Principals' and Teaching Research Group Leaders' Perceptions of Teaching Research Group Leaders' Engagement in Curriculum Leadership in Chinese Secondary Schools

by

SHAN, Yiming

A Thesis Submitted to

The Education University of Hong Kong

in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirement for

the Degree of Doctor of Education

December 2017

Statement of Originality

I, SHAN, Yiming, 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 University's policies and regulations on Academic Honesty, Copyright and Plagiarism in writing the thesis and no material in this thesis has been submitted for a degree in this or other universities.

SHAN Yiming

December, 2017

Thesis Examination Panel Approval

Members of the Thesis Examination Panel approved the thesis of SHAN, Yiming defended on 28 August 2017.

Principal Supervisor
Dr CHEN, Junjun
Assistant Professor
Faculty of Education and Human Development
The Education University of Hong Kong

External Examiner
Prof CHEN, Shuangye
Professor
Institute of Curriculum & Instruction

East China Normal University

Associate Supervisor
Prof WALKER, Allan David
Chair Professor
Department of Education Policy and Leadership
The Education University of Hong Kong

Internal Examiner
Dr HO Choi Wa Dora
Assistant Professor
Department of Early Childhood Education
The Education University of Hong Kong

Approved on behalf of the Thesis Examination Panel:

_____

Chair, Thesis Examination Panel
Dr STAPLETON, Paul
Programme Director of EdD Programme
The Education University of Hong Kong

Abstract

The global trend of decentralisation in education empowers schools and teachers to have more autonomy in making instructional decisions. Influenced by the implementation of the new curriculum reform (NCR) and the three-level curriculum management policy in China, teachers supposedly have more authority in curriculum decision-making. Although many studies on curriculum leadership (CL) have been conducted, there is still a scant amount of studies focusing on understanding of teachers' engagement in CL. This is especially the case in the Chinese setting. This research thus aims to explore principals' and Teaching Research Group (TRG) leaders' perceptions of TRG leaders' engagement in CL and compare their perceptions to explore similarities and differences. TRG leaders are the backbone teachers chosen from the corpus of front-line teachers, therefore, it is critical to investigate their engagement in CL.

A qualitative research approach was deployed using interviews, observations, documents and field notes. Interviews were adopted as the main source of data to investigate how 10 principals and 20 TRG leaders understand TRG leaders' engagement in CL in secondary schools in Taiyuan City, Shanxi Province, China. Content analysis was employed to analyse the data in Nvivo 10.

The findings are grouped into five major categories, namely, general understanding of CL; enacting CL at the organisational level; at the classroom level; at the social relationship level; and at the personal level. The study identified that the term CL is rather new to some principals and to most of the TRG leaders. In particular, findings show that TRG leaders' autonomy in taking initiatives for curriculum matters is limited at all levels although they have been assumed to be taking the role of TRG leader. Importantly, this research developed a conceptual

model of TRG leaders' engagement in CL in the Chinese context which consisted of four dimensions: (1) framing/planning goals at the organisational level, (2) coordinating curriculum at the classroom level, (3) building relationships with stakeholders at the social relationship level, and (4) prompting individual development at the personal level. The findings of this research bring significant contributions to the theoretical knowledge base, to practice, and to policymaking. The development of a model serves to present a conceptual framework to explicate teachers' involvement in CL in the context of Chinese secondary schools, thus broadening the knowledge base of teachers' engagement in CL internationally and locally.

The findings of this research will assist researchers and principals in realising the challenges that TRG leaders encounter and propose the possible solutions in the Chinese context. Moreover, the findings will also provide implications for TRG leaders' preparation. In addition, the research contributes to refining the initiatives of empowering teachers in curriculum decision-makings in curriculum reform.

Keywords: Curriculum leadership, TRG leaders, principals

Acknowledgments

Many people played major roles in helping me to complete this research. I definitely could not have finished the task without their assistance and encouragement.

My first special thanks go to my two supervisors, Professor Allan Walker and Dr. Chen Junjun who provided expert guidance and encouragement at the right times to ensure that I would complete the journey. Professor Allan Walker is an excellent supervisor who has provided me with constant support and positive encouragement especially during times I had health issues. His expertise shepherded me through my thesis writing. My appreciation also goes to Dr. Chen Junjun who has been incredibly patient in motivating me in the writing up of the thesis, especially when I succumbed to anxiety. Dr. Chen Junjun is not only a mentor who gives me professional guidance on my studies, but she is also an elder sister who really cares about my life. Thank you for your dedication and assistance which have helped me through this tough process.

My gratitude and admiration also go to Dr. Yuen Yuet Mui, Dr. Lu Jiafang and Dr. Ko Yue On who have given me encouragement, support and valuable comments for my EdD studies. A heartfelt thanks for your assistance.

I also want to express my great appreciation to the Chinese secondary school participants in my research. The principals and curriculum leaders were very co-operative in this study and provided on-going support through their participation. Particular thanks go to my friends, Xu Chao, Duan Huiyao, and my teachers, Ma Meilun, Sun Xiumei, Li Yan, Wang Qiong who helped me to approach schools. Thanks also go to my friends Hao Xiaoye and Michelle Manly, who assisted me in peer reviewing and back translation. Without their cooperation and assistance, this research would never have been possible.

My final sincere thanks go to my family: parents Shan Yawei and Yang Xiaoyuan and husband Wang Jun. They have given me their selfless love, patience and encouragement throughout my doctoral journey.

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List of Abbreviations

CL   Curriculum Leadership

GCSE   General Certificate of Secondary Education

NCR   New Curriculum Reform

PEP   People's Education Press

TRG   Teaching Research Group

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Principals' and Teaching Research Group Leaders' Perceptions of Teaching Research

Group Leaders' Engagement in Curriculum Leadership in Chinese Secondary Schools

Chapter 1: Introduction

The new curriculum reform (NCR) undertaken in China in 2001 has led to

changing patterns of management and governance in schools, with greater autonomy

delegated at the institutional level (Wang, 2012). In particular, the implementation of

the three-level (national, provincial and school level) curriculum management policy

under the NCR aims to decentralise authority in terms of curriculum decision-making

(Guo, 2013; Zeng & Zhou, 2013). Consequently, in theory, teachers have been granted

more autonomy in curriculum matters, which include curriculum objectives,

curriculum planning, curriculum implementation and curriculum development (Xu &

Xu, 2007). Their role is intended to gradually change from that of being followers to

being leaders in curriculum decision-making (e.g., Chang & Li, 2007; Fan, Wang, &

Tang, 2007; Law & Wan, 2006; Zhang, 2012; Zhong, 2013).

The organisational structure of secondary schools in China includes a *Teaching*

Research Group (TRG, *jiaoyan zu*) who organise teachers to carry out teaching and

research activities (Qian & Walker, 2013; Yang & Erics, 2013). Some front-line

teachers are appointed TRG leaders (*jiaoyan zuzhang*) to take charge of curriculum

matters in their subject area. Although TRG leaders are not middle-level leaders, their

job includes, to some degree, managing teachers and dealing with the daily affairs of

teachers (Guo, 2007; He, 1998; Li, 2013; Zhang, 2007). However, it is worthwhile to

note that TRG leaders' autonomy in decision-making is constrained and rather limited

(Chang & Li, 2007). This appears to run contrary to the original intention of the

three-level curriculum management policy (Y. Li, 2010). Hence, there is an urgent need

to investigate how TRG leaders understand curriculum leadership (CL) and how they

enact CL. In view of these issues, the design of this research aims at exploring both

principals' and TRG leaders' perceptions of TRG leaders' engagement in CL in Chinese

secondary schools.

      Chapter 1 presents an overview of the research in five sections. The first section

addresses the rationale of the research from two perspectives, the contextual

background and the theoretical background. The second section identifies the purpose

of the research. The third section specifies the four research questions that guide the

research. The fourth section presents the significance or importance of the research.

The final section introduces the structure of the thesis.

1.1 Rationale of the Research

      This section presents the rationale for the study from two perspectives. First, it

elaborates the international and Chinese educational context of empowering teachers to

enact CL, and emphasises the need to reconceptualise TRG leaders' engagement in CL.

Second, it examines the theoretical underpinnings of teachers' involvement in CL and

suggests the necessity for probing both principals' and TRG leaders' perceptions of

how TRG leaders enact CL.

      1.1.1 Contextual background. In recent decades, education reforms in many

countries have turned the focus onto decentralisation implementation which transfers

authority, responsibilities and tasks from the top down (e.g., Bjork, 2006; Hawkins,

2006; Koh, Ponnusamy, Tan, Lee, & Ramos, 2014). This global trend of decentralising the education system enables schools and teachers to have more power and autonomy in curriculum issues and curriculum decision-making processes (Law, Galton, & Wan, 2010). Typically, the devolution of power to the local decision-maker involves the principal, the teachers, parents and other stakeholders of the community (Behrman, Deolalikar, & Soon, 2002; Gunnarsson, Orazem, Sánchez, & Verdisco, 2004). Further, as Ho (2005) pointed out, teachers are particularly more involved in curriculum and instruction. Thus, probing teacher's leadership role in curriculum issues, such as curriculum development, instruction, assessment and evaluation, conforms to the trend towards decentralisation of curriculum internationally.

In China, the government launched curriculum reform in the early 1990s (Law, 2014) with an attempt to put a great premium on the creation and wide distribution of knowledge and skills (Law, 2014; Li & Ni, 2012). Particularly, the NCR began to be implemented with the Guidelines for Basic Education Curriculum Reform (for Experiment) issued by the Chinese Ministry of Education (MoE) in 2001. The three-level (e.g., national/central, provincial/local, and school) curriculum management policy carried out by the NCR has subsequently changed the patterns of management and governance in learning organisations (e.g., Huang & Zhu, 2015; Lu, 2005; Wang, 2012; X. Li, 2010). Decentralising power to the school level enables teachers to be the main force of curriculum development (especially for the school-based curriculum) and it provides policy space for teachers' engagement in CL at the school level (Fu & Yu, 2014; Wang & Zheng, 2013; Xiong & Zhong, 2010). Wang and Zheng (2013) reported

that NCR has had significant influence on teacher empowerment since it is the first time

that teachers have assumed the roles of designers, developers and leaders of curriculum

development rather than being mere teaching tools (*Jiaoshu Jiang*). Under this

circumstance, the role of leader has gradually been transferred to the teacher in making

curriculum decisions (Law & Wan, 2006). However, it has been identified that teachers

achieve only a low level of empowerment and have little influence on curriculum issues

in Chinese schools (e.g., Chang & Li, 2007; Hu & Gu, 2012). Furthermore, Tang, Lu

and Zou (2011) have argued that the implementation of NCR has mainly been targeted

at the secondary school context aiming at cultivating students' comparative

accountability and their academic achievement. Consequently, putting the focus on

examining TRG leaders' engagement in secondary schools becomes particularly

significant.

In summary, the contextual analysis indicates that there is a call for reflection

on empowering teachers to enact CL. Most importantly, due to the uniqueness of the

Chinese context, examining TRG leaders' engagement in secondary school is urgent

and significant. The next section will introduce the theoretical background of this

research.

1.1.2 Theoretical background. There has been much research attention given

to understanding CL (Stark, Briggs, & Rowland-Poplawski, 2002). However, it is

apparent that a large proportion of the literature relates to exploring the principals' role

in CL rather than focussing on the teacher as the leader in CL (e.g., Elliott, Brooker,

Macpherson, & Mcinaman, 1999; Jenkins & Pfeifer, 2012; Law, Galton, & Wan, 2007).

This might be because the principal has been positioned as the senior person and decision-maker in the schools' hierarchical management system (Elliott et al., 1999). CL used to be regarded as the responsibility of principals and administrators (Bailey, 1990).

Jorgensen (2016) noted that enacting CL is not only within the ambit of the principal but also within that of the teachers. In the past 20 years, the realm of leadership has expanded to include teachers (Cummings, 2011). It has been identified that TRG leaders are critical to school improvement (Fullan, 2001). Restructuring teachers' professional identities and putting teachers in a central role in the curriculum making process have been one focus of educational literature, theory and reform (Handler, 2010). Under this circumstance, there is a call for teacher participation in curriculum decision-making. The matter of teachers' engagement in CL has attracted increasing attention in many countries (e.g., Elliott et al., 1999; Law et al., 2007; Wiles, 2009). More efforts in respect to CL have been placed on the "the professional role of teachers in making curriculum" (Law et al., 2007, p. 156). Teachers have taken on much more responsibility for curriculum matters at the organisational level in recent years (Wiles, 2009). However, there is still a paucity of studies focussed on teachers' engagement in CL (Cummings, 2011; Jefferries, 2000; Law et al., 2007; Ylimaki, 2011). In particular, few empirical studies of CL that occur in secondary schools in Asian contexts have been reported in western literature (Lee & Dimmock, 1999). Thus, there is a need to probe the phenomenon of teachers' involvement in CL. Meanwhile, it has been found that principals' conceptualisation has an impact on leadership structures

(Cummings, 2011). Further, there is little known about how principals can influence the effectiveness of teachers to enact the leadership role (Chval et al., 2010). Consequently, it has also been suggested that examining teachers' engagement in CL could be analysed from principals' perspective.

Concerning research attention to CL, more and more studies have been directed to examining CL in the Chinese educational context (Chen, 2009; Huang & Zhu, 2008; Lu, 2011). However, the most relevant research on CL has focused on examining principals' CL, whilst little research has investigated teachers' engagement in CL (e.g., Chen, 2009; Hu & Gu, 2012; Wang & Kang, 2013; X. Li, 2010). Particularly, there are few studies that investigate CL using empirical data and the majority of these are commentary studies that make conclusions and argumentations without any concrete empirical data (Hu & Gu, 2012). Unfortunately, many of these studies are stereotyped as representing the researchers' personal understandings and providing conclusions with regard to the problems of CL, followed by suggestions and solutions about how to deal with these problems. Further, there is a lack of empirical investigation into teachers' engagement in CL and the influence of enacting CL in Chinese literature (Hu & Gu, 2012; Long & Chen, 2010).

The MoE defined the role of TRG leader in Secondary School Teaching Research Group Rulebook (draft) in 1957. This emphasises that a TRG leader is not the director of administrative affairs (*xingzheng ganbu*)[1] positioned between the principal,

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[1] The director of administrative affairs (xingzheng ganbu) is "directly responsible to the president" and is "in charge of all administration" (Price, 2005, p. 148).

the director of studies (*jiaodao zhuren*)[2] and teachers. Some Chinese researchers (e.g.,

Guo, 2007; He, 1998; Li, 2013) have contended that TRG leaders are not middle-level

leaders at school. Others have claimed that TRG leaders are always the backbone

(*gugan*) teachers who have management and leadership skills (Zhang, 2007). In earlier

Chinese literature, it was proposed that empowering teachers to enact CL is critical to

the success of NCR (Huang & Zhu, 2008; Luo & Xia, 2011; Tusi, 2010; Xiong, 2007;

Zhong, 2003; Zhou, Li, & Wei, 2006).This was reinforced by the findings of many

researchers in the field, as will be seen below. Teachers' engagement in CL is not only

a critical factor affecting the success or failure of the reform, but is the fundamental

guarantee of the implementation of NCR, and a necessity for curriculum development

(Xiong, 2007). Teachers' participation in CL can make up for limitations in the

principal's leadership (Dong, 2008; Mao, 2009). Although principals try to perform

their CL roles, they still face challenges such as a large workload and lack of

knowledge and skills to effectively manage the curriculum (Dong, 2008). Teachers'

involvement in CL plays a significant role in improving teaching quality (Chen, 2014)

and academic achievement (Huang & Zhu, 2008). Being a subject leader and an

organiser of teaching and researching activities, TRG leaders play a more and more

important role in school-based curriculum (Guo, 2007; Zhou et al., 2006; Zhou &

Zheng, 2013). Principals are still in charge of resource allocation which leads to

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[2] The director of studies (jiaodao zhuren) is responsible for "the full administration of the institution in
     absence of both the president and vice-president(s)". The responsibilities include planning,
     organising, directing and supervising all the work of TRGs (Price, 2005, p. 148).

teachers following the principals' order and instructions (Dong, 2008; X. Li, 2010).

Thus, in the light of these findings, a deeper understanding of how TRG leaders are

empowered and how they enact CL not only from TRG leaders' perspectives but also

principals' perspectives is obviously required. In addition, even fewer studies have

been conducted to make comparisons between teachers' and principals' perceptions of

CL (e.g., Wang, 2008). Making comparisons could fill the research gaps in both

Chinese and western studies. Furthermore, it could testify to what extent TRG leaders

have been empowered. In summary, the implementation of NCR and the three-level

curriculum management policy empowers teachers to have more autonomy in

curriculum decision-making. Nevertheless, the research on teachers' engagement in CL

is relatively scant. Thus, there is a need to develop and reconceptualise the knowledge

base of teachers' engagement in China. Being front-line teachers, TRG leaders also

assume the roles of leading curriculum development. They are the main force of the

NCR (Zhou et al., 2006) and they are the implementers of principals' educational

beliefs (Li, 2007). Thus, this research seeks to understand how principals and TRG

leaders perceive TRG leaders' engagement in CL in the Chinese context. The next

section will introduce the purpose of this research.

1.2 Purpose of the Research

The purpose of this research is to identify principals' and TRG leaders'

perceptions towards CL in Chinese secondary schools. The study has three objectives.

The first objective is to investigate principals' perceptions of TRG leaders'

engagement in CL. The second objective is to examine TRG leaders' perceptions of

TRG leaders' engagement in CL. The third objective is to investigate similarities and differences through comparisons of principals' and TRG leaders' perceptions. Addressing these objectives aims to provide deeper understanding of how TRG leaders enact CL in Chinese secondary schools, and why they practise in this way. This knowledge, in turn, can inform discussions of how TRG leaders' roles can be further developed.

1.3 Research Questions

The research involves the formulation of the following research questions:

1. What are principals' perceptions of TRG leaders' engagement in CL in secondary schools in China?

2. What are TRG leaders' perceptions of TRG leaders' engagement in CL in secondary schools in China?

3. What are the similarities between principals' and TRG leaders' perceptions of TRG leaders' engagement in CL in secondary schools in China?

4. What are the differences between principals' and TRG leaders' perceptions of TRG leaders' engagement in CL in secondary schools in China?

1.4 Significance of the Research

The findings of this research will make contributions to the knowledge base from three perspectives, namely, the theoretical perspective, the practical perspective, and the policy perspective.

1.4.1 Theoretical perspective. As mentioned above, research on CL is limited, with few studies examining the issues of TRG leaders' behaviour in CL as opposed to

principals' engagement in CL (e.g., Elliott et al., 1999; Jenkins & Scott, 2012; Law et al., 2007). In particular, there have been few empirical studies making comparisons between principals' and teachers' conceptions of teachers' engagement in CL. Consequently, there is a need to investigate what teachers' engagement in CL means to both principals and TRG leaders. The findings will advance the international and regional literature on understanding the nature of teachers' engagement in CL using Chinese empirical data.

Second, it is hoped this research may contribute to building a conceptual framework of teachers' engagement in CL in secondary schools for the Chinese literature especially. In the Chinese literature, it has been found that very few studies focused on teachers' engagement in CL have provided empirical data (Chang & Li, 2007; Chen, 2009; Hu & Gu, 2012; Long & Chen, 2010; Wang & Kang, 2013; X. Li, 2010; Yang & Zheng, 2009). Thus, this research will provide empirical data and instructional implications for understanding more about CL in secondary schools in the Chinese context, which eventually will offer insights into issues related to teachers' participation in CL in practice. Moreover, most earlier Chinese studies are structured to critically evaluate findings emanating from western studies so their arguments are based on no Chinese empirical data (Hu & Gu, 2012). Therefore this research is designed to fill in the gaps in previous Chinese studies by providing empirical evidence support.

1.4.2 Practical perspective. From the practical perspective, this research is significant in three ways. Firstly, it aims to provide insights into issues related to the

teacher as a leader in CL in a specific Chinese context. It attempts to satisfy curriculum

development needs and help educators know more about how teacher leaders are

empowered and how they enact the CL role in practice. Moreover, examining teachers'

engagement in CL in secondary schools is especially relevant since the implementation

of NCR is targeted at secondary schools particularly (Tang et al., 2011).

Secondly, this research may contribute to enriching principals' understanding of

what the teacher's role is in CL, and how to place the teacher leaders in a better position

to support their transition into the CL role. Moreover, it aims to provide principals with

criteria for selecting TRG leaders and cultivating TRG leaders to support management

mechanisms for school effectiveness and development, thus strengthening the school

improvement process.

Thirdly, it is hoped the findings of this research will assist TRG leaders in

understanding how to improve awareness in taking on the CL role, and obtaining

related knowledge and skills of how to enact CL. As mentioned above, TRG leaders in

the Chinese context are front-line teachers, not middle-level leaders (Guo, 2007; Li,

2013). The findings thus will lead to more meaningful design of teacher education and

teachers' continual professional development programmes. Meanwhile, understanding

the detailed responsibilities of enacting CL will enable TRG leaders to be prepared for

or improve their academic accountability, which could further enhance their teaching

improvement and students' academic achievement.

1.4.3 Policy perspective. The NCR and the decentralisation of curriculum has

empowered teachers with more autonomy in decision making. Findings of this research

could serve as a bridge to connect the theoretical perspectives with practical concerns to provide a reference for policy makers reflecting on the strengths, weaknesses, challenges and accomplishments of implementing decentralisation at the school level.

Furthermore, it is expected that this research will contribute to the indigenous knowledge base and new understandings related to teachers' engagement in CL, which will assist policy makers in refining and improving policies of three-level curriculum management and so ultimately will assist the implementation of NCR.

In addition, the findings of this research may provide clarification of the job descriptions of a TRG leader. CL is a "loose term" with various definitions (Law & Wan, 2006, p. 62). Probing principals' and TRG leaders' in-depth perceptions of CL might enable researchers to define CL more appropriately and accurately.

1.5 Structure of the Thesis

This thesis consists of seven chapters. This chapter has introduced the rationale of the research, the purpose of the research, research questions, the significance of the research, and the structure of this thesis.

Chapter Two examines both the international and Chinese educational reform context, which aims at providing deeper understandings of the background of curriculum decentralization and teachers' participation in CL.

Chapter Three provides an overview of the literature on school leadership, CL, teachers as leaders in CL, teachers as leaders in CL in the Chinese context and previous studies on teachers as leaders in CL.

Chapter Four describes the methodology, which includes the research design,

rationale for adopting the qualitative approach, population and sampling plan, data collection, data analysis, trustworthiness and ethical considerations of the research.

Chapter Five presents the research findings in accordance with the research questions. This chapter mainly includes participants' understandings of CL and how TRG leaders enact CL at the organisational level, the classroom level, the social relationship level and the individual level.

Chapter Six discusses the main findings emanating from the results and makes comparisons with previous Chinese studies and western studies. The focus of this chapter is to gain a more focused understanding of how TRG leaders enact CL in the Chinese context and to explore findings that have not been noted or examined by previous studies.

Chapter Seven summarises the overall process of the research, implications and makes recommendations for future research on teachers' engagement in CL in the Chinese context.

Chapter 2: Educational Reform Context

Social and cultural contexts have a significant influence on the quality of school leadership (Alabi & Alabi, 2010; Leithwood, Patten, & Jantzi, 2010; Walker & Dimmock, 2002). The purpose of this chapter is to review the context of decentralisation, both internationally and in China, in which teachers are empowered to enact CL, and to depict the background of this research.

This chapter is composed of two sections. The first section examines decentralisation and the devolution of authority to teachers in the international context.

The rationale is that recent educational development in China has been influenced by the phenomenon of decentralisation in the global context (Lai-ngok, 2004). The second section specifically introduces educational reform in the Chinese context. It emphasises educational decentralisation and the NCR which devolves power to teachers.

2.1 Educational Reform in the International Context

In recent decades, educational reform in numerous countries has shifted emphasis to education decentralisation (e.g., Bjork, 2006; Hawkins, 2006). Being a part of curricular reforms, education decentralisation has become a worldwide phenomenon (Behrman et al., 2002; Carney, 2008; Jeong, Lee, & Cho, 2017; Sweinstani, 2016; Walker, 2002). The following sections will introduce the phenomenon of educational decentralisation in the international context and explore the participation of teachers in the curriculum decision-making process under the policy of decentralisation.

2.1.1 Decentralisation in the international context. Educational decentralisation is defined as the devolution of authority, responsibilities, and tasks from higher levels (e.g., a central administration) to lower levels (e.g., local educational authority, individual schools) (Behrman et al., 2002; Ho, 2005). Specifically, decentralisation involves the distribution of power and decision-making in respect to "policy, planning, administration and resource allocation" (Zajda, 2006, p. X). Decentralisation is regarded as a major feature of "current institutional innovation" (Galiani, Schargrodsky, Hanushek, & Tommasi, 2002, p. 275). Economic and political globalisation leads and pushes education reform to move from centralisation to decentralisation (Astiz, Wiseman, & Baker, 2002). Decentralisation has become "a

globalised policy" and "catchword in education" since the beginning of the 1980s

(Daun, 2007, p. 1). Particularly, it is viewed as an "unprecedented and fundamental"

part of education reforms in many countries (Jeong et al., 2017, p. 12).

Internationally, there has been an increasing debate over issues of

decentralisation reform and there has been a worldwide trend to empower schools with

more autonomy in decision-making (Ho, 2006; Walker, 2002). It has been identified

that schools are entailed with more authority to make decisions and to take

responsibilities for financing, curriculum, staffing and students affairs with respect to

implementation of the decentralisation policy (Behrman et al., 2002; Gunnarsson et al.,

2004; Ho, 2006). Specifically, Gunnarsson et al. (2004) noted that the forms of

decentralisation include: (1) downsizing the central educational bureaucracy and

modifying its functions, moving authority and responsibility to local levels of

government, (2) introducing school-based management and community-based school

financing, performance-based financing schemes, (3) deregulating the choice of school

books and materials, and (4) expanding school choice through vouchers, charter

schools or open enrollment programs (p.3). In particular, stakeholders such as

principals, school administrators, teachers, parents and community members are

empowered with authority to make more decisions since the implementation of school

decentralisation (Gunnarsson et al., 2004; Ho, 2005; 2006).

Behrman et al. (2002) have suggested that examining the influence of

decentralisation in education would yield valuable insights. Implementing educational

decentralisation not only enables stakeholders to have more autonomy in

decision-making, it also has profound significance for educational reform. Educational decentralisation is regarded as a "precondition for financial assistance" and "the greater intention to redistribute power" which increases "efficiency, and creates greater sensitivity to local cultures" (Utomo, 2005, p. 1). Furthermore, decentralisation reform leads to "greater responsiveness to local conditions and preferences, thus leading to more effective education" (Behrman et al., 2002, p. 32). Ho (2005) noted that school decentralisation plays a significant role in enhancing stakeholders' involvement and shifting the cost burden of education from the central level to the school level. Moreover, it has been found that education decentralisation contributes to the level of educational attainment (Barankay & Lockwood, 2007; Falch & Fischer, 2012).

In summary, with the implementation of decentralisation, schools do have more authority to make decisions for financing, curriculum matters and staffing. Further, decentralisation devolves authority not only to principals and administrators, but also to teachers. The next part will look at issues in relation to empowering teachers in curriculum decision-making under educational decentralisation.

2.1.2 Empowering teachers in curriculum decision-making. The devolution of education content (e.g., curriculum, testing) is regarded as one of the most important forms of decentralisation (Behramn et al., 2002). Decentralisation provides a new paradigm for leading curriculum, namely, empowering teachers with more autonomy in taking up a more central role in making decisions about curriculum issues at the school level. Indeed, empowering and involving teachers in taking more decisions for curriculum matters has been presented formally by the Llewellyn report in 1982 (Law,

2017).

Decentralisation enables teachers to have more democratic participation in making decisions for school and curriculum matters (Ho, 2005; Law et al., 2010). For example, being a type of decentralisation, school-based management devolves the authority of decision making to teachers (Behrman et al., 2002). These decisions and responsibilities involve curriculum planning, setting academic standards, evaluating academic achievement, selecting teaching materials and maintaining school buildings (Gunnarsson et al., 2004; Ho, 2006). Decentralisation differs from hierarchical leadership by entailing more power and autonomy to teachers to decide what to teach, how to teach, and how to assess teaching and learning (Caldwell, 2005; Law, 2017; Lee, Yin, Zhang, & Jin, 2011).

Empowering teachers to make decisions for curriculum matters has its benefits. Law, Galton, Kennedy and Lee (2016) found that "decentralisation of pedagogical decision-making, empowerment of school leadership, and teachers" attribute to the success of the educational system (p. 177). Further, the involvement of teachers in school management has been shown to improve teachers' morale and ultimately improve the quality and efficiency of education (Behrman et al., 2002). Lai-ngok (2004) explained that the devolution of autonomy in curriculum decision-making enables teachers to have more freedom to choose and design the most appropriate curriculum to fit the students' needs. However, teachers' powers and autonomy are still rather limited even though they have been empowered with authority in curriculum decision-making. Utomo (2005) reported that teachers' autonomy in curriculum matters is minimal at the

school level. This is because some education reforms neglect teachers' equally important roles and shared responsibilities when they are involved in curriculum decision-making processes at the school level (e.g., Day, Harris, & Hadfield, 2001).

In conclusion, in the western context in recent years, the conception of empowering teachers with greater flexibility in curriculum matters has been developed further and debated.   The teacher's role has gradually transformed from that of a curriculum user to that of a curriculum developer in the decentralisation process (Law, 2017). Thus, context analysis demonstrates a need to examine the empowerment of teachers for making decisions for curriculum matters at the school level. Behrman et al. (2002) have noted that the scope of empowerment differs greatly from country to country. The next section will introduce the Chinese educational reform context in order to obtain understandings of how decentralisation is implemented.

2.2 Educational Reform in the Chinese Context

This section examines decentralisation reform, new curriculum reform and the phenomenon of teacher empowerment in decision-making in Chinese educational settings in order to understand the uniqueness of teachers' engagement in CL in China.

2.2.1 Educational decentralisation in mainland China. The Chinese education system has experienced substantial changes – a top-down education reform – since 1985 and there has been a discernible trend of decentralisation in the current wave of education reform (Lai-ngok, 2004; Qi, 2011). Decentralisation devolves a certain extent of autonomy from the central government to the local governments, local communities and even individuals. Decentralisation in mainland China has its own

uniqueness and diversity (Hawkins, 2006).

Devolution of authority to the school level provides policy space for teachers to be involved in curriculum matters (Chang & Li, 2007; Fu & Yu, 2014; Wang & Zheng, 2013). However, some researchers (e.g., Carney, 2008; Lai-ngok, 2004) have pointed out that the central State still dominates education although China has been implementing school decentralisation. This is because the central authority in Chinese education is primarily strengthened by education legislation and supervision (Qi, 2011). In particular, decision-making regarding curriculum issues is still "tightly" controlled by the central State in China (Lai-ngok, 2004) and tolerance to curriculum diversities and flexibility is very limited despite decentralisation reform (e.g., Bray, 1999; Hawkins, 2006; Qi, 2011). For instance, teaching hours, content of teaching, plan of instruction, performance evaluation criteria, and even textbook selection are all stipulated under the authoritative directive of the central educational authorities in China (Qi, 2011; Yang, 2012). This demonstrates that there is no completely decentralised education system but a mixture of both centralisation and decentralisation in the Chinese context (Hanson, 2006; Hawkins, 2000, 2006; Luo, 2012). Hipgrave et al. (2012) used the term centralised decentralisation to depict the deconcentration process in Chinese education.

In short, although the curriculum decision making process has been empowered to the school level, schools are still highly controlled by the State. The next section will introduce the new curriculum reform implemented in 2001 which attempts to transform the curriculum management system from centralisation to decentralisation.

2.2.2 The new curriculum reform: three-level curriculum management.

Recent reforms in China have been focused on the quality of education (Walker & Qian, 2012). The new curriculum reform (NCR) was introduced in 2001 with the issuing of *The Guidelines for Basic Education Curriculum Reform (for Experiment)* (referred to below as the Guidelines). The NCR is regarded as a new round of reform since it brings about "major curriculum and instructional change" and introduces a couple of new concepts such as "school-based curriculum, self-initiated learning and inquiry-based learning" (Walker & Qian, 2012, p.164-168). The philosophy underpinning this NCR is to improve the educational system and its quality, and equip students with the knowledge and skills for an increasingly globalised world (Guo, 2013). Zeng and Zhou (2013) commented that one of the core moves of the NCR was to shift the curriculum management system from a "centralised system to a decentralised and distributed system" (p. 271).

One significant change of the NCR is the implementation of a three-level curriculum management policy stipulated in the Guidelines. The three levels are the national/central level, the provincial/local level and the school level, as stipulated in Clause 16 in the Guidelines (MoE, 2001):

1) The MoE sets up overall plans for basic education, formulates curriculum management policy, regulates the teaching hours and teaching content, specifies the curriculum standard and curriculum evaluation system;

2) The provincial education departments are responsible for planning the implementation of the national curriculum in local conditions, and

formulating the local/provincial curriculum with the approval of the MoE;

3) The schools execute the national and local curriculum. Meanwhile, schools

are entitled to develop a school-based curriculum in accordance with their

educational context, but under the supervision of the educational bureaucracy

It can be seen in Clause 16 that this large-scale curriculum change distributes

powers of curriculum decision-making to central government, local governments, and

then to schools and school teachers" (e.g., Guo, 2013; Zeng & Zhou, 2013). Wang

(2012) suggested that the NCR prompts a change in the curriculum administration

system from "a highly centralised, two-tiered framework to a distributed, three-tiered

structure" (p.18). Further, Walker, Qian and Zhang (2011) described the three-level

system as "a form of decentralisation" that "calls on schools, cities, districts and

provinces to design school-based curricula that accounts for local needs" (p. 394). Thus,

local schools and teachers are empowered to decide more on teaching content, teaching

approaches and teaching objectives (Lai-ngok, 2004). The change in the NCR is

dramatic as this is the first time that teachers have assumed the roles of curriculum

designer, curriculum developer and curriculum leader (Wang & Zheng, 2013).

To conclude, the three-level curriculum management policy released by the

NCR supports school-based curriculum development and the devolution of authority of

curriculum decision-making to the school level. The following section will examine

closely issues related to the empowerment of teachers to engage in curriculum matters

at the school level under the three-level curriculum management system.

2.2.3 Empowering teachers with autonomy in curriculum matters. Issues

of empowering teachers in curriculum matters have become Chinese educators' focus since the mid-1980s (Lai-ngok, 2004). In particular, the implementation of the NCR and the three-level curriculum management policy has placed teacher's role in a high position in decision-making (Chang & Li, 2007; Fan et al., 2007; Huang & Zhu, 2015; Li, 2001; Lu, 2005; Wang & Zheng, 2013; Zhang, 2012; Zhong, 2013). Qian, Walker, and Yang (2017) suggested that this new curriculum reform demands "a fundamental shift" in teaching and learning (p. 105). This reconstruction of the curriculum management system changes the traditional role of teacher from being a follower to being the developer, the implementer and the evaluator in the curriculum decision-making process (Han, 2009; Li, 2004).

