modes”. Classroom teaching modes only consist of one dimension of classroom culture, a system including relationship between teachers and students, environment, curriculum resources, teaching conditions.

2. Promoting the reform as a whole in the district, but advocating “basic patterns” accompanied by “variations”. A district-wide reform is usually very difficult to promote with only one mode. It is impossible to ask all subjects, all teachers and all schools to implement the reform in one way. The district has a basic pattern of reform for schools and teachers to follow, but allows each school to have their different features. Each school can have a basic mode, and also allow each subject to make changes accordingly. Each subject can have a basic operation guide, and allow each teacher to have his or her ways of implementation. Each teacher can have his or her own basic methods, but can also have different ways of performance in different lessons.

3. Emphasizing “classroom teaching management” together with classroom teaching reform. Any classroom reform or innovation without effective classroom management is fruitless. Classroom teaching without effective classroom control or management will not bring efficiency or effectiveness, and the quality of teaching and learning won't be guaranteed.

4. Emphasizing school-based curriculum development and transformation of national curriculum. To implement student-oriented teaching and learning, it is necessary to find suitable textbooks for instructional reform, and to integrate and modify textbooks for each school. Curriculum reform and integration can promote instructional reform, while instructional reform can accelerate curriculum reform.

5. Focusing the integration and innovation of classroom teaching and learning with information technology. As a reform launched in the age of information, the application of information technology in classroom teaching and learning is very important.

6. Implementing the reform with research and exploration. From the district to schools and teachers, research and exploration is through the whole process of the reform. The district becomes the headquarters of the reform, designing, training and guiding the reform of the whole district, and doing research together with all schools and teachers. The district is also responsible for exchanging and sharing the experience of reform with schools, teachers and experts outside Nanshan. In 2012, the district held the 16th annual meeting of Overall Primary and Secondary School Overall Reform Committee, The Chinese Society of Education, and exchanged with peers and educational experts with the theme of classroom culture construction.

This student-oriented “Excellent Classroom Culture Construction” reform started in 2009 and was then spread over all the schools of the district. This initiative advocates "excellent classroom instruction" rather than "traditional classroom

instruction", emphasizing that efficient teaching and learning should have some basic elements such as preview and self-study, cooperative inquiry, exchange and presentation. The teachers should help the students "learn how to learn" (Pei et al., 2013, p. 138), guide the students to learn by themselves and help them learn to cooperate, exchange views and make successful presentations. The students are encouraged to "to dig into, to speak out, and to write down" (Wang, 2015, p. 3). This instructional reform advocates "student-oriented, inquiry-guided learning" (Pei et al., 2013, p. 140), and encourages the schools to help students master the skills of "Six Types of Learning": individual self-learning; cooperative learning with the help of other students; interactive presentation learning; teacher-guided learning; network learning; practice & research learning. After more than six years' practice and implementation, most of the schools of Nanshan District have made some progress in the reform.

2.3 The Relationship of School Leaders to the Reform.

"New Curriculum Reform" is a massive national reform which has had significant influence on the teaching and learning of Chinese schools. It also has great influence on school leadership. It brings big challenges for school principals and other school administrators. Resistance to change is common in a change process (Val & Fuentes, 2003; Ford, Ford & D'Amelio, 2008). It is important for school leaders to shift their focus to new educational ideas and at the same time apply effective change strategies (Kotter, 2002) to persuade the teachers to actively participate in reform implementation and make the change stick. Nanshan District's instructional reform

“Excellent Classroom Culture Construction” is the extension and deepening of “New Curriculum Reform”. It is promoted as a whole in the district with “basic patterns”, but allows variations in the practices of schools, principals, and teachers. Principals and teachers are encouraged to actively participate in the research and exploration of the practices of the reform: “Principals, directors and teachers all join in the research” (Long, 2011, p. 39). This “from top to bottom” district reform advocates diversity and autonomy in each school’s implementation, and this allows the principals and teachers to turn their own understanding of “New Curriculum Reform” into real practices and exert their own influence on the reform. This promotion strategy is helpful for the distribution of leadership in the reform. In the process of the reform, school administrators such as principals, departments heads (directors) and influential teacher leaders all contribute to the implementation of the reform, and exert important influences.

To understand better the relationship of leaders to reform implementation, it is necessary to introduce two important contexts influencing school leadership in Chinese schools: “Principal Accountability System” and the organizational structure of Chinese schools. In a “Principal Accountability System”, the school principal has to take the responsibility as “the first person who is accountable” for important issues such as reform implementation, so the role of the principal is significant in the reform. On the other hand, the power of the principal is limited, and he or she has to inspire other administrators and teachers to participate in the reform in order to achieve success. The organizational structure of schools may explain most of the leading roles of the school

in reform implementation, including school administrators and teacher leaders. These leaders exert their different influence on the reform, and their roles are worth noticing in this research on distributed leadership in the reform.

2.3.1 The Principal Accountability System (*xiào zhǎng fù zé zhì*, 校长负责制).

In Chinese primary and secondary schools, there are some important policies and practices that have significant influence on the roles of school administrators and teachers. “The Principal Accountability System” (*xiào zhǎng fù zé zhì*, 校长负责制) is one of the contexts that are directly related to the role of school administrators and teachers in the reform.

In 1985, “The Decision of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China on Education System Reform” stipulated that schools should gradually adapt “The Principal Accountability System” and that schools with proper conditions should establish a school administration committee chaired by the principal. In 1993, the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China and the State Counsel issued “China Education Reform and Development Outline” and made explicit that primary and secondary schools adapt a Principal Accountability System and that principals should fully implement the national education principles and policy, and rely on teaching staff in school administration. In 1995, The Education Law of the People’s Republic of China was issued and it stipulated that the president of or the leading administrator of a school “shall be in charge of the school's teaching and administration”

(National People's Congress of China, 1995, Article 30), and that schools should guarantee that teachers, staff members and workers participate in the democratic management and supervision through the congress of teachers, staff members and workers with teachers as its main body, or through other forms.

The Principal Accountability System is meant to decentralise and depoliticise the school administration system (Walker et al., 2012), but many scholars in China found that this “system” has some problems and needs adjustment (Bao, 2004; Feng, 2005; He, 2008; Yang, 2008; Zhang, 2005). The main problems include:

1. Educational administrative departments interfere too much in school work, and principals have no power in many important school decisions.

Education bureaus decide the designation and evaluation of principals, and principals have to follow the direction of educational administrative departments. It brings obstacles to principals' autonomy in school administration.

2. Principals have no power in personnel administration and cannot decide the discharge or designation of teachers with permanent positions (*zhèng biān jiào shī*, 正编教师);

As public schools belong to “public institutions” (*shì yè dān wèi*, 事业单位), the personnel departments of the government are in charge of the discharge and designation teachers with permanent positions (*zhèng biān jiào shī*). Moreover, the salaries of permanent teachers are related to their “technical posts” (*zhí chēng*, 职称), which

cannot be decided by the principals. As the great majority of the teachers are permanent, it is very difficult for principals to sanction incompetent teachers.

3. The power of principals lack efficient supervision and may lead to corruption and tyranny.

Although laws and regulations stipulated that party committees, school administration committees, faculty delegates' congress, and faculty congress are supposed to inspect principals, their supervision is often more superficial and cannot effectively prevent the corruption and tyranny of the principals.

To solve these problems, Feng (2005) suggested that principal responsibility should be reconstructed and the principals should be granted more power in autonomy. He also suggested that principals' role should change from "hero or heroine" into "leader of leaders". Bao (2004) suggested that the efficient supervision of principals' power is necessary and that their professional development should be enhanced to guarantee the efficient operation of the Principal Accountability System.

The Principal Accountability System is one of the most important policies and practices influencing the leadership of primary and secondary schools of China. Principals are granted the power to manage and lead the school in overall administration, and at same time they face great pressures and challenges from local educational administrative departments, teachers, students and parents. At the school level, the principal is "the first person who is accountable" (*dì yī zé rèn rén*, 第一责任人) for teaching and research. In a national background of New Curriculum Reform and a local

background of Excellent Classroom Culture Construction reform, principals in Nanshan District have to focus on the reform in their school administration. Although principals possess some power in school decisions and resource allocation, their power is limited and leadership skills are required to bring effective results. Principals may play the most significant role in the leadership of the reform, but more importantly, it is essential to persuade and lead their teachers to actively participate in the reform. For example, change strategies such as providing the right vision, effective communications, and empowering action (Kotter, 2002) may help the school leaders lead the change effectively.

2.3.2 Organizational Structure of Chinese Schools Related to the Reform.

As discussed above, principals are pressed to actively participate in the reform, and most important of all, to persuade and inspire other administrators and teachers to exert their influence on the reform. To understand all the important leaders influencing the reform better, it is necessary to explain the basic organizational structure of Chinese schools related to the reform.

Figure 2.1 shows the formal organizational structure of a Chinese school in relationship to the reform.

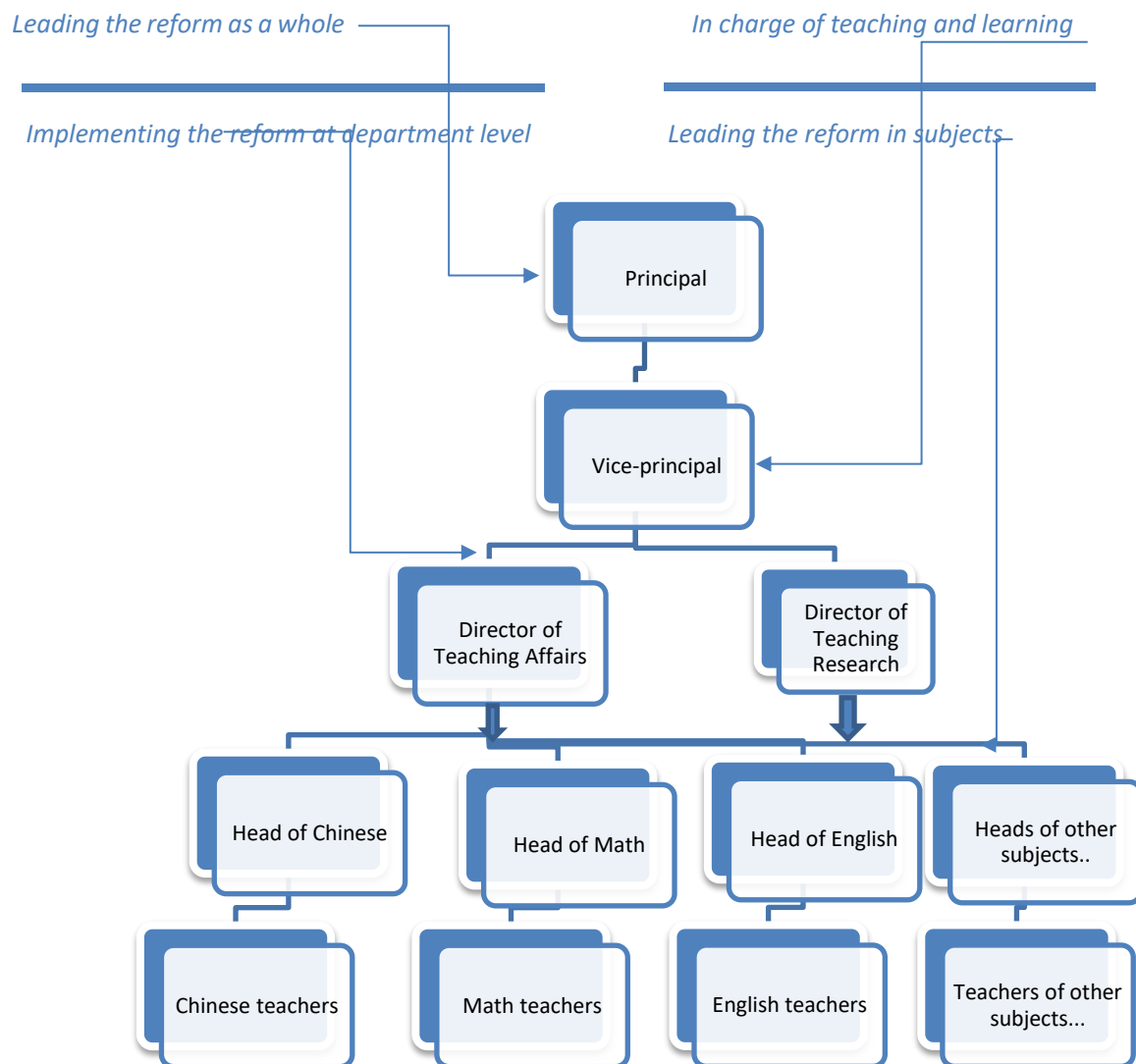


Figure 2.1. Formal Organizational Structure of Chinese Schools in Relationship to the Reform.

As the “first person to be accountable” for the reform, the principal (*xiào zhǎng*, 校长) is in charge of the reform as a whole. The vice-principal (*fù xiào zhǎng*, 副校长) in charge of teaching and learning works together with the principal and is responsible for teaching and learning of the whole school. Department heads or directors (*zhǔ rèn*, 主任) in charge of teaching and learning are the director of teaching affairs and the director of teaching research. The director of teaching affairs is usually in charge of teaching routines of the whole school, and the director of teaching research is usually

in charge of teacher development and training of the whole school. These two directors directly report to the vice-principal in charge of teaching and learning.

The principal, the vice-principal, and department heads are all called “*lǐng dǎo*” (领导, leaders) by others, but the meaning of “*lǐng dǎo*” here is more related with the position (people in charge), and is less related with guidance or inspiration which leadership implies. The principal and vice-principal(s) consist of the senior management team and are usually referred to as “principal-level leaders” (*xiào jí lǐng dǎo*, 校级领导), and the middle-level management team and are called “middle-level leaders” (*zhōng céng lǐng dǎo*, 中层领导). *Xiào jí lǐng dǎo* (principal-level leaders) are appointed by the education bureau. *Zhōng céng lǐng dǎo* (middle-level leaders) are assigned by the principal but the assignment must be reported to the education bureau. In some Chinese schools, the principal adds the title of “principal aide” (*xiào zhǎng zhù lǐ*, 校长助理) to some department heads. This position is usually considered to be higher than ordinary middle-level administrators and lower than vice-principals. It is generally considered to be a middle-level position and the designation can be decided by the principal only and does not need approval from the education bureau. All these administrators have their own offices and their main responsibility is administration although most department heads also teach lessons. They have all formal designated positions, and may be taken as a full-time formal administrator.

In Western literature on distributed leadership, the role of middle-level administrators such as department heads in Chinese schools is quite limited. In a research on leadership practices on math instruction, for example, Spillane and Zuberi

(2009) claim that they have “selected all the formally designated leaders” (p. 377), but they only mention principals, assistant principals, and curriculum specialists for mathematics and literacy. In another study on distributed leadership, Hulpia, Devos and Rosseel (2009) only include the principal, the assistant principals, and teacher leaders in “the leadership team” (p. 1015), and they do not mention the roles of middle-level administrators which are important in Chinese schools. The reason is maybe that there are not similar middle-level positions in Western schools. When “departments” are mentioned in Western studies, they usually refer to “academic departments” or “subject departments” (Leithwood, Mascall, & Strauss, 2009a, p.127), which are similar to “subject teams” (*xué kē zǔ*, 学科组) in Chinese schools, and subject heads are usually regarded as teacher leaders and as informal leaders. In Chinese school, departments (处) are of a higher level than “teams” (zǔ, 组). For example, the director of teaching affairs (*jiào wù chù*, 教务处) is in charge of the teaching affairs of all the school, including all subjects.

At the level of teachers, “subject heads” (*xué kē zǔ zhǎng*, 学科组长) are in charge of the reform implementation in a subject. They are full-time teachers with heavy workloads and usually teach as many classes as other ordinary teachers. They usually share their office with other ordinary teachers. They are assigned by the principal and are not regarded as “*lǐng dǎo*” (leaders) by others. Their central role is teaching rather than administration, and they may be regarded as teacher leaders with less formal administrative positions. However, the heads of “core subjects” (*hé xīn xué kē*, 核心学

科) such as Chinese, math and English play very important roles in leading the teachers of their subjects to implement the reform in classroom teaching.

Besides the principal, the vice-principal, department heads and subject heads, who are more formal in their responsibility in leading the reform, there are some school leaders without formal designations. An example is that there are usually several “backbone teachers” (*gǔ gàn jiào shī*, 骨干教师) in a school exerting great influence on the reform. A “backbone teacher” is usually an influential teacher. The name “backbone teacher” is widely used in Chinese schools, but it is not a position, but refers to a teacher with an honour or title awarded by the school or an education administrative department for his or her excellent achievement in teaching. “Backbone teachers” mainly act as experts in teaching in their influence on the reform. Most of these “backbone teachers” are awarded titles or honours such as “distinguished teachers” (*míng shī*, 名师) and “excellent teachers” (*yōu xiù jiào shī*, 优秀教师) by the district, municipal or provincial government. Most backbone teachers are ordinary teachers without formal positions. Some teachers may be promoted to the positions of department heads or even principals after they are awarded the honors or titles. Another example is the influence of “project leaders” in a school. “Project leader” (*xiàng mù fù zé rén*, 项目负责人) is not an official title or position, either. It refers to a teacher who is assigned a certain reform-related task. These “project leaders” are usually teachers without any formal position. The principal or other administrators plan a certain research project and entrust these teachers to be in charge of its operation. This role is more informal and temporary, and terminates when the projects end. There is

usually no extra pay or official acknowledgement for their work, but as the leader in the project, these teachers play a very important role in promoting the reform-related tasks, and influence other teachers greatly. In Chinese schools, people also like to refer to some very influential leaders as “soul leaders” (*líng hún lǐng xiù*, 灵魂领袖). The “soul leaders” are very important and influential leaders widely recognized by other leaders and teachers. The role of soul leaders is not related to their positions, and they are not necessarily formal leaders such as principals. They are usually experts in teaching and learning with great personal charisma and noble moral virtues that inspired and moved others to follow.

As discussed above, the organizational structure of a Chinese school may suggest what kind of school leaders may influence the reform implementation of the school. School administrators, including “principal-level leaders” (*xiào jí lǐng dǎo*) and “middle-level leaders” (*zhōng céng lǐng dǎo*), are formal leaders with specific positions and responsibility. Some teacher leaders have positions such as subject heads, who are responsible for the teaching of a subject. These positions are not very formal administrative positions, but the roles of these teacher leaders are very important in their subjects or grades. Backbone teachers usually act as experts and informal leaders in the subjects they teach. Their influence is not caused by their position, but by the acknowledgement of their expertise in teaching. Project leaders are informal leaders in leading a certain project assigned by school administrators, and their influence is informal and is usually limited in the project they are in charge of. “Soul leaders” are very important and influential leaders widely recognized by other leaders and teachers,

but their role is not related to their positions. They are usually influential because of their expertise and noble moral virtues. Influential leaders discussed above are shown below in Figure 2.2 Influential leaders in the instructional reform:

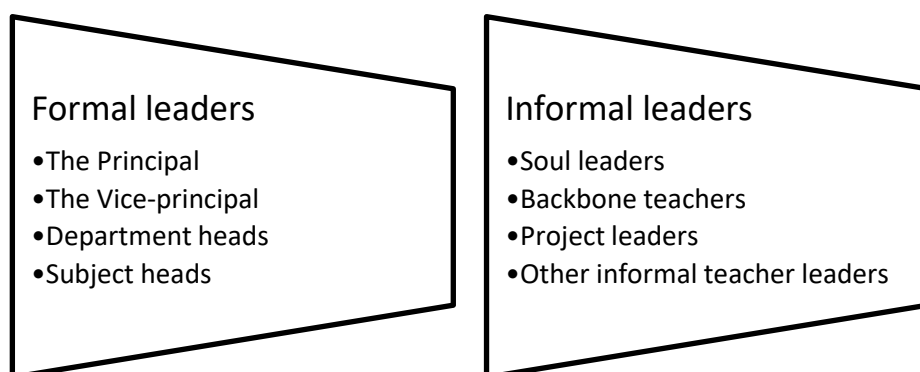


Figure 2.2. Influential leaders in the instructional reform.

2.4 Chapter Summary

This chapter provided a short introduction of the context of a national “New Curriculum Reform” launched in 2001 and a district-level “Excellent Classroom Culture Construction” reform starting from 2009 in Nanshan District, Shenzhen. Then it introduced two important contexts influencing the roles of school administrators and teachers in the reform: The Principal Accountability System (*xiào zhǎng fù zé zhì*) and the basic organizational structure of a Chinese primary or secondary school.

“New Curriculum Reform” brings both challenges and opportunities for school administrators and teachers, as it requires them to shift from the traditional concept of teaching and learning to unfamiliar concepts of curriculum reform. After more than a decade’s practice, the new ideas of the “New Curriculum Reform” are widely accepted, but the real practice in classroom is not so easy. To increase the efficiency of classroom teaching and learning, Nanshan District launched the instructional reform “Excellent

Classroom Culture Construction”. To make the practice more realistic, the district encourages schools to promote the reform with basic patterns plus variations. This district reform advocates diversity and autonomy in each school’s implementation, and this allows the principals and teachers to exert their different influences on the reform based on the context of the school. This promotion strategy is helpful for the distribution of leadership in the reform and school administrators such as principals, department heads (directors) and influential teacher leaders who can all contribute to the implementation of the reform, and exert important influences. At the school level, the people involved in the reform not only include the principal and other formal school administrators, but also influential teachers who can set examples and help the implementation of the reform in classrooms. The basic organizational structure of a Chinese school shows the roles of formal and informal school leaders in different positions and tasks; “Principal Accountability System” shows how the principal is required to take “first person” responsibility for the reform and to play a significant role in the reform. In the implementation of the instruction reform, these two contexts have significant influence on the roles of school administrators and teachers.

Chapter 2 provided an introduction of the context under which the research was conducted, and showcased issues that need to be explored through the lens of distributed leadership. In Chapter 3, the researcher provides a literature review of distributed leadership and discusses contextual and cultural influences on distributed leadership. Based on this context explanation and the literature review, the researcher develops a conceptual framework for this research.

CHAPTER 3

LITERATURE REVIEW AND CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Whereas Chapter 2 introduces the context of this research, and Chapter 3 reviews the literature related to distributed leadership and contextual and cultural influence on leadership. It first make a literature review on distributed leader. It discusses the definition of leadership and distributed leadership, what leaders are involved in the educational leadership distribution, the arrangement and implementation of distributed leadership, patterns of distributed leadership and important routines and tools through which leadership is distributed. After that, it explores literature on the influence of school context and culture on distributed leadership, Chinese literature on distributed leadership and cultural factors affecting distributed leadership in Chinese schools. Based on the literature review, the researcher then develops a conceptual framework of distributed leadership designed for this research.

3.1 Literature Review

Literature review plays a very important role in educational research. Hallinger (2013) develops a conceptual framework for carrying out systematic reviews of research that can be applied in educational leadership and management. According to Hallinger, a review of research should be organized around a set of questions guiding the study and these questions comprise a conceptual framework for conducting systematic reviews of research. Hallinger's conceptual framework for carrying

systematic reviews of literature provides a guidance for my literature review and my review centered on the five questions raised by Hallinger (p. 130):

(1) What are the central topics of interest, guiding questions and goals?

The central topic of the research is how distributed leadership is shaped by the context of Chinese instructional reform and Chinese culture. So the guiding questions and goals are to identify and explain relative theories and research on distributed leadership, how context and culture influenced distributed leadership, and what Chinese cultural factors may affect distributed leadership in schools.

(2) What conceptual perspective guides the review's selection, evaluation and interpretation of the studies?

The conceptual perspective guiding the review's selection, evaluation and interpretation of the research is mainly based on the studies of Spillane (2006) and Leithwood et al. (2007) on distributed leadership, which includes multiple leaders who are distributed leadership, the arrangement and implementation of distributed leadership, patterns of distributed leadership, routines, tools and artefacts through which leadership is distributed.

(3) What are the sources and types of data employed for the review?

The data of this review were mainly collected from English journal articles, dissertations, books, book chapters, and conference papers on the topic of distributed leadership and contextual and cultural influence on leadership. They were mostly

collected from the library of the Education University of Hong Kong, including electronic copies obtained from online library. To understand better distributed leadership in Chinese context, the researcher also searched relative literature in Chinese language on “China National Knowledge Infrastructure” (CNKI, website: www.cnki.net).

(4) How are data evaluated, analyzed and synthesized in the review?

The researcher checked all the collected data, evaluated the relevance to the topic of research, and then analyzed and synthesized them mainly based on the conceptual perspective of the review discussed in Question 2.

(5) What are the major results, limitations and implications of the review?

In the literature review, the researcher tried to follow the three criteria of the quality of a review of research suggested by Hallinger (2013): Conclude with a clear statement of results. The results of literature review in each section are summarized and synthesized. (2) Discuss how the design of the research review impacts interpretation of the findings. The literature on distributed leadership in Chinese language, for example, proves to be mainly non-empirical research, and this shows the inadequacy of empirical evidence on distributed leadership in Chinese. (3) Identify implications of the findings for relevant audiences and clarify future directions. The findings shown in this literature review provide a theoretical foundation for the development of conceptual framework of this research, and can also provide implications for other researchers on distributed leadership.

3.1.1 Definition of leadership and distributed leadership

Leadership is a high priority issue and has become the subject of enormous literature both as a concept and practices. As Bennis (1989) points out, leadership is difficult to define although “you know it when you see it” (p.1). According to Chemers (1997), “Leadership is a process of social influence in which one person is able to enlist the aid and support of others in the accomplishment of a common task.” (p.1) Northouse (2013) has a similar definition: “Leadership is a process whereby an individual influences a group of individuals to achieve a common goal”. (p. 5) Leithwood and Riehl (2005) define leadership as “the work of mobilizing and influencing others to articulate and achieve the school’s shared intentions and goals” (p. 14). Dimmock (2012) also notices that leadership is “a social influence process”, and he emphasizes that leadership “is guided by a moral purpose with the aim of building capacity by optimizing available resources towards the achievement of shared goals” (p. 7). While the definitions of leadership are different, we can summarize some central components in leadership definition: (1) Leadership is based on social influence. This is the most important central component of leadership. It is impossible to discuss leadership without (2) Leadership is about a process. As leadership is a process, it involves the interactions between leaders and followers. (3) Leadership involves group activities in which leaders influence a group of other people to complete a common goal. (4) Leadership centers on a common goal or task. Leaders and followers share a common goal, and they work together to achieve the goal.

In addition to the definition of leadership, studies of leadership have produced

many theories on leadership issues such as leadership traits, leadership styles, leadership performance and leadership contexts. In the field of educational leadership, numerous leadership theories and perspectives have been developed and explored, such as instructional leadership, transformational leadership and moral leadership (Leithwood, Jantzi & Steinbach, 2006). Researchers have explored how different leadership practices affect student achievement, teacher job satisfaction, reform implementation and other elements related to school improvement.

The emergence of the idea of distributed leadership is relatively late, and it has become popular in the West in recent years. This new interest is in response to the more challenging mission for schools and principals, and is partly due to disappointment at and “a move away from” previous theorizing and empirical enquiry focused on a solo leader or heroic leader (Harris, 2009a, p. 3). A distributed perspective on leadership not only focuses on a single heroic leader like a school principal, but also many kinds of “unglamorous and unheroic leadership” (Spillane, 2006, p. 10) that are unnoticed in schools. In recent years, influential educational scholars such as Spillane (2006), Gronn (2002), Harris (2009a), and Leithwood (2007, 2008) have contributed to the theoretical development of distributed leadership.

Although distributed leadership is widely acknowledged as a new approach towards leadership research and researchers generally agree with the importance and necessity of distributed leadership as a new perspective in educational leadership, the definition of distributed leadership remains ambiguous and obscure (Mayrowetz, 2008; Tian, 2015; Timperley, 2005). It is often confused with similar concepts such as shared

leadership, democratic leadership, collaborative leadership, delegated leadership, empowered leadership and dispersed leadership (Bolden, 2011; Oduro, 2004; Pearce, Hoch, Jeppesen, & Wegge, 2010; Spillane, 2006), which researchers such as Spillane and Harris consider it should be distinguished from distributed leadership (Harris, 2009; Spillane, 2006). According to Harris (2009a), a common misunderstanding and interpretation is to regard distributed leadership as a convenient “catch all” descriptor for similar forms of leadership such as shared, collaborative, participate or extended leadership practice. Although distributed leadership may involve these forms leadership practices, it is more than that. It focuses more on leadership practice and interactions between leaders, followers and the situation (Spillane, 2006, p.14). Another misinterpretation of distributed leadership is to position distributed leadership as the antithesis of top-down, hierarchical leadership. While distributed leadership emphasizes other leadership practices different from “top down” forms of leadership, it is not the opposite and in fact includes both formal and the informal forms of leadership practices (Harris, 2009, p.5). Distributed leadership includes leadership practices delegating and empower others, but it is more than “delegated leadership”, which is mostly controlled by administrators (DeFlaminis, Abdul-Jabbar & Yoak, 2016) and empowered leadership, which “builds followers’ confidence in their own capacities to think and act on their own.” (Northouse, 2013, p. 229).

Despite the confusion about the definition of distributed leadership, researchers generally agree with three premises of distributed leadership explained by Bennett and Woods (2003, pp. 6-7): 1. “An emergent property of a group or network of interacting

individuals”, which emphasizes interactions and is similar to Spillane's (2006) concept of "practice aspect". According to Spillane, leadership practice is produced through the “joint interactions” of leaders, followers and situation (p. 3); 2. “Openness of the boundaries of leadership”, which implies that both formal leadership and informal leaders are included; and 3. “Varieties of expertise are distributed across the many, not the few”, which emphasizes that “many” leaders involved in leadership, similar to Spillane’s (2006) concept of "leader-plus aspect" (p. 12), indicating the recognition of “multiple” (p. 13) formal and informal leaders leading schools. To sum up, distributed leadership is firstly about “practices” of leadership which involves interactions among leaders, followers and situation. Secondly, distributed leadership focuses on both leaders with formal leadership positions and informal leaders, and the boundaries of leadership is open. Thirdly, distributed leadership involves “multiple leaders”, and leadership is distributed among a group of leaders.

Instead of attempting to achieve a uniform definition of the concept, most researchers (Gronn, 2002; Leithwood et al., 2007; Spillane, 2006) try to explain what it is and provide relative evidence. Spillane (2006, 2010) and Gronn (2002) make great contributions to the development of theory related to distributed leadership, but their orientations are different. Spillane (2006) discussed “a distributed perspective on leadership” (p. 2). He emphasized that it is necessary to consider it from the angle of leadership practice. The practice of distributed leadership are joint interactions of people, including leaders, followers and what he calls “situation”, which includes tools and routines used by schools to influence people (p. 3). Gronn (2002) and Leithwood

et al. (2007) categorized distributed leadership into different types or patterns. Gronn (2002) distinguished between two distinct forms of distributed leadership: “addictive” or “numerical” action; “holistic or “concertive” action. Addictive forms of distributed leadership describe an uncoordinated dispersed “aggregated leadership” (p. 429) of an organization. Holistic or concertive action (leadership) is a consciously–managed and synergistic action, and may take three modes: spontaneous collaboration: people of different levels collaborate to solve a problem, and then disband; intuitive working relations: leaders begin to rely on each other and develop a close working relationship after they form intuitive understandings over time; and institutionalized practice: Structural relations in organizations are “formalised either by design or by adaptation” (p. 430). Leithwood, et al. (2007) refined Gronn’s (2002) three modes of “concertive” distributed leadership, and discussed four patterns of distributed leadership: (1) planful alignment. The tasks or functions of those providing leadership have been given planful thought by organizational members; (2) spontaneous alignment: leadership tasks and functions are distributed with little or no planning; (3) spontaneous misalignment: this pattern is similar to spontaneous alignment in the lack of planning for leadership distribution; (4) anarchic misalignment: this pattern implies planning and alignment within a sub-unit (such as a department) but, as a whole, it represents an oppositional or competitive disposition related to the organization. The categorization of distributed leadership patterns by Gronn (2002) and Leithwood et al. (2007) is very important. Their research suggests that more aligned and planned distributed leadership may bring more positive results of school improvement, and this is helpful for both the research

and practices of distributed leadership in schools.

In fact, the contribution of distributed leadership is not to provide a replacement for other leadership concepts, but to enable "the recognition of a variety of forms of leadership in a more integrated and systemic manner" (Bolden, 2011, p. 264). For researchers of distributed leadership, it is necessary to first identify people to whom leadership is distributed and why they have influence. This perspective, however, only shows "a portion of the meaning and potential power of distributed leadership" (Hallinger & Lee, 2012, p. 669). It is also important to understand leadership practices distributed through the interactions of people and situation. This perspective is defined by Spillane (2006) as "practice-aspect" (p. 3), and he reminds people to notice ways of arrangement and implementation of distributed leadership, and routines and tools through which leadership is distributed.

In the following, the researcher discusses the practices of distributed leadership reflected in Western literature: the people to whom leadership is distributed; ways of arrangement and implementation of distributed leadership; patterns of distributed leadership; routines and tools through which leadership is distributed. These practices can be used for later comparison with the practices in Chinese schools in this research.

3.1.2 Multiple Leaders: Who Are They?

The leader-plus aspect of distributed leadership (Spillane, 2006) implies that multiple leaders are involved in the leadership, and interacting with each other. From the perspective of distributed leadership in schools, both formal leaders such as

principals and informal leaders without any formally designated task are included. In the following, the researcher discusses the roles of formal leaders such as principals and other school administrators, and the roles of informal teacher leaders discussed in Western literature on distributed leadership.

3.1.2.1 Principals.

Distributed leadership is an approach turning away from focusing on a “solo or stand-alone” leader (Gronn, 2002, p. 423). Compared with the literature on school leadership completely centering on principals’ “heroic leadership” (Spillane, 2006, p. 5), research on distributed leadership include other leaders besides the principal. Distributed leadership, however, does not deny the importance of principals. As Harris (2007, 2012, 2013b) and Spillane (2006) pointed out, principals play critical and central roles in distributed leadership, although the roles have changed compared to traditional approaches. Without the support from principals, it is impossible for distributed leadership to “flourish” (Harris, 2012, p. 8). A distributed perspective of leadership does not mean to “displace” the crucial role of principals (Williams, 2011). As Wallace stated (2002, p. 166), “Without principals' support, there is little scope for others to make a contribution.” Principals’ leadership practices such as setting the direction and sharing the vision are essentially important (Cherkowski, 2013; Day, Sammons, & Hopkins, 2009; Leithwood et al., 2007; Petersen, Yager & Yager, 2012). In fact, in their research on distributed leadership (Copland, 2003; Hulpia, Devos & Rosseel, 2009; Lee, Hallinger & Walker, 2012; Ng & Ho, 2012; Spillane, 2006, 2007, 2009, 2010; Wallace,

2002), Spillane and some other researchers paid great attention to principals' roles in performing and distributing their leadership practices. Spillane and Hunt (2010) investigated on how principals perform or distribute their leadership to other leaders every day. Using data on 38 school principals in the US from an experience sampling method (ESM) log, this study concentrated on school principals' work practices and it showed that the principals were still important leaders, but they seemed to work frequently with other formally-designated leaders and teachers. Principals reported leading alone an average of 22% of the time, and spending, on average, 42% of their time co-performing with other leaders. In a research study on leadership in a context of reform focusing on distributed leadership, Copland (2003) found that many principals started to allow other leaders "to step forward to handle important leadership duties" performed previously by principals (p. 391). Copland thought that it was not an automatic step in, but it was because the principals viewed other leaders as professional equals, and intentionally included others in the work of change. The principal "yet remains crucial" (Copland, 2003, p. 391) in practices such as protecting vision for the reform and acting as buffer between the district and the school. Harris (2012) also emphasized that the role of the principals has changed, and can be seen as "a move from being someone at the apex of the organisation, making decisions, to seeing their core role as developing the leadership capacity and capability of others" (Harris, 2012, p. 8). The distribution does not solely depend on the principal's initiative (Odura, 2004), but principals are still key figures in their own influence and support to other leaders in distributed leadership. To sum up, although principals are no longer taken as "solo or

stand-alone” leaders, their roles in distributed leadership are crucial and cannot be denied.

3.1.2.2 Other Formal Leaders.

Besides the important influence of principals, the roles of other formal leaders such as vice-principals, assistant or deputy principals, department heads, subject heads, curriculum specialists, and teachers in charge of certain programs are also very important. Literature on the leadership of vice-principals (assistant/deputy principals) is relatively sparse (Harris, 2003; Shoho, Barnett, & Tooms, 2012) in educational leadership research compared to the large amount of research on principal leadership. The reason why the role of assistant heads was neglected may be because they are thought to be chiefly involved in administrative functions, and the responsibilities of this role are often "blur" with the duties of principals (Harris, 2003, p. 7), and are “ambiguous and unrecognized” (Shoho et al., 2012). Interestingly, the role of assistant heads is included in many studies on distributed leadership (Bennett & Woods, 2003; Devos, Tuytens, & Hulpia, 2014; Harris, 2009a, 2013a; Leithwood, Mascal, & Strauss, 2009a; Spillane, 2006; Spillane, 2010). A distributive perspective of school leadership accepts the vice-principal/assistant principal as an educational leader (Harvey, 1994), who shares responsibility for leadership with the principal as an important formally designated leader.

In Spillane’s (2010) study of leadership and management of three case study schools, about 30% of elementary school respondents admitted that they have formally

designated leadership roles, but the number and ratio of formal leaders vary greatly among different schools. While Spillane's (2010) study involved formal leaders and informal leaders, some other researchers studying distributed leadership, such as Ng and Ho (2012) mainly focused on senior management (principals and vice-principals) and middle management (department heads, heads of subject) teams. In research made on the distributed leadership of a case study school in Singapore in an ICT reform, Ng and Ho (2012) found that the leadership of SM and MM in case study school is "interdependent and mutually reinforcing" (p. 544), and important leadership functions are distributed among these leaders and have impact on one another. Formal leaders besides principals, therefore, are part of distributed leadership and need to be included.

3.1.2.3 Teacher Leaders.

Although the definition of "teacher leadership" remains controversial, the importance of the "unglamorous and unheroic leadership" (Spillane, 2006, p. 10) of teacher leaders are clear. Teacher leaders may be formal or informal leaders. Some teacher leaders have formal tasks such as leading a team of teachers of the same subject or leading a certain program, but they are first of all classroom teachers. Their influences on teachers are direct and their intermediary function between school administrators and ordinary teachers are great. Harris is a strong advocator of teacher leadership (Harris, 2002, 2003, 2005, 2007). According to Harris, teacher leaders play four roles in their leadership: brokering role; participative leadership; mediating role; and forging close relationships with individual teachers (Harris, 2005, p. 205). In an

empirical study in a school improvement context, Timperley (2005) found that "heroic" leaders in this study were no longer principals. The literacy leaders performed the most important leadership roles in assisting teachers to question or change their literacy instruction to help students who were not succeeding.

One of the greatest contributions of distributed leadership is a call of attention on informal leaders interacting with other teachers in daily work, and their leadership practices are often unnoticed by educational researchers. Informal teacher leaders are usually full-time classroom teachers with more experience or expertise, and they can play a tutoring role to other teachers (Devos, Tuytens & Hulpia, 2014). Their leadership role is usually part-time and has immediate significance for teachers who need advice and help in their teaching. Spillane and Healey's (2010) research reported that many subject area teacher leaders with formally designated positions were not often sought for advice in their school subjects. Of those teachers confirmed by other teachers as key advice givers in mathematics or reading/language arts, only 48% had a formally designated leadership position, whereas, 52% were informal leaders with no such position. From the perspective of distributed leadership, it is necessary to identify and acknowledge the leading roles of both formal and informal teacher leaders. Scribner and Bradley-levine (2010) investigated teacher leadership in a context of a reform, and they found that teacher leadership was related to positional or personal power with some particular institutional, organizational, and sociocultural rules. Some teachers lead and influence organizational activity in important ways, but neither they nor their peers are conscious of their supportive, service-oriented leadership as leadership. When studying

leaders involved in distributed leadership, it is necessary to identify and include teacher leaders and explain their roles in leadership practices.

3.1.3 How Distributed Leadership Is Arranged and Implemented?

Besides understanding people to whom leadership is distributed, it is also important to know how distributed leadership is arranged and implemented. Spillane (2006) listed three types of arrangement of distributed leadership: division of labour; co-performance; and parallel performance.

A division of labour pertaining to leadership functions implies the division and distribution of tasks among school members, including “unofficial and informal work practices” (Gronn, 2002). Reflecting the division of labour among a group of people may be a contribution of distributed leadership to the research of educational leadership because it can show the contributions of different leaders and the collaborative and democratic nature of leadership (Oswald & Engelbrecht, 2013).

The concept of division of labour is relatively conventional and easier to be understood. Co-performance emphasizes the cooperation and coordination of two or more leaders performing a leadership function collaboratively. When explaining the practice aspect of distributed leadership, Spillane further discussed three forms of co-performance: Collaborated distribution, the distribution of leadership in the same place and time to practise the same leadership routine; Collective distribution, two or more leaders practicing the same leadership routine separately but interdependently; and Coordinated distribution, leaders practising a leadership routine separately or together

in a particular sequence (Spillane, 2006, p. 60). Other researchers have also studied the significance of “co-performance” on distributed leadership (Bolden, 2011; Gunter, Hall, & Bragg, 2013; Hallinger & Heck, 2009; Harris, 2013a; Wright, 2008). Gunter, Hall, and Bragg (2013), for example, compared three forms of co-performance practices to cooperation and coordination of players in sports matches: collaborated distribution in basketball; collective distribution in baseball; and coordinated distribution in a relay race. In an attempt to study the daily work of five school principals, Spillane and Hunt (2010) used an experience sampling (EMG) device to collect relative data. The researchers categorized principals into different groups based on multiple dimensions of their practice such as activity types, time on activities, whether they take a leadership role in activities, whether they perform alone or co-perform, and with whom they co-perform. The results showed that most principals were co-leading with others, and even the “solo practitioners”, who spent less time co-leading, spent 32% of their time co-leading, and the “people-centered practitioners”, who spent more time co-leading, spent 50% of their time co-leading. Spillane and Hunt (2010) highlighted the differences of the three groups of principals’ practice, but even the group that spent the least amount of time co-leading spent about one-third of their time co-leading with other leaders. Co-performance implies the cooperation and coordination of different leaders. As multiple leaders are involved in this process, this arrangement is relatively complicated and needs more attention.

By “parallel-performance”, Spillane (2006) referred to the arrangement of distributed leadership which involves people performing the same functions or routines

without coordination. Leaders perform the same leadership work in parallel and redundantly, carrying out the same leadership function. Spillane reminded us that this “redundancy” is not a bad thing, and has the advantage of reinforcing the power of leadership.

Spillane (2006) also discussed the implementation of distributed leadership. He mentioned three ways of implementation: distribution by design from the decisions of formal and informal leaders; the distribution by default; distribution of leadership through crisis when a school encounters an unanticipated problem or challenge and leaders work together to address it. While distributed leadership by design and by default is more often, distribution through crisis depends on specific circumstances.

Spillane (2006) and other scholars (Gronn, 2002; Gunter, Hall & Bragg, 2013; Harris, 2013) listed some common practices of leadership distribution arrangement and implementation, and this provides an angle for researchers interested in distributed leadership to explore the ways how leadership is distributed, although in reality, the formation of distribution of leadership may be more complicated and diversified.

3.1.4 What Patterns of Distribution Are Practiced?

Leithwood et al. (2007) discussed four patterns of distributed leadership: planful alignment planned by organizational members; spontaneous alignment with little or no planning; spontaneous misalignment, similar to “spontaneous alignment” in being unplanned, but different in misalignment; anarchic misalignment, characterized by active rejection and opposition of the organization as a whole, but usually with planning

and alignment in a sub-unit. These four patterns can be further categorized according to “alignment”: the first two patterns belong to “alignment” types; and the last two patterns belong to “misalignment” types. The distribution patterns can also be classified into three types: “planful type” (the first pattern); “spontaneous type” (the second and third patterns); “anarchic type” (the last pattern). Leithwood et al. (2007) suggested that the two “alignment types”, planful alignment and spontaneous alignment, tended to make contributions to organizations’ productivity and that planful alignment may produce more significant positive effects than other types. Mascal, Leithwood, and Strauss (2009) further studied the relationship between patterns of distributed leadership and teachers’ academic optimism. The study found that teachers’ academic optimism appeared to be most strongly and positively associated with a planful aligned pattern of leadership distribution, while spontaneous patterns seemed to have negative effects on teachers’ academic optimism.