Giving teachers more autonomy and power to participate in curriculum matters and to make curriculum decisions has received much attention among educators who have interests in curriculum decentralisation and CL. As many Chinese researchers (e.g., Wang, 2012; Wang & Zheng, 2013; Zhang, 2012; Zheng, 2007) have commented, the three-level curriculum management policy is the recognition of teacher's role in the curriculum decision-making process, especially for the school-based curriculum. Educators (e.g., Han, 2009; Li, 2004; Peng, 2007; Zuo, 2009) put a focus on teachers' autonomy in curriculum decision-making and identified that teachers' are empowered to select, design and develop the teaching content in accordance with their competence, knowledge base, experiences and students' needs, especially for the school-based curriculum. Zhou et al. (2006) lisedt teachers' authority in detail:

1) Teachers have greater choice of curriculum content in light of curriculum

standards and learner' needs;

2) They have more active participation in curriculum development,

especially of school-based subjects;

3) They have more free choice of approaches to teaching as well as greater

autonomy in translation of curriculum "standards" and "structures" into

classroom teaching practices. (p. 30)

Devolving curriculum decision-making to school teachers is viewed as one of

the focal points of the NCR (Zeng & Zhou, 2013). Concerning the significances of

empowering teachers, the success of the curriculum reform requires teachers'

participation in CL (Huang & Zhu, 2015; Zhang, 2006). Reciprocally, teachers'

engagement in CL and their participation in curriculum matters affect the

implementation of curriculum reform (e.g., Xiong, 2007; Zheng, 2007). Xiong (2007)

confirmed that realising teachers' central role and empowering teachers with autonomy

in the curriculum decision-making process are pivotal and provide safeguards for

implementing education reform, and curriculum decentralisation.

Theoretically, teachers gain more autonomy and authority in decision-making

in curriculum matters as a result of the implementation of the three-level curriculum

management policy (Lai-ngok, 2004). Nevertheless, there are many challenges in

practice. In fact, teachers' authority is greatly constrained and they are only partially

empowered to take autonomous decisions for school-based curriculum (Hu & Gu, 2012;

Rong, 2005; Rong, 2017; Zhang, 2006). Further, some researchers (e.g., Peng, 2007;

Zhang, 2006) have warned that teachers lack awareness about curriculum matters. For

example, teachers regard curriculum development as the educational experts' responsibilities rather than theirs (Zhang, 2006).

In conclusion, the new curriculum management system in the Chinese educational context delegates more autonomy to teachers. However, teachers are faced with challenges in making decisions for curriculum matters. Thus, there is a need for more empirical study in relation to how teachers are empowered and what instructional initiatives they take at the school level.

2.3 Summary

The review of both the international and the Chinese educational contexts indicates that the education reform trend has shifted from a centralised form to a decentralised form. With the implementation of decentralisation, schools, principals, and teachers are empowered with more autonomy. Given this context, the role of teachers becomes increasingly significant and important in the curriculum decision-making process. Furthermore, it is proven that empowering teachers with more authority impacts on the school development.

This context analysis provides a general understanding of the research background. Chinese education is currently experiencing a dramatic change in management, namely, implementing the three-level curriculum management system. It seems that local schools, principals and school teachers have been empowered with more autonomy in curriculum decision-making. However, there is still a need to explore how teachers are actually empowered and how they take on their CL role.

The next chapter will provide a theoretical framework for better understanding

issues related to CL and teachers' engagement in CL for this research.

Chapter 3: Literature Review

This research aims at investigating both principals' and TRG leaders'

perceptions related to TRG leaders' engagement in CL in Chinese secondary schools.

Please note that TRG leaders in the Chinese context are defined as the teachers who

assume the roles of being in charge of curriculum matters (Guo, 2007; He, 1998; Li,

2013). This research takes this definition to explore TRG leaders' involvement in CL.

The purpose of this chapter is to critically examine literature relevant to teachers'

engagement in CL and offer conceptual lenses in relation to teachers' involvement in

CL.

To embed the research into the Chinese context, a comprehensive literature

review is structured from five perspectives, namely, the overview of school leadership,

the perceptions of CL, the perceptions of teachers' engagement in CL in the

international context, the perceptions of teachers' engagement in CL in the Chinese

context, and previous studies on teachers' engagement in CL.

3.1 Overview of School Leadership

There is abundant literature relating to school leadership. This section gives an

introduction to the concept of school leadership and the significance of enacting

leadership.

3.1.1 Perceptions of school leadership. Leadership is regarded as a process

that guides individual behaviour for the purpose of goal achievement (Yukl, 2006).

Some researchers (e.g., Christie & Lingard, 2001) define it as the exercise of influence

over others' practices. Furthermore, leadership is viewed as "a dynamic interplay of school-related factors and personal factors" which assists the achievement of the school goals (Elliott et al., 1999, p. 171).   Leadership is also viewed as "the ability to move the school forward" (Dunford, Fawcett, & Bennett, 2000, p.2). Moreover, Harris (2003) believe that leadership primarily refers to the relationships and the connections among stakeholders at the school level. To be specific, Nashashibi and Watters (2003) describe leadership from four perspectives, (1) "leadership is a process of influencing others", (2) "leadership can be exercised by people without formal authority or designation", (3) "leadership implies that there are followers", and (4) "leadership involves moving forward to achieve goals or objectives" (p. 48).

The above descriptions of leadership involve "role definition, power relationships and behaviour of those who may be characterised as leaders" (Elliott et al., 1999, p. 174). It seems, however, there is no agreement on the definition of leadership. Day and Antonakis (2012) suggest that it is difficult to define leadership precisely. Being compared with the aforementioned depictions, the definition given by Elliott et al. (1999) appears representative since it reflects the functional characteristics and the influential ability of leadership. The next part will examine the significance of enacting leadership.

3.1.2 Significance of enacting leadership. This section attempts to address the significance of exercising leadership from four perspectives, namely, the school level, the classroom level, the social relationship level and the individual level.

Firstly, enacting leadership plays a pivotal role for school development.

Leadership is a major factor that affects the success or failure of the school development (e.g., Day & Sammons, 2013; Dunford et al., 2000; Hallinger & Heck, 2010a, 2010b; Ho, 2010a; Simkins, 2005). Exercising leadership contributes to building a distinctive school culture and community culture (Harris, 2003). Secondly, some scholars indicate that leadership has a significant impact on students' academic achievement at the classroom level (e.g., Bulris, 2009; Lee, Walker, & Chui, 2012; Leithwood et al., 2010; Louis, Dretzke, & Wahlstrom, 2010; Pashiardis & Johansson, 2016; Robinson, Lyoyd, & Rowe, 2008; Walker, Lee, & Bryant, 2014). Educational leadership is identified to have direct influence on students' learning performance (Karadağ, Bektaş, Çoğaltay, & Yalçın, 2015). Furthermore, Leithwood et al. (2010) indicate that leadership is widely regarded as a pivotal factor that fosters the students' learning. In addition, the achievement gains are viewed as the property of school leadership (Robinson, 2006). Thirdly, leadership has strong impact on staffs' professional development (Day, Fleenor, Atwater, Sturm, & McKee, 2014). It is identified that enacting leadership enables leaders to contribute to building staff capacity including motivations, commitments, skills and knowledge base (Day & Sammons, 2013). Fourthly, enacting leadership is important to individual leader's development since it plays a critical role in improving leaders' instructional ability and in preparing them for change in accordance with the teaching context and students' diverse learning needs (Whitworth & Chiu, 2015). Moreover, it is identified that taking on a leadership role contributes to enhancing individual leader's knowledge, skills and abilities and values (Day et al., 2014; Dimmock & Goh, 2011).

In summary, research has shown that enacting leadership is closely related to

the development of school, students and teachers. In the field of leadership, some

studies begin to put emphasis on exploring the schooling issues through reviewing

curriculum implementation and curriculum development (e.g., Elliott et al., 1999;

Macpherson et al., 1995; Macpherson, Brooker, Aspland, & Elliott, 1998; Wiles, 2008,

2009; Ylimaki, 2011, 2012). It appears that CL has been given increasing research

attention these days by researchers. The next section will focus on the issues related to

CL.

3.2 Perceptions of CL

This section presents a review of the definitions of CL and discusses the

significances of enacting CL, which makes sense of the perceptions of CL from various

angles and provides a reference for better understanding of teachers' engagement in

CL.

3.2.1 Definition of CL. There is an extensive literature debating the definition

of the CL. However, CL is a loosely defined term with various kinds of definitions

(Law & Wan, 2006; Tsui, 2014). Table 1 lists some key items mentioned in the

descriptions of CL.

Table 1
Key Items in Descriptions of CL

Researcher(s)	Context/ culture	Functions	Instructional initiatives	Relations	Roles
Bailey, 1990		√	√		
Cardno & Collett, 2003		√	√		√
Cardno, 2006		√	√		√
DeMatthews, 2014		√	√		
ECRA Group, 2010	√	√	√		
Elliott et al.,1999	√	√			
Elliott et al., 2005	√				
Henderson & Gornik, 2007	√	√	√	√	
Henderson & Hawthorne, 1995	√	√			√
Jefferries, 2000		√	√		√
Jorgensen & Niesche, 2011			√	√	√
Joseph, Milel, & Windschitl, 2002	√				√
Law & Wan, 2006	√	√	√		√
Lee & Dimmock, 1999			√		
Lin & Lee, 2013		√	√		
Macpherson et al., 1995	√	√	√	√	√
Macpherson et al., 1998	√	√	√	√	√
Macpherson, 1998	√	√	√	√	√
Macpherson & Brooker, 1999	√	√		√	√
Macpherson & Brooker, 2000	√	√		√	√
Tsui, 2010		√	√		
Wiles, 2008		√	√	√	√
Wiles, 2009		√	√	√	√
Ylimaki, 2011	√	√	√	√	√
Ylimaki, 2012	√	√	√	√	√
Total No.	15	21	18	12	16
(%)	58	81	69	46	62

To conclude, the perception of CL is regarded as a shared phenomenon that

occurs at "macro- (e.g., starting a new school) and micro-levels (e.g., implementation of curriculum policy in a single class)" (Macpherson et al., 1998, p. 76). It is also shaped by three contextual factors, namely, "the images of curriculum held by people, the organisational arrangements and the social relationships among people" (Macpherson & Brooker, 2000, p. 70). By integrating the claims made by Macpherson et al. (1998) and Macpherson and Brooker (2000), the perceptions of enacting CL are examined critically from four perspectives, namely, the organisational level, the classroom level, the personal level and the social relationship level. These four levels also form the foundation for presenting the research findings and discussion.

      3.2.1.1 Defining CL from the organisational level. CL is defined by its functions which include building a vision and culture, allocating resources, monitoring, reviewing and developing programme or staff at the organisational level (Lee & Dimmock, 1999). Nashashibi and Watters (2003) indicate that CL integrates the strategic goals and the shared vision into all areas of work and disciplines of the organisation. CL is viewed as one of the commonly used terms to depict the leadership of a school's core function (Cardno & Collett, 2003). Lee and Dimmock (1999, p. 457) provide a more comprehensive list to illuminate the responsibilities of exercising CL that include: (1) setting and planning goals, (2) monitoring, (3) reviewing and developing the educational programme of the school, (4) monitoring, reviewing and developing the staff of the school, (5) building culture, and (6) allocating resources.

      In a word, exercising CL refers to taking macro control over issues related to vision building, goal-setting, and resource allocation at the organisational level.

3.2.1.2 Defining CL from the classroom Level. CL contains any initiative that

teachers take with the purpose of improving teaching and learning (Macpherson et al.,

1998) irrespective of whether they are aware of their efforts or not (Elliott et al., 1999).

The responsibilities of enacting CL not only involves taking instructional initiatives,

but also includes any decision related to "the sociocultural and political aspects of

educational content" (Ylimaki, 2012, p. 305). Researchers identify that exercising CL

includes formulating instruction plans, making performance assessments (DeMatthews,

2014), spearheading the adoption of teaching materials, maintaining expertise in the

subject area and reviewing learning achievement (Wiles, 2008). In this sense, CL seems

like classroom teaching which focuses on taking instructional decisions for improving

teaching performances and learning outcomes (Wiles, 2009).

3.2.1.3 Defining CL from the social relationship level. From the social

relationship aspect, CL is regarded as the engagement and interactions between

individuals and their organisational context (Macpherson et al., 1998; Wiles, 2008). In

other words, enacting CL stands for interplay between the leader and other stakeholders

in schools, community, and society that is in relation to curriculum roles (Macpherson

et al., 1998; Ylimaki, 2011). In general, implementing CL reflects the engagement,

communication and interactions among the stakeholders in the organisational context

(Wiles, 2008).

3.2.1.4 Defining CL from the personal level. CL involves an individual impact

that results from a set of personal qualities which the individual brings to the

organisational context for organisational building and school improvement (e.g.,

ECRA Group, 2010; Elliott et al., 1999; Elliott et al., 2005; Ylimaki, 2011). It involves

the knowledge, values and attitudes that individuals hold when taking initiatives and it

also reflects the individual's personal qualities (Macpherson et al., 1998). Elliott et al.

(2005) put forward that implementing CL is about how individuals construct or

reconstruct their professional identities during work. CL reflects personal inherent

qualities such as self-awareness, personal beliefs, and experiences in their professional

context (Elliott et al., 2005; Ylimaki, 2011).

A review of the definitions of CL indicates that there is no commonly agreed

definition of CL. Through integrating the various descriptions in the current literature,

it seems logical to define CL from four perspectives, namely, building vision for

curriculum development at the organisational level, coordinating curriculum at the

classroom level, communicating curriculum issues at the social relationship level and

reflecting individual's professionalism and qualities at the personal level. The next

section will explore the significances of enacting CL.

3.2.2 Significance of enacting CL. CL is conceived as "a central phenomenon"

happening in the educational context and consisting of "the factors and people who

comprise it" (Macpherson et al., 1998, p. 76). This part explicates the significances of

enacting CL from four perspectives, namely, the organisational level, the classroom

level, the social relationship level and the personal level.

Enacting CL has significances at the school level. It is regarded as a key factor

for school improvement processes (DeMatthews, 2014; Wan & Wong, 2006; Wiles,

2008, 2009). It could be explained as teachers endeavouring to organise, serve, and

meet the needs of the organisational context that ultimately prompts school development (Wiles, 2009). Chval et al. (2010) found that teachers performing the CL leadership role assists school-level decision making. Moreover, it is noted that CL plays a pivotal role for creating "positive learning and safe, orderly schools" (Ylimaki & Brunner, 2011, p. 1264)

At the classroom level, it is identified that enacting CL enhances teaching and learning (e.g., Handler, 2010; Wiles, 2009; Ylimaki, 2012). This is because enacting CL requires the ability to design a curriculum and implement curriculum initiatives in accordance with the diverse need of students and instructional variations (Handler, 2010). CL is vital for providing positive reinforcement for students learning through the implementation of "a positive behavioural support system" (DeMatthews, 2014, p. 192). Furthermore, Xiong and Lim (2015) note that CL decisions have influences on students' learning experiences.

Referring to the social relationship level, enacting CL prompts teacher collaboration, staff development, and the formation of professional learning communities (e.g., Copland & Knapp, 2006; Grossman, Wineburg, & Woolworth, 2001; Patterson & Patterson, 2004). It is identified that enacting CL prompts interactions and collaborations thus fostering teacher learning and enhancing development of professional knowledge and skills among teachers (Law & Wan, 2006; Li, 2004).

Concerning its significances to personal development, enacting CL facilitates individual professional development. Individuals who are equipped for enacting CL are

required to have professional skills, specialised knowledge, competencies of curriculum, communicative ability, and even an understanding of psychology thus further enhancing personal development (e.g., Chval et al., 2010; Cummings, 2011; King, 2002).

In summary, CL is defined as "an amorphous role" in the school setting which falls to "a person or group of people who assume responsibility for curriculum" (Jorgensen, 2016, p. 370), such as principals, administrators, and teachers (e.g., Bailey, 1990; Cardno & Collett, 2003; Macpherson & Brooker, 2000).Indeed, CL is not limited to the role or the position. Enacting CL involves taking instructional responsibilities, administrative duties and initiatives relating to curriculum issues. Wiles (2009) suggests that "curriculum leadership in today's schools must move beyond the maintenance or management function to address school reform for now and for the future" (p. 12). The literature shows CL's crucial role in determining school development, improving teaching and learning, enhancing collaboration among stakeholders, and prompting individuals' (teachers who assume roles in taking curriculum initiatives) development. With the implementation of curriculum decentralisation worldwide, the locus of the CL has extended from the traditional managerial roles (such as the principal and the middle-level leader) to teachers. The following section will introduce the issues related to the teacher as a leader in CL.

3.3 Perceptions of Teachers' Engagement in CL in the International Context

It is identified that teacher involvement in the school decision-making process has "long" been an area of research (Ho, 2010b, p. 613). This section reviews the

literature regarding perceptions of teachers' engagement in CL from the organisational

level, the classroom level, the social relationship level and the personal level. Within

each level, issues of characteristics, significances, challenges, and suggestions or

expectations relating to teachers' engagement in CL will be examined.

3.3.1 Perceptions of teachers' engagement in CL at the organisational level.

Teachers who are involved in CL have the authority to make administrative and

instructional decisions which "forms part of the foundation of a good school" (Ho,

2010b, p. 621). To be specific, the initiatives of exercising CL mainly involve the

following responsibilities: (1) setting direction or planning goals (e.g., DeMatthews,

2014; Wiles, 2009), (2) building shared vision for curriculum development (e.g.,

Nashashibi & Watters, 2003), (3) monitoring organisational performance (e.g., Li,

2004), (4) reviewing educational programme (e.g., Leithwood, Louis, Anderson, &

Wahlstrom, 2004), (5) building culture and climate (e.g., Li, 2004; Macpherson et al.,

1996), and (6) allocating resources (e.g., Cummings, 2011; Lin & Lee, 2013).

Empowering teachers to take on the CL role is viewed as one of the

determinants of school development (e.g., Campbell & Malkus, 2011; Halai, 1998;

Handler, 2010; Ho, 2010a; Li, 2004; York-Barr & Duke, 2004). Researchers identify

that entailing teachers with the autonomy in participating curriculum issues enhances

school culture building (e.g., Gabriel & Farmer, 2009; Hoerr, 2005) and maintains the

school's security and stability (e.g., Wiles, 2009; Ylimaki & Brunner, 2011).

However, teachers are faced with difficulties in taking on the CL role. On the

one hand, there exists a rigid structure or undemocratic leadership within educational

organisations (e.g., Elliott et al., 1999; Moreeng & Tshelane, 2014). Teachers have

feelings of being neglected and not being acknowledged in the rigid structural and

organisational set-up (Moreeng & Tshelane, 2014). On the other hand, lack of

awareness in taking on the CL role leads to a low level of teachers' participation in CL

activities (e.g., Elliott, 1999; Handler, 2010; Vance, 1991). As Ho (2010) explains,

teachers prefer participating in taking curriculum initiatives at the classroom level since

they are "ethically obliged to do whatever is best for students" (p. 614).

In summary, teachers' engagement in CL provides teachers with more

autonomy in making administrative and instructional decisions at the school level. It

brings benefits to school development though the level of teachers' participation is

relative low. The next section will provide a fuller understanding of issues relating to

the perceptions of teachers' engagement in CL at the classroom level.

3.3.2 Perceptions of teachers' engagement in CL at the classroom level.

Teachers' engagement in CL involves a set of pedagogical initiatives which are taken at

three stages, namely, planning stage, implementation stage, and evaluation stage

(Xiong & Lim, 2015). This section examines the literature relating to teachers'

engagement in CL at the classroom level from these three layers.

The first layer is the curriculum planning stage. Teachers are mainly responsible

for taking three instructional initiatives at this stage. Firstly, teachers are in charge of

tailoring standards and ensuring compliance with standards, such as monitoring the

curriculum implementation and testing the achievement of the legislated standards

(Wiles, 2008, 2009). Furthermore, teachers hold the responsibility for supporting the

standards and following the policy at the school and department level (Macpherson et al., 1998). Secondly, teachers have autonomy in setting goals and building visions for curriculum development at the planning stage (e.g., Handler, 2010; Wiles, 2008, 2009). Handler (2010) notes that teachers should be equipped with curriculum design techniques when taking on the CL role. Thirdly, teachers have autonomy in making decisions for selecting, spearheading, and managing the distribution of the teaching resources (e.g., Cummings, 2011; Macpherson et al., 1996; Wiles, 2008). In addition, they could take autonomous decisions about developing materials for their teaching context (Macpherson et al., 1996).

The second layer is the curriculum implementation stage. Teachers identify themselves as curriculum "modifiers, adapters and researchers" when they are assigned to take on the CL role (Macpherson, 1998, p. 12). They have autonomy in organising constructive activities in the classroom (Henderson & Hawthorne, 1995), maintaining control of the classroom context (Ross, 1981), and taking instructional initiatives for effective teaching and learning (Macpherson et al., 1995, 1998; Macpherson & Brooker, 2000).

The third layer is the curriculum evaluation stage. Stark et al. (2002) argue that teachers should take a careful examination of whether the curriculum implementation process meets the intended goals. In addition, it has been pointed out that teachers are responsible for making assessments of teaching quality and learning outcomes, and monitoring evaluation activities to ensure curriculum implementation (e.g., Cummings, 2011; Henderson & Hawthorne, 1995; Wiles, 2008).

Empowering teachers to have autonomy in enacting CL has profound significances. First, teachers' engagement in CL is critically linked to school improvement (e.g., Cummings, 2011; Handler, 2010; Wan & Wong, 2006; Wiles, 2009). Wiles (2009) explains that teachers provide a "maintenance function" for school development when enacting CL (p. 5). Furthermore, empowering teachers to enact CL is found to be essential to create "positive learning and safe, orderly schools regardless of out-of-school situations" (Ylimaki & Brunner, 2011, p. 1264). Second, teachers' participation in CL improves teaching quality and facilitates teachers' professional development (e.g., Cummings, 2011; King, 2002). Law et al. (2007) identify that teachers' engagement in CL is essential for improving "transformational experiences" for individual professional development (p. 144). Moreover, enacting CL is regarded as a necessary process for promoting teachers' understandings, improving capacities and reconstructing practice (Macpherson et al., 1996). Third, it is acknowledged that teachers' engagement in CL has significant impact on academic achievement (e.g., Cummings, 2011; DeMatthews, 2014; Handler, 2010; King, 2002; Law et al., 2007; Macpherson et al., 1996; Wan & Wong, 2006; Wiles, 2009; Xiong & Lim, 2015). This is because teachers are more dedicated to work to improve their teaching when empowered with autonomy, thus ultimately improving student learning outcomes (Cummings, 2011). Fourth, it is also noted that empowering teachers to play a CL role facilitates the implementation of education reform (e.g., Li, 2004; Wan & Wong, 2006). Li (2004) indicates that teachers' engagement in CL involving "teacher collaboration and empowerment may hold the key for successful curriculum reform" (Li, 2004, p. 2).

However, teachers are faced with challenges when taking on the CL role.   It is argued that teachers' autonomy in curriculum decision-making is normally constrained by curriculum standards (Macpherson & Brooker, 2000). Thus, the level of confidence in taking instructional initiatives decreases (Macpherson & Brooker, 2000).

To sum up, teachers' engagement in CL focuses very much on classroom teaching (Macpherson, 1998). It appears that empowering teachers with authority brings benefits to school improvement, teaching development, and the improvement of learning outcomes although their autonomy is constrained by the national curriculum standard in some educational settings. The following section will examine the Western literature relating to perceptions of teachers' engagement in CL at the social relationship level.

3.3.3 Perceptions of teachers' engagement in CL at the social relationship level. Enacting CL involves sustaining relationships with the stakeholders (e.g., principals, administrators, peers, parents, students, and other educators) inside and outside of schools (Elliott et al., 2005). This section examines social relationships from three dimensions, namely, relations with superiors, relations with subordinates, and relations with stakeholders outside of school.

Concerning the relationship with superiors, teachers who assume CL roles mainly take responsibilities related to seeking collaboration with administrators to provide vision and strategic direction for school-wide programmes or seeking support from superiors (e.g., Chval et al., 2010; Cummings, 2011).

Teachers serve as "a bridge for both the upward flow of inquiry and the

downward flow of information" when taking on the CL role (Wiles, 2009, p. 4).

Enacting CL also involves building relations with subordinates (see Table 2). Teachers

can make autonomous decisions in promoting team collaboration, providing guidance

to teachers (especially mentoring novice teachers), assisting or supporting staff

development, sharing teaching experiences and teaching sources, identifying teachers'

needs, communicating with colleagues, solving problems, and empowering

subordinates.

Table 2
Autonomy in Building Relationships with the Subordinates

Autonomy	Western Researchers
Promote collaboration	Avizhgan, Jafari, Nasr, & Changiz, 2015; Cummings, 2011; ECRA Group 2010; Elliott et al., 2005; Jefferries, 2000; Nashashibi & Watters, 2003; Wiles, 2009; Ylimaki, 2011
Provide guidance/mentor teachers	Bailey, 1990; Cummings, 2011; Jefferries, 2000; Jorgensen & Niesche, 2011; Wiles, 2009
Assist/support	Cummings, 2011; Jorgensen & Niesche, 2011; Ritchie, Tobin, Roth, & Carambo, 2007; Wiles, 2009
Share knowledge/skills	Cummings, 2011; Jefferries, 2000; Nashashibi & Watters, 2003
Identify teachers' needs	Jefferries, 2000; Jorgensen & Niesche, 2011; Nashashibi & Watters, 2003; Wiles, 2009
Communicate	DeMatthews, 2014; Nashashibi & Watters, 2003; Wiles, 2008, 2009
Solve problems	Albashiry, Voogt, & Pieters.,2016; Bailey, 1990
Empower teachers	Jefferries, 2000; Vann, 2010

Apart from maintaining internal relationships with stakeholders in schools,

teachers are involved in relationships with external stakeholders (Albashiry et al.,

2016). It is noted that teachers make school visits to build and maintain positive

relationships with other schools, the local community, or the district administrators

(e.g., Cummings, 2011; ECRA Group, 2010).

Building relationships with the stakeholders, especially with teachers, plays a crucial role in building a positive school climate and boosting teacher development (e.g., Gabriel & Farmer, 2009; Hoerr, 2005; Nashashibi & Watters, 2003). It is reported that interactions with colleagues could prompt experience-sharing, create professional conversation, and enhance peer collaboration (e.g., Britt, Irwin, & Ritchie, 2001; Nashashibi & Watters, 2003). Reciprocally, teachers can not only develop themselves, but also earn credibility and respect from other teachers through such interaction. Teachers could get respect and be recognised when their professionalism, expertise, competence, personal qualities and professional values are shown through enacting leadership (e.g., Bennett & Anderson, 2003; Patterson & Patterson, 2004). However, teachers do not always get support and encouragement from principals and teachers (e.g., Chval et al., 2010; Cummings, 2011; Mangin, 2007).

In conclusion, enacting CL is regarded as cultivating and maintaining relationships with stakeholders inside and outside of schools, which contributes to facilitating school climate development and individual development. Next, perceptions of teachers' engagement in CL at the individual level will be examined.

3.3.4 Perceptions of teachers' engagement in CL at the personal level.

There is a cluster of personal characteristics that are significant in identity restructuring when teachers are engaged in CL initiatives. This section examines perceptions of teachers' engagement in CL at the individual level from three perspectives: (1) teachers' awareness of taking on the CL role, (2) individuals' knowledge and skills relating to

enacting CL, and (3) their professional ethics for enacting CL.

The personal dimension of CL is related to how teachers construct or

reconstruct their professional identities (Elliott et al., 2005). Some researchers identify

that teachers have feelings of empowerment (e.g., Macpherson et al., 1996) and have

awareness in pursuing continual professional development (e.g., Bailey, 1990;

Cummings, 2011; Elliott et al., 2005; King, 2002). Having awareness of empowerment

is one determinant that enables teachers to apply theory to practice (Macpherson et al.,

1996). However, it is claimed that teachers demonstrate little desire and even less

ambition to take on the CL role (e.g., Duke, Showers, & Imber, 1980; Elliott et al., 1999;

Handler, 2010). Consequently, it is suggested that teachers should become more

familiar with their leadership roles and responsibilities (e.g., Avizhgan et al., 2015;

Ross & Gray, 2006). In particular, teachers should be equipped with specialised and

professional preparation for better influencing their views and awareness of performing

leadership roles (Cummings, 2011).

Concerning teachers' knowledge and skills relating to exercising CL, teachers

are equipped with such knowledge or skills as curricular design, researching, classroom

teaching, educational theories, and educational policy or documents (e.g., Handler,

2010; Jefferries, 2000). In addition, teachers have substantial skills and knowledge of

communication, team building, and maintaining interpersonal relationships (e.g.,

Hanny & Seller, 1991; Jefferries, 2000; Nashashibi & Watters, 2003; Wiles, 2009).

Morrison (1995) gives detailed descriptions of knowledge and skills:

Knowledge of: people's motivations; organisational health; structures and

networks in the school; managerial styles (one's own and other people's); the

processes of decision-making; planning; communication; handling of conflict

and change);

Skills in: analysing complex organisations; drawing up action plans from

amassed data; target setting and review; managing consensus and conflict;

empathy and public relations; discretion, consultation, counselling and staff

development. (p. 68)

However, some teachers have limited skills and knowledge which affects the

degree of the fulfillment of the CL role (e.g., Mabry & Ettinger, 1999). Elliott and

Calderhead (1993) identify that teachers' professionalism is relatively limited because

they are inadequately prepared for possessing appropriate theories. Thus, it is proposed

that teachers should improve professional competences in instructional design and

implementation (Handler, 2010), and develop practice ability in interpersonal skills

(Avizhgan et al., 2015), leadership skills, and communication skills (Cummings, 2011).

With regard to professional ethics, it is identified that personal qualities affect

the success of individuals and organisations (Nashashibi & Watters, 2003). Table 3 lists

the professional ethics that teachers should possess when taking on the CL role. It

shows that teachers' professional ethics mainly involve listening to staff or being aware

of colleagues' needs (e.g., Cummings, 2011; Gabriel & Farmer, 2009), trusting others,

and being tagged as risk-taking (e.g., Macpherson et al., 1998, 1996; Morrison, 1995).

In addition, researchers identify other professional ethics including being open,

committed, courageous and responsible (see Table 3).

Table 3

Teachers' Professional Ethics of Enacting CL

Professional Ethics	Researcher(s)
Be positive, encouraging, caring	Cummings, 2011
Confidence, freedom, participation, openness, value of self, personal subjectivities, feelings of empowerment, encouragement, responsibility, commitment, trust, risk taking	Macpherson et al., 1996
Diligent	Handler, 2010
Hard working, flexibility, responsiveness, commitment, self-awareness, empathy, motivation	Jones & Anderson, 2001
Legitimacy, credibility, integrity, optimism and enjoyment of work, risk-taking, a tolerance of ambiguity, active listener	Morrison, 1995
Listen to staff	King, 2002
Listen to staff members, be mindful of teachers' needs, wants, and concerns	Gabriel & Farmer, 2009
Open mindedness, awareness of teachers' needs	Jefferries, 2000
Responsibilities	Norris, Barnett, Basom, & Yerkes, 2002
Risk-taking, trust others	Macpherson et al., 1998

In general, teachers who have engaged in CL demonstrate awareness in taking

on the leadership role, own substantial knowledge and skills related to both teaching

and management, and have good ethics. Being possessed of these characteristics

enables teachers to implement their CL role more successfully. Reciprocally,

assuming the CL role enhances teachers' knowledge and skills in teaching.

Furthermore, they can obtain respect and recognition, and be treated as

knowledgeable and capable professionals by stakeholders. The next section will take a

close look at the issues relating to teachers' engagement in CL in the Chinese

educational context.

3.4 Perceptions of Teachers' Engagement in CL in the Chinese Context

As it is a most important part of curriculum reform, empowering teachers to

enact CL has become a tendency (Mao, 2009; Zhong, 2013). Comparatively, teachers'

engagement in CL has unique characteristics in the Chinese context. This section will examine teachers' engagement in CL in the Chinese context from four perspectives, that is, the school level, the classroom level, the social relationship level, and the personal level.

   3.4.1 Teachers' engagement in CL at the organisational level. Teacher participation in CL mainly refers to being involved in curriculum matters and curriculum activities (Zheng & Guo, 2010). As a leader enacting CL, teachers have autonomy in making administrative decisions and instructional decisions at the organisational level which comprises building school culture (e.g., Chen, 2009; Wang, 2013), building shared-vision for curriculum development (e.g., Fu & Yu, 2014; Wang & Kang, 2013), allocating teaching sources (e.g., Wang & Kang, 2013), and providing suggestions relating to curriculum issues (e.g., Li, 2004; Luo & Xia, 2011). Moreover, relevant Chinese studies have found that teachers' engagement in CL can improve the school climate and prompt school development (e.g., Dong, 2008; Luo & Xia, 2011; Li, 2004). Indeed entailing teachers with autonomy in CL assists in building a democratic, open and collaborative climate in the learning organisation (e.g., Luo & Xia, 2011; Wang, 2008).

   However, a low level of participation in taking on the CL role in the Chinese context has been reported (e.g., Chang & Li, 2007; Hu & Gu, 2012; Wang, 2008). It is because the management system in most schools is still highly dominated by principals. Unsurprisingly, this kind of undemocratic schooling results in teachers having no or less autonomy in making decisions on curriculum matters (e.g., Mao, 2009; Wang &

Zheng, 2013). Due to this, it is suggested to empower teachers with more autonomy in decision-making at the school level (e.g., Chang & Li, 2007; Fu & Yu, 2014; Ye & Zhu, 2013).

To conclude, teachers are empowered to take both administrative and instructional initiatives at the organisational level when they enact CL. It is, however, is identified in the Chinese literature that teachers' autonomy for making decisions about curriculum matters at the school level is rather limited because of the rigid and hierarchical schooling system. The next section will examine Chinese researchers' perceptions of teachers' engagement in CL at the classroom level.

3.4.2 Teachers' engagement in CL at the classroom level. As mentioned above, the decision-making process at the classroom level consists of the curriculum planning stage, the implementation stage, and the evaluation stage. This section examines teachers' engagement in CL in the Chinese context at these three stages.

At the curriculum planning stage, teachers have autonomy in taking instructional initiatives that mainly include establishing curriculum vision or objectives, designing and managing school curriculum development, and selecting teaching materials (see Table 4). However, some Chinese researchers (e.g., Hu & Gu, 2012; Zheng & Guo, 2010; Zheng, 2007) indicate that any instructional initiatives, in particular the design of the curriculum, the adoption of textbooks, and the selection of teaching content, have to adhere to the requirements stipulated in the national curriculum standard.

Table 4

Instructional Initiatives Taken at the Curriculum Planning Stage

Instructional Initiatives	Researcher(s)
Establish curriculum vision/objectives/plan	Fu & Yu, 2014; Li, 2010; Lin & Lee, 2013; Wang & Zheng, 2013; Wang, 2013; Xu, 2011; Zhang & Xie, 2012; Zheng, 2007; Zheng & Guo, 2010
Design curriculum	Dong, 2008; Huang & Zhu, 2015; Wang & Zheng, 2013; Zheng & Guo, 2010
Select teaching sources	Fu & Yu, 2014; Zheng & Guo, 2010

It is claimed that teachers' responsibilities when taking on the CL role are primarily reflected at the curriculum implementation stage (Fu & Yu, 2014). Huang and Zhu (2015) state that teachers' CL refers to how teachers enact the leadership role in curriculum implementation. Chinese literature demonstrates that teachers have more autonomy in coordinating the curriculum, which involves solving problems in class (Law et al., 2007), aligning teaching and learning (Xiong & Lim, 2015), making decisions for curriculum development and curriculum improvement (Dong, 2008), and adopting suitable teaching pedagogy (Zheng & Guo, 2010).