The categorization of the patterns of distributed leadership focuses on the nature of leadership distribution, and it can help researchers distinguish different patterns of distributed leadership and pay attention to their different effects. This research aimed to explore how context and culture influence the distributed leadership of Chinese schools in a reform. This typology of distributed leadership helped the researcher to identify what patterns of distributed leadership existed in the schools, and more importantly, to explain the reasons why they were formed. This categorization helped the researcher explore possible the effects of different patterns of distributed leadership on the reform in Chinese context.

3.1.5 Routines, Tools and Artefacts.

One of the most important parts of Spillane's (2006) concept of distributed leadership is about leaders' interaction with situation, which he used to refer to routines, tools and artefacts with which leaders exert influences. In his opinion, leaders not only interact with followers but also with aspects of the situation, including routines and tools. Timperley (2005) also noticed the importance of the use of "artefact" in distributed leadership, and emphasized the necessity of modifying the artefact to meet the requirement of distributed leadership. Tian (2015) listed "the utilization of artefact" such as tools and routines mentioned by Spillane as one of the four favourable elements supporting distributed leadership, and may "expand the operational sphere of leadership" (p. 9). In describing routines of distributed leadership, Rutherford (2009) listed specific routines such as collaborative lesson planning and study groups. Gunter, Hall, and Bragg (2013) found that routines such as teacher development and curriculum committee meetings are more helpful for collaborated distribution than other leadership routines, such as monitoring or evaluating instruction. Interactional routines can reflect how distributed leadership is practiced in real-life, and in-depth and systematic inquiry into routines and tools is helpful for the explanation of distributed leadership. Moreover, routines and tools influencing the leadership of the schools may vary and have different effects in different context and culture. So it was necessary to include important routines and tools in this research of distributed leadership in Chinese schools.

3.1.6 Normative Prescriptive Approach of Distributed Leadership.

Theoretical and empirical research conducted by educational researchers so far can be roughly categorized into two types (Gunter, Hall, & Bragg, 2013; Robinson, 2008; Tian, 2015): descriptive theoretical approach mainly describing how leadership is distributed and in what patterns of distributed leadership appears (Gronn, 2003; Spillane, 2006); normative prescriptive approach studying the effects and influence of distributed on school performance (Harris, 2004, 2009a, 2012; Leithwood, 2007). Spillane (2006) mostly concentrated on the “descriptive” approach of distributed leadership, but he mentioned that in leadership routines, leaders may be “pulling together” in similar directions or pulling in opposite or different directions, which may possibly bring positive or negative effects on leadership. According to Hartley (2010), the effects of distributed leadership can be broadly categorized into two types: 1. The effect on some organizational variable, such as the reduction of principals ‘workload; 2. Effects of distributed leadership on pupils’ achievement, which is “a notoriously difficult matter to measure” (Hartley, 2010, p. 139).

Despite the difficulty, recently, some educational researchers have begun to go beyond the conceptual and empirical descriptions of whether or how leadership is distributed, and turn to the “normative” side of distributed leadership. They focus on the issues of impact and outcome, which is more directly and more closely related with schooling and education. For example, Camburn and Han's (2009) study claims that distributed leadership can support instructional change. Mascal, Leithwood, and Strauss' (2009) research discussed the different effects of different types of distributed

leadership on teachers' academic optimism. The findings of Hallinger and Heck's (2009) research confirmed that distributed leadership was related to school capacity for improvement, and significantly correlated to important school processes. These studies provided some evidence for the possible effects of distributed leadership on school improvement, although they are few in number.

Although the main purpose of this research is not to discuss the effects of distributed leadership, especially the effects on student learning, which are very difficult to measure, the normative prescriptive approach can still provide a clue for the exploration and explanation of distributed leadership in the context of Chinese schools. While mainly describing how context and culture influenced distributed leadership in the schools, the researcher also paid attention to what patterns of distributed leadership appeared in the schools and what kind of effects and influence this distributed leadership had brought to them.

3.1.7 The Influence of Context and Culture on Distributed Leadership.

Context has become a major focus of research in the social sciences. In the research of educational leadership, context is considered to be a very important factor influencing “styles” of leadership. According to Leithwood, Louis, Anderson, and Wahlstrom (2004), to understand educational leadership, it is necessary to understand the context first, because leadership is “contingent” (p. 10) and may vary in different circumstances. The researchers listed some important and influential contexts: organizational context such as geographic location, level of schooling and school size;

diverse school population, which may bring special challenges for schools leaders and prompt them to meet the needs of special groups of students such as students from economically disadvantaged families; the “large-scale, accountability-oriented” (p. 11) policy context, whether state or local, which has become pervasive for schools and greatly influences the enactment of school leadership. Many studies on distributed leadership also mention the important influence of context (Bennett & Woods, 2003; Bolden, 2011; Harris, 2013; Leithwood, et al, 2007; Spillane, 2006; Tian, 2015). In his discussion on the distribution of leadership in schools, Spillane (2006) listed several important contexts influencing the distribution of leadership in schools: (1) School type. For example, principals in private schools seemed to be more likely than public schools to distribute responsibility for leadership; (2) School size. It seemed that larger schools tended to have a bigger number of formally designated leaders; (3) Development stage. As a school goes through a change, the distribution of leadership may also change; (4) Subject matter. It seemed that leadership routines varied in leading the instruction of different subjects in schools. Hallinger and Heck (2009) explored whether the context of a state-level policy in US school made a difference in the development of school capacity for distributed leadership. The study suggested that the implementation of this state policy helped create “broader and deeper leadership capacity in schools” (p. 102).

In analyzing the influence of different contexts, many scholars like to use multi-level perspectives to describe and explain the results. A commonly-used approach is to discuss the context at three levels: macro, meso and micro levels (Erez & Gati, 2004; Hannah & Lester, 2009; Hujala, 2004). Macro-level context is at the highest and

broadest level, and usually refers to national-level or state-level context such national educational reform; meso-level context is in the middle, and may refer to city-level or district-level context; and micro-level context is about smaller groups such as schools or even about individual persons such as teachers in classroom teaching (Blackstone, 2012; Plomp & Nieveen, 2007). This three-level approach was helpful for the researcher to further analyze the context discussed in Chapter 2 together with the data collected. The national-level “New Curriculum Reform” of China can be considered as the macro-level context; the “Excellent Classroom Culture Construction” launched by the district can be regarded as the meso-level context; and the school level implementation of the reform and contributions of different leaders can be discussed as the micro-level context.

Culture is closely related to context. Although culture is difficult to define, the effects of culture on organizational management and leadership have been widely recognized (Copland, 2003; Dimmock & Walker, 2005; Schein, 2004; Stoll, 1998). Dimmock and Walker (2005) stated three propositions in the relationship between leadership and culture: (1) leadership is a “culturally and contextually bounded process” (p. 3), and it is intertwined with its organizational and societal environment; (2) cultural influence on leadership is multidimensional, “often difficult to discern, subtle and easy to overlook” (p. 3); (3) recognizing the relationship between leadership and cultural and contextual influences on leadership is helpful to the improvement of leadership practice. According to Dimmock and Walker (2005), there are two levels of group culture: societal culture and organizational culture. Both of them have significant

influence on leadership. Between the two levels of culture, Dimmock and Walker added a “subculture”: regional or local culture, because even in a same country, different regions may have distinctly different cultures and may have significant influence on leadership. Distributed leadership, like any other forms of leadership, cannot be separated from its context and culture (Bolden, 2011; Currie, Locket, & Suhomlinova, 2009; Spillane, 2004). Research on distributed leadership is a "contextually situated exploration" (Bolden, 2011, p. 263). With a changing context, school leadership will be quite different. Leadership cannot be understood without understanding the social and cultural context in which it is embedded (Currie, Locket, & Suhomlinova, 2009; Spillane, 2004). Spillane (2006) explained the difference of distributed leadership with different subject matter, school type, and school size and development stage (pp. 35-38). In studies on distributed leadership, both external and internal contextual and cultural factors shaping leadership practice have to be considered and they both play significant roles in determining the nature of distributed leadership of certain organizations (Woods, Bennett, & Harvey, 2004). With the popularization of distributed leadership, recent studies on distributed leadership expanded from schools in Western developed countries such as the USA, UK, Australia and Canada to other cultures and contexts such as South Africa (Williams, 2010), Singapore (Ng & Ho, 2012), Slovenia (Sentočnik & Rupar, 2009), Taiwan (Chang, 2011), and Hong Kong (Law, Galton, & Wan, 2010). With different backgrounds and contexts, leadership practices vary greatly in forms and levels. Although the Education Department of South Africa promoted the practice of distributed leadership in schools and encouraged teachers to participate in

decision-making, Williams (2011) identified factors inhibiting the policy implementation such as the authoritarian ethos pervading the education system and the tradition of teachers' "non-participation in the decision-making process" (p. 194). Considering the context of South African schools, Williams suggested that "the idealism be moderated by recognition of the realities of the South African situation" (p. 197) and that the government should formulate long-term goals for the change. As identified by Williams, in a context and culture of South Africa, the development of distributed leadership may not be as easy as in Western countries.

Schein (2004) defined organizational culture as "a pattern of shared basic assumptions that was learned by a group as it solved its problems of external adaptation and internal integration, that has worked well enough to be considered valid and, therefore, to be taught to new members as the correct way to perceive, think, and feel in relation to those problems" (p. 17). According to Schein, there are three levels of culture: artefact, referring to visible organizational structures and processes hard to decipher; espoused beliefs and values, referring to espoused justifications such as strategies, goals, and philosophies; underlying assumptions, referring to "ultimate source of values and action" (p. 26) including unconscious, taken-for-granted, beliefs, perceptions, thoughts, and feelings. Schein's model offers a very helpful guide to delve deep into organizational culture and not to be misled by the more superficial levels. In analyzing the effects of school culture, Stoll (1998) listed 10 norms which help school improvement: (1) Shared goals—"we know where we're going"; (2) Responsibility for success—"we must succeed"; (3) Collegiality—"we're working on this together"; (4)

Continuous improvement—“we can get better”; (5) Lifelong learning—“learning is for everyone”; (6) Risk taking—“we learn by trying something new”; (7) Support—“there’s always someone there to help”; Mutual respect—“everyone has something to offer”; (9) Openness—“we can discuss our differences”; and (10) Celebration and humor—“we feel good about ourselves”. In Stoll’s opinion, “collegiality” is especially important and worth special attention for it is a concept that involves “mutual sharing and assistance; an orientation towards the school as a whole; and is spontaneous, voluntary, development-oriented, unscheduled, and unpredictable” (p. 10). Building a culture within the school that embodies collaboration, trust, and teamwork is favourable for the development of distributed leadership (Copland, 2003). Tian (2015) summarized four key conditions that seem to support distributed leadership in schools: formal leaders’ support, climate of trust, strategic staff policy and utilization of artefacts in leadership (p. 7). Duif, Harrison, and Dartel (2013) also emphasized that distributed leadership is easy to be nurtured in a culture with “open climate, trust, learning organization, respect, high standards, common values and a shared vision” (p. 8). Woods (2005), on the other hand, identified three main obstacles that may limit the construction of distributive leadership: context, people and practice. "Context" here refers to “non-democratic structure, culture and history of schooling”; "People" refer to those who are resistant to change due to self-interest; “Practice” here refers to problematic practices such as ineffective democracy and unauthentic democracy (pp. 73-86). Harris (2008), interestingly, also paid attention to obstacles that may make distributed leadership more difficult to achieve: 1. Distance. The geographic separation

makes it more difficult for teachers to connect. 2. Culture. A shift in culture away from the “top down” model of leadership brings more challenge for school development. 3. Structure. The way schools are organized may build some barriers to distributing leadership.

The reasons why people become influential are also related to specific context and school culture. Spillane (2006) listed four important reasons why people become influential: 1. Human capital, which is related to a leader’s knowledge, skills, and expertise; 2. Cultural capital, which refers to a leader’s way of being and doing, interactive styles that are valued in particular contexts; 3. Social capital, which is connected with a leader’s social networks or connections, and is closely related to the prevalence of norms such as trust, collaboration, and a sense of obligation among people in an organization; 4. Economic capital, which includes money and other material resources (p. 48). “Economic capital” is related to school context such as leaders’ positions. The other three capitals are more connected with leaders’ personality and expertise, and are also related to the context and culture of the school they work in. Scribner and Bradley-levine’s (2010) study repeatedly emphasized the importance of the cultural conditions shaping teachers’ construction of teacher leadership, and the necessity to understand the reasons of teachers’ leadership in school culture and school context. As for “social capital”, it is often connected with concepts such as professional learning community, which emphasizes teamwork, collegiality, collaboration and trust among teachers in a school (Harris, 2013a; Scribner & Bradley-levine, 2010; Wright, 2008).

In conclusion, context and culture may have a positive or negative influence on distributed leadership depending on its nature, and may provide great support to or obstacles to it.

3.1.8 Distributed Leadership in China.

The literature previously discussed on distributed leadership is written in English, and mainly conducted in contexts outside China. To understand better distributed leadership in the Chinese context, the researcher also searched relative Chinese language literature. A subject search of “distributed leadership” on “China National Knowledge Infrastructure” (CNKI, website: www.cnki.net), one of the most widely used knowledge database for Chinese language literature, found 69 results: 41 journal articles; 27 master and doctoral theses; and 1 conference paper. When the subject was changed to “*fēn bù shì lǐng dǎo*” (分布式领导, the Chinese translation of “distributed leadership”, the results increased and included 101 sources: 77 journal articles; 31 master and doctoral theses; and 1 conference paper. Among the 77 journal articles, 6 were in a non-educational context, and 4 were papers on higher education leadership. The remaining 67 articles were mostly non-empirical “prescriptions and commentaries” explained by Walker, Hu, and Qian (2012). “Prescriptions” try to teach school principals how to become successful, especially in the reform launched by the government. “Commentaries” concentrate on discussing problems and concerns that principals face in leading their schools. Most of them are “imported prescriptions” introducing distributed leadership and its significance for Chinese schools (Liang &

Zhang, 2007; Rao, 2012; Zheng & Yin, 2015). The earliest introduction of distributed leadership into Chinese educational leadership was a research paper found written by Feng Daming (2004): Ten-Year Development of Educational Leadership Theories in USA, UK and Australia (1993-2002). Although the concept of distributed leadership has been introduced into Mainland China for more than ten years, the reception of distributed leadership is relatively weak compared to its popularity in the West. Feng (2012) pointed out that one of the most important reasons for this, was the misunderstanding of “*fēn bù shì lǐng dǎo*”, the literal translation of “distributed leadership” into Chinese. The word “*fēn bù*” (distribution) may be easily misunderstood and simplified as the situation of delegation of power or responsibilities, rather than the real influence. In a Chinese school, there is a distribution of power among formally designated leaders such as principals, vice-principals, department heads, and subject heads. The concept of “teacher leader” is not new in Chinese contexts either. “Backbone teachers” (*gǔ gàn jiào shī*, 骨干教师), for example, may be influential teacher leaders without any formal administrative position. The focus of distributed leadership, however, is not only on the distribution of designated power or position, but also on actual leadership practices exerting influences. Harris (2012) also reminded researchers to notice two problems which often cause the misinterpretation and misunderstanding of distributed leadership. One is the attempt to include different things in this concept and to use the term as a “‘catch all’ descriptor for any form of shared, collaborative or extended leadership practice” (p. 11). Another problem is the tendency to use distributed leadership “as the antithesis of top-down, hierarchical leadership”. In fact,

while distributed leadership emphasizes the importance of informal leadership, it does not deny the important roles of formal leadership.

Besides the misinterpretation of the meaning, there is a cultural gap in China about the implementation of distributed leadership in China. In analyzing the problems of China's "New Curriculum" discussed in Section 2.1.2, Feng (2006) cited the examples of distributed leadership, which some Chinese principals tried to introduce into their schools to accelerate the facilitation of curriculum reform. As it is in conflict with the traditional Chinese culture of school leadership, it brings confusion and incompatibility. The concept of distribution leadership, for instance, is contradictory with what Confucius pointed out in The Analects (*lún yǔ*, 论语): "He who holds no rank in a State does not discuss its policies" (*bù zài qí wèi bù móu qí zhèng*, 不在其位, 不谋其政), which may imply that school leadership is the business of the principal only. Walker, Hu, and Qian (2012) also noticed the problem. While many Chinese scholars advocate distributed leadership, there seems to be a disconnection between the theory and the real practice of principals. The cultural gap needs to be given attention to, but in Chinese contexts and culture, distributed leadership still has its significance. As Feng (2012) pointed out, the significance of Spillane's (2006) leader-plus perspective does not lie in the augmentation of different people, but in the increased efficiency and enhanced influence in the interactions and co-performance of people. Li's (2015) study was the only empirical study of these 67 journal articles that the researcher found in CNKI, providing an example of how instructional leadership is distributed in a Chinese school. Li (2015) shadowed a school principal in her school for

a month and found that the principal was not the only leader in instructional leadership, and that many teachers also played very important roles. He categorized other leaders into three types: leaders with formal positions; excellent teachers with wide recognition; and teachers having similar educational ideas with the principal. He concluded that distributed leadership can help teachers exert their influence in instructional leadership, and that principals should also actively participate in the leadership in key areas and core activities. In Li's (2015) study, leaders in instructional leadership not only included the principals, teachers with formal positions, but also informal teacher leaders. These informal leaders became influential not because of their positions, but because they were excellent in teaching or had similar educational ideas with the principal. This study may suggest that despite the cultural differences, the practice of distributed leadership in Chinese schools is also worth investigation and exploration.

3.1.9 Cultural Factors Affecting Distributed Leadership in Chinese Schools.

Hofstede, Hofstede, and Minkov's (2010) five cultural dimensions may be the most popular and most cited framework for the influence of culture on management and leadership. They firstly introduced four dimensions: power distance, uncertainty avoidance, individualism/collectivism, masculinity/femininity, and later the fifth dimension, long-term orientation/short-term orientation was introduced. Values associated with long-term orientation/short-term orientation are all found in the teachings of Confucius, so the fifth dimension is also called Confucian dynamism.

Many scholars have criticized the grounding of his studies (Baskerville, 2003;

McSweeney, 2002). The dimension of “masculinity/femininity”, for example, was criticized for having flaws in its methodology (Dimmock & Walker, 2006), and the dimension of “uncertainty avoidance” has been argued to be irrelevant to Chinese population (McSweeney, 2002). Despite the criticism and the limitations, the dimensions introduced in Hofstede’s model such as power distance, collectivism, and Confucian dynamism are helpful for the understanding the influence of Chinese culture on distributed leadership in this study.

3.1.9.1 Power distance.

Power distance is defined by Hofstede as “the extent to which the less powerful members of institutions and organizations within a country expect and accept that power is distributed unequally” (Hofstede, Hofstede, & Minkov, 2010, p. 61). China scores highly in the power distance index, for traditional Confucian ideas advocate the respect for the elderly and seniors. For example, Confucius advocated “*wǔ lún*” (五伦, meaning “five basic relationship”) : ruler-subject (*jūn chén*, 君臣), father-son (*fù zǐ*, 父子), elder brother–younger brother (*xiōng dì*, 兄弟), husband-wife (*fū fù*, 夫妇), and senior friend–junior friend (*péng yǒu*, 朋友). The junior partner owes the senior respect and obedience, and the senior owes the junior protection and consideration. This high power distance of Chinese culture challenges distributed leadership in Chinese schools (Dimmock & Walker, 2002; Feng, 2006; Walker, Hu, & Qian, 2012) because distributed leadership is based on the premise of emphasizing both formal leadership and informal leadership and moves from the attention on the solo heroic leader.

3.1.9.2 Collectivism.

Collectivism is used as the opposite of individualism by Hofstede, Hofstede, & Minkov (2010), and it pertains to “societies in which people from birth onward are integrated into strong, cohesive in-groups, which throughout people’s lifetime continue to protect them in exchange for unquestioning loyalty” (p. 92). Chinese society is a typical collectivist society, so it is of no doubt that it scores low in individualism index. In collectivist cultures such as Chinese culture, harmony (*hé*, 和) is very important (Walker, Hu, & Qian, 2012; Zhang, Lin, Nonaka, & Beom, 2005). “Harmony is to be prized” (*yǐ hé wéi guì*, 以和为贵) as explained by Confucius in the Analects (*lún yǔ*, 论语) and is widely accepted by Chinese people. To maintain harmony with one’s social environment is considered as a key virtue. Direct confrontation of another person is considered rude and undesirable. Hofstede, Hofstede, and Minkov (2010) cited the example of saying no in a “harmonious way”: “you may be right” and “we will think about it” are examples of polite ways of turning down a request. Another important value to be considered in Chinese culture is face (*miàn zi*, 面子). In collectivist societies, “face” is something to meet the essential requirements related to one’s social position. To “give face” means to show due respect for that position. A famous Chinese proverb says, “a person needs a face; a tree needs bark” (*rén yào liǎn shù yào pí*, 人要脸树要皮). To lose face is to lose social status and respect (Zhao, 2012). To make others “lose face” is a very serious offense. In research on distributed leadership in Chinese, these values have to be considered, for they may influence the practice of leadership essentially. With a harmonious environment, it may be difficult for school leaders to

promote the reform. In the process of the reform, the leaders should also consider not making teachers have the feeling of “losing face”, which may bring very negative reactions.

3.1.9.3 Confucian values.

In Hofstede’s fifth dimension, long term orientation/short term orientation is based on some Confucian values. Long-term orientation tends to foster virtues oriented toward future rewards—in particular, perseverance and thrift. Perseverance (*yì lì*, 毅力) is considered to be a great virtue in Chinese culture. The story of “An iron pestle can be ground down to a needle” (*tiě chǔ mó chéng zhēn*, 铁杵磨成针) is very popular in teaching young children. Another typical Chinese value in this dimension is “*guān xi*” (关系), which means relationship, social networks, or personal connections. In a research study on distributed leadership or any type of leadership in Chinese schools, perseverance and “*guān xi*” are important (Pisapia & Ying, 2011), for it helps people to become influential and effective leaders.

As this research investigates how context and culture influences the distributed leadership of schools in the reform, the discussion of Chinese cultural features such as high power distance, high collectivism, and Confucius values (Hofstede, Hofstede, & Minkov, 2010) can remind the researcher to pay attention to these cultural factors influencing leadership practices of schools, and to explore how these Chinese cultural values shaped the distributed leadership in Chinese schools.

3.2 Conceptual Framework

Chapter 2 introduced the three-level context of the research: national-level curriculum reform; district-level instructional reform; and school-level context. Section 3.1 discussed the literature on the definition of distributed leadership, the practices of distributed, and the contextual and cultural influence on distributed leadership. The context and literature discussed in Chapter 2 and Section 3.1 provided a foundation for the development of the conceptual framework of this research.

The conceptual framework mainly centered on the central research question: How does context and culture influence distributed leadership in Chinese schools? (Please see *Figure 3.1* Conceptual Framework: How does context and culture influence distributed leadership in Chinese schools):

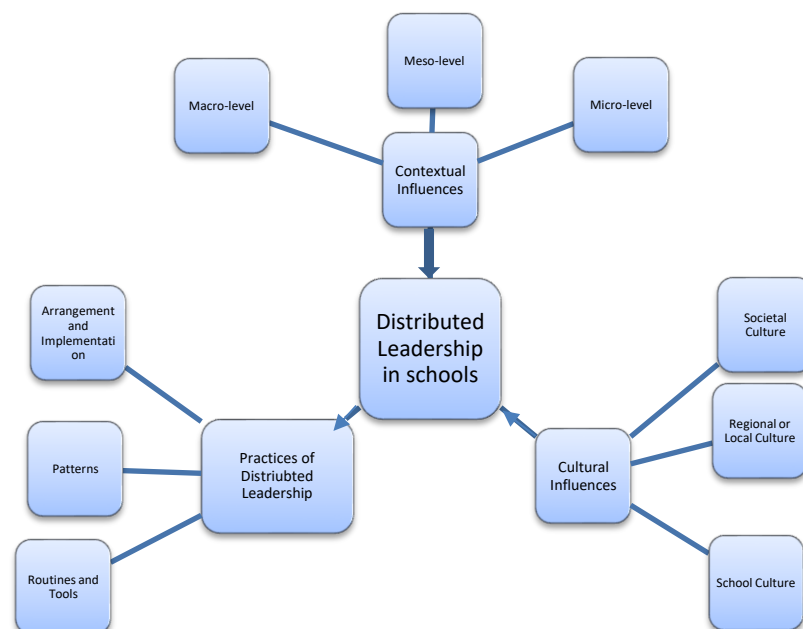


Figure 3.1. Conceptual Framework: How does context and culture influence distributed leadership in schools.

Figure 3.1 shows the conceptual framework of this research: Distributed leadership in schools influenced by context and culture is in the centre of this framework, and it shows the core of this research is distributed leadership in schools. Three dimensions surrounding the centre of distributed leadership are included in this research: Contextual Influences, Cultural Influences and Practices of Distributed Leadership. Under each dimension are subtopics: (1) Contextual Influences. Three levels of contexts are included: micro-level, meso-level and micro-level; (2) Cultural Influences. Three levels of group cultures are included: societal level, regional or local level and organizational or school level; (3) Practices of Distributed Leadership influenced by context and culture, which include ways of arrangement and implementation, patterns of distributed leadership, and routines and tools through which leadership is distributed.

The following section discusses the research design of this study based on this conceptual framework.

3.2.1 Contextual influences on distributed leadership.

As discussed in Chapter 2 and Section 3.1.6, this research analyzed three levels of contexts: macro-level or national-level context of the “New Curriculum Reform”; meso-level or district-level instructional reform “Excellent Classroom Culture Construction; and micro-level or school level implementation of the reform. This research explored how these contexts influence the reform and the distributed leadership of the schools.

3.2.2 Cultural influences on distributed leadership.

As discussed in Sections 3.1.6, 3.1.7 and 3.1.8, cultural influences on distributed leadership in schools include societal culture such as harmony (*hé xié*), face (*miàn zi*), and “*guān xi*” shared by Chinese society as a whole; regional or local culture such as the culture of reform and openness of Shenzhen discussed in Section 2.2.1; and specific school culture shaping the values and assumptions of people in schools. Dimmock and Walker’s (2006) distinction of societal and organizational culture; Schein’s (2004) model of three levels of culture; and Stoll’s (1998) description of positive cultural values were all helpful for the exploration of cultural influences on distributed leadership. Dimmock and Walker (2006) provide a three-level approach for the researcher to explore cultural influences: societal culture, local culture and school culture. Schein’s (2004) model of cultures help the researcher to pay attention to both the visible cultural features and deeper levels of culture. Stoll (1998) listed norms of culture which help school improvement such as shared goals, mutual respect, and openness. These norms may also be helpful for the construction of distributed leadership, and are very important factors to consider in the analysis of cultural influences.

3.2.3 Practices of distributed leadership influenced by context and culture.

This dimension is designed to discuss how leadership distribution is specifically practiced in Chinese schools, and mainly focuses on ways of distribution in arrangement and implementation, patterns of distribution, and routines and tools

through which leadership practice is performed. The purpose is to explore and explain specific leadership practices in Chinese schools.

3.2.3.1 Ways of distribution in arrangement and implementation.

As discussed in Section 3.13, leadership distribution may be arranged in the forms of division of labour and co-performance, and may be implemented by design or default. This research explored the ways of leadership distribution arrangement and implementation in Chinese contexts and culture, and identifies its similarities and differences with practices discussed in Western literature.

3.2.3.2 Patterns of distribution.

As discussed in Section 2.14, Leithwood et al. (2007) identified four forms of distributed leadership: (1) Planful alignment. (2) Spontaneous alignment. (3) Spontaneous misalignment. (4) Anarchic misalignment. This research explored if this finding could be applied in the context and culture of Chinese schools in a reform.

3.2.3.3 Routines and tools through which leadership practice is performed.

As discussed in Section 2.15, routines and tools are very important in the distributed perspective of leadership, for it is through the interaction of people with routines and tools that leadership practices happen. This research explored important routines and tools in the context and culture of Chinese schools.

3.3 Chapter Summary

This chapter reviewed important literature on distributed leadership. It first discussed the definition of distributed leadership illuminated by prominent scholars on distributed leadership such as Spillane (2006), Gronn (2002), Leithwood (2007), and Harris (2009a). It then analyzed relative literature on people to whom leadership is distributed, ways of distribution, patterns of distribution, routines and tools through which leadership is distributed, and the effects of distributed leadership on school performance. After that, it discussed the influence of context and school culture on distributed leadership, Chinese literature on distributed leadership and important cultural factors affecting the distributed leadership in Chinese schools.

Based on the literature review, this research built a conceptual framework of distributed leadership influenced by the context and culture of Chinese schools. The framework focused on how context and culture influenced the distributed leadership in Chinese schools and contained three dimensions: "Contextual Influences Dimension", which included three levels of contexts: micro-level, meso-level and micro-level; "Cultural Influences Dimension", which included three levels of group cultures: societal level, regional or local level and organizational or school level; "Practices of Distributed Leadership Dimension" influenced by context and culture, which included ways of arrangement and implementation, patterns of distributed leadership, and routines and tools through which leadership.

CHAPTER 4

METHODOLOGY

Chapter 2 gave an introduction of the context of the three case study schools, and Chapter 3 reviewed the relative literature on distributed leadership and cultural influence on leadership to develop a conceptual framework. This chapter continues to explain the methodology adopted in the research and the approaches to data analysis. This chapter is divided into six sections: Section 1 explains the multiple-case design of the research; Section 2 introduces the sampling logic of selecting the three case study schools; Section 3 presents data collection methods; Section 4 shows the process of data analysis; Section 5 discusses participants and ethical issues; and Section 6 lists the limitations of this case study research.

4.1 Qualitative Multiple Case Study Design

As Merriam (1998) suggests, when people start a research project, a fundamental consideration is the philosophical orientation or philosophical underpinnings (Baxter, 2008) of the researcher. Carr & Kemmis (1986) discuss three basic forms of educational research which are based on different philosophical paradigms: positivist, interpretive, and critical. Quantitative research is usually based on a positivist paradigm of “rationality, objectivity and truth” (p. 129). In this perspective, reality is stable and measurable. Qualitative studies usually take constructivist and interpretivist perspectives. They claim that truth is relative and it is dependent on people perspectives.

According to Carr & Kemmis, the purpose of interpretive social science is “to reveal the meaning of particular forms of social life by systematically articulating the subjective-meaning structures governing the ways in which typical individuals act in typical situations” (p. 90). In this perspective, education is a process and school is a lived experience. Merriam (1998) summarizes four characteristics of qualitative research: (1) the key philosophical assumption is based on the view that “reality is constructed by individual interacting with their social world”; (2) the researcher is the primary instrument for data collection and analysis; (3) qualitative research usually involves fieldwork; (4) the product of a qualitative study is richly descriptive for it focuses on process, meaning and understanding (p.8). Creswell (2015) lists six major characteristics of qualitative research at different stages: (1) exploring a problem and developing a detailed understanding of a central phenomenon; (2) having the literature review play a minor role but justify the problem; (3) stating the purpose and research questions in an open-ended way to capture the participants’ experiences; (4) collecting data based on words or from images from a small number of individuals so that the participants’ views are obtained; (5) analyzing the data for description and themes using text analysis and interpreting the larger meaning of the findings; (6) writing the report using flexible, emerging structures and evaluative criteria and including the researchers’ subjective reflexivity and bias (p. 16). This research is to explore how distributed leadership is practiced within an instructional reform environment in Chinese schools, and the aim is to explore an educational process and the lived experience in case study schools, so a qualitative approach is adopted in the research.

The central research question of this study was: How does context and culture influence distributed leadership in schools? To understand and explain the research problem, this research adopted a qualitative multiple-case study design to explore how distributed leadership in schools is influenced by context and culture. As Miles and Huberman (1994) pointed out, qualitative studies focus on “naturally occurring, ordinary events in natural settings”, and can present what “real life is like” (p. 10). A further strength of qualitative studies is their “richness and holism” and that they can provide rich and vivid descriptions of “lived experience” for people.

Yin (2009) defines a case as “a contemporary phenomenon within its real life context, especially when the boundaries between a phenomenon and context are not clear and the researcher has little control over the phenomenon and context.” (p. 13) He listed three situations in which case studies might be used: (1) “how” or “why” questions are being posed; (2) the investigator has little control over events; and (3) the focus is on a contemporary phenomenon within a real-life context (p. 2). The research question of this study was “how does context and culture influence distributed leadership in schools?”, so it is a “how” question. Leadership practices are impossible to be “controlled” by anybody, and the focus was on leadership practiced every day in the real-context of Chinese schools.

Case studies, as Yin (2009) points out, can either be quantitative or qualitative. Stake (1995, 2005) and Merriam (1998) have a qualitative concentration on discussing case study research. According to Stake (1995, 2005), a case can be either simple or complex. “It may be a child or a classroom of children or an event, a happening, such

as a mobilization of professionals to study a childhood condition” (2005, p. 444). Qualitative case study is a “study of the particularity and complexity of a single case, coming to understand its activity within important circumstances” (1995, p. xi). Merriam defines a case as “a thing, a single entity, a unit around which there are boundaries” (p.27), and qualitative case study as “an intensive, holistic description and analysis of a bounded phenomenon such as a program, an institution, a person, a process, or a social unit” (p. xiii).

Placing boundaries on a case is very important in case studies. “If the phenomenon you are interested in studying is not intrinsically bounded, it is not a case” (Merriam, p. 27). According to Stake (2005), the object of case study is “a specific, unique, bounded system” (p. 445) and it is necessary to identify certain features within the system, within the boundaries of the case” (p.445). Miles and Huberman (1994) believe that a case is “a phenomenon of some sort occurring in a bounded context” (p. 25). As Crewswell (2015) explains, “bounded” means that the case is “separated out for research in terms of time, place, or some physical boundaries” (p. 469). Yin (2009) also emphasizes the importance of defining the boundaries of a case study. To identify research questions to be answered or propositions to be examined is important, for it helps the research clarify the boundaries of the case study with regard to “the time period covered by the case study; the relevant social group, organization, or geographic area; the type of evidence to be collected; and the priorities for data collection and analysis?” (p. 28). Setting boundaries will ensure that the study remains reasonable in scope. In this research on distributed leadership within an instructional reform environment in Chinese schools,

for example, I need to decide what kind of instructional reform environment to be included in the study, how many and what kind of schools and participants to be chosen, the time period covered by the case study, and what type of evidence to be collected. The instructional reform environment involved in this study is bounded within the national new curriculum reform and the district reform of “Excellent Classroom Culture Construction” (please see Chapter 2). I selected three case study schools in the same district and set limit to the number of interview participants of each school to be 10 to 15. Each participant was interviewed once or twice, and the time for each interview was between 30 to 90 minutes.

A three-case study design was adopted in the research. Merriam (1998) points out that the inclusion of multiple cases in case study is a common practice to enhance “the external validity” (p.40). This three-case design can bring more richness and variety to the study. Yin (2009) suggests that multiple case study is usually considered to be more compelling and more robust. Miles and Huberman (1994) also think that multiple-case sampling can add “confidence” to findings, and can strengthen “the precision, the validity and the stability of findings” (p. 29). As Yin (2009) emphasizes, multiple cases should not be treated as multiple respondents in survey, and in designing multiple cases, replication logic should be followed, rather than a sampling logic. The cases should be treated as multiple experiments. When the investigation starts, similar results or contrasting results may be predicted explicitly. As Stake (1995) states, a typical case study procedure for multiple case study or collective study is to first analyze each case

separately and then to compare the cases to identify common and different themes among all of the cases.

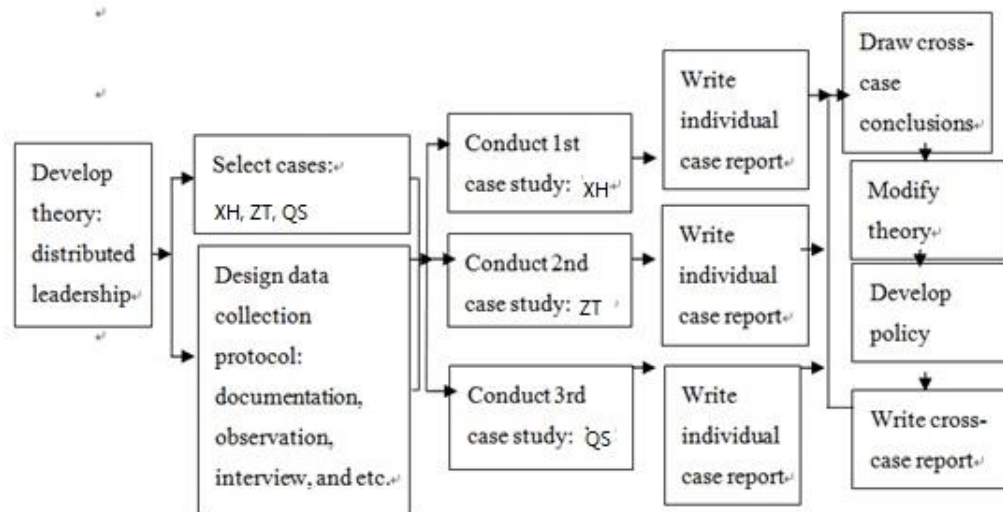


Figure 4.1. Multi-case Design of the Research.

As shown in Figure 4.1, in this study, the investigation is conducted in a multiple case design: first, every school is taken as an individual case to find relevant evidence and conclusions for this individual case; then each case's conclusions are used to be replicated by other individual cases. Each individual case and the multiple-case as a whole is the focus of a final research report. For each individual case, the report illustrates detailed information of particular claims. As a whole, the report demonstrates the extent of the replication logic and show why certain cases are predicted to have similar results, whereas, some other cases may be predicted to have contrasting results.

4.2 The selection of case study schools: purposeful sampling

As Patton (2002) pointed out, qualitative and quantitative research methods are quite different in sampling logics. Qualitative studies typically focus on “purposeful sampling” selecting “information-rich cases” (p. 230), and they usually use relatively

small samples for studies in depth. Quantitative studies, however, often use relatively large random samples for generalization. Miles and Huberman (1994) also suggested that qualitative sampling tends to be “purposive” (p. 27) because random sampling with small number of cases may lead the researchers in a biased direction. Purposeful sampling can help the researcher to identify and select information-rich cases “for the most effective use of limited resources” (Palinkas, Horwitz, Green, Wisdom, Duan, & Hoagwood, 2015, p. 533). So researchers intentionally select cases “to learn or understand the central phenomenon” (Creswell, 2015, p. 205). Patton listed and explained 15 kinds of qualitative sampling strategies in his book, including “typical case sampling”, “critical case sampling”, “criterion sampling”, “theoretical sampling”, “convenience sampling”, and “stratified purposeful sampling” (pp. 243-244). These strategies were very helpful for the selection of sample schools of this research.

In this research, three primary schools were chosen as the case study schools, for Chinese primary schools are comparatively less pressed in academic results as secondary schools and are, thus, more active in participation in reforms. Students of the nine-year compulsory education are recruited with the policy of school districts (*xué qū*, 学区). After graduation from primary schools, students need not attend a selective examination to be admitted into junior secondary schools. The cases are selected in the logic of typical case sampling, critical case sampling, criterion sampling, theoretical sampling, and stratified purposeful sampling. In applying these strategies, the research may be in the logic of “mixed purposeful sampling” (Patton, 2002, p. 242), for these sampling strategies are not mutually exclusive.

According to Dr. Fa, the Former Vice-director of Nanshan District Education Bureau and the official directly in charge of the district reform, these three sample schools were all typical school representatives of Excellent Classroom Culture Construction of Nanshan District:

“Why do I say that these three schools are typical school representatives? The reason is that all of them have achieved success in the reform by integrating the reform with their practical reality. In a sense, they have all witnessed changes brought by the reform.”

Although these three schools were different in their context, they had aspects in common to guarantee the success of their reform. Dr. Fa emphasized the following common features the three schools shared and which guaranteed their success in the reform:

1. All the principals had good understanding of the reform, and had high expectations and strong enforcement.
2. Principals and vice-principals were united and worked together to achieve the success.
3. All teachers were involved in the reform and the reform was promoted as a whole.

Dr. Fa’s comments on these three schools indicate some of the reasons why the

researcher selected them as sample schools. Section 4.2.1 to Section 4.2.5 discuss in detail the sampling logic of this study, which is summarized in Table 4.1 below.

Table 4.1
Purposeful Sampling

Sampling Strategy	Sampling Logic	How the sampling aligns to the schools
Typical Case Sampling	To select a case that is “typical” to those unfamiliar with the situation.	The three schools were typical schools in the district: they were located respectively in the north, middle and the south of the district. Each school is representative of one type of families the students came from: low, middle and high socioeconomic status.
Critical Case Sampling	To select cases that represent the central phenomenon and can help the researcher learn much about the phenomenon.	The three schools were outstanding in their achievement and were widely acknowledged to have made some successes in the instructional reform the district and other schools.
Criterion sampling	To identify and select the cases that meet some predetermined criterion of importance	The three schools could meet predetermined criteria for case study schools: participating actively in the reform, making some achievements, and demonstrating some features of distributed leadership.
Theoretical sampling	To select cases representative of “important theoretical constructs” in the study.	The three schools already exhibited some features of distributed leadership in achieving some success in the reform, and encouraging teachers to actively participate in the reform
Stratified Purposeful Sampling	To stratify purposeful samples according to different levels in items such as socioeconomic status.	The three schools were typical schools stratified with different parents in different social economic status, and that their achievement in the reform was also different in forms.

4.2.1 Typical case sampling.

To people not familiar with the background of Nanshan District, it was helpful to

provide typical case study schools for study. The residents of Nanshan District could be roughly divided into three categories according to their social economic status: poor “peasant workers” or “immigrant workers” (*nóng mín gōng*, 农民工), ordinary working class, and rich elites. The area in the north is relatively poor with many “villages among the city” (*chéng zhōng cūn*, 城中村) where peasant workers live. The area in the middle has the biggest government-built housing for low-income local residents, so residents are mostly ordinary working-class people. The area in the south has many expensive and upscale houses, and many rich elites live there.

The three primary schools in this research were typical schools of the district: Xingfu Primary School located in the north of the district, and a typical school for the children of poor “peasant workers”; Zhuti School located in the middle of the district, and typical school for the students from ordinary working families; Qiushi No. 2 Primary School located in the south of the district, and typical school for the children of relatively rich elites. (Please see *Figure 4.2* Location of case study schools)

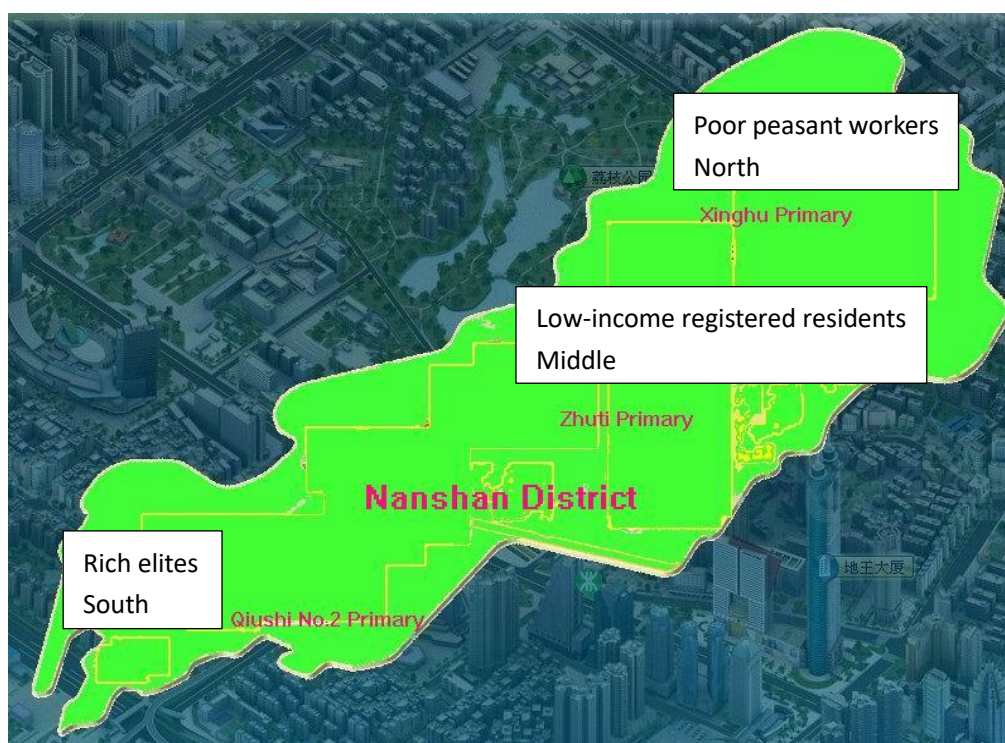


Figure 4.2. Location of Case Study Schools

4.2.2 Critical case sampling.

According to Patton (2002), critical cases are cases that can be identified with the logic of “if it happens there, it will happen anywhere” (p. 236). In this study, reform and distributed leadership were the focus of attention. The three schools were outstanding in their achievement and acknowledged to have made some successes in the instructional reform launched by Nanshan District: Xingfu - outstanding in improving the learning outcome of students; Zhuti - quite famous for students’ cooperative learning; Qiushi No. 2 - great achievement in its curriculum (textbook) integration reform. In their effects to achieve the success, the participation of teachers, or distributed leadership, have played a great role. As successful schools participating in the reform, they can be identified as critical cases of this study.

4.2.3 Criterion sampling.

Criterion sampling logic is to identify and select the cases that meet some predetermined criterion of importance (Palinkas, Horwitz, Green, Wisdom, Duan & Hoagwood, 2013). In this study, this predetermined criterion for case study schools was to select schools participating actively in the district reform, making some achievement and demonstrating some features of distributed leadership. As Dr. Fa stated, these case study schools had achieved success in the reform and the teachers actively participated and, therefore, can meet these criteria. Xingfu successfully improved the learning outcome of students after the reform; Zhuti was widely recognised by the local education bureau and other schools in the reform of students' cooperative learning; and Qiushi No. 2 made great progress in its curriculum integration reform.

4.2.4 Theoretical sampling.

Theoretical sampling is a type of theory-based criterion sampling, and the cases were representative of “important theoretical constructs” (Patton, 2002, p. 238). This case study was based on the theories of distributed leadership contributed by Western scholars, so in selecting the case study schools, the researcher firstly had the theory of distributed leadership in mind; the three schools had already exhibited some features of distributed leadership in achieving some success in the reform, as their reform was promoted as a whole, and all teachers and administrators encouraged to make contributions to the reform.

4.2.5 Stratified purposeful sampling.

Stratified purposeful sampling can be considered as a combination of different types of purposeful sampling by stratifying purposeful samples. As cited in Patton's book (2002, p. 240), researchers can combine typical case sampling with maximum heterogeneity sampling by stratifying purposeful samples according to different levels in items such as socioeconomic status. In this way, although it provides less diversity than a full maximum variation sample, it represents more than simple typical case sampling. Based on the prior discussion of context in Chapter 2, the three schools were typical schools stratified with different parents in different social economic status, and that their achievement in the reform was also different in form. In selecting these three schools, the logic of stratified purposeful sampling was applied.

4.3 Data collection methods

Semi-structured interviews of 34 principal, vice-principals, department heads, subject heads, teacher leaders and followers of these three sample schools were completed. All interviews were recorded and then transcribed. The researcher conducted a pilot study before collecting materials in the case study schools. The purpose of this pilot study was to refine the researcher's data collection plans (Yin, 2009). Pilot studies can provide the opportunity to examine necessary adjustments or alternatives (Given, 2008, p. 625). A pilot study can also help develop suitable wording or questioning techniques. The school the researcher chose for the pilot study was a primary school not among the three sample schools. The principal and vice-

principal were very interested in this research, and were happy to participate. The researcher conducted a focus group discussion on a research project of professional learning community of this school, which was similar to the thesis proposal. The researcher first gave a 20-minute introduction of the research proposal, and then had a one-hour focus-group discussion with a group of people, including the principal, vice-principal, chairman of teachers' union, director of teaching research, subject heads, grade heads and ordinary teachers. The researcher also read the interview questions to them, and asked if they could understand the interview questions. All ten leaders and teachers attending the discussion expressed their opinions about the research proposal. Through the discussion, the researcher found that the word "leadership" was confusing to the teachers. Except for the two principals and the director of teaching affairs, almost every one emphasized that they were not leaders at all. The researcher tried to explain the difference between "leaders" and "managers", but they were still confused about that. The Chinese equivalent of "leadership" is "lǐng dǎo" (领导), which is also the equivalent for the word "leader". In Chinese, the word "lǐng dǎo" usually refers to people with formal official positions. With more explanations, the researcher helped them to understand that leadership meant influence and guidance, and not necessarily implemented by people with formal leading positions. This pilot study helped the researcher understand that the literal translation of the word "leadership" was confusing in Chinese culture, and that more explanation of the meaning would need to be added in the interview questions and explained in formal interviewees to make them understand it better.

Table 4.2
Data Collection Methods

Methods	Activities
Interviews	The researcher interviewed 34 participants, including a government official, 4 principals, 3 vice-principals, 8 department heads, 4 subject heads, 8 informal teacher leaders, and 6 young teachers.
Documentation	The researchers collected personal documents, written reports, internal records, formal studies, news clippings and other published and unpublished books and articles.
Observations	As the vice-principal of Zhuti, the researcher observed relative activities of the school as in insider and practitioner, The researcher also observed open lessons of other two schools to collect information about their reform.

Besides interviews, the researcher also tried to obtain other sources of evidence such as documentation and observations to strengthen the validity of the case studies (Yin, 2009, pp.114-118). Table 4.2 illustrates the data collection methods of the research: interviews, documentation and observations.

Seidman's (2006) "Interviewing as a qualitative research" introduced "three interview series" (p. 17), a model of "in-depth, phenomenological interviewing" (p. 16) with a series of three separate interviews with each participant: Interview One: Focused Life History; Interview Two: the Details of Experience; and Interview Three: Reflection on the Meaning. Seidman (2006) thought that this approach helped the interviewer and participant to delve deeper into the experience of the participant and to place it in context. Conducting a three interview series with each participant in the research was possible, but the researcher tried to be familiar with the interviewees' experience and context by having two meetings with them: one 15-minute informal briefing meeting with each participant, which helped the researcher be familiar with

each participant's background and allowed the researcher to introduce the research to them; and one formal interview which encouraged the participant to reflect their "meaning" of their experience. Prior to the first briefing meeting, the researcher sent them written materials introducing the research and consent of participation in the research, and asked them to sign the consent form if they agreed to participate. The researcher intentionally gave each participant two weeks to prepare before the formal interview took place. In the meantime, the researcher contacted them through email, phones, internet, and instant messages to answer their questions about the research, and help them understand the research better. Therefore, when they attended the formal interview, they were ready for the dialogues and to reflect on the meaning of each question the researcher asked. The interview length varied from 30 to 90 minutes. Interviews with young teachers tended to be shorter, and interviews with principals tended to be longer. The reasons may be that young teachers tended to talk more about teachers around them and less about leaders such as school administrators. As Seidman (2006) suggested, places of interviews should be convenient, private, and familiar to the participants to make them feel "comfortable and secure" (p. 49). In both briefing meetings and formal interviews, the researcher tried to find a quiet place in the participants' own schools to help them relax and concentrate.

4.3.1 Interviews.

Interviews played the most significant role in the study. While following his own line of inquiry, the researcher tried to ask substantial questions to minimize potential

bias. Interview questions were sent to the participants before the formal interviews, which included questions about the context, culture and practices of distributed leadership in the reform (Please see Appendix B: Interview Script). These questions were closely related with the central research question “how does context and culture influence the distributed leadership in schools” and the three sub-questions. To answer the first sub-question “what are the contextual influences on the practices of distributed leadership”, the researcher asked the participants to introduce the background of the instructional reform, and the basic information of their schools such as school type, school size and developmental stage. To answer the second sub-question “what are the cultural influences on the practices of distributed leadership”, the researcher asked the following interview questions: What are the most important school cultures in your school? What influences do you think they have on the distributed leadership of your school’s reform? As a school in the special zone of China, what special cultural features do you think your school have influenced the distributed leadership of your school? To answer the third sub-question “how is distributed leadership practiced within an instructional reform environment in China”, the researcher asked the participants to introduce and explain the leaders who had great influence on the reform, the ways of arrangement and implementation of distributed leadership in the reform, the patterns of leadership distribution in the reform, the influential routines and tools in the reform and the effects of distributed leadership in the reform.

As shown in the Table 4.3, 34 participants were interviewed, and the interviews provided rich data for the research. When selecting the participants of each school, the

researcher tried to include leaders who affected the reform at different levels. Some followers were also selected. In each different school, the specific number and categories of participants were different depending on the availability and different contexts of the schools. The number of participants from each school was similar: 10 from Qiushi No. 2, 11 from Xingfu, and 12 from Zhuti. In each school, participants were selected based on their positions and influence on the reform. In Zhuti Primary, the researcher selected the participants and asked for their approval. In other schools, the participants were recommended by their principals. The researcher tried to include participants with different positions, different ages, different working experiences and different subjects, although there was a slight difference in each school.

Table 4.3 shows the variations of participants in categories, positions, subjects, working experiences and age in each school:

From the categories of the participants, it can be seen that leaders at different levels are included: one government official; four principals; three vice-principals or principal aides; eight school department heads; four subject heads; and eight influential teacher leaders. Six young teachers, who were greatly influenced by the reform and leaders, were also included. The specific positions of the 34 participants are also shown in the table: besides a Vice Director of Education Bureau, four principals or former principals; three vice-principals or principal aides; four directors or vice-directors of teaching affairs; three directors of teaching research; one director of administration; and one vice director of school culture office were included.

Table 4.3
Basic Information of Participants

Name	Schools	Position	Subject	Category	Gender	Age Range	Experience Range
Fa	Education Bureau	Former Vice Director of Nanshan Education Bureau	English	Government official	M	>50	>30
Yong	Xingfu Primary	Principal	Chinese	Principal	M	>50	>30
Jiang	Xingfu Primary	Former Vice-principal	Chinese	Vice-Principal	M	35-50	15-30
Yuan	Xingfu Primary	Director of Administration	Chinese	Department head	M	35-50	15-30
Zhao	Xingfu Primary	Director of Teaching Research	Math	Department head	M	35-50	15-30
Xie	Xingfu Primary	Director of Teaching Affairs	Math	Department head	M	35-50	15-20
Mei	Xingfu Primary	Backbone teacher	Chinese	Teacher leader	F	35-50	15-30
Kang	Xingfu Primary	Young teacher	Chinese	Young teacher	F	<35	<10
Fen	Xingfu Primary	Backbone teacher	Math	Teacher leader	F	35-50	<10
Liang	Xingfu Primary	Backbone teacher	Math	Teacher leader	F	35-50	15-30
Hua	Xingfu Primary	Backbone teacher	Chinese	Teacher leader	F	35-50	10-15
Hong	Xingfu Primary	Vice Director of School Culture	Music	Department head	F	35-50	15-30
Wang	Qiushi No. 2	Principal	Math	Principal	M	35-50	15-30
Pan	Qiushi No. 2	Vice-principal	Math	Vice-Principal	F	35-50	15-30
Feng	Qiushi No.	Director of	Math	Department	F	35-50	15-30

	2	Teaching Research		head			
Yao	Qiushi No. 2	Backbone teacher	Math	Teacher leader	F	<35	<10
Hu	Qiushi No. 2	Young teacher	Chinese	Young teacher	F	<35	<10
Jing	Qiushi No. 2	Backbone teacher	English	Teacher leader	F	<35	10-15
Gong	Qiushi No. 2	Subject chief	Math	Teacher leader	F	35-50	10-15
Tang	Qiushi No. 2	Young teacher	Chinese	Young teacher	F	<35	<10
Ni	Qiushi No. 2	Young teacher	English	Young teacher	F	<35	<10
Su	Qiushi No. 2	Young teacher	Math	Young teacher	F	<35	<10
Luo	Zhuti School	Former principal	Chinese	Principal	M	>50	15-30
Ye	Zhuti School	Principal	Math	Principal	M	35-50	15-30
Xing	Zhuti School	Director of Teaching Affairs	Chinese	Department head	F	35-50	15-30
Jun	Zhuti School	Director of Teaching Research	Chinese	Department head	M	35-50	15-30
Han	Zhuti School	Backbone teacher	Math	Department head	F	35-50	15-30
Cui	Zhuti School	Backbone teacher	Chinese	Department head	F	35-50	15-30
Jia	Zhuti School	Subject chief	Chinese	Teacher leader	F	35-50	15-30
Bi	Zhuti School	Subject chief	English	Teacher leader	F	<35	<10
Ying	Zhuti School	Subject chief	Math	Teacher leader	F	35-50	15-30
Zhen	Zhuti School	Backbone teacher	Chinese	Teacher leader	F	35-50	15-30
Si	Zhuti School	Backbone teacher	Math	Teacher leader	F	35-50	15-30
Hui	Zhuti School	Young teacher	English	Young teacher	F	<35	<10

For teacher leaders, five heads of subject and eight teacher leaders without formal

positions participated in the interviews. Six young teachers were also included. Most of the participants were teachers of “core subjects” (*hé xīn xué kē*, 核心学科, also often referred to “subjects with exams”): 14 in Chinese, 14 in maths and five in English. Only one music teacher, who did not teach a “core subject”, was included because this teacher contributed to a special feature of her school in introducing Hakka folk songs into the campus. As most of them were formal or informal leaders, only nine young teachers were less than 35 years old, and 22 formal or informal leaders were between 35 to 50 years. Three of the participants were over 50 years old. Only nine young participants had worked less than 10 years. Three of them had worked between 10 to 15 years; four of them between 15 to 20 years; fourteen of them between 21 to 30 years; and four of them for more than 30 years. For the gender of the participants, 10 were males and 24 were females. This may partly show the dominance of female teachers in Chinese primary schools.

4.3.2 Documentation.

The researcher collected various kinds of documents about the reform at the national (macro) level, the city and district (meso) level and at the school (micro) level including: 1. Policies, laws, and regulations related to the reform; 2. written reports including agendas, announcements and minutes of meeting; 3. internal records such as administrative documents, plans, proposals, progress reports; 4. formal studies or evaluations of the “cases”; and 5. News clippings and other articles. The researcher tried to identify and collect as many as documents central to the schools’ reform and

distributed leadership practice for future analysis. As a pioneer school in instructional reform, principals and teachers of Zhuti had published several books and a number of journal articles on the reform, and all the schools had also some unpublished materials on the reform. Both published and unpublished documents and other materials of all these three sample schools were collected and used as important evidence of the research. Other documental materials such as news reports on these schools were also searched and collected. Policies, laws, and regulations related to the reform were collected for the analysis of context and background. As Hodder (2003) suggested, different types of documents have to be understood “in the context of their conditions of production and reading” (p. 156). They should be distinguished as a result of first-hand experience or from secondary sources. As Yin (2009) pointed out, documents are useful, but they are not always accurate. So the researcher should use them critically. They can be used to “corroborate and augment evidence from other sources” (p. 103). For example, they can be used to verify the correct titles or names mentioned in the interviews, and can provide other specific details to corroborate information from other sources. By analyzing documents, the researcher can also make inferences and find new clues. As Patton (2002) explained, documents are valuable not only because of “what can be learned directly from”, but also “as stimulus for paths of inquiry that can be pursued only through direct observation and interviews” (p.294). According to Creswell (2015), documents provide a researcher with “a rich source of information” (p. 221). They are “in the language and words of the participants” (p. 222) and are also easy to analyse, because the researcher does not have to transcribe them as in the

analysis of observational or interview data. Documents, however, may be “incomplete, inauthentic, or inaccurate” (p. 222), so the researcher needs to pay attention to distinguish between them. In the research, these documents were used to validate and cross-check findings together with interviews and observations. They were imported into the computer software Atlas.ti Version 7.5.4, coded and analyzed together with interview materials. Using CAQDAS (computer assisted qualitative data analysis software) had great advantages (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011): (1) it is relatively easier to search, retrieve, sort, separate and categorize data and codes; (2) it can help have multiple-level analysis simultaneously; (3) it can show both the data and analytic processes; and (4) it is helpful for management and organization of the data and emerging analysis.

4.3.3 The role of “insider researcher”.

The term “insider researcher” is usually used to refer to a situation where the researcher becomes a part of the topic being investigated (Given, 2008). The researcher worked as the Vice-principal at Zhuti School, and can be regarded as an insider and practitioner of the reform. The role of “inside researcher” helped the researcher to make “participant observation” (Yin, 2009). The role provides special opportunities to collect case study data, and the researcher can perceive reality as someone “inside” the case study. As Creswell (2015) pointed out, an insider researcher making participant observations has excellent opportunities to see experiences from the views of participants, and at the same time as an “inside” observer, can record information in

time while actively engaging in activities at the study.

In this research, the researcher could access some resources and information that otherwise would have been inaccessible to the study. As a participant-observer, however, it is more difficult for a researcher to work as an external observer. In Zhuti Primary, the researcher tried to make good use of the role as an insider and minimize the bias as an insider at the same time. The researcher focused on observing relative meetings of different levels and the lessons of participants. Sometimes they were videotaped or audio recorded. If the information of the observations included in the study concerned relative individuals, the researcher asked for their consent. As it was inconvenient to be involved in most of the meetings of the other two schools, the observations were mostly made on their open lessons.

Insider status is not always an advantage. As the researcher was the vice-principal of one case study school, the participants may feel not pressed by the position of the research and may not be able to express their real opinions. On the other hand, the researcher was quite familiar with the teachers and the school itself, the analysis and interpretation might also be biased and prejudiced. To minimize the bias, the researcher sent written materials introducing the research and consent of participation in the research to all the participants prior to the first briefing meeting, and asked them to sign the consent form if they agreed to participate. The researcher made sure that they understand they can choose not to participate in the program if they are reluctant. In fact, one participant of Zhuti Primary declined to participate in the research for she thought that she was not one the best leaders in the reform. A participant of Qiushi No.

2 Primary took part in the first brief meeting, but was not able to have further interview because she attended a training program of the education bureau. To minimize the possible bias as an insider, the researcher used triangulation of multiple methods: besides interviews, document collection and analysis, and observation were used. Moreover, the researcher sent interview transcripts and drafted findings to the participants to ensure them to check the accuracy and validity of the data and findings. The participants were invited to read what were analyzed and interpreted before the research report was written. In addition, the researcher did not use the data if any participants did not acknowledge the interpretation.

4. 4 Data Analysis

Data analysis is a very important and challenging process for case study researchers. Miles and Huberman (1994) defined data analysis as three “concurrent flows of activity” (p. 10): data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing and verification. Data reduction refers to the process of reduction and transformation to focus and organize the data. Data display is important because text is dispersed and “cumbersome” for analysis. The display types include matrices, graphs, charts and networks. Like data reduction, data display is “a part of analysis” (p. 11), and is helpful for conclusion drawing and verification, which explains what things mean. Given (2009) listed five features of qualitative research data analysis: (1) The gathering of data and the analysis of those data are iterative processes; (2) Both during and after collecting data, researchers engage in memoing; (3) Any analysis of data involves some form of

coding; (4) Qualitative researchers arrive at a more profound analysis of the data when they engage in writing up the data as soon as possible; and (5) All data analysis must move toward developing concepts or relating to already existing concepts.

In the process of data analysis, therefore, it is very important to put data into different arrays and to keep coding and interpreting them all the time. In the process of data analysis, the researcher paid attention to “the sufficient presentation of evidence” (Yin, 2009, p. 127), examine, categorize, code and interpret the data based on the research questions, and in the meantime tried to explore “alternative interpretations” (Yin, 2009, p. 127). Data collected from interviews are all recorded and transcribed with the help of qualitative computer software Atlas.ti Version 7.5.4. The transcribed text was “refined” (Miles & Huberman, 1994, p. 51) so that it is clear to readers. The data were then coded and analyzed with Atlas.ti, computer software specially designed for qualitative research analysis. The researcher used it for coding literature, documents and transcribed interview texts.

In coding, the researcher read them repeatedly and tried to connect the words and sentences with the conceptual framework of the research. In creating each “free code”, the researcher tried to add theoretical meaning, relationship and context in naming the codes (for example: “who are leading: Xingfu: principal: leading direction”). (Please see Table 4.4 Example of Free Codes) The researcher created 572 “open codes” and then put them into 35 smaller “patterns” (Miles & Huberman, 1994) or “code families” according to their categories including (Please see Appendix A: Code Book): (Please see Table 4.6 Examples of Code Families)



Table 4.4

Examples of Free Codes

Interview Scripts (Extracts)	Free Codes
Bi and I are pioneers of our school's instructional reform. We first went to DLK to learn about the reform, and we were among the first teachers to experience classroom teaching and learning which is full of life. We accepted the ideas of reform, and then started our experiments again and again. Many other teachers then found that the reform was possible. Our principals also found that it was practicable and then they started to promote the reform.	Pioneers of the reform; experiments; who are leading: teacher leaders. Set examples to other teachers.
Jia is my partner in Chinese teaching, and she has great personal influence on me. One year after I started my reform experiments, I was promoted to the position of middle-level administrator, and then she became Head of Chinese. She is the direct observer and supporter of my reform practices. When I encountered difficulties in reform, the solution unusually came from her. She is the strongest supporter of my reform. We reach a congenial and cooperative relationship, and this set the atmosphere of the Chinese subject team. We get united together, and more and more teachers joined us and then our reform came to success.	Acknowledged by principals. Partnership; personal influence. Who are leading: middle-level administrator; Who are leading: subject Head. Partnership and cooperation between a middle-level administrator and a subject head.
Bi is an example of teachers who do not have any formal position but greatly influenced others in the reform. She is young, but her students made great progress in the reform. This impressed more experienced teachers, and these teachers' attitude toward the reform changed.	Who are leading: informal teacher leader; young teacher's success.

Table 4.5

Examples of Code Families

Free Codes	Code Families
Who are leading: principals Who are leading: vice-principals Who are leading: middle-level administrators Who are leading: subject heads	 Distribution by position
Who are leading: project leaders Who are leading: master teachers	 Distribution by task

(1) Codes related to schools and the district: Xingfu (XF), Zhuti (ZT), Qiushi 2 (QS) and District (ND);

(2) Codes concerning people who are influential: principals (PL); vice-principals (VP); department heads (DH); teacher leaders (TL).

(3) Codes showing context and culture: macro-level context (Macro); meso-context (Meso); micro-context (Micro); societal culture (SoC); local culture (LC); school culture (ScC).

(4) Codes related to arrangement and implementation of distributed leadership: by position (BP); by task (BT); by spontaneity (BS); collectivist distribution (CD); distribution in sequence (IS); distribution at the same level (DS); distribution at different levels (DD)

(5) Codes reflecting the patterns of distributed leadership: planful distribution (PD); aligned distribution (AD); unaligned distribution (UD); spontaneous alignment (SA);

(6) Codes concerning routines and tools: teacher tutoring (TT); teaching and research (TR); school regulations (SR).

(7) Codes reflecting effects: contribution to distributed leadership (CD); effects of distributed leadership (ED); effects of reform (ER).

After coding, all the data were selected and transformed in a process of “data reduction” so that they were suitable for further analysis. As this research was a multi-case study, data display was mainly in the form of cross-case displays (Miles & Huberman, 1994). Cross-case displays can enhance generalizability although the main goal of qualitative studies is not generalizability. They can also help to deepen understanding and explanation. In the process, case-oriented strategies and variable-oriented strategies were combined to present the displays, for there were both similarities and differences of different cases, and the researcher desired to present

comparisons and contrasts of these three cases. The displays were mainly in the form of matrices to understand “the flow, location and connection of events” (Miles & Huberman, 1994, p. 93), and were also in the form of networks to understand more complicated connections. By creating network view of codes of Atlas.ti, a visionary view of the data analyzed can be achieved and useful for the final reporting of the research results. With the help of “data display”, the researcher reported and explained results in details. After that, the researcher concluded the study by “summarizing key findings, developing explanations for results, suggesting limitations in the research, and making recommendations for future inquiries” (Creswell, 2015, p. 196). The researcher first summarized the major results of the research, and viewed the major conclusions to each of the research questions, and discussed positive implications of the study for practice, policy and research. Then the researcher attempted to explain reasons why the results occurred. The explanations were based on the conceptual framework that the researcher developed from literature review and research questions. The researcher contrasted and compared results with past literature and indicated whether the results confirmed prior studies on distributed leadership. After that, the researcher aimed to show the limitations of the study that may have affected the results, and recommend future studies based on the results of this research.

4.5 Participants and Ethical issues

The participants included both leaders and followers. The principal and other formally designated leaders such as vice principals and department leaders, and

informal leaders and followers were selected for interviews to give elaborate and more direct explanations about the practice of distributed leadership in the reform.

In the process of research, the researcher paid great attention to well-established and important ethical principles including informed and voluntary consent (autonomy), no harm to participants (beneficence), and equal share and fairness (justice) (Orb, Eisenhauer & Wynaden, 2000, p. 94). As it was a case study of public schools, the research acquired the approval of the principals. The researcher explained clearly the research plan to all participants and asked them to sign consent papers to acknowledge their willingness to participate in the study and to show their understanding of their rights. In the interviews, the interviewer encouraged the participants to answer some open questions about distributed leadership of the school, and to express their observations and opinions on distributed leadership and its effects on the school's reform. During the interviews, the participants were free to ask questions about concerns or concepts they were not very sure about. Before the interviews were recorded, the interviewer asked the participants to sign consent for recording. To protect their identity, the research removed the names and locations which may have revealed their real identity and replaced with pseudonyms. After the transcriptions were finished, the written texts were sent to the participants prior to further analysis for member checking (Given, 2008) to ensure the accuracy of transcriptions. The participants were encouraged to give their feedback to the researcher, and to make modification to the transcription if necessary. All of the participants signed their names and expressed their opinions on the accuracy of transcriptions.

Although all the schools and participants were given anonymous names to protect them, the small sample of schools and the specific background of the research may still reveal information of the sample schools. The researcher made it clear that the research was an exploration of how leadership is distributed in the context of Chinese schools in an instructional reform, rather than judgements about practice or the running of schools, and many participants expressed their willingness to contribute what they understood about this issue. In each interview, the researcher explained the following to the participant: 1. The thesis was a piece of academic research and will not be widely published, and if published, approval of the participants would be acquired; 2. Transcribed texts would be sent to them for their feedback; 3. Chapters in the drafted or final thesis which involved their stories would be sent to them for their review. The pseudonyms used to refer to them would be shared with each participant to identify their stories.

4.6 Limitations of a case study

The case study of specific organizations makes an in-depth study of the organization, but good case studies “are still difficult to do” (Yin, 2009, p.16), and case studies are often criticized to have limitations for generalization and wider conclusions. As Stake (1995) pointed out, the real beauty of case studies is “particularization”, not generalization. In studying a particular case, the researcher comes to know it well, “not primarily as to how it is different from others, but what it is, what it does” (p. 8). In this sense, doing a case study does not mean to use a “sample”

to find frequencies or to generalize theories. Accordingly, in a multiple-case study of three schools' distributed leadership will prove rich evidence for the theory of distributed leadership.

4.6.1 Theoretical Limitations.

The conceptual framework of this study was “borrowed” from studies of distributed leadership conducted by Western scholars. The validity of adaptation and revision of Spillane’s practice approach of distributed leadership and Leithwood et al.’s (2007) categorization of distributed leadership in the context of Chinese schools were to be confirmed. In the process of the study, the researcher kept adapting and monitoring these Western theories in the context of Chinese schools. The English version of the interview questions were translated into Chinese by people who are both good at English and Chinese, and then the Chinese version of questions were translated again back to English by other people to minimize the effects of different languages.

4.6.2 Methodological Limitations.

In the data analysis, interpretations were mainly drawn from the researcher’s own coding and readings and, therefore, had the risk of misinterpretation. Although it was convenient for the researcher to conduct the research as the vice-principal of one of the case study schools, Zhuti School, the researcher’s position at the school may have influenced the participants’ reactions and replies. As the researcher was quite familiar with the teachers and the school itself, the analysis and interpretation might also be

biased and prejudiced. It was very difficult for the researcher to achieve a “double-blind” standard.

Trustworthiness has become a very important concept in qualitative research because it allows researchers to reconsider the concepts of generalizability, internal validity, reliability, and objectivity in qualitative terms. Lincoln and Guba’s (1985) explanation of the trustworthiness of interpretations is produced within the constructivist paradigm (Given, 2008, p.119). According to them, trustworthiness involves establishing credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability instead. A credible study is one where the researchers have accurately and richly described the phenomenon in question, and it shows the confidence in the “truth” of the findings. Transferability reflects the need to describe the scope of qualitative study so that it is applicable to different contexts. Dependability implies that the findings are consistent and could be repeated. Confirmability reflects the need to ensure that the interpretations and findings match the data. To ensure the study’s trustworthiness in qualitative research, techniques may include data triangulation (collecting multiple sources of data), prolonged engagement in the community, member checking (consulting with study participants on the accuracy and validity of the data and findings), and maintaining an audit trail (documenting analytic decisions during the study). (Given, 2008, p. 10)

To enhance trustworthiness, the researcher used triangulation of multiple methods: besides interviews, document collection and analysis, and observation were used. This triangulation proved to be useful. For example, the participants of XF didn’t mention

the influence of subject heads on the reform, and some administrators simply declared that the subject heads were not influential as some teacher leaders. This finding was confirmed by an internal journal of XF primary, which claimed that “the work of subject heads is not well done”. Moreover, the researcher used member checking to ensure the participants to the accuracy and validity of the data and findings. After the transcriptions were finished, the written texts were sent to the participants prior to further analysis for member checking to ensure the accuracy of transcriptions. The participants were encouraged to give their feedback to the researcher, and to make modification to the transcription if necessary. All of the participants signed their names and expressed their opinions on the accuracy of transcriptions. I invited all the interview participants to read what were analyzed and interpreted before adding them into the research report. In addition, the researcher did not use the data if any participants did not acknowledge the interpretation. In addition, the names and locations which could reveal their real identity were removed or replaced with other names. The researcher emphasized that the data collected were only used for the study, and their real identity would not be identified in the report. The researcher checked carefully if he had made any biased assumptions, and sent what he had found to leaders and teachers of other schools to reveal possible biased conclusions. When the draft case study report was completed, he had key informants review and make modifications according to their feedbacks. When the draft case study report was completed, he had key informants review and make modifications according to their feedbacks. Yin (2009, p. 42) listed three tactics to increase “construct validity” in case studies: use multiple sources of

evidence; establish a chain of evidence; and have the draft case study report reviewed by key informants. The researcher collected different sources of evidence: interviews, documents and observations. In the process of data analysis, he established relationships with different evidence. He also verified the data he analyzed with key informants. In this way, the construct validity and internal validity were increased. As for "external validity", this case study was not meant to draw generalizations to a larger universe, but with a multi-case design and cross-case analysis, the “generalizability” was enhanced to an extent (Miles & Huberman, 1994).

4.7 Chapter Summary

This chapter explained the research methodology. It first discussed the sampling logic adapted in selecting three case study schools and explained why the research used a multiple-case design. Then, it introduced data collection and data analysis methods. After that, it explained participants and ethical issues, and finally showed the limitations of this case study research. The next chapter presents findings of the conducted research using the methodology discussed in this chapter.

CHAPTER 5

CONTEXTUAL AND CULTURAL INFLUENCES

This chapter compares and integrates findings of this research about contextual and cultural influences on distributed leadership in schools. The discussion centers on the conceptual framework, and finds answers to the research question: How does context and school culture influence distributed leadership in schools? This chapter focuses on the two sub-questions of the central question: What are the contextual influences on the practices of distributed leadership? What are the cultural influences on the practices of distributed leadership? It is divided into two sections: Section 5.1 discusses contextual influences identified in the case study schools in three levels: macro-level, meso-level and micro-level; and Section 5.2 explains important cultural influences in the case study schools in three levels: societal culture, local culture and school culture.

5.1 What are the contextual influences?

Distributed leadership, like any other form of leadership, has to be understood in context and culture. In the implementation of a district instructional reform, the schools were not only directly influenced by meso-level context: the district reform, but also influenced by macro-level context of national reform and policies, and micro-level context of school context.

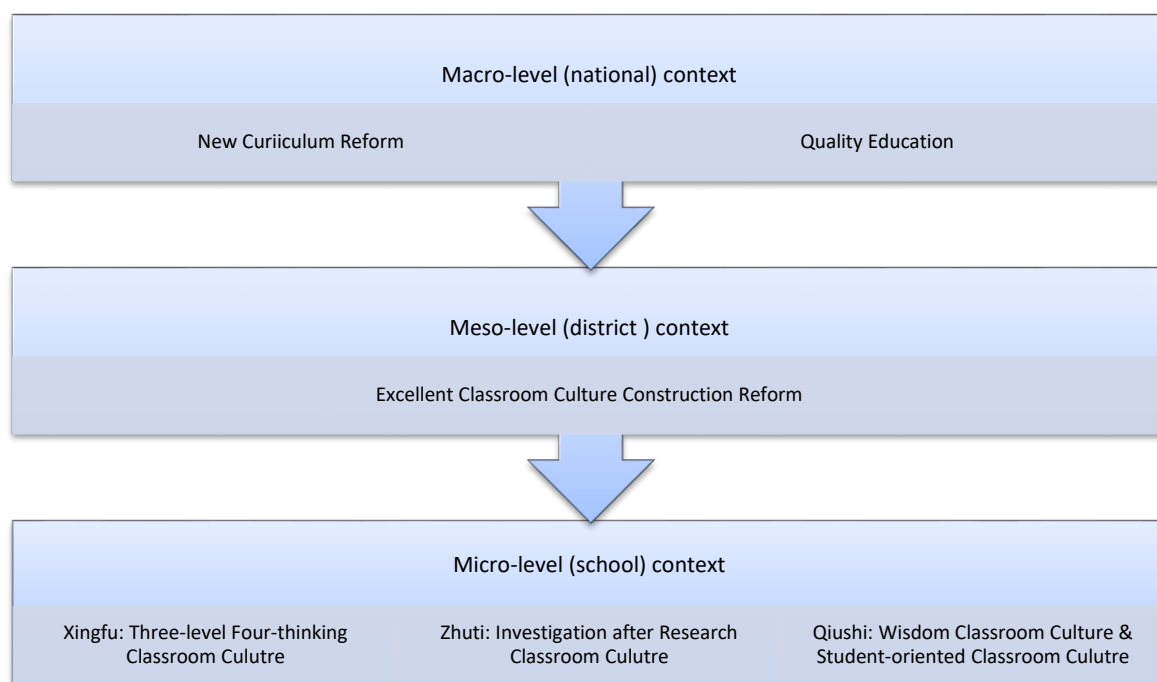


Figure 5.1. Multiple Contextual Influences on the Reform of the Schools.

Figure 5.1 shows the multiple contextual influences on the reform of the case study schools. As discussed in Chapter 2, Excellent Classroom Construction (*zhuó yuè kè táng wén huà jiàn shè*, 卓越课堂文化建设) Reform, the instructional reform launched by Nanshan District, was actually the extension and deepening of Nanshan district's participation in the national "New Curriculum Reform" started in 2001. Most participants of the three case study schools were clear that their school's reform was influenced by district and national reform. Pan, the Vice-principal of Qiushi No. 2 Primary pointed out:

"The context of our instructional reform has three levels. The first is a national-level curriculum reform; the second is our district reform, and it is among the first experimental areas of the national reform; and the third is the reform in our school, which is a leading

school in teaching and learning.”

Macro-level and meso-level policy contexts had important influences on distributed leadership in the schools in the reform. After more than a decade’s practices of the New Curriculum Reform, school administrators and teachers in Nanshan District were very familiar with the educational ideas advocated by the reform. The roles of principals were important in a “Principal Accountability System”, and their contributions to the reform were critical. The district reform was promoted with some “basic patterns” of teaching and learning change, but allowed for variations in the practices of schools, principals, and teachers. It encouraged diversity and autonomy in each school’s implementation, so the different schools could decide their foci based on their contexts.

The schools shared common educational concepts advocated by the district-reform and national reform to promote *sù zhì jiào yù* (素质教育, quality education): Student orientation, cooperative and inquiry-based learning, and all-round development of students. To respond to the initiation of the district, all the three schools “constructed” their own “classroom culture”: Xingfu’s “Three-level Four-Thinking Classroom” (*sān jiē sì wéi kè táng*, 三阶四维课堂); Zhuti’s “Investigation after Research Classroom” (*xiān xué hòu yán kè táng*, 先学后研课堂); Qiushi No. 2’s “Wisdom Classroom” (*zhì huì kè táng*, 智慧课堂) and later “Student-oriented Classroom” (*xué běn kè táng*, 学本课堂). All of these different “classroom cultures” were basically modelled on the principles of “six types of learning” (*liù xué kè táng*, “六学”课堂, (please also see Section 2.2.3) provided by the district: Individual self-learning; cooperative learning

with the help of other students; interactive presentation learning; teacher-guided learning; network learning; and practice and research learning. Instructional reform has to be finally implemented in classroom teaching and learning, and most participants concentrated on talking about the reform implementation in their own school, rather than another two levels of context. In real implementation of the reform, the participation of the schools had different foci and achieved different effects because of the different school contexts.

5.1.1 Basic School Context of Case Study Schools.

Table 5.1 shows the basic school context of the three case study schools. The schools were of different types: Xingfu Primary was an independent primary school; Zhuti Primary was a section of a nine-year school; and Qiushi No. 2 Primary was a member school of a seven-school brand education group.

The parents of their students had different socioeconomic statuses: Xingfu is located in the north, and its parents had the lowest socioeconomic status, and only 5% of their students were registered Shenzhen residents (*hù jí rén kǒu*, 户籍人口); Qiushi No. 2 Primary is located in the rich southern area of Nanshan District, and its parents had the highest socioeconomic status, and over 95% of their students were registered Shenzhen residents; Zhuti School was located in the middle area of the district and the parents of Zhuti were also in the middle in socioeconomic status, and about 70 of them were registered Shenzhen residents. As a brand school, the number of students of Qiushi No. 2 was over 2,200; Zhuti Primary had about 1,800 students; and Xingfu had only

less than 900 students.

Table 5.1

Basic School Context of the Case Study Schools

School	School type	Year of establishment	Students	Registered population (<i>hù jǐ rén kǒu</i> , 户籍人口)	Location in Nanshan District	Socio-economic status of parents
Xingfu	Independent primary school	1952	Less than 900	About 5%	North	Low. Not much attention to their children's education
Zhuti	Primary section of a nine-year school	1995	About 1,800	About 70%	Middle	Middle
Qiushi No. 2	Member school of a seven-school education group	1988	Over 2,200	About 95%	South	High. High expectation for children's education

5.1.1.1 Basic information of Xingfu Primary School.

Xingfu Primary School was established in 1952, and located in a relatively remote area in the north of Nanshan District. It was a typical school for the children of poor “peasant workers” or “migrant workers” (*nóng mín gōng*, 农民工). Currently, the school has about 900 students and 50 teachers. It was located in a “village amid a city”

(*chéng zhōng cūn*, 城中村), and about 95% of the students' parents were non-registered (*fēi hù jí rén kǒu*, 非户籍人口) residents. The low socioeconomic status of students influenced the academic results, and Xingfu was usually ranked at the bottom in district-wide uniform examinations.

All the participants of Xingfu Primary mentioned the low socioeconomic status of the students. As the students were mostly from the families of immigrant workers with poor education background, the parents did not have time or energy to care for their children and did not know how to help improve their learning. This was one of the most important reasons why it was very difficult to improve students' learning. Mei, a veteran teacher, thought that this feature was "the most outstanding". As the parents were immigrant workers and may leave the city at any time, the name list of students often changed drastically from Grade 1 to Grade 6. The quick student turnover brought great difficulties to teachers, "You take great pains to train a learning habit, and then it is easily broken." Mei also complained that the parents simply "do not pay much attention to their children". When one of her students was seriously ill at school, the parent did not come to pick him up in time even after the school was over. So she had to take care of the student at school. With parents with low socioeconomic status struggling to make a living, it was difficult for Xingfu Primary to improve students' learning for parents gave little support to their children's study. This brought more difficulties for the school's reform. Liang, another veteran teacher, was also upset about the quick turnover of students, "They are unstable and may leave at any time." The parents were ill-educated, but on the other hand trusted and respected the teachers. Liang regarded it as an

advantage for teachers, “If you win the trust of the parents, they will trust you completely.” The final success of Mei and her experimental classes was also the results of the trust and support of the parents, for they bought computers for their children for the experiments although they were not very rich.

5.1.1.2 Basic information of Primary Section, Zhuti School.

Zhuti School was a public nine-year integrated school located in Nanshan District. It originated from an independent primary school and an independent secondary school, both of which were public schools built in 1995 for local residents. About 70% of the students’ parents were permanent Shenzhen residents, but most were ordinary workers. It had a Secondary School Section and a Primary School Section, which were on different campuses. Currently, Zhuti Primary had about 1,800 students and 110 teachers.

Zhuti Primary was a typical school in the middle area of Nanshan District with students different from Xingfu Primary School and Qiushi No.2 Primary School. About 70% of the students were registered Shenzhen residents, but the parents were mostly ordinary residents struggling to make a living. Wu, the Director of Teaching Research, did not think that the school was a brand school, for “the parents of the students mostly belong to working class.” Luo, the former principal, summarized three features of the context of the school: (1) low political status of parents. Few of them had high social status such as government officials; (2) low economic status of parents. Most of them were ordinary workers of state-owned enterprises, and many of them were laid-off workers without a job; (3) low education level of parents. About 70% of the parents did

not receive a college education. So, Zhuti Primary was a typical school for students coming from ordinary families.

5.1.1.3 Basic information of Qiushi No. 2 Primary School.

Qiushi No. 2 Primary School was built in 1988, and located in the south of Nanshan District. It was a member school of the Qiushi Education Group located in the relatively rich area of the district, which was made up of four kindergartens, four primary schools, two junior middle schools and one senior middle school. The parents of Qiushi No. 2 were mostly rich and well-educated elite. Currently, it had about 2,220 students and 130 teachers.

Most participants of Qiushi No. 2 acknowledged that their school was a “brand school” and talked about the high expectation of parents. Feng, the Director of Teaching Research, thought that the parents of the school “are all people with high socioeconomic status and well cultured”. The parents paid great attention to the education of their children, and “have very high expectation for Qiushi”. Pan, the Vice-principal, also mentioned the high expectation of the parents, “our students have different context from other schools, so the expectation of parents are different, and they have higher goals and positioning for students’ development.” The high expectation of the parents greatly influenced the school’s teaching and learning.

5.1.2 Different Foci, Strategies and Effects of the Reform.

Table 5.2 shows different foci, strategies and effects of the reform implemented

by the three case study schools. Due to different school contexts, their purposes of reform were different: Xingfu had a humiliating history of ranking the last in the district-wide examination, so aimed to improve its learning outcome and ranking at the bottom of district exams; Zhuti tried to activate the vigour and vitality of students from ordinary working families through the reform; and Qiushi No. 2's purpose was to meet the high expectation of parents of developing the students' comprehensive capability.

Table 5.2

Different Foci, Strategies and Effects of the Reform

School	Purposes	Classroom culture	Foci	Promoting strategies	Effects
Xingfu	Improving learning outcome and the ranking at district exams	Three-level Four-thinking Classroom	“Striding Development” Program (network learning)	Experimental classes	Improved the learning of experimental classes, and the ranking in district exams
Zhuti	Activate the vigour and life of students	Investigation after Research	Student cooperative group learning (cooperative learning with the help of other students)	All classes	Improved students' development and won wide recognition
Qiushi No. 2	Meet the high expectation of parents	Wisdom Classroom & Student-oriented Classroom	Integration of textbooks (practice & research learning)	First in experimental classes and then in all classes	Improved students' overall capability with good learning outcomes

All three schools had their own “classroom culture”: Xingfu’s “Three-level Four-Thinking Classroom”; Zhuti’s “Investigation after Research Classroom; and Qiushi No. 2’s “Wisdom Classroom” and later “Student-oriented Classroom. But, in applying the “Six-type Learning Classroom” strategy of the district reform, their foci were different: Xingfu mainly focused on “network learning” and promoted a computer-based learning program the “Striding Development Program” in some experimental classes; Zhuti mainly focused on “cooperative learning with the help of other students” and promoted student cooperative group learning in all classes of the school; and Qiushi No. 2 focused on a higher level of learning, “practice & research learning”, and promoted textbook integration first in experimental classes and then applied in the classrooms of all classes. The effects of the reform were different too: Xingfu improved the learning of the experimental classes and the ranking in district exams, but the reform was not extended to other classes; Zhuti improved students’ overall development, especially their cooperative learning and courteous presentation, and won wide recognition; and Qiushi No. 2 not only improved students’ overall capability but also kept very good learning outcomes. It was widely acknowledged both in the reform and academic achievement.

Dr. Fa, Former Vice-director of Education Bureau, explained the different purposes of the schools’ reform as follows:

“Xingfu is relatively remote and backwards and the students are from low socioeconomic status families. Zhuti is not as marginalized as Xingfu, but its students are from average or below average socioeconomic status families. For these two schools, it is

important to break “bottlenecks” and to form their own characteristics... As for Qiushi No. 2, it has a very good school foundation and its students are from good socioeconomic status families...so it tries to make breakthrough based on its advantages, and to promote classroom culture construction with full force.”