Concerning the curriculum evaluation stage, teachers are believed to be in charge of making assessments of the teaching quality (e.g., Lin & Lee, 2013), analysing the design of the curriculum and implementation strategies (e.g., Dong, 2008; Huang & Zhu, 2015), and evaluating students' learning (e.g., Xiong & Lim, 2015).

The literature also identifies the significance of enacting CL at the classroom level. Entailing teachers to take on the CL role improves students' learning outcomes (e.g., Law & Wan, 2006; Jin & Zhao, 2004), enhances teaching quality (e.g., Dong, 2008; Luo & Xia, 2011), and promotes the implementation of curriculum reform (e.g., Li & Duan, 2004; Wang & Zheng, 2013). Consequently, it is critical to empower

teachers with more autonomy in participating in curriculum matters and making

instructional decisions (e.g., Lin & Feng, 2007; Lu, 2011; Mao, 2009; Wang, 2008).

The literature reveals that teachers' engagement in CL is mainly focused on

taking initiatives at the classroom level. It seems that teachers have more autonomy in

making instructional decisions. More importantly, empowering teachers with

autonomy at the classroom level has significant impacts on effective teaching and

learning. The next section will explore how teachers build relationships with

stakeholders when taking on the CL role.

3.4.3 Teachers' engagement in CL at the social relationship level. Teachers

are in charge of maintaining relationships with superiors and subordinates in the school

and other stakeholders outside of the school when taking on the CL role. Hu and Gu

(2012) state that building relationships with superiors is more important than setting up

relationships with colleagues. Teachers are mainly responsible for conveying problems

to superiors and getting working arrangements from superiors (Wu, 2003). However,

maintaining relationships with superiors has difficulties. Dong (2008) describes this as

follows,

> Outwardly, teachers' relationship with the principal is cooperative. Actually,
>
> however, there is conflict between them. First, teachers are still the followers in
>
> decision-making. Initiatives taken by teachers must follow principal's orders
>
> and be under principal's supervision. Sometimes the initiatives do not satisfy
>
> teachers' needs. Second, the principal is in charge of resources allocation. If
>
> teachers want to obtain these resources, they have to follow the principal.

However, when there is negative consequences emerged due to the

inappropriate decisions, teachers are always forced to suffer the consequences.

(p. 41)

Xu (2004) argues that the principal always supports teachers ideally but not

always practically in China. Thus, it can be assumed that although teachers are

empowered with authority in building and maintaining relations with their superiors,

they are faced with challenges which affect their motivation in enacting CL.

Concerning the relationship with subordinates, teachers are responsible for

sharing knowledge, experiences, resources and information with peers, communicating

and collaborating with colleagues, mentoring and prompting individuals' continual

professional development, supervising and evaluating teachers' performance,

providing support and assistance to teachers, building and maintaining team culture,

and leading team development and so on (see Table 5). Fu and Yu (2014) propose that

teachers should create a communicative and collaborative climate for teachers to

express and share opinions. Furthermore, Wang and Zheng (2013) advocate that

teachers should encourage other teachers to provide suggestions, be tolerant of teachers'

mistakes, and provide guidance and assistance to teachers who are suffering from

difficulties. However, some researchers identified a gap which is that there is less

collaboration between teachers and their colleagues (e.g., Dong, 2008; Fu & Yu, 2014).

This might be because the examination-oriented system and the teacher performance

evaluation system increase competition among teachers, which leads to a low-level of

collaboration (e.g., Li & Wang, 2010; Xiong & Zhong, 2010).

Table 5

Initiatives Taken for Building Relationships with Subordinates

Initiatives	Researcher(s)
Share knowledge, experience, resources	Law et al., 2007; Lin & Lee, 2013; Luo & Xia, 2011; Wang & Kang, 2013; Xiong, Kang, & Zhong, 2011; Ye & Zhu, 2013; Zhang & Xie, 2012; Zheng, 2007
Communicate/collaborate	Jin & Zhao, 2004; Li, 2010; Luo & Xia, 2011; Wang & Kang, 2013; Wang & Zheng, 2013; Zhang & Xie, 2012; Zhang, 2012; Zheng, 2007
Mentor/prompt teacher development	Lee, McInerney, Liem, & Ortiga, 2010; Li, 2004; Li, 2010; Mao, 2009; Wang & Kang, 2013; Zhang & Xie, 2012; Zheng, 2007
Supervise	Lee et al., 2011; Li, 2004; Wang & Kang, 2013; Xiong et al., 2011; Zheng, 2007
Support/assist teaching	Li, 2004; Wang & Kang, 2013; Xiong et al., 2011; Zhang & Xie, 2012
Build & maintain culture	Jin & Zhao, 2004; Li, 2004; Zheng, 2007
Lead team development	Dong, 2008; Hu & Gu, 2012; Huang & Zhu, 2015
Provide guidance	Huang & Zhu, 2015; Li, 2004; Zheng, 2007
Allocate responsibilities	Xiong & Lim, 2015

In addition to maintaining relationships with superiors and subordinates, teachers are also responsible for building relationships with stakeholders outside the school. For example, teachers build relationships with external learning organisations to communicate and share information and experiences relating to curriculum issues or examination issues (Wang & Kang, 2013). Huang and Zhu (2015) stress the necessity for building relationships with other schools to exchange information and share experiences. However, the opportunities for building cooperation with other stakeholders outside the school are fewer (Zhang & Xie, 2012). Thus, Huang and Zhu (2015) suggest two possible pathways for building external relationships, namely, inviting experts to hold training for transmitting knowledge and skills relating to CL, or promoting inter-school exchanges and co-operation.

Building social relationships with stakeholders inside and outside the school is

necessary and significant. Teachers participating in CL are claimed to make up for

deficiencies in principal's leadership (Dong, 2008; Mao, 2009), and motivate other

stakeholders (e.g., principals, middle level leaders, head teachers, and other teachers) to

be involved in CL. It is also found that teachers participating in CL could develop a

sense of responsibility in peers and expand their creativity in curriculum development

(Fu & Yu, 2014) and school culture to become more cooperative and harmonious (Li,

2004; Li & Duan, 2004). Therefore, teachers are expected to strengthen communication

and collaboration with stakeholders, especially with teachers in the Chinese context

(e.g., Luo & Xia, 2011; Mao, 2009).

In summary, teachers' engagement in CL involves building and maintaining a

relationship with superiors, subordinates, and other stakeholders inside and outside the

school. Being involved in the relationships enables teachers to develop themselves and

get recognition from stakeholders. Nevertheless, teachers face challenges that include

insufficient support from superiors, uncooperative environment and atmosphere among

peers and little communication with stakeholders outside the schools. The next section

will explore the Chinese literature related to the perceptions of how teachers take on the

CL role at the individual level.

3.4.4 Teachers' engagement in CL at the personal level. This section

examines Chinese educators' perceptions of CL from three aspects, that is, teachers'

awareness of taking on the CL role, teachers' knowledge and skills relating to enacting

CL and teachers' professional ethics of engagement in CL.

It is expected that teachers who are empowered to take on the CL role should

have an awareness of pursuing continual professional development (e.g., Dong, 2008; Zheng & Guo, 2010) and of how to become teachers who assume the CL roles (Xiong et al., 2011). However, Chinese research reveals that most teachers lack awareness of taking on the CL role (e.g., Lin & Feng, 2007; Mao, 2009; Xiong & Zhong, 2010). This may be because Chinese teachers lack confidence in taking on the CL role, which leads to the low level of participation (Li & Wang, 2010). In addition, the hierarchical schooling system in China makes teachers view themselves as followers rather than decision makers (Lin & Feng, 2007).

Concerning teachers' knowledge and skills, teachers are equipped with substantial knowledge and skills related to curriculum design, curriculum implementation, in-class teaching, curriculum evaluation, and self-reflection (e.g., Jin & Zhao, 2004; Wang, 2013; Ye & Zhu, 2013). Nevertheless, it is reported that most teachers' professional skills and knowledge relating to educational management or the way of enacting CL are rather weak (e.g., Chang & Li, 2007; Fan et al., 2007; Xiong & Zhong, 2010). This may be caused by teachers seldom being trained and cultivated to broaden their knowledge base and skills related to how to enact CL (Lin & Feng, 2007).

Referring to teachers' professional ethics related to taking on the CL role, it is noted that most teachers are responsible (Mao, 2009; Ye & Zhu, 2013), devoted (Wang & Zheng, 2013; Zheng & Guo, 2010), risk taking (Li, 2004), sharing (Ye & Zhu, 2013), and trustworthy (Zheng, 2007). However, it is diagnosed that some teachers still lack a sense of responsibility (Lin & Feng, 2007), and are selfish, and utilitarian (Ye & Zhu, 2013), which results in the inactiveness in taking on the CL role.

Some researchers (e.g., Jin & Zhao, 2004; Liu & Lv, 2010; Zheng & Guo, 2010) acknowledge that empowering teachers with autonomy in enacting CL is pivotal for teachers' continual professional development. Appropriate professional training has been approved to improve teachers' awareness of taking on CL (e.g., Liu & Lv, 2010; Xiong et al., 2011). To be specific, enacting CL broadens teachers' knowledge of curriculum theory and practice, evokes awareness and motivation in taking on the CL role, supplements any weakness in professional competence, and improves their ethical charisma among peers (Xiong et al., 2011).

In consideration of the problems and the significances of empowering teachers with autonomy in enacting CL, some suggestions are proposed for individual development. First, teachers' awareness of taking on CL role should be evoked and strengthened (e.g., Lin & Feng, 2007; Mao, 2009). Lin and Feng (2007) propose three approaches to increase teachers' awareness of, and confidence in, taking on the CL role: (1) holding training programmes to improve and strengthen teachers' awareness of CL, (2) building and increasing teachers' sense of ownership through involving them in the curriculum decision-making process, and (3) completing a performance evaluation to encourage and ensure the implementation of CL (p. 22).

Second, it is crucial to improve teachers' ability to enact CL which involves broadening knowledge and skills relating to curriculum design, curriculum implementation, curriculum evaluation, decision making, problem solving, reflective thinking, and communication (e.g., Dong, 2008; Fan et al., 2007; Huang & Zhu, 2015; Jin & Zhao, 2004). In particular, it has been found that most teachers and principals are

willing to participate in training related to CL (e.g., Fan et al., 2007). However, it is

suggested that teachers should improve themselves through personal reflection on the

process of curriculum implementation (e.g., Huang & Zhu, 2015; Li & Wang, 2010)

In conclusion, teachers' engagement in CL plays a significant role in school

improvement, teaching improvement, relationship enhancement, and individual

development. The Chinese literature, however, shows that teachers face different

challenges when enacting CL at each level. As mentioned above, there is a low level of

empowerment and participation at the organisationl level and the classroom level.

Teachers are faced with an uncooperative environment and atmosphere at the social

relationship level. Furthermore, teachers have limited knowledge and skills related to

CL at the personal level. The following section will take a look at the specific previous

studies on teachers' engagement in CL to help further understanding of how teachers

enact their CL role.

3.5 Studies on Teachers' Engagement in CL

This section mainly reviews relevant international and Chinese studies that have

been conducted in secondary school settings with the purpose of providing a more

specific theoretical framework for the current research.

3.5.1 International studies. Some quantitative and qualitative research has

been conducted on various aspects of teachers' engagement in CL. This section

critically examines the international studies from four dimensions, namely, findings

relating to teachers' perceptions of enacting CL at the school level, the classroom level,

the social relationship level, and the individual level. The rationale of examining these

studies is because the literature might provide references for the current research in

relation to methodology design, data analysis, and data interpretation at the secondary

schools.

   3.5.1.1 Teachers' engagement in CL at the organisational level. Previous

studies on teacher engagement in CL have provided a concrete conceptual framework

for understanding the nature of teachers' CL role (e.g., Macpherson, 1998; Moreeng &

Tshelane, 2014), and influential factors in their enaction of CL (e.g., Elliott et al.,

1999). Macpherson et al. (1998) adopted a qualitative methodology to explore

stakeholders (teachers, students, and parents) at both primary and secondary schools

in Hong Kong, Brisbane (Australia), Cambridge (United Kingdom) and Phoenix

Arizona (USA) in 1995. This research aimed at exploring the nature of CL in a range

of contexts and gaining insights into the involvement in curriculum decision-making.

Research findings showed that the power of decision-making was dominated by the

principal, the deputy principals and heads of departments. Another example is Moreeng

and Tshelane's (2014) study of 12 teachers who teach Grade 10 to 12 in rural schools

in the Free State Province, South Africa. This study aimed to investigate teachers'

views, feelings and experiences about CL. Findings emanating from this research

showed that teachers still viewed enacting CL as principals' responsibility. It was also

identified that the structure of the school management system was characterised as rigid

and hierarchical which led to inequality in empowerment distribution. A further

example is the research conducted by Elliott et al. (1999) in 20 secondary schools in

Queensland, Australia. This quantitative study mainly investigated the patterns of

teachers' involvement in CL and identified teachers' personal characteristics in relation

to their CL actions. They found that it was important to involve school teachers in

taking on a CL role. However, the majority of teachers were unmotivated to enact CL.

Teacher participants indicated that the principal viewed him or herself as the leader in

curriculum decision-making and was not willing to entail teachers with more power.

In summary, the previous studies show the vital role of empowering teachers

with autonomy in making decisions at the organisational level. Meanwhile, it

obviously can be seen that schooling is still dominated by principals which leads to

teachers having limited power and autonomy.

3.5.1.2 Teachers' engagement in CL at the classroom level. Macpherson and

Brooker (2000) argue that teachers' engagement in CL primarily focuses at the

classroom level in practice. Western studies at the classroom level mainly focus on the

significances as well as the challenges of teachers' enacting CL. Macpherson et al.

(1995) conducted a study with narrative methodology at two primary and two

secondary schools in Queensland to investigate teachers' thinking related to CL. It was

elicited that a teachers' engagement in CL brought significant improvements in

effective teaching and learning. Another example is the qualitative research done by

Aspland, Macpherson, Brooker, & Elliott (1998). This was a follow-up study of

Macpherson et al.'s (1995) research. It aimed at readdressing the narratives and

conversations taken in Macpherson et al.'s (1995) study and reconstructing insights

into teachers' perceptions of CL. It validated the findings of the previous study and also

identified that empowering teachers to enact CL had positive influence on effective

teaching and learning. Furthermore, Alford's (2010) quantitative study found a

correlation between enacting CL and students' learning outcomes. This study was

conducted in Ohio County High School which served students in grades 9 through 12.

In his findings, 48% of the junior students were proficient or distinguished in the area of

mathematics and 68% of the sophomores were proficient or distinguished in the area of

reading. It was identified that all the learning achievements were due partly to the

teachers' engagement in CL. However, findings from Macpherson et al.'s (1998) study

identified that teachers' initiatives were constrained by the prescription made by

National Curriculum and GCSE syllabi in the UK context. Furthermore, teacher

participants acknowledged that the policy pronouncements made them lose their

confidence and feel confused in taking initiatives.

To conclude, previous studies reveal that teachers have some autonomy in

making instructional initiatives at the classroom. It is also indentified that teachers'

engagement in CL has impact on effective teaching and learning.

   3.5.1.3 Teachers' engagement in CL at the social relationship level. Studies at

the social relationship level seem rare. A few western studies probe the

inter-relationships among stakeholders. For example, Ritchie et al. (2007) conducted a

qualitative research with stakeholders (students, experienced and inexperienced

teachers, the assistant principal, and the co-ordinator) at City High School in

northeastern USA. This research mainly aimed at probing leadership dynamics. It was

found that there was an active interaction among teachers and their colleagues. It also

identified that enacting CL through collaborative interactions with colleagues assisted

the achievement of educational accomplishments. Furthermore, research findings

emanating from Elliott et al. (1999) also testified that teachers' collaboration with the

constituents had an effective influence on others.

In conclusion, building and maintaining relationships with stakeholders are

determinant factors that prompt CL implementation.

3.5.1.4 Teachers' engagement in CL at the personal level. Regarding the

personal level, it is found that teachers at secondary schools were enthusiastic and

committed in taking on the CL role (Macpherson, Aspland, Elliott, & Brooker, 2002).

Research conducted by Macpherson et al. (1998) manifested that teachers had

autonomy in proposing ideas, assisting in the interpretation of policy documents,

developing materials and taking local policy initiatives. Findings emanating from

previous western studies also indicated that teachers' engagement in CL contributed to

the continual professional growth of teachers (e.g., Aspland et al., 1998). However,

teachers are faced with challenges when exercising CL. Teachers were found to have to

deal with contextual pressures including insufficient resources, inadequate

professional training, and the constraints of the national curriculum (e.g., Macpherson,

1998). Furthermore, teachers feel neglected and unacknowledged by superiors when

the school context is undemocratic (e.g., Moreeng & Tshelane, 2014). They were

identified to lack vigour and enthusiasm since they did not have a sense of ownership

(Alford, 2010). Also, Elliott et al. (1999) found that the majority of teachers may

undervalue their efforts and see themselves as mere implementers in taking on the CL

role.

It can be concluded that teachers obtain benefits from participating in CL. However, challenges exist in exercising CL which teachers need to learn to handle.

The previous western studies help to probe into how teachers enact CL in the secondary school context. However, they are still small in number and there are limitations to some extent. The following part examines some limitations which involve single source data collection and issues related to generalisations.

The use of multiple sources of data can be a powerful way of demonstrating validity (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2011). In Elliott et al.'s (1999) research, the entire data source was extracted from the teachers' questionnaires. If this research had been designed to obtain data from more sources, it might have been able to probe more in depth the phenomenon of teachers' engagement in CL. Further, Alford's (2010) research particularly focused on examining CL in mathematics curriculum development which could not be widely generalised to other curricula or other contexts. Researchers identify that context is a factor that has significant influence on perceptions of leaders and the quality of leadership (e.g., Alabi & Alabi, 2010; Emrich, 1999). Reciprocally, leadership depends largely on the social context (Roehl, 2015; Zander, 2002). Some previous studies, furthermore, were conducted nearly twenty years ago (e.g., Aspland et al., 1998; Elliott et al., 1999; Macpherson et al., 1995; Macpherson, 1998). Thus, it seems that the findings are out-of-date and could not be adapted to the context of the current research.

Despite limitations and bias, the existing literature makes significant contributions to the field and provides apparent implications for the current research as

well as future studies on teachers' engagement in CL. It is found that teachers have

autonomy in enacting CL extensively at the school level, the classroom level, the social

relationship level and the individual level. Moreover, the significances of enacting CL

involve promoting school development, improving effective teaching and learning,

enhancing collaborative communication among colleagues and assisting individual

professional development.

The following section will provide an overview of Chinese studies in relation to

teachers' engagement in CL in secondary schools.

3.5.2 Chinese studies. Enacting CL is affected by contextual factors

(Macpherson & Brooker, 2000).   Identifying the issues and challenges of empowering

teachers with more autonomy in enacting CL has become Chinese educators' focus

since interacting with education reform and decentralisation worldwide (Chen, 2009).

This section examines Chinese studies related to teachers' engagement in CL in

secondary school settings at the organisational level, the classroom level, the social

relationship level and the personal level.

3.5.2.1 Teachers' engagement in CL at the organisational level. It seems that

many quantitative studies have been conducted on probing teachers' engagement in CL

in the Chinese context. For example, Chang and Li (2007) conducted quantitative

research with 772 teachers at both primary schools and secondary schools in five

provinces in China. In their research, 83% of the teachers acknowledged that the

principal was still the decision-maker and manager although teachers had been

designated to take on the CL at schools. Surprisingly, less than 10% of the teachers

were identified as engaging in making instructional decisions at the organisational level.

Further, Hu and Gu (2012) examined teachers' engagement in CL with teachers selected from Guangdong Province in China utilising questionnaires for data collection. In this quantitative study, more than 60% of the teacher participants acknowledged that they were not sufficiently empowered to make administrative decisions. 53% of the teachers noted that the limited empowerment and undemocratic culture did not provide sufficient support for teachers to exercise CL. Hu and Gu (2012) also pointed out that a rigid and hierarchical schooling system left less space for teachers to participate in curriculum matters even though teachers had sufficient motivation and confidence in taking on the leadership role. A further example is Wang's (2008) research into principals, administrators and teachers at primary and secondary schools in eight provinces in China. The study aimed to examine the unique features of teachers' engagement in CL. Wang (2008) collected the quantitative data through questionnaires and identified that 66% of the participants (principals, administrators, and teachers) acknowledged that the administrative affairs were still dominated by the principals, deputy principals, or superior leaders.

These studies demonstrate that teachers have been designated to be leaders in CL, however, their autonomy and power are constrained by the hierarchical schooling.

3.5.2.2 Teachers' engagement in CL at the classroom level. Concerning

teachers' engagement at the classroom level, it seems that many studies focus on illustrating the challenges of enacting CL. For instance, Chang and Li (2007) found that

only 9% of the teachers were reported to have autonomy in making instructional

decisions on curriculum development and only 4% of them have autonomy in

curriculum settings. In addition to the low level of participation in enacting CL,

previous studies indicated that teachers were faced with other challenges. In Hu and

Gu's (2012) research, 36% of the teachers acknowledged that they were confused about

the content of the curriculum standard and how to follow the curriculum standard. It

was concluded that being unfamiliar with the requirements of the curriculum standard

affected teachers' teaching performance and the implementation of CL (Hu & Gu,

2012). Liu and Lv (2010) examined teacher's understanding of enacting CL through

narratives with one teacher participant. It was identified that teachers' engagement in

the CL role could improve the quality of teaching and learning at the classroom level.

Furthermore, the research conducted by Wang (2008) indicated that 64% of the

teachers acknowledged that they had strong interests in participating in activities

relating to curriculum development and curriculum design. However, it was found that

there was a low level of participation in curriculum matters. Up to 90% of the

participants (principals, administrators and teachers) indicated that teachers had no or

less power in making instructional decisions.

In a word, although teachers have enthusiastic attitudes towards engagement in

CL, it seems that they are not ready to take the initiatives.

3.5.2.3 Teachers' engagement in CL at the social relationship level. Enacting

CL involves building relationships with stakeholders at the social relationship level. Hu

and Gu (2012) found that 79% of the teachers viewed that building positive

relationships with both superior leaders and peers was important for enacting CL

successfully and smoothly. It was also identified that 52% of the teachers

acknowledged that being good at communicating with superiors enabled teachers to

obtain high prestige and recognition from colleagues. In particular, findings showed

that building relations with superiors was more important than maintaining relationship

with colleagues. However, 53% of the principal participants acknowledged that they

could not provide sufficient support for teachers to exercise CL. Furthermore, teachers

in Liu and Lv's (2010) research reported that building and maintaining relationships

with teachers improved competence in taking on the CL role. One teacher stated that

evaluation gained from her colleagues assists her in reflecting on her teaching practice

as well as in CL implementation.

To sum up, building a good relationship with stakeholders is necessary for

exercising CL. More importantly, it should be realised that teachers are facing

challenges in maintaining the relationships.

3.5.2.4 Teachers' engagement in CL at the personal level. Regarding the

personal level, research findings show that teachers are faced with both opportunities

and challenges. Hu and Gu (2012) found that 94% of the teachers preferred to give

suggestions on administrative affairs, and 65% of the teachers indicated that they would

like to take on the CL role if they were empowered. In addition, Wang (2008) reported

that teachers were enthusiastic and motivated by being engaged in the CL role.

Approximately 57% of the participants paid close attention to the information related to

curriculum reform and curriculum development. These two examples show that

teachers hold positive attitudes towards taking on the CL role. However, previous

studies indicate that teachers are lacking the knowledge and skills with regards to

participation in CL. Chang and Li (2007) discovered that 21% of the participants lack

the professional ability related to the development of the curriculum. Findings also

showed that teacher training, especially high quality training, was relatively weak.

About 62% of the teachers acknowledged that the training they participated in occurred

no more than four times. It was also found that teachers lack knowledge related to

management (28% of the teachers), management ability (26% of the teachers) and

communication skills (20% of the teachers). Furthermore, Fan et al. (2007) examined

the implementation of CL in Wuxi in China utilising a multi-method approach to

collect and analyse data. Two principals and one TRG leader were interviewed and 80

questionnaires were sent to teachers. Up to 57% of the teachers reported that they had

little or even no understanding of the concept of CL and 80% of them acknowledged

that they needed professional guidance and trainings to take on the CL role. Particularly,

one principal participant stated the difficulties in enacting CL,

> We had strong willingness to empower teachers with autonomy in taking on
>
> the CL role. Our teachers, TRG leaders and even administrators, however, had
>
> less or no perceptions of how to enact CL. And there are no experts or scholars
>
> to guide us. (p. 58)

As aforementioned previous studies are of importance to obtain valuable

findings for better understanding of how teachers enact the CL role in the Chinese

context. Nevertheless, there are bias and limitations in these studies which are

discussed in the following part.

It seems that there are many studies conducted using single source quantitative data, namely, the questionnaire (e.g., Chang & Li, 2007; Hu & Gu, 2012; Wang, 2008). Oppenheim (1992) argues that adopting a questionnaire cannot yield adequate information since participants may have no opportunity to correct misunderstandings or give in depth explanations. Therefore, previous studies which only adopted questionnaires as the data source have potential limitations. Further, concerning questionnaire design, some studies do not give explanations of how the questionnaire was designed and some of them just adopt one from other studies in other educational contexts (e.g., Chang & Li, 2007; Fan et al., 2007; Hu & Gu, 2012; Wang, 2008). Therefore, the reliability and validity of the research instruments and findings in these studies are questionable. These examples show that more qualitative studies need to be conducted to expand understanding of how teachers enact CL. Furthermore, in viewing the previous Chinese studies, it was noticed that in the limited number of qualitative studies conducted, only a small sample size was used. For example, Liu and Lv (2010) only interviewed and observed one teacher participant. Furthermore, Fan et al. (2007) interviewed only two principals and one TRG leader to probe their understandings of CL in three secondary schools in Wuxi. CL is culture and context dependent (Macpherson & Brooker, 2000). Thus, these two studies might not be representative of other contexts although that kind of in-depth analysis is desirable.

To conclude, previous Chinese studies do shed significant light on understandings of CL and enacting of CL at secondary schools in China. However, they

are still small in number. This study thus attempts to contribute to fill in the gaps.

3.6 Summary

In conclusion, this chapter has mainly reviewed perceptions of school

leadership, CL, and teachers' engagement in CL. There are three issues extracted from

the literature review. Firstly, there is a tendency to explore the essence of TRG leaders'

engagement in CL. Secondly, the literature review provides a theoretical framework for

this current research. Enacting CL mainly can be examined from four levels, namely,

the organisation level, the classroom, the social relationship level and the classroom

level. Thirdly, research gaps were identified in relation to the reviewed literature.

Concerning the research gaps, there are four main issues. First, compared with the

studies that explore the role of principal in CL, previous studies on TRG leaders'

engagement in CL are relatively limited, and even fewer in secondary schools. Second,

there are no studies related to the comparison of principals' and TRG leaders'

perceptions of TRG leaders' engagement in CL. Third, the acquisition of only a single

source of data was a limitation in previous studies conducted by Chinese researchers.

Fourth, with respect to Chinese studies, it was found that most of the relevant studies

made comments and arguments without empirical evidence. Further, the structure of

these studies was stereotyped as one that presents the researchers' personal

understanding and provides comments surrounding the problems of teachers'

engagement in CL, followed by suggestions and solutions as to how to deal with these

problems without any empirical evidence to back them up.

The review of the literature has helped to position the importance of the current

research, guide the design of the research questions and frame the results and

discussion chapter. Next chapter will discuss the methodological issues.

Chapter 4: Methodology

This research aims to explore both principals' and TRG leaders' perceptions

of how TRG leaders engage in CL. Thus, the purpose of this chapter is to introduce

the methodology of the research in detail. It helps to get more understanding of how

the research is designed, how the research questions are posed and how the data are

collected to probe principals' and TRG leaders' perceptions.

Crotty (2009) presents four basic elements of the research process that should

be carefully taken into consideration namely: (1) the methods we propose to use, (2)

the methodology governing our choice and use of methods, (3) the theoretical

perspective which lies behind the methodology in question, and (4) the epistemology

which informs this theoretical perspective. These four elements serve as a reference

for the design of the research. This chapter is composed of eight sections which fully

explain the research design, rationale for the qualitative research approach, sampling

strategy, data collection, translation, data analysis, trustworthiness, and ethical

considerations.

4.1 Research Design

This section poses the research questions (RQ) and frames the research

procedure.

As discussed in Chapter 2 and Chapter 3, the educational context of NCR

pushes studies of CL to focus on teachers' participation in curriculum matters.

Furthermore, the literature shows the necessity for conducting empirical studies, especially qualitative investigation, to further probe in depth teachers' engagement in CL. In this research context, TRG leaders are teachers who have been designated by the principal as leaders to enact CL and to be in charge of curriculum issues at the whole school level. Thus, the primary purpose of this research is to examine principals' and TRG leaders' perceptions of TRG leaders' participation in CL and to derive empirical findings to fill in the research gaps.

In line with the purpose and the unique characteristics of CL examined in the literature, a couple of overarching questions were addressed in this research to unveil both principals' and TRG leaders' perceptions of TRG leaders' engagement in CL. More specific questions are listed below:

RQ1. What are principals' perceptions of TRG leaders' engagement in CL?

RQ2. What are TRG leaders' perceptions of TRG leaders' engagement in CL?

RQ3. What are the differences between principals' and TRG leaders' perceptions of TRG leaders' engagement in CL?

RQ4. What are the similarities between principals' and TRG leaders' perceptions of TRG leaders' engagement in CL?

Please note that all four research questions are investigated from four perspectives, that is, the organisational level, the classroom level, the social relationship level, and the personal level.

The design of the research is derived from a conceptual framework based on viewing the literature on CL. Figure 1 illustrates the research procedure.

The procedures involved two phases, namely, the pilot study and the main study. Guided by RQ1 and RQ2, the pilot study aimed to identify problems and refine the interview questions through interviewing principals and TRG leaders. Based on the pilot study, the main study was deployed. Interviews with both principals and TRG leaders were the major source of data in the main study. For data triangulation, the main study also comprised meeting observations, field notes, and documents. In terms of RQ3 and RQ4, a comparison was made to identify the similarities and the differences between principals' and TRG leaders' perceptions. Content analysis was used to analyse and compare all the data related to principals' and TRG leaders' perceptions. Furthermore, NVvio 11 was used to accommodate, organise and retrieve research data for content analysis.

Literature Review

| Literature Review |

Research Design

| Research Questions |

| Pilot Study |

| Main Study |

Data Collection

| Interview |

| Interview & Field notes |

| Observation & Field notes |

| Documents |

| Principals | | TRG leaders |

| Principal | | TRG leaders |

| Principal | | TRG leaders |

| TRG Leaders |

Data Analysis

| Principals |

| TRG leaders |

| Compare Principals and TRG leaders |

| Identification the CL in Chinese context |

Figure 1. The design of the research in the Chinese context

4.2 Rationale for Qualitative Research Approach

Conducting qualitative research enables the researcher to make sense of or interpret multifarious phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2011; Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). Further, it is identified that qualitative research is directed at exploring participants' in-depth and interpreted understandings (Ormston, Spencer, Barnard, & Snape, 2016). Thus, this study adopted a qualitative methodological approach in a bid to probe deeply and to interpret comprehensively principals' and TRG leaders' perspectives of TRG leaders' involvement in CL. The following lists the rationales of using a qualitative approach as the research methodology in this research.

First, qualitative research functions to "assess the impact of policies on a population" (Grbich, 2013, p. 3). As mentioned in Chapter 2, the Chinese educational context is experiencing NCR which aims at decentralising powers through implementing the three-level curriculum management policy. Probing TRG leaders' engagement in CL takes place under this educational reform context. Therefore, adopting the qualitative approach suits the underlying purpose of this research, namely, probing the impact of the three-level curriculum management policy on TRG leaders.

Second, the qualitative method is viewed as an attempt to extract a rich set of data that focuses upon collecting the participants' conceptions, insights and understandings of the subject matter (Ormston et al., 2016; Taylor, Bogdan, & DeVault, 2016). Moreover, qualitative research is quite precise in reflecting participants'

perspectives, attitudes and values (Creswell, 2009; Grbich, 2013). The purpose of this

research was indeed an attempt to probe participants' perceptions of how TRG leaders

enact CL. Qualitative research thus was considered more appropriate for this research.

Third, conducting qualitative research could yield robust findings without using

statistical procedures or quantifiable measures (Patton, 2015; Tesch, 1990). This

research mainly collected data from interviews, observations, field notes and

documents, and it focused on the acquisition of an in-depth understanding of a

phenomenon rather than probing a quantitative inquiry. Consequently, adopting a

qualitative approach enables "the exploration of little-known behaviours" (Grbich,

2013).

In summary, the pragmatic and interpretive characteristics of qualitative

research enable the possibility of eliciting more understandings from the respondents

(Marshall & Rossman, 2011). Consequently, conducting a qualitative study is

appropriate for exposure of principals' and TRG leaders' viewpoints in relation to

TRG leaders' engagement in CL. The next section will introduce issues related to the

sampling strategy of this qualitative research.

4.3 Sampling Strategy

The suitability of the sampling strategy affects the quality of the research

(Cohen et al., 2011; Fowler Jr, 2014). Adopting various types of sampling strategies

enables researchers to obtain qualified participants who could offer credible

information (Creswell, 2013). The sampling strategy of this research is a combination

of both convenience sampling and purposive sampling. This section introduces why

these sampling techniques are adopted and how they are used.

Convenience sampling refers to the method that approaches samples which are

most convenient (Blaxter, Hughes, & Tight, 2006; Saumure & Given, 2008).

Specifically, Dörnyei (2007) defines a convenience sampling strategy as selecting the

target population which is easy to access or available at a given time or being willing to

participate in the research. Stake (1995) suggests that the researcher could pick cases

which are "easy to get to and hospitable to the inquiry" (p. 4). This research was

conducted in 10 secondary schools in Taiyuan City, Shanxi Province, China, which

included all school types. Table 6 presents the target schools which consist of nine

state-run schools and one private school. One principal and two TRG leaders were

approached from each school in 2016. The selection of principals was made to cover

all school types (e.g., one provincial key school, four local key schools, four ordinary

schools and one private school). It was expected that principals at private schools

might have different perspectives on the autonomy granted to TRG leaders to those

working in state-run schools. Further, the selection of TRG leaders from each school

tried to counterbalance participants by the subject that TRG leaders taught. In other

words, this research tried to involve a similar number of TRG leaders who taught

science to those who taught social science subjects. It has been identified that samples

of 12 should suffice for research which aims to explore perceptions and experiences

among a relatively homogeneous population (Boddy, 2016; Guest, Bunce, & Johnson,

2006). Furthermore, Green and Thorogood (2009) claim that 20 samples are adequate

for interview studies. Thus, this research accessed and interviewed 30 participants (10

principals and 20 TRG leaders) that were easy to approach through personal

connections.

However, convenience sampling is identified to have bias since it cannot be

representative of the population (Mackey & Gass, 2005). For better selection of

participants who suit the research purposes, a purposive sampling technique was also

adopted.