Dr. Fa further explained their different foci and strategies as follows:

“Zhuti found a very important tool...student group cooperative learning...all teachers participate in the research and practice to guarantee the efficiency of classroom teaching and learning. Qiushi No. 2 tried to deepen the promotion of classroom culture construction through integration and modification of curriculum and textbook...a higher level...Through the participation of all teachers, the reform is promoted to a direction which other schools have to find in the future. As for Xingfu...the two principals mean to “stir” the teachers’ mind and to raise their confidence through the reform.”

In the implementation of these three foci of the reform, the leaders of different levels in Zhuti Primary and Qiushi No. 2 Primary exerted great influences. In Xingfu Primary, the “Striding Development” Program not only promoted the development of students, but also made the experimental teachers become influential leaders, who won honours for the school and helped other school teachers become more confident of the school and themselves.

5.1.2.1 Xingfu Primary: “Striding Development” Program.

In Xingfu Primary, the most important focus of the reform was the Striding Development Program”, which was used by the school to improve students’ learning and to raise the teachers’ confidence. It was a research program based on an internet platform developed by Beijing Normal University, and had been applied in numerous schools throughout the country. It emphasized “student-orientation” and advocated “self-initiative, cooperation and inquiry” (Yao, Wang, & Wu, 2012, p. 101), which was consistent with the ideas of “Excellent Classroom Culture Construction”. It provided an online platform for teachers of Xingfu Primary to receive guidance and help from experts of Beijing Normal University, and also offered opportunities for teachers to show their talents and exchange views with other teachers in other schools throughout the country.

As the teacher leader leading the program, Mei was very satisfied with its effects. She thought that it not only helped the improvement of students’ quality education, but also had effects on students’ learning. The students’ learning outcomes in Chinese, math and English of all the four experimental classes were much better than those of other classes. The program not only helped students achieve better learning outcomes, but also helped teachers participating in the program achieve better development and become more confident of themselves. Mei, Hua and other teachers of the experimental classes won numerous honors and delivered “demonstration lessons” to the teachers of other schools. Their success helped teachers to become more confident of the school and themselves: “Teachers of Xingfu can also reach outside world, and win honors for

the school”. As the program was implemented only in experimental classes, influential teachers were mainly teachers doing the experiment. The effects of the reform were relatively limited. Hua, another teacher leader in the experiment, complained that some teachers thought that the program “has nothing to do with them” and that “it is just the business of experimental teachers”. But the improvement of students’ learning in experimental classes also helped other teachers become more confident of the school and the teachers themselves.

5.1.2.2 Zhuti Primary: “Student Cooperative Group Learning Program”.

The “Student Cooperative Group Learning Program” was the most important focus of Zhuti Primary’s reform and practiced throughout the whole school in all subjects. School administrators and teachers all contributed to its implementation. Han, the Vice-director of Teaching Affairs, explained that the cooperation of formal leaders in the implementation of the reform as follows:

“We have leaders in each subject, for example, Xing and Jia in Chinese teaching, Bi and me in math teaching, Cui and Ying in English teaching. Principal Chun insisted in attending our lessons and guided us in the direction.”

At the teachers’ level, teacher teaching different subjects also cooperated in the reform implementation. Han explained as follows:

“Cooperative group learning is a program implemented throughout

our whole school...There is also cooperation between Chinese teachers, math teachers and English teachers. In the constructing of student groups, for example, these teachers together decided the members of each group.”

Bi, the Head of Math, confirmed the participation of all math teachers in the student cooperative group learning program:

“All the math teachers participated in program of student cooperative group learning, and each teacher tried hard to make student cooperative group learning effective and efficient in the class.”

The focus on student cooperative group learning, on the whole, was acknowledged by most of the teachers of Zhuti Primary, so they actively participated in the reform. In the process of implementation, leaders of different levels worked together to exert influence on others. The reform was started by the principal, and experimented by pioneers such as Xing and Han, and was then promoted and expanded to the whole school. The cooperation of department heads and subject heads, as mentioned by Han, was helpful for each subject to implement the reform according to the characteristics of the subject. The cooperation of teachers teaching different subjects guaranteed the success of each class in the reform. Both formal leaders and informal leaders played very important roles in influencing each other. Leadership was widely distributed in the reform of each subject and each class, and this was very important for the successes of

the school as a whole.

5.1.2.3 Qiushi No. 2 Primary: “Textbook Integration Program”.

The promotion of the “Textbook Integration Program” of Qiushi No. 2 Primary, was “of a higher level” according to Dr. Fa, Vice Director of Education Bureau. They collect different versions of textbooks and integrate them into one suitable for their students. It was decided by Wang with his own experience of instructional reform in the school that he had left and the tradition of Qiushi No. 2’s reform. Pan, Vice-principal, introduced how the school focused on the integration of curriculum and textbooks:

“In each subject, we have some leaders in textbook integration...In Chinese, we focus on reading expansion.... In math, we integrated different versions of textbooks... We formed a team of “student-oriented version” to integrate the textbooks...Then we started our “unit-bundling lessons”. The leader of math textbook integration is Gong. As for English, Jing is responsible for that.”

Through the promotion of textbook integration, school administrators and teacher leaders exerted their influence in different subjects and helped the teacher achieve better development. Wang, the principal, was very satisfied with the participation of different leaders in the reform:

“School administrators, subject heads, and backbone teachers, or

informal teacher leaders, are all devoted to the reform. It is very good for their development, especially for the young teachers. This is a process of training teachers, and is also a process of their exerting influence. So their development is fast, and I am very satisfied with this.”

Qiushi No. 2 Primary focused on the integration of the textbook and its application in classroom teaching and learning. Teacher leaders such as Gong and Jing were pioneers of the program. After they had initial successes, the school administrator and other teachers worked together to improve it and expand it to the whole school. Similar to the reform of Zhuti Primary, the reform was initiated by the principal, experimented by some pioneer teachers, and finally expanded to the whole school. In the process of the reform, both the school administrator and teacher leaders exerted great influence.

5.1.3 Major Findings on Contextual Influences.

Section 5.1 discussed the findings of the research about the contextual influences on distributed leadership of the case study schools. The results showed that macro-level and meso-level policy context had important influences on the reform implementation of the case study schools. As the district reform encouraged schools, principals, and teachers to have their own diversity and innovation in the reform implementation, the schools could decide their foci based on their contexts. Each school “constructed” their own “classroom culture” following the initiation of the district reform, and the real

practices of the reform were mostly influenced by the schools' own context and each school had its own focus: Xingfu mainly focused on a computer-based learning program the "Striding Development Program" to improve students' learning; Zhuti mainly focused on student cooperative group learning to activate the vigor of students; and Qiushi No. 2 focused on textbook integration first in experimental classes and then applied in the classrooms of all classes. The purpose was to meet the high expectation of parents. The different promotion strategies had influences on the distribution of leadership in the reform. As Zhuti Primary and Qiushi No. 2 promoted the foci in all classes, influential leaders were of different levels in the whole school, including school administrators, formal teacher leaders and informal leaders. Xingfu's promotion was mostly concentrated on experimental classes, so the most influential leaders were teachers and school administrators related to the experiment. Moreover, the good results of improving students' academic learning with the experiments also helped other teachers not participating in the experiment become more confident of the school and themselves. While all these schools were active participants of the district reform, their different foci based on their school context had influences on the distributed leadership on the reform. In Zhuti and Qiushi No.2, all school administrators and teachers were involved in the reform, so leadership was distributed among different administrators and teachers across the school. In Xingfu Primary, the reform was mainly implemented in experimental classes, leadership was usually distributed among people more related to the experiment.

5.2 What are the cultural influences?

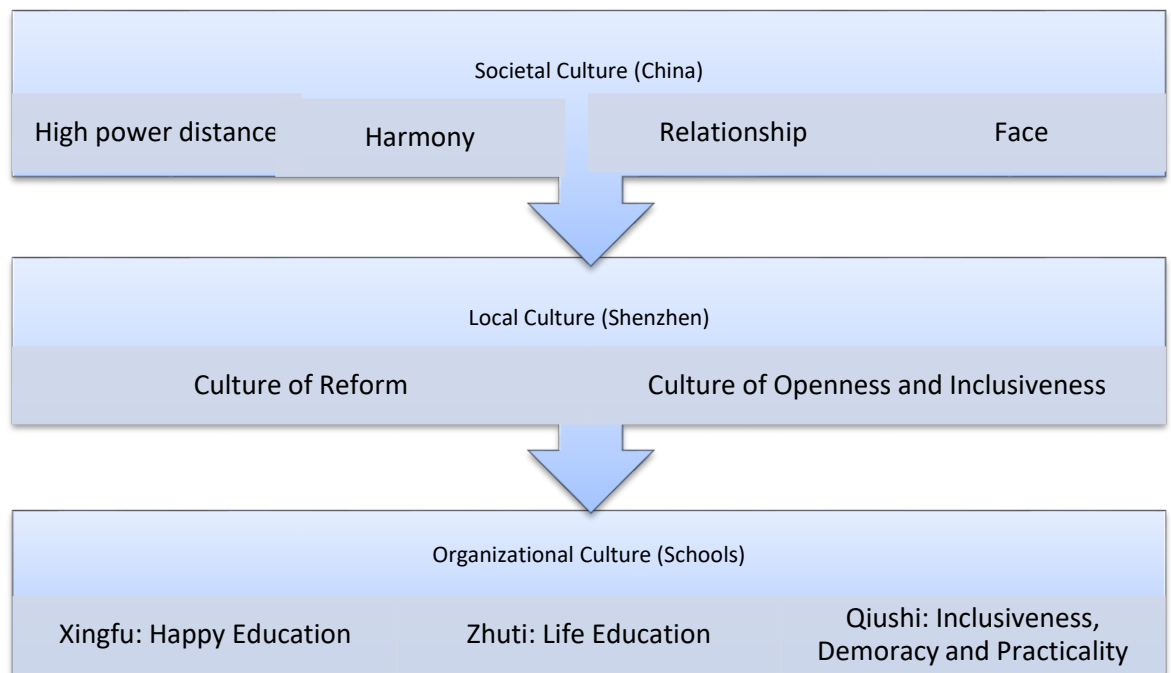


Figure 5.2. Cultural Influences on the Schools' Reform.

Figure 5.2 shows the multi-level cultural influences on the schools' reform and the distribution of leadership. The findings of the research showed that at the level of societal culture, some typical Chinese cultural values greatly shaped the distribution of leadership of the schools, such as high power distance, the promotion of harmony (*hé xié*, 和谐), mutual respect to save “face” (*miàn zi*, 面子) and the maintenance of “relationship” (*guān xi*, 关系). As the window of China's openness and reform, the local culture of Shenzhen is imprinted with the marks of reform and openness. As an immigrant city, Shenzhen is famous for its culture of “inclusiveness” (*bāo róng*, 包容), which implies the acceptance of multiple views and values. The culture of reform, openness and inclusiveness greatly influenced the schools' reform and leadership distribution. At the school level, each school has its own “school culture”: Xingfu Primary advocated “Happy Education”, emphasizing the happiness of teachers and

students; Zhuti Primary promoted “Life Education” to activate the vigour and vitality of teachers and students; and Qiushi No. 2 emphasized the culture of inclusiveness, democracy and practicality.

Sections 5.2.1 to 5.2.3 analyse in detail these three levels of cultural influences identified in the results and findings of the research:

5.2.1 Societal Influences.

In the interviews, most participants of the research mentioned the influences of some typical Chinese cultural values on the reform and the leadership distribution, such as high power distance, harmony, relationship, and face.

5.2.1.1 High Power Distance.

In Chinese culture, subordinates tend to respect the authority of their superiors. A typical example of the influence of high power distance was that the reform in the three case study schools were initiated by people with senior positions: in Xingfu Primary, Jiang, the vice-principal, launched a “30 Changes” reform; in Zhuti Primary, Luo, the former principal, started the reform; and in Qiushi No. 2 Primary, the reform was first initiated by Ping, the former principal, and was then continued by Wang, the present principal. The authority represented by their positions was one of the reasons that helped the implementation of the reform. For example, Xing, Principal Aide of Zhuti Primary, thought that Luo’s “supreme authority” persuaded teachers to participate in the reform and won support from teachers. Yao, a teacher leader of Qiushi No. 2 Primary,

thought that the reform of her school was “a typical from-top-to- bottom reform” and the authority of the principals was very important in this kind of reform. Zhao, Director of School Administration, believed that the successful reform promotion was partly because of Jiang’s “authority” in position and in teaching and learning.

5.2.1.2 *Harmony.*

Harmony (*hé xié*, 和谐) is usually considered to be positive for development and is often taken as a goal to pursue in Chinese schools. School administrators usually regard the creation of a harmonious environment as an important task, and try to include harmony in their school culture. In the interviews, many participants mentioned that harmony was helpful for the implementation of the reform, and prompted people to participate in and make contributions. All the participants of Xingfu Primary emphasized the importance of harmony. Yong, the principal, stated that his goal was to make the school “more and more harmonious”. His efforts in creating a harmonious environment were confirmed by most of his teachers and administrators. Liang, a veteran teacher, thought that the relationship of the school was harmonious and that harmony has good effects on work, “It surely has effects on our work. If you work in a place not so harmonious, you won’t devote yourself at work.” Kang, a young teacher, also believed that the school was “very harmonious and happy”, and that the teachers felt “strong sense of belonging”. Biao, the principal of Zhuti Primary and his teachers Zhen and Cui, also mentioned the “harmonious environment” of the school. Interestingly, none of the participants of Qiushi No. 2 Primary mentioned “harmony”

or “harmonious” in their interviews. The reason may be related to the culture of the school such as encouraging teachers to express different opinions. The section below discussing the schools culture of this school will make further explanations.

5.2.1.3 Relationship (*guān xì*, 关系).

In China, having a good relationship (*guān xì*, 关系) with another is usually regarded as a very important way to communicate with others and to exert influence. For example, Jia, Head of Chinese of Zhuti Primary, had a very good “personal relationship” (*sī rén guān xì*, 私人关系) with other teachers, and this helped them trust and influence each other: “Good personal relationship helps us to be close in emotions, and then we can have more influences on each other.” Zhen, a veteran teacher, also thought that good relationship between principals and teachers helped the implementation of the reform in Zhuti Primary: “We have very good relationship...The principals... trust and appreciate teachers. Teachers can feel their care and appreciation, and are happy and enthusiastic about the reform.” Jiang, the vice-principal of Xingfu Primary, believed that one of the most important reasons for his influence on teacher leaders such as Mei and Liang was that he had a “good personal relationship” with them: “We are like pals.” Interestingly, none of the participants of Qiushi No. 2 mentioned “relationship” in the interviews. The reason may be again related to the school’s culture of encouraging different opinions.

5.2.1.4 Face (*miàn zi or liǎn*, 面子或脸).

In China, losing face (*diū liǎn*, 丢脸) is a serious humiliation. The teachers of

Xingfu Primary regarded ranking at the bottom of district exams as “losing face”, and this prompted them to become more involved in improving students’ learning. Yuan, the Director of School Administration explained, “If the school loses face, our teachers lose face, too...People keep talking about Xingfu ranking the last every year, and this makes teachers lose face. Just for saving the face, we should try our best to improve students’ learning.” Yao, a young teacher leader of Qiushi No. 2 Primary, cited another example of how Chinese teachers valued their “*miàn zi*”. When the experiments started in the school, some veteran teachers refused to join and one of the reasons was that they were afraid of losing face, “How can they save their faces if the academic learning of students gets worse? ” In the reform of these two schools, the influence of “*miàn zi*” on teachers’ participation in the reform seemed opposite. “*miàn zi*” somewhat became the motivation of the teachers in Xingfu Primary to participate in the reform to improve student learning, In Qiushi No. 2 Primary, however, “*miàn zi*” became an obstacle for some veteran teachers to join in the reform.

5.2.2 Local Shenzhen Culture.

Shenzhen is a very special city in China. As the first Special Economic Zone of China, it is famous for its reform and openness. Most participants mentioned the culture of reform, openness and inclusiveness of Shenzhen, and believed that it had favourable influence on the reform implementation.

5.2.2.1 Culture of Reform.

As a city famous for reform, teachers and administrators of the schools in Shenzhen

can easily accept the ideas of reform. Yao, a young teacher leader in Qiushi No. 2 Primary noticed that teachers liked to “make exploration, make research and make attempts in spite that they might fail in the experiment.” According to Jiang, vice-principal of Xingfu Primary, most people in Shenzhen were immigrants from “all corners of the country”, and this implied that people in Shenzhen tended to make changes: “They are all people who can accept change, otherwise they wouldn’t come to Shenzhen. Principals, teachers, students and parents are all ready for change.” Luo, the former principal of Zhuti Primary, had insisted on doing experiments and making reform in his schools, and he thought that the reform culture of Shenzhen had great influence on schools:

“Shenzhen is a city of reform and opening-up, so people here can easily learn and accept advanced educational concept from outside. Shenzhen is also a city of innovation... The culture of reform in Shenzhen has significant influence on schools. Our school is making reform all the time, from subject education reform, to life education reform and then to curriculum reform and instruction reform.”

As discussed above, in a city famous for reform and innovation, administrators and teachers in Shenzhen schools were more ready to accept reform and change. And if they believed that the reform was helpful for students’ development, they would be more devoted to the reform and exert influence on it.

5.2.2.2 Culture of Openness of Inclusiveness.

To Ying, Head of English of Zhuti Primary, the openness and inclusiveness culture of Shenzhen “implies the intermingling of multiple cultures”. Wang, the principal of Qiushi No. 2 Primary, thought that the culture of openness of Shenzhen was “originated from the culture of immigration”. As teachers and administrators came from all over the country, they could easily accept different ideas and different ways of thinking. Yao, a young teacher leader of Qiushi No. 2, also thought that teachers in Shenzhen “are interested in accepting new things”: “you can exchange new ideas with any teacher, and they are interested in discussing and exploring new ideas.” Jia, the Head of Chinese of Zhuti Primary, believed that the culture of openness helped the teachers to accept new ideas from home and abroad “with open-mindedness”: “We do not have any problem in accepting new ideas, because we have learned a lot. The problem is whether we can follow up in actions.” Cui, the Vice-director of Zhuti Primary, believed that this culture of openness was helpful for the implementation of the reform: “This culture has significant influence on teachers. It’s easier for them to accept the concept of the new curriculum reform and to implement the reform.” Xing, Principal-aide of Zhuti Primary, analyzed three features of Shenzhen teachers which make them different from teachers from other cities: 1. Teachers in Shenzhen do not have to pay too much attention to money, for their salaries can guarantee a decent living. So they can pay more attention to the spiritual development of students; 2. Shenzhen is a city of learning. People tend to care about the spiritual learning and development, so this provides a good environment for teachers to pursue their educational ideals; 3. Shenzhen is city with an

international perspective. So teachers are easier to accept advanced educational ideas from the West, and to apply them in classroom teaching and learning.

Parents and students in Shenzhen are also open-minded and well-informed. The parents pay more attention to the comprehensive development of their children and have higher expectations for schools. Jing, a teacher leader of Qiushi No. 2, felt that the high-quality students “compel us teachers to learn how to keep up with the pace”. Si, a veteran teacher of Zhuti Primary, had the same feeling, “In Shenzhen, teachers face parents and students with multi-dimensional information, and teachers have to make reform and try to help the students achieve all-round development in classroom teaching.”

The culture of reform and the culture of openness and inclusiveness had direct and significant influence on Shenzhen’s schools. It is easier for teachers, parents and students to accept the ideas of reform and to implement it. Dr. Fa, the former Vice-director of Nanshan Education Bureau, summarized this as follows:

“I think that one of the reasons of leadership distribution in these schools is that Shenzhen has a unique education culture or teacher culture, which is a culture of reform, a culture of openness, a culture of inclusiveness, and a culture of democracy. In Shenzhen schools, administrators and teachers respect each other. Democracy and inclusiveness are more obvious than schools in other parts of the country.”

As Dr. Fa summarized, the local Shenzhen culture had great influence on the distributed leadership of the schools in the reform. A unique open, inclusive and democratic education culture or teacher culture had been formed in Shenzhen schools. School administrators were ready to respect teachers' opinions and teachers trusted the administrators. The open and democratic culture was favourable for the construction of distributed leadership. Democracy and inclusiveness were more obvious in Shenzhen schools, and this may explain why the schools in Shenzhen were able to have effective distributed leadership in a Chinese culture of high power distance.

5.2.3 School culture.

Chinese societal culture and the local culture of Shenzhen had great influence on all the three case study schools. The school culture of each school, however, had very obvious characteristics based on its context. Table 5.3 illustrates the different cultures of the case study schools, including their different contexts, purposes and effects. Xingfu Primary advocated "Happy Education" (*xìng fú jiào yù*, 幸福教育) based on the low socioeconomic status of students, and the main purposes were to maintain stability and harmony, and to increase the confidence of teachers and students. This helped to create a harmonious environment for the school. Zhuti Primary promoted the school culture of "Life Education" (*shēng mìng jiào yù*, 生命教育) for the students were mostly from ordinary working families and lacked vigour and vitality. The main purposes were to activate the vigour, vitality and overall-development of students. Through the promotion of school culture and relative reform, the school enhanced the

over-all development of students. Qiushi No. 2 Primary had high-quality parents and students with high expectations for teachers and the school. To meet the expectations, the school advocated the culture of inclusiveness & practicality (*bāo róng qiú shí*, 包容求实). Being inclusive means to be more democratic and inclusive with different opinions of teachers and to encourage the teachers to express their own ideas and to do the work in their own ways. To be practical means to encourage the teachers to apply their ideas in their actual work and to achieve actual effects. This school culture brought the school to a higher level with overall development and excellent academic learning of their students.

Table 5.3
Cultures of Three Case Study Schools

School	School Culture	Context	Main purposes	Effects
Xingfu	Happy Education	Low socioeconomic status families; poor academic learning	Stability, harmony, confidence,	Created a harmonious environment for the school
Zhuti	Life Education	Ordinary working families; lack vigor and vitality	Vigor, vitality and overall-development	Enhanced the over-all development of students
Qiushi No.2	Inclusiveness & Practicality	Rich elite families; High expectation of parent	Democracy, pursuit of perfection	Brought the school to a higher level with overall development and excellent academic learning

Sections 5.2.3.1 to 5.2.3.3 discuss in detail the culture of each school:

5.2.3.1 Xingfu Primary: Happy Education.

As a school with students from low socioeconomic status families, Xingfu Primary had poor student academic learning, and the humiliating history of ranking the last in the district-wide exam resulted in low morale and lack of confidence. Yong, the principal of the school, explained the low morale when he came to the school in 2009:

“Xingfu has a very weak background. When I came to this school, there were only 15 classes and 36 teachers with permanent positions...The environment was very bad and backward. Good teachers left. Good students also left. It is necessary to work hard to raise the spirits of teachers and students.”

It is under this background that Yong started to advocate “Happy Education”: to maintain the stability of the school, to uplift the low morale and try to make everybody feel happy:

“As a principal, he must care about every child, every teacher, and every parent, and try his best to take them into consideration, and to make everybody feel pleased and happy. It’s important to build this atmosphere, caring about them both spiritually and physically.”

One of his measures was the introduction of Hakka folk songs (*kè jiā shān gē*, songs popular for Hakkas, immigrant Han Chinese, who were from North China and settled down in South China many years ago, 客家山歌) to enhance the confidence of the students and teachers. As most of the teachers were Hakkas (*kè jiā rén*, 客家人),

and the principal was quite familiar with famous Hakka folk song singers, he successfully introduced Hakka folk songs into his school and made it an outstanding feature. The most important task for a school principal, however, was the academic learning of students. Yong distributed much power to his vice-principal and gave great support to him and other leaders. After years' practice, "Happy Education" was widely accepted by teachers and students. When they were asked about what part of the school culture impressed them most, all participants of Xingfu Primary mentioned "Happy Education" and the harmonious environment it created. This may explain why all participants of Xingfu Primary emphasized the importance of harmony as discussed in Section 5.2.1.2. As a result of the promotion of "Happy Education", in a city-level evaluation of students' satisfaction of the school, 99% of the students of the school said that they felt happy.

Most participants acknowledged "Happy Education" as their school culture. Jiang, the vice-principal, summarized the goals of "Happy Education" as "happy life, harmonious relationship, smooth classroom, and beautiful campus". Yuan, Chairman of the Teachers' Union and Director of School Administration, believed that the connotation of the school culture was "to lay a foundation for our children's lifelong happiness." This harmonious environment created by "Happy Education" was helpful for the development and improvement of the school. Yuan thought that this had positive effects on the reform and school work as a whole:

"A word may describe our school culture, and that is "Happy" in the Education Philosophy our principal proposes. "To be happy" is

our goal, and it is also our means to develop ourselves...This culture has positive influence on all aspects of our work. The teachers feel happy and have enthusiasm at work. So it will surely promote our work at school.”

Xingfu Primary had a background of a remote school with low morale and poor student learning. In order to uplift the low morale and to help the students and teachers become more confident of themselves, the school promoted “Happy Education” in order to create a harmonious atmosphere and inspire teachers to work more happily. For the common goal of changing poor student learning, many teachers actively participated in the reform and made contributions.

5.2.3.2 Zhuti Primary: Life Education.

Zhuti Primary was an ordinary school with students mostly from ordinary working families. Based on this context, Luo, the first principal of the school, paid special attention to inspire the potential of the students. He started to promote his “subject education” (*zhǔ tǐ jiào yù*, 主体教育) since Zhuti Primary School was established in 1995, and emphasized the importance to respect each student as a “subject”. When Zhuti Primary School was integrated with Zhuti Secondary School in 2003 and became Zhuti School, Luo became the principal of this newly integrated school, and started to advocate “Life Education”, which emphasized that each student and teacher had a natural life, spiritual life and social life, and that it was necessary to promote the comprehensive development of each individual. Luo initiated a “Life Education”

research project which lasted until 2007. The foci of this research project included: the respect on students' choices and development; the attention on emotional experience and exchange; the respect on individual difference and uniqueness; the significance for life development; and the integrity and dynamism of life development.

After more than four years' experiment, "Life education" gradually became a generally-accepted school culture. In the interviews, all of the participants of Zhuti referred to "Life Education" when asked about what was the most important culture of their school. Bi, the Head of Math, started to accept "Life Education" when she came to this school after graduation nine years ago, and she thought that the essence of "Life education" was the respect to each student's development, "Each student has his or her own ways of development, and we should respect their ways of development". Han, a "backbone teacher" and Vice-director of Teaching Affairs, believed that "Life Education" "is not only for students, but also for teachers... We are all following the natural principles of life, and perform our education based on life education."

The school culture "Life Education" advocated by Luo also influenced the implementation of the reform. It not only emphasized the respect for students and teachers, but also encouraged the teachers to participate in decision making. Most participants agreed upon the influence of "Life Education" on the implementation of the reform. Luo thought that "this vision of promoting the life development of students has very great influence on teachers". Han believed that "Life Education" set a solid foundation for the reform, otherwise the instructional reform "wouldn't be so good, so smooth". Hui, a young teacher, believed that Life Education consistent with the core

values of the instruction reform: “The reform emphasizes the development of students, to develop students, to respect the students. This is the same with Life Education...So it is easier for us to accept the reform.”

Zhuti Primary promoted “Life Education” to activate the vitality of students and teachers, and to respect the development of students and teachers. After more than a decade’s practices, teachers had accepted the ideas advocated by “Life Education”. As a result, when the student-oriented reform in student cooperative learning started, administrators and teachers of the school were not only able to accept the reform, but also actively participated in it because they believed that it was helpful to students’ development.

5.2.3.3 Qiushi No. 2 Primary: “Inclusiveness & Practicality”.

Qiushi No. 2 Primary School was built in 1988. The school set a high standard for itself from the very beginning of its establishment. In 2003, it became a member school of the Qiushi Education Group, a famous brand public education group in Shenzhen. It has a high reputation for high-quality teaching and learning. The parents were well-educated elites, and more than 95% of them were registered residents of Shenzhen.

In 2012, Wang became the principal of the school. He noticed that the school had already a strong culture of “old Qiushi spirit” shared by all member school of the Qiushi Education Group: pursuing the truth and being practical (*qiú zhēn wù shí*, 求真务实). Pursuing the truth implied that the teachers dared to express their opinions and pursue what they believed were right. Being practical implied concentrating on work and

achieving actual effects. Based on this tradition, Wang started to promote the school culture of “Inclusiveness & Practicality”. Wang summarized the core values of this culture as “inclusiveness and diversity, consciousness and practicality”. According to him, to be inclusive did not mean to be “indulgent”, but meant to accept different types of teachers, including “democrats” who liked to speak out at anything they wanted to say and even “opposition party”, who expressed different opinions whenever they found something wrong with the school. Wang “intentionally” supported this. When the teachers had different opinions, he did not criticize them, and sometimes even praised them. Wang believed that this culture had great influence on the reform: “They all like to participate in the reform and exert influence”.

Feng, the Director of Teaching Research; Gong, the Head of Math; Yao, a teacher leader; and Ni and Tang, two young teachers, mentioned the “old Qiushi spirit”. Feng thought that this “spirit” had helped cultivate a positive attitude toward work by inspiring the teachers’ inner motivation. Tang thought that the spirit of “pursuing the truth and being practical” required the teachers to be strict with themselves at work, and not to be “superficial”. Gong thought that teachers were practical and conscientious, and loved to make research in teaching and learning. Yao was deeply impressed with “old Qiushi spirit”, and thought that this had become a tradition of the school and had great influence on the reform:

“This surely has influence on the reform. The “old Qiushi” teachers like to pursue the truth, and when something new is brought to them, they may resist or argue about it, but they may also make research

on it and accept it with joy. They would tell the principals uprightly if they think that it is not right. Our teachers are not afraid of speaking out the truth. I think that this culture brings about our school's flourishing."

The "inclusiveness" advocated by Wang was also acknowledged by Pan, the vice-principal, and Ni, a young teacher. Pan thought that the school culture of the school required teachers and administrators to be student-oriented and conscientious in pursuing high-quality teaching and learning, with the foundation of democracy, inclusiveness and diversity. Ni thought that the culture of inclusiveness was very obvious in the school, "no matter the teachers are young or old, their opinions would be accepted. All kinds of opinions are accepted, even criticisms. Parents also often write to the school to make some suggestions."

Qiushi No. 2 Primary had a culture of "inclusiveness and practicality". Being inclusive, the school was able to accept different ideas and, thus, encouraged teachers to make innovations with their own characteristics. With a culture of practicality, when teachers accepted the reform, they would try their best to contribute to the reform and be devoted in it. As discussed in Section 5.2.1.2 and Section 5.2.1.3, none of the participants of Qiushi No. 2 Primary mentioned typical Chinese values of "harmony" or "relationship". The main reason may be that the school culture encouraged teachers to express different opinions and to speak out what they really thought about. Advocating "harmony" or "good relationship" may prevent teachers from speaking out their minds, for expressing different ideas may be considered to be a contradiction and

not to be consistent with the principles of harmony and good relationship.

5.2.4 Major Findings on Cultural Influences.

Section 5.2 discussed the cultural influences on the reform and leadership distribution of the case study schools. The societal culture has great influence, and typical Chinese cultural values such as high power distance, harmony, good relationship and face were identified to be influential and important. A typical example of the influence of high power distance was that the reform in the three case study schools were initiated by people with senior positions: principal-level administrators. Most participants of Zhuti Primary and Xingfu Primary mentioned the positive influence of harmonious environment and good relationship on the reform, but none of the participants of Qiushi No. 2 Primary mentioned this. The reason may be that the culture of Qiushi No. 2 Primary encouraged teachers to speak out different opinions. “Face” prompted many teachers to actively participate in the reform to improve student learning, but in Qiushi No. 2 Primary some veteran teachers rejected the reform at the beginning because of worries about losing face.

The culture of reform, openness and inclusiveness of local Shenzhen culture have greatly changed the attitude of school teachers, students, and parents toward reform and new ideas, and made them easier to accept and implement the reform. School administrators were ready to respect teachers’ opinions and teachers trusted the administrators. The open and democratic culture was favourable for the construction of distributed leadership. Democracy and inclusiveness were more obvious in Shenzhen

schools, and this may explain why these schools in Shenzhen were able to have effective distributed leadership in a Chinese culture of high power distance.

The different school culture of the three case study schools originated from their different contexts and purposes. Harmony advocated by Xingfu Primary, respect advocated by Zhuti Primary and inclusiveness promoted by Qiushi No. 2 Primary helped these schools inspire their teachers to actively participate in the reform and make contributions. Xingfu Primary promoted “Happy Education” in order to uplift the low morale and to help the students and teachers to become more confident of themselves. For the common goal of changing poor student learning, many teachers actively participated in the reform and made contributions. Zhuti Primary promoted “Life Education” to activate the vitality of students and teachers. As a result, when the student-oriented reform in student cooperative learning started, administrators and teachers were able to happily accept the reform and actively participated in the reform because they believed that it was helpful to students’ development. Qiushi No. 2 Primary had a culture of “inclusiveness and practicality”. The school encouraged teachers to express their different opinions and to make innovations with their own characteristics. After teachers had accepted the reform, they tried their best to contribute to the reform and to be devoted in it. In an open and democratic culture, teachers of Qiushi No. 2 Primary were able to exert their influence on their reform no matter whether they were formal leaders or informal leaders.

5.3 Chapter Summary

Chapter 5 discussed findings related to the two research questions: What are the contextual influences on the practices of distributed leadership? What are the cultural influences on the practices of distributed leadership? Section 5.1 discussed the findings of the research about the contextual influences on distributed leadership of the case study schools: (1) Macro-level contextual influence: the new curriculum reform of China which was initiated from 2001 helped school administrators and teachers accept the ideas of reform gradually. (2) Meso-level contextual influence: The district reform was implemented in the whole district and was an extension of the national curriculum reform. (3) Micro-level or school level contextual influence: As the district reform encouraged schools, principals, and teachers to have their own diversity and innovation, each school “constructed” their own “classroom culture”, and their reform was mostly influenced by the schools’ own context: Xingfu mainly focused on a computer-based learning program the “Striding Development Program” in some experimental classes to improve students’ learning; Zhuti mainly focused on student cooperative group learning construction in the whole school to activate the vigour of students; and Qiushi No. 2 focused on textbook integration in the whole school to meet the high expectation of parents. The different promotion strategies had influence on the distribution of leadership in the reform. As Zhuti Primary and Qiushi No. 2 promoted the foci in all classes, influential leaders were of different levels in the whole school, including school administrators, formal teacher leaders and informal leaders. Xingfu’s promotion was

mostly concentrated on experimental classes, so the most influential leaders were teachers and school administrators related to the experiment.

Section 5.2 discussed the cultural influences on the reform and leadership distribution of the case study schools: (1) The societal culture with typical Chinese cultural values such as high power distance, harmony, good relationship and face. These values were proved to be influential and important for the distribution of leadership in the reform. The reform in the three case study schools were initiated by people with senior positions: principal-level administrators, and this may show the culture of high power distance. Most participants of Zhuti Primary and Xingfu Primary mentioned the influence of values such as harmony, relationship and face on the reform, but none of the participants of Qiushi No. 2 Primary mentioned the influence of harmony and relationship because the culture of Qiushi No. 2 Primary encouraged teachers to speak out their different opinions. (2) The influence of the local Shenzhen culture of reform, openness and inclusiveness. This culture had greatly changed the attitude of school teachers, students, and parents toward reform, and they were easier to accept and implement the reform. The open and democratic culture was favourable for the construction of distributed leadership. And this may explain why these schools in Shenzhen were able to have effective distributed leadership in a Chinese culture of high power distance. (3) Influence of organizational culture or school culture. The schools had different school culture because they had different contexts and purposes. Xingfu Primary promoted “Happy Education” in order to uplift the low morale cause by poor student learning. For the common goal of changing poor student learning, many

teachers actively participated in the reform and made contributions. Zhuti Primary promoted “Life Education” to activate the vitality of students and teachers. As a result, school administrators and teachers of the school happily accepted the reform and actively participated because they believed that it was helpful to students’ development. Qiushi No. 2 Primary had an open and democratic culture and encouraged teachers to express their different opinions and to make innovations with their own characteristics. This culture of “inclusiveness and practicality” prompted the teachers to try their best to contribute to the reform after they accepted the ideas of it.

CHAPTER 6

HOW DISTRIBUTED LEADERSHIP IS PRACTICED IN SCHOOLS?

This chapter discusses findings about how distributed leadership was practiced within an instructional reform environment in China. First, it explains four types of distributed leadership practices that the researcher developed after the data analysis based on the categorization of Spillane (2006): distribution by position, distribution by spontaneity, and collectivist distribution. Second, it discusses two special types of leaders identified in the findings: “soul leaders” and “backbone teachers”. Then it analyzes patterns of distributed leadership in the schools. Finally, it introduces important culture-rooted routines and tools, through which leadership was distributed in the reform of the schools: master-disciple relationship establishment (*shī tú jiē duì*, 师徒结对), teaching and research (*jiào yán*, 教研) activities, teacher assessment regulations, and principals’ participation in the reform.

6.1 Four types of distributed leadership practices

After the data analysis, the researcher developed four types of distributed leadership practices in Chinese schools. As shown in Table 6.1, the categorisation was based on ways of arrangement and implementation of distributed leadership defined by Spillane (2006) as discussed in Section 3.1.2, and was also developed from Chinese context and culture. This categorization of distributed leadership practices may be easier for Chinese people to understand and can better reflect the special characteristics

of distributed leadership in Chinese schools such as emphasizing the positions of leaders, encouraging spontaneity, and attaching great importance to collective collaboration.

Table 6.1
Four types of distributed leadership practices

Type	Related Chinese context and culture	Meaning
Distribution by position	High power distance culture. Positions are highly valued.	People with formal positions are distributed power and responsibility.
Distribution by task	High power distance. Although leadership roles are informally distributed, but they are assigned by people with formal positions and had effects.	People are informally assigned leadership responsibility usually by people with formal leadership positions.
Distribution by spontaneity	Spontaneity is often regarded as positive actions in Chinese culture for it implies proactive participation.	People perform leadership practices spontaneously and voluntarily neither caused by their positions or any assigned task.
Collectivist distribution	Chinese culture of collectivism. Division of labor cannot be separated from cooperation	Leadership practices were shared by multiple people, who worked together to achieve the goals, including collectivist distribution at the same level, collectivist distribution at different levels, and collectivist distribution in sequence.

By “distribution by position”, the researcher meant to highlight the cultural feature of high power distance in China. Positions were highly valued in Chinese culture of high power distance, and people with formal leadership positions such as principals and

other school administrators, and formal teacher leaders such as subject heads were identified to be very important leaders of the reform.

“Distribution by task” refers to circumstances of leadership distribution when people were assigned leadership responsibility usually by people with formal leadership positions. These tasks were usually more informal, but as they were usually assigned by formal leaders and that the goal of the task was clear, people with distributed leadership by task were usually very influential in the implementation.

“Distribution by spontaneity” was developed by the researcher. This kind of distribution is similar to Gronn’s “spontaneous collaboration” (2002) and Leithwood et al.’s “spontaneous alignment” (2007), but “distribution by spontaneity” is used here with more Chinese characteristics because spontaneity is often regarded as a positive action in Chinese culture for it implies proactive participation. This distribution of leadership occurs when people are performing leadership practices neither caused by their positions or any assigned task.

The term “collectivist distribution” is used to reflect the Chinese culture of collectivism, and refers to the situations when leadership practices are shared by multiple people, who work together to achieve the goals. They may work in the same place coordinately or separately, or work in different places, and they have common goals. Three types of collectivist distribution were analysed: collectivist distribution at the same level; collectivist distribution at different levels; and collectivist distribution in sequence.

6.1.1 Distribution by position.

In a high power distance Chinese culture, positions usually mean responsibility, duties and authority. As discussed in Section 2.3, “*lǐng dǎo* (leaders, 领导) in the organizational structure of a Chinese school have clearly distributed responsibility for their positions. In a “Principal Accountability System” (*xiào zhǎng fù zé zhì*, 校长负责制) as discussed in Section 2.4.1, the principal has to take overall responsibility for school running. Vice-principals and department heads in charge of teaching and learning are directly responsible for the specific implementation of an instructional reform. At the teacher level, subject heads have duties to organize the teachers of their subject teams in reform implementation, and their leadership is also arranged by position. The distribution of leadership to these leaders with positions is usually more formal and more obvious.

Figure 6.1 shows formal leaders with positions influencing the reform implementation of the three schools: formal school administrators including principals, vice-principals and department heads and partially formal teacher leaders such as subject heads.

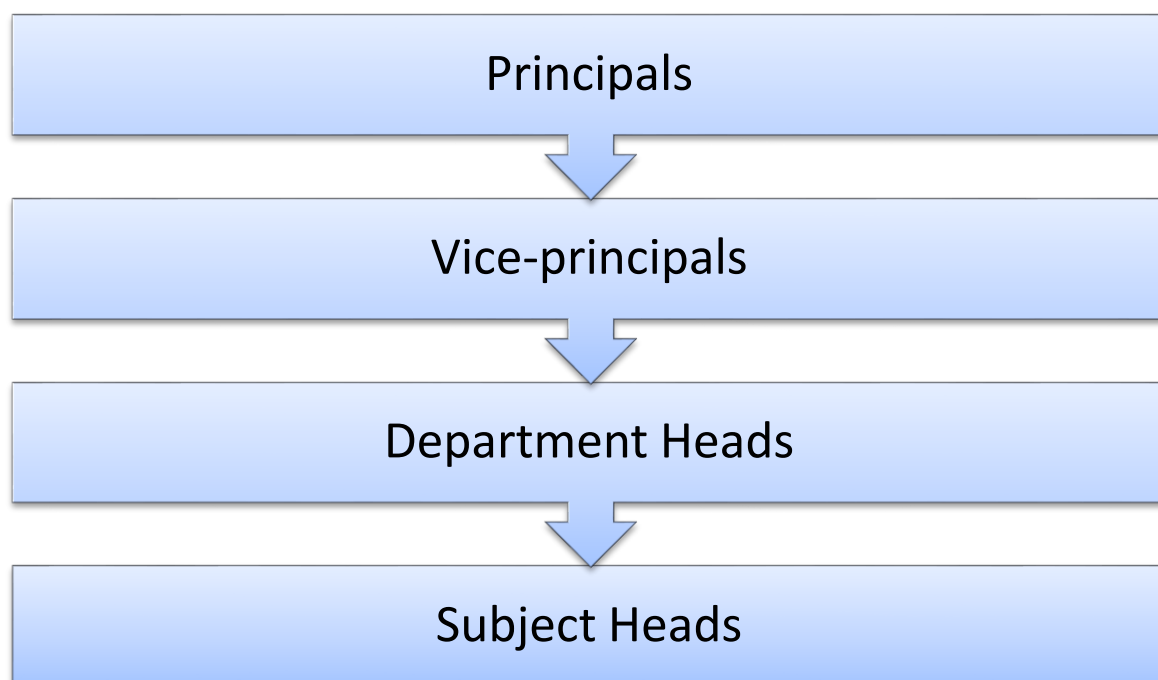


Figure 6.1. Distribution by Position.

Section 6.1.1.1 to 6. 1.1.5 discuss in detail how these formal leaders in the three case study schools exerted their influence on the reform with leadership distributed to them based on their positions.

6.1.1.1 Principals: Leading the Direction.

Table 6.1 shows the roles of principals of the three case study schools in the reform implementation. As shown, principals mainly played the role of leading the direction and providing the vision for teachers, and most participants of their schools acknowledged their importance in the reform. Biao, the principal of Zhuti Primary, was not acknowledged to be influential in the reform by the participants of his school, and the reason may be that he did not participate in the reform implementation before he became the principal of the school and did not make many changes about the reform as initiated by his former principal.

Table 6.1
Roles of Principals in the Reform

School	Name	Position	Main roles	Influence on the reform (as related by participants)
Xingfu	Yong	Principal (2009-now)	Vision and direction	Create a harmonious environment for the school(8/ 11)
Zhuti	Luo	Former Principal of Zhuti Primary (1995-2003) and Zhuti School (2003-2012)	Vision and direction, spiritual leader	Launched the reform and led the reform to success (10/12)
Zhuti	Biao	Principal (2012-now)	Inherited the vision and direction provided by Luo	Continued the reform without much adjustment (1 of 12)
Qiushi No. 2	Ping	Former Principal (2003-2012)	Vision and direction	Initiated the reform “revolutionarily” (6/10)
Qiushi No. 2	Wang	Principal (2012-now)	Refined vision and direction provided by Ping and others	Refined the reform with his own educational ideas (10/10)

Eight of the 11 participants (including the principal himself) of Xingfu Primary mentioned the influence of Yong, the principal, in the reform, and his main influence was related to the overall development of the school and the cultivation of school culture “Happy Education” (please see Section 5.2.3.1). Most participants acknowledged his influence in leading the direction of the school. Yuan, the Chairman of Teachers’ Union and Director of School Administration, thought that the direction of the school “is mostly related with the principal. Our principal will ...lead us toward a direction”. The importance of his support to his vice-principal in the reform was

confirmed by Dr. Fa, the District Education Bureau Official in charge of the reform: “Yong, the principal of Xingfu, is active and positive towards the reform ...He trusts Jiang, his vice-principal, and gives great support to Jiang's courageous instructional reform. The two get united and push the reform as a whole....It has very good results. ” His promotion of “Happy Education” created a harmonious environment for teachers, and his active and positive attitude toward the reform, and strong support to the vice-principal, prompted the teachers to actively participate in the reform.

Luo, the former principal of Zhuti School, advocated “Life Education” (Please see Section 5.2.3.2) since the establishment of this nine-year school in 2003. After several years’ practices, “Life education” gradually became a generally-accepted school culture. Luo started the reconstruction of classroom instruction culture from 2009. The reform was also reported by famous Chinese educational journals such as “People’s Education”. The reform not only promoted the development of students, but also led the direction of teachers and was helpful for their own development. In the reform, Luo played a very important role in decision-making, guidance and process control. In the interviews, ten of the 12 participants thought that Luo was the most important in the reform, and six of them believed that Luo influenced him or her most in the reform. The most important role of Luo in the reform, according to the participants, was leading the direction and providing a vision for others to follow. Han, the Vice-director of Teaching affairs, thought that the reason why the reform was able to be promoted was because Luo had provided a vision for teachers “This is very important. He masters the direction. Without this, we couldn’t go on with the reform.” Jia, the Head of Chinese, thought that

Luo had provided “a theoretical vision in direction and altitude”: “It is impossible for ordinary teachers to reach such a level and to find this direction”. Xing, the Principal-aide and a pioneer in the reform, referred to Luo as “the spiritual leader” of the reform, and that he moved the teachers by his “spiritual guidance” inspiring teachers’ educational pursuit.

In the interviews, none of the 11 participants of Zhuti Primary, except Biao himself, the present principal, mentioned the influence of Biao on the reform. This is noteworthy and meaningful for Luo, the former principal, who had retired and the new principal had been in the post for more than two years. The most important reason may be that Biao, as the former vice-principal in charge of teaching and learning of Secondary Section, had inherited the school culture of “Life Education” and continued the reform initiated by Luo, the former principal, without much adjustment. He also continued to entrust the Vice-principal in charge of the Primary Section to implement the reform. On the other hand, the teachers and leaders of Zhuti Primary were accustomed to the practices of the reform, and played their different roles in the reform as before, although the school had a new principal. In the interviews, Hui, a young teacher, thought that the new principal paid more attention to teaching efficiency but “the vision and direction of the reform is the same”. Si, a teacher leader, thought that the reform had become a “habit” of teachers, and they were still practicing it as before. Zhen, a veteran teacher, also believed that the achievement of the reform was still shared to new teachers even if there was a new principal. It shows that the principal turnover did not bring many changes to the reform, and one of the reasons may be that

leadership in the reform was already distributed to different levels of leaders of the school and that it moderated the influence of a new principal.

In 2001, Ping became the principal of Qiushi No. 2 Primary School, and he started to advocate his “Wisdom Education”, emphasizing “Shape soul with soul; and Enlighten wisdom with wisdom”. From 2009, in the context of the district instructional reform, Ping started his “Wisdom Classroom” reform, emphasizing the raising of students’ independent learning capabilities. Six of the 10 participants of Qiushi No. 2 Primary mentioned this reform initiated by Ping. The promotion of student cooperative group learning was widely recognized as an important achievement of the reform.

In 2012, Ping retired and Wang, the new principal, came to Qiushi No. 2 Primary School. Wang was the principal of Hesha Primary and launched the “Student-oriented Classroom”, as an instructional reform and has achieved great success there. When he came to the new school, he found that the ideas of the “Wisdom Classroom” were quite consistent with his ideas of the “Student-oriented Classroom” and tried to integrate the two into one: “I tried to make it more systematic and more in-depth based on Wisdom Classroom...I introduced the ideas of student-orientation into it, and thus made more progress on Wisdom classroom. I called it ‘Student-oriented Classroom’”. Besides insisting on student cooperative group learning in which the “Wisdom Classroom” advocates, Wang and his teachers started the reform on the integration of curriculum: “In the process of editing textbooks, the teachers’ enthusiasm and initiative are greatly motivated.” The influence of Wang, the principal, on the reform was significant. All the 10 participants of Qiushi claimed that Wang was the most influential person on the

reform, and 6 of them thought that Wang influenced him or her most in the reform. Gong, the Head of Math, thought that Wang not only led the direction, but also provided specific help to teachers: “It’s just like a step-to-step direction... he even prepared lessons for us. Principal Wang leads us the way.” Feng, Director of Teaching Research, thought that Wang was the “soul figure” of the reform. Su and Ni, two influential young teachers, thought that Wang was “the most influential and important person” in the reform. Hu, another young teacher, thought that the principal was “the commander-in-chief” in the reform.

Unlike Biao, Wang was widely acknowledged as the most influential figure in the reform. The main reasons may include: (1) Biao inherited the reform from Luo, and did not make much change; Wang integrated his own ideas with the reform initiated by Ping, and successfully changed it into “Student-oriented Classroom”; and (2) As the principal of a nine-year school, Biao paid more attention to the Secondary Section, and continued to entrust the reform to Chun, the executive principal of the Primary Section; as the principal of an independent primary school, Wang directly implemented and influenced the reform.

As shown above, the principals of the case study schools played critical and important roles in leading the reform. According to the “Principal Accountability System”, they were “the first person who is accountable” for school work such as implementing the reform. So all of them were playing the roles of principals such as providing a vision and direction, and giving strong support to the reform. With different contexts, the nature of principal leadership in each school was different: Yong mainly

played the role of strong supporter, and entrusted his vice-principal to work out strategies for the reform; Biao was a faithful inheritor, and did not make many changes about the direction and practices of the reform initiated by Luo, the former principal; Wang may be called an excellent transcender, who successfully integrated his own ideas with the reform launched by Ping, the former principal. Interestingly, both Zhuti Primary and Qiushi No. 2 Primary had a principal turnover, but this did not bring many negative effects on the reform implementation of the schools.

6.1.1.2 Vice-principals: Co-leaders and Supporters.

Table 6.2
Roles of Vice-principals in the Reform

School	Name	Position	Responsibility	Influence on the reform (as related by participants)
Xingfu	Jiang	Former vice-principal (2009-2014)	Teaching & learning	Launched and led the reform supported by the principal with “30 Change Strategies” (8/11)
Zhuti	Chun	Vice-principal (2007-2015)	Overall administration of Primary Section	Co-led and supported the reform launched by the principal (10/12)
Qiushi No. 2	Pan	Vice-principal (2006-2015)	Teaching & learning	Supported the reform launched by the principal (7/10)

According to Dr. Fa, the Vice Director of Education Bureau, one of the most important reasons for the success of the three case study schools’ reform was that: “Principals and vice-principals are united and work together to achieve the success.” In the reform, the vice-principals acted mainly as co-leaders and supporters with

responsibilities authorized by the principal, and played important roles in promoting the reform. (Please see Table 6.2 Roles of Vice-principals in the Reform.)

Jiang, the vice-principal of Xingfu, played a very important role in its instructional reform. Although he had left Xingfu for half a year, most participants of Xingfu (eight of 11 participants) acknowledged his contributions to the reform. After Jiang came to Xingfu, the principal made it explicit that Jiang was in charge of the teaching and research of the school, and gave great support to Jiang. As a holder of the title “Shenzhen Distinguished Teacher”, Jiang was an expert in teaching and research. He was quite unprepared for what he found after he came to the school:

“I was really struck at the results: Xingfu ranked the last in all subjects, Chinese, math and English, and the average difference with the school which ranked the last but one were more than 10 points.”

Jiang was determined to “do something” about this. After he observed teachers and talked with them, he found that “it is not as bad as they told me”. Many teachers had high expectations for their professional development, but did not have “platforms” to improve themselves in teaching and learning. The bad results of the exams prompted Jiang to delve into the school’s development, especially the improvement of student learning. He suggested “30 Change Strategies of Xingfu”. The changes included changing ideas about the school’s positioning, changing school management, introducing the “Striding Development program” and other research projects, raising

the confidence of teachers, and changing ways of teacher assessment. Jiang devoted himself to planning and implementing the reform with this strategy of “30 Changes of Xingfu”, and finally brought a miracle to Xingfu together with his colleagues:

“In the sample exam of the district next year, we realized our dream.

Our math ranked the third in the district. Chinese ranked the 39th.

English ranked the last, but the difference of average points from the last but two was only 2 points.”

Mei, an influential informal teacher, was deeply impressed with Jiang’s contributions and influence: “I think that he has very great influence on me...I have this impression, not because he is my superior. He has left Xingfu, and I do not have to flatter him...If everybody works like him, nothing is difficult to do well.”

As the vice-principal in charge of teaching and learning and an expert in teaching, Jiang initiated an instructional reform in order to improve student learning of the school, and finally achieved success with the strong support of the principal and teachers. The instructional reform of Xingfu Primary was initiated by the vice-principal rather than the principal. One reason may be that the principal was more concerned with the stability of a remote low-socioeconomic status school. Another reason may be that Jiang was a widely-acknowledged expert in teaching and learning, and that the principal had confidence in Jiang and so entrusted him to lead the reform.

Zhuti Primary Section is a section of Zhuti School and has an independent campus.

As the Vice-principal of Zhuti School and Executive Principal of Primary Section, Chun

(the researcher of this study) was in charge of the overall administration of the section. He represented the authority of the principal, and executed and implemented the principal's educational ideas in the Primary Section. He also played an important role in the reform. Ten of the 12 participants acknowledged his influence on the reform. Luo, the former principal, delegated the responsibility of leading the Primary Section to Chun and they often "observed lessons and guided teachers together". Biao, the present principal, continued to entrust Chun to take charge of the Primary Section: "He is responsible for the detailed planning and execution of the collective decision of the school, and the basic strategies to implement the reform". Xing, the Principal Aide, thought that Chun was "the second most important person in the reform. He precisely conveyed the educational ideas of the principal to the teachers...He also actively supported the reform, a strong supporter." Han, the Vice-director of Teaching Affairs thought that Chun "gave the guidance about the direction". Jia, the Head of Chinese, thought that Chun "gave spiritual encouragement and support". Chun acted as the "executive principal" responsible for overall administration of Zhuti Primary and was different from the other two vice-principals, who only concentrated on teaching and learning. He co-led with the principal in providing a direction for the teachers in the reform, and gave strong support to other leaders such as Xing, the Principal-aide in charge of teaching of learning of Zhuti Primary.

Pan, the Vice-principal of Qiushi No. 2 Primary, was in charge of the school's teaching and learning. She thought that the clear division of labor was very good for the promotion of school work: "Very clear division of labor. As a vice-principal, I know

that I am responsible for teaching and learning, and act as an aide to the principal.” Her influence on the reform was also acknowledged. Seven of the 10 participants of Qiushi No. 2 believed that she had influence on the reform. Wang, the principal, regarded Pan as a “congenial partner” who “understands and supports” the reform: “Her support and understanding comes from her inner heart... neither superficial nor false. She understands my management culture, congenial.” Feng, the Director of Teaching Research, Gong, the Head of Math, Jing, a teacher leader, and Su, a young teacher, mentioned Pan’s influence on the reform as a co-leader, supporter, and an expert. Yao, a teacher leader, believed that Pan was “the second most influential person in the reform”, and was an important “interpreter” of the reform: “Whenever we had difficulties in understanding the reform, she would interpret for us.” Like Jiang, Pan was in charge of teaching and learning of the school, but she was not the initiator of the reform like Jiang. Wang, the principal, was an expert in teaching and learning himself, and Pan acted mainly as the “interpreter” and the congenial supporter of the principal.

As discussed above, the vice-principals mainly acted as co-leaders and supporters of the principals in the reform. They conveyed the ideas of the principals to the teachers and made interpretations when necessary. The role of each vice-principal in the three schools was different: as a famous expert in teaching and learning, Jiang initiated the instructional reform, and was greatly supported by the principal; Chun as the executive principal co-led the reform launched by the principal mainly by providing a direction and support for the teachers; and Pan mainly acted as the interpreter and the congenial supporter of the principal, and worked together with the principal to

implement the reform.

6.1.1.3 Department Heads: Implementers & Organizers.

In Chinese schools, the positions of middle-level administrators are formally designated. The departments are responsible for teaching and learning, for example, the Department of Teaching Affairs and the Department of Teaching Research. These two departments are in charge of teaching and learning of the whole school, and act as intermediate formal institutions between principal-level leaders and teachers. In this research, therefore, department heads were included in the group of formally designated school administrators rather than teacher leaders. The research found the directors of teaching affairs and directors of teaching research played important roles in the reform. They mainly acted as implementers and executors of specific plans of the reform according to the arrangement of principal-level leaders, monitoring the progress of the reform. In Xingfu Primary and Qiushi No. 2 Primary, the department heads were less mentioned as influential figures on the reform. The main reason was maybe that most of the time, they were carrying out the routine tasks assigned to them by the principal-level leaders, rather than giving a direction to the reform. In Zhuti Primary, Xing, the Director of Teaching Affairs, and her two Vice Directors, Han and Cui, were pioneers of the instructional reform before they were promoted to department heads. And they were considered to be very influential figures of the reform. All the participants of Zhuti Primary regarded Xing as a very important leader in the reform, and she was considered to be the “soul” of the reform by Luo, the former principal, and Jia, the Head of Chinese.

(Please see Table 6.3 Roles of Department Heads in the Reform)

Table 6.3

Roles of Department Heads in the Reform

School	Name	Position	Main roles	Influence on the reform (as related by participants)
Xingfu	Zhao	Director of Teaching Research	Teacher training and teaching research	Organizing and coordinating open lessons, teaching tutoring and research projects (8/ 11)
Xingfu	Xie	Director of Teaching Affairs	Teaching routines	Teaching routine check (5/11)
Zhuti	Xing	Principal-aide & Director of Teaching Affairs	Pioneer of reform; “soul” of the reform; teaching and learning of Primary Section	Led “Distinguished Teachers’ Studio” and influenced teachers of different subjects (12/12)
Zhuti	Jun	Director of Teaching Research	Teacher training & teaching research;	Provided support to the reform by persuading resisters (4/12)
Zhuti	Han	Vice-director of Teaching Affairs	Aide to Xing; Pioneer; reform in math teaching	Led reform in math teaching (9 of 12)
Zhuti	Cui	Vice-director of Teaching Affairs	Aide to Xing; Pioneer; reform in English teaching	Led the reform in English teaching (6 of 12)
Qiushi No. 2	Feng	Director of Teaching Research	Teacher development, math teaching	A connection link between principals and teachers (4/10)
Qiushi No. 2	Jie	Director of Teaching Affairs	Lesson guidance, Chinese teaching	A connection link between principals and teachers (3/10)

None of the three teacher leaders and young teachers of Xingfu Primary mentioned anything about the leadership of department heads in the reform. When the department heads were asked about their roles, they usually referred themselves as “aides to principals”, “being implementers”, “doing duties” and “routine work”. So the roles of department heads of Xingfu in the instructional reform may be limited to their duties and implementing what they were assigned by the principal and the vice-principal.

Zhao, the Director of Teaching Research, was mainly responsible for teacher training and teaching research. He acted as “an implementer” in teachers’ open lessons, teacher tutoring and research programs. Eight of the 11 participants mentioned his influence on the reform. As the Director of Teaching Affairs, Xie was mainly responsible for management, inspection and assessment of teaching routines, such as lesson preparation, classroom order, homework check and assessment, and test organization and grading. Five of the 11 participants mentioned his influence on the reform.

Zhao and Xie formed what Jiang, the former vice-principal of Xingfu Primary, called “the two-horse carriage” in implementing the strategies of instructional reform of Xingfu. According to Jiang, these two “horses” cooperated and worked together towards the right direction of the “carriage”: the reform. Their implementation was important. Their roles, however, were mainly following the leadership the principals and guaranteeing the routine work of teaching and learning. The direction of the “carriage” was mainly decided by the principal and the vice-principal, the “carriage drivers”.

Unlike the department heads of the other two schools, most of the department heads of Zhuti Primary were pioneers of the instructional reform before they were promoted to the position of department heads from classroom teachers. So, their influence on the reform was similar to the influence of the department heads of other schools in routine management, but different in their specific guidance and direction in both theory and practice of teaching and learning to classroom teachers.

Xing, the Principal Aide & Director of Teaching Affairs, was a classroom Chinese teacher before she was promoted to be a department head. She was the pioneer of the instructional reform, and her success promoted many other teachers to follow, including the teachers of different subjects. All the participants of Zhuti Primary School acknowledged her as an important leader in the reform, and eight of the 12 participants thought that Xing had the greatest influence on him or her on the reform. Luo, the former principal, called her “the soul of the reform”. Jia, the Head of Chinese, also said that the reform “would lose soul” without her.

As Xing was a Chinese Teacher, her influence on Chinese teaching is great. Zhen, a veteran Chinese teacher, was moved and persuaded by her efforts to promote the reform: “She inspired us with her own efforts and examples, rather than commanded us. This is more convincing.” Xing’s influence was not only on Chinese teachers, and she set an example for teachers of all subjects. Ying, the Head of English, said that Xing’s influence on her is the greatest: “I followed her step by step, and made exploration. Finally I also made successes.” Cui, the Vice-director of Teaching Affairs, was also an English teacher, and she thought that Xing and Han moved her “spiritually”:

“I had no reason not to follow them to promote the development of students for a longer purpose.” Considering her great influence on the reform, the principal promoted Xing to the position of Director of Teaching Affairs, and appointed her and Han as Director and Vice-director of Zhuti Primary Distinguished Teachers’ Studio, leading 11 “Distinguished Teachers” in the reform.

Xing was a very special leading figure in Zhuti Primary’s reform. First, she was the first teacher in the school generally acknowledged to have achieved success in the experiment of the reform. So she influenced others first as a teacher leader, and her influence was on teachers of all subjects as a pioneer. Second, she was promoted to be a middle-level administrator, Principal-aide and Director of Teaching Affairs after her success in the experiment, and her role changed from a teacher leader to a formal leader with an official position. As a director of teaching affairs, her influence was still on teachers of all subjects. Third, she acted as Principal-aide in charge of the teaching and learning of Primary Section, which was still a middle-level position, but was similar to the position of the vice-principal in charge of teaching and learning in an independent primary school, so her influence was greater than other directors of teaching affairs. As an important leader, she was considered as the “soul” of the reform by other administrators and teachers. Section 6.2 will further discuss her role as a “soul leader”.

Jun, the Director of Teaching Research, was in charge of teacher training and teaching research. He was not a pioneer of the reform such as Xing and Han. Four of the 12 participants of Zhuti Primary mentioned his influence on the reform. In fact, besides daily routine work as a director of teaching research, Jun’s contribution to the

reform was his support and the persuasion of some veteran teacher's opposition during its early stage. Xing thought that his support was very important: "Some veteran teachers opposed the reform...Jun persuaded them to support the reform. This is also very important." As a veteran department head, his attitude and support to younger department heads such as Xing helped the school move more smoothly toward the success of the reform.

Han, the Vice-director of Teaching Affairs and Vice-director of "Distinguished Teacher Workshop", was a pioneer in the reform like Xing. She was an ordinary math teacher before promoted to the position of a department head, in charge of teaching training and math teaching. Nine of the 12 participants acknowledged her as an influential figure on the reform. She not only acted as an exemplar, but also led math teachers to make a systematic plan to enforce the reform. Si, a veteran math teacher, mentioned her cooperation with Han in working out an assessment system of student group cooperative learning in math: "Han and I made standards of implementing the reform with some other teachers. And we worked a system of assessment." Xing was the partner of Han, teaching the same class, and she thought that Han "has the highest achievement in math teaching reform", and "inspired and guided" Xing on Chinese teaching reform.

Cui, an English teacher, was also a pioneer of the instructional reform, and she was promoted to the position of Vice-director in charge of teaching routines and English teaching because of her contributions to the reform in English teaching. Six of the 12 participants mentioned her influence on the reform. Hui, a young English teacher,

thought that Cui and Ying, the Head of English, “pointed out a direction”: “We can imitate and learn, and tried to apply the theory and practice of student cooperative learning.”

While there were only a director of teaching affairs and a director of teaching research in the two other schools, there were two vice-directors of teaching affairs in Zhuti Primary. One of the reasons was that there was only a principal-level administrator (Chun) in the Primary Section, and the position of Xing was similar to a vice-principal in charge of teaching and learning. So Xing needed aides to help her in leading the reform. Another reason was that Han and Cui were both very influential teacher leaders before the promotion, so they could influence teachers like Xing, both as a middle-level administrator and an excellent teacher. The three of them, thus, worked as a leading team at the level of middle-level management influencing the teachers significantly.

The two department heads in charge of teaching and learning in Qiushi No. 2 Primary were Feng, the Director of Teaching Research, and Sun, the Director of Teaching Affairs. Their main roles were to act as “a connection link” between the principals and teachers. Feng thought that she acted “as a connection link”: “The role of a middle-level administrator is to understand the intentions of principals, and then implement it at work.” There was a clear division of labor between these two directors in the reform: “Sun is responsible for the work of Department of Teaching Affairs, including lessons guidance in Chinese subject. I am responsible for teacher development, the professional development of young teachers.” Similar to Xingfu

Primary, fewer teacher participants mentioned the influence of department heads in the reform. Only four of the participants acknowledged the influence of Feng, and three of them acknowledged the influence of Sun. The main reason was maybe that they acted more as mouthpieces of principals and the teachers did not feel that they were leading a direction. Yao, a teacher leader, did not think that department heads such as Feng had great influence on the reform for their understanding of the reform was not as clear as the two principals: “Her role is just to push the work, rather than to lead a direction.”

As discussed above, department heads in charge of teaching and learning were mostly implementers and organizers of the reform: directors of teaching research were usually in charge of relative teacher development and directors of teaching affairs and focused more on teaching routine check. Most of the time, they did routine work and did not provide a direction for others. So fewer teacher participants in Xingfu Primary and Qiushi No. 2 Primary mentioned the influence of department heads in the reform. The roles of the department heads in Zhuti Primary were different from other schools. It was a primary section of a nine-year school and different from the other two independent primary schools. The role of Xing was more similar to the role of vice-principals in the other two schools. More importantly, Xing and her two aides were promoted to the positions because of their excellent achievement in the reform as ordinary teachers. So they not only acted as implementers and organizers in the reform, but also led the direction of teaching in the subjects they were in charge of. As the “soul” of the reform, Xing was acknowledged by all the participants of the school to be influential in the reform, and her influence was much greater than other department

heads.

6.1.1.4 Subject Heads: Leaders of the Reform in the Subject.

As discussed in Section 2.12, subject (grade) heads in Chinese primary schools are teacher leaders with heavy workloads, and the position is mostly designated for the purpose of coordination of a subject team (*xué kē zǔ*, 学科组) or a grade team (*nián jí zǔ*, 年级组). The assignment is relatively casual, and the change of subject heads or grade heads often happens each term. Subject heads are responsible for the coordination of the teaching and learning of the subject he or she teaches, and more involved in the instructional reform than grade heads. Moreover, few grade heads were mentioned in the interviews of participants. So this research focuses on subject heads teaching Chinese, math and English; the three subjects directly related with the reform.

The research on the three case study schools found that the influence of subject heads in each school was different. In Xingfu Primary, no subject heads were mentioned as influential leaders in the reform; in Zhuti Primary, subject heads acted as pioneers of the reform and their influences were great; in Qiushi No. 2 Primary, subject heads were influential as a whole in their own subject teams, but not as influential as the subject heads of Zhuti. Subject heads were supposed to lead the reform in the subject she or he taught. The subject heads of Xingfu Primary were not acknowledged by any participant to be influential. The subject heads of Qiushi No. 2 Primary were excellent teachers, but their influence was limited in their own subject teams. The influence of subject heads at Zhuti Primary were significant and acknowledged as pioneers of the reform by

most of the participants. (See Table 6.4 Roles of Subject Heads in the Reform).

Table 6.4
Roles of Subject Heads in the Reform

School	Name	Position	Roles in the reform	Influence on the reform (Acknowledgement of Participant)
Xingfu	Wei	Head of Chinese	Not mentioned	Not mentioned
Xingfu	Zhu	Head of Math	Not mentioned	Not mentioned
Xingfu	Zhang	Head of English	Not mentioned	Not mentioned
Zhuti	Jia	Head of Chinese	Pioneer	Co-led the reform in Chinese with Xing (8/12)
Zhuti	Bi	Head of Math	Pioneer ; First teacher making reform on math teaching	Successful informal young teacher leader influencing the whole school; Promoted to Head of Math for her influence; Co-led the reform in math with Han (9/12)
Zhuti	Ying	Head of English	Pioneer; First teacher making reform on English teaching	Promoted to Head of English for her influence; Co-led the reform in English with Cui (6/12)
Qiushi No. 2	Xiao	Head of Chinese	Leader and experimenter in Chinese reform	Organizing and influencing Chinese teachers (3/10)
Qiushi No. 2	Gong	Head of Math	Leader and experimenter math reform	Organizing and influencing Math Team (5/10)
Qiushi No. 2	Yan	Head of English	Leader and experimenter English reform	Organizing and influencing English Team (2/10)

Interestingly, none of the participants of Xingfu Primary mentioned the influence of the subject heads on the reform. In fact, when the researcher tried to confirm the final list of participants of Xingfu Primary, and expressed his wish to interview some subject heads, Zhao, the Director of Teaching Research, simply said that the teachers on the list the school provided for “are much more influential than subject heads”. The results of the interviews of the participants confirmed Zhao’s views. An article in an internal journal edited by the school pointed out the problem of subject teams (*xué kē zǔ*, 学科组) of Xingfu Primary, and may explain part of the reason why subject heads are not very influential in the reform: “For all these years, there are no routine teaching research activities and there are no activities organized by subject teams. Very few subject heads are trying to organize the subject teams to have discussion. The work of subject heads is not well done. Except for the first meeting at the beginning of the term, subject heads do not have any responsibility.” Subject heads were supposed to lead the subject teaching reform of the school, but were not performing leadership practices as expected. The main reason was that they did not do the work they were supposed to do. This finding confirmed the statement of distributed leadership that a formal position or title did not necessarily make people become an influential leader (Gronn & Hamilton, 2004; Spillane & Healey, 2010).

The influence of the subject heads of Zhuti Primary was different. They were considered by the participants of the school as leaders with significant influence. The main reason was that they were at the same time pioneers of the instructional reform in the subjects they taught. Eight of the 12 participants mentioned the influence of Jia, the

Head of Chinese; nine of them confirmed the important role of Bi, the Head of Math; six of them thought that Ying, the Head of English, was very influential in the reform. Jia was an ordinary Chinese teacher before she was assigned the post of the Head of Chinese after Xing was promoted to the Director of Teaching Affairs. Xing and Jia together played very important role in leading the reform of Chinese teaching, and Xing regarded her as a “partner in Chinese teaching”: “She is the direct observer of what I have done in the reform, the strongest supporter of my specific implementation of the reform.” Han, the Vice-director of Teaching Affairs and a math teacher, thought that Jia also influenced her as a partner teaching the same class: “When we walked together or even when we had lunch together, we would talk about our students...When we make a concerted effort, the children can get a better development and we can have easier operation.”

Bi, the Head of Math, was also an ordinary young teacher unnoticed by others when the reform started. She voluntarily attended a two-week training course together with Xing in DLK Secondary School, a school famous for instructional reform. After she came back to school, she insisted on making experiments in the instructional reform, and finally became a very influential figure in the reform of math teaching. She was assigned the post of Head of Math after she achieved great success as a pioneer of the reform. In this way, she was quite representative of an informal teacher leader without any formal position exerting great influence on the reform, although she continued to influence others after becoming the Head of Math. Luo, the Former Principal, thought that Bi was a typical example of a young teacher benefiting from the reform: “Bi was

an unnoticed teacher in the past...After the reform started, she learned how to implement the reform... Her influence as an exemplar is very strong and prompted other teachers to learn from her.” Xing confirmed that Bi was an example of an influential young teacher leader without any formal position: “Many other teachers, veteran teachers and experienced teachers, noticed that such a young teacher helped her students achieved good development with reform, and they started to change their attitude toward the reform.”

Ying was assigned the post of Head of English after Cui was promoted to the position of Vice-director of Teaching Affairs from this post. She was the pioneer of the reform in English teaching when still an ordinary teacher. Like Bi, she was the first teacher starting the reform in English teaching and making great progress, and influenced Cui, the then Head of English, and the two together lead the reform in English. Cui explained her cooperation with Ying, which was similar to the cooperation of Xing and Jia: “I often discuss with Ying and talk with other English teachers to make research on English teaching...Ying made the initial attempts, and then I followed her.” The influence of the subject heads of Zhuti Primary was significant and acknowledged by most of the participants of the school. The most important reason was that they were pioneers and achieved success in the reform of the subjects they taught, so they were influential in their subject teams. Interestingly, they were also acknowledged by teachers teaching other subjects. One of the reasons was that these subject heads cooperated with teachers of other subjects in student cooperative group learning, and so influenced the teachers teaching the same classes. Bi was one of the two teachers

(the other one was Xing) participating in the training for the reform before it was initiated, and the reform turned her from an unnoticed young teacher into an influential and successful teacher leader. So her success was more convincing and influenced teachers of different subjects.

In the interviews of Qiushi No. 2 Primary, many participants used the word “Big Team” to describe a subject team. This school had more than 2,200 students, and the number of teachers was the biggest in the three case study schools. The number of Chinese teachers, for example, was nearly 50. The subject heads of these “big teams” were excellent experimental teachers with great influence, but they were most influential in their own subject teams. Teachers of other subject teams seldom mentioned them. Moreover, when asked “who influence you most”, all young teachers mentioned other teachers teaching the same subject in the same grade except Ni, for Yan, the Head of English, was her “master”. One of the reasons may be that the “big team” was too big and met only every two weeks, different from other subject teams in schools such as Zhuti Primary which met every week. In the interviews of the ten participants of Qiushi No. 2 Primary, four mentioned the influence of Xiao, the Head of Chinese; five confirmed the influence of Gong, the Head of Math; two of them thought that Yan, the Head of English, had influence on the reform, and these two teachers were both English teachers. Xiao, the Head of Chinese, was an excellent veteran teacher famous for her Chinese teaching. Chinese Team is the biggest subject team of the school, and the principal often discussed directly with her about the reform in Chinese teaching. Hu, a young Chinese teacher, explained the influence of Xiao on

the Chinese Team: “She often discusses directly with the principal, and then delivers the message to us. She arranges and organizes our team both in direction and action.” Gong, the Head of Math, also taught experimental classes as Xiao did. As a subject head, she actively participated in the reform and set an example for math teachers: “I myself insist on doing this. I asked all math teachers to observe my lessons... Gradually more and more teachers start to follow and many of them are doing very well now.”

Yan, the Head of English, was a practitioner in the reform such as Gong. She and Jing, another English teacher, were the first two teachers starting the reform in English teaching. Her influence was not as strong as Jing. Only two English teachers mentioned her influence on the reform, while Jing was also acknowledged by middle-level and principal-level leaders. In spite of that, her influence as a subject head was also strong. Jing thought that Yan had also great influence on her: “Whenever I had an open lesson, or I made a speech in a meeting, I would first ask for help from them (Yan and Meng, Jing’s master)... Whenever I had finished the lessons, I would also ask for their opinions again.” The roles of the subject heads of Qiushi No. 2 Primary were mainly limited in leading the reform of their subject teams, so they were acknowledged only by the teachers teaching the same subject. Moreover, as the school was big with many teachers in a subject team, the influence of the subject heads on young teachers seemed not as direct and effective as veteran teachers teaching the same subject within the same grade.

Subject heads were supposed to lead the reform in the subject she or he taught. The subject heads of Xingfu Primary, however, did not do their work effectively, so their influence on their subject teams were weak and not acknowledged by any

participant of the school. The subject heads of Qiushi No. 2 Primary were excellent teachers and led the reform in their subjects, but their influence was limited in their own subject teams. The influence of subject heads at Zhuti Primary were significant and acknowledged by most of the participants of their school including teachers teaching other subjects. The reasons were that they were very influential pioneer leaders in the reform in their subjects and cooperated with teachers teaching other subjects in student cooperative group learning.

6.1.1.5 Key Findings on Distribution by Position.

Section 6.1.1 discussed findings about how leadership was distributed to different leaders according to their positions, and found that there were similarities in duties and responsibility distributed to leaders with the same position, but the distribution was greatly influenced by context and culture of the schools.

At principal-level leadership, all of them mainly led the direction of the reform and provided a vision for teachers. In specific implementation of the reform, however, their influences were different. In Xingfu Primary, the reform was initiated by the vice-principal, and the principal gave great support to the vice-principal, but he was not the direct leader of the reform. In Zhuti Primary and Qiushi No. 2 Primary, the reform was both initiated by former principals who had retired. The principal of Zhuti Primary inherited “Life Education” advocated by the former principal, and did not make much change to the reform, while the principal of Qiushi No. 2 Primary integrated the old tradition of the school with his own educational ideas, and successfully refined the

reform initiated by the former principal. While most participants of Zhuti did not mention the influence of the present principal on the reform nor acknowledged the former principal as the most influential “spiritual leader”, all the participants of Qiushi No. 2 confirmed that the present principal was the most important person on the reform. The roles of vice-principals of Zhuti Primary and Qiushi No.2 were similar, and were mainly “co-leaders”, “supporters” and “interpreters”, but the vice-principal of Xingfu Primary was the initiator of the reform, and his influence on the reform was, in a sense, greater than other vice-principals.

The department heads of Xingfu Primary and Qiushi No. 2 Primary were generally regarded as implementers and organizers doing routine work, and were not thought of as influential as middle-level administrators of Zhuti Primary. The department heads of Zhuti Primary were considered to be very influential, as three of them were pioneers of the reform promoted to the positions of department heads from ordinary teachers because of their great contribution. Xing, the Principal-aide and Director of Teaching Affairs, was considered to be the “soul” of the reform and all participants acknowledged her great influence on the reform.

The influence of subject heads in the three case study schools varied greatly: In Xingfu Primary the influence was weak and no participants mentioned their influence. The main reasons may be that they do not have motivations and their responsibilities are not clearly defined by the school.; the subject heads of Zhuti Primary were pioneers promoted to the position because of their contributions to the reform, and their influence was acknowledged by most participants of the school; subject heads of Qiushi No. 2

were excellent veteran teachers, and their influence was limited in influencing teachers teaching the same subject.

As shown in the results and findings, having a leadership position does not necessarily bring real influence. For example, the subject heads of Xingfu Primary were not acknowledged to be real leaders in leading the reform in their subject teams. The extent of influence on the reform of formal leaders with the same position may vary greatly depending on a particular setting. For example, the influences on the reform exerted by the principal of Zhuti Primary and the principal of Qiushi No. 2 were greatly different because their different extent of involvement in and contributions to the reform.

6.1.2 Distribution by Task

The researcher uses “distribution by task” to refer to the arrangement of distributed leadership in less formal ways. The responsibility or duties are usually distributed to people without formal leading positions, or the responsibility or duties are distributed to people with formal positions but they are not directly related with the positions. This section discusses two types of leaders identified in the reform of the three case study schools with leadership distributed by task: project leaders and master teachers. They are mostly informal teacher leaders, and their roles are context-loaded and culture-rooted.

6.1.2.1 “Project Leaders” (xiàng mù fù zé rén, 项目负责人): Experimenters and practitioners of the reform.

“Project leader” is not an official title or position for a teacher. The researcher uses

it here to refer a teacher who was assigned a certain reform-related task. These “project leaders” were usually teacher leaders without any formal position. The principal or other administrators planned a certain project and entrusted these teachers to be in charge of its operation. There was usually no extra pay or official acknowledgement for their work, but as the leader in the project (*xiàng mù fù zé rén*, 项目负责人), these teachers usually played a very important role in promoting the reform-related reform, and greatly influenced other teachers.

The research found many examples of teachers leading a certain reform-related project exerted great influence on the reform. In Xingfu Primary, the success of the reform was related to research projects such as the “Striding Development Program”, so project leaders such as Mei and Hua were very influential in the reform. Because their success in the project was acknowledged by other teachers and school administrators, they were influential not only in this project, but set examples for excellent teaching and learning in the whole school. In Zhuti Primary, the reform mainly concentrated on student cooperative group learning, and Si, an informal teacher leader without any formal position was assigned the task of leading research on low-grade math teaching reform. As a project leader, she worked together with the other two leaders and played an important role in promoting the development of young teachers. In Qiushi No. 2 Primary, textbook integration was regarded as an important research project, so project leaders such as Jing, in charge of English textbook integration, and Yao, in charge of math textbook integration, were very important in the reform, and their experiments and achievements helped the school to implement the reform later in

all the classes. (Please see Table 6.5 Roles of Project Leaders in the reform)

Table 6.5

Roles of Project Leaders in the Reform

School	Name	Project	Roles in the reform	Influence on the reform (Acknowledgement of Participant)
Xingfu	Mei	Striding Development Program	Leader of the program; "No. 1 Teacher of the School"	Acting as the pioneer and school, influencing other teachers with her efforts at the reform (11/11)
Xingfu	Hua	Classic Chinese Teaching	Leader of the program	Influencing other Chinese teachers (5/11)
Zhuti	Si	Low-grade student cooperative group learning	Leader of the program	Influencing other math teachers (5/12)
Qiushi No. 2	Jing	English textbook integration	Pioneer	Successfully influencing other English teachers to join in the reform (3/10)
Qiushi No. 2	Yao	Math textbook integration	Pioneer	Successfully influencing other math teachers to join in the reform (5/10)

Mei, an influential veteran Chinese teacher of Xingfu Primary, was identified by all 11 participants to be an important leader of the instructional reform, especially in leading the ICT-based "Striding Development Program". In Jiang's mind, Mei was "the No.1 Teacher" of the school. When he was asked about the roles of Mei in the reform, he said, "Young teachers will feel ashamed of themselves if they do not follow. She's the No. 1 teacher. The No. 1 teacher is doing this. Why can't young teachers follow?"

Hua, a young Chinese teacher with a master degree in ancient Chinese, was a backbone teacher in leading the reform in Classic Chinese Program and in "Striding Development Program". Five of the 11 participants noticed her influence in the reform, but her roles in editing Classic Chinese textbooks and organizing the teaching were also very important. Mei was a veteran Chinese teacher going on her fifties. Before the instructional reform, she was unnoticed by other teachers in leading teaching and learning, and even regarded as a "shrew" (quoted from Jiang's interview). When Jiang started the instructional reform, he found her expertise and enthusiasm in the reform and persuaded her to participate in the "Striding Development Program in which she became the leader. The program provided a good opportunity for Mei and other teachers to improve their teaching and learning, and to exchange with other teachers throughout the country. Mei was also given opportunities to give "demonstration lessons" to other teachers and won their recognition. After Jiang left the school, she continued to lead the program, although she was not given any formal position by the school. As a "No. 1 Teacher", her influence on other teachers was all-directional, and not only limited in leading the program. Her expertise had won wide recognition and exerted great influence on important teaching and learning routines such as classroom routines, teaching research and teacher tutoring. When Mei gave demonstration lessons, other teachers were very glad to observe and learn from her. Yuan, the Chairman of Teachers' Union and Director of School Administration, was moved by her devotion to work: "I sometime feel that this is incredible. She is going on her fifties, and will soon retire in several years, but she does not have any sign of burnout, and is always energetic." Hua

was relatively young compared with Mei. She had a master degree in Classic Chinese Works. Classic Chinese was an important part of the reform that Jiang had planned for Xingfu, who persuaded Hua to become the leader of Classic Chinese Teaching Program of the school. The school joined the Classic Chinese Association and this greatly improved students' academic learning in Chinese. Besides the role in leading classic Chinese teaching, she was also an experimental teacher of the "Striding Development Program" and also involved in many research projects of the school. She also often won honors in teaching competitions and gave open lessons to guide teachers younger than her. Jiang thought that the honors she won helped her to become more confident and exert influence over other teachers: "Our teachers have never won such prizes, and they get more confident. Teachers such as Mei, Liang and Hua became more and more confident after winning nation-level prizes, and they influenced other teachers through this." Like Xing, Mei was the only leader acknowledged by all the participants of the school. She was the first teacher doing the experiment of "Striding Development Program" and achieved success. Moreover, her devotion to work moved other teachers to follow her. Hua insisted on doing the task delegated by the vice-principal, and finally achieved success and won many honors and awards. This won confidence for her and other teachers, and inspired others to follow.

Si was one of the three "Distinguished Teachers of Zhuti Primary" in the Math Team, and she cooperated with the other two "Distinguished Teachers", Han and Bi, in working out the "Multi-level objectives" of student cooperative group learning in math.

Si was responsible for Grades 1 and 2. Compared with Han and Bi, she was an informal

teacher leader, but her influence as a project leader was also important and promoted the development of young teachers. Han, the Vice-director of Teaching Affairs, explained the cooperation: “The three of us observed lessons with other young teachers, and made sure that objectives of student cooperative group learning are implemented...After about one year’s practice, our young teachers had very fast development.” Si’s task of leading math reform in lower grades was assigned by Han, the department head in charge of the math teaching reform. She successfully completed the work and was the most influential leader in math reform in the lower grades. Meanwhile, she cooperated with two formal leaders, Han and Bi, in implementing the reform as a whole in the school.

After Wang came to Qiushi No. 2 Primary, one of the foci of the reform was the integration of textbooks for student-oriented learning. Jing and Yao were two informal leaders without any position, but were assigned the task of English and math textbook integration. As pioneers, the two project leaders played very important roles in the reform. Six of the 10 participants mentioned the influence of Jing, and three of them acknowledged the contributions of Yao in the reform. Jing, a young English teacher without any formal position, was assigned the task of integrating English textbooks, and her contribution was acknowledged by Ni, a young English teacher, as “a very influential teacher leader without any formal position”: “She edited and integrated our second series of textbooks we are now using. She made great contribution by trying the textbooks and making it suitable for our teachers.” Jing explained her role in the reform as a “pioneer” in textbook integration: “I made a lot of investigation and research and

was the first one to start the reform in our grade. I had many open lessons, and other teachers could see clearly the improvement of the students. The teachers then found the effects of the reform and started to follow.” Yao, a young math teacher, was assigned the task of integrating math textbooks by the principal. Yao was the first math teacher trying to integrate three versions of math textbooks into one which was suitable for students of the school. Through the integration of different textbooks, the school started to promote “unit bundling teaching” (*dān yuán kǎn yuán jiào xué*, 单元捆绑教学), which could help the students get a better comprehensive understanding of math. After Yao’s initial experiment and success, more and more math teachers joined in the project, and it was gradually expanded to the whole school. Jing and Yao were pioneer experimenters of Qiusi No. 2 Primary’s textbook integration. After they successfully edited new textbooks, they applied them in real classroom teaching, and worked together with other teachers to refine them. Gradually, they were expanded to the whole school. Similar to the subject heads of the school, these two project leaders were mostly acknowledged by teachers of their own subjects, for they focused on the reform of the subjects that they taught.

Project leaders were assigned the task of leading a project, and mainly acted as experimenters and practitioners. Their influence was usually limited in the project they were in charge of. Si was the most influential in math reform in lower grades. Jing was influential in English textbook integration, and Yao in math textbook integration. Hua was most influential in Classic Chinese teaching. Mei was special and influenced not only teachers in the project. The main reason may be that as a veteran teacher and

excellent in teaching, Mei's success in the project and her devotion to work moved other teachers to follow her. Moreover, the project was significant for the success of Xingfu Primary's instructional reform, and influenced the school as a whole.

6.1.2.2 “Master Teachers” (*Shī fu*, 师傅): Leaders influencing disciples directly.