Purposive sampling is a strategy that selected units on the basis of the

researcher's judgment and for specific purposes (Babbie, 2007; Cohen et al., 2011;

Maxwell, 2013). It is viewed as the deliberate choice of participants due to the

participants' qualities (Etikan, Musa, & Alkassim, 2016). Further, Elo et al. (2014)

contend that purposive sampling is suitable for qualitative research where the

participants can provide rich information related to the research topic. Adopting this

technique as well as convenience sampling seems appropriate for the purpose of the

research since it is widely used in qualitative research for identifying and selecting

information-rich cases (Klenke, 2016). The following parts explain why 10 secondary

schools, 10 principals and 20 TRG leaders are recruited.

In this research, a purposive sampling strategy was utilised to locate the target

schools firstly. Concerning the selection of the target schools, there were three criteria.

First, all these schools were secondary schools in Taiyuan City, Shanxi Province, China.

The NCR was pioneered in 2001 in 38 experimental areas (e.g., provinces, autonomous districts and municipalities) selected by the MoE, which aimed at prompting the implementation of NCR. Taiyuan City is one of the experimental areas (MoE, 2001). Further, Tang et al. (2011) argue that the implementation of NCR has mainly targeted the secondary school context. This research thus purposively selected samples from the secondary schools in Taiyuan City. Second, the degree of autonomy of the schools was taken into consideration. With the implementation of education reform, public schools/state-run schools were empowered with more responsibility in decision making (Feng, 2015). However, private schools were given more autonomy compared to the state-run schools, such as "fee collection" and "enrollment" (Li & Zheng, 2017, p. 244). Particularly, the third Plenary Session of the 18th CPC Central Committee not only   promoted the healthy development of private education but guaranteed the school-run autonomy of private schools (MoE, 2013).   However, as private schools in China only constituted 11.7% in 2016 (MoE, 2016), this study only targeted one private school. Third, it is noted that the selection of samples should serve as representative of the population and therefore provide specific and detailed information (Daymon & Holloway, 2011; Tesch, 1990). In order to enhance the representativeness of the research findings and ensure ease of access to participants, the research instruments were distributed to 10 target secondary schools which were

readily available through personal connections. The selected ten target schools had to

represent the current pattern of education facilities in China.[3] Of those ten schools, 90%

were state-run secondary schools and 10% was a private school. The state-run schools

included five key schools (one provincial key school and four city key schools) and

four non-key schools (see Table 6).

Table 6
School Characteristics

School Characteristics			School Code	n	%
State-run Schools	Key Schools	Provincial Key School	S1	1	10
		City/Local Key Schools	S2, S3, S4, S5	4	40
	Non-key Schools	Ordinary schools	S6, S7, S8, S9	4	40
Private School			S10	1	10

Note. S=School

Secondly, the purposive sampling technique was adopted to find principal and

TRG leader participants. The selection of the participants heightened the relevance of

their inclusion in the study overall and demonstrated a process of selecting the desired

sample on the basis of "knowledge of a population" and "the purpose of the study"

(Babbie, 2007, p. 185). The first criterion was all participants identified were well

qualified and had experienced curriculum decentralisation and NCR. The purpose of

this study was to probe participants' perceptions of TRG leaders' engagement in CL.

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[3] "The Chinese educational system is highly differentiated, which schools being classified into national key schools, provincial key schools, municipal key schools, and ordinary schools (Gao, 2011, p. 76)".

"China's educational system is split into the existence of government designated key schools and non-key schools. There are several categories of key schools, such as provincial key schools, city key schools, and county key schools (Nie, 2008, p. 10)".

Thus, it was important that participants with a knowledge of curriculum decentralisation should be included in the sample to help better understand how TRG leaders enacted the CL role.

Thirdly, the purposive selection of one principal and two TRG leaders in each secondary school in 2016 ensures the representativeness of this research. It is commonly accepted that the goal of selecting a sample is to be representative of the population (Palinkas et al., 2015; Polit & Beck, 2010; Silverman, 2013). Further, Maxwell (2013) emphasises that the value of a qualitative study is affected by its representativeness of a larger population. For ensuring generalisability, the selection of principals included both principals (P1, P3, P7, & P10) and deputy principals (P2, P4, P5, P6, P8, & P9) who were in charge of teaching affairs. The rationale of choosing principals as the participants is because principals are fully responsible for ensuring quality in teaching and learning. As for the deputy principals, they are responsible for implementing strategies related to curriculum matters. Concerning the selection of two TRG leaders from each school, this involved one TRG leader who taught a science subject and one TRG leader who taught a humanities subject in order to ensure representative balance. Table 7 and Table 8 display the demographic information of both principals and TRG leaders.

Fourthly, to ensure variation across the population, elements such as years of being the TRG leader and teaching areas were considered. As can be seen from Table 7 and 8, the data of gender reflects a female dominated structure in the school settings.

70% of the principals identified themselves as female while 30% were male. Of the 20 TRG leaders, 75% were female and 25% were male. Years of work experience were collapsed into less than 5 years, 5-10 years, and greater than 10 years. All principals had experiences of being the TRG leader. It is noted that of the 10 principals responding, 70% had five years or more experience. Similarly, results indicated that of the 20 TRG leaders' responses, 75% had been in the position of TRG leader five years or more. This indicates that these participants were relatively experienced school leaders. TRG leaders' qualification was grouped into two categories, Bachelor and Master. The subjects that the TRG leaders taught were divided into two categories – science (e.g., chemistry, geography, mathematics, and physics) and humanities (e.g., Chinese, English, history, politics, and PE).

Table 7

Principals' Demographic Information

Code	School	Gender		Experience of Being TRG Leader			Teaching subject		Qualification	
		Male	Female	> 10 years	5-10 years	< 5 years	Science	Humanities	Master	Bachelor
P1	S1		√	√			√			√
P2	S2		√		√		√			√
P3	S3		√			√	√			√
P4	S4		√		√			√		√
P5	S5		√			√	√		√	
P6	S6	√		√				√		√
P7	S7		√		√			√		√
P8	S8		√			√		√	√	
P9	S9	√		√			√			√
P10	S10	√		√			√			√
n	10	3	7	4	3	3	6	4	2	8

Note. P=Principal; S=School

Table 8 *TRG leaders' Demographics Information*

Code	School	Gender		Experience of Being TRG Leader			Teaching subject		Qualification	
		Male	Female	> 10 years	5-10 years	< 5 years	Science	Humanities	Master	Bachelor
TRGL1	S1		√	√			√			√
TRGL2	S1		√		√		√			√
TRGL3	S2		√			√	√			√
TRGL4	S2		√		√			√		√
TRGL5	S3		√			√	√		√	
TRGL6	S3	√		√				√		√
TRGL7	S4		√		√			√		√
TRGL8	S4		√			√		√	√	
TRGL9	S5	√		√			√			√
TRGL10	S5	√		√			√			√
TRGL11	S6		√		√			√		√
TRGL12	S6		√	√			√			√
TRGL13	S7	√		√				√		√
TRGL14	S7		√		√			√	√	
TRGL15	S8		√		√		√		√	
TRGL16	S8		√		√			√		√
TRGL17	S9		√		√		√			√
TRGL18	S9		√	√				√		√
TRGL19	S10	√				√	√		√	
TRGL20	S10		√			√		√	√	
n	10	5	15	7	8	5	10	10	6	14

Note. TRGL=TRG leader; S=School

4.4 Data collection

The use of multiple data sources can enhance data credibility and reliability

(Creswell, 2009; Yin, 2009). The primary source of data was participant interviews

with a sample of principals and TRG leaders. The secondary source was observations.

The third source was field notes of the interviews and the meeting observations. The

last data source was documents that included TRG leaders' job descriptions and their

performance summaries. The following sections will introduce the data collection in

detail.

4.4.1 Interview. Blaxter et al. (2006) argue that the approach adopted in a study

depends on what the research aims to find out or what research questions are to be

answered. Interviews with principals and TRG leaders were used as the main source of

data in this research. For ensuring the feasibility of conducting the interviews, a pilot

study designed for the interview was deployed prior to the main study. The details of

the procedures will be clarified in the following sections.

4.4.1.1 Pilot study. A pilot study is defined as a small-scale study carried out

before the full study, which could identify problems before the study begins and refine

the elements of the research design (Bryman, 2016; Crowther & Lancaster, 2008;

Kumar, 2014). Conducting a pilot study enhances the reliability and validity of the

research (Padden, 2013).

Thus, to test the validity, clarity and effectiveness of the research and the

interview questions, a pilot study was conducted with two principals and five TRG

leaders from two target secondary (included in the 10 target secondary schools in the main study) schools in Taiyuan City in 2016. As mentioned above, these participants were familiar with their school context and had related knowledge and skills concerning enacting CL. Thus, the participants could provide valuable suggestions for revising the interview questions. These interviews took place at the interviewees' offices and were tape-recorded.

The pilot study enabled the researcher to reflect on problems such as vague wording, the logic of the research questions and the workability of the interview and enabled making necessary revisions prior to the main study (Kvale, 2007). In this research, the draft of the interview questions was revised on the basis of respondents' feedback. Having reworded some unclear questions and instructions, the interview questions became easier to read and understand by the population sample. Furthermore, the pilot interviews enabled the researcher to become familiar with the interview procedures which could facilitate conducting the interviews in the main study. Moreover, it could enhance the researcher's interview skills such as establishing rapport with the interviewees, or controlling the tempo of the interview or adjusting the sequence of the questions and presenting further questions in a timely way. Data taken from the pilot study were not used in the final study but were compiled and analysed to aid the researcher in the organisation of the final study. The next section will introduce the process of conducting the main study.

4.4.1.2 Main study. For probing participants' deeper understanding of TRG

leaders' engagement in CL, the face-to-face interview was adopted. The following

parts introduce the rationale of conducting the interviews and the procedures of the

interview.

In depth semi-structured interviews were designed and conducted in the study

since it enabled the interviewer to probe in depth in the interview and obtain more

hidden information (Qu & Dumay, 2011). In this research, the semi-structured

interview was an effective instrument for data collection since the interview questions

were open-ended which could give room for individuals to develop their own

knowledge, ideas, opinions, experiences and provide more complete information

(Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009). Furthermore, it has been identified that an interview keeps

the interviewee motivated and interested in the research by using follow-up questions

which can also contribute much detailed information (Turner, 2010). In this case, the

researcher could elicit richer and more focused responses from participants.

In the main study, 10 principals and 20 TRG leaders were interviewed at their

school sites. The semi-structured interviews with these participants lasted for

approximately 40 minutes in a private and safe location. During the interview, the

researcher engaged as minimally as possible in the conversation and all the interviews

were audio recorded simultaneously. Furthermore, the interview was carried out in

Mandarin, a language in which the interviewees felt comfortable. Tape-recorded

interviews enabled the researcher to check the accuracy of any original data which was

unclear in the transcription by preserving the original words (Seidmen, 1991). The

interview records were transcribed verbatim and translated for analysis. Moreover, a copy of the written transcription was delivered to all participants so that they could approve or amend the transcripts for the sake of accuracy (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). For anonymity, pseudonyms were used to identify the participants.

The design of the research questions was derived from the theoretical framework related to TRG leaders' engagement in CL and was revised based on the pilot study. Both principals' and TRG leaders' interview mainly comprised 13 questions. In the interviews, two groups of questions were asked (see Appendices A and B, for English and Chinese versions).

The first group of questions centred on examining participants' demographic information, such as years in position, teaching subject and academic degree, which might influence their perceptions of CL styles and provide implications for data interpretation. For example, questions focused on how many years they been the TRG leader and what their highest academic degree was. These questions helped the research obtained more information related to participants' knowledge and experience, and establish rapport with the participants.

The second group of questions placed emphasis on eliciting participants' perceptions of TRG leaders' engaging in CL (see Appendices A and B for English and Chinese versions). This part involved six subcategories. Questions in the first category explored participants' general understanding of CL. For example, questions were related to whether they had heard the concept of CL and how they describe CL. The

second category focused on examining characteristics of TRG leaders' engagement in

CL. For example, participants were asked whether they had any autonomy in enacting

CL and what autonomous decisions they can take. In the third category, questions were

asked about the significances of enacting CL. For instance, respondents were asked to

explicate the significance for school development, for teaching and learning, or for

individual development. The questions in the fourth category focused on exploring

challenges in participating in CL. Participants were asked to explain the difficulties in

enacting CL at the school level, the classroom level, the social relationship level and the

individual level. The fifth category aimed at probing expectations of enacting CL. For

example, questions were asked relating to how enacting CL should be done and why it

should be done. The sixth category focused on participants' reflection on enacting CL.

For example, principals were asked about how they perceive empowering more

autonomy to TRG leaders to enact CL. TRG leaders were asked to reflect on their roles

and on the empowerment. It was concluded that all the interview questions served as

probing in depth information relating to TRG leaders' engagement in CL.

In summary, adopting the semi-structured interview as the method of data

collection provided a rich source of insight into how principals and TRG leaders

perceive TRG leaders' engagement in CL. The next section will introduce observation

which is regarded as another data source for this research.

4.4.2 Observation. This study was also enriched by data collected from the

observation of meetings. The following highlights the rationales of taking meeting

observation and how the observations were conducted.

Observation is regarded as the qualitative data collection technique that "entails the systematic noting and recording of events, behaviours, and artifacts in the social setting chosen for study" (Marshall & Rossman, 2006, p. 98). Observational research is identified to be more advantageous in yielding positives results than other qualitative data collection techniques when the research focuses on probing participants' actions, roles and behaviours (Flick,2014; Tyson, Burton, & McGovern, 2014 ; Walshe, Ewing, & Griffiths, 2011). Adopting observation methods was appropriate since this research aimed at exploring the actions and behaviours of how TRG leaders enact the CL role.

In particular, this research conducted participant observation to watch and record participants' behaviour in its natural settings (Bernard, 2011). Conducting participant observations played a significant role in this research. It was helpful for understanding the research context (e.g., the physical, social, cultural, and economic contexts) in that it enabled researchers to get access to the natural and authentic context (Flick,2014; Kawulich, 2005; Mack, Woodsong, MacQueen, Guest, & Namey, 2005; Rubin & Rubin, 2012). Second, it was useful for gaining insights into uncovered factors such as the relationships and interactions among and between participants and improving the quality of data (Mack et al., 2005; Rubin & Rubin, 2012).

The observation of meetings occurred in the participants' natural settings and

usually lasted for 30-40 minutes. In the observation, the researcher was an

unobtrusive and nonreactive observer who just presented at the meetings and

observed what happens. For enhancing the generalisability of the research, four types

of meetings were observed and video recorded (see Appendix C). The first

observation was taken at a meeting held by the TRG leader at the beginning of the

semester which aimed at making the work arrangements for the whole semester. The

second observation was conducted at the monthly meeting held by a TRG leader for

arranging routine issues. The third was deployed for a meeting related to team

building activities, such as classroom observation and class evaluation. The last

observation was taken for a meeting held for mentoring young teachers. Selecting the

above mentioned meetings as the data source were representative since TRG leaders

participated in all these meetings and enacted CL when holding the meetings.

Observing these meetings could provide more in-depth information on how TRG

leaders exercise CL in practice, which was in accordance with the primary purpose of

this research. Video recordings of how TRG leaders took the CL role during work

sessions were collected which placed specific emphasis upon CL behaviours. The

next section will introduce the third data source for this research, namely, field notes.

    4.4.3 Field notes. Field notes is defined as a linguistic form of recording a

description of events, (e.g., interviews, observations) and activities (e.g., interactions)

(Creswell, 2008; Keiding, 2011; Mack et al., 2005). Furthermore, it is noted that field

notes can be used to record the researchers' "insights, hunches, or broad ideas or

themes that emerge during the observation" (Creswell, 2008, p. 225). In this research, field notes were adopted as a further data collection method to triangulate the research findings. This section discusses the rationale and procedures of taking field notes.

Taking field notes was of great importance for this research. First, being a part of creating an audit trail, keeping field notes enables the researcher to inscribe and record detailed, context related, and authentic information (Carlson, 2010; Emerson, Fretz, & Shaw, 2011). In the research, taking field notes helped collect authentic data spontaneously and simultaneously in the interviews and the observations. It recorded both interactions in the meetings and interviewees' reactions during the interviews. Bernard (1995) argues that human memory is a "very poor recording device" (p. 390). Moreover, Tessier (2012) suggests that ideas and memories from interviews are most likely lost during the research process. Thus, taking field notes was helpful in capturing and preserving the insights, ideas, and understandings that emerged during the interviews and the observations (Taylor et al., 2016). Second, taking field notes is a process of transforming thoughts into written words which can be easily reviewed, reread and studied (Emerson et al., 2011). In this research, the field notes taken for the interviews and the observations were important since they could elicit further and underlying information on how TRG leaders enact CL. In addition, field notes enable researchers to obtain more vivid memories and images when they reread the notes during coding and data analysis (Emerson et al., 2011; Taylor et al., 2016; Tessier, 2012).

It is identified that field notes should be taken contemporaneously with, and as fully as possible after, events thus reflecting the social realities (Emerson et al., 2011). Field notes for the interviews took place after the interviews with the purpose of understanding what had been observed in the first place and helping in memorising the key issues that occurred during the interview. The field notes for the meeting observations were taken during and after the observation which aimed at recording curriculum leaders' strategies, reactions and reflections when interacting with other teachers in the meetings. In this research, the field notes were in the form of jotting, namely, "short temporary memory triggers" (e.g., words, phrases) that can be reread or reviewed at a later date (Neuman, 2005, p. 400). As Yin (2014) states, field notes are viewed as the most common component of a database. Particularly, the notes were taken chronologically and methodically for better understanding of TRG leaders' strategies of enacting CL.

To conclude, taking field notes for interviews and meeting observations could yield more information since it inscribes the authentic context in a timely way (Emerson, et al., 2011). The next section will introduce the last source of data for this research – documentation.

4.4.4 Documentation. Documents contain text (words) and images that can be checked and retrieved for description, analysis and evaluation (Bowen, 2009; Prior, 2010). The following parts examine the rationale of documentation and the procedures of documentation.

There are four rationales for choosing documents as the data source for this

research. Firstly, it enabled the researchers to obtain background information for the

current phenomena under investigation (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007). Secondly,

documentary research provided additional information and insights that supplemented

the research data (Bowen, 2009). In particular, the researcher could obtain information

that cannot be observed or information of which the researcher was unaware (Patton,

2015). Thirdly, documentation served as a way to verify the convergence of the

findings from different sources (Bowen, 2009). In addition, it is identified that the

credibility of the findings might be enhanced if the information collected from the

documents is corroboratory with evidence obtained from other sources (Bowen, 2009).

Thus, it appeared that conducting document study not only assisted in expanding the

data provided by principals and TRG leaders in the interviews and observations, but

also increased the trustworthiness of the findings.

For obtaining data from multiple sources, the documents included TRG leaders'

job descriptions and TRG leaders' performance summaries. In total, the researcher

collected 10 pieces of job description and 10 pieces of performance summaries from

the 10 secondary schools. As mentioned above, data collected from documents could

provide information about many things that cannot be observed and provided

supplementary data for the interviews and observations. The data obtained from these

documents helped to obtain further information about TRG leaders' responsibilities.

The next section will introduce issues related to the translation procedure which was

conducted before the data analysis.

4.5 Translation

It is identified that translation could facilitate cross-linguistic content analysis (Brislin, 1980). Thus, the translation stage was adopted to assist the data analysis. This section introduces three steps of the translation designed for processing the data source.

The interviews and the observations were conducted in Mandarin. After transcribing the interview records, observation records and the Chinese version documents, the researcher translated these transcripts into English sentence by sentence firstly. In the second step, the translated transcripts were sent via e-mail to two professionals who were familiar with the research context and were competent in bilingual translation to check the accuracy and readability of the translation and give comments. Davidson (2009) emphasises that data might be lost during the translation process. Thus, member checking plays a pivotal role in establishing the validity and reliability of the study (Carlson, 2010; Cope, 2014; Lincoln & Guba, 1985). After discussion with these professionals, it was found that there were slight disagreements with the English translation. For precisely and accurately expressing the data source, some adaptations, such as words or phrases, were made with the assistance provided by these two professionals. In the third step, the translated transcriptions were mailed to a qualified professional and were back-translated into Chinese. It is noted that language differences have impact on the understanding and interpretation of meanings (Van Nes,

Amba, Jonsson, & Deeg, 2010). The technique of back translation is a validation step which could reduce the loss of meaning and identify the agreement of a more suitable version of the text (Edwards, 1998; Nes et al., 2010). The back-translated transcripts were checked for consistency with the original transcripts to ensure the quality of translation. After the back-translation was completed, the two Chinese versions were compared. It was noticed that there existed slight differences between the two. Thus, the reconciliation was made to ensure minimising ambiguity in the translations and identify language that could best express the content in the source text.

After translating the data source, the data analysis was conducted. The next section will introduce the data analysis process.

4.6 Data Analysis

Since this research was designed to be a qualitative one, a qualitative analysis using "the non-numerical examination and interpretation of observations" was adopted (Babbie, 2007, p. 378). Interpretivism was specifically chosen as the main research paradigm to guide the analysis, since it emphasises the understanding and examination of differences between individuals by employing multiple methods such as interview and observations (Chowdhury, 2015; Dudovskiy, 2016; Elster, 2007). Further, as the focus of this research is probing participants' perceptions of TRG leaders' engagement in CL, the fact that interpretivism relies on content analysis to probe in-depth meanings indicated it was a suitable methodology for our purposes (Drisko & Maschi, 2016). This section introduces content analysis which was adopted

as the data analysis approach and the tool of NVivo 11 which was used to aid coding.

      4.6.1 Content analysis. Being a method for textual analyses, which includes

comparing and categorising the data (Flick, 2014), content analysis was used for

analysing the interview data, the observation data, the field notes and the documents.

The following introduce the rationale and the procedures of adopting content analysis.

      4.6.1.1 Rationale of adopting content analysis. Content analysis is defined as a

technique for describing and interpreting meanings (Schreier, 2012). There are three

rationales for choosing content analysis. Firstly, content analysis can be employed for

various sorts of data such as texts, interview transcripts and written documents

(Krippendorff, 2013; Schreier, 2012). The data sources of this research involved

interview transcripts, observation transcripts, field notes and documents. Thus it was

appropriate for adopting content analysis. Secondly, content analysis can be applied to

large amounts of textual data to analyse the frequency, percentage and the relationships

of the variables (Mayring, 2000). In this research, there were large amounts of research

data that involved 30 pieces of interview transcripts, four observation records, 34 field

notes and 20 documents data. Therefore, it was a reasonable choice to apply content

analysis. Thirdly, content analysis focuses on probing similarities and differences

within data (Graneheim & Lundman, 2004). The purpose of this research involved

exploring the similarities and differences between principals' and TRG leaders'

perceptions. In this case, adopting content analysis meets the research needs.

      4.6.1.2 Procedure of content analysis. Coding is regarded as "one among

several procedural components of content analysis" (Krippendorff, 2013, p. 126). In this research, coding, as the descriptive technique, was used in content analysis for analysing the interview data, observation data, the field notes and the documents. Zhang and Wildemuth (2016) present seven steps for content analysis which are: (1) prepare the data, (2) define the unit of analysis, (3) develop categories and a coding scheme, (4) test your coding scheme on a sample of text, (5) code all the text, (6) draw conclusions for the coded data, and (7) report your methods and findings (p. 3-5).

With reference to these steps, the current research mainly deployed three steps for content analysis.

The first step was establishing the coding categories. Zhang and Wildemuth (2016) identify three sources for developing the categories, namely, the data, previous related studies, and theories. Further, in qualitative content analysis, coding categories can be generated mainly from the theory and can be modified to yield new categories inductively (Elo & Kyngäs, 2008; Flick, 2014). In this research, the coding categories were designed and developed according to the relevant literature and previous studies relating to teachers' engagement in CL, and exploring the interview, observation and documents data. To understand participants' perceptions of enacting CL, five categories were developed that involved general understanding of CL, enacting CL at the organisational level, the classroom level, the social relationship level and the personal level. In each category, there were new categories designed for the sub-codes to probe the findings in depth (see Table 9)

Table 9 *The Data Coding Outputs*

Coding Category		Sample Quotation
Category	Sub-categories	
Enacting CL at the Organisational Level	Characteristics	We make adjustment under the macro-control of the school and we must follow the national curriculum standard. (TRGL6)
		TRG leaders should lead the direction of subject, and organise teaching and research activities. (DJD6)
		TRG leader's working plan should be in accordance with the school's educational philosophy. (MO1)
	Difficulties	There exists hierarchy in school's management system. We cannot make autonomous decisions. We only can provide suggestions. We play a less significant role for school development. (TRGL16)
	Significances	I think TRG leader is the main force of the school since they lead the curriculum development. They are the core of the subject. They play a really important role in teaching. (TRGL1)
		Enacting CL ensures quality teaching thus improves the whole level of the school (DPS2)
	Expectations	It is necessary to give TRG leaders more powers, such as curriculum design for school-based curriculum. (P9)

Note. TRGL=TRG leader; P=Principal; DJD=Document of job description; DPS= Document of performance summary; MO=Meeting observation

The second step is to test the validity of the coding scheme on a sample of text. Zhang and Wildemuth (2016) indicate that coding a sample of the data source could check the clarity and consistency of the category. For testing the accuracy of the coding categories, a peer review was made by a person with a doctoral degree in educational leadership. He coded the same transcript as the researcher using the coding categories. Peer review is used for confirmation of the reliability of the research data (Dede, 2012). Then, the two coded versions were compared. Consensus was achieved upon

discussion. Calculating inter-coder reliability through comparison of the coded

transcripts is a crucial element of content analysis (De Swert, 2012). A resulting Kappa

value of 0.85 can be regarded as satisfactory for this research since Krippendorff's

alpha (Kalpha >.70) is regarded as the standard reliability statistic for content analysis

(Fornahl, 2007; Hayes & Krippendorff, 2007; Krippendorff, 2013).

After checking the coding consistency with the peer review and revising some

coding rules, the procedure of content analysis moved onto the third step, that is coding

all the interview data, observation data, field notes and the documents. Zhang and

Wildemuth (2016) mention that coding schemes can be applied to the entire data source

when sufficient consistency has been achieved. Figure 2 illustrates the process of

content analysis which involves coding the text and eliciting sub-codes, codes,

sub-categories and categories. To be specific, the data analysis was composed of three

phases. First, principals' perceptions of TRG leaders' engagement in CL was identified

from the five perspectives, namely, general understanding of CL, enacting CL at the

organisational level, the classroom level, the social relationship level and the personal

level. Second, TRG leaders' perceptions were identified by categorising their

perceptions through the six perspectives used in probing principals' perceptions. Third,

the findings of principals' and TRG leaders' perceptions were compared within in each

perspective.

| TEXT | → | SUB-CODES | → | CODES | → | SUB-CATEGORIES | → | CATEGORY |

TRG1: We have no or less autonomy in making decisions for the national curriculum. For example, we cannot make any changes in the textbooks and the teaching content. All the teaching initiatives are guided by the national curriculum standards. We must follow the standards. In contrast, we have more authority in school-based curriculum. Recently, all schools put focus on developing school-based curriculum. Principals give us more autonomy in this area. We can choose any topic for teaching and we can select teaching materials in accordance with students' needs.

Use the designated teaching materials

Follow the teaching content required in the standards

National curriculum

Can decide teaching content

Can select teaching materials

School-based curriculum

Curriculum planning stage

Characteristics

Enacting CL at the classroom level

Other text segments

Other sub-codes

Other codes

Other sub-categories

Figure 2. The process of content analysis

In summary, conducting content analysis enabled probing in-depth how principals and TRG leaders perceive TRG leaders' engagement in CL. The next section will introduce NVivo that was used to assist the storage and retrieval of the data for content analysis.

4.6.2 NVivo. NVivo is regarded as a popular and a comprehensive computer tool for managing qualitative data (Bandara, 2006; Beekhuyzen, Nielsen, & von Hellens, 2010; Hilal & Alabri, 2013; Zamawe, 2015). In particular, Bandara (2006) indicates that NVivo assists the researcher in importing, coding, editing, retrieving and recoding data. This section examines the rationale of using NVivo and the procedures of using NVivo.

There are four reasons for selecting NVivo for data analysis. First, it can accommodate various types of data including Word, PDF, digital photos, audio files, and videos, digital photos, PDF, and text (Hutchison, Johnston, & Breckon, 2010). The original data sources of this research were composed of audio files for interviews, videos of meeting observations, PDF for the documents and the text of field notes. Further, NVivo can be used to assist data analysis irrespective of the type of qualitative data (Leech & Onwuegbuzie, 2011). Thus, using NVivo to manage these sources of data was suitable.

Second, NVivo can assist qualitative researchers in managing and organising the data by coding (Hilal & Alabri, 2013; Ozkan, 2004; Wong, 2008). In addition, it facilities the process of manipulating, browsing, coding, and interpreting data (Azeem ,

Salfi, & Dogar, 2012). Particularly, Bazeley (2007) lists five aspects in which Nvivo helps qualitative data analysis, namely managing data (e.g., interview transcripts, notes of observations, documents), managing ideas, querying research data, modelling data visually and reporting data. As mentioned above, the content analysis of this research aims to analyse the transcripts and explore participants' in-depth perceptions. Thus, NVivo suited the coding of content analysis in this research.

Third, it is identified that using NVivo saves researchers' time in the transcription, coding, retrieving and analysis process (Ozkan, 2004; Wong, 2008; Zamawe, 2015), since it eases the laborious task of data analysis and removes the tremendous amount of manual tasks (Wong, 2008). There was a large amount of qualitative data to be analysed in this research which involved 20 interview transcripts, 4 observation transcriptions, 24 field notes, and 20 texts of documents. Therefore, using NVivo could be helpful for systematically managing and analysing the data.

Last but not the least, using Nvivo ensures the transparency and accuracy of the data analysis since it has no or little influence on research design (Beekuyen et al., 2010; Bringer, Johnston, & Brackenridge, 2004; Johnston, 2006; Zamawe, 2015). Furthermore, it enables the researchers to approach the data records quickly and accurately (Azeem et al., 2012).

In this research, NVivo11 was used to analyse the interview data, observation data, field notes and the documents. The main purpose of using this tool was to integrate participants' perceptions, make comparisons and find out the differences and

similarities of the stakeholders' viewpoints. After translating the verbatim

transcriptions of interviews, observations records, field notes and the documents into

English, all the research data were uploaded onto NVivo 11. This qualitative software

program organised the research data through the coding scheme, which provides

assistance for content analysis.

In conclusion, adopting NVivo facilitates content analysis of the tremendous

amount of data in this research. The next section will discuss issues related to

trustworthiness of the research.

4.7 Trustworthiness

Credibility and validity are conceptualised as describing the trustworthiness and

quality of qualitative research (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Polit & Beck, 2012). This

section examines five aspects that can ensure and enhance the validity and reliability of

this research.

Firstly, there is a threat to the reliability and validity of a study when insufficient

attention is paid to the piloting (Bartlett, 2013; Weir & Roberts, 1994). Ekinci (2015)

indicates that piloting improves the reliability and validity of the data since it enables

the research to determine the problems in research design and make substantial change

prior to the main study. In this research, a pilot study was conducted to identify

problems in the interview questions prior to the main study. The drafts of the interview

were revised on the basis of respondents' feedback which enabled further

implementation of the main study. Secondly, peer review was adopted as a method to

evaluate the design and the feedback of the interview questions in piloting, which

assisted the researcher to modify the interview questions. Furthermore, to ensure the

performance of the coding, the coding categories and the coding scheme were also peer

reviewed. Creswell and Miller (2010) indicate that "peer debriefers" provide written

reflections to researchers that function as "a sounding board for ideas" that ultimately

increase the credibility of the research. Thirdly, the translation stage is identified to

have influences on the validity and reliability of the analysis of qualitative data (Cope,

2014). In this research, member checking was adopted to test the quality of translation

which ensured the validity and reliability of the study (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). It is

identified that member checking increases the trustworthiness of the research (Carlson,

2010). Further, arranging a bilingual to make back translation also ensured the quality

of the transcript translation for further analysis (Nes et al., 2010). Fourthly, the use of

two or more methods of data collection is viewed as triangulation, which could be a

powerful way of demonstrating validity (Casey & Murphy, 2009; Cohen et al., 2011;

Patton, 2015). It is identified that triangulation improves the validity and reliability of

research findings (Everest, 2014; Golafshani, 2003; Hussein, 2009; Lauri, 2011;

Oluseyi, 2014). The validity and reliability of this research could also be enhanced

because of the multiple sources of data collection, namely, interviewing, observations,

the field notes and the documents. Furthermore, triangulation strengthens a study by

using multiple methods of data analysis (Golafshani, 2003). Further, using multiple

sources of data is preferred to using a single source since it increases the validity and

reliability of the research (Creswell, 2009). For analysing the multiple sources of data, the research deployed content analysis and NVivo technique which could also be a powerful way of demonstrating validity and reliability. Fifthly, the participants within the pilot study were selected from the target schools where the main study was conducted. This can ensure reliability to some extent since the findings would be more reliable if the research was carried out on a similar group of respondents in a similar context (Cohen et al., 2011).

In summary, the design of the research ensures the validity and reliability of the findings. In the next section, ethical issues will be presented.

4.8 Ethical Considerations

Ethical issues arise at "a variety of stages in social research", which affects both the researcher and participants (Bryman, 2016, p. 120). The researcher should respect the rights and dignity of participants in their research (Oates, Kwiakowski, & Coulthard, 2010). In this case, ethical issues were taken into consideration before the research was conducted.

Before conducting the pilot study and the main study, a consent form, which explained the purpose, the duration and the benefits of the study was sent to all the participants to request their assistance (see Appendices D and E for English and Chinese versions). Cohen et al. (2011) note that the researchers' intentions should be made clearly and explicitly if they intend to probe into the private aspects or affairs of individuals. Further, the issue of confidentiality was also promised in the consent form

to protect the privacy of participants and the validity of the data to ensure no harm to the

participants (Oates et al, 2010). In particular, the consent form ensures that information

collected about respondents is anonymised and is not personally identifiable. Once

approval of the proposal was obtained, the researcher then obtained permission to

conduct the study.

4.9 Summary

This chapter presented the research design and the rationales of adopting

qualitative research that were used to address the research questions. With the purpose

of probing in-depth participants' perceptions of TRG leaders' engagement in CL, this

research was bounded by data that consisted of in-depth data collection from multiple

sources such as semi-structured interviews with principals and TRG leaders,

observations of meetings, field notes taken for the interviews and observations, and a

review of documents relating TRG leaders' job description and performance summary.

Meanwhile, this research deployed content analysis together with NVivo 11 to explore

participants' perceptions and to compare their perceptions to elicit similarities and

differences. The next chapter presents the research findings through the data analysis.

Chapter 5: Research Findings

This chapter presents the research findings related to participants' perceptions

of TRG leaders' engagement in CL in secondary schools in China. The chapter has

three main purposes which align with the stated research questions. First, it provides a

detailed account of principals' perceptions related to TRG leaders' engagement in CL.

Second, it illustrates TRG leaders' perceptions of TRG leaders' involvement in CL. Third, it compares principals' and TRG leaders' perceptions in relation to how TRG leaders enact the CL role. Furthermore, the comparison explores the similarities and differences at the organisational level, the classroom level, the social relationship level and the personal level.

Five categories which emerged from the data analysis process are presented in this chapter: (1) a general understanding of CL, (2) framing or planning goals at the organisational level, (3) coordinating curriculum at the classroom level, (4) building relationships with stakeholders at the social relationship level, and (5) enacting CL at the individual level.

5.1 A General Understanding of CL

This section examines participants' general understanding of CL. In particular, it explores how participants define this term. The findings are presented under the following headings, namely, principals' general understanding of CL, TRG leaders' general understanding of CL, and a comparison between principals' and TRG leaders' perceptions.

Principals' general understanding of CL. Nine out of the ten principals acknowledged that they knew or they had heard about the concept of CL. Particularly, when changing the expression of CL into the term "curriculum matters" (e.g., making instruction plans, spearheading teaching materials, choosing teaching context, and evaluating curriculum), all participants indicated that, to some extent, they understood

the concept and gave their interpretations of the term.

The principals defined CL as the implementation of curriculum under the three-level curriculum management system enacted by the MoE. It was identified that enacting CL involved goal settings, curriculum design and implementation. In particular, seven out of the ten principals indicated that enacting CL was mainly focused on the school-based curriculum. As P6 explained:

Enacting CL only involves designing and developing the school-based curriculum, since the national curriculum has been set by the MoE already and there is no space for us to make decisions. (P6)

To be specific, CL was defined broadly by teaching initiatives that teachers undertook which were in relation to curriculum matters. Enacting CL involved following the national curriculum standards, choosing teaching materials, making class arrangements, designing teaching content. P4 described in a detailed way that

CL focuses on which courses to offer, arranging how many class hours, designing what teaching content should be addressed, choosing teaching materials and so on. (P4)

Furthermore, findings in documents of job descriptions stipulated that CL involved taking curriculum initiatives, such as controlling teaching quality, implementing education reform (DJD2), and conducting research and organising activities (DJD 6).

In summary, principals understood CL and could give descriptions of CL. It was

important to verify through the findings that the descriptions of CL mainly focused on implementing curriculum initiatives. The next section will examine how TRG leaders view the concept of CL.

TRG leaders' general understanding of CL. It was interesting to find that 13 TRG leaders (65%) acknowledged that they did not know or had not heard of the concept of CL. When paraphrasing the term CL into curriculum matters, all TRG leaders acknowledged that they had some understandings of what curriculum matters involved. However, they noted that they could not define or interpret what exactly constituted curriculum matters.

In the findings, 13 TRG leaders (65%) defined CL as taking actions in relation to educational concerns, and teaching the curriculum. In other words, enacting CL was implementing the national curriculum from a macro-perspective, and developing a school-based curriculum from the microscopic viewpoint. TRGL9 confirmed,

> We follow the national curriculum standards when taking the national
> curriculum. Meanwhile, we develop our own characteristics for the
> school-based curriculum. Implementing CL is a combination of particularity
> and universality. (TRGL9)

Moreover, TRG leaders detailed that CL involved course construction (TRGL9, TRGL19), spearheading of textbook adoption (TRGL6), taking in-class initiatives (TRGL2) and leading research projects on curriculum issues (TRGL8, TRGL12).

To sum up, TRG leaders were not entirely familiar with the expression of CL.

However, they could give detailed descriptions of various aspects of curriculum issues.

The next part will compare principals' and TRG leaders' perceptions related to

understandings of CL.

Comparison between perceptions of general understandings of CL. Through

integrating the findings of participants' perceptions, it was noted that both principals

and TRG leaders had some understandings of CL. In particular, principals and TRG

leaders acknowledged that they had more understanding when the term CL was

paraphrased into the term curriculum matters which involved curriculum planning,

curriculum implementation or curriculum development. Overall, it seemed that

principals were more familiar with the concept of CL than TRG leaders.
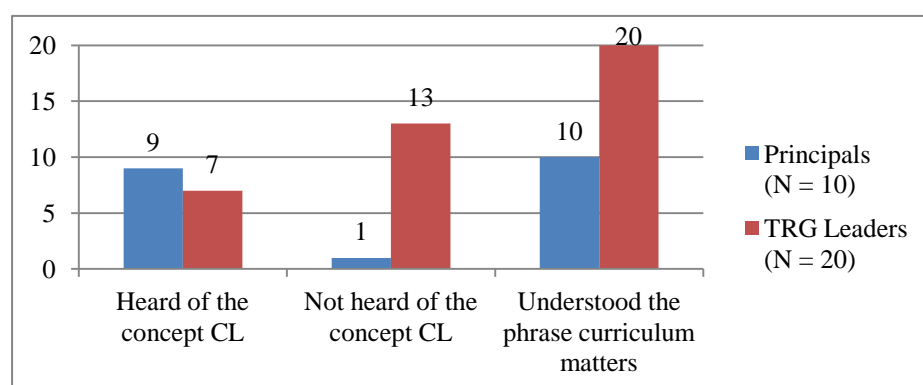
Figure 3. Participants' general understanding of CL

There were two main common understandings. Both principals and teachers

viewed CL as actions related to teaching, which involved goal setting and goal planning

regarding teaching and curriculum issues. Principals defined CL as engaging in

curriculum matters under the three-level curriculum management system, while TRG

leaders referred to it as the macro-control of teaching issues. On the other hand, from a

specific perspective, both principals and TRG leaders defined CL as the

implementation of the school-based curriculum.

There were some differences. Findings indicated that principals viewed CL as

the whole construction of a course, which approached it from a higher level, whereas

TRG leaders regarded CL as specific actions related to instructional issues.

Furthermore, TRG leaders showed more understanding compared to principals. For

example, concerning curriculum design, principals defined CL as the professional

ability to control teaching quality while TRG leaders gave specific descriptions of the

ability, such as organising classroom teaching, inspiring students' motivation and

maintaining expertise.

In summary, the concept of CL was quite new to the participants, especially the

TRG leaders. However, both principals and TRG leaders had their own understandings

and descriptions. The following section will present findings related to participants'

perceptions of how TRG leaders take on the CL role at the organisational level.

5.2 Framing/Planning Goals at the Organisational Level

Research findings of participants' perceptions relating to framing goals at the

organisational level yielded two major themes, namely, *making administrative*

decisions and *instructional decisions*. The following sections present findings

emanating from these two themes

5.2.1 TRG leaders' administrative decisions at the organisational level.

This section examines findings regarding TRG leaders' autonomy in making

administrative decisions at the organisational level from three perspectives: principals'

perceptions, TRG leaders' perceptions, and a comparison of perceptions.

Principals' perceptions of TRG leaders' administrative decisions. A great deal

of the comments stemmed from three principals' perceptions (30%) that TRG leaders

had autonomy in making some administrative decisions when taking on the CL role.

These autonomous decisions involved every aspect of school affairs, such as making

performance appraisal of teachers (P7) or arranging cleaning tasks (P4). However, the

three principals (30%) admitted that TRG leaders had little power although they had

been somewhat empowered. P2 stated,

> The main power is in the principal's hand. TRG leaders can only make
>
> suggestions rather than decisions. (P2)

Despite the fact that TRG leaders' autonomy was restricted, nine principals

(90%) believed that TRG leaders' engagement in CL plays a significant part in school

development and can maintain the security and stability of school's education. P7

emphasised,

> Curriculum is the core of school running. What you want to cultivate and what
>
> unique features you want to build must be reflected through curriculum. TRG
>
> leaders are the leaders of curriculum implementation. They are familiar with the
>
> teaching context, the characteristics of the curriculum and students' learning
>
> needs. They are the main force and the foundation of school development,
>
> especially framing goals or making plans for curriculum. Thus, empowering

TRG leaders to enact CL is a determinant factor in school development. (P7)

This indicated that empowering TRG leaders with autonomy in taking administrative decisions was affirmed by principals. Hence, it was not surprising to find that five principals (50%) spoke passionately about the need for empowering TRG leaders to make administrative decisions. P2 reflected that

> The primary stage for school management is based on administrative management, and the advanced stage is academic management. Only by empowering TRG leaders could the school management system be developed, since TRG leaders are the experts in the subject areas. (P2)

In light of principals' viewpoints, TRG leaders have autonomy in making administrative decisions at the school level. The next part will examine TRG leaders' perceptions of how they take autonomous decisions for administrative affairs at the school level.

TRG leaders' perceptions of TRG leaders' administrative decisions. In this research, five TRG leaders (25%) acknowledged that they had some authority in making administrative decisions. One was making performance appraisal of teachers' performance (TRGL2, TRGL9). Another was making decisions about activities unrelated to teaching, such as preparing programmes for the New Year ceremony (TRGL15), arranging teachers to take sports meetings (TRGL9) or attending Party lectures (TRGL5). TRG leaders' autonomy in making administrative decisions was also evident in the meeting observations. In OM1, TRG leaders checked teachers'

attendance records before the meeting started, introduced the procedures and standards of the performance appraisal to teachers, and arranged cleaning tasks at the end of the meeting. According to TRG leaders' response, enacting CL involved these tasks which were unrelated to curriculum.

However, the autonomy was limited. In the interviews, 11 TRG leaders (55%) claimed that they were implementers who had to follow their superiors' orders rather than being leaders who had powers in decision-making. TRGL14 noted,

> Since I had little power in making administrative decision, it was impossible for
>
> me to force teachers to do this or to do that, such as requiring overtime work.
>
> (TRGL14)

It can be confirmed that TRG leaders tended to be dissatisfied with the level of their autonomy since the ability to take autonomous decisions was only with principal's permission. TRGL1 gave an explanation of this phenomenon:

> Teachers' engagement in CL is impossible in the Chinese education system
>
> since a hierarchy exists within the schooling system. (TRGL1)

Although TRG leaders acknowledged that they have less autonomy, they still regarded being empowered with autonomy in taking administrative decisions as important. In this research, eight TRG leaders (40%) indicated that TRG leaders participating in CL played a significant part in school development. TRGL17 commented that

> Teaching and researching is the core of the foundation of school development.

TRG leaders' engagement in CL is the mainstay of teaching and researching.

Therefore, empowering TRG leaders to take on the CL role prompts school

development. (TRGL17)

In conclusion, a great deal of the comments made by TRG leaders revolved

around reflections that TRG leaders had limited autonomy in making administrative

decisions at the organisational level. The next part will take a closer look at the

similarities and differences in participants' perceptions of TRG leaders' administrative

decisions.

Comparison of perceptions of TRG leaders' administrative decisions. The

following will illustrate the similarities and differences between principals' and TRG

leaders' conceptions related to TRG leaders' autonomy in making administrative

decisions at the organisational level.
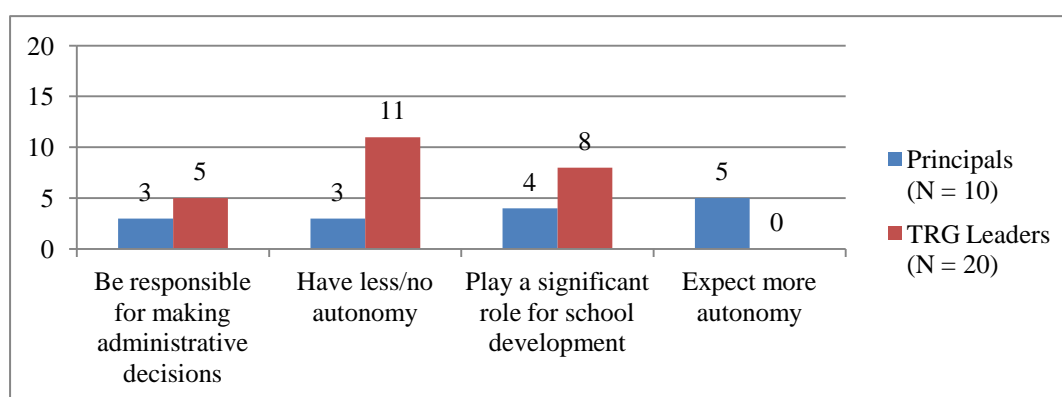
Figure 4. Participants' perceptions of TRG leaders' administrative decisions

As can be seen from Figure 4, both principals and TRG leaders agreed that TRG

leaders are responsible for making administrative decisions at the school level.

However, it was mentioned by both principals and TRG leaders that TRG leaders had

limited autonomy. For example, TRG leaders were identified as not only being in charge of making performance appraisal for teachers, but also responsible for taking on other tasks unrelated to teaching affairs. Furthermore, both principals and TRG leaders confirmed that TRG leaders' engagement in CL brought benefits to school development.

Concerning the dissimilarities, there were slight differences between principals' perceptions and TRG leaders' perceptions in that principals provided less information compared to TRG leaders. Principals indicated that TRG leaders only arranged cleaning tasks for teachers, whereas TRG leaders stated that they took lots of responsibilities including making performance appraisals or preparing programmes. Moreover, it was noticed that when referring to TRG leaders having no autonomy in making administrative decisions, principal respondents only mentioned the problems in a general way. In contrast, TRG leaders not only mentioned this phenomenon but gave detailed explanations. Furthermore, one striking finding was that only principals expected TRG leaders to have more autonomy in taking administrative decisions.

To conclude, TRG leaders were found to have limited and restricted autonomy in making administrative decisions at the school level. The next section will examine findings of TRG leaders' autonomy in making instructional decisions at the school level.

5.2.2 TRG leaders' instructional decisions at the organisational level.

Research findings indicated that TRG leaders not only made administrative decisions,

but also made instructional decisions at the school level. This section explores how participants perceive TRG leaders taking micro-control over curriculum matters at the organisational level. Findings will be presented in accordance with principals' perceptions, TRG leaders' perceptions and a comparison of participants' perceptions of TRG leaders' instructional decisions.

Principals' perceptions of TRG leaders' instructional decisions. Three principals (30%) acknowledged that TRG leaders could make instructional decisions, especially about the school-based curriculum. To be specific, they claimed that TRG leaders led the design and development of the overall curriculum for their subject area. P8 stated,

> TRG leaders are not only in charge of curriculum matters, but also teaching and researching activities. (P8)

Findings obtained from the documents also demonstrated that TRG leaders had autonomy in making instructional decisions at the whole school level. For example, it was stipulated in DJD6 that TRG leaders were responsible for leading the direction of the subject area and creating a feasible work plan for curriculum development.

On the other hand, all principals identified that TRG leaders had no power or no autonomy in making instructional decisions on the national curriculum. P3 noted,

> TRG leaders must follow the guidance of the three-level curriculum management system when taking on the CL role, which means they have no power at all. (P3)

In terms of the problems of scant TRG power in making instructional decisions, five principals (50%) expressed their hopes of empowering TRG leaders with more autonomy in taking instructional initiatives. P4 stated,

TRG leaders must have absolute power in dealing with curriculum matters thus leading curriculum development. (P4)

In summary, TRG leaders' autonomy in taking instructional initiatives was restricted and largely depended on whether the curriculum was the national curriculum or the school-based curriculum. The next part will examine TRG leaders' perceptions of autonomy in making instructional decisions at the school level.

TRG leaders' perceptions of TRG leaders' instructional decisions. Concerning TRG leaders' viewpoints, 11 TRG leaders (55%) acknowledged that they had autonomy in making instructional decisions, especially regarding the school-based curriculum. TRGL4 put it that

TRG leaders have a whole plan for the school-based curriculum. They can decide whether the lesson preparation is suitable for teaching and learning or not, and can select teaching content and teaching sources for the school-based curriculum. (TRGL4)

Furthermore, the meeting observation also revealed that TRG leaders could make autonomous decisions about instructional issues. In MO2, TRG leaders were seen to have power in arranging instructional affairs, such as working out a detailed plan for the collective lesson preparation, or solving problems in teaching.

On the contrary, concerning autonomy in making decisions for the national

curriculum, all TRG leaders reported that they had no power in making instructional

decisions, such as choosing the teaching content, selecting the teaching materials or

arranging the teaching schedule. TRGL19 stated,

> TRG leaders have no power in enacting CL in that they must follow the
>
> guidance of the three-level curriculum management system. (TRGL19)

It can be argued that TRG leaders' autonomy in taking instructional initiatives

for the national curriculum is restricted by the policy of three-level curriculum

management. This policy plays a guiding role for TRG leaders' initiative in relation to

curriculum. Furthermore, TRGL7 noted that TRG leaders' autonomy does not match

their ambitions since they have no power.

In a word, the findings reflected that TRG leaders had limited and restricted

power in taking on the CL role. Although TRG leaders' autonomy was restricted, eight

out of the twenty TRG leaders acknowledge that teachers who participation in the CL

played significant role in school development and seven TRG leaders (35%) indicated

that it promoted the subject development. TRGL17 explained,

> Teaching and researching are the core of the foundation of school development.
>
> TRG leaders' engagement in the CL is the mainstay of teaching and researching.
>
> Therefore, the development of a school has close relationship with the
>
> implementation of CL. (TRGL17)

In light of the significance of empowering autonomy in taking instructional

decisions, a number of TRG leaders (TRGL1, TRGL7, TRGL9, TRGL13) emphasised

that they need more power in making instructional decisions. TRGL1 stated,

> *The superiors cannot always arrange tasks without empowering us.*

From TRG leaders' point of view, it can be concluded that they have little power

in making autonomous decisions for either the national curriculum or the school-based

curriculum. The next part will compare principals' and TRG leaders' perceptions of

autonomy in making instructional decisions.

Comparison of perceptions of TRG leaders' instructional decisions. Along with

participants' conceptions of TRG leaders' autonomy in making instructional decisions

at the organisational level, this section sheds light on examining the similarities and

differences in both principals' and TRG leaders' perceptions.
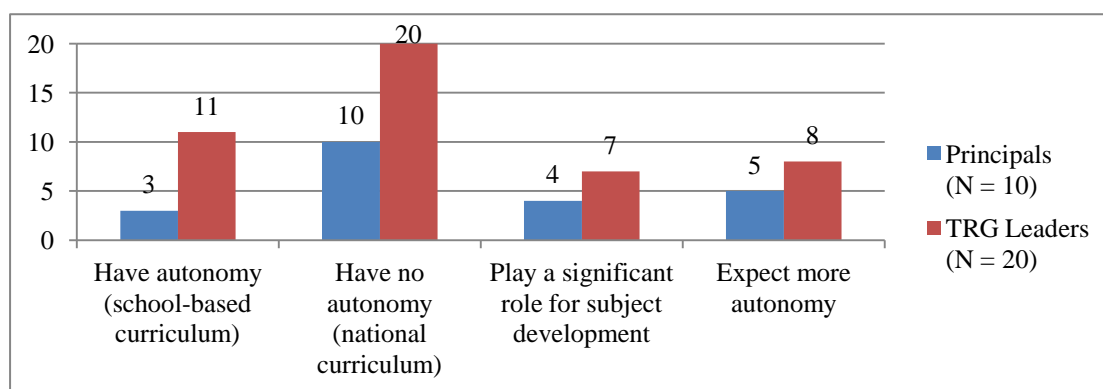
Figure 5. Participants' perceptions of TRG leaders' instructional decisions

As can be seen from Figure 5, both principals and TRG leaders agreed that TRG

leaders have autonomy in making instructional decisions, leading the direction and the

development of the curriculum, especially for the school-based curriculum. However,

findings indicate that TRG leaders have no autonomy in making instructional decisions

on the national curriculum. Regarding the significances, both principals and TRG

leaders acknowledged that empowering TRG leaders to enact CL on instructional

issues is crucial to school development, and is necessary to empower TRG leaders with

more power in all curriculum matters. As P2 explained,

> TRG leaders are the experts on the subject areas, so empowering them would be
>
> more effective for school development. (P2)

Concerning the differences in the perceptions, principals took a macro

viewpoint and noted that TRG leaders were in charge of organising teaching and

researching activities, and guiding curriculum development, whereas, TRG leaders

gave detailed explanations of their responsibilities on making instructional decisions

about the school-based curriculum, such as making a whole plan for the curriculum,

supervising lesson preparation, or making decisions on teaching content and teaching

sources. In addition, TRG leader participants also gave more detailed information about

how they had no autonomy in making instructional decisions, such as having no power

in arranging which teacher to take which classes.

It can be concluded that TRG leaders' autonomy in making instructional

decisions depends on the type of curriculum. Enacting CL enabled TRG leaders to have

more power in the school-based curriculum compared with the national curriculum.

The next section will explore findings of how TRG leaders enact CL at the classroom

level.

5.3 Coordinating Curriculum at the Classroom Level

As mentioned in the literature review chapter, teachers' engagement in CL involves a set of pedagogical initiatives which has three stages, namely, the planning stage, the implementation stage, and the evaluation stage. This section has three sub-sections for examining findings of TRG leaders' engagement in CL, at the curriculum planning stage, at the curriculum implementation stage and at the evaluation stage.

5.3.1 Enacting CL at the curriculum planning stage. This section presents findings of TRG leaders' engagement in CL at the planning stage from two perspectives, namely, TRG leaders' autonomy in the national curriculum and autonomy in the school-based curriculum.

5.3.1.1 TRG leaders' engagement in CL for national curriculum. As in the previous sections, this section presents findings from three perspectives, principals' perceptions, TRG leaders' perceptions and a comparison of the participants' perceptions.

Principals' perceptions of TRG leaders' engagement in CL for national curriculum. All principals reported the necessity of following the national curriculum standards made by the MoE. It involved following the requirements of teaching hours, teaching content and the requirements of selecting textbooks. In the documents of TRG leaders' job descriptions, it was also noted that TRG leader must follow the requirements stipulated in the national curriculum standards. Further, four documents of

job description (40%) emphasised that TRG leaders should analyse the requirements in

the national curriculum standards regularly with the purpose of better guiding teaching.

P9 commented that

> The national curriculum standards are the roadmap of teaching and are the
>
> guidance for TRG leaders to mentor teachers. (P9)

> Reflected by P9, it seems that the national curriculum standards play a key role

in guiding TRG leaders' initiatives, and to some extent restrict TRG leaders' autonomy.

P8 noted that

> The Bureau of Education checks whether schools follow the national curriculum
>
> standards or not regularly, especially taking supervision over whether the school
>
> has taught all the stipulated teaching content. (P8)

> Findings also demonstrated that the national curriculum standards have

regulations concerning the teaching content, such as what to teach or how long it would

take. P10 said that

> TRG leaders must follow the teaching content stipulated in the national
>
> curriculum standards. For example, there are 32 class hours per week which
>
> include 30 hours for the national curriculum and 2 hours for the school-based
>
> curriculum. TRG leaders have no right to change the schedule since it has been
>
> stipulated in the national curriculum standards. (P10)

> Further, findings emanating from all principals' interviews indicate that TRG

leaders cannot make autonomous decisions for teaching materials.   TRG leaders must

use designated textbooks for the national curriculum. P4 explained,

> At first, the MoE listed teaching materials which were published by Suzhou
>
> edition or PEP (People's Education Press) edition. Then the Provincial
>
> Department of Education and the Bureau of Education chose one of the above
>
> listed materials for local schools. TRG leaders have no choice but to use the
>
> materials chosen by the superior department. (P4)

The requirement of following the national curriculum standards was also

mentioned in the documents of job descriptions. Findings indicated that TRG leaders

are responsible for carefully reading the curriculum requirements (DJD2, DJD3) and

navigating the teaching by following the national curriculum standards (DJD4).

Although principals acknowledged that TRG leaders' autonomy in choosing

teaching materials is restricted, three principals (30%) emphasised that TRG leaders

should be entitled to autonomy in selecting materials. P4 addressed that

> We respect the choices that TRG leaders make in choosing teaching sources
>
> since they are more familiar with students' needs. (P4)

From principals' viewpoints, it can be concluded that TRG leaders have little or

no autonomy in making decisions for the school based curriculum. Enacting CL was

simply compliance with the national curriculum standards. The next part will examine

TRG leaders' perceptions of autonomy at the curriculum planning stage.

TRG leaders' perceptions of TRG leaders' engagement in CL for national

curriculum. In this research, all TRG leaders spoke of the necessity of following the

121

national curriculum standards. Particularly, 12 TRG leaders (60%) noted that the

national curriculum standards were fixed and they required all teachers to strictly

follow the arrangements and requirements of the national curriculum. For instance,

TRG leaders were found to have no autonomy in choosing the teaching content.

TRGL11 noted,

> TRG leaders cannot make any change in the teaching content. Teaching what
>
> content has been stipulated in the national curriculum standards. (TRGL11)
>
> Referring to teaching materials, 11 TRG leaders (55%) emphasised that they

must follow the requirements stipulated in the national curriculum standards and they

have no power in selecting or adjusting the teaching materials for the national

curriculum. TRGL15 described in detail,

> The MoE stipulates that teaching materials for Chinese courses must be
>
> published by People's Education Press (PEP) or Jiangsu Education Publishing
>
> House. The local bureau of education then selects the teaching materials from
>
> the list presented by the MoE, which are in conformity with the national
>
> curriculum requirements and approved by the State Textbook Examination and
>
> Approval Committee. (TRGL15)
>
> Participants ascribed this phenomenon to the High School Entrance

Examination and the College Entrance Examination. The autonomy of selecting the

teaching content and teaching materials was all restricted by the national curriculum

standards which led to no space for TRG leaders to make any change. TRGL6 gave her

explanation of this phenomenon,

All the teaching content in the textbooks recommended by the MoE is involved

in the examination scope. Teaching serves the examinations. It is necessary to

use the appointed teaching materials, since most students take the national

entrance examination. (TRGL6)

From viewing data collected from TRG leaders' perceptions, it can be

concluded that TRG leaders' autonomy in enacting CL is restricted by the national

curriculum standards completely. The next part will make a comparison of principals'

and TRG leaders' perceptions.

Comparison of the perceptions of TRG leaders' engagement in CL for national

curriculum. It was fascinating to find that both principals and TRG leaders provided

lots of comments on TRG leaders' autonomy in the national curriculum. The following

sections will examine the similarities and differences in their conceptions for the

purpose of understanding more about how TRG leaders enact CL for the national

curriculum at the curriculum planning stage.
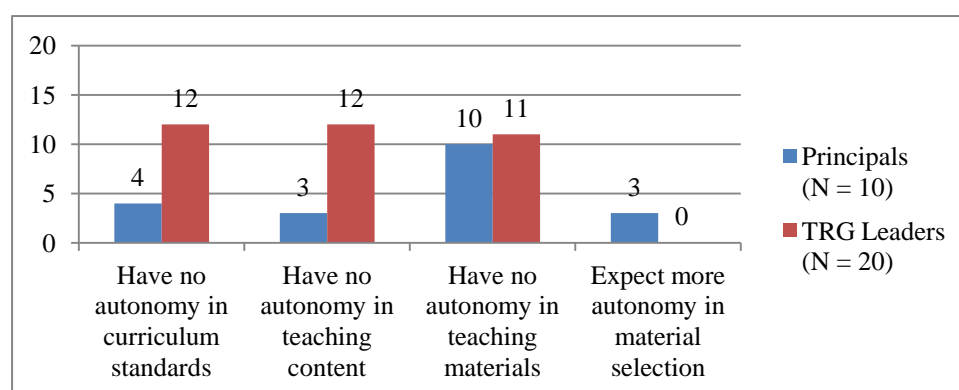
Figure 6. Participants' perceptions of autonomy in national curriculum

Concerning the similarities in the findings, both principals and TRG leaders indicated that TRG leaders must follow the requirements stipulated in the national curriculum standards made by the MoE (see Figure 6). Not only because the national curriculum standards have strong relationship with the testing content in the entrance examinations, but also there were inspections on the implementation of the national curriculum standards held by the local bureau of education. Furthermore, it can be seen from Figure 6 that both principals and teachers shared the view that teaching content and teaching materials for the national curriculum are fixed and stipulated by the MoE. TRG leaders thus cannot make autonomous decisions on what to teach and what textbooks to use for the national curriculum when taking on the CL role.

As for the differences, there were two differences in the perceptions. First, one unexpected finding was that only principals expected TRG leaders to have more autonomy in material selection (see Figure 6). Second, when explaining why TRG leaders' must follow national curriculum standards, principals' focus was the supervision conducted by the education administration departments at national and provincial/local levels. TRG leaders' explanation, however, focused on the entrance examination which had more relation to the authentic teaching context. The next part will examine TRG leaders' autonomy in school-based curriculum at the curriculum planning stage.

5.3.1.2 TRG leaders' engagement in CL for school-based curriculum. This part mainly examines principals' and TRG leaders' perceptions of TRG leaders'

autonomy in taking initiatives for the school-based curriculum. Further, it makes a

comparison of the perceptions on this issue.

   Principals' perceptions of TRG leaders' engagement in CL for school-based

curriculum. Concerning TRG leaders' autonomy in taking on the CL role, seven out of

the ten principals indicated that TRG leaders had more or less power in making

autonomous decisions for the school-based curriculum, such as making instructional

plans and selecting instructional materials, in accordance with students' learning

abilities and needs. As P8 described it:

> Making a lesson plan functions as a guideline for effective teaching and
>
> learning, since the design of the plan is based on taking teaching context and
>
> students' learning abilities into consideration. (P8)

   P8 argued that TRG leaders' had more autonomy in the school-based

curriculum compared to the national curriculum. Furthermore, six principals (60%)

indicated that TRG leaders were in charge of guiding teachers and the Lesson

Preparation Group to write lesson plans, plan and design teaching schedules and hours

distributions, and arrange equipment courses, quizzes or examinations.

   As for autonomy in selecting teaching materials, eight principals (80%)

acknowledged that TRG leaders could make autonomous decisions in selecting and

adopting instructional materials and supplementary teaching materials for the

school-based curriculum. P2 noted,

> Being the principal, I always empower and encourage TRG leaders to develop

their own teaching resources and I respect their choices. (P2)

It noted that principal participants were more supportive in empowering TRG leaders to take on the CL role. In particular, five principals (50%) wished TRG leaders could have more powers in choosing teaching materials and supplementing materials for the school based curriculum.

Furthermore, TRG leaders' autonomy in the school-based curriculum was also evident in the documents of job descriptions. For example, it was stipulated in the DJD2 and DJD4 that TRG leaders should be in charge of arranging and guiding teachers to make teaching plans which included the learning progress, examination arrangements and the in-class experiment arrangements.

To conclude, TRG leaders had more autonomy in the school-based curriculum from principals' viewpoints. Next, TRG leaders' perceptions of autonomy in taking initiatives for the school-based curriculum will be examined.

TRG leaders' perceptions of TRG leaders' engagement in CL for school-based curriculum. Findings collected from TRG leaders' interviews (90%) demonstrated that there were no unified curriculum standards for the school-based curriculum. All TRG leaders acknowledged that TRG leaders had relatively more autonomy in making decisions for the school-based curriculum involving teaching content, instruction plans and textbook selection. Particularly, 10 TRG leaders (50%) addressed that they made their own instruction plans in accordance with students' ability, such as how to allocate time for various knowledge points or what teaching approaches to use to teach different

knowledge points. Furthermore, TRG leaders noted that they had autonomy in organising teachers or the Lesson Preparation Group to discuss how to design and formulate the instruction plans.

Moreover, nine TRG leaders (45%) indicated that TRG leaders had more autonomy in selecting teaching materials and supplementary materials for the school-based curriculum. For one thing, they could select teaching materials which were suitable for teaching context. For another, TRG leaders had autonomy in integrating teaching materials which enabled learners to have a better understanding of the teaching content. TRGL6 gave an explanation,

> When opening the Literary Appreciation course, I added classical literature as Tao Te Ching into the teaching content of this course, though this content was not illustrated in the national curriculum teaching materials. (TRGL6)

The above data of TRG leaders' perceptions indicated that there was more space and autonomy for TRG leaders to enact CL for the school-based curriculum. The next part will explore the similarities and differences in participants' perceptions of TRG leaders' autonomy in the school-based curriculum when taking on the CL role.

Comparison of perceptions of TRG leaders' engagement in CL for school-based curriculum. The following figure illustrates principals' and TRG leaders' similarities and differences in their understanding of TRG leaders' autonomy in taking initiatives for the school-based curriculum at the planning stage.
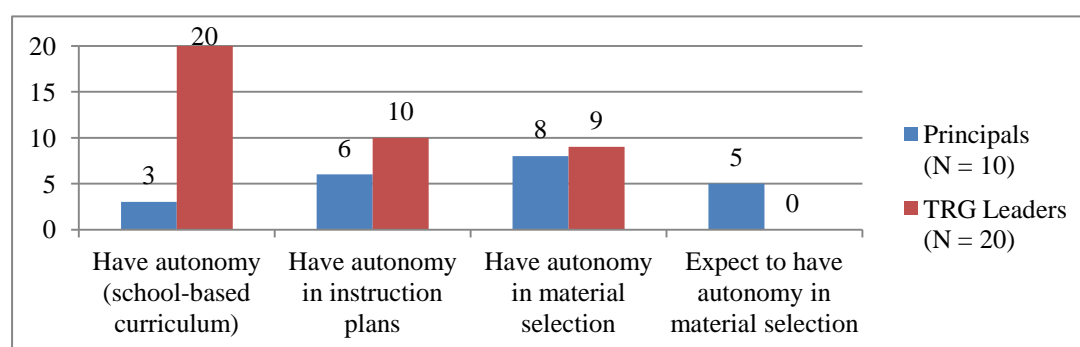
Figure 7. Participants' perceptions of TRG leaders' engagement in CL for school-based curriculum

Concerning the similarities in the findings, the perceptions derived from both principals and TRG leaders showed that TRG leaders had autonomy in making decisions in relation to the school-based curriculum, which was in accordance with students' needs. In particular, TRG leaders were empowered with more autonomy in formulating the instruction plans and selecting the teaching materials for the school-based curriculum.

As for the differences, findings showed that TRG leaders had more understanding when being compared with principals' perceptions. For example, principals provided less information about TRG leaders' autonomy in choosing teaching materials than TRG leaders'. TRG leaders mentioned that TRG leaders had autonomy in adopting or designing both textbooks and supplementary materials while principals only mentioned TRG leaders' autonomy in selecting textbooks. Moreover, it was interesting to notice that principals indicated that TRG leaders should have autonomy in choosing the teaching materials whereas TRG leaders did not mention this issue.

In a word, at the curriculum planning stage, TRG leaders' autonomy in taking instructional initiatives for the national curriculum was restricted. However, TRG leaders had more authority in making autonomous decisions for the school-based curriculum. The next section will identify findings of TRG leaders' engagement in CL at the curriculum implementation stage.

5.3.2 Enacting CL at the curriculum implementation stage. The second stage of making decisions for the CL was the implementation stage. This section introduces findings of how principals and TRG leaders perceive TRG leaders' engagement in CL in classroom teaching at the implementation stage and makes a comparison of their perceptions.

Principals' perceptions of TRG leaders' engagement in CL at the curriculum implementation stage. In this research, five principals (50%) emphasised that TRG leaders have extensive autonomy in classroom teaching for both the national and school-based curriculum. P5 reflected,

> TRG leaders can arrange what to teach first and what to teach next, and can adjust the degree of difficulties or easiness to meet students' learning abilities and learning needs. (P5)

Data of principals' points of view indicated that TRG leaders had great autonomy at the curriculum implementation stage. The next part will examine TRG leaders' viewpoints.

TRG leaders' perceptions of TRG leaders' engagement in CL at the curriculum

implementation stage. With regard to TRG leaders' perceptions, 13 TRG leaders (65%)

indicated that TRG leaders were empowered with large autonomy in classroom

teaching not only for the national curriculum but also the school-based curriculum.

Findings indicated that autonomy in class arrangement mainly involved the following

issues:

how to add some contents to suit students' needs (TRGL16);

teach what knowledge point first and what to be the second (TRGL2,TRGL4,

TRGL6);

what content to put into the optional course (TRGL6);

how to integrate the content for students' to be prepared for the examinations

(TRGL6);

how to teach (TRGL3, TRGL4, TRGL6, TRGL9);

how to inspire students' motivation (TRGL11);

how to control the pace of teaching (TRGL7).