“Master teacher” (*shī fu*, 师傅) is not an official title or position, and used very often in Chinese primary schools to refer to a veteran or expert teacher who is assigned the task of mentoring one or more “disciples” (*tú di*, 徒弟). “Master teachers” are usually more experienced teachers with good expertise. The results of the research showed that the three case study schools intentionally encouraged the master teachers to exert influence on the reform by formalizing master-disciple relationship in the schools (Please also see Section 6.6.1). Xingfu Primary advocated a “*Qīng Lán Project*” (青蓝工程, originating from the Chinese saying “青出于蓝而胜于蓝, *qīng chū yú lán ér shèng yú lán*” (“Indigo blue is extracted from the indigo plant but is bluer than the plant it comes from.”), which means “the worthy disciple excels his masters”) master-disciple relationship project; Zhuti Primary promoted the “Distinguished Teacher Program” (*míng shī gōng zuò shì*, 名师工作室), and the “Distinguished Teachers” were all very influential master teachers tutoring a great number of young teachers; Qiushi No. 2 Primary tried to mentor young teachers through a “New Excellent Teacher” (*xīn yōu shī*, 新优师) program, establishing three-person learning groups with a master, an assistant master and a young teacher in each group. Master teachers were not necessarily ordinary teachers. All the subject heads and project heads previously listed

such as Bi, Mei and Jing were master teachers tutoring young teachers, and the department heads in Zhuti Primary such as Xing, Han and Cui were also very influential master teachers. Pan, the vice-principal of Qiushi No. 2 Primary, had been the master teacher of Yao before Yao herself became a master teacher. In this section, the researcher only listed some important master teachers without any formal position mentoring young teachers and promoting the reform. (Please see Table 6.6 Examples of Master Teachers in the Reform). From this list, the research shows that informal leaders in the reform of these case schools were distributed in every subject and grade.

Table 6.6
Examples of Master Teachers in the Reform

School	Name	Subject	Roles in the reform
Xingfu	Liang	Math	Pioneer and master teacher
Zhuti	Zhen	Chinese	Master teacher in lower-grade Chinese teaching
Qiushi No. 2	Qin	Chinese	Tang's master
Qiushi No. 2	Hai	Math	Su's master
Qiushi No. 2	Bai	Chinese	Hu's master
Qiushi No. 2	Meng	English	Jing's master

Liang, a middle-aged math teacher of Xingfu Primary, successfully led her students to achieve an unprecedented No. 3 ranking in district-wide sample tests, and was admired and acknowledged by other teachers and leaders. Eight of the 11 participants of Xingfu mentioned her contributions to the reform. She received many honors and awards as a result of her achievements, which were acknowledged and

accepted by others. Yuan, the Chairman of Teachers' Union and Director of School Administration, was very proud of her achievement: "Nobody feels jealous or unfair about honors or awards she receives. Many people, especially young teachers, accept her and accept her methods and ways of working." Liang's achievement increased her confidence and more importantly proved that Xingfu teachers and students could be as excellent as teachers and students of other schools. Liang not only improved her own students' achievement, but also helped other teachers in teacher tutoring and teaching research. Fen, a young teacher, thought that Liang's influence on her was great: "The guidance is very effective...I heard many teachers say that they want to become a teacher like her." Liang was an example of an excellent teacher who won the recognition of other teachers by their expertise in teaching. She did not have a position, and was not assigned a specific task, but many teachers wanted her to become their master because of her achievement in teaching.

Zhen was a veteran Chinese teacher going on to her fifties. As a veteran teacher, she actively participated in the reform, and led young teachers in lower-grade Chinese teaching. Her disciples included not only Chinese teachers, but also teachers in other subject teams. Cui, the Vice-director of Teaching Affairs, was deeply impressed with the influence of veteran teachers like Zhen on the reform as follows: "They are not young any more, but they are active to participate in the reform and applied it in their lessons. They set very good examples to the young teachers, and led the young teachers in the reform." Zhen was a veteran teacher, and did not have a formal position in the reform. She actively participated in the reform, and her expertise and experience helped

her become an effective leader and set good examples for young teachers.

In Xingfu Primary and Zhuti Primary, when asked the question “who influence you most in the reform”, the answers of most participants focused on several important leaders such as subject leaders, project leaders and department heads. In Qiushi No. 2 Primary, the answers were more dispersed, and many teachers referred to their “masters” as the one influencing him or her most. Tang, a young Chinese teacher, confirmed that Qin, her master, had the greatest influence on her. Su, a young math teacher actively participating in the reform, thought that Hai, her master had influenced her most in the reform. Hu, a young Chinese teacher, regarded Bai, her master, as the most influential person on her reform. Jing, the leader of English integration, had become a master teacher herself, but when asked who had the greatest influence on her, she referred to Meng, who was her master and guided her teaching. Tang, Hai, Bai and Meng were all ordinary teachers without any formal leading position, but were all acknowledged to be the most influential person to their disciples’ reform. The influence of these master teachers was mostly in the routine work of their disciples, and may be more direct and easier to implement.

Master teachers were a culture-specific type of leaders in the Chinese schools. Masters were assigned the task of mentoring their disciples, and they formed a very close relationship at work. The influence of masters on their disciples were more direct and effective, and was, thus, very important for the development of disciples. Because of the big number of master teachers in a school, the influence of master teachers was spread all over the school, and many informal master teacher leaders such as Liang,

Zhen, Tang, Hai, Bai and Meng played important roles in the reform. This finding about the roles of master teachers has great significance for the knowledge base of distributed leadership.

6.1.2.3 Key Findings about Distribution by Task.

Section 6.12 showed how leadership was assigned to influential people by task rather than position. The distribution of leadership was more informal, but the influence is nevertheless as significant as distribution by position. Some leaders with formal positions may also be distributed leadership by task, but the leadership distributed in this way is irrelevant to their positions. Assigning a leadership task does not necessarily equate to responsibility meaning real influence. For example, Bi and Xing in Zhuti Primary were sent out for training for the reform, and assigned the task of making explorations in the reform, but this designation was only one reason for their final significant influence on the reform. Five other teachers in the Secondary Section were also sent out for training together with them, but these teachers did not become influential leaders in the reform as they did not insist on doing the experiment after coming back and were not able to achieve success and win recognition as Xing and Bi did.

In the research, two types of leaders generated by distributed leadership by task were identified in case study schools: project leaders and master teachers. Project leaders were assigned the task of leading a certain research project, which was usually informal and temporary. Master teachers were influential leaders in the particular

context and culture of Chinese schools, and their influence was more direct and more widely spread.

Depending on different contexts, the influence of project leaders was different. Project leaders were very influential in Xingfu Primary because the reform was mainly promoted through research programs. Mei, the Leader of the “Striding Development Program”, was considered to be “No. 1 Teacher of the School”, and all participants acknowledged her contribution to the reform. Jing and Yao, two young teachers in Qiushi No. 2 Primary who were assigned the task of integrating textbooks, successfully became influential teacher leaders because of their contributions to the reform. Si, an ordinary teacher in charge of the research on low-grade student cooperative group learning in Zhuti Primary, was also very influential on the reform.

The influence of “Master teachers” was culturally rooted in Chinese schools. “Master teachers” included leaders with both formal and informal positions. Many school administrators were also “master teachers” as they were also very excellent teachers. The vice-principal of Qiushi No. 2 Primary and the department heads of Zhuti Primary, for example, were also important master teachers. The importance of “master teachers”, however, lied in that many teachers without any formal positions could become influential leaders. Liang, a master teacher without any formal position in Xingfu Primary, was considered to be a very influential figure on the reform for her contributions to the improvement of student learning outcome and tutoring young teachers. In Zhuti Primary, veteran teachers without any formal positions like Zhen were able to exert their influence on young teachers’ professional development through

“master teacher culture”. In Qiushi No. 2 Primary, five of the participants mentioned their master teachers as the people who had had the most influence on his or her reform, and these master teachers were all ordinary teachers without any formal position.

6.1.3 Distribution by Spontaneity.

By “distribution by spontaneity”, the researcher refers to distributed leadership neither arranged by position nor by task. Most leadership distribution is arranged by position or by task, but in a school's daily work, there are also many forms of distributed leadership which are neither planned nor designed. In some circumstances, the task of leadership is not specifically designed to anybody, but for some reasons, some teachers start to perform the task naturally and spontaneously. Yuan, the Director of School Affairs of Xingfu Primary, cited an example of distributed leadership by spontaneity in teachers' preparation for the incoming district examination. It was neither arranged by position nor task, and in a sense, everybody involved in the preparation was a leader in this action: “The education bureau was going to have district-wide examination. Our school did not tell the teachers about this, but teachers of Grade Four and Grade Five gathered together to discuss about the preparation for the incoming exam. What should we do? Chinese teachers and math teachers gathered together to discuss about ways to improve students' learning.” In this case, teachers teaching the grades which might participate in the district exam (Grade 4 and 5) spontaneously gathered together and exerted influence on each other in order to improve learning through cooperation.

As a matter of fact, the program of teacher tutoring in Xingfu Primary was also

developed from the informal leadership of some teachers on other teachers by spontaneity. The school formalized teacher tutoring relationship, and the distribution by spontaneity became distribution by task. Zhao, the Director of Teaching Research, explained: “The teachers wishes to exchange views with them (teacher leaders). We find that some teachers want to recognize them as their masters, so we use this platform to enhance the relationship. Before teacher tutoring relationship is formally established, they already have informal relationship.” After master-disciple relationship was encouraged and formalized by the school, distribution by spontaneity became distribution by task. The influence of master teachers were strengthened.

In Zhuti Primary, an example of distributed leadership by spontaneity was the participation of some low-grade teacher leaders in the reform. At the beginning of the reform, the school did not start the reform of student cooperative group learning in low-grade teachers. After the low-grade teachers saw the effects of the reform in middle-grade and high-grade teachers, they started to make experiments in their classes without the designation of the school administrators because they thought that the cooperative group learning could start in the lower grades and set a good foundation for the higher grades. Teachers such as Zhen and Si finally found a successful way to lead low-grade students in cooperative group learning, and their achievement was then noticed and recognized by the school administrators. According to Wu, the Director of Teaching Research, low-grade teachers “voluntarily participated in the reform, and formed a spontaneous leadership and influence.” Zhen believed that her spontaneous experiments had very good results: “At that time, I was in the low grade...I thought we

could have a try. I started to make experiments based on the age of our student. We found that it had very good effects, and the low-grade students have also great learning potentials.” Si had the same feeling about the achievement: “At that time, there was no requirement for low-grade teachers to enforce student cooperative group learning, but the teachers started to set the foundation for this. They enhanced the students’ capability, the capability to cooperate and pair learning.” The contributions of teacher leaders such as Zhen and Si to the reform in the lower grades were actually inspired by the success of leaders such as Xing in the higher grades. As veteran excellent teachers, they believed that the reform could also be implemented in the lower grades. They spontaneously started the experiments and finally won acknowledgement of other teachers and the school administrators.

In Qiushi No. 2 Primary, Peng, an ordinary veteran teacher, insisted on tutoring students’ Chinese “circulatory composition” through the Internet for more than six years, and achieved great success by combining it with the educational ideas of the reform. Many young teachers started to follow him. His leadership in the reform is distributed neither by position nor task, and was also an example of “distribution by spontaneity”. Pan, the vice-principal, explained Peng’s influence on young teachers: “He insisted on doing this, and it is not temporary. Now he is in a new grade, and his influence is brought to the new grade. All the young teachers in this grade think that Peng is their example, and try to learn from him. We do not have to promote him.” Peng’s participation in the reform was special. He developed a unique way of teaching and learning with the help of the Internet. His influence was somewhat more related to

his special interest in the Internet. This was achieved with spontaneity, and was later acknowledged by other teachers and school administrators.

Distribution by spontaneity was practiced by leaders voluntarily, and encouraged in Chinese culture because it implied a proactive attitude toward work. When this type of distributed leadership was identified to be positive for the reform, the school would usually acknowledge and encourage this. Distribution by spontaneity may become other types of distribution such as distribution by task. In Xingfu Primary, for example, distributed leadership by spontaneity performed by informal master teachers became distributed leadership by task after informal master-disciple relationship was acknowledged and formalized by the school. In Zhuti Primary, the spontaneous contributions of Si in lower-grade reform was acknowledged by the school, and then Si was assigned the task of project leader in math reform in the lower grades. In this way, the distributed leadership by spontaneity became distributed leadership by task.

6.1.4 Collectivist distribution.

By “collectivist distribution”, the researcher refers to the situations when leadership practices are shared by multiple people, who work together to achieve goals. In fact, collectivist distribution may be caused by distribution by position or by task. It may be either formal or informal. The researcher highlights this way of distributed leadership because with a collectivist culture, collective cooperation and coordination is constantly emphasized and encouraged in Chinese schools.

In Chinese culture, “division of labor” can also be regarded as a form of

collectivist distribution, for the leaders involved in “division of labor” actually share the same goals. That is why most participants of the research mentioned “cooperation” when talking about “division of labor”. And they usually emphasized that “division of labor” could not be separated from “cooperation” (*fēn gōng bù fēn jiā*, 分工不分家). For example, Yong, the principal of Xingfu Primary, emphasized that both “division of labor” and “cooperation” were important: “We have a division of labor, but we also have cooperation and coordination. In important school activities, we need to cooperate and finish the task together. Some are organizers and some are coordinators. Both a division of labor and cooperation is needed to finish the job.”

This section discusses three types of collectivist distribution of leadership: collectivist distribution at the same level of leaders; collectivist distribution at different levels; and collectivist distribution in sequence.

6.1.4.1 Collectivist distribution at the same level.

At the principal-level, principals usually clearly distribute part of their power and responsibility to the vice-principal. In Xingfu Primary, Yong was responsible for overall administration of the school, and Jiang was responsible for teaching affairs and research. In Zhuti School, Luo and later Biao were responsible for the administrator of the whole school, including the Primary Section and Primary School, and Chun was responsible for the overall administration of the Primary Section. In Qiushi No. 2 Primary, Wang was responsible for the overall administration of the school, and Pan responsible for teaching and learning. Although the vice-principal was usually in charge of teaching

and learning in “division of labor”, the principal was still “the first person who is accountable” for teaching and learning of the school according to the “Principal Accountability System”. So principals and vice-principals often exerted their influence on teaching and learning together. For example, in Zhuti Primary, Luo, the former principal, often observed the lessons together with Chun, his vice-principal. Effective collectivist distribution of leadership at the principal level usually implies good coordination and cooperation between the principal and the vice-principal. Dr. Fa, the Former Vice-director of Nanshan Education Bureau, believed that one of the most important reasons for the success of the three case study schools in the reform was that “principals and vice-principals are united and work together to achieve the success”. Principals and vice-principals co-led the reform in the schools, and this was important for the success of the reform.

At the department-level, usually the director of teaching and the director of teaching research were distributed to the responsibility of teaching and learning. So, In Xingfu Primary, Zhao, the Director of Teaching Research, and Xie, the Director of Teaching Affairs, were directly related to the instructional reform; in Zhuti Primary, Jun, the Director of Teaching Research, Xing, the Director of Teaching Affairs and her two vice-directors, Han and Cui, were distributed the responsibility of teaching and learning; in Qiushi No. 2, Feng, the Director of Teaching Research and Sun, the Director of Teaching Affairs, were the people in charge of teaching and learning. Just as Jiang, the Vice-principal of Xingfu described, the director of teaching research and the director of teaching affairs were “two horses in a carriage” in charge of teaching and learning at

the department level. There was also a more specific division of labor among the two directors. Xie, the Director of Teaching Affairs of Xingfu Primary, explained the division of labor between Zhao and him: “For example, I am responsible for teaching routine check, and Director of Teaching Research is in charge of teaching competitions.” Although they had a division of labor in this, improving teaching and learning was the common goal of the two directors. When they made important decisions about teaching and learning, they needed coordination and cooperation. Zhao, the Director of Teaching Research, mentioned that their cooperation under the leadership of the vice-principal: “In teaching and learning, the former Vice-principal is directly leading. In improving students' learning, for example, three of us, Vice-principal, Director of Teaching Affairs and I, consist of a leading team. We together decide the direction of teaching and learning mode and the arrangement of teachers in their positions.” The cooperation and coordination of directors of teaching affairs and directors of teaching research was very important for the implementation of the reform.

For teacher leaders, collectivist distribution often occurred when teachers teaching the same class or teaching the same subject cooperated to implement the reform. Their common goals were usually to improve the teaching and learning of the same class or the same subject, so cooperation and coordination were very important. Liang, a teacher leader of Xingfu Primary, mentioned her cooperation and coordination with other teachers as a class teacher (*bān zhǔ rén*, 班主任): “We have a division of labor among teachers teaching the same class, such as class teacher, assistant class teacher and subject teachers...I have to coordinate with subject teachers such as English

teacher and Chinese teacher.” Hua, another teacher leader of Xingfu Primary, also mentioned her cooperation with other teachers to improve student learning: “I often discuss with...Chinese teacher, English teacher and math teacher about the change of our children, how the discipline is in our class, how to improve classroom control, and how to improve students' attention...As for teachers teaching the same subject, the Chinese teachers teaching experimental classes of Striding Development Program often discuss together about strategies of doing the experiment...” For teacher leaders, it was very common for them to cooperate with other teacher leaders in teaching the same subject or the same class. The collective contribution to the leadership practices could usually bring about better results in the reform.

6.1.4.2 Collectivist distribution at different levels.

Collectivist distribution of leadership was not necessarily performed at the same level of school administrators and teachers. In many circumstances, administrators and teachers of different levels worked together to achieve some goals at different levels.

A typical example of this practice was the student group cooperative learning reform in math. Han, the Vice-director of Teaching Affairs, and Bi, the Head of Math, and Si, a veteran teacher without any formal position, consisted the leading team of this reform. They had division of labor and also cooperation. With their combined efforts, the reform was extended to all math teachers. Bi explained this as follows:

“At the beginning, Han and I started to make reform in math teaching. Later Si joined in. We three were then divided into three

groups. Si is responsible for the reform in Grade 1 and Grade 2. I am responsible for the Grade 3 and 4. Han is in charge of Grade 5 and 6. In this way, the whole school started to implement the reform...We learned from each other and made innovations together.”

Through the collective influence of a middle-level administrator, a subject head and a teacher leader without any position, the math teaching reform was carried out in the whole school and all math teachers participated.

Another example of collectivist distribution of leadership was the cooperation between school administrators and subject heads in leading the reform of a subject. To guarantee the implementation of the reform, school administrators usually also had a division of labor in leading the teaching of a specific subject. In Zhuti Primary, the three directors of teaching affairs had a division of labor in different subjects: Xing for Chinese teaching, Han for math and Cui for English. In Qiushi No. 2 Primary, Pan was responsible for English; Feng and Sun were respectively in charge of math and Chinese teaching. In Xingfu Primary, department heads were required to assist the work of grade heads, and each department head was also in charge of one grade besides his or her duties as a department head.

In Zhuti Primary, the cooperation between department heads and subject heads was very effective, and the reason was because these department heads had been subject heads before being promoted to directors. Xing and Jia worked together in the reform

of Chinese teaching; Han and Bi were responsible for math; Cui and Ying for English. They acted as “pair leaders”. In Qiushi No. 2 Primary, Sun and Head of Chinese, Feng and Head of Math, Pan and Head of English, were also paired to lead the teaching of Chinese, math and English respectively. Cui, the Vice-director of Teaching Affairs of Zhuti Primary, cited the example of the cooperation of Xing and Jia in leading the reform in Chinese teaching:

“Take Chinese teaching for an example. Xing leads the general direction. Jia is responsible for the implementation in Subject Team. I really appreciate their cooperation. They two often exchange views and make exploration together. After their discussion, they will reach a consensus, and then bring it to their subject team for exchange and discussion.”

With the collective influence of middle-level administrators and subject heads, the teachers of Zhuti Primary were able to understand better the direction of the reform in their subjects, and also the specific implementation methods.

6.1.4.3 Collectivist distribution in Sequence.

The researcher uses “collectivist distribution in sequence” to refer to circumstances when people perform leadership practices separately or together in a particular sequence. For example, in Qiushi No. 2 Primary, the purpose of textbook integration was to apply the new textbooks in classroom teaching and learning. Some teacher leaders first attempted to edit their own textbooks based on several versions of

textbooks, and then these teachers and some others tried to use the integrated books in their lesson teaching. This was conducted in a particular sequence. Gong, the Head of Math, introduced how math teacher leaders could integrate textbooks and then apply them in lesson teaching:

“In textbook integration...each teacher is responsible for a unit or a part, and he or she has to make deep research on it, and to integrate different versions of textbooks. After all the teachers finished their tasks, we integrated the textbooks as a whole. As for research lessons, we have unit bundling lessons, and grade bundling lessons. Several teachers work together to present the lessons as a whole.”

The reform of textbook integration in Qiushi No. 2 Primary started from textbook editing and then the application of new textbooks in lessons. In the process, numerous teacher leaders contributed to the reform.

Jun, the Director of Teaching Research of Zhuti Primary, cited another example of collectivist distribution of leadership in sequence. In preparing a research lesson, the leaders of the Distinguished Teacher Workshop, the Department of Teaching Research, and the Department of Teaching Affairs performed their leadership practices in a sequence: “Distinguished Teacher Workshop first proposed a research focus. The Department of Teaching Research then refined it in detail. The Department of Teaching Affairs was responsible for the implementation and organization of research lessons

and trial lessons on the detailed focus. We are linked together. ” In this process, leadership was distributed to the leaders of the three departments in a sequence and each of them contributed to the implementation of the reform in their own ways.

6.1.4.4 Key Finding about Collectivist distribution.

Section 6.1.4 discussed the collectivist distribution of leadership practices identified in the findings of the research. The term “collectivist distribution” was used here to reflect the Chinese culture of collectivism, and referred to situations when leadership practices are shared by a number of people, who work together to achieve their goals. They may work in the same place coordinately or separately, or work in different places, but have common goals. Three types of collectivist distribution were analyzed: collectivist distribution at the same level; collectivist distribution at different levels; and collectivist distribution in sequence. In a collective culture, cooperation and coordination were encouraged and advocated. Almost all participants mentioned that they had cooperation and coordination with others in the implementation of the reform.

Collectivist distribution not only existed at the same level of school administrators and teachers, but also went across different levels. School administrators and teachers worked together in some leadership practices to achieve the same goals. In some circumstances, collectivist distribution was performed in a sequence for some particular purposes. To understand how distributed leadership was practiced in Chinese context and culture, it is necessary to consider the Chinese collective culture. So this categorization of distributed leadership may be easier for Chinese people to understand

and can reflect the special characteristics of distributed leadership in Chinese schools.

6.2 Soul leaders, Backbone teachers and Master teachers

In this research, three types of important leaders with special Chinese characteristics were identified: “soul leaders” who inspired almost everybody in the school in the reform; “backbone teachers”, who were widely acknowledged in teaching and were persuasive in their reform; “master teachers”, who were usually ordinary teachers influencing their “disciples” in daily routine work (Please also see Section 6.1.2.2 and Section 6.6.2).

The word “soul” (*líng hún*, 灵魂) was used by Luo, the former principal of Zhuti Primary, to describe Xing, who was acknowledged to be an important leader in the reform by all the participants of the school. The researcher uses the term “soul leader” (*líng hún lǐng xiù*, 灵魂领袖) to refer to very important and influential leaders widely recognized by other leaders and teachers. Soul leaders were not only experts in teaching and learning, but also had personal charisma and noble moral virtues that inspired and moved others to follow. Their influence was significant and the number of them was very few in a school. Table 6.7 shows some examples of “soul leaders” identified by the research. Interestingly, the “soul leaders” were not necessarily principals: Xing was a middle-level administrator; Mei was an ordinary teacher leader without any formal position; and Wang was a school principal. All three leaders were confirmed by all the participants of their schools to be a very important and influential person in the reform. Luo and Jia called Xing “the soul” of the reform; Jiang referred to Mei as “The No.1

Teacher of the School”; and Wang was called “commander-in-chief of the reform” by Hu, “the soul figure of the reform” (*líng hún rén wù*, 灵魂人物) by Feng, and “the most influential and important person in the reform” by Ni and Su. “Soul leaders” inspired others with their pursuit of educational dreams, set good examples, and persuaded others to follow them with their expertise, personal charisma and devotion to work. Luo, who initiated the reform of Zhuti Primary and was referred to as “the spiritual leader” of the reform by Xing, and Jiang, the initiator of the reform of Xingfu Primary, may also be regarded as “soul leaders”, for they were acknowledged by most participants and their influence was significant.

Table 6.7
Examples of “Soul Leaders”

School	Name	Position	Recognition	Roles in the reform
Xingfu	Mei	Informal teacher leader	“The soul” of the reform (11/11)	Project leader, master teacher, backbone teacher. Influencing the whole school.
Zhuti Primary	Xing	Principal-aide & Director of Teaching Affairs	“The No.1 Teacher of the School” (12/12)	First pioneer in the reform, and then led the reform of the whole school.
Zhuti Primary	Luo	Former principal.	“The spiritual leader” (10/12)	Initiated the reform. Lead the direction.
Qiushi No. 2 Primary	Wang	Principal	“Commander-in-chief” “The soul figure” “Most influential and most important” (10/10)	Successfully refined the reform initiated by the former principal with his own ideas

Backbone teachers (*gǔ gàn jiào shī*, 骨干教师) regarded as “backbones” of the school are awarded honors or titles by the school and different levels of governmental educational departments for their excellence in teaching. Table 6.8 shows some examples of backbone teachers in the research.

In Xingfu Primary, for example, influential teacher leaders such as Mei and Liang were awarded the title of “Shenzhen Excellent Teacher” by the municipal government. Most backbone teachers are ordinary teachers. Some teachers may be promoted to the positions of department heads or even principals after they are awarded the honors or titles.

In Zhuti Primary, for example, Xing won the honor of “Top Ten Excellent Teacher of the Year” awarded by the municipal government in 2012. Han won the title of “Shenzhen Backbone Teacher” awarded by the municipal government.

Jiang, the Vice-principal of Xingfu Primary, was an expert in teaching and had the title of “Shenzhen Distinguished Teacher”. Wang, the principal of Qiushi No. 2 Primary, had won numerous honors and titles such as “Top Ten Excellent Teacher of the Year” and “Shenzhen Distinguished Teacher” awarded by the municipal government before he became a principal. Backbone teachers are officially acknowledged for their expertise with honors or titles. The number of backbone teachers is limited in a school. In the case study schools, backbone teachers were widely acknowledged to be excellent teachers, and their participation in the reform was more persuasive and authoritative, and set very good examples for others to follow.

Table 6.8
Examples of “Backbone teachers”

School	Name	Position	Honours or titles	Influence in the reform
Xingfu Primary	Mei	Informal teacher leader	Shenzhen Excellent Teacher	Influenced other with expertise
Xingfu Primary	Liang	Informal teacher leaders	Shenzhen Excellent Teacher	Influenced others with expertise
Xingfu Primary	Jiang	Vice-principal	Shenzhen Distinguished Teacher	Influenced others with expertise
Zhuti Primary	Xing	Principal-aide and Director of Teaching Affairs	Top Ten Excellent Teacher of the Year in 2012	Influenced others with expertise
Zhuti Primary	Han	Vice-Director of Teaching Affairs	Shenzhen Backbone Teacher	Influenced others with expertise
Qiushi No. 2 Primary	Wang	Principal	Shenzhen Distinguished Teacher	Influenced others with expertise

The influence of “soul leaders” or “backbone teachers” was critical and significant, but the number of them was very limited. In each case study school, there were only one or two soul leaders. About ten percent of the teachers were backbone teachers. As discussed in Section 6.1.2.2, the number of “master teachers” were much larger and widely spread over the schools. They included almost all important and influential people in the schools in each subject and grade. In each school, the number of master teachers was about one-third of the teachers. Table 6.9 compared these three special

types of leaders in Chinese schools, and showed their different contributions to the reform.

Table 6.9
Soul leaders, Backbone Teachers & Master Teachers

Type	Soul leaders	Backbone teachers	Master teachers
Characteristics	Experts in teaching and learning. Had personal charisma and noble moral virtues that inspired and moved others to follow.	Officially acknowledged experts with honors or titles.	Veteran teachers chosen as “masters” by their disciples because of their expertise, experience, or moral character.
Level of leadership	They may be principal-level leaders, middle-level department heads or ordinary teacher leaders without any formal positions.	Most of them are ordinary teachers. Some teachers may be promoted to the positions of department heads or even principals after they are awarded the honors or titles.	The great majority of them are ordinary teachers, but some department heads or principal-level leaders may also be chosen as “masters” by disciples.
Influence on the reform	Big and significant. Inspired almost everybody in the school.	Important and convincing with their expertise.	Spread all over the school in every subject and grade, influencing the routine work of almost every teacher.

6.3 Patterns of Distributed Leadership

This section discusses and explains the patterns of distributed leadership practiced in the reform of the schools in the eyes of participants. The researcher asked the participants if they thought that the distribution of leadership in their school was

“planned” or “spontaneous”, and was “aligned” or “misaligned”. As the sample schools had successfully implemented the reform, it may not be surprising that all the participants confirmed that the distributed leadership in their schools’ reform was “aligned” and leadership practices worked toward the same direction of the reform. So generally the participants thought that the patterns of the distributed leadership in their schools belonged to “alignment types”. All the participants of Qiushi No. 2 Primary thought that the leadership distribution was “planned”, but some of the participants in the two other schools hesitated about denying that they were not “spontaneous”. So they expressed their opinions using words such as “more planned than spontaneous”, “mainly planned and secondarily spontaneous”, and “both planned and spontaneous”. The reasons for their hesitation may be due to the changeableness of being “planned” and “spontaneous”. What was planned may be changed with spontaneous actions, and spontaneous activities may also be noticed and included in the plan. Moreover, in Chinese culture, “Spontaneous” is often used as a commentary word, and it was actually regarded by some participants as a positive word for it implied effective inspiration and active participation (Please also see Section 6.1.2 Distribution by Spontaneity).

The participants also discussed the reasons of “alignment”, and most thought that the main reasons were the recognition of the reform and their wishes for the betterment of students. To improve students’ learning was their common goal and what they worked for.

6.3.1 Planned or spontaneous?

All the participants of Qiushi No. 2 Primary confirmed that the distribution of the leadership in the reform was “planned”. In the other two schools, while most participants thought that the distribution of leadership was “planful”, some of them hesitated about denying that it was not “spontaneous”. Zhao, the Director of Teaching Research, thought that the distribution of leadership in Xingfu was “more planful than spontaneous”. Xie, the Director of Teaching Affairs, thought that it was planned at school level, but spontaneous in detailed implementation: “It is planful in school-level work, such as curriculum reform...In detailed implementation of the reform, there are some spontaneous distribution.” Jun, the Director of Teaching Research of Zhuti Primary, thought that it was mainly planned in the school, but “secondarily spontaneous”: “The distribution of leadership in our reform is planned, but at some stages of the reform, there is also spontaneous distribution.” Jia, the Head of Chinese, thought that both planful and spontaneous distribution of leadership were important for the reform: “Generally speaking it is planned, especially at the beginning of the reform. In the specific implementation of the reform, there are many forms of spontaneous leadership. You cannot predict what kind of difficulties you may meet in the reform, so not everything can be perfectly planned before.” This finding may explain why the participants thought that the distribution of leadership by spontaneity was good for the reform. Spontaneous participation usually implied a proactive attitude and often helped the teachers to achieve success acknowledged by the school.

6.3.2 Aligned distribution.

When asked if they thought that the distribution of leadership in promoting the instructional reform was aligned and worked toward the same direction, almost every participant offered an affirmative answer such as “very supportive” (Jiang), “especially aligned” (Hong), “definitely consistent” (Liang, Biao), “absolutely agreed” (Kang, Zhen), “mostly aligned” (Hui), “obviously aligned” (Yao), “basically aligned” (Feng). Xie thought that the majority of teachers in Xingfu Primary were aligned in the implementation of the reform “After discussion and clarification, people reach consensus and work toward the same direction”. Zhao had the same feeling: “I think that the majority are aligned and take concert action, and work toward the same goal and direction.” The most important reason for the alignment was that all the administrators and teachers wished to improve students’ learning through the reform.

Han thought that the whole of Zhuti Primary school was working toward the same direction, so the distribution of leadership was aligned: “I think that it is aligned. The whole school, all the teachers participate in the reform, and it is expanded to everyone. So we work toward the same direction.” Luo, the former principal of Zhuti Primary, thought that the alignment came after some pioneer teachers had success in experiment, “Some teachers did the experiment, and had very good effects. Other teachers who had been hesitating started to try their best to learn from the pioneers and participate in the reform.”

As the leader of the “Striding Development Program”, Mei thought that the

teachers involved were aligned and worked toward the same direction: “For us experimental class teachers, we are aligned in promoting the program. The three teachers teaching the same class cooperate together and push the program smoothly.” Hua, another teacher participating in the program, felt somewhat isolated because teachers not participating seemed “indifferent” to it: “I feel that we are aligned in exerting influences, at least in pushing the same class together with other experimental teachers. But other teachers not participating in the program are neither for nor against the experimental program. They just think that Striding Development Program has nothing to do with them and it is the business of experimental teachers. So they are indifferent to this.”

Mei and Hua’s complaint about the “indifference” of some teachers not involved in the research programs may suggest the limitation of reform programs not implemented in the whole school. The influence of the project leaders of the research program was mostly on teachers who participated in the program. Teachers who didn’t participate in the experiments may not be so “aligned”, but as those teachers with an indifferent attitude towards the reform didn’t have great influences on others as teacher leaders leading the experiments. The school may be “aligned” as a whole in the reform. On the other hand, all teachers of the schools wished to improve the students’ learning and to stop ranking at the bottom in district exam. They may still be aligned toward the aim of the reform to improve student learning as a whole. This may be one of the reasons that Mei won acknowledgement of all the participants of the school.

6.3.3 Reasons for alignment.

In confirming the alignment of leadership distribution, almost every participant explained why they thought that it was aligned with the same direction of instructional reform. Their reasons were quite similar: “for the development of the school” (Hong); “for our conscience...and our common goal” (Mei); “for our professional ethics” (Liang, Feng); “for the betterment of the students” (Fen, Wang, Tang, Biao); “to help our students to become more excellent” (Kang, Gong, Hu, Xing); “inner drive” (Zhao); and “recognition of the reform” (Yao, Si).

Yuan thought that the reason why the teachers of Xingfu were consistent with efforts to improve student learning of the school was that they were concerned with the honor of the school: “Our teachers are greatly concerned with the honor of the school...Most of our teachers have worked here for a long time, and they feel emotionally connected with the school.” Jiang mentioned similar reasons: “In inner heart, nobody wants to rank the last. Everybody has the sense of dignity, and nobody is satisfied with the result of being the last... Our teachers are qualified teachers. They do not want to be looked down upon by other people.” So the alignment of Xingfu Primary teachers may be greatly related to the context of ranking last in the district exam and their wishes to change the situation.

Biao, the Principal of Zhuti Primary, thought that the recognition of the reform was the main reason of the alignment of distributed leadership in the school’s reform: “Most teachers acknowledge the reform. They want to see the real development of the

students, and the teachers themselves can also achieve professional development and improvement in teaching. So the great majority of them are aligned.” In constructing student cooperative learning groups, for example, teachers of all different subjects cooperated to build effective groups. The classroom and term assessments of students were all made according to the performance of student groups rather than individuals. As Xing pointed out, “All the teachers, including all subjects, and all administrators, including all departments, were aligned toward the same goal: the constructing of student cooperative learning groups”.

6.3.4 Key Findings on Patterns of Distributed Leadership.

This section investigates the patterns of distributed leadership that were practiced in the reform in the eyes of the participants of the case study schools. The results of this research showed that all the participants confirmed that the distributed leadership in their schools’ reform was “aligned” and leadership practices worked toward the same direction. All the participants of Qiushi No. 2 Primary thought that the leadership distribution was “planned”, but some of the participants of the other two schools hesitated about denying that they were not “spontaneous”. In the interview, many participants thought that “spontaneous” leadership was good for the reform if aligned. The participants also discussed the reasons of “alignment”, and most thought that the main reasons were the recognition of the reform, and their wishes for the betterment of students. In Xingfu Primary, only a few of the teachers participated in the research programs such as “Striding Development Learning”, and others did not appear to be

very supportive to the programs, but most felt ashamed of being ranked last in district exam and wanted to improve student learning. This is somewhat related to “*miàn zī*” (face) discussed in Section 5.2.1.4. So they may still be aligned toward the aim of the reform to improve student learning as a whole.

6.4 Routines and Tools through Which Distributed Leadership was Practiced

The research found that the most important routines and tools influencing the reform of the case study schools were mainly in the categories of teacher development and school administration. The reason may be that instructional reform had to be finally implemented by teachers in classrooms, and that teachers’ direct involvement was significant. The routines and tools of these schools were similar for they were most in the field of teacher development and school administration, but were quite different in specific implementation.

In teacher development, important routines acknowledged by all the participants included “*shī tú jiē duì*” (master-disciple relationship establishment, 师徒结对) programs of these schools and “*jiào yán*” (teaching and research, 教研), a term used in Chinese primary schools to refer to formal and informal teaching discussion, lesson preparation, teacher training, and open lessons. In school administration, most participants mentioned two important routines and tools: teacher assessment and administrators’ participation in the reform.

Dr. Fa, the Former Vice-director of the Nanshan Education Bureau, mentioned the importance of these routines for distributed leadership in the reform:

Teaching tutoring, open lessons and other teaching and research activities, are very important practices for leadership distribution...They all belong to the dimension of teacher professional development...Some other practices can also help leadership distribution, such as teaching experience sharing, awarding excellent teachers, setting good examples, and building platforms for teachers.

In teacher tutoring and jiào yán activities, a great number of teacher leaders participated in these routines and influenced the routine work of teaching and learning. Leadership was spread over these routine works and guaranteed the daily implementation of the reform in teaching and learning. By awarding teachers actively participating in the reform in teacher assessment, the schools encouraged more teachers to join in the reform and to make contributions to the reform. So the routine of teacher assessment was also important.

6.4.1 Shī tú jiē duì (师徒结对, Master-disciple Relationship Establishment)

Shī tú jiē duì (师徒结对, Master-disciple Relationship Establishment) is a typical and traditional practice in Chinese primary schools for young or inexperienced teachers to learn from more experienced and more excellent teachers (Please also see Section 6.1.2.2). Teachers often form a natural informal “master-disciple” relationship with each other in their teaching. To improve teaching and learning and to promote the reform, all three schools used the strategy of formalizing this relationship and

encouraging young teachers to learn from experienced teachers. “Master teachers” naturally became the leaders of teaching and learning.

All schools had similar formal teacher tutoring programs: Xingfu Primary had a disciple-master program (“*Qīng Lán Project*”, 青蓝工程). Zhuti Primary had a special “Distinguished Teacher Workshop” (*míng shī gōng zuò shì*, 名师工作室) Program, and “Distinguished Teachers of the School” became the leaders of the reform and acted as masters to other teachers in leading the reform. Most participants of Zhuti Primary thought that this program was significant for the success of the reform.

Qiushi No. 2 Primary's teacher tutoring program was the “New Excellent Teacher Program” (*xīn yōu shī*, 新优师), and it was also called the “Three-person Cooperation Team” (*sān rén hé zuò zǔ*, 三人合作组). Beside a master and a disciple, there was also a “negotiator” or “assistant” in the team, and it had become a small professional learning community which benefited the three of them.

As shown in Table 6.10, the three schools had different purposes and ways of operation in their *shī tú jiē duì* programs, but all were helpful for teacher development and the construction of professional learning community in the schools. *Shī tú jiē duì* is a cultural-specific routine in China. The formalization and innovation in this traditional Chinese “master-disciple relationship” stimulated the wide distribution of leadership of “master teachers” in Chinese schools. As masters and disciples usually feel emotionally attached, their mutual influence was usually significant and effective. While masters influenced their disciples greatly in the tutoring, disciples may also have influenced

their masters at the same time. In this sense, the programs were helpful for the professional development of both masters and disciples.

Table 6.10

Shī tú jiē duì (师徒结对, *Master-disciple Relationship Establishment*)

School	Xingfu Primary	Zhuti Primary	Qiushi No.2 Primary
Program	Qīng Lán Project	Distinguished Teacher Workshop	New Excellent Teacher Program
Main purposes	Formalizing informal master-disciple relationship to improve student learning	Encouraging “distinguished teachers” in the reform to influence other teachers	Improving the “overall quality” of teachers of the school
Ways of operation	A master had usually one or two disciples. They observed each other’s lessons, and master teachers help disciples to improve teaching and learning.	Each “distinguished teacher” acted as the master teacher of more than two disciples. Master teachers helped disciples to prepare open lessons and provided help in disciples’ routine teaching.	A three-person group included a master, a disciple, and a “negotiator” or “assistant”. Each master had only a disciple. So the number of master teachers was very big. They mostly provided help in their disciples’ routine teaching.
Effects on the reform	Young teachers had someone to consult with and had better development.	The success of distinguished teacher could be shared by other teachers, and it was especially helpful for young teachers’ development.	Almost all teachers were involved in the program, and it was helpful for the professional development of teachers as a whole.

In Xingfu Primary, influential teacher leaders such as Mei, Liang and Hua were also effective “master teachers” of the Qīng Lán Project. The school held very formal

ceremonies of “Master-disciple Relationship Establishment” (*shī tú jiē duì*). “Masters” and “disciples” were required to observe each other’s lessons and to exchange views about teaching and learning. “Disciples” were required to ask help from “masters”, keep records of the programs and write reflections. Liang, a veteran teacher leader, explained her tutoring as follows: “My disciples usually came into my classroom to observe my lessons...When they are going to have open lessons, I will guide them how to deliver the lessons.” Mei, a veteran teacher leader, confirmed the effects of the program: “When the disciples have difficulties, they can at least find someone to consult with.” Kang, a young teacher, thought that she benefited a lot from teacher tutoring: “I am much thankful for the help that my master gives me, especially for her help to improve my teaching practice.” As the main purposes of this teacher mentoring program was to improve students’ learning, it was mostly operated in classroom teaching and learning, and very helpful for young teachers to improve their teaching practices.

The “Distinguished Teacher” Program of Zhuti Primary was similar to the Qīng Lán Project of Xingfu Primary in its influence on master-disciple relationship establishment. The “master teachers” were recognized more formally as “Distinguished Teachers of the School” by the school. The school also set up a “Distinguished Teacher Workshop” and assigned Xing and Han as the Director and Vice-director respectively of the “Workshop”. “Distinguished Teachers of the School” enjoyed special treatment such as extra allowances, more opportunities for outside training. The list of “Distinguished Teachers of the School” included department heads such as Xing and Han, subject heads such as Jia and Bi, and also teacher leaders without any formal

position such as Zhen and Si. At the beginning, only three teachers were awarded this title, but the list gradually increased to 11 people. By 2015, more than 35 people had become “master teachers” of the “Distinguished Teacher” Program in Zhuti Primary. In the interviews, all the participants of Zhuti Primary mentioned this program as an important routine and tool of the reform.

At the beginning stage of the “Distinguished Teacher of the School” Program, the teachers were awarded the honor because they acted as pioneers of the reform. The school hoped that they could set good examples for other teachers. Xing explained this as follows: “The first ‘Distinguished Teachers of the School’ are teachers awarded by the school to promote the reform and to select leaders for the reform. At that time, they were only ordinary teachers... They integrated the concept of the reform with their own teaching practices and set good examples for other teachers.” As the influence of these “Distinguished Teachers” increased in the reform, the school started to expand their roles in teaching tutoring, and formalized “master-disciple” relationships between these teachers and other teachers that they had great influence on: “The school found that they had great influence on promoting teachers in the reform after they were awarded the honor. Then the school started to formalize the master-disciple relationship... One of the most important duties is to train disciples.” As these “distinguished teachers” were considered to be excellent teachers by the school and other teachers, young teachers were very glad to become their disciples and the program had very good effects on influencing young teachers’ participation in the reform. Zhen, a veteran teacher leader, also thought that the “Distinguished Teacher” Program and teacher tutoring were

the most important routine in the reform: “This teacher tutoring helped other teachers participate in the reform and enjoy the achievement of the reform...Distinguished Teacher Program is also a pressure to those teachers who were awarded the honor, and prompted them to make further research on the reform.” The program was also helpful for the development of the master teachers for it required them to provide more effective tutoring for their disciples, and the active participation of their disciples also influenced them in return.

The teacher tutoring routine of Qiushi No. 2 Primary was the “New Excellent Teacher Program” (*xīn yōu shī*, 新优师) promoted by Wang, the principal. Different from the teacher tutoring of other schools, the “New Excellent Teacher Program” was in the form of “three-person groups”, including a master, a negotiator or assistant, and a disciple. All the participants of the school thought that this was one of the most important routines of the school in the reform. Wang said that the main purpose of this program was to “cultivate a team of teachers with overall high quality”. The establishment of “three-person groups” helped the teachers feel emotionally attached to each other, and Wang noticed that a “master culture” (*shī fu wén huà*, 师傅文化) had formed in the schools: “Every time when they meet each other, the disciples would call their masters ‘*shī fu*’”. As they were emotionally attached, the cooperation in teaching became more natural and more effective. Feng, the Director of Teaching Research, thought that the “New Excellent Teacher” Program was an important part of the school’s teacher development plan: “They are integrated as a whole for teaching research. Old teachers, young teachers, and middle-aged teachers work together...All

the teachers are involved in the program.” As almost all of the teachers were involved in the program and master teachers were widely spread all over the school. This teacher tutoring program was very effective in master teachers’ influences on their disciples. In the interviews, most teachers referred to their “masters” as the one influencing him or her most in the reform.