In addition, findings in the documents related to TRG leaders' performance

summaries reflected that TRG leaders had more autonomy in classroom teaching. It

was found that eight documents of performance summary (80%) reported issues related

to TRG leaders' engagement in CL in classroom teaching. For example, in DPS2 and

DPS4, the participants mainly reported how they taught, what pedagogy they adopted,

how they motivated students in learning, and how they cultivated students' innovative

ability.

In summary, TRG leaders' perceptions showed that they had more autonomy in

making decisions at the curriculum implementation stage. The following part will make

a comparison of participants' perceptions relating to TRG leaders' autonomy at this

stage.

Comparison of perceptions of TRG leaders' engagement in CL at the

curriculum implementation stage. It was noticeable that a number of participants

commented on TRG leaders' autonomy in taking initiatives at the curriculum

implementation stage. The following will explore the similarities and differences in

depth to provide more detail.
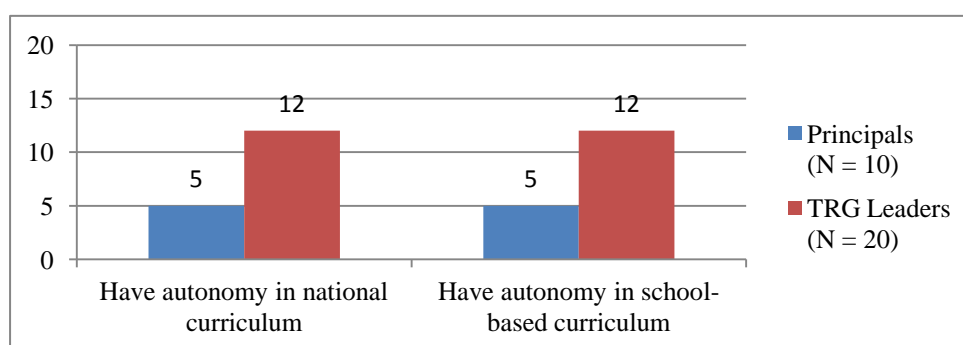
Figure 8. Participants' perceptions of TRG leaders' engagement in CL at the
curriculum implementation stage

As can be seen from Figure 8, both principals and TRG leaders acknowledged

that the largest power for TRG leaders to enact CL was in classroom teaching for both

the national curriculum and school-based curriculum. Both principals and TRG leaders

put forward that TRG leaders had autonomy in arranging which knowledge points to

teach first and which to be next. Further, principals and TRG leaders share in common

that being empowered with autonomy in classroom teaching was helpful for improving

teaching quality.

As for the differences, TRG leaders gave more information compared to principals'. For example, in TRG leaders' viewpoints, autonomy in classroom teaching involved adjusting the sequence of teaching content, adding suitable content in class teaching, integrating the teaching content, deciding the appropriate teaching approaches, inspiring students' motivation in learning and controlling the pace of teaching. Besides mentioning the item of adjusting the sequence of content, however, principals only indicated that class arrangement included adjusting the degree of difficulty and ease of the teaching content.

It can be concluded that TRG leaders had extensive and large autonomy in taking instructional initiatives at the implementation stage.   There were no differences between the national curriculum and the school-based curriculum. The following section will probe findings relating to TRG leaders' engagement in CL at the curriculum evaluation stage.

5.3.3 Enacting CL at the curriculum evaluation stage. This section presents findings relating to principals' perceptions, TRG leaders' perceptions of how TRG leaders enact CL at the curriculum evaluation stage and also makes a comparison of respondents' perceptions.

Principals' perceptions of TRG leaders' engagement in CL at the curriculum evaluation stage. All principals acknowledged that TRG leaders had more autonomy in taking teaching and researching activities at the curriculum evaluation stage. It was

composed of holding workshops for reflecting teaching practice (P1), arranging peer

class observation for evaluating teaching and learning outcomes (P1, P8, P10), and

discussing the use of teaching approaches (P3, P4).

In addition, it was found that all the documents of job descriptions required

TRG leaders to guide, organise and conduct research activities. For example, in DJD3,

TRG leaders were empowered to renew the plan for teaching and researching activities

every three years.

Affirmed by P4 and P5, empowering TRG leaders to take initiatives relating to

teaching and researching ensures the effectiveness of teaching and enhances the

learning outcomes.

In summary, findings indicated that TRG leaders' autonomy at the curriculum

evaluation stage mainly focused on taking teaching and researching initiatives. The

next part will explore TRG leaders' perspectives.

TRG leaders' perceptions of TRG leaders' engagement in CL at the curriculum

*evaluation stage.* All TRG leaders noted that they could make autonomous decisions in

conducting teaching and researching activities. TRG leaders mentioned various kinds

of initiatives that include conducting seminars or workshops to discuss how to

implement curriculum reform to satisfy students' needs, organising teachers to prepare

lessons together, analysing the national curriculum standards, the examination syllabus

and examination papers, discussing the appropriate teaching approaches, analysing the

current trends in teaching, organising peer class observation and making evaluations for

teaching, and evaluating students' learning and guiding teachers on marking students'

assignments (see Table 10). In addition, TRG leaders indicated that they were

responsible for the research projects.

Table 10
Teaching and Researching Initiatives Taken by TRG Leaders

Teaching and Researching Initiatives	N
Hold seminar/workshop on curriculum reform	13
Analyse national curriculum standards/ teaching materials/examinations; Discuss teaching approaches;	4
Analyse the current trends in teaching	4
Conduct research projects	3
Organise class observation & evaluation	2
Guide teachers on marking students' assignments	1

In the documents of the performance summaries (DPS6, DPS8), TRG leaders

pointed out that they always made evaluations after the class observation or

examinations. Further, TRG leaders' autonomy in taking initiatives at the curriculum

evaluation stage was also identified in MO3. In MO3, TRG leaders arranged teachers to

observe a 45-minute class and then make class evaluation. This kind of post-evaluation

meeting was held weekly which aimed at reflecting and dealing with problems in

teaching, and sharing teaching experiences among peers. It can be seen that TRG

leaders had extensive autonomy in arranging curriculum evaluation.

However, it was emphasised by 14 TRG leaders (70%) that there are no unified

criteria for TRG leaders to take as a reference when making evaluations. TRGL7

indicated,

The criteria for evaluation are based on our knowledge and experiences. There

are no specific or unified criteria for curriculum evaluation. (TRGL7)

It is noted that although TRG leaders have autonomy in making curriculum

evaluation, there are no criteria for them to take as a reference. TRG leaders still had to

face difficulties when making curriculum evaluation. Nevertheless, six TRG leaders

(30%) emphasised that empowering with autonomy to organise and conduct teaching

and researching activities holds the key for school development, individual

development, and ultimately promotes students' learning.

It can be concluded from TRG leaders' perceptions that enacting CL enables

TRG leaders to have more autonomy in taking autonomous decisions in teaching and

researching activities.   The next part will take a close look at the similarities and

differences between principals' and TRG leaders' perceptions of TRG leaders'

involvement in CL at the curriculum evaluation stage.

Comparison of perceptions of TRG leaders' engagement in CL at the

curriculum evaluation stage. Similarly, principals and TRG leaders shared in common

perceptions that TRG leaders have autonomy in organising, arranging and making

decisions on conducting teaching and researching activities. In particular, the

curriculum evaluation initiatives are involved in the teaching and researching activities,

such as evaluating teaching performance of in-class teaching, evaluating learning

outcomes and reflecting on teaching approaches in accordance with the teaching

context. Furthermore, both principals and TRG leaders agreed that TRG leaders'

engagement in CL ensured the implementation of the teaching and researching

activities and prompted the improvement of teaching and researching.

Dissimilarly, TRG leaders have more understanding about how they make

autonomous decisions on teaching and researching initiatives. Besides all the items

mentioned by the principals, TRG leaders added that TRG leaders' engagement in CL

in teaching and researching involved guiding teachers on marking students'

assignments and preparing lessons. Further, concerning the difficulties, TRG leaders

presented that there were no evaluation criteria. However, principals did not give any

description of this issue.

In conclusion, conducting teaching and researching initiatives are part of TRG

leaders' autonomy in taking on the CL role, especially evaluating teaching and learning.

Having examined TRG leaders' engagement in CL at the classroom level, it can be

found that TRG leaders' autonomy is relatively less. The next section will examine

findings of how TRG leaders' enact the CL at the social relationship level.

5.4 TRG Leaders' Relationships with the Stakeholders

CL is defined as the engagement and interaction between individuals and their

organisational context (Wiles, 2008). In this section, findings will be presented from

three aspects, namely, relationship with the superiors, relationship with the

subordinates and relationship with other stakeholders.

5.4.1 TRG leaders' relationships with the superiors. The following sections

present findings from principals' perspectives, TRG leaders' perspectives and a

comparison of the perspectives of relationship with their superiors.

Principals' perceptions of TRG leaders' relationships with the superiors.

During the interview, nine principals (90%) indicated that TRG leaders have

relationships with their superiors including building and maintaining the relations with

the principals, deputy principals, Teaching and Researching Centre and the Office of

Academic affairs. P6 described,

> TRG leaders seldom go to the principal with emergent or important issues. They
>
> always communicate with the deputy principal who is in charge of teaching
>
> affairs, such as reporting teaching achievements at the end of every semester.
>
> (P6)

From principals' statements, it can be identified that building relationships with

superiors mainly focus on communicating with deputy principals and other

administrators rather than the principals. Furthermore, six principals (60%) emphasised

that TRG leaders always communicate directly with the Teaching and Research Centre

and communicate with the Office of Academic affairs for curriculum matters, such as

submitting a working plan. In addition, findings collected from the documents of job

descriptions (DJD5) also stipulated that TRG leaders are in charge of the teaching and

researching affairs under the lead of Teaching and Researching Centre.

However, four principals (40%) reported that TRG leaders obtain insufficient

support from superiors which has led to TRG leaders becoming more inactive,

unmotivated, and with less responsibilities when enacting CL. In a number of the

interviews, three principals (30%) complained that they were willing to support TRG leaders but with no power. P4 stated,

> We cannot provide enough platforms for TRG leaders to go out and take trainings, since there are many regulations for outside trainings. For example, the local government requires the documents for training must be with the red tape. It would be a violation of government regulation on training programmes, if TRG leaders or I cannot provide the official documents. So, we seldom allow teachers to go outside to participate in meetings or trainings. We do not want to make trouble. (P4)

P4's statement confirmed that principals are willing to support TRG leaders and give more autonomy to TRG leaders. However, principals' autonomy was also restricted by some regulations or policy made by the government. Further, P7 noted,

> There are no funds for TRG leaders to go outside. And even the principals have no power in allocating the funds. Therefore, TRG leaders seldom communicate with us and apply for taking outside trainings, since they think it would be useless even we knew. (P7)

Comments made by P7 also illustrated that principals' autonomy is restricted by the actual inability to support TRG leaders. It can be concluded that enacting CL involves building and maintaining relationships with superiors. Meanwhile, there are difficulties for TRG leaders to communicate with superiors. The next part will examine

TRG leaders' viewpoints relating the relationships with the superiors.

TRG leaders' perceptions of TRG leaders' relationships with the superiors. In the findings, 13 TRG leaders (65%) acknowledged that they always communicate with the deputy principals who are in charge of teaching affairs. TRG leaders not only communicate on teaching issues, but also on unrelated teaching issues. For instance, TRGL12 said,

> We communicate with the deputy principal on how to award teachers who have
>
> excellent teaching performance. (TRGL12)

> Further, TRGL14 and TRGL13 pointed out that they request approval for leave

from the deputy principal when teachers have personal or health problems. These

statements also confirm that TRG leaders have close communication with the deputy

principals.

Concerning relationships with the principals, TRG leaders addressed that they

seldom directly communicate with the principals unless something is urgent.

In addition, 10 TRG leaders (50%) stated that they have close connection with

the Teaching and Research Centre on teaching on researching issues and with the

Office of Academic Affairs on curriculum matters. TRGL4 stated that

> We report the teaching and researching objectives to the Teaching and
>
> Researching Centre at the beginning of the semester and report the
>
> accomplishment of objectives at the end of the semester. We reflect problems or
>
> provide suggestions to the Office of Academic Affairs, such as suggesting

teacher arrangements for teaching. (TRGL4)

Whereas, ten TRG leaders (50%) mentioned that they get insufficient spiritual

and material support from the principals which makes them disappointed and inactive

when taking on the CL role. TRGL2 noted that

Being the TRG leader is a thankless job that we seldom got inspiring or even

any verbal praise from the superiors. (TRGL2)

It could infer that TRG leaders are dissatisfied with the status quo. Furthermore,

eight TRG leaders (40%) complained that they get pressure from principals. TRGL4

stated,

Usually, the superiors seldom communicate with us actively and they do not

really care about what happens within the groups. But when problems emerge,

TRG leaders always get blamed and questioned by the superiors. (TRGL4)

In summary, TRG leaders have close relationships with superiors, especially the

deputy principals, the Teaching and Researching Centre and the Office of Academic

Affairs, for different purposes.   Next, a comparison will be made to explore in depth

the similarities and differences in participants' perceptions.

Comparison of perceptions of TRG leaders' relationships with the superiors.

Regarding the similarities in their perceptions, both principals and TRG leaders

acknowledged that TRG leaders have relationships with the principals, deputy

principals, Teaching and Researching Centre and the Office of Academic Affairs (See

Figure 9). In particular, principals and TRG leaders agreed that TRG leaders always

communicate with the deputy principals who are in charge of teaching affairs. As can

be seen from Figure 9, both principals and TRG leaders share in common that TRG

leaders get insufficient support from the principals which leads to TRG leaders

becoming inactive, unmotivated, and with less responsibilities when taking   on the CL

role.
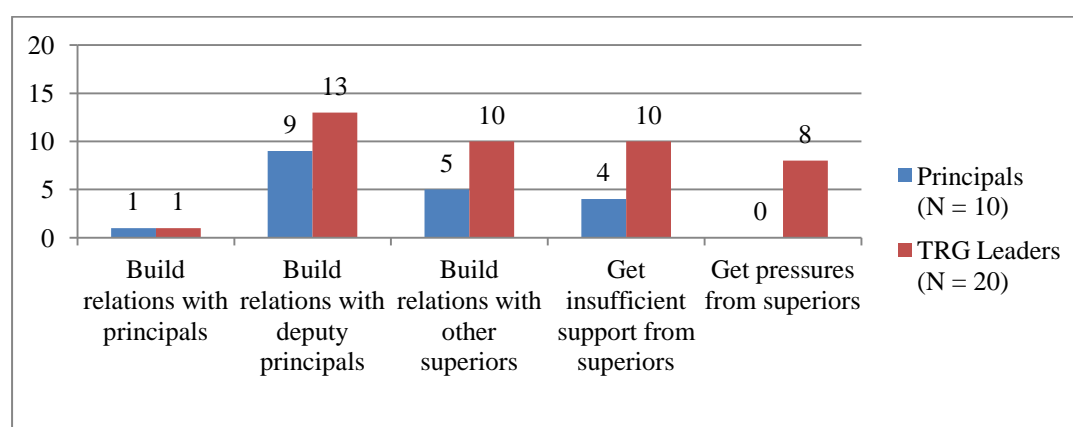
Figure 9. Participants' perceptions of TRG leaders' relationships with the superiors

As for the differences, it was found that principals' focuses differ from TRG

leaders'. One striking finding was that TRG leaders emphasised that they cannot get

both spiritual and material support from principals. However, principal participants did

not mention this issue. Another finding was that principals emphasised the rationales

behind the problems. For example, principals indicated that they cannot provide

sufficient support to TRG leaders because of regulations or lack of funds. However,

TRG leaders just stated that they could not get both spiritual and material support but

did not explain the underlying reasons.

In summary, when taking on the CL role, TRG leaders build relationships with

the superiors for different purposes. The next section will examine findings of the

relationship with the subordinates when enacting CL.

      5.4.2 TRG leaders' relationships with subordinates. In accordance with the

research questions, this section introduces findings from three aspects, namely,

principals' perceptions, TRG leaders' perceptions and a comparison of participants'

perceptions.

      Principals' perceptions of TRG leaders' relationships with subordinates.

Findings from all principals' interviews and all documents of job descriptions indicate

that TRG leaders work with their colleagues closely by sharing experiences, solving

problems, and providing guidance and support in teaching. P8 indicated,

      TRG leaders cooperate with teachers to discuss teaching issues such as teaching

      progress, teaching approaches or teaching experiences. (P8)

      It can be noted that TRG leaders play a key role in managing and guiding

teaching activities. In the documents, TRG leaders are required to take responsibilities

to share knowledge and skills of teaching (DJD2, DJD6, DJD7) and help teachers to

solve problems in teaching and give suggestions (DJD6, DJD9).

      Furthermore, six out of the ten principals indicated that TRG leaders are in

charge of teachers' development, such as encouraging teachers to take part in

competitions to practice their teaching skills, giving comments and suggestions on

rehearsals for demonstration classes, and supervising teachers' attendance of peer class

observation.

However, five principals (50%) put forward that the atmosphere among teachers is unmotivated which brings difficulties to TRG leaders when enacting CL. In particular, elderly teachers are inactive and unenthusiastic. P1 identified,

The elderly teachers do not want to pursue further development since they will retire after 3-5 years. (P1)

Data of principals' viewpoints indicated that TRG leaders mainly have relationships with subordinates for providing guidance, sharing experiences and solving problems in teaching. The next part will examine TRG leaders' perspectives relating to the relations with subordinates.

TRG leaders' perceptions of TRG leaders' relationships with subordinates.
Concerning relationships with subordinates, 15 TRG leaders (75%) viewed TRG leaders' engagement in CL as playing an important role in building relationships with subordinates. As can be seen from Figure 10, 17 TRG leaders (85%) acknowledged that they have autonomy in providing guidance on teaching, which involves guiding lesson preparation, designing examination papers and analysing curriculum standards. Meanwhile, 16 TRG leaders (80%) addressed that TRG leaders take responsibilities for teachers' development, especially mentoring young teachers. TRG leaders were identified to be responsible for examining teachers' study notes of peer class observation (TRGL10), checking teachers' reflection of reading (TRGL19) and supervising teachers to submit lesson plans (TRGL16). Furthermore, 14 TRG leaders (70%) noted that enacting CL includes sharing teaching experiences, new information

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on examination, new teaching concepts and teaching sources with peers. In the documents of the performance summaries, 12 TRG leaders (60%) reported that they are responsible for mentoring teaching, sharing experiences with teachers and promoting teacher development. TRGL14 mentioned,

> TRG leaders learn new things (e.g., flipped classroom, microlecture) in the middle-level trainings firstly, then share with teachers in the teaching and researching activities. (TRGL14)

Moreover, TRG leaders were identified to be responsible for solving problems and building up a harmonious culture for peer communication. Findings emanating from the meeting observation also demonstrated that TRG leaders play a pivotal role in teacher development. For instance, in MO4, the TRG leader shared new information about training outside school and encouraged young teachers to attend the training programmes to pursue continual professional development. In this meeting, the TRG leaders also encouraged teachers to participate in the Teaching Competition and promised to offer supportive assistance. It was fascinating to notice that enacting CL enabled TRG leaders to have autonomy in mentoring teachers.
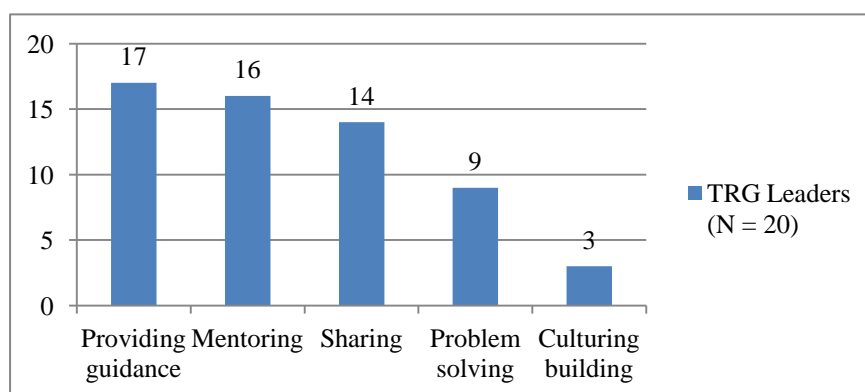
Figure 10. TRG leaders' responsibilities of building relationships with subordinates

On the other hand, 14 TRG leaders (70%) noted that the atmosphere among teachers is unmotivated that brings difficulties to TRG leaders when enacting CL. For instance, TRGL16 said,

Communication makes me feel tired since when I assign tasks to teachers, they

are inactive. (TRGL16)

In particular, the findings show that TRG leaders have difficulty in managing young teachers. For example, five TRG leaders (25%) identified that young teachers are inactive in participating in group activities. TRGL5 addressed that

Young teachers have procrastination if you do not push them. (TRGL5)

Meanwhile, some TRG leaders acknowledged that leading elderly teachers to take part in the teaching and researching activities is not easy. TRGL5 explained,

Some elderly teachers do not want to undertake duties since they are not

interested in new things and want to be stable. (TRGL5)

In TRG leaders' viewpoints, TRG leaders are empowered with large autonomy in maintaining relations with subordinates. However, identified by TRG leaders, there

are challenges in building relationships with peers. The next part will make a

comparison of participants' perceptions.

     Comparison of perceptions of TRG leaders' relationships with the subordinates.

Figure 11 illustrates both principals' and TRG leaders' perceptions of building and

maintaining relationships with subordinates within the school when enacting CL.

Regarding the similarities in their perceptions, first, principals and TRG leaders put

forward that TRG leaders guide teachers in teaching. Second, all participants agreed

that TRG leaders are responsible for encouraging and mentoring teachers, especially

young teachers. Third, participants share in common that TRG leaders not only share

teaching experiences with teachers, but also solve problems that teachers encounter in

teaching. Meanwhile, both principals and teachers acknowledge that the atmosphere

among teachers is unmotivated and inactive which brings troubles to TRG leaders

when enacting CL. In particular, they agree that the elderly teachers are unenthusiastic

in taking activities.
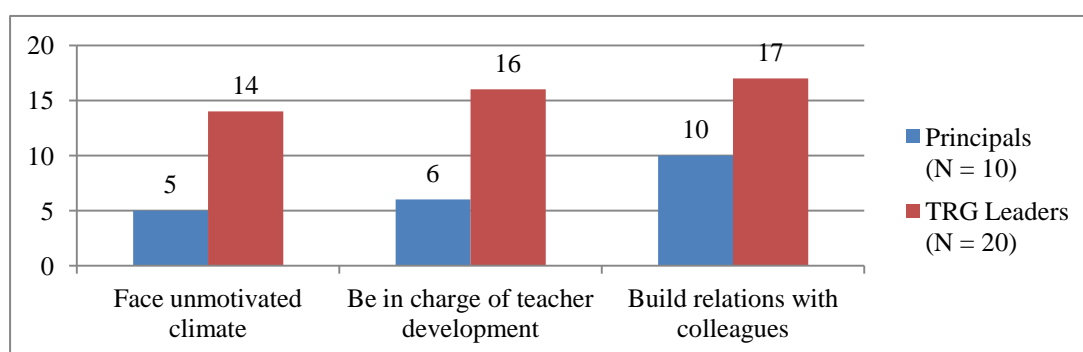
Figure 11. Participants' perceptions of TRG leaders' relationships with subordinates

     There are slight difference between principals' perceptions and TRG leaders'

perceptions. For example, principals introduced TRG leaders' responsibilities from a

macro perspective, such as providing tactic and useful guidance, organising teachers to

take teaching initiatives. On the other hand, TRG leaders provided more detailed

information on how they help teachers in teaching. For instance, they indicated that

TRG leaders encourage teachers to take demonstration classes, open classes, they

supervise teachers on submitting the reflection of reading or lesson plans, and they

share new information on examination, teaching concepts or teaching sources and

cultivate teachers' reading habits.

In conclusion, TRG leaders have more autonomy in building and maintaining

relations with subordinates. However, the atmosphere is rather inactive which brings

difficulties for TRG leaders to enact CL. The next section will examine TRG leaders'

autonomy in building relations with stakeholders outside the school.

5.4.3 TRG leaders' relationships with stakeholders outside the school. This

section probes the findings of principals' perceptions and TRG leaders' perceptions of

how TRG leaders build relations with stakeholders outside school and makes a

comparison of their perceptions related to this issue.

Principals' perceptions of TRG leaders' relationships with stakeholders outside

the school. In principals' interviews, two principals (20%) acknowledged that TRG

leaders take responsibilities for building relationships with parents, other schools or

educational experts outside the school. P9 said,

RG leaders should use personal convenience to connect experts and gain

teaching experiences from communication. (P9)

Furthermore, in the documents of job descriptions (DJD1), it was found that TRG leaders are responsible for inviting experts to guide teaching and researching activities with the purpose of consolidating teaching knowledge and deepening understandings in teaching.

However, principals acknowledge that TRG leaders' initiatives cannot get support from parents, especially when they take initiatives for developing school-based curriculum. P9 explained,

> The society holds a utilitarianism view on learning. Most parents do not accept activities unrelated with national curriculum. They just want to take the activities or courses which are helpful for the entrance examination. (P9)

Findings in some principals' (e.g., P4, P5, P7) interviews and the documents of job descriptions (DJD1, DJD5) show that TRG leaders should actively build up connections with other schools to share teaching experiences or to obtain updated information relating to teaching and examination.

In conclusion, principals viewed building relationship with other stakeholders outside the school as TRG leaders' responsibility when taking on the CL role. The next part will examine TRG leaders' perceptions on relationship with other stakeholders.

TRG leaders' perceptions of TRG leaders' relationships with stakeholders outside the school. Findings emanating from 19 TRG leaders' (95%) perceptions demonstrated TRG leaders seldom connect with other learning organisations but

always communicate with the local educational bureau for attending the middle-level

trainings. TRGL5 explained,

> We have no channel and we do not know when and where the educational
>
> trainings are held. (TRGL5)

All TRG leaders stated that the most frequent connecting channel is the local

educational bureau which holds middle-level trainings every year for TRG leaders.

TRG leaders mentioned that the trainings are mainly related to teaching issues, such as

introducing flipped classroom teaching, Micro classes and Renrentong. However, three

TRG leaders (15%) complained that they get pressured. TRGL20 stated,

> The local Teaching and Researching Centre holds the middle-level trainings for
>
> TRG leaders. This should be good actions. But the organisers of the Teaching
>
> and Researching Centre control strictly the attendance records, and give us
>
> assignments, such as writing the reports of teachers' continual professional
>
> development or giving suggestions on classroom teaching reform. These
>
> requirements bring pressures and increase our burden. (TRGL20)

In summary, it is interesting to notice that TRG leaders show unwillingness to

build relationships with stakeholders outside the school since there is not a channel for

them to communicate. The next part will compare principals' and TRG leaders'

perceptions on relationships with other stakeholders.

Comparison of perceptions of TRG leaders' relationships with stakeholders

outside the school. Findings show that some principals and a few TRG leaders agree

that TRG leaders should have relationships with other stakeholders such as educational experts or other schools for obtaining and sharing information.

However, it was noticed that participants' focuses were slightly different. Principals indicated that students and parents do not support unrelated curriculum activities which brings difficulties to TRG leaders when enacting CL. On the other hand, TRG leaders pointed out that the difficulties are the pressures from the local educational bureau and having no channels with other schools or educational organisations. Furthermore, findings show that principals expect TRG leaders to build up relationships with other schools whereas TRG leaders did not mention this issue.

In summary, when taking on the CL role, TRG leaders have relationships with superiors, subordinates and other stakeholders within and outside school for communicating information, sharing experiences and resources, and solving problems. The next section will present findings of how TRG leaders enact CL at the personal level.

5.5 Enacting CL at the Personal Level

This section presents findings relating to both principals' and TRG leaders' perceptions of TRG leaders' taking on the CL role at the individual level and compares the similarities and differences between participants' perceptions. Three subcategories are examined, namely, TRG leaders' awareness in enacting CL, TRG leaders' knowledge and skills of exercising CL and TRG leaders' professional ethics of taking on the CL role.

5.5.1 TRG leaders' awareness of enacting CL. Same as the previous section, this section focuses on findings of principals' perspectives, TRG leaders' perspectives and a comparison of the perspectives.

Principals' perceptions of TRG leaders' awareness of enacting CL. In this research, six out of the ten principals indicated that TRG leaders have a lack of awareness or are unmotivated in taking on the CL role, although some principals (e.g., P4, P7, P8) acknowledged that some TRG leaders have desires for taking greater participation in curriculum matters. P2 indicated,

> Some TRG leaders regard taking on the CL role as a high-paying and low-return
>
> job. The lack of a sense of achievement makes them feel frustrated and
>
> unmotivated. Some TRG leaders, especially the elderly TRG leaders, just want
>
> to maintain the status quo. Their awareness in taking on CL is relatively low.
>
> However, principals have to assign these elderly teachers as the TRG leaders,
>
> since they are experienced in teaching and are supported widely by teachers.
>
> (P2)

It is important to verify through the findings whether TRG leaders hold negative attitudes towards taking on the CL role. Due to the lack of awareness, four principals (40%) emphasised the necessity of evoking and strengthening TRG leaders' awareness in taking on the CL role to equip them with specialised preparation for enacting CL actively and effectively.

Data obtained from principals' viewpoints indicates that TRG leaders lack

awareness in taking on the CL role. The next part will examine TRG leaders' viewpoints

on their awareness.

TRG leaders' perceptions of TRG leaders' awareness of enacting CL. Some

TRG leaders were identified to have awareness of taking on the CL role, especially the

three young TRG leaders (15%). These TRG leaders were found to be active in taking

participation in curriculum matters, such as organising teaching and researching

activities. TRGL9 addressed that

> Being a TRG leader of PE Group, I always actively lead and organise the group
>
> to participate in competitions to broaden teachers' knowledge of teaching and
>
> practicing. (TRGL9)

However, all TRG leaders acknowledged that TRG leaders have a lack of

awareness in taking on the CL role. As can be seen from Figure 12, 12 TRG leaders

(60%) admitted that they are inactive in taking initiatives for enacting CL. TRGL7 said

that

> I seldom take initiatives actively without getting orders from the superior
>
> department. For one thing, I do not want to bother the superiors, for another I do
>
> not want to bring trouble to myself. (TRGL7)

It can be noted from the findings that young TRG leaders tended to be more

motivated in taking on the CL roles when compared with elderly TRG leaders. TRG

leaders' motivation became weaker with the increase in working years.
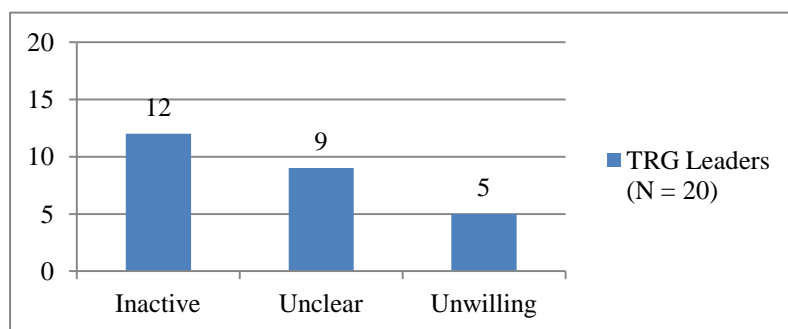
Figure 12. TRG leaders' reactions towards taking on the CL role

Furthermore, nine TRG leaders (45%) expressed their confusion about the role of CL (see Figure 12). Some TRG leaders (e.g., TRGL6, TRGL19, TRGL20) indicated that they do not know clearly about their autonomy and power when enacting CL. Some TRG leaders (e.g., TRGL4, TRGL18) do not regard themselves as leaders and some participants (e.g., TRGL5, TRGL12) do not believe their engagement in CL is important.

In addition, five TRG leaders (25%) showed their unwillingness to be given with more power. Participants indicated that they prefer following orders assigned by the superiors. TRGL15 said,

I like being led rather than leading. I just want to put all my energy and efforts in

teaching and do not want to waste the energy in structuring how to lead.

(TRGL15)

Although the above findings indicate that TRG leaders lack awareness in taking on the CL role, seven TRG leaders (35%) emphasised that it is necessary for TRG leaders to build up awareness in taking on the CL role. TRGL18 noted,

Being the TRG leaders, you should learn first if you want to lead your group and

the teachers. It is necessary for TRG leaders to build up beliefs in pursuing

professional development. Thus can ensure the implementation of CL and can

ensure the effectiveness of management. (TRGL18)

In summary, TRG leaders were found inactive in taking on the CL role, unclear

about their power and unwilling to be empowered. The following part will compare

principals' and TRG leaders' perspectives of awareness in enacting CL.

Comparison of perceptions of TRG leaders' awareness of enacting CL. In the

findings, some principals and TRG leaders acknowledged that some TRG leaders do

have awareness in taking participation in curriculum matters. Whereas, all principals

and TRG leaders put forward that most TRG leaders lack awareness and are unwilling

to take on the leadership role. TRG leaders were found to be unmotivated and they just

want to maintain the status quo. As for the expectations, both principals and teachers

indicated that TRG leaders' awareness of taking on the CL role should be strengthened.

As noted by both principals and TRG leaders, being familiar with the responsibilities

and functions of the CL ensures the implementation of CL.
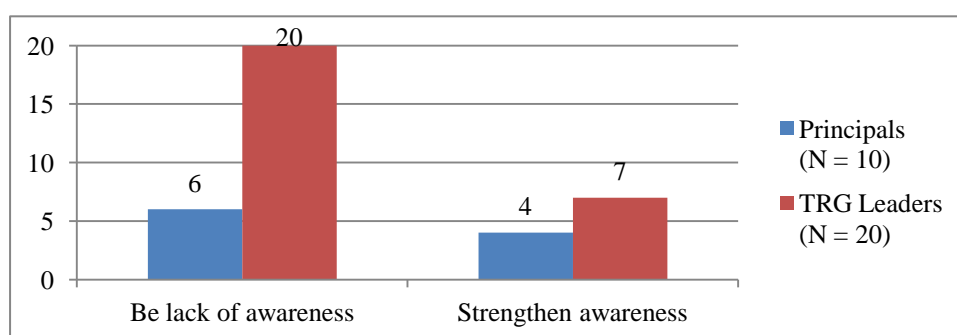
Figure 13. Participants' perceptions of TRG leaders' awareness of enacting CL

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Concerning the differences in participants' perceptions, it was found that TRG leaders provided more information about being unaware in taking on the CL role when compared with principals' perceptions. For instance, TRG leaders gave detailed information of having a lack of awareness that involves being inactive in taking on the CL role, being unclear about the responsibilities and being unwilling to be empowered to enact the CL.

In conclusion, TRG leaders were identified to have a lack of awareness in taking on the CL role. The next section will examine TRG leaders' knowledge and skills related to enacting CL.

5.5.2 TRG leaders' knowledge and skills related to enacting CL. Similarly, this section explores findings relating to principals' perceptions, TRG leaders' perceptions and a comparison of perceptions on TRG leaders' knowledge and skills of taking on the CL role.

Principals' perceptions of TRG leaders' knowledge and skills related to enacting CL. In this research, five principals (50%) stated that TRG leaders are competent in teaching, in particular in relation to the knowledge, skills and experiences of curriculum issues. P7 emphasised that

> Our TRG leaders are experts in teaching. They are the teachers who perform excellence in teaching. They are equipped with extensive knowledge and have rich experiences in teaching. Their professionalism enables them to get respect from peer teachers, thus lays the foundation for enacting CL smoothly. (P7)

However, six principals (60%) indicated that most TRG leaders lack skills or knowledge relating to how to enact CL. Some principals (P4, P10) noted that TRG leaders have no or less communication skills or management experience. Furthermore, some principals (P4, P7, P9) put forward that some TRG leaders are weak in professionalism, especially weak in conducting teaching and researching initiatives. In the findings, eight out of the ten principals acknowledged that TRG leaders must be professional in teaching and researching, while six principals (60%) emphasised that TRG leaders' organisational capability and communication ability must be strong enough to take on the CL role. P1 depicted,

> If TRG leaders' research ability is weak, they cannot lead teachers. TRG leaders'
> ability, professionalism and capacity for work must be convincing to other
> teachers. (P1)

Principals explained that there is no or less training related to improving TRG leaders' management skills and communication skills of how to enact CL. P7 explained,

> TRG leaders are tired of taking trainings since the quality of training is low. (P7)

Thus, it appears that TRG leaders are not equipped with enough knowledge and skills related to enacting CL effectively.

TRG leaders' perceptions of TRG leaders' knowledge and skills related to enacting CL. In this research, nine TRG leaders (45%) emphasised that TRG leaders are always experienced in teaching and are backbones of the team development.

TRGL5 said,

> Being the TRG leader, I must set a good example for peer teachers. I must push
>
> myself to learn new thing since knowledge is infinite. The premise of taking on
>
> CL role is to be equipped with the foresight for curriculum development and
>
> with extensive knowledge and experience in teaching. (TRGL5)

Nevertheless, seven TRG leaders (35%) acknowledged that most TRG leaders do not possess management and communication skills relating how to enact CL, although they are empowered with some autonomy in taking initiatives. TRGL9 stated,

> I feel tough and helpless when taking on CL since I was not trained to be a
>
> leader and I lack related skills and experiences of how to enact CL. (TRGL9)

Some participants gave explanations that TRG leaders seldom or never take trainings related to cultivating management skills or communication skills. As noted by TRGL17,

> Trainings for TRG leaders are organized by the local teaching and researching
>
> centre. However, these trainings focus on cultivating teachers' ability in
>
> teaching rather than skills or knowledge relating taking on the leadership role.
>
> (TRGL17)

In the findings, 16 TRG leaders (80%) acknowledged that TRG leaders' professionalism must be strong enough so that it can make other teachers convinced and get support for teachers. TRG leaders indicated that they should be capable of rich teaching experiences (TRGL6, TRGL13), outstanding researching ability (TRGL15) or

foresight for the subject area (TRGL8). Moreover, 14 TRG leaders (70%) indicated that

TRG leaders should be competent in management and communication. It seemed that

the lack of related knowledge and skills of CL was what the TRG leaders really cared

about. The next part will explore the similarities and differences of principals' and TRG

leaders' perceptions.

Comparison of perceptions of TRG leaders' knowledge and skills related to

enacting CL. It can be easily seen from Figure 14 that there are four similarities in

principals' and TRG leaders' perceptions. First, both principals and TRG leaders

acknowledge that TRG leaders are competent in teaching. Second, they all stated that

TRG leaders are not equipped with enough knowledge and skills related to

communication skills or management skills for enacting CL. Furthermore, principals

and TRG leaders gave the same explanation of the shortcomings that there is less or no

training relating improving knowledge and skills of how to enact CL. In addition, both

principals and TRG leaders put forward that some TRG leaders' weak professionalism

brings them difficulties in taking teaching and researching initiatives. Third, both

principals and TRG leaders expected TRG leaders to be professional in teaching and

researching. Fourth, they all indicated that TRG leaders should have organisational

capability and communication ability which enables them to lead the whole group to

develop and be competent in taking on the CL role.
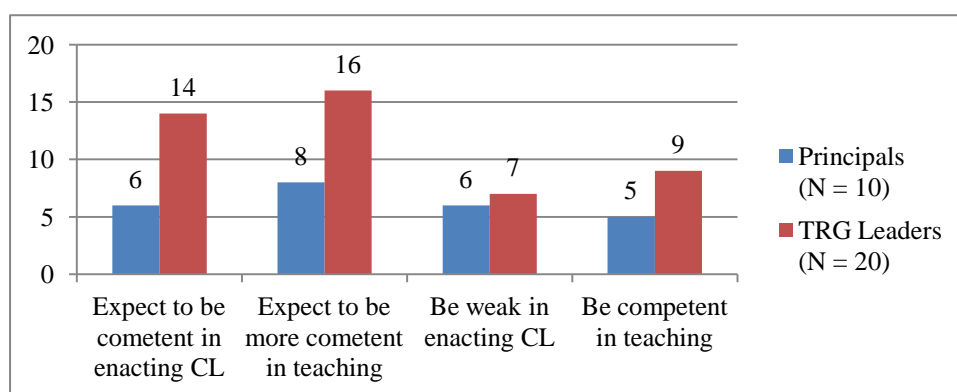
Figure 14. Participants' perceptions of TRG leaders' knowledge and skills of enacting CL

There are four similarities in principals' and TRG leaders' perceptions. First, both principals and TRG leaders acknowledge that TRG leaders are competent in teaching. Second, they all address that TRG leaders are not equipped with enough knowledge and skills related to communication skills or management skills for enacting CL. Furthermore, principals and TRG leaders give the same explanation of the shortcomings that there is less or no training relating to improving knowledge and skills about how to enact CL. In addition, both principals and TRG leaders put forward that some TRG leaders' weak professionalism brings them difficulties in relation to taking teaching and researching initiatives. Third, both principals and TRG leaders expect TRG leaders to be professional in teaching and researching. Fourth, they all indicate that TRG leaders should have organisational capability and communication ability which enables them to lead the whole group to develop and be competent in taking on the CL role.

Regarding the differences, it is interesting to note that TRG leaders have more expectations about their knowledge and skills. For example, TRG leaders indicated that

they should be possessed of lots of teaching experiences, strong teaching and

researching ability, be knowledgeable in subject areas, and have foresight for the

subject area.

The data obtained from participants' perceptions indicates that TRG leaders are

not equipped with enough knowledge and skills to enact CL. Meanwhile, the data show

participants' strong willingness to increase competence in taking on the CL role. The

next section will explore findings of TRG leaders' professional ethics of taking on the

CL role.

5.5.3 TRG leaders' professional ethics of enacting CL. This section

examines findings concerned with professional ethics that TRG leaders possess with

when enacting CL from three perspectives, namely, principals' perceptions, TRG

leaders' perceptions, and a comparison of the perceptions.

Principals' perceptions of TRG leaders' professional ethics of enacting CL. In

this research, eight out of the ten principals in the interview acknowledged that TRG

leaders should possess personal qualities that include honesty, integrity, accountability,

fairness and accountability. Furthermore, the document of job descriptions (DJD7)

stipulates that TRG leaders should hold high responsibility and dedicate themselves to

taking on the CL role. P5 addressed that

> Being designated to be the leaders means they have got recognition of their
>
> professionalism and their professional ethics. Possessing good morality plays a
>
> pivotal role in building harmonious atmosphere among peers. TRG leaders

should devote themselves to teaching and researching initiatives, and reach their full potential in enacting CL. (P5)

However, two principals (20%) highlighted the lack of professional ethics among TRG leaders when taking on the CL role. For example, some TRG leaders are aggressive and cannot build up good relationships with colleagues (P4) and some leaders have a lack of sense of responsibilities in enacting CL (P9).

In summary, principals' viewpoints indicate that TRG leaders have a relatively low level of professional ethics for taking responsibilities for enacting CL. The next part will investigate TRG leaders' perceptions of their ethics when taking on the CL role.

TRG leaders' perceptions of TRG leaders' professional ethics of enacting CL. In the interviews, 18 TRG leaders (90%) put forward that TRG leaders should possess professional ethics, such as being persistent when facing difficulties (TRGL9, TRGL11, TRGL13, TRGL17), being responsible for taking on the CL role (TRGL19, TRGL20), being patient when facing misunderstanding from superiors or subordinates (TRGL8, TRGL20), being enthusiastic about enacting CL (TRGL18) and being fair when evaluating teachers' performance (TRGL1, TRGL15). Furthermore, in the documents of performance summaries, TRG leaders are required to be responsible (DPS2, DPS7). As TRGL1 said,

> Having professional ethics is very important since it determines whether subordinates will surround and support the TRG leader or not. (TRGL1)

Whereas, three TRG leader participants (15%) highlighted that some TRG

leaders lack professional ethics such as being irresponsible, selfish or without

persistency. TRGL16 described,

> When there is a chance for outside training, some TRG leaders do not give the
>
> opportunity to teachers. And some leaders always hang back when coming
>
> across difficulties. (TRGL16)

The data obtained from TRG leaders' perceptions indicate that TRG leaders

have a low level of professional ethics for taking on the CL role. The next part will

search for the similarities and differences in the perceptions of TRG leaders'

professional ethics.

Comparison of perceptions of TRG leaders' professional ethics of enacting CL.

Research findings show that both principals and TRG leaders hold the same viewpoints

that TRG leaders should be possessed of professional ethics, such as the spirit of

dedication, accountability in taking on the CL role, fairness in treating every teacher

and persistency when facing difficulties (see Figure 15). Principals and TRG leaders

acknowledged that TRG leaders lack professional ethics to some extent. Some TRG

leaders have been   found to be irresponsible when enacting CL, selfish when there are

training opportunities or study opportunities, and not persistent when facing

difficulties.

Concerning the differences in participants' perceptions, findings indicate that

principals have more expectations in TRG leaders' professional ethics. As can be seen

from Figure 15, TRG leaders indicated that leaders should be patient with

misunderstandings and be enthusiastic about their job. These two characteristics were

not mentioned by principals.
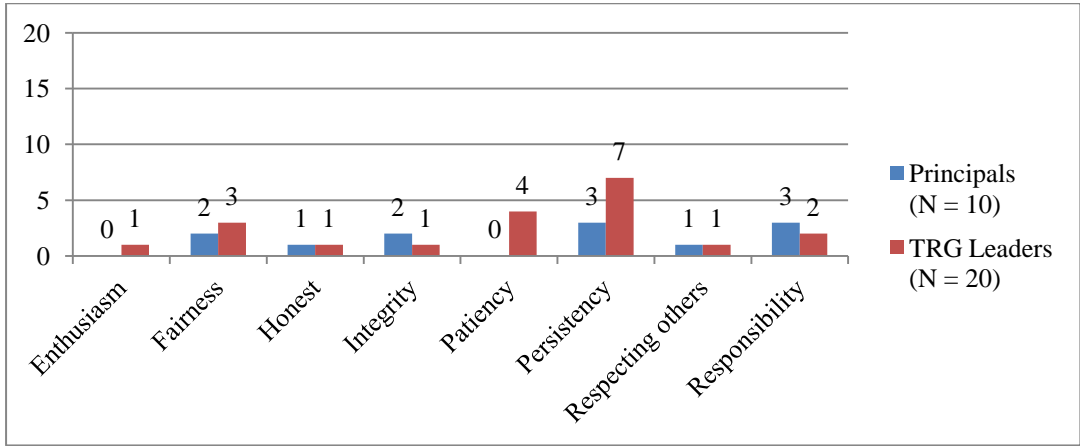
Figure 15. Participants' expectations on professional ethics

        In conclusion, enacting CL requires TRG leaders to be aware of taking on the

CL role, with skills and knowledge of teaching and managing, and with professional

ethics. The next section will integrate all the findings collected from principals'

perceptions and TRG leaders' perceptions to build up a model of TRG leaders'

engagement in CL in Chinese secondary schools.

5.6 Summary

        The purpose of this research was to create an in-depth and rich description of

how principals and TRG leaders perceive TRG leaders' engagement in CL in the

Chinese secondary school context. Furthermore, a comparison was made to explore the

similarities and differences in both principals' and TRG leaders' perceptions. This

chapter not only presents the findings in accordance with the research questions, but

also identifies the findings of participants' perceptions of the general understanding of

CL, TRG leaders' engagement in CL at the organisational level, at the classroom level,

at the social relationship level and at the personal level. The next chapter will further

discuss the major findings and surprising findings emanating from the foregoing

results.

Chapter 6: Discussion

In general, the current research has probed both principals' and TRG leaders'

perceptions and collected relevant responses concerning TRG leaders' engagement in

CL. This research is unique in that it investigates both principals' and TRG leaders'

perceptions of this important position and makes comparisons to explore the

similarities and differences. This research project is significant since it advances the

international and regional literature on understanding of how teachers' are empowered

to enact the CL role. Particularly, it fills gaps left by earlier Chinese studies of teachers'

engagement in CL. The purpose of this chapter is to discuss the major findings and

discuss these in relation to existing Chinese and western literature relevant to

curriculum leadership. It aims to clarify how CL is enacted in this research context, how

it agrees with or differs from previous literature, and why this might be so. In addition,

this chapter builds a theoretical model derived from the research findings which

provides in-depth understanding of how CL was implemented by TRG leaders.

Thus, the research findings are presented in the following sections under six sub

categories: general understanding of CL, enacting CL at the organisational level,

enacting CL at the classroom level, enacting CL at the social relationship level and

enacting CL at the personal level, and a model of TRG leaders' engagement in CL

which summarises all the research findings.

6.1 General Understanding of CL

To shed light on participants' perceptions of TRG leader's engagement in CL,

this section discusses findings related to whether participants are familiar with the

conceptions of CL or not, and how participants depict the term CL.

6.1.1 Being familiar vs. being unfamiliar with CL. In this research, it was

particularly interesting to note that nine out of the ten principals acknowledged that

they had heard the concept of CL, which was different from the responses of TRG

leaders' of which only seven (35%) indicated that they had heard the term.

This finding is in line with findings identified by some scholars (e.g., Fan et al.,

2007; Zhang, 2012). For example, Fan et al. (2007) identified that 33% of the teachers

had less understanding of the conception of CL and 57% had not heard of the concept of

CL. In the same vein, Zhang (2012) reported that teachers who were empowered to

enact CL lacked relevant knowledge of CL. From the findings, it could be deduced that

the term of CL is rather new to most of the TRG leaders in the Chinese context. In

the foregoing discussion in the literature review, it was noticed that much research

attention has been given to understanding CL since the implementation of NCR in 2001

in the Chinese context (Lin & Feng, 2007; Lu, 2005; Xiong & Zhong, 2010; Ye & Zhu,

2013; Zhang, Yang, & Li, 2014). This may explain why most TRG leaders are rather

unfamiliar with the term CL. Furthermore, it is presumably because the TRG leaders

have seldom been trained or taught knowledge or skills related to the management of

CL.

Comparatively, CL is not a new concept to researchers and teachers in western

studies. The term CL was first presented by Passow (1952) in his dissertation dealing

with 'Group-Centred Curriculum Leadership'. It has attracted increasing attention

since 1990s (e.g., Chen, 2009; Tusi, 2010; Yin, 2012; Zhang et al., 2014; Zheng & Guo,

2010). For example, the significance of involving school teachers in CL has been

explored by western researchers (e.g., Elliott et al., 1999; Macpherson et al., 1998). In

addition, Alford (2010) has investigated issues of how teachers enact CL and found

correlations between enacting CL and academic achievement. It appears that western

studies of CL are relatively advanced since they have turned to focus on the

consequences or significances of the implementation of CL rather than focusing on the

nature of CL.

Based on the findings, it is concluded principals are more familiar with the term

CL when compared with TRG leaders' perceptions. This finding is unique in the

Chinese context since the research attention given to CL in Chinese studies has lagged

behind western studies. The next part will take a closer examination of and discussion

about how principals and TRG leaders depict CL.

6.1.2 Depicting CL with various descriptions. As a whole, findings indicated

that CL was defined variously by principals and TRG leaders in this research. For

example, CL was defined as taking instructional initiatives (all principals and 13 TRG

leaders), as the functions or responsibilities taken by TRG leaders for enacting CL

(seven principals and six TRG leaders), and as the interrelationships among a set of

stakeholders (three principals and one TRG leader).

Table 11 illustrates how the findings of the current study support the

understandings from both Chinese and Western literature, and where the new findings

are. It is noted that the description of CL in the current research is identical to that in the

Chinese literature which defines CL as taking instructional initiatives at the classroom

level (e.g., Dong, 2008; Hu & Gu, 2002; Wang & Zheng, 2013), as building and

maintaining relationships with stakeholders at the social relationship level (e.g., Hu &

Gu, 2012; Wu, 2003; Xu, 2004), and as the awareness, knowledge, skills held by

teachers when taking on the CL role (e.g., Jin & Zhao, 2004; Lin & Feng, 2007; Ye &

Zhu, 2013). It can be affirmed that there is no unified definition for CL (Law & Wan,

2006) although there are various kinds of descriptions (Chen, 2009; Lu, 2005; Xiong &

Zhong, 2010).

Table 11
Comparison of Descriptions of CL

This Research	Chinese Literature	Western Literature
Instructional initiatives	Instructional initiatives	Instructional initiatives
Functions/responsibilities	--	Functions/responsibilities
Interrelations with stakeholders	Interrelations with stakeholders	Interrelations with stakeholders
--	Awareness, knowledge, skills	--
--	--	Roles assumed by teachers

Note. -- = Absence

In the similar vein, Table 11 shows that the descriptions of CL in this research also support those in the western literature. Table 1 presented in Chapter 3 illustrates that CL was defined more by the concept. It involves the conceptions of instructional initiatives, functions and responsibilities (e.g., Macpherson, 1998; Wiles, 2008, 2009; Ylimaki, 2011, 2012). Furthermore, CL is regarded as a role definition which reflects the school's core function (Cardno & Collett, 2003). In addition, some researchers (e.g., Henderson & Gornik, 2007; Wiles, 2008; Ylimaki, 2012) define CL as the interplay among stakeholders. Moreover, CL is viewed as the roles assumed by teachers who are responsible for curriculum issues (e.g., Cardno & Collett, 2003; Jorgensen, 2016; Ylimaki, 2011). Hence, it could be inferred that CL is depicted with an extensive description.

Interestingly, the descriptions of CL in the current research and findings in earlier Chinese studies are more likely to focus on the instructional duties taken by teachers who are empowered to enact CL. Emrich (1999) contended that context affects perceptions of both incumbent leaders and potential leaders. The educational context of both current research and previous Chinese studies is regarded as 'a state-controlled system' and 'highly exam-centric education' (Kirkpatrick & Zang, 2011 p. 37). Although quality-oriented education has been implemented to replace the exam-oriented education mode since 1985, long-term mainstream education is still teaching-for-examination (Zhou, 2013). Hence, this explains why participants of this research and educators in China primarily define CL as taking instructional initiatives.

In conclusion, participants' definitions of CL in the current research apparently focused on taking instructional initiatives at the organisational level and the classroom level. This result concurs with those in the research by Macpherson et al. (1998) in which CL primarily occurs at two levels, namely, the macro-level (for the whole learning organisation) and the micro-level (within in a single classroom). The following will discuss participants' definitions from these two levels.

6.1.2.1 Macro-control over curriculum matters at the school level. In this research, three principals (30%) and five TRG leaders (25%) defined CL as macro-control over a school's educational affairs, especially taking the responsibilities for goal setting and goal planning on teaching issues or curriculum issues.

It can be seen from Table 12, these descriptions are also identified in both Chinese and western literature in that goal setting and planning are regarded as the functional responsibilities of leaders who take on the CL role (e.g. Chen, 2009; Lee & Dimmock, 1999; Nashashibi & Watters, 2003; Wang & Zheng, 2013). Aligning with the findings in the current research, definitions of CL made by Chinese educators involve planning goals, building up shared vision (Xiong & Zhong, 2010), monitoring teaching (e.g., Li & Duan, 2004; Shen & Luo, 2004), building climate (e.g., Chen, 2009; Fu & Yu, 2104; Xiong & Zhong, 2010), allocating teaching resources (Lu, 2011) and coordinating curriculum development (e.g., Huang, Zhu, Zhou, Huang, & Xu, 2003; Mao, 2009, Ye & Zhu, 2013).

Similarly, western researchers also define CL as depicting the leaders' functions

and responsibilities (Cardno & Collett, 2003). For example, it involves planning

strategic goals (e.g., Nashashibi & Watters, 2003; Wiles, 2009), building shared vision

for curriculum development (e.g., Nashashibi & Watters, 2003), building culture and

climate (e.g., Li, 2004), monitoring the development of educational programmes and

staff development, and allocating resources (e.g., Lee & Dimmock, 1999; Li, 2004).

Table 12

Comparison of Macro-control over Curriculum Matters at the School Level

This Research	Chinese Literature	Western Literature
Plan goals	Plan goals	Plan strategic goals
--	Build shared vision	Build shared vision
--	Monitor teaching	Monitor educational programme
--	Build school climate	Build school climate
--	Allocate teaching resources	Allocate resources
--	Coordinate curriculum development	--
--	--	Monitor staff development

Note. -- = Absence

Comparatively, principals and TRG leaders in this research did not provide such

a detailed description of CL at the organisational level. This is probably because the

participants in the current research are unfamiliar with the specific content of CL. As

mentioned above, the term CL was initially proposed with the implementation of NCR

in 2001 in China. Furthermore, two principals (20%) and five TRG leaders (25%) in

this research claimed that they had not been taught about or trained in the related

knowledge or skills of what CL was or how to enact CL. Since the concept of CL is

newly established in participants' thinking, they have few perceptions.

In summary, research findings show that enacting CL involves taking macro-control over curriculum matters at the school level. The following section will introduce findings related to defining CL from the micro-control perspective.

6.1.2.2 Micro-control over curriculum matters at the classroom level. The aforementioned results reveal that all of the principals and 13 TRG leaders (65%) depicted CL as taking instructional initiatives at the classroom level. Specifically, it was identified that taking instructional initiatives at the classroom level included making curriculum plans, utilising teaching resources, making assessments, maintaining expertise, and controlling the quality of teaching and learning.

Table 13 shows the comparison of understandings in relation to taking micro-control over curriculum matters at the classroom level. It illustrates that the result of this research is congruent with the Chinese literature in that enacting CL involves making teaching objectives and teaching plans (e.g., Chen, 2009, Wang & Zheng, 2013), controlling and improving teaching quality (e.g., Chen, 2009; Huang et al., 2003; Wang & Kang, 2013).

Table 13

Comparison of Micro-control over Curriculum Matters at the Classroom Level

This Research	Chinese Literature	Western Literature
Make curriculum plans	Make teaching objectives and teaching plan	Develop unit plans/ lesson plans
Utilise teaching resources	--	Select teaching materials
Make assessment	--	Review student achievement, make assessment of teaching
Maintain expertise	--	Maintain subject area expertise
Control the quality of teaching and learning	Control and improve teaching quality	--

Note. -- = Absence

Furthermore, this finding strongly supports notions presented by western researchers that enacting CL concerns taking instructional initiatives at the classroom level (e.g., Macpherson et al., 1998). For example, some western researchers present that engaging in CL involves selecting teaching materials, maintaining subject area expertise, reviewing student achievements (Wiles,2008), developing unit plans or lesson plans, and making assessments of teaching (DeMatthews, 2014).

The above discussion might imply that enacting CL is primarily related to taking instructional initiatives at the classroom level. The underlying rationale could be the examination which is still regarded as the central concern of academic instruction (Yin, Lee, & Wang, 2014).

To recapitulate, a striking feature of enacting CL is that it mainly puts emphasis on taking instructional initiatives at the classroom settings level. The next section will discuss in depth the finding of how and why TRG leaders are unfamiliar with the term CL.

6.1.3 TRG leaders' unfamiliarity with the term CL. In the current research, it was found that respondents (all principals and 13 TRG leaders), especially the TRG leaders, seemed confused or unaware of the term CL when asked "Have you ever heard of the concept of CL?" Whereas, the good news was that all the principals and all the TRG leaders acknowledged that they knew and gave some descriptions from their viewpoints when the researcher paraphrased the term CL into the expression being in charge of curriculum matters. However, the Chinese literature and previous Chinese studies on CL rarely explain this in any depth. This result might imply that the research on CL in China is a "subset of research" (Xu, 2016, p. 23). Being unfamiliar with the concept of CL is common to most of the TRG leader participants in this research although the concept has been presented since 2001. It is presumably because the TRG leaders seldom have been trained or taught knowledge or skills related to management of CL. Principals (P2) in this research indicated that there were no/less trainings in relation to improving TRG leaders' management skills or communication skills in how to enact CL.

In conclusion, the findings related to participants' general understanding of CL indicate that TRG leaders were not entirely familiar with the term CL. Further, it is noteworthy that participants could still give various descriptions of CL which mainly involved taking macro-control and micro-control over curriculum matters. The next section will probe further into participants' descriptions of TRG leaders' engagement in CL at the organisation level.

6.2 Layer 1: Enacting CL at the Organisational Level

With regard to the responses of TRG leaders' engagement in CL at the school

level, it seemed intuitively sensible from findings that TRG leaders could make both

administrative and instructional decisions. The following sections will discuss the

issues in relation to these two themes: making administrative decisions and making

instructional decisions.

6.2.1 Being empowered with limited autonomy in making administrative

decisions. In this research, three principals (30%) and five TRG leaders (25%)

indicated that TRG leaders could participate in making administrative decisions to

some extent, such as providing suggestions or making appraisal performance for team

members. In terms of TRG leaders' responses, TRG leaders were also in charge of tasks

unrelated to teaching or curriculum issues such as arranging cleaning, taking records of

attendance, and preparing programmes for school activities. Identified by11 TRG

leaders (55%), it was found that TRG leaders had less or limited power in making

administrative decisions at the school level though they were designated to take on the

CL role.

This result is identical to that in the Chinese literature in that teachers who are

empowered to enact CL in the Chinese context can offer comments and suggestions

regarding school development (Wang & Zheng, 2013). Table 14 illustrates the

comparison of perceptions of teachers' authority in making administrative decisions at

the school level between the Chinese and western literature and the current research. It

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is interesting to notice that subtle differences emerge around the descriptions of the

responsibilities

Table 14
Comparison of Making Administrative Decisions at the Organisational Level

This Research	Chinese Literature	Western Literature
Provide suggestions	Offer comments and suggestions	--
Make appraisal performance	--	--
Take unrelated to teaching/curriculum issues: arrange cleaning, take records of attendance, prepare programmes for school activities	--	--
--	Build culture	Build culture
--	Build vision	Build vision
--	Allocate resources	Allocate resources
--	--	Modify school structure

Note. -- = Absence

Chinese educators depict more administrative responsibilities that involve

culture building (Chen, 2009; Dong, 2008), vision building (Fu & Yu, 2014; Xiong &

Zhong, 2010), and resources allocation (Li, 2004; Lin & Lee, 2013). Although these

have the same educational context, differences are still noticeable. This result might

imply that Chinese literature mainly makes critical evaluation and commentary on

western studies (Hu & Gu, 2012). Moreover, the low level of engagement in

administrative affairs was alluded to in Chinese literature. For instance, Wang (2008)

found that teachers who took on the CL role did not participate in making

administrative decisions at the whole school level to any considerable degree since the

administrators (e.g., principals, deputy principals, heads of departments) engaged in the

administrative affairs extensively. Similarly, Hu and Gu (2012) reported that more than

60% of the teacher participants acknowledged that they were not sufficiently

empowered to make administrative decisions. It seems highly reasonable to believe that

bureaucratic and hierarchical management still dominates most Chinese schools'

structures, thus teachers do not have enough opportunities and powers to enact CL (e.g.,

Mao, 2009; Wang & Zheng, 2013; Ye & Zhu, 2013).

Comparatively, the result of this research is disparate from the western literature

in that western teachers are empowered with more autonomy in taking administrative

initiatives when enacting CL. For example, teachers are entailed with power in building

school culture (Macpherson et al., 1996; Nashashibi & Watters, 2003), building shared

vision (DeMatthews, 2014; Wiles, 2009), allocating resources (Cummings, 2011), and

modifying the school structure (Leithwood et al., 2004). In the current study, however,

responsibilities were not presented in such a detailed way. Speculatively, issues of

empowering teachers to take control of the curriculum were presented "by the end of

20th century" (Asuto,Clark, Read, McGree, & deKoven, 1994, as cited in Handler,

2010, p. 35). In contrast, Chinese scholars placing teacher involvement at the centre of

enacting CL only happened in recent years (Huang & Zhu, 2015). Therefore, it is not

surprising that issues related to CL occurring inside secondary schools, especially in

Asian contexts, are relatively few (Lee & Dimmock, 1999). This may explain why

there are more descriptions related to the responsibilities of enacting CL in the western

literature. In addition, the phenomenon of low levels of engagement in CL is evident in

the western literature. It is identified that teachers have a lack of desire to be engaged in

school level decision-making (e.g., Duke et al., 1980; Elliott et al., 1999; Vance, 1991).

The relatively low participation is partially because a majority of teachers still see

themselves as the implementers rather the decision makers (Elliott et al., 1999).

Interestingly, the findings of these western studies occurred between 1980s and 1990s

(e.g., Duke et al., 1980; Vance, 1991; Elliott et al., 1999). It seems reasonable to

speculate that classroom teachers have recently participated more and taken more

responsibilities for curriculum development at the school level (Wiles, 2009).

It is concluded that TRG leaders can make administrative decisions at the

school level although their autonomy is rather limited. The following section will

examine findings of TRG leaders' participations in making instructional decisions at

the school level.

6.2.2 Being empowered but with no/less autonomy in participating the

national curriculum matters. In the current research, three principals (30%) and 11

TRG leaders (55%) acknowledged that TRG leaders had autonomy in making

instructional decisions at the school level, especially for the school-based curriculum. It

was identified that enacting CL functioned as coordinating the curriculum at the

organisational level, which mainly involved planning the curriculum programme,

guiding curriculum development, monitoring and supervising the implementation of

curriculum, and organising teaching and researching activities for curriculum

development. Although TRG leaders were empowered with more autonomy in making

instructional decisions, all principal and TRG leader respondents indicated that TRG

leaders had no/less autonomy in making decisions about anything related to the

national curriculum.

Findings related to autonomy in respect to the national curriculum are compared

with both Chinese and western views (see Table 15). The result of the present research

supports the proposition that teachers are empowered with autonomy in planning and

coordinating the curriculum (e.g., Luo & Xia, 2011; Zheng & Guo, 2010). It is

noteworthy in in Chinese literature that enacting CL involves establishing curriculum

vision, setting objectives (Lin & Lee, 2013) and building plans for curriculum

development (Li, 2004).

Table 15
Comparison of Autonomy in the National Curriculum

This Research	Chinese Literature	Western Literature
Plan/coordinate the curriculum	Plan/coordinate curriculum, set objectives, establish curriculum vision	Coordinate the curriculum
Guide curriculum development	Build plans for curriculum development	--
Monitor curriculum implementation	--	Monitor educational programme
Organise teaching & researching activities for curriculum development	--	Take curriculum exploration
Have no/less autonomy	Have no/less autonomy	--

Note. -- = Absence

As for the low level of engagement in curriculum matters, findings emanating

from the present research are also congruent with the Chinese literature (e.g., Chang &

Li, 2007; Wang, 2008; Wang & Zheng, 2013). For instance, Wang (2008) identified that

91% of the participants acknowledged that teachers had no or less power in making

instructional decisions at the school level. Further, Chang and Li (2007) addressed that

teachers' participation in instructional decisions was less than 10% at the school level.

More speculatively, curriculum matters are still controlled by school leaders (e.g.,

principals, deputy principals), thereby incurring the low level of empowerment (Wang

& Zheng, 2013). On the other hand, even being empowered, teachers still hold the

perception that curriculum matters are mainly in the charge of principals (Chang & Li,

2007).

Meanwhile, as can be seen from Table 15, the result also supports western views

that teachers are responsible for monitoring, reviewing and developing the educational

programme of the school (Lee & Dimmock, 1999), coordinating the curriculum

development (Wiles, 2009), and taking opportunities for curriculum exploration

(Macpherson et al., 1996). Interestingly, differing from the current study, findings in the

western literature do not articulate clearly whether the instructional decisions are made

for the national curriculum or the school-based curriculum. One presumption is that the

difference in educational context leads to the dissimilarity in the findings. The

three-level curriculum management policy, which empowers teachers with more

autonomy in making instructional decisions for the school-based curriculum, is only

implemented in the Chinese context (Li, 2010; Zeng & Zhou, 2013). This might explain

why the issues of the national curriculum and the school-based curriculum are only

mentioned in this research and in the Chinese literature. In addition, the finding of a low

level of engagement in curriculum matters is also consistent with the western literature.

For example, Elliott et al. (1999) found that approximately 60% of the teachers showed

unwillingness to participate in CL activities at the school level. It is most likely that

teachers prefer taking responsibilities and making decisions for curriculum issues at the

classroom level rather than at the organisational level (Conly, 1999; Eisenhart, Cuthbert,

Shurm, & Harding, 1993).

In conclusion, TRG leaders are empowered with limited autonomy in making

instructional decisions at the school level, especially regarding the national curriculum.

The following section will discuss perceptions of TRG leaders' engagement in CL at

the classroom level.

6.3 Layer 2: Enacting CL at the Classroom Level

Teachers are identified as having a desire to participate in curriculum matters

(Ho, 2010b). Enacting CL involves three stages of taking pedagogical initiatives: the

planning stage, the implementation stage, and the evaluation stage (Xiong & Lim,

2015). The following sections will discuss the findings of how TRG leaders enact CL at

the classroom level from these three perspectives.

6.3.1 Planning stage: being compliant vs. being autonomous. With reference

to the curriculum planning stage, findings of how TRG leaders take on the CL role will

be discussed and compared with previous Chinese literature and western literature.

Discussion will involve two aspects, namely, autonomy in the national curriculum and

autonomy in the school-based curriculum.

     6.3.1.1 Being compliant with the national curriculum requirements. In this

research, all principals and 12 TRG leaders (60%) acknowledged a salient

characteristic of enacting CL at the classroom level was compliance with the national

curriculum standards (Guo Jia Ke Cheng Biao Zhun) made by the MoE in 2001. It was

identified that TRG leaders cannot make any change in the teaching hours, teaching

content and teaching materials. Particularly, autonomy in selecting and designing

teaching materials for the national curriculum was restricted by a need to obtain strict

approval – the Provisional Procedures for Primary and Secondary School Textbook

Compilation and Approval, issued in 2001. In this research, both principals (e.g., P4)

and TRG leaders (e.g., TRGL15) described the process of textbook selection in detail.

     The instructional materials are listed and released by the MoE firstly (e.g., PEP

     and Jiangsu Education Publishing House). Then the provincial authorities

     choose one material for schools from the list. (TRGL15)

     Thus, the participants (all principals and 11 TRG leaders) emphasised that TRG

leaders had no or little autonomy in making any changes or making any instructional

decisions for teaching materials of the national curriculum. This result may imply that

the curriculum is heavily structured since the national curriculum standards have

already been stipulated and state the requirements of how many topics to learn for each

subject (Cavanagh, 2006).

     Table 16 demonstrates the similarities and differences in relation to compliance

with the curriculum standards. It can be noticed that the commentary of ensuring

compliance with the curriculum standards is consistent with previous Chinese literature

(e.g., Feng, 2006; Hu & Gu, 2002; Qi, 2011). For instance, Hu and Gu (2002) identified

that 36% of the teachers acknowledged that they have to follow the curriculum

standards though they do not totally understand the underlying requirements of the

curriculum standards. This result partially echoes the policy of three-level curriculum

management that requires the curriculum to be controlled by the central government,

local authorities, and schools respectively and to be developed in accordance with the

national curriculum standards (Feng, 2006). To be specific, the teaching content, plans

of instruction, and textbook selection are regulated for the national curriculum under

the implementation of the curriculum standards (Qi, 2011). In particular, the finding of

being compliant with the textbook selection requirement is identical to that in the

Chinese literature. For example, Qi (2011) and Yang (2012) argued that the textbook

selection must be in conformity with the national requirements and approved by the

State Textbook Examination and Approval Committee. Similar to the explanations

presented by the respondents in the current research, Zeng and Zhou (2013) noted that

> The Department of Educational Administration at the national and
>
> provincial/local levels are required to provide directions and supervise
>
> curriculum implementation and development in schools. Meanwhile, the
>
> schools are entitled and obliged to report to the higher level any problems they
>
> have in implementing the national and local curriculum.