Shī tú jiē duì is a cultural-specific routine in China. The formalization and innovation in this traditional Chinese “master-disciple relationship” stimulated the wide distribution of leadership of “master teachers” in Chinese schools. As masters and disciples would usually feel emotionally attached, their mutual influence was usually significant and effective. The three schools had different *shī tú jiē duì* programs, and all had helped the teachers to achieve professional development. While masters tutored their disciples, disciples may also have influence on their masters. In this way, the programs helped the teachers to form professional learning communities influencing all the teachers involved.

6.4.2 Jiào Yán (教研, Teaching and Research).

Jiào yán (teaching and research) is a culturally-rooted practice in Chinese primary and secondary schools and it emphasizes the collective cooperation and contribution of school administrators and teachers. “*Jiao*” means “teaching”, and “*yan*” means “research”. “Teaching and research” is a systematic and most routinely operated practice to improve teaching and learning in Chinese schools. In fact, this is a “system” or “regulation” (*zhì dù*, 制度) that the government required for the schools

to implement in their work. The principal is “the first person who is accountable” for teaching and research. The vice-principal in charge of teaching and learning, director of academic affairs and director of teaching and research are other formal school administrators responsible for teaching and research. At the teachers’ level, subject teams are usually responsible for daily organization of teachers in teaching and research. Teaching and research system play a significant role in the implementation of the curriculum reform, the improvement of teaching quality and teacher development. When asked about the most important routines and tools in the reform, all the participants mentioned “*jiào yán*” (teaching and research, 教研). “Teaching and research” roughly refers to activities of the school and for teachers to improve teaching and learning, including formal collective lesson preparations, lesson observation and comment, open lesson delivery, collective quality analysis and research projects, and also informal discussion and cooperation among teachers. Among these teaching and research activities, two practices most often mentioned by the participants were: open lessons (*gōng kāi kè*, 公开课), and formal and informal discussion on teaching.

In Chinese primary schools, each teacher is required to deliver at least one open lesson each term. Most of the time, open lesson delivery is regarded as a collective event rather than an individual activity, because a group of teachers may participate in the preparation of the open lessons. Moreover, in the process of open lesson delivery, other teachers were usually required to give oral or written feedback (*píng kè*, 评课) to the lessons. So open lessons have effects on both the teacher delivering the lessons and other teachers observing and commenting on the lessons. In the interviews, all the

participants of the three schools emphasized that “open lessons” were very influential and very important routines in the reform.

“Open lessons” may be roughly categorized into two different types: “competition lessons” (*jìng sài kè*, 竞赛课) and “demonstration lessons” (*zhǎn shì kè*, 展示课). “Competition lessons” are often organized by different levels of government. At the school level, it is usually a teaching competition for young teachers. In some circumstances, every teacher is required to attend the competition. Zhao, the Director of Teaching Affairs of Xingfu Primary, thought that this was an important routine for teaching and learning: “This is a school-wide teaching competition... All teachers teaching different subjects have to participate in the competition...It includes all teachers, except a few old teachers.” When teachers participated in the competition, their master teachers usually played very important roles helping the lesson preparations. They would help their disciples to “*mó kè*” (磨课), to deliver the lesson in different classes to find problems and solutions. These experiences were very useful for the young teachers to improve their teaching skills and to learn from veteran teachers.

“Demonstration lessons” are “demonstrated” for discussion and research, so they are also called “research lessons” (*yán jiū kè*, 研究课). As previously discussed, delivering a demonstration lesson is not the individual activity of the teacher delivering the lesson. There are usually a group of teachers working together to prepare the lesson. And there is usually a process of “*mó kè*” (磨课) as in young teachers’ lesson preparations in competition lessons. “Demonstration lessons” are often delivered by

some expert teachers to show how lessons should be delivered. Mei and Hua, for example, often delivered “research lessons” for other teachers of Xingfu Primary to observe and to learn from. Hua explained: “Teachers teaching the experimental classes discuss together about lesson preparation...Other teachers then come to observe the lesson and there will be discussion and comment on the lesson.” Young teachers may also deliver “research lessons” for experts and veteran teachers to guide and help. Kang, as a young teacher of Xingfu Primary, was deeply impressed with the guidance of experts from outside: “Experts guide our classroom teaching for three turns. When I first came to school, experts from other schools observed my lessons and gave me very helpful advice.” Besides research lessons open to experts from outside, teachers often delivered lessons open to teachers teaching the same grade or the same subject. These open lessons were more informal and might happen every day, and they were very useful for young teachers’ development. Hu, a young teacher of Qiushi No. 2 Primary, explained the influence of these open lessons: “Our grade team arranges the open lessons and our masters guide us...After the open lesson is finished, our team leader and masters will discuss with young teachers about the lesson. This helps young teachers achieve quick development.” In the process of such an open lesson, master teachers, subject heads, team leaders and young teachers delivering the lessons all contributed to lesson delivery. The discussion and comments on the lesson after the delivery also had a very important influence on teacher development.

“Reception lessons” (*jiē dài kè*, 接待课) are a special type of “demonstration lessons” and are open to visitors from outside. As Zhuti Primary and Qiushi No. 2

Primary became famous for their success in the reform, they had received thousands of visitors from all over the country to observe lessons. Teachers delivering “reception lessons” were usually expert teachers of the school, but in Qiushi No. 2 Primary, young excellent teachers were often arranged to deliver these lessons. Young teachers such as Jing, Yao, Hu, Ni, and Su often received visitors and delivered open lessons to them, and they thought that it was very useful for the development of young teachers. In Zhuti Primary, young teachers such as Bi also gave numerous “reception lessons” and these experiences helped them become more confident of themselves and achieve better development. In the process of giving “reception lessons”, there were also a team of teachers working together to prepare the lessons. Teachers delivering the lessons could obtain help and advice from other teachers, and this was very helpful for their development. Su, a young teacher of Qiushi No. 2 Primary, explained her experiences in delivering reception lessons: “When I was going to give an open lesson for the first time, I was quite nervous, because I was a new teacher. But then I found that other teachers were quite active to participate in this. Their attitude had influence on me, and I did not feel nervous and did not give up. I tried my best to finish the lesson well. And they also offered great help to me.” Delivering a reception lesson was a great challenge for young teachers, but as it was also a great chance for them to develop themselves for a collective effort was also involved. Jia, the Head of Chinese at Zhuti Primary, emphasized that “every open lesson is generated from our collective wisdom”. In a sense, open lessons may have been generated from the Chinese culture of collectivism. Teachers were required to show their lessons to a collective group of teachers for their

comments, and the collective preparation of the lesson delivery helped the teachers delivering the lesson benefit greatly from the practices. While competition lessons and lessons open to subject teams are routine practices in most Chinese schools, “reception lessons” were not very common. In Zhuti Primary and Qiushi No. 2 Primary, the reform was implemented in the whole school, so Xing and Wang were both confident that “almost every teacher can give reception lessons”. Teachers delivered reception lessons to outside visitors almost every week in turn, and both young teachers and veteran teachers were confident of lesson delivery.

Another important routine mentioned by most of the participants was formal and informal “*jiào yán huó dòng*” (teaching and research activity, 教研活动). In a general sense, open lesson delivery is also a kind of teaching and research activity, but this “*jiào yán huó dòng*” mentioned by the participants referred to formal meetings about teaching and research, and informal discussions in the spare time of teachers.

In Chinese primary schools, a subject team usually meets once in a week to have formal discussions of teaching and learning. In a large school such as Qiushi No. 2 Primary, the meeting of a subject team (big team) was once in two weeks, for teachers teaching the same subject in the same grade (small team), they needed time to gather together. There were usually monthly “*jiào yán huó dòng*” (teaching and research activity, 教研活动) arranged at the school level. These formal meetings offered opportunities for teachers to receive training and exchange ideas with other teachers, and were somewhat similar to “Breakfast Club” in Spillane’s research (2006). These formal teaching research activities were mostly arranged by subject heads and

department heads in charge of the subject. Most important decisions and strategies of teaching and learning on the subject were reached through these formal meetings. The integration of textbooks and “unit bundling lessons” of Qiushi No. 2, and the objectives of student cooperative group learning of Zhuti Primary, for example, were mostly discussed and decided through these formal teaching research activities. The preparation of open lessons to visitors was also usually done in subject teams’ teaching and research activities. Pan, Vice-principal of Qiushi No. 2 Primary, thought that formal teaching and research activities “bundled teaching and research together”: “We made a comprehensive research on all types of lessons in the same grade, and then made explorations on the teaching of the same type of lessons in different grades.” These formal discussions on teaching and learning were regular in schools, and allowed teachers to meet regularly to exchange views and cooperate in many teaching tasks.

Besides formal gatherings to discuss teaching and learning, the informal exchange of views in spare time was also very important for teachers to improve their teaching. As discussed in Section 6.14, the subject heads of Xingfu Primary were considered to be weak in their influence in the reform, and one of the reasons was that formal teaching research of subject teams was not well practiced. As a result, teachers often used their spare time to discuss about their teaching and lessons more informally. Liang cited an example of seeking help from another teacher: “When I started to teach Grade 6, I asked teachers teaching Grade 6 last year about instructional reform.” Fen, a young teacher of Xingfu Primary, also introduced her experience exchanging ideas with other teachers more informally: “We are all very busy, but we have a morning exercise

time and an afternoon ‘sunny sports’ time, in which we can exchange views...This is not very formal, but I benefit a lot from this”. The participants of the other two schools also mentioned informal discussion of teachers on teaching and learning. Jia, the Head of Chinese of Zhuti Primary, often discussed about teaching with others in her spare time: “We talked at lunch, and after lunch, we talked when we walked together. We talked about many detailed about classroom teaching, how to design the teaching contents, how to avoid the waste of time in student group cooperation, how to be more effective.” Informal discussions on teaching and learning might not be as regular as formal meetings of subject teams, but when they became a routine, they could also contribute a lot to teachers’ development, for they were generated from the voluntary needs of teachers. The “sunny sports” time discussion in Xingfu Primary, and the “lunch time” discussion in Zhuti Primary, helped the teachers learn from each other and influence each other in the reform.

Formal “*jiào yán huó dòng*” in a way reflected the collective culture of Chinese schools. Teachers were required to prepare lessons collectively and discuss teaching and learning in subject teams and grade teams. Informal discussions about teaching and learning, however, were more related to the atmosphere of the school. Only in a cooperative and open culture with mutual trust, could the teachers voluntarily share and cooperate with each other in their professional learning and development. So it somewhat showed the influence of a cooperative school culture on teachers.

6.4.3 *Píng yōu píng xiān* (评优评先, Teacher Assessment) and Administrators' Active Participation in the reform.

Besides the previously discussed important routines and tools directly related to teaching and learning, most participants mentioned routines related to school administration: *píng yōu píng xiān* (评优评先, teacher assessment) and school administrators' participation in the reform.

Píng yōu píng xiān refers to two teacher awarding practices in Chinese schools at the end of a term or an academic year: *píng yōu* refers to the selection of district-level and school-level “excellent teachers” (*yōu xiù jiào shī*, 优秀教师) with money award and moral encouragement; *píng xiān* means the selection of “advanced teachers” (*xiān jìn jiào shī* 先进教师), mainly with moral encouragement. Teachers winning these honors can usually have better opportunities for promotion and training outside. To promote the reform, all the three schools related *píng yōu píng xiān* to the performance of teachers in the reform. In Xingfu Primary, the learning outcome was directly related to teacher assessment. Teachers who failed to achieve good results in student learning would not be included in the awarding lists. Zhuti Primary not only had a special awarding system designed to encourage pioneers of the reform (Distinguished Teacher Program), but also related the participation of teachers in the reform with annual and term end teacher assessment. In Qiushi No. 2, teachers actively participating in the reform were encouraged and promoted, even if they were young teachers.

Yuan, the Director of School Office of Xingfu Primary, thought that the change

in teacher assessment was an important routine to promote the instructional reform: “Teacher assessment, teacher awarding and promotion, are all greatly connected with students’ learning. I think that this routine has significant influence on teachers’ enthusiasm on the reform.” Jun, the Director of Teaching Research of Zhuti Primary, also thought that effective teacher assessment for the reform was also an important tool: “At every stage, we would make an assessment of the teachers. This can be taken as an important tool or a routine. For teachers making achievement in the reform, we offer better platform for them in outside demonstration and outside training. In this way, they can prove their values and achievement.” By relating teacher assessment with the performance in the reform, the schools encouraged and awarded teachers actively participating in the reform, and prompted more teachers to learn from them and to be more involved in the reform.

The active participation of school administrators, especially principal-level leaders, in the reform was also considered to be an important routine of the schools in the reform. The vice-principal of Xingfu Primary, the former principal and vice-principal of Zhuti Primary and the principal of Qiushi No. 2 were constantly mentioned by the participants with regard to their direct involvement in teaching and learning. Their observation of lessons, discussion of lessons with teachers and attending teaching and research meetings and activities were thought by the participants to be very influential routines and tools of the reform. Luo and Chun, for example, observed more than one hundred lessons in a term in Zhuti Primary and often discussed with teachers about the teaching. Jiang as the direct leader of the reform in Xingfu Primary observed

all the teachers' lessons and actively participated in teaching discussions with teachers. Wang, the Principal of Qiushi No. 2, was acknowledged to observe teachers of all subjects and offered valuable advice to the teachers. Yao, Teacher Leader of Qiushi No. 2, was deeply impressed with this: "Principal Wang likes to sit down with us and discuss about teaching, and likes to go into classrooms. He almost observes all kinds of lessons, and this is really worth admiring... This is a very special routine. The principal observed lessons every day." Wang explained this routine as his fondness for research and his intention to exchange ideas with teachers: "This is a fondness for teaching and research... School administrators and teachers need to express themselves, and I need to express myself, too. My comments are usually to the point, and the teachers like to listen to my comments." In the process of discussion, Wang and his teachers could achieve "mutual influence": "We can have exchanges, and just as collisions generate sparks, exchange and communication enrich creativity. I really enjoy this. In this exchange, I can lead them, and they can lead me, too. It's a mutual influence." In a culture of high distance in Chinese schools, principals tend to be more an administrator than an expert although the government tries to "de-administration" school principalship. In these three schools, the principal-level leaders acted not only as experts guiding the reform, but also cooperators and co-researchers. Their active participation in the reform not only showed their emphasis on the reform, but also helped them to find specific problems and solutions. Teacher assessment may be more related with principals' supervision and monitoring, and principal-level administrators' participation in the reform may be more related to principals' professional support.

Monitoring and support were both important for leading an instructional reform, and maybe the reason why most participants mentioned these two important routines in the reform.

6.4.4 Major Findings on Routines and Tools

Section 6. 6 discussed important routines and tools identified in the results and findings of the research. Two types of important cultural-rooted routines in teacher development were acknowledged by all the participants: “*shī tú jiē duì*” (teacher tutoring, 师徒结对) programs and “*jiào yán*” (teaching and research, 教研). All the three schools used the strategy of formalizing master-disciple relationship (*shī tú jiē duì*) and encouraging young teachers to learn from experienced teachers. “Master teachers” naturally became the leaders of teaching and learning. Xingfu Primary had “Qīng Lán Project”. Zhuti Primary had a special “Distinguished Teacher Workshop” Program. Qiushi No. 2 Primary's teacher tutoring program was the “New Excellent Teacher Program”. The three schools had different purposes and ways of operation in their *shī tú jiē duì* programs, but all these programs were helpful for teacher development and the construction of professional learning community in the schools. Open lessons were mentioned by all the participants as a very important routine in *jiào yán* activities. Open lessons may have been generated from the Chinese culture of collectivism and required teachers to show their lessons to a collective group of teachers or experts for comments. There was also a collective group of teachers to help the teacher delivering the lesson to make preparations. This helped the teachers involved in open lessons to develop

quickly from the practices. Open lessons may be “competition lessons” mostly for young teachers, or “demonstration lessons” for research and discussion. In Zhuti Primary and Qiushi No. 2 Primary, “reception lessons” were delivered to outside visitors constantly for they were famous in their reform. Almost all teachers could conduct reception lessons, including young teachers, and this was significant for the professional development of teachers. Formal and informal “*jiào yán huó dòng*” (teaching and research activity) were also mentioned by most participants as a very influential routine. Formal discussion about teaching and research reflected the collective culture of Chinese schools. Teachers were required to gather regularly and to prepare lessons collectively. Informal discussions about teaching and learning, however, were more related to the culture of the school. In a cooperative and open culture with mutual trust, the teachers voluntarily shared and cooperated with each other in professional learning and development.

In school administration, two routines were identified to be significant for the distribution of leadership in the reform: *Píng yōu píng xiān* (teacher assessment) and principal-level administrators’ participation in the reform. *Píng yōu píng xiān* refers practices to award and encourage teachers in Chinese schools at the end of a term or an academic year. By relating *píng yōu píng xiān* with the performance of teachers in the reform, the schools encouraged and awarded teachers actively participating in the reform, and prompted more teachers to learn from them and to be more involved in the reform. In a culture of high distance in Chinese schools, principals tend to be more of an administrator than an expert. In these three schools, principal-level leaders actively

participated in the reform not only as experts guiding it, but also as cooperators and co-researchers. Their active participation provided great support for teachers.

6.5 Chapter Summary

This chapter is an analysis of findings about how distributed leadership was practiced in three case study schools. It analyzed four types of distributed leadership practices: distribution by position; distribution by task; distribution by spontaneity; and collectivist distribution. Then, the chapter discussed three types of leaders unique in Chinese culture: “soul leaders”, “backbone teachers” and “master teachers”. After that, the chapter explained the patterns of distributed leadership in the schools and routines and tools through which distributed leadership was practiced. As positions were highly valued in Chinese culture of high power distance, school administrators with formal leadership positions and formal teacher leaders such as subject heads were identified to be important leaders of the reform. Besides leadership distributed by position, there were also circumstances of leadership distribution by task, when people were assigned leadership responsibility irrelevant to positions. In the case study schools, two types of leaders were identified in this distribution: project leaders, who were assigned the leadership responsibility of a project informally; and master teachers, who tutored their disciples in daily work. Distribution by spontaneity occurred when people were performing leadership practices neither caused by their positions or any assigned task. Spontaneity is often regarded to be a positive action in Chinese culture for it implies proactive participation. So, distribution by spontaneity was also common in Chinese

schools. Collectivist distribution was highlighted as it was encouraged and advocated in Chinese culture of collectivism. Three types of collectivist distribution were analyzed: collectivist distribution at the same level; collectivist distribution at different levels; and collectivist distribution in sequence.

In this research, three types of important leaders with special Chinese characteristics were identified: “soul leaders” who inspired others with their expertise and moral character; “backbone teachers”, who persuaded other to participate in the reform with their expertise; and “master teachers”, who influenced their “disciples” in daily routine work. The influence of “soul leaders” or “backbone teachers” was critical and significant, but the number of them was very limited. The number of “master teachers” was much larger and widely spread over the schools. They included almost all important and influential people in the schools in each subject and grade. The patterns of distributed leadership identified in the findings were also discussed in this chapter, and the distributed leadership in the three sample schools was considered by the participants to be aligned in the direction of the reform. When they were asked the question if it was spontaneous or planned, most of them thought that it was planned, but some hesitated about it, because they thought it was both spontaneous and planned.

The routines and tools most influential to the reform were mostly related to teacher development and school administration. According to the participants, the most important routines included master-disciple relationship establishment programs (*shī tú jiē duì*, 师徒结对), teaching and research (*jiào yán*, 教研) activities such as open lessons and formal and informal discussions about teaching, teacher assessment (*píng*

yōu píng xiān, 评优评先), and principal-level administrators' participation in the reform. These routines and tools were culture-rooted and had great influence on the distribution of leadership. *Shī tú jiē duì* programs involved a great number of master teachers in the routine influence on the disciples and the influence was all spread over the school. Open lessons and other *jiào yán* activities were consistent with the collective culture of Chinese schools, and encouraged collective contributions to these activities. By relating *píng yōu píng xiān* with the performance of the teachers in the reform, the schools encouraged and awarded teacher leaders actively participating in the reform. Principal-level leaders actively participated in the reform not only as experts, but also as cooperators and co-researchers in the reform. Their active participation provided great support for teachers.

CHAPTER 7

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

Chapter 5 discussed contextual and cultural influences on the distributed leadership identified in this research, and Chapter 6 explained the evidence about how distributed leadership was practiced. This chapter first summarizes the major findings and draws some conclusions in response to the research questions. Then, it analyzes the implications of this study for policy and practice. Finally, the main contributions of this study are summarized with suggestions about areas for further study based on the findings of this research.

7.1 Major Findings

This research focused on the central research question “*how does context and culture influence distributed leadership in schools?*” and its three sub-questions:

What are the contextual influences on the practices of distributed leadership in Shenzhen?

What are the cultural influences on the practices of distributed leadership?

How is distributed leadership practiced within an instructional reform environment in China?

Given the Chinese background to educational reform and a Principal Accountability System, the research on the influence of context and culture on distributed leadership is significant. The new curriculum reform prompted principals

and teachers to introduce new ideas such as distributed leadership from the West, but context and culture may become the obstacles to borrow ideas from outside (Feng, 2005; Walker, Hu, & Qian, 2012). Moreover, the research on distributed leadership in the context of Chinese schools is also important for the knowledge base and future study of distributed leadership.

This research adopted the design of a qualitative multiple-case study. Three case study schools were selected to explore the contextual and cultural influences on distributed leadership in the context of a district-wide instruction reform: Xingfu Primary School was located in the north of the district, a school for the children of poor “peasant workers”; Zhuti Primary School was located in the middle of the district, a school for the students from ordinary working families; and Qiushi No. 2 Primary School was located in the south of the district, a school for the children of relatively rich elites. Semi-structured interviews of 34 principals, vice-principals, department heads, subject heads, teacher leaders and followers of these three sample schools were completed. All the interviews were transcribed and analyzed together with documentation. As an insider of the reform, the researcher also made “participant observations” (Yin, 2009). Data display was mainly in the form of cross-case displays (Miles & Huberman, 1994) to compare the similarities and differences of the three different cases.

The main findings are summarized as follows.

7.1.1 What are the contextual influences on the practices of distributed leadership?

The researcher chose a commonly-used three-level perspective (Erez & Gati, 2004; Hannah & Lester, 2009; Hujala, 2004) to describe and explain the results identified in contextual influences: a macro-level or national-level “New Curriculum Reform” launched in 2001; a meso-level or local level context of a district-level “Excellent Classroom Culture Construction” reform starting from 2009 in Nanshan District, Shenzhen; and a micro-level or school level context of different foci of the reform in each school.

The results of the research showed that macro-level and meso-level policy contexts had important influences on distributed leadership in the schools: (1) A “Principal Accountability System” prompted principals to respond to the reform promoted by different levels of educational administrative departments, and the roles of principals in leading the reform were critical (Feng, 2005; Walker, Hu, & Qian, 2012); (2) After more than a decade’s promotion of New Curriculum Reform, school administrators and teachers have become familiar with the educational ideas borrowed from the West and gradually accepted the new ideas (Feng, 2006; Guo, 2012), so both administrators and teachers were ready for participation in the new instructional reform; and (3) As one of the first 38 experimental areas of New Curriculum Reform, Nanshan District started its reform in 2001, so the newly-initiated district instructional reform was more easily accepted (Education Bureau of Shenzhen, 2015). Administrators and teachers already had many practices in the national-level reform, and the problems that the new

instructional reform tried to deal with usually encountered difficulties. This district reform was promoted with “basic patterns” which advocated student-oriented and inquiry-based learning (Pei, Hu, & Li, 2013), but allowed for variations in the practices of schools, principals, and teachers. Principals and teachers were encouraged to actively participate in the research and exploration of the practices of the reform (Long, 2011; Zeng, 2012). It advocated diversity and autonomy in each school’s implementation, and school administrators such as principals, department heads (directors) and influential teacher leaders could all contribute to the implementation of the reform and exert important influences.

The micro-level or school-level context was greatly different in each school. When each school tried to “construct” their own “classroom culture”, the real practices of the reform were mostly influenced by the schools’ own context. The research does not find obvious evidence of the influence of school type, school size and subject matter on distributed leadership listed by Spillane (2006), but the socio-economic status of students and the development stage had great influence on distributed leadership of the schools. Moreover, this research suggests that reform not implemented in the whole school may limit the distribution of leadership in the reform among people involved in the reform. On the other hand, when the reform was implemented in the whole school, the number of important leaders in the reform was much bigger and they were distributed at different levels.

Xingfu Primary, a remote school with poor socioeconomic status students, focused on improving students’ learning through an effective computer-based learning

program – the “Striding Development Program”. As a school under quick development and change, more and more teachers started to support the efforts to improve students’ learning outcome. Zhuti Primary mainly focused on student cooperative group learning to activate the vigour and inspire their students, who were mostly from ordinary working families. Qiushi No. 2 Primary focused on textbook and curriculum integration first in experimental classes and was then applied in the classrooms of all classes. The purpose was to meet the high expectation of well-educated and rich parents. The different promotion strategies of these three schools proved to be effective for the success of the reform. In addition, this context influenced the distribution of leadership in the schools during the reform. For example, Zhuti Primary and Qiushi No.2 promoted the reform in all classes, so a great number of administrators and teachers participated and exerted their influence. Xingfu’s promotion was mostly concentrated on experimental classes, so the influential leaders in the reform were mostly teachers and school administrators related to the experiment.

7.1.2 What are the cultural influences on the practices of distributed leadership?

This research identified three levels of cultural influences on distributed leadership: societal culture shared by Chinese people; local Shenzhen culture; and school culture. This is based on the categorization of cultural levels by Dimmock and Walker (2005). The results showed that societal culture had great influence. Typical Chinese cultural values such as high power distance (Hofstede, Hofstede, & Minkov, 2010), harmony, good relationship and face were identified to be important for the

influence of school administrators and teachers, and their participation in the reform. The reform in the three case study schools were initiated by people with senior positions such as principals and vice-principals, and the authority and power represented by their positions was one of the reasons why the promotion of the reform was effective. In harmonious environment, teachers and administrators were glad to participate in and make contributions to the reform. Good personal relationship was one of the reasons why school leaders of Zhuti Primary and Xingfu Primary were able to exert their influence on others in the reform. “*miàn zi*” (face) was a motivation for the teachers in Xingfu Primary to participate in the reform, but in Qiushi No. 2 Primary, “*miàn zi*” became an obstacle for some veteran teachers for they were afraid that participating in the reform might have bad effect on student learning and make them lose face.

A perceived culture of reform, openness and inclusiveness of local Shenzhen culture (Cartier, 2002) had greatly affected the attitude of school teachers, students and parents toward reform and new ideas, and made them easier to accept and implement the reform (Schein, 2004). This open and democratic culture in Shenzhen schools was favourable for the construction of distributed leadership. School teachers and administrators respected each other. The teachers were encouraged to express their opinions and to contribute to the reform in their own ways. As a result, the teachers trusted the administrators and accepted the reform more easily. Democracy and inclusiveness were more obvious in Shenzhen, and this may explain why the schools in Shenzhen were able to construct effective distributed leadership even in a Chinese culture of high power distance. When analyzing different levels of culture in

educational leadership, Dimmock & Walker (2005) insisted on adding a level of “regional/local subculture” between societal culture and organizational culture, because “varying cultural configurations reside within broader societal cultures and that these can exert significant influence on school organization, leadership, curriculum and learning and teaching” (p. 25). The results of the research confirm the importance of subculture of Shenzhen on distributed leadership in school leadership. As China is a country with a high-hierarchical culture with high power distance (Hofstede, Hofstede, & Minkov, 2010), people may be more traditional and conservative toward change (Zhang, Lin, Nonaka, & Beom, 2005). Walker et al. (2012) found that distributed leadership was advocated in China by scholars to be one of the “ideals” of educational leadership, but principals decline to practice it. Dimmock and Walker (2002) suggest that China’s culture supports “a centralized model of leadership” in schools, which is not favourable for the distribution of leadership. This research, however, found that distributed leadership was prominent in case study schools in Shenzhen. The subculture of reform, openness and inclusiveness may be one of the most important reasons for the prominence of distributed leadership in the research, for this subculture of openness and reform mediates the high power distance of Chinese culture and encourages leadership distribution in schools.

The different school culture of the three case study schools originated from their different contexts and purposes, and their school culture had great influence on the distributed leadership in the reform. Xingfu Primary had a poor student learning. In order to uplift the low morale, the school promoted “Happy Education” to create a

harmonious atmosphere for teachers. This school culture of “Happy Education” inspired teachers to actively participate in the reform of improving student learning. Zhuti Primary promoted the school culture of “Life Education” for more than a decade to activate the vitality of students and teachers. As a result, when the student-oriented reform started, administrators and teachers of the school were able to accept the reform gladly because they believed that it was helpful to students’ development and was consistent with their school culture. Qiushi No. 2 Primary had a culture of “inclusiveness and practicality”. The school was able to accept different ideas and encouraged teachers to make contributions to the reform according to their own characteristics. When teachers accepted the reform, they would try their best to contribute to the reform and to exert their influence in it (Stoll, 1998). Interestingly, none of the participants of Qiushi No. 2 Primary mentioned the influence of typical Chinese values of “harmony” or “relationship” on the leadership practices of the school. The main reason may be that the school culture encouraged teachers to express different opinions and to speak out what they really thought about, and that advocating “harmony” or “good relationship” may prevent teachers from speaking out their minds. This may suggest that with different school culture, the influence of typical Chinese cultural values in different schools are also be different. The results of the research confirm that distributed leadership is supported in a school culture with shared goals and collegiality (Stoll, 1998), with open climate and respect (Duif et al., 2013), and with formal leaders’ support and climate of trust (Tian, 2015).

7.1.3 How is distributed leadership practiced within an instructional reform environment in China?

The research identified four ways of arrangement and implementation of distributed leadership in Chinese schools: distribution by position; distribution by task; distribution by spontaneity; and collectivist distribution. The results show that in Chinese culture, people with formal leadership positions were identified to be important leaders of the reform. There were also circumstances of leadership distribution by task, when people were assigned leadership responsibility, usually assigned by other people with positions. Two types of leaders by task were identified: project leaders assigned leadership responsibility of a project and “master teachers” (shī fu, 師傅) tutoring their disciples in daily work. Distribution by spontaneity refers to circumstances when people performed leadership practices spontaneously, neither caused by their positions nor by an assigned task. Collectivist distribution was highlighted as it encouraged and advocated Chinese culture of collectivism. Three types of collectivist distribution were analyzed: collectivist distribution at the same level; collectivist distribution at different levels; and collectivist distribution in sequence.

These types of leadership distribution are developed from Spillane’s (2006) categorization three forms of distributed leadership arrangement: division of labour, co-performance and parallel performance and Leithwood et al.’s (2007) categorization of four patterns of distributed leadership: planful alignment; (2) spontaneous alignment; (3) spontaneous misalignment; (4) anarchic misalignment. However, the categorization of the researcher uncovered in the present study shows distinct Chinese cultural features,

which embody different meanings. In Chinese culture, for example, a division of labour does not exclude the efforts of co-performance. People are encouraged to make collective efforts to achieve goals even though they have a very clear division of labour. Spontaneity is encouraged in Chinese culture, for it implies a proactive attitude toward change, so the negative effects of spontaneous patterns of distributed leadership identified in Mascall, Leithwood, and Strauss's study (2009) may not happen in Chinese context and culture.

The distributed leadership in schools were identified to be aligned in the direction of the reform. Most of the interviewees thought that distributed leadership in their school was planned, but some thought that it was both spontaneous and planned. The research identified three routines and tools most influential to distributed leadership in the reform: teacher tutoring program (shī tú jiē duì, 师徒结对); teaching and research (jiào yán, 教研) activities such as open lessons and formal and informal discussions about teaching; teacher assessment regulations and principals' participation in the reform. The results show that some important routines influencing distributed leadership are similar to routines mentioned by Spillane (2006). Formal and informal discussions on teaching and learning, for example, are similar to routines such as the Breakfast Club at Adams School (p. 76). However, most of the routines and tools identified by the research have distinct Chinese cultural features. Teacher tutoring programs and open lessons, for instance, are not common in Western literature on educational leadership.

To sum up, context and culture had great influence on the distribution of schools.

The influence of different levels of context and culture was different. National-level and local-level context and culture provided a wider background for the schools, and influenced leadership practices of the schools in a wider range. The varied school contexts and school culture brought variations to different leadership practices in each school. The harmonious environment of Xingfu Primary, for example, embodied mutual trust, and was favourable for the development of distributed leadership (Copland, 2003). Zhuti Primary advocated mutual respect and activation of life and vigour, and this culture was helpful for the nurturance of distributed leadership (Duif, Harrison, & Dartel, 2013). Qiushi No. 2 Primary emphasized democracy, participation and inclusiveness, and this helped the school to overcome obstacles that limit the construction of distributed leadership (Woods, 2004). All these results and findings confirmed the statement that distributed leadership is context-loaded and culture-rooted (Bolden, 2011; Dimmock & Walker, 2005; Spillane, 2004).

7.2 Conclusions

The findings of this research previously discussed suggest several noteworthy and outstanding conclusions about how context and culture influenced distributed leadership in Chinese schools, and can provide a more detailed understanding of what distributed leadership means in China.

7.2.1 Conclusion 1:

Context and culture, and especially local and school context and culture of this research, helped the schools negotiate the high power distance culture of China

(Hofstede, Hofstede, & Minkov, 2010), and enabled leaders of different levels to contribute to the reform implementation.

Feng (2006) noticed the “cultural dilemma” Chinese schools face in implementing reform with new ideas borrowed from the West. Distributed leadership appears in conflict with traditional Chinese culture of school leadership which may imply that school leadership is the business of the principal only. Walker, Hu, and Qian (2012) also noticed the problem that principals “tend to pay lip service” (p. 338) to educational ideals such as distributed leadership. Dello-Iacovo (2009) mentioned that foreign observers are often perplexed with “the apparent widespread support for *sù zhì jiào yù* (quality education) ideals in theory coupled with widespread resistance in practice” (p. 248). The findings of this research, however, showed that the case study schools seemed to have overcome the obstacles of “cultural dilemmas” and successfully constructed distributed leadership that prompted multiple leaders to exert their influences on the reform.

The practices of distributed leadership in the three Chinese case study schools were identified and acknowledged in the findings. Leaders of different levels actively participated in the reform and exerted their different influence. Although the importance of principals was acknowledged, other formal and informal leaders such as backbone teachers and master teachers were confirmed to be significant for the success of the reform. The findings of this research were, thus, different from the claims of Dimmock and Walker (2002), Feng (2006), and Walker, Hu, and Qian (2012) about the difficulties of practicing distributed leadership in China. The main reasons for the

results were also related to the context and culture of these schools: (1) The reform had been implemented for more than a decade and Nanshan District is an experimental area of the reform, so administrators and teachers had gradually accepted the ideas of reform; (2) Shenzhen has a culture of reform, openness and inclusiveness, so schools could easily accept reform and new educational ideas; and (3) The three schools intentionally promoted a school culture of harmony (Stoll, 1998); mutual respect (Duif, Harrison & Dartel, 2013); openness and trust (Copland, 2003; Tian, 2015); and democracy and participation (Woods, 2005) which was favorable for the cultivation of distributed leadership and school improvement. Xingfu Primary promoted harmony through “Happy Education”; Zhuti Primary advocated respect for teachers and students as individuals through “Happy Education”; and Qiushi No.2 Primary encouraged teachers to participate in the schools’ decision and speak out their mind through the culture of “inclusiveness and practicality”. The school culture helped the schools to become aligned toward the direction of the reform and win support from teachers. In other parts of China, the educational ideas of “New Curriculum Reform” are also widely accepted by schools after more than a decade’s promotion by the government (Dello-Iacovo, 2009), but in real practice, the Western approach needs to be modified so that it is compatible with local contexts and culture (Guo, 2013). The local culture of openness and reform of Shenzhen as an immigrant city has influenced the culture of the schools positively, and contributed to the effective implementation of distributed leadership. Distributed leadership, on the other hand, helped the schools negotiate the high distance culture of China, and enabled leaders of different levels to contribute to the reform

implementation.

7.2.2 Conclusion 2:

An approach that is sensitive to Chinese cultural orientations, such as high power distance, reveals categories of leadership distribution that are not accounted for in the literature. These relate to the special characteristics of distributed leadership in Chinese schools such as emphasizing the positions of formal leaders, encouraging spontaneity, and attaching great importance to collective collaboration.

Spillane (2006) lists three types of arrangement of distributed leadership: *division of labour*; *co-performance*; and *parallel performance*. A *division of labour* of certain leadership function implies the division and distribution of tasks among school members. *Co-performance* emphasizes the cooperation and coordination of two or more leaders collaboratively performing a leadership function. By “*parallel-performance*”, Spillane (2006) refers to the arrangement of distributed leadership which involves people performing the same functions or routines without coordination. Spillane (2006) also discusses how the arrangement of distributed leadership is implemented. He mentions three ways of implementation: *distribution by design*; *distribution by default*; and *distribution of leadership through crisis*.

Spillane’s categorization of the ways of arrangement and implementation of distributed leadership provides a tool for the exploration of practices of distributed leadership, but this categorization is not easy for Chinese people to understand (the term “co-performance”, for instance, is very difficult to explain in Chinese), and cannot show

unique features of Chinese contexts and culture (Spillane, 2006).

Based on Spillane's (2006) research, the researcher of this study developed four types of leadership distribution: distribution by position; distribution by task; distribution by spontaneity; and collectivist distribution. (Please see Table 7.1, Four Types of Leadership Distribution).

As shown in Table 7.1, by "distribution by position", the researcher intended to highlight the cultural feature of high power distance in China. As positions were highly valued in China's high power distance culture, people with formal leadership positions such as principals and other school administrators, and formal teacher leaders such as subject heads, were identified to be very important leaders of the reform. This is consistent with the existing literature on distributed leadership. Principals still played critical and central roles in distributed leadership (Harris, 2007, 2012, 2013b; Spillane, 2006). Other formal leaders such as vice-principals (Bennett & Woods, 2003; Leithwood et al., 2009) and department heads (Ng & Ho, 2012) were also vital in their influence on other people. These school administrators have formal administration positions, and their leadership practices are mostly distributed by position.

The roles of subject heads were similar to the roles of Timperley's (2005) literacy leaders. They were both teachers with formal leadership roles, and directly influenced other teacher leaders in the areas they were in charge of. As leaders with formal positions, their leadership practices were also distributed by position. As teacher leaders, their influence on other teachers are more direct.

Table 7.1
Four types of leadership distribution

Type	Related Chinese context and culture	Meaning	Comments
Distribution by position	High power distance culture. Positions are highly valued.	School administrators and teachers with formal positions are distributed power and responsibility.	A school administrator or teacher with a formal position is not necessarily an influential leader.
Distribution by task	High power distance. Although leadership roles are informally distributed, but they are assigned by people with formal positions and had effects.	School administrators and teachers are informally assigned leadership responsibility usually by people with formal leadership positions.	More informal. A school administrator or teacher assigned a task does not necessarily become an influential leader.
Distribution by spontaneity	Spontaneity is often regarded as positive actions in Chinese culture for it implies proactive participation.	School administrators and teachers perform leadership practices spontaneously and voluntarily neither caused by their positions or any assigned task.	“Distribution through crisis” defined by Spillane (2006) is a type of “distribution by spontaneity”
Collectivist distribution	Chinese culture of collectivism. Division of labor cannot be separated from cooperation	Leadership practices were shared by multiple people, who worked together to achieve the goals, including collectivist distribution at the same level, at different levels, and distribution in sequence.	Different from “collectivist distribution” defined by Spillane (2006). Included “division of labor” because division of labor usually implies a common goal for multiple people and needs collective contributions to the work.

“Distribution by task” refers to circumstances of leadership distribution when people were assigned leadership responsibility, generally with formal leadership positions. These tasks were usually more informal, but as they were more often than not assigned by formal leaders and that the goal of the task was clear, people with distributed leadership by task were usually very influential in the implementation of the task. “Distribution by position” and “distribution by task” were both planned: distribution by position is more formal; and distribution by task is more informal. Both of them may belong to the type of “distribution by design” explained by Spillane (2006), but are more specific and clearer in meaning.

“Distribution by spontaneity” was developed by the researcher because spontaneity is often regarded as a positive action in Chinese culture for it implies proactive participation. This distribution of leadership occurs when people are performing leadership practices neither caused by their positions or any assigned task. Distribution of leadership by spontaneity was also identified to be common in Chinese schools. Also, many participants in the research regarded performing leadership practices spontaneously as a positive attitude toward work which should be encouraged. Interestingly, in listing important norms for school improvement, Stoll (1998) considered “collegiality” to be especially important because it implies a “spontaneous and voluntary” (p. 10) orientation towards the school as a whole. “Distribution through crisis” explained by Spillane (2006) refers to spontaneous leadership practices when people work together to address an unanticipated problem or challenge that a school encounters, so it belongs to the type of “distribution by spontaneity”.

The term “*collectivist distribution*” used here is different from “*collectivist distribution*” defined by Spillane (2006), a form of “*co-performance*”. It is used here to reflect the Chinese culture of collectivism, and refers to situations when leadership practices are shared by a number of people, who work together to achieve their goals. They may work in the same place coordinately or separately, or work in different places, but have common goals. “Collectivist distribution” is similar to Spillane’s (2006) “distribution by co-performance”, but it also includes “distribution by division of labor” as division of labor usually implies a common goal for a number of people and needs collective contributions to the work. Three types of collectivist distribution were analyzed: collectivist distribution at the same level; collectivist distribution at different levels; and collectivist distribution in sequence. In a collective culture, although school leaders usually had clear division of labor, cooperation and coordination were encouraged and advocated. Almost all participants explained that they had also cooperation and coordination when they discussed their division of labor. The idea that “division of labor cannot be separated from cooperation” (fēn gōng bù fēn jiā, 分工不分家) is popular in Chinese schools. Collectivist distribution not only existed at the same level of school administrators and teachers, but also went across different levels. School administrators and teachers worked together in some leadership practices to achieve the same goals. In some circumstances, collectivist distribution was performed in a sequence for some particular purposes. Collectivist distribution in sequence is similar to “coordinated distribution” as defined by Spillane (2006).

In distribution by position and distribution by task, the form of planned

leadership is more related to power distance orientation, for the leadership distribution by position or by task is usually arranged by formal leaders with a position. But it is not always related to power distance orientation. In Qiushi No. 2 primary school, for example, all participants acknowledge that the distributed leadership was planned, but the school was the most democratic in school decisions. This planned leadership may be more related to collectivism orientation.

The results and findings of the research show that having a leadership position did not necessarily bring real influence. For example, the subject heads of Xingfu Primary were not acknowledged to be real leaders in leading the reform in their subject teams, although they distributed leadership by position. This finding is consistent with the research of Spillane and Healey (2010) that many subject area teacher leaders with formally designated positions are not often sought for advice in their school subjects. This is also consistent with the statement of Gronn and Hamilton (2004) that a leader is not necessarily a person with a formal role or title. The extent of influence may also be different with leaders with the same positions at different schools. The department heads of Zhuti Primary, for example, were identified to be more influential than the middle-level administrators of other schools. Assigning a leadership task or responsibility did not necessarily mean real influence, either. For example, Bi and Xing in Zhuti Primary were sent out for training and assigned the task of making research in the reform. This designation was an important reason for their final influence on the reform. Five other teachers in the Secondary Section were also sent out together and assigned the same task, but these teachers did not become influential leaders in the

reform as they did not achieve success as Xing and Bi did. This is consistent with Leithwood, Mascall, and Strauss' (2009) claim that allocation of responsibility or task "does not necessarily mean that the persons or groups exercising those functions and tasks will be perceived as influencing what others think and do" (p. 119).

7.2.3 Conclusion 3:

The research identified three types of leaders in distributed leadership with distinct Chinese Characteristics: "soul leaders", "backbone teachers" & "master teachers".

Table 7.2 shows the characteristics and roles of "soul leaders", "backbone teachers" and "master teachers" in the research. The following explains in detail these three types of important leaders with special Chinese characteristics.

According to Spillane (2006), a distributed perspective on leadership not only focuses on a single heroic leader like a school principal, but also other "unglamorous and unheroic leadership" (p. 10) that are unnoticed in schools. In this research, both "heroic leaders" and leaders with "unglamorous and unheroic leadership" were identified in Chinese schools. "Soul leaders" identified in the research belonged to "heroic leaders" inspiring almost everybody in the school and were significant in their influence on the reform, but they were not necessarily principals. "Backbone teachers" were considered important and widely acknowledged to be excellent, and their contribution to the reform were very persuasive. "Master teachers" were usually ordinary teachers influencing their "disciples" in daily routine work, and their "unglamorous and unheroic leadership" was spread all over the school and was worthily

noticed and discussed.

Table 7.2

Soul leaders, backbone teachers & master teachers

Type	Soul leaders	Backbone teachers	Master teachers
Formal or informal leaders	Both formal and informal leaders.	Mostly informal leaders.	Mostly informal leaders.
Level of leadership	Both administrators and ordinary teachers	Mostly ordinary teachers. Some of them become administrators after winning honors.	The great majority of them are ordinary teachers. Some disciples also choose administrators excellent in teaching as masters.
Characteristics	Excellent in expertise and in moral character. Inspire the great majority of teachers to follow them. The number is very few. There were only one or two identified in each school.	Officially acknowledged to be excellent teachers with some honors or titles. The number is limited. About one-tenth of the teachers were identified as backbone teachers in each school	Chosen as “masters” by disciples because of their expertise, experience, or moral character. The number is big and spread all over the school. About one-third of the teachers acted as master teachers in each school.
Roles in the reform	Lead the direction of the reform and inspire almost everybody in the school.	More persuasive and set good examples for others to follow.	Spread all over the school in every subject and grade, influencing the routine work of almost every teacher.

The word “soul” (líng hún, 灵魂) was used by Luo, the former principal of Zhuti Primary, to describe Xing, who was acknowledged to be an important leader in the reform by all participants of the school. The researcher uses the term “soul leader”

(líng hún lǐng xiù, 灵魂领袖) to refer to important and influential leaders widely recognized by other leaders and teachers. In Chinese culture, heroic leadership practices were worshiped and advocated (Chen, 2011; Walker, Hu, & Qian, 2015; Zhao, 2010). “Soul leaders” usually had personal charisma, expertise, and noble moral virtues and the number of them usually very few in a school. Interestingly, “soul leaders” identified by the research, were different in each school and not necessarily principals: Xing was a middle-level administrator; Mei was an ordinary teacher leader without any formal position; and Wang was a school principal. All three leaders were confirmed by all the participants of their school to be a very important and influential person in the reform. Luo and Jia called Xing “the soul” of the reform; Jiang referred to Mei as “*The No.1 Teacher of the School*”; and Wang was called “*commander-in-chief of the reform*” by Hu, “*the soul figure of the reform*” (líng hún rén wù, 灵魂人物) by Feng, and “*the most influential and important person in the reform*” by Ni and Su. “Soul leaders” inspired others with their pursuit of educational dreams, set good examples, and persuaded others to follow them with their expertise, personal charisma and devotion to work. Luo, who initiated the reform of Zhuti Primary and was referred to as “the spiritual leader” of the reform by Xing, and Jiang, the initiator of the reform of Xingfu Primary, may also be regarded as “soul leaders”, for they were acknowledged by most participants and their influence was significant.

Backbone teachers (gǔ gàn jiào shī, 骨干教师) are regarded as “backbones” of the school and awarded honors or titles by the school and different levels of governmental educational departments for their excellence in teaching. In Xingfu

Primary, for example, influential teacher leaders such as Mei and Liang were awarded the title of “Shenzhen Excellent Teacher” by the municipal government. Most of backbone teachers were ordinary teachers. Some teachers may be promoted to the positions of department heads or even principals after they are awarded the honors or titles. In Zhuti Primary, for example, Xing won the honor of “Top Ten Excellent Teacher of the Year” that was awarded by the municipal government in 2012. Han won the title of “Shenzhen Backbone Teacher”, awarded by the municipal government. Wang, the principal of Qiushi No.2 Primary, had won numerous honors and titles such as “Top Ten Excellent Teacher of the Year” and “Shenzhen Famous Teacher” awarded by the municipal government before he became a principal. Backbone teachers are officially acknowledged to be excellent teachers with some honors or titles. The number of backbone teachers is limited within a school. In case study schools, as backbone teachers were widely acknowledged to be excellent teachers, and their participation in the reform was more persuasive and authoritative, they set very good examples for others to follow.

The influence of “Master teachers” (*shī fu*, 師傅) was culturally rooted in Chinese schools. “Master teachers” included leaders with both formal and informal positions. The extent of their influence was the greatest for they included almost all important and influential people in the school and the people influenced by them were usually young and inexperienced teachers, desperately needing training and guidance. The influence was spread all over the school, in each subject and grade. The significance of “master teachers” also lay in that many teachers without any formal positions could become

influential leaders. In Qiushi No. 2 Primary, 5 of the participants mentioned their master teachers as the people who had the most influence on his or her reform, and these master teachers were all ordinary teachers without any formal position. The effective formalization of “master-disciple relationship” in the three schools prompted the greatest number of master teachers to join in the leading team and exert direct influence on their disciples. This was an important reason for the success of their reform.

The three roles in distributed leadership previously discussed are specific to Chinese context and culture, and not fully accounted for in existing theories. This finding provides rich possibilities for further studies on similar cultural-specific roles in distributed leadership. Similar to the three types of leaders with distinct Chinese features, the four types of leadership distribution discussed in Section 7.2.2 are also closely related to Chinese context and culture. “Distribution by position” and “distribution by task” are more related to Chinese culture of high power distance. People with formal positions may become very influential in Chinese culture, in which positions are highly respected. Formal leaders can also assign tasks to their subordinates and empower them in leadership practices. “Distribution by Spontaneity” is highlighted because spontaneity is regarded as a proactive attitude toward work in Chinese culture. “Collectivist distribution” is developed to show the obvious Chinese culture of collectivism, in which people tend to make collective efforts although there usually is a division of labour among them.

Interestingly, “soul leaders” are not necessarily people with formal positions. The soul leader of Xingfu Primary’s reform, for example, is Mei, an ordinary teacher

without any formal position. Soul leaders may be developed by distribution by position. For example, Wang, the soul leader of Qiushi 2, is the principal of the school. But they may be developed by other forms of leadership distribution. Mei is an ordinary teacher without formal administrative positions, but as project leader, she is assigned the task by the principals of the school. Her role as a soul leader may be caused by distribution by task. Xing, the soul leader of Zhuti School, is a spontaneous pioneer of the reform, and with her achievement, she is promoted to the position of Principal-aide, so her role as a soul leader may be related to both distribution by spontaneity and distribution by position. Backbone teachers are usually identified and acknowledged after they have achieved some success in teaching and learning, rather than being delegated or assigned tasks by school administrators, so their leadership practices before being acknowledged are mostly performed based on distribution by spontaneity. After being acknowledged and sometimes being given some administrative positions, backbone teachers may perform leadership practices based on distribution by position or by task. For master teachers, their roles of being leaders are mostly assigned informally by school administrators, so their leadership practices are more related to distribution by task. Master teachers and project leaders identified in the research are somewhat delegated or empowered informal leadership responsivity by formal leaders, but soul leaders and backbone teachers are mostly performing their leadership practices in spontaneity before they are identified and acknowledged by formal leaders. Collectivist distribution may be the most common form of leadership distribution in Chinese schools and might be more welcomed by the schools, for collectivist distribution implies that a great

number of leaders at different levels are performing leadership practices and making contributions to achieve the goals. Soul leaders, backbone teachers and master teachers are all supposed to perform their leadership practices collectively and to make contributions to achieve the goals of school reform.

An interesting finding about the three types of leaders is that all these three successful schools in reform implementing had similar amount of soul leaders, backbone teachers and master teachers. In each school, there were usually one or two soul leaders. About one-tenth of the teachers were backbone teachers, and about one-third of the teachers acted as master teachers. It may suggest that a proper portion of soul leaders, backbone teachers and master teachers may help the schools to achieve better school performance. This significance of this finding may be considered in future research on school performance or school leadership in reform or change.

7.2.4 Conclusion 4:

Shī tú jiē duì (master-disciple relationship establishment) and jiào yán (teaching and research) were identified to be very important cultural-rooted routines and tools influencing distributed leadership in Chinese schools.

Two types of cultural-rooted routines and tools in teacher development were acknowledged by all the participants to be the most influential to the distributed leadership of the schools: “*shī tú jiē duì*” (master-disciple relationship establishment, 师徒结对) programs and “*jiào yán*” (teaching and research, 教研), is a term used in Chinese primary schools to refer to formal and informal teaching discussion such as

lesson preparation, teacher training, and open lessons. The formalization and innovation in traditional Chinese “master-disciple relationship” stimulated the wide distribution of leadership of “master teachers”. The three schools had different forms of “Master-disciple relationship”: *Qīng Lán Gōng Chéng* (青蓝工程), Distinguished Teacher Program and New Excellent Teacher Program, which all promoted the development of young teachers, and enhanced the emotional attachment of disciples and masters. “Shī tú jiē duì” (“Master-disciple relationship”) is typical in Chinese culture, and may appear in other professions; its formalization in these Chinese primary schools helped to spread the influence of master teachers on the reform, and achieve great success. Among *jiào yán* activities, open lesson (*gōng kāi kè*, 公开课) was mostly acknowledged to be an important routine. Open lessons were very common in Chinese schools, and through which young teachers, master teachers, subject teachers, school administrators and other leaders of the schools played their different roles of leadership. Teachers delivering open lessons exerted great influence, and other teachers participating in open lesson preparation and assessment also played important roles. In other teaching and research activities such as subject team meetings, subject heads were usually the leaders, but other leaders such as school administrators and teacher leaders also played very important roles. The active participation of principals in teaching and research activities were especially important, for their expertise helped teachers obtain a better understanding of the reform. “Sha tú jiē duì” and “jiào yán” activities such as open lessons are very effective routines strengthening teachers’ professional learning community (Shen, Zhen, & Poppink, 2007). The research on the effects of open lessons

was also conducted in Japan (Miyakawa & Winsløw, 2013); Indonesia (Saitoa, Harunb, Kubokic, & Tachibanad, 2006); and Russia (Post, 2005). Miyakawa and Winsløw (2013) found that open lessons were effective in developing teachers' knowledge. Saitoa, Harunb, Kubokic, and Tachibanad (2006) believed that open lessons such as collaborative lesson study are helpful for teachers' professional development. Post (2005) suggested U.S. teachers could learn from Russian teachers in practices such as open lessons, and believed that U.S. teachers could also benefit from similar practices. In Western literature, practices such as “shī tú jiē duì” and “jiào yán” activities including open lessons are not very common. Spillane (2006) introduced a routine of distributed leadership “Breakfast Club”, a regular morning meeting in which teachers discussed research about teaching and learning. This routine is similar to teachers' formal and informal discussions on teaching, one of the practices of Chinese “jiào yán” activities.

7.3 Implications

This research on the contextual and cultural influences on distributed leadership in Chinese schools contributes to the knowledge base of school leadership in China. As empirical evidence on distributed leadership in Chinese schools is scant, this research has several implications for policy, practice and further study of distributed leadership.

7.3.1 Implications for Policy

Although distributed leadership has been promoted in China by the government and scholars as one of the “ideals” of school leadership for more than a decade, principals tend to ignore the initiation because there is a cultural dilemma for principals

(Feng, 2006; Walker & Qian, 2012). As a borrowed idea from the west, it is often thought to be conflictive with Chinese context and culture. This research provides empirical evidence of distributed leadership in Chinese schools in Nanshan District, Shenzhen, and shows that distributed leadership was also effectively practiced in the context of Chinese context and culture and contributed to the reform of the schools. The culture of openness and reform in Shenzhen and the school culture of harmony, trust and democracy helped the cultivation of distributed leadership. On the other hand, the results show that distributed leadership identified in the schools had distinct Chinese characteristics. The implication for policy makers and education administrators is that the promotion of educational ideas borrowed from outside should be combined with Chinese context and culture, and that local and school context and culture should be especially considered in specific implementation. This research proves that distributed leadership can also be effectively implemented if it is properly integrated with Chinese context and culture, and has its uniqueness and special features.

7.3.2 Implications for Practice

Understanding distributed leadership is helpful for improving leadership efficiency. Just as Spillane (2006) concluded, although it is not a “prescription” for better leadership in itself, it might be a “means to prescription” (p. 10). This research provides school leaders in China and in Shenzhen with some “means to prescription” for better school leadership in issues such as how to cultivate a cooperative, participative, democratic, congenial and harmonious school culture for the development of

distributed leadership; how to identify, encourage and support formal and informal leaders to exert important influence on school improvement; how to find suitable development strategies suitable to school context and culture; how to strengthen the role of “soul leaders” to inspire and motivate teachers, and expand leadership roles of “master teachers”; and how to make full use of cultural-rooted routines and tools such as “shī tú jiē duì” (master-disciple relationship) and “jiào yán” (teaching and research) to bring more people into effective leadership practices.

This research has special significance for school leader development. For principals to develop teacher leaders and middle-level leaders, it is helpful to identify, encourage and develop leaders with actual effective influence such as “soul leaders”, “backbone teachers” and “master teachers” and to identify informal leaders. For principal-level leader development, policy makers and government officials may pay attention to the candidates’ expertise and moral character, which is important to create a school culture motivating and influencing teachers to follow. It is also important for them to develop principals with actual effective influence on others such as “soul leaders”, “backbone teachers” and “master teachers”.

7.3.3 Implication for Research

The research provides an etic study that stimulates emic elaborations. “Etics that stimulate emic elaborations” (Leung & White, 2004, p. 29) refer to instances when indigenous “emic” studies are “stimulated” by an “etic” theoretical framework borrowed from other literature. This study of distributed leadership in Chinese context

and culture is an example of indigenous emic research in China, but it is based on an etic theoretical framework borrowed from Western literature. This study contributes to the knowledge base of Western theory of educational leadership applied in China. It presents how distributed leadership was effectively performed in the context of instructional reform and in Chinese culture, and proves that contextual influences and cultural influences have greatly shaped the practices of distributed leadership. Even in a high power distance culture, distributed leadership can also be effectively practiced. The local culture of openness and reform, and harmony, openness, trust and democracy promoted by the school culture of the schools helped the cultivation of distributed leadership. It provides vivid case examples of how distributed leadership for reform implementation occurred in real-life Chinese school contexts. The research identifies “soul leaders”, “backbone teachers”, and “master teachers”, who were very influential in Chinese culture, and important cultural-rooted routines and tools such as “shī tú jiē duì” and “jiào yán”, which helped a great number of teachers become influential leaders. As the research suggests, collectivist culture encourages more people to participate in decision-making and change activities. The collectivist nature of Chinese nature may provide an enhanced context for distributed leadership, and a further study of this topic may be conducted to gather more evidence. The results of the study had significance on the study of distributed leadership in China and in other contexts. It provides empirical evidence to the generally accepted claim that distributed leadership is a “contextually situated exploration” (Bolden, 2011, p. 263), and prompts future researchers on distributed leadership to focus more on the contextual and cultural

features of their studies.

7.4 Major Contributions of the Study

This qualitative multiple-case study investigated how context and culture shaped distributed leadership in schools, and had the following contributions. First, it shows that in the high distance power culture of Chinese schools, distributed leadership could also be effectively implemented in an open and inclusive local culture such as Shenzhen, and in a school culture emphasizing harmony, openness, trust and democracy such as the three case study schools in this research. Second, the researcher developed a categorization of distributed leadership practices based on the context and culture of China: distribution by position, distribution by task, distribution by spontaneity, and collectivist distribution. This categorization is easier for Chinese people to understand and shows the special characteristics of Chinese context and culture. Third, the researcher identified and explained three types of important leaders in Chinese schools, “soul leaders”, “backbone teachers” and “master teachers”. These leaders are culture-rooted in the Chinese context, and their contributions and influence must not be neglected. Finally, the research identified two important leadership practice routines unique in Chinese context and culture, “shī tú jiē duì” and “jiào yán” activities such as open lessons. These routines were extremely important and effective for teachers’ professional development, and contributed greatly to reform implementation in the case study schools.

Although this research has some implications for policy, practice and research

of distributed leadership, it also has some limitations. (1) As the interviews were conducted in Chinese and most of the documents analyzed were written in Chinese, there may be bias in the process of translation, although the researcher took great care to translate the interview questions and documents as accurately as possible. Nonetheless, these Chinese data provided rich and valuable insights into distributed leadership in Chinese context and culture. (2) This study was conducted in a modern city famous for reform and openness, and the results of the research can only represent the schools in cities with similar context and culture. As a study on contextual and cultural influences, however, this study is significant and representable for schools with a similar context and culture in China.

The rich findings of this research are helpful for further study of distributed leadership in Chinese schools, which may help to further narrow the knowledge gap. First, this research selected Chinese primary schools as case study schools, and a future study on Chinese secondary schools might be interesting. Chinese primary schools are comparatively less pressed in academic results as secondary schools and are, thus, more active in participating in reforms and accepting new ideas. But for secondary schools, they face great pressure of the senior high school entrance exam (*zhōng kǎo*, 中考) or college entrance exam (*gāo kǎo*, 高考). The results of the research on distributed leadership might be different as they have different school contexts and cultures. Second, this research was conducted in a modern coastal city famous for the culture of openness and reform, and the results of the research can only represent the schools in cities with a similar context and culture. A further study of schools in different areas of

China, or a quantitative or a mixed study which include more schools, may provide more varied evidence for the distributed leadership in Chinese schools. A future study on distributed leadership in schools may be conducted in more conservative inland cities of China or schools in similar modern coastal cities such as Shanghai to make comparisons. Third, the way that soul leaders, backbone teachers and master teachers work in leadership distributions and influence others in Chinese schools needs to be further studied. For example, a comparison of these roles in schools located in developed areas of China and in schools in more remote areas may shed more light on the influence of these cultural-rooted leaders in China. Finally, a comparison of distributed leadership in Chinese and Western schools may present more colorful and richer pictures of distributed leadership in different contexts and cultures, and add to the knowledge base of distributed leadership.

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APPENDIX A

CODE BOOK

Theme	Code Family	Meaning
Organizations (4 codes)	XF	Xingfu Primary
	ZT	Zhuti Primary
	QS	Qiushi No. 2 Primary
	ND	Nanshan District
Leader types (4 codes)	PL	Principals as leaders
	VP	Vice-principals as leaders
	DH	Department heads as leaders
	TL	Teachers as leaders
Context (3 codes)	Macro	Micro-level context
	Meso	Meso-level context
	Micro	Micro-level context
Culture (3 codes)	SoC	Societal culture
	LC	Local culture
	ScC	School culture
Arrangement & implementation of distributed leadership (7 codes)	BP	Distribution by position
	BT	Distribution by task
	BS	Distribution by spontaneity
	CD	Collectivist distribution
	IS	Distribution in sequence
	DS	Distribution at the same level
	DD	Distribution at different levels
Patterns of distributed leadership (4 codes)	PD	Planful distribution
	AD	Aligned distribution
	UD	Unaligned distribution
	SA	Spontaneous alignment
Routines and tools (3 codes)	TT	Teacher tutoring
	TR	Teaching and research
	SR	School regulations
Effects (3 codes)	CD	Contribution to distributed leadership
	ED	Effects of distributed leadership
	ER	Effects of the reform.

APPENDIX B

A GLOSSARY OF KEY CHINESE TERMS

Chinese Character	pīn yīn	English Meaning
班主任	<i>bān zhǔ rèn</i>	class teacher
包容	<i>bāo róng</i>	inclusiveness
包容求实	<i>bāo róng qiú shí</i>	inclusiveness & practicality
不在其位，不谋其政	<i>bù zài qí wèi bù móu qí zhèng</i>	He who holds no rank in a State does not discuss its policies
城中村	<i>chéng zhōng cūn</i>	village amid the city
单元捆绑教学	<i>dān yuán kǎn yuán jiào xué,</i>	unit bundling teaching
第一责任人	<i>dì yī zé rèn rén</i>	the first person who is accountable
丢脸	<i>diū liǎn</i>	lose face
非户籍人口	<i>fēi hù jí rén kǒu</i>	non-registered resident
分布式领导	<i>fēn bù shì lǐng dǎo</i>	distributed leadership
分工不分家	<i>fēn gōng bù fēn jiā</i>	“division of labor” could not be separated from “cooperation”
夫妇	<i>fū fù</i>	husband-wife
父子	<i>fù zǐ</i>	father-son
副校长	<i>fù xiào zhǎng</i>	vice-principal
公开课	<i>gōng kāi kè</i>	open lesson
骨干教师	<i>gǔ gàn jiào shī</i>	backbone teacher
关系	<i>guān xi</i>	relationship
过程与方法	<i>guò chéng yǔ fāng fǎ</i>	processes and approaches
和	<i>hé</i>	harmony
和谐	<i>hé xié</i>	harmony
核心学科	<i>hé xīn xué kē</i>	core subject
户籍人口	<i>hù jí rén kǒu</i>	registered resident
教务处	<i>jiào wù chù</i>	teaching affairs department
教研	<i>jiào yán</i>	teaching and research

教研活动	<i>jiào yán huó dòng</i>	teaching and research activity
教育科研高地	<i>jiào yù kē yán gāo dì</i>	Highland of Education and Research
教育强区	<i>jiào yù qiáng qū</i>	District with Strong Education
接待课	<i>jiē dài kè</i>	Reception lesson
竞赛课	<i>jìng sài kè</i>	competition lesson
君臣	<i>jūn chén</i>	ruler-subject
客家人	<i>kè jiā rén</i>	Hakka
客家山歌	<i>kè jiā shān gē</i>	Hakka folk songs
灵魂	<i>líng hún</i>	soul
灵魂领袖	<i>líng hún lǐng xiù</i>	soul leader
灵魂人物	<i>líng hún rén wù</i>	soul figure
领导	<i>lǐng dǎo</i>	leader
“六学”课堂	<i>liù xué kè táng</i>	“six types of learning” classroom
论语	<i>lún yǔ</i>	The Analects
面子	<i>miàn zi</i>	face
名师	<i>míng shī</i>	distinguished teacher
名师工作室	<i>míng shī gōng zuò shì</i>	Distinguished Teacher Workshop
磨课	<i>mó kè</i>	Lesson teaching practices
农民工	<i>nóng mín gōng</i>	immigrant workers
朋友	<i>péng yǒu</i>	senior friend–junior friend
评课	<i>píng kè</i>	Lesson assessment
评优评先	<i>píng yōu píng xiān</i>	teacher assessment
青出于蓝而胜于蓝	<i>qīng chū yú lán ér shèng yú lán</i>	Indigo blue is extracted from the indigo plant but is bluer than the plant it comes from
青蓝工程	<i>Qīng Lán Gōng Chéng</i>	Indigo Blue Project
情感/态度与价值观	<i>qíng gǎn /tài du yǔ jià zhí guān</i>	affective/attitudinal and values
求真务实	<i>qiú zhēn wù shí</i>	pursuing the truth and being practical
人要脸树要皮	<i>rén yào liǎn shù yào pí</i>	a person needs a face; a tree needs bark
三阶四维课堂	<i>sān jiē sì wéi kè táng</i>	Three-level Four-Thinking Classroom

三人合作组	<i>sān rén hé zuò zǔ</i>	Three-person Cooperation Team
三维目标	<i>sān wéi mù biāo</i>	three-dimensional objective
生命教育	<i>shēng mìng jiào yù</i>	Life Education
师傅	<i>shī fu</i>	master
师傅文化	<i>shī fu wén huà</i>	master culture
师徒结对	<i>shī tú jiē duì,</i>	master-disciple relationship establishment
事业单位	<i>shì yè dān wèi</i>	public institutions
私人关系	<i>sī rén guān xì</i>	personal relationship
素质教育	<i>sù zhì jiào yù</i>	quality education
铁杵磨成针	<i>tiě chǔ mó chéng zhēn</i>	An iron pestle can be ground down to a needle
徒弟	<i>tú di,</i>	disciple
五伦	<i>wǔ lún</i>	five basic relationship
先进教师	<i>xiān jìn jiào shī</i>	advanced teacher
先学后研课堂	<i>xiān xué hòu yán kè táng</i>	Investigation after Research Classroom
项目负责人	<i>xiàng mù fù zé rén</i>	project leader
校级领导	<i>xiào jí lǐng dǎo</i>	principal-level leader
校长	<i>xiào zhǎng</i>	principal
校长负责制	<i>xiào zhǎng fù zé zhì</i>	Principal Accountability System
校长助理	<i>xiào zhǎng zhù lǐ</i>	principal aide
新课改	<i>xīn kè gǎi</i>	New Curriculum Reform
新优师	<i>xīn yōu shī</i>	New Excellent Teacher
幸福教育	<i>xìng fú jiào yù</i>	Happy Education
兄弟	<i>xiōng dì</i>	elder brother–younger brother
学本课堂	<i>xué běn kè táng</i>	Student-oriented Classroom
学科组	<i>xué kē zǔ</i>	subject team
学科组长	<i>xué kē zǔ zhǎng</i>	subject head
研究课	<i>yán jiū kè</i>	research lesson
以和为贵	<i>yǐ hé wéi guì</i>	Harmony is to be prized
毅力	<i>yì lì</i>	perseverance
优秀教师	<i>yōu xiù jiào shī</i>	excellent teacher
展示课	<i>zhǎn shì kè</i>	demonstration lesson
正编教师	<i>zhèng biān jiào shī</i>	teachers with permanent positions

知识与技能	<i>zhī shì yǔ jì néng</i>	knowledge and skills
职称	<i>zhí chēng</i>	technical posts
制度	<i>zhì dù</i>	regulation
智慧课堂	<i>zhì huì kè táng</i>	Wisdom Classroom
中层领导	<i>zhōng céng lǐng dǎo</i>	middle-level leader
主任	<i>zhǔ rèn</i>	director
主体教育	<i>zhǔ tǐ jiào yù</i>	subject education
卓越课堂文化建设	<i>zhuó yuè kè táng wén huà jiàn shè</i>	Excellent Classroom Culture Construction
尊师重教	<i>zūn shī zhòng jiào</i>	respecting teachers and attaching importance to education

APPENDIX C

THE INTERVIEW SCRIPT

THE EDUCATION UNIVERSITY OF HONG KONG

Department of Educational Policy & Leadership

Interview Script

How Does Context and Culture Influence Distributed Leadership in Schools

——A Case Study of Three Primary Schools in Shenzhen, China

Principal Researcher: Rao Chunping

Principal Supervisor: Dr. Darren Bryant

香港教育學院

教育政策與領導學系

訪談稿

文化和背景對學校分散式領導的影響

--以中國深圳三所小學為例

首席研究員：饒春平

首席導師：Dr. Darren Bryant

1. Nature of project, ethics protocol.

1、簡要描述研究的背景、目的和倫理審查准則。

2. Interviewee's title, position and current responsibilities.

2、瞭解受訪者的頭銜、職位、目前的權責。

3. The background of the instructional reform

Please describe briefly the context of the instructional reform in your school.

What is your general impression of the reform?

3、課堂教學改革背景

請簡要描述貴校的課堂教學改革的背景。對這個改革您是如何看的？

4. Who are leading?

Please describe people who you think have influences on instructional reform in your school. Who are they? What roles do they play respectively? Is there any teacher who has no official leading position, but has great influence on the reform? Why do you assign the leadership to (Why are you assigned the leadership by) other leaders?

4、誰在領導改革：

您認為對貴校的課堂教學改革有影響力的有哪些人？他們都分別扮演著什麼樣的角色？有沒有未擔任官方的領導職位但對改革有著很大的影響力的老師？您為什麼把領導力分給其他領導（為什麼其他領導把領導力分給您）？

5. How distribution is arranged?

Is there a division of labor in leading your school's instructional reform? Please cite some examples if it is true?

Is it true that people sometimes co-perform a leadership function or routine with cooperation in leading the reform? How is it in details? Please cite some examples.

Please describe the moments you observe when various people perform the

same leading functions or routines but without coordination between them.

For what reasons do you think the above distribution of leadership appear? What make the leaders influential?

5、領導力是如何分佈的？

貴校在領導課堂教學改革方面是否有分工？請舉例說明。

是否存在多人合作共同執行某項領導職能的情況？具體情況是怎樣的？請舉一些具體例子。

請描述您觀察到的多人執行某項領導職能但並沒有相互協調合作的情況。

您認為以上出現的領導力分佈的情況是基於什麼原因？是什麼原因使得這些領導者有影響力？

6. How distribution is implemented?

How do you think is the distribution of leadership implemented in your school's reform?

Please cite some examples of leadership practice planned and designed.

Please describe the moments you observe when leadership is not planned or designed but is implemented by some leaders by default?

Have you ever observed any unanticipated event which requires a leadership through crisis? Please describe them if it is true.

6、領導力的分佈是如何實施的？

您對於貴校改革中的領導力分佈實施是怎麼看的？請舉一些計劃好、設計好的領導實踐行為的例子。也請舉一些未經計劃、默認實施的一些領導行為。您有沒有觀察到應對應急事件而實施的領導行為？如果有，請您描述具體情況。

7. Types of distributed leadership: Planful or spontaneous? Alignment or misalignment?

In your opinion, is the distribution of leadership in your school's reform is planned or spontaneous? Do most people agree on or support the distributed leadership in your school's reform? What are the reasons?

7、分散式領導分類：計劃型還是自發型？協同型還是非協同型？

您認為貴校改革中的領導力分佈是有計劃實施的，還是自發形成的？您認為貴校大部分是支持還是反對這個改革？原因是什麼？

8. Cultural features

Would you please describe some features of your school, such as school type, school size and developmental stage? What are the most important school cultures in your school? What influences do you think they have on the distributed leadership of your school's reform? As a school in the special zone of China, what special cultural features do you think your school have influenced the distributed leadership of your school?

8、文化特點

請您描述貴校的特點，如學校類型、規模和發展期。您認為貴校最重要的學校文化是什麼？他們對於貴校的分散式領導有什麼影響？您認為貴校作為中國特區的學校有哪些特別的文化特點影響了貴校的分散式領導？

9. Routines and tools

Please describe any routine or special tool of your school which you think have great influence on in your school's reform? How leadership is distributed in practicing

these routines or using these tools? Please describe them in details.

9、慣例和工具

請您描述貴校對於學校改革有著重大影響的慣例或是特別工具。在執行這些慣例或是使用這些工具時，領導力是如何分佈的？請具體描述。

10. Effects

Please state briefly what influences you think the distributed leadership of your school have on the reform itself and other school improvements?

10、影響

貴校分散式領導對課堂教學改革及其他學校變革行為有何影響？請簡要談談您的看法。

11. I'll obviously be very careful not to write up any of this in a manner by which you can be identified. However, is there anything you've just told me which I should be particularly careful about? Anything I should check with you first before I use it?

11、在寫作過程中我將盡量不披露您的身份。不過，有沒有您剛才告訴我的事情中有特點注意的地方？有沒有我使用之前必須再跟您核對的地方？

APPENDIX D

CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH (PARTICIPANTS)

THE EDUCATION UNIVERSITY OF HONG KONG

Department of Educational Policy & Leadership

CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH

How Does Context and Culture Influence Distributed Leadership Schools

——A Case Study of Three Primary Schools in Shenzhen, China

I _____ hereby consent to participate in the captioned research supervised by Dr. Darren Bryant and conducted by Rao Chunping.

I understand that information obtained from this research may be used in future research and may be published. However, my right to privacy will be retained, i.e., my personal details will not be revealed.

The procedure as set out in the attached information sheet has been fully explained. I understand the benefits and risks involved. My participation in the project is voluntary.

I acknowledge that I have the right to question any part of the procedure and can withdraw at any time without negative consequences.

Name of participant

Signature of participant

Date

INFORMATION SHEET

How Does Context and Culture Influence Distributed Leadership Schools

——A Case Study of Three Primary Schools in Shenzhen, China

You are invited to participate in a project supervised by Dr. Darren Bryant and conducted by Rao Chunping, who are staff / students of the Department of Educational Policy & Leadership in The Education University of Hong Kong.

The introduction of the research

This research examines distributed leadership defined in the context of a district-wide reform conducted by Nanshan District Education, Shenzhen, China. It aims to understand how distributed leadership is enacted in this context and to explore whether distributed leadership supports or limits the reform in the eyes of teachers and administrators. The main objectives of this case study are:

1. To explore how leadership is distributed in the culture and context of public schools in a special zone of China;
2. To explore how leadership is distributed in the context of a district-wide instructional reform.

You are chosen for this research because, as a school leader, you play a very important role in the distribution of leadership and in enacting reform in your school. You have been selected because of your leadership and participation in reforms at the school level.

The methodology of the research

Principals, vice-principals, and representatives of middle school administrators,

school leaders and followers in three schools will participate in the study.

If you agree to participate, you will be asked questions on the following aspects of distributed leadership: 1. Who are leading; 2. How distribution is arranged; 3. How distribution is implemented; 4. Types of distribution; 5. Important routines and tools; 6. Cultural features; 7. Contextual features. You will be also asked about your opinions on the effects of distributed leadership in their schools. You will be interviewed for about 30-60 minutes each time, and your participation in meetings, school activities and classes may also be observed. The observation will be done with your approval, and you can decline to participate if you wish. You will not be given any personal benefit in the research, but the data collected will provide rich materials for the study of distributed leadership. You will be given a summary of my research results in the future.

The potential risks of the research

Your participation in the project is voluntary. You have every right to withdraw from the study at any time without negative consequences. All information related to you will remain confidential, and will be identifiable by codes known only to the researcher.

How results will be potentially disseminated

The results of my research will be included in my EdD thesis, and may also be published in journal articles or in book chapters, presented in conference, etc. Anonymity will be preserved.

If you would like to obtain more information about this study, please contact Rao Chunping at telephone number +8613509651291 or his supervisor Dr. Darren Bryant

at telephone number (852) 2948 8827.

If you have any concerns about the conduct of this research study, please do not hesitate to contact the Human Research Ethics Committee by email at hrec@ied.edu.hk or by mail to Research and Development Office, The Education University of Hong Kong.

Thank you for your interest in participating in this study.

Rao Chunping

Principal Investigator

香港教育學院

教育政策與領導學系

參與研究同意書

文化和背景對學校分散式領導的影響

--以中國深圳三所小學為例

本人_____同意參加由 Dr. Darren Bryant 負責監督,饒春平執行的研究項目。

本人理解此研究所獲得的資料可用於未來的研究和學術發表。然而本人有權保護自己的隱私，本人的個人資料將不能洩漏。

本人對所附資料的有關步驟已經得到充分的解釋。本人理解可能會出現的風險。本人是自願參與這項研究。

本人理解我有權在研究過程中提出問題，並在任何時候決定退出研究，更不會因此引致任何不良後果。

參加者姓名:

參加者簽名:

日期:

有關資料

課堂教學改革中的分散式領導

--以中國深圳三所小學為例

誠邀閣下參加 Dr. Darren Brant 負責監督, 饒春平 負責執行的研究計劃。她/他們是香港教育學院學生/教員。

研究計劃簡介

本研究選擇了中國深圳南山區三所在課堂教學改革背景的小學為例,目的是通過個案研究,瞭解西方教育學者所闡述及研究的“分散式領導”是否適用於中國的小學,對其作出解釋,並瞭解老師和學校管理者對分散式領導影響課堂教學改革及其他學校效能的看法。具體的目標的是:

瞭解分散式領導中國特區公辦學校這樣的文化和背景下的具體表現,其原因是什麼;

瞭解分散式領導在區一級層面的課堂教學改革的背景下的具體表現。

您被邀請參與此研究,是因為您作為學校領導者在實施貴校改革的分散式領導中扮演著非常重要的角色。您被邀請參與,是因為您在學校改革中的領導力及積極參與。

研究方法

參與者包括三所個案研究學校的校長、副校長、部分中層領導、老師領袖及跟隨者。參與者的聯絡資料主要通過學校獲得。

將邀請您參加訪談,並向您詢問以下方面的問題: 1. 誰在領導您所在學校的課堂教學改革? 2. 領導力的分佈是如何安排的? 3. 領導力的分佈是如何實施

的？4. 分散式領導是什麼樣的類型？5. 重要慣例和工具；6. 文化特色；7. 背景特點。同時還將詢問您對於分散式領導對課堂教學改革的影響。訪談大時間每次大約 30 分鐘至 60 分鐘。同時還可能觀察您參加學校會議、學校活動或您進行課堂教學的情況。觀察要獲得您的同意，如果您不同意參與則不會進行觀察。

是次研究並不為閣下提供個人利益，但所搜集數據將對研究分散式領導提供寶貴的資料，本研究的研究結果概要將提供給參與者。

任何風險

閣下的參與純屬自願性質。閣下享有充分的權利在任何時候決定退出這項研究，更不會因此引致任何不良後果。凡有關閣下的資料將會保密，一切資料的編碼只有研究人員得悉。

如何發佈研究結果

研究結果將收入到我的博士論文之中，同時也可能以其他方式發布，如發表在期刊雜誌、在會議發布等。不管以何種方式發布，都嚴格保守匿名的原則。

如閣下想獲得更多有關這項研究的資料，請與饒春平聯絡，電話 +8613509651291 或聯絡她/他們的導師 Dr. Darren Bryant，電話 (852)2948 8827。

如閣下對這項研究有任何意見，可隨時與香港教育學院人類實驗對象操守委員會聯絡（電郵：hrec@ied.edu.hk；地址：香港教育學院研究與發展事務處）。

謝謝閣下有興趣參與這項研究。

饒春平

首席研究員

APPENDIX E

CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH (SCHOOLS)

THE EDUCATION UNIVERSITY OF HONG KONG

Department of Educational Policy & Leadership

CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH (FOR SCHOOL)

How Does Context and Culture Influence Distributed Leadership Schools

——*A Case Study of Three Primary Schools in Shenzhen, China*

My school hereby consent to participate in the captioned project supervised by Dr. Darren Bryant and conducted by Rao Chunping, who are staff / students of Department of Educational Policy & Leadership in The Education University of Hong Kong.

I understand that information obtained from this research may be used in future research and may be published. However, our right to privacy will be retained, i.e., the personal details of my students'/teachers' will not be revealed.

The procedure as set out in the attached information sheet has been fully explained. I understand the benefits and risks involved. My students'/teachers' participation in the project are voluntary.

I acknowledge that we have the right to question any part of the procedure and can withdraw at any time without negative consequences.

I agree that the captioned research project can be carried out at this school.

Signature:

Name of Principal/Delegate*:

(Prof/Dr/Mr/Mrs/Ms/Miss*)

Post:

Name of School:

Date:

(* please delete as appropriate)

INFORMATION SHEET

How Does Context and Culture Influence Distributed Leadership Schools

——A Case Study of Three Primary Schools in Shenzhen, China

Your school is invited to participate in a project supervised by Dr. Darren Bryant and conducted by Rao Chunping, who are staff / students of Department of Educational Policy & Leadership in The Education University of Hong Kong.

The introduction of the research

This research examines distributed leadership defined in the context of a district-wide reform conducted by Nanshan District Education, Shenzhen, China. It aims to understand how distributed leadership is enacted in this context and to explore whether distributed leadership supports or limits the reform in the eyes of teachers and administrators. The main objectives of this case study are:

1. To explore how leadership is distributed in the context and culture of public schools in a special zone of China;
2. To explore how leadership is distributed in the context of a district-wide instructional reform.

Your school is chosen as one of the three case study schools for this research, because your school is representative of good distributed leadership in the context of an instructional reform.

The methodology of the research

Principals, vice-principals, and representatives of middle school administrators, school leaders and followers in three schools will participate in the study.

The participants will be asked questions on the following aspects of distributed leadership: 1. Who are leading; 2. How distribution is arranged; 3. How distribution is implemented; 4. Types of distribution; 5. Important routines and tools; 6. Cultural features; 7. Contextual features.

They will be also asked about their opinions on the effects of distributed leadership in their schools. They will be interviewed for about 30-60 minutes each time, and their participation in meetings, school activities and classes may also be observed. The observation will be done with their approval, and they can decline to participate if they wish. They will not be given any personal benefit in the research, but the data collected will provide rich materials for the study of distributed leadership. They will be given a summary of my research results in the future.

The potential risks of the research

Please understand that your teachers' participation are voluntary. They have every right to withdraw from the study at any time without negative consequences. All information related to your students'/teachers' will remain confidential, and will be identifiable by codes known only to the researcher.

How results will be potentially disseminated

The results of my research will be included in my EdD thesis, and may also be published in journal articles or in book chapters, presented in conference, etc. Anonymity will be preserved.

If you would like to obtain more information about this study, please contact Rao Chunping at telephone number +8613509651291 or their supervisor Dr. Darren

Bryant at telephone number (852) 2948 8827.

If you have any concerns about the conduct of this research study, please do not hesitate to contact the Human Research Ethics Committee by email at hrec@ied.edu.hk or by mail to Research and Development Office, The Education University of Hong Kong.

Thank you for your interest in participating in this study.

Rao Chunping

Principal Investigator

香港教育學院

教育政策與領導學系
參與研究同意書(學校)

文化和背景對學校分散式領導的影響

--以中國深圳三所小學為例

本校同意參加由 Dr. Darren Bryant 負責監督, 饒春平 負責執行的研究計劃。她/他們是香港教育學院學生/教員。

本人理解此研究所獲得的資料可用於未來的研究和學術發表。然而本人有權保護本校學生/教師的隱私,其個人資料將不能洩漏。

本人對所附資料的有關步驟已經得到充分的解釋。本人理解可能會出現的風險。本人是自願讓本校學生/教師參與這項研究。

本人理解本人及本校學生/教師皆有權在研究過程中提出問題,並在任何時候決定退出研究,更不會因此引致任何不良後果。

本人同意讓香港教育學院學生於本校進行與上述研究項目有關之研究。

簽署:

(教授/博士/先生/女士/小姐*)

校長/ 學校代表*姓名:

(姐*)

職位:

學校名稱:

日期:

(*請刪去不適用者)

香港教育學院

教育政策與領導學系
參與研究同意書(學校)

文化和背景對學校分散式領導的影響

--以中國深圳三所小學為例

誠邀貴校參加 Dr. Darren Brant 負責監督，饒春平 負責執行的研究計劃。她/他們是香港教育學院學生/教員。

研究計劃簡介

本研究選擇了中國深圳南山區三所在課堂教學改革背景的小學為例，目的是通過個案研究，瞭解西方教育學者所闡述及研究的“分散式領導”是否適用於中國的小學，對其作出解釋，並瞭解老師和學校管理者對分散式領導影響課堂教學改革及其他學校效能的看法。具體的目標的是：

1. 瞭解分散式領導中國特區公辦學校的背景和文化下的具體表現，其原因是什麼；
2. 瞭解分散式領導在區一級層面的課堂教學改革背景下的具體表現。

貴校被邀請參與此研究，是因為您是這三所個案研究小學的之一，貴校的分散式領導在課堂教學改革中作用明顯，特別是在促進學生合作學習和自主學習成果顯著。貴校的參與對於研究者瞭解中國小學在課堂教學改革背景下的分散式領導情況有很大的幫助。

研究方法

參與者包括三所個案研究學校的校長、副校長、部分中層領導、老師領袖及跟隨者。參與者的聯絡資料主要通過學校獲得。

將邀請貴校的參與者參加訪談，並詢問以下方面的問題：1. 誰在領導您所在學校的課堂教學改革？2. 領導力的分佈是如何安排的？3. 領導力的分佈是如何實施的？4. 分散式領導是什麼樣的類型？5. 重要慣例和工具；6. 文化特色；7. 背景特點。同時還將詢問對於分散式領導對課堂教學改革的影響。訪談大時間每次大約 30 分鐘至 60 分鐘。同時還可能觀察參與者參加學校會議、學校活動或進行課堂教學的情況。觀察要獲得參與者的同意，如果他們不同意參與則不會進行觀察。

是次研究並不為閣下提供個人利益，但所搜集數據將對研究分散式領導提供寶貴的資料，本研究的研究結果概要將提供給參與者。

任何風險

貴校教師的參與純屬自願性質。所有參加者皆享有充分的權利在研究開始前或後決定退出這項研究，更不會因此引致任何不良後果。凡有關貴校學生/教師的資料將會保密，一切資料的編碼只有研究人員得悉。

將如何發佈研究結果

研究結果將收入到我的博士論文之中，同時也可能以其他方式發布，如發表在期刊雜誌、在會議發布等。不管以何種方式發布，都嚴格保守匿名的原則。

如閣下想獲得更多有關這項研究的資料，請電郵與本人 (s1055739@ied.edu.hk) 或本人的導師 [Dr. Darren Bryant](#)

(dabryant@ied.edu.hk)聯絡。

如閣下對這項研究有任何意見,可隨時與香港教育學院人類實驗對象操守委員會聯絡(電郵:hrec@ied.edu.hk;地址:香港教育學院研究與發展事務處)。

謝謝閣下有興趣參與這項研究。

饒春平

首席研究員