It can be concluded from the discussion that TRG leaders' autonomy in taking

instructional initiatives for the national curriculum is largely constrained.

Table 16
Comparison of the Compliance with the National Curriculum Requirement

This Research	Chinese Literature	Western Literature
Follow the national curriculum standards	Follow the national curriculum standards	Follow the curriculum standards
Have no autonomy in teaching hour	--	--
Have no autonomy in teaching content	Have no autonomy in teaching content	--
Have no autonomy in teaching material	Have no autonomy in textbook selection	Have autonomy in material selection
--	Have no autonomy in plans of instruction	--

Note. -- = Absence

As can be seen from Table 16, the acknowledgment of the need for

compliance with the curriculum standards is also in line with the western literature

(e.g., Cummings, 2001; Macpherson et al., 1996; Wiles, 2008). It is identified by

western researchers that teachers assume the responsibilities of reviewing and

monitoring curriculum policies (Cummings, 2001) and assisting in the interpretation

of policy documents (Macpherson et al., 1996). For example, Macpherson and

Brooker (2010) pointed out that teachers' autonomy in taking initiatives related to

curriculum control is constrained by the National Curriculum and GCSE syllabi. This

explains the similarity in the perceptions of the compliance with curriculum

requirements in the current research and earlier western research. Nevertheless,

findings of having no autonomy in selecting textbooks differ from western scholars'

conceptions (e.g., Cummings, 2011; Macpherson et al., 1996; Wiles, 2009). In contrast, teachers are expected to have autonomy in developing teaching resources in accordance with the teaching context. It seems that autonomy in making decisions on teaching sources in the western educational context is relatively greater than the autonomy teachers have in the Chinese context. Speculatively, the different educational contexts and different educational systems result in the dissimilar results, since it is identified that the social context has impacts on teachers' perceptions and implementation of school policies and teaching initiatives (Cummings, 2011).

In summary, the findings of the current research illustrate that TRG leaders have little or no power in taking autonomous decisions for the national curriculum when taking on the CL role. The next section will discuss issues of how TRG leaders engage in CL for the school-based curriculum.

6.3.1.2 Having autonomy in tailoring school-based curriculum. Findings (seven principals and 18 TRG leaders) in the current research showed that TRG leaders have relatively more autonomy in making instructional decisions for the school-based curriculum including planning and designing teaching schedules, teaching approaches, hours distributions, arranging equipment courses and quizzes. For instance, six principals (60%) and 10 TRG leaders (50%) emphasised that TRG leaders were empowered to formulate the instruction plans for the school-based curriculum in accordance with students' abilities and learning needs. Particularly, research findings (eight principals and nine TRG leaders) also revealed that TRG leaders can make

autonomous decisions in selecting and adopting instructional materials and

supplementary teaching materials for the school-based curriculum.

Table 17
Comparison of the Autonomy in School-based Curriculum

This Research	Chinese Literature	Western Literature
Plan/design teaching schedule	Make instruction plan	Build up a holistic view
Choose teaching approaches	--	--
Make hours distributions	--	--
Arrange equipment courses /quizzes	--	--
Select instructional materials	Tailor teaching sources	Select instructional materials

Note. -- = Absence

The above table (Table 17) makes a comparison of how much autonomy was

available in respect to the school-based curriculum. The findings of having autonomy

in making instruction plans and tailoring teaching sources are congruent with the

Chinese literature (e.g., Feng, 2006; Wang & Zheng, 2013; Yang, 2012). For example,

Wang and Zheng (2013) reported that teachers can utilise their autonomy to formulate

the teaching plan for each academic year and the unit plan for each lesson when

enacting CL. In addition, Yang (2012) claimed that teachers have autonomy in

choosing teaching materials for the school-based curriculum. It seems logical that the

school-based curriculum is developed by the schools themselves with the purpose of

reflecting the unique characteristics of the school (Feng, 2006).

It can be noted from Table 17 that the finding also supports the western

literature that enacting CL involves building up a holistic view of the curriculum

(Macpherson et al., 1996) and prompting curriculum design (Handler, 2010;

Henderson & Hawthorne, 1995). Handler (2010) stated that teachers who are placed

in the role of enacting CL should have a depth of knowledge related to curriculum

design and curriculum planning, which plays essential role in classroom success. As

might be expected, being empowered with autonomy in selecting instructional

materials also support statements made by western researchers (e.g., Cummings, 2011;

Macpherson et al., 1996; Wiles, 2008). For instance, it is identified that enacting CL

involves spearheading textbook adoption (Wiles, 2009) and developing materials for

specific teaching context (Macpherson et al., 1996).

To conclude, TRG leaders have more autonomy in making decisions in respect

to the school-based curriculum when compared with their authority in taking

instructional initiatives in the national curriculum. Due to the low level of participation

in making decisions for the national curriculum, principals and TRG leaders expressed

their expectations regarding empowerment. The next part will take a close examination

of an unexpected finding related to participants' expectations about being given more

autonomy in materials selection.

6.3.1.3 Expecting more autonomy in selecting instructional materials.

Surprisingly, five principals (50%) in the current research expected to empower TRG

leaders with more powers in selecting teaching materials, whereas TRG leaders did not

have any such expectations. Several possible reasons could be behind this phenomenon.

Firstly, one presumption is that the learning organisations in China are still based on a

hierarchical structure in which the principal is positioned as the decision-maker (e.g.,

Mao, 2009; Wang & Zheng, 2013; Ye, 2013). Thus, the teacher's role is to implement the decisions made by the principal of the school which characterises a hierarchical structure (Elliott et al., 1999). Secondly, it is found in previous Chinese literature that teachers are unaware of taking on the CL role. It is also identified that teachers always follow principals' decisions loyally and are reluctant to accept autonomy in order to avoid having conflicts with their superiors (Fu & Yu, 2004; Ho, 2010a). Further, teachers have got used to being the followers rather than the implementers in making curriculum decisions (e.g., Chen, 2009; Lu, 2011; Zeng & Huang, 2006). Hence, teachers have already accepted the adoption of designated textbooks and references books (Mao, 2009). The above discussions partly explain why only principal participants expect TRG leaders to be empowered with autonomy in making decisions on tailoring teaching materials while curriculum leaders show no interest.

In summation, at the curriculum planning stage, TRG leaders are empowered with more autonomy in making decisions about the school-based curriculum. In contrast, their autonomy in the national curriculum is constrained by the national curriculum standards. The next section will discuss and gain insights into findings related to how TRG leaders enact CL at the curriculum implementation stage.

6.3.2 Implementation stage: being with a large autonomy in classroom teaching. Examining the findings of more than half the participants (five principals and 13 TRG leaders) it seems that TRG leaders can make decisions about the national

187

curriculum and the school-based curriculum regarding teaching arrangement at the curriculum implementation stage. It is found that TRG leaders have a great deal of autonomy in deciding what knowledge points should be focused on, what should be taught first, what teaching approaches should be adopted, and what innovative strategies could be used. Moreover, seven principals (70%) and 12 TRG leaders (60%) acknowledged that having power and autonomy in making decisions about classroom teaching was helpful for improving teaching quality and increasing academic achievements.

Table 18 compares the research findings regarding autonomy in classroom teaching with those in the Chinese literature and the western literature. Concerning the comparison with Chinese views, this result is identical to the Chinese literature in respect to the focus of enacting CL in classroom teaching (e.g., Dong, 2008; Luo, 2011; Zheng & Guo, 2010). It is found that teachers' engagement in CL could improve the quality of the curriculum since they are also normal teachers who work in an authentic teaching context and are familiar with students' diverse learning needs (e.g., Fu & Yu, 2014; Huang & Zhu, 2015). Furthermore, it was noticeable that findings in the current study presented detailed information describing TRG leaders' initiatives. For example, TRG leaders were found to have autonomy in making decisions about adjusting the sequence of teaching knowledge points, maintaining an appropriate learning pace for students, choosing the effective teaching approaches for specific knowledge. This is disparate from the Chinese literature in which there are less descriptions and in which

explanations rarely go into any depth about what teachers can do in classroom teaching.

This result might imply that most Chinese studies focus on exploring the challenges

faced by teachers who enact CL (e.g., Chang & Li, 2007; Zhang & Fu, 2013), rather

than examining what powers or authorities that they have when empowered.

Table 18
Comparison of the Autonomy in Classroom Teaching

This Research	Chinese Literature	Western Literature
Make teaching arrangement	Make teaching arrangement	Taking constructivist activities
Decide knowledge points		
Decide the content	No detailed information	No detailed information
Decide the teaching approaches		
Decide innovative strategies		

In Table 18, it can be seen that the result also supports the proposition that the

focus of enacting CL is in the classroom which can be found in much of the western

literature (e.g., Macpherson & Brooker, 2000; Wiles, 2009). For example, Henderson

and Hawthorne (1995) argued that enacting CL involves taking constructivist activities

in the classroom. In addition, enacting CL is regarded as taking any initiative which

leads to effective learning and teaching (Ho, 2010b; Macpherson et al., 1995). More

speculatively, it is appropriate to empower teachers with autonomy to participate in

curriculum and pedagogical decisions since they are "ethically obliged to do whatever

is best for their students, incorporating conditions of specialized knowledge,

responsibility for student welfare, autonomous performance and collective

self-regulation" (Ho, 2010b, p. 614).

To recapitulate, it is noteworthy that the focus of engaging CL is at the

classroom level and it also can be noted that teachers' engagement in CL plays a pivotal role in teaching and learning. The next part will take a close look at how TRG leaders take on the CL role at the curriculum evaluation stage.

6.3.3 Evaluation stage: focusing on teaching and researching activities.

Concerning how TRG leaders enact CL at the curriculum evaluation stage, findings show that all of the principals and the TRG leaders hold many perceptions about TRG leaders' autonomy in taking teaching and researching initiatives. It was identified that curriculum evaluation was the focus of teaching and research activities which involved evaluating teaching performance after peer class observation, evaluating students' learning achievements after tests or examination, and holding workshops for colleagues to reflect on teaching practice. However, it was indicated by the participants (14 TRG leaders) that there were no criteria for the curriculum evaluation. According to TRG leaders' description, evaluation and reflection were always based on teachers' knowledge, experience and expertise in teaching.

A comparison of understandings related to autonomy in teaching and researching activities is shown in Table 19. Relevant to the current research, Chinese educators also indicate that enacting CL includes making assessments and evaluations of curriculum and teaching quality (e.g., Dong, 2008; Zheng & Guo, 2010). Meanwhile, the result of having no evaluation criteria strongly supports Chinese scholars' argument (e.g., Liu, 2007; Wu, 2006; Ye, 2013).

Table 19

Comparison of the Autonomy in Teaching and Researching

This Research	Chinese Literature	Western Literature
Evaluate teaching performance	Make assessment of curriculum and teaching quality	Write assessments/ reviews of the curriculum implementation
Evaluate learning achievements	--	Review students' learning achievements
Reflect teaching practice	--	Evaluate curriculum activities
Have no evaluation criteria	Have no evaluation criteria	--

Note. -- = Absence

Further, it is apparent in Table 19 that there is no systematic curriculum

evaluation organisation, such as local-based and school-based evaluation (Liu, 2007).

Feng (2006) contended that there are three curriculum evaluation tools developed under

the implementation of NCR in 2001; these involve assessing the learning process and

learning outcomes, evaluating teaching behaviour and teaching performance, and

evaluating curriculum implementation. However, the MoE has not presented any

detailed criteria for curriculum evaluation (Zhou & Zhu, 2007). Therefore, some

researchers (e.g., Wu, 2006; Ye, 2013) called for the necessity of restructuring and

establishing effective curriculum evaluation criteria for Chinese education. It is not

surprising that the finding of the present research are congruent with the findings in the

Chinese literature since the research context is same, i.e. education conducted under the

three-level curriculum management system. In addition, it could indicate that many

challenges and problems still exist in the evaluation system even though teachers are

empowered to make curriculum evaluation.

This result is identical to the western literature which emphasizes the necessity

for curriculum evaluation when enacting CL (see Table 19). Western researchers

indicate that evaluation initiatives involve conducting regular reviews of students'

learning achievements (Wiles, 2008, 2009), writing assessments or reviews of

curriculum implementation (Cummings, 2011), or evaluating curriculum activities

(Henderson & Hawthorne, 1995). However, disparate from the current research,

previous western studies did not mention the problem of having no evaluation criteria.

Coleman (2003) and Ylimaki (2012) made a salient comment that an individual's

conception of CL is affected by the cultural factor and particular settings. In the western

educational context, issues related to curriculum evaluation have been discussed and

analysed since the American educator Ralph Tyler introduced the model of curriculum

evaluation (Gilligan, 1990). As mentioned above, however, curriculum evaluation in

China has only developed recently. This might explain why respondents'

understandings of curriculum evaluation vary from context to context.

In conclusion, TRG leaders are identified to have more autonomy in taking

autonomous decisions at the curriculum evaluation stage. The next section will examine

findings of enacting CL at the social relationship level.

6.4 Layer 3: Enacting CL at the Social Relationships Level

This section will discuss findings of perceptions related to TRG leaders'

relationships with stakeholders when taking on the CL role. Discussion will be

presented according to the following structure: relationships with superiors,

relationships with colleagues within school, and relationships with other stakeholders

outside school.

6.4.1 Building relationships with superiors but getting insufficient support.

In the current research, nine principals (90%) and 13 TRG leaders (65%) affirmed that

TRG leaders had relations with their superiors including principals, deputy principals,

administrators in the Teaching and Researching Centre and Office of Academic Affairs.

TRG leaders were found to be engaged in building relations with their superiors for

reporting emergent issues to the principal, reflecting on daily problems with deputy

principals, communicating teaching and researching issues to the Teaching and

Researching Centre, and reporting curriculum issues to the Office of Academic Affairs.

However, four principals (40%) and 10 TRG leaders (50%) acknowledged that TRG

leaders cannot get sufficient support from principals and deputy principals. In particular,

eight TRG leaders (40%) noted that they got pressures from principals that demotivated

them to take on the CL role.

Table 20
Comparison of the Relationship with the Superiors

This Research	Chinese Literature	Western Literature
Report emergency issues	--	--
Reflect daily problems	Reflect problems	--
Communicate teaching and researching issues	Communicate and obtain arrangements	Seek collaboration/ support
Report curriculum issues	--	--
Get insufficient support	Get insufficient support	Get less support
Get pressures	Have tension in relations	--

Note. -- = Absence

The above table illustrates the similarities and differences in the relationship with superiors through comparing the findings in this research with views in both the Chinese literature and western literature. It can be seen that this result partially echoes perceptions presented in the Chinese literature that teachers take responsibilities in communicating with their superiors (e.g., administrators in Curriculum Development Committee) to obtain working arrangements and to reflect on problems (e.g., Wu, 2003). For example, Hu and Gu (2012) pointed out that building good relationships with superiors is more important than maintaining relationships with colleagues. They identified that 52% of the teacher participants acknowledged that being good at communicating with superiors enabled them to obtain high prestige among their colleagues. In line with the finding in the current research, Hu and Gu (2012) found that 53% of the principal participants acknowledged that they could not provide sufficient support for teachers to enact CL. Speculatively, the vertical management system in Chinese learning organisations results in a particular situation in which teachers enact the leadership role but with less support from the principals (e.g., Hu & Gu, 2012; Lin & Feng, 2007; Ye & Zhu, 2003). Moreover, the finding of getting pressure from principals is also identical to the Chinese literature. Dong (2008) stressed that there is tension between principals and teachers. He further emphasised that teachers lack power in decision making and they have to follow the principals' orders which do not always satisfy teachers' intention. This may explain why TRG leaders have challenges in maintaining relations with their superiors in a Chinese context. However, it is

interesting to note that some researchers put forward the proposition that principals are supportive in promoting teachers' professional development (e.g., Qian & Walker, 2013; Qian et al., 2017). It is possible that the research contexts in these studies differ from this research context, which leads to the dissimilarities. As Macpherson and Brooker (2000) state, contextual factors have an influence on enacting CL.

Comparatively, in western studies, teachers were found to be active in seeking collaboration with administrators to convey information school-wide (e.g., Cummings, 2011). It is identified that successful leadership requires the support of administrators (Cummings, 2011). Thus, it seems logical that TRG leaders tend to build and maintain relations with their superiors at the school level. Further, the commentary of getting less support from superiors is also affirmed in the western literature. It is noted that school administrators do not always provide support to teachers although they play a pivotal role in supporting teachers' initiatives (Chval et al., 2010). In light of the discussion, it can be commented that building relationships with superiors has impacts on the implementation of CL.

One of the striking findings is that descriptions of the relationships with superiors in the current research were more detailed than descriptions in the Chinese literature and the western literature. For example, in the current research, both principals and TRG leaders gave detailed information about whom they communicated with (e.g., principals, deputy principals, administers in Teaching & Researching Centre/ Office of Academic Affairs) and how they communicated (e.g., report

achievement, reflect problems or report other issues). Whereas, it seems that previous

Chinese and western studies do not go into such length when probing the relationships

with superiors. One presumption is that the research purposes are different. It is

noticeable that a number of Chinese studies related to CL mainly examine and make

critiques of the western studies (Hu & Gu, 2012). The foci of those western studies are

on exploring the nature of teachers' CL role or on influential factors in the enactment of

CL (e.g., Elliott et al., 1999; Macpherson, 1998; Moreeng & Tshelane, 2014). By

contrast, the purpose of this research was probing participants' perceptions of what CL

was and how CL was enacted. Thus, this explains the slight differences in the findings.

In conclusion, TRG leaders are responsible for building and maintaining

relations with their superiors at the school level. When being empowered to take on the

CL role, TRG leaders serve as "a bridge" for connecting the superiors and the

subordinates (Wiles, 2009, p. 4). The next section will discuss major findings related to

TRG leaders' relationships with colleagues when enacting CL.

6.4.2 Taking more responsibilities in building relationships with the

colleagues. Regarding findings of TRG leaders' relationships with subordinates, seven

principals (70%) and 15 TRG leaders (75%) indicated that TRG leaders were in charge

of guiding teaching, sharing knowledge, experiences or skills, solving problems,

providing support to teachers, and promoting teachers' continual professional

development. In addition, four TRG leaders (15%) mentioned that TRG leaders

devoted themselves to building up a harmonious culture or climate for peer

communication and collaboration.

Table 21 illustrates the responsibilities that teachers assume for building relations with subordinates. This finding is affirmed by both the Chinese literature and western literature (see Table 21). It has been identified in earlier Chinese studies that teachers are responsible for taking initiatives for maintaining relationships with colleagues, which includes (1) organising curriculum activities (Hu & Gu, 2012; Huang & Zhu, 2015), (2) sharing resources, information, experiences, knowledge with peers (Luo & Xia, 2011; Ye & Zhu, 2013), (3) solving problems and providing assistance (Li, 2004; Wang & Kang, 2013), (4) mentoring and prompting individual development (Mao, 2009; Zhang, 2012), and (5) nurturing a positive climate for communication and collaboration (Li, 2004; Jin & Zhao, 2004).

Table 21

Comparison of the Relationship with the Subordinates

This Research	Chinese Literature	Western Literature
Guide teaching	--	--
Share experiences/skills	Share resources/information/ experience/knowledge	--
Solve problems	Solve problems	--
Provide support	Provide assistance	Support teaching & researching
Prompt teachers development	Mentor, prompt individual development	Mentor teachers, assist teacher and team development
Build climate for communication & collaboration	Nurture positive climate for communication & collaboration	Develop supportive environment
--	Organise activities	
--	--	Encourage peers
--	--	Evaluate teachers' performance
--	--	Model exemplary behaviours/practices

Note. -- = Absence

Furthermore, the result is in congruence with the western literature addressing

the responsibilities that teachers take on to build relations with their subordinates when

enacting CL (see Table 21). For instance, responsibilities mentioned by western

scholars involve (1) supporting teaching and researching (Albashiry et al., 2006; Wiles,

2009), (2) mentoring teachers in instructional issues (Cummings, 2011; Jefferies,

2000), (3) assisting teacher and team development (Jorgensen, 2016; Nashashibi &

Watters, 2003), and (4) developing a supportive working culture or environment

(Elliott et al., 2005; Yalimaki, 2011). Comparatively, it is noteworthy that a number of

responsibilities are presented in the western literature which include encouraging peers,

evaluating teachers' performance or modelling exemplary behaviours or practices for

teachers (e.g., Britt et al., 2001; Nashashibi & Watters, 2003). However, this is

disparate from the finding in the current study. It is noticeable that the western literature

provides more descriptions of the responsibilities for maintaining relations when

compared with findings in the current study. It could be inferred that the differences in

the researching context lead to the dissimilarities in the findings. As Emrich (1999)

concludes, incumbent leaders' perceptions are affected by the contextual factors.

To conclude, TRG leaders are empowered to take more autonomous decisions

and responsibilities to build and maintain relationships with their subordinates at the

school level. The next section will probe further into findings related to difficulties in

building relations with peers within the school.

6.4.3 Facing uncooperative environment and atmosphere among peers. As

for the challenges encountered by TRG leaders when building relationships with

subordinates, five principals (50%) and 14 TRG leaders (70%) complained that the

uncooperative climate and atmosphere among teachers brought difficulties when

enacting CL. For example, it was identified that some teachers, especially elderly

teachers, were unmotivated in participating in activities held by TRG leaders since they

did not want to pursue further development. Further, five TRG leaders (25%) noted that

young teachers were lazy and procrastinated in taking activities.

This result echoes Chinese researchers' (e.g., Dong, 2008; Xiong & Zhong,

2010) contention that there is little collaboration between leaders and teachers. For

example, Dong (2008) said that only when the school organises teachers to collaborate

can leaders communicate with teachers. It is striking that although the result of the current research is similar to the results of previous Chinese studies, the rationales behind the phenomenon are different. In the current research, it was identified that teachers' laziness, procrastination and lack of enthusiasm incurred the unmotivated and uncooperative atmosphere within groups. This finding is disparate from the Chinese literature in which it is found that the teacher performance evaluation system mainly depends on students' achievements in the entrance examination leading to severe competition rather than a cooperative climate among peers (Fu & Yu, 2014; Li & Wang, 2010).

Comparatively, the result of this current research also differs from the findings in western studies in which teachers were found to be active in interaction and collaboration with peers (e.g., Elliott et al., 1999; Ritchie et al., 2007). It is identified that there is a "centrality of successful interactions" among teachers (Ritchie et al., 2007). Britt et al. (2001) pointed out that interaction enables teachers to share professional experiences and prompts professional conversations.

As might be expected, the finding of facing an uncooperative atmosphere is more consistent with findings in the Chinese literature, but rather different from the findings in western studies. This result might simply indicate that the Chinese context differs from the western context. Hong and Pawan (2014) stressed that

The teachers' attempts to share knowledge with colleagues were met with

refusal and even disdain, despite being in a cultural context in which teacher

collaborations is highly prized and is especially encouraged in the public

schools through collaborative teacher research groups known as jiaoyanzu (p.

63)

In light of this, the climate within groups is rather uncooperative which brings

difficulties to teachers when enacting CL.

Enacting CL not only involves building relationships with stakeholders within

the school, but also includes maintaining relations with stakeholders outside school.

The following section will discuss primary findings related to building relationships

with stakeholders outside school.

6.4.4 Complaints about connecting with stakeholders outside school. One

interesting finding emanated from data analysis of the relationships with stakeholders

outside school. It was found that principals' and TRG leaders' perceptions about whom

they communicate with in external collaboration were rather different. In this research,

two principals (20%) indicated that TRG leaders took responsibilities for building

relationships with other schools or educational experts outside the school. However, 19

TRG leaders (95%) acknowledged that they seldom connected with other learning

organisations but always communicated with the local educational bureau for attending

middle-level trainings. Particularly, findings showed that three principals (30%)

expected TRG leaders to actively build up connections with other schools for sharing

instructional experiences or exchanging information. Whereas, some TRG leaders (e.g.,

TRGL5, TRGL7, TRGL8) reported that they had no channels to connect with experts

or other learning organisations. Different from principals' perceptions, TRG leaders

also complained that they got pressures from communicating with the local educational

bureau in that they were always forced to take trainings which were inconsistent with

their needs or their learning receptivity.

The current result of maintaining relations with stakeholders outside school is

disparate from both the Chinese literature and western literature since the descriptions

in the literature rarely probe into issues related to relations with stakeholders outside

school. It seems highly reasonable to believe that the dissimilarities are due to

differences in the research context. Another interesting result is the expectation for

leaders to connect with other schools. This echoes Huang and Zhu's (2015) suggestion

that it is feasible to use outside school resources to provide assistance for teachers to

enact CL which includes inviting experts to hold trainings on transmitting knowledge

and skills about CL, resolving problems and providing advice on enacting CL. Huang

and Zhu (2015) pointed out that it is necessary for schools to build relations with

stakeholders outside school since the experts' and scholars' trainings are pivotal

pathways for teachers to develop the capability of enacting CL. It is worth noting that

the notion of suggesting that teachers connect with stakeholders individually is

dissimilar to Huang and Zhu's (2015) statement. This may also explain why TRG

leaders in this research complained that they are forced to and have pressure to connect

with other stakeholders outside the school. To conclude, a striking feature of building

relations with stakeholders outside school is that TRG leaders are relatively inactive in

taking initiatives because there are no communication channels.

In summary, empowering TRG leaders to take on the CL role at the social relationship level reflects the necessity for building and maintaining relationships with superiors, subordinates and other stakeholders within and outside the school. The next section will explore findings relating to enacting CL at the personal level.

6.5 Layer 4: Enacting CL at the Personal Level

Enacting CL reflects individual's "subjective interpretations" that arise from "self-awareness, beliefs and experiences" (Ylimaki, 2011, p. 342). This section will examine and discuss the findings of both principals' and TRG leaders' perceptions of TRG leader' engagement in CL at the personal level, which mainly involves probing TRG leaders' awareness in enacting CL, knowledge and skills related to CL, and their professional ethics of taking on the CL role.

6.5.1 Weak awareness of enacting CL. In the current research, six principals (60%) and 12 TRG leaders (60%) acknowledged that some TRG leaders had a lack of awareness in taking on the CL role and were unmotivated or inactive in enacting CL. It is noticeable that it was the same percentage (60%) in these two groups of participants. Particularly, it was identified that some TRG leaders did not want to take responsibilities for curriculum matters, some were unclear about their responsibilities, and some did not want to be empowered. Findings indicate that TRG leaders are not only unfamiliar with the term CL and the specific responsibilities of enacting CL, but are also unmotivated in enacting CL. The underlying reason for not enacting CL was

because TRG leaders were used to following the principals' order and instructions (TRGL 7). Because of the lack of awareness, four principals (40%) and six TRG leaders (30%) expected TRG leaders to build up more awareness in taking on the CL role.

This result is consistent with the Chinese literature in that teachers are inactive in taking on the CL role and lack awareness of how to enact CL (e.g., Mao, 2009; Xu, 2004; Ye & Zhu, 2013). Ho (2010) noted that some teachers are less enthusiastic about making decisions when tasks are imposed by their superiors. More speculatively, teachers have already got used to being the followers rather than the decision makers (Lu, 2005; Mao, 2009). Specifically, teachers hold weak consciousness in taking on the CL role and view enacting CL as being controlled by principals or other administrators (Lu, 2011). Further, it is noteworthy that findings also support the notion of evoking and strengthening teachers' awareness of enacting CL presented in the Chinese literature (e.g., Fu and Yu, 2014; Huang & Zhu, 2015; Zheng, 2007). For example, Lin and Feng (2007) commented that teachers' weak awareness results in the fabrication of autonomy in taking the leadership role, thus it is necessary to strengthen teachers' awareness of enacting CL. This commentary is also affirmed by Mao (2009),

> With the development of ideology in education and the implementation of education reform, the level for leadership competencies of teachers became higher. Therefore, teachers should pursue continual professional development with the purpose of being qualified in taking the curriculum leadership role. (p.

98)

Similarly, this result echoes conceptions in western studies (e.g., Handler, 2010) that most teachers do not have strong ambitions or desires in taking on the CL role. Duke et al. (1980) pointed out that teachers demonstrate little desire to participate in decision-making at the school level and have little satisfaction with this. This explains why TRG leaders' awareness of enacting CL is low.

Furthermore, the finding supports the statements made by western researchers (e.g., Avizhgan et al., 2015; Ross & Gray, 2006) that teachers should be more familiar with the roles and functions of CL. Cummings (2011) speaks of the need to equip teachers with specialised preparation in taking on the CL role, and be prepared to participate in continual professional development with the purpose of performing CL effectively.

In conclusion, this research illustrates that TRG leaders lack awareness about participating in curriculum matters. Nevertheless, participants realised the importance and significance of increasing awareness in taking on the CL role. The next section will discuss findings in relation to whether TRG leaders are equipped with knowledge and skills in enacting CL.

6.5.2 Lack of knowledge and skills related to enacting CL. It is notable that six principals (60%) and seven TRG leaders (35%) in the current research acknowledged that TRG leaders lack the related knowledge, skills and experiences of how to enact the CL role. TRG leaders were identified to have difficulties in managing

teachers since they are not equipped with communication skills or management

experiences. According to TRG leaders' statements, although they are equipped with

some power, they do not know how to enact the role effectively without related

knowledge and skills of enacting CL. Furthermore, three principals (30%) and six TRG

leaders (30%) explained that there is little or no training related to improving TRG

leaders' management skills or communication skills regarding how to enact CL.

　　　　Table 22 illustrates the comparison of the findings of teachers' knowledge and

skills of enacting CL with both the Chinese and western literature. This result strongly

supports the findings in previous Chinese studies, which indicated that teachers lack

substantial and professional knowledge of how to enact CL (e.g., Lu, 2005; Wang &

Zheng, 2013; Xiong & Zhong, 2010). For example, Fan et al. (2007) identified that

80% of the teachers acknowledged that they lack professional guidance about how to

take on the CL role. In addition, Chang and Li (2007) noted that 21% of the teachers

indicated that the most difficult thing in enacting CL is the weakness in professional

ability to do it. Furthermore, Lu (2005) argued that teachers feel lost when being

empowered and do not know how to enact the role practically.

Table 22

Comparison of the Knowledge and Skills of Enacting CL

This Research	Chinese Literature	Western Literature
Lack communication/management skills	Lack professional ability	Have communication/management skills
Lack professional training	Lack professional guidance	--

Note. -- = Absence

Nevertheless, this result is disparate from the western literature in which teacher leaders were not found to lack related knowledge and skills of enacting CL (see Table 22). In the western literature, teachers are identified to have substantial knowledge of and skills in management and communication (e.g., Jefferries, 2000; Nashashibi & Watters, 2003; Wiles, 2009). As mentioned foregoing, there has been much research attention given to understanding CL since 1990s (e.g., Bailey, 1990; Elliott et al., 1999). This might explain why western studies have found teachers do not lack knowledge and skills about enacting CL, whereas teachers in the Chinese context are found to be weak in knowledge and skills.

In summary, findings indicate that TRG leaders lack knowledge and skills related to taking on the CL role. However, it is noteworthy that TRG leaders are competent in the professional aspect of teaching. The next section will discuss major findings related to TRG leaders' competency in professional knowledge and skills in teaching.

6.5.3 Professionalism in teaching. In this research, about a half of the participants of both groups (five principals and nine TRG leaders) stated that TRG leaders were competent in professionalism. TRG leaders were regarded as the experts and academic leaders in teaching since they had foresight for curriculum development and had extensive knowledge and experience in teaching.

This result is identical to conceptions presented in the Chinese literature that teachers are possessed with substantial knowledge and skills in teaching or in relation

to curriculum matters, such as curriculum design, curriculum development, curriculum implementation, curriculum evaluation (e.g., Fu & Yu, 2014; Law et al., 2007; Mao, 2009; Wang, 2013; Ye & Zhu, 2013).

In addition, the result echoes western studies which reveal that teachers should have specialised knowledge and competencies in teaching. For example, teachers are expected to be capable of making curricular design, taking instructional practice and curriculum implementation, have a global understanding, researching ability, be familiar with educational theory and policy (Handler, 2010), be competent in classroom teaching and be analytical in educational documents (Jefferries, 2000). This result might also imply that teachers spend most of the time taking initiatives related to teaching and learning (Little, 2003).

In summary, findings illustrate that TRG leaders are equipped with competence in teaching when taking on the CL role. The following section will discuss the primary findings of TRG leaders' professional ethics when enacting CL.

6.5.4 Lack of professional ethics when taking on the CL role. It was found that eight principals (80%) and 18 TRG leaders (90%) commented that having professional ethics was an important factor for engaging in CL. In the findings, TRG leaders were expected to have personal qualities such as honesty, fairness, responsibility, integrity, accountability, persistence, tolerance, and legitimacy. However, only two principals (20%) and four TRG leaders (2%) suggested that TRG leaders lack professional ethics when taking on the CL role. For example, TRG leaders were

identified as being irresponsible, aggressive, selfish and not persistent when facing

difficulties.

The following table shows the understandings of teachers' professional ethics

when taking on the CL role. It compares the findings of research with both the Chinese

literature and western literature. It is noted that this result is in line with earlier Chinese

research that mentioned the expectation of having professional ethics when enacting

CL (e.g., Hu & Gu, 2012; Mao, 2009; Xiong & Zhong, 2010). For example, teachers

are expected to possess professional ethics including risk taking (Li, 2004),

responsibility (Mao, 2009; Ye & Zhu, 2013; Zheng, 2007), sharing (Ye & Zhu, 2013),

and personal accountability (Zheng & Guo, 2010). Particularly, morality and charisma

are regarded as important factors for leaders to build up individual prestige among

peers (Hu & Gu, 2012). In addition, it is noteworthy that lacking professional ethics

echoes the contention that teachers lack a sense of responsibility (Lin & Feng, 2007),

and are selfish (Ye, 2013). It is not surprising that the educational context of the current

research and previous Chinese studies is same. This may partially explain why findings

are quite similar in that teachers' professional ethical level is relatively low in the

Chinese context (Ou, 2014).

Table 23
Comparison of Professional Ethics of Enacting CL

This Research	Chinese Literature	Western Literature
Expect to be with honesty, fairness, responsibility, integrity, accountability, persistence, tolerance, and legitimacy	Expect to be with risk taking, responsibility, sharing, personal accountability	Have the nature of caring, encouraging, positive, listen to staff, trust others, self efficacy, risk taking, responsibility, legitimacy, credibility, self-empathy, responsiveness
Lack professional ethics	Lack professional guidance	--
Be irresponsible, aggressive, selfish, not persistent	Be irresponsible, selfish	--

Note. -- = Absence

Needing professional ethics when taking on the CL role is also affirmed in the

western literature. For example, teachers are identified as being caring, encouraging,

positive (Cummings, 2011), listening to staff, trusting others, self efficacious   (Elliott

et al., 2005; Jefferries, 2000; Macpherson, 1998), risk taking (Macpherson et al., 1996),

responsible (Jones & Anderson, 2001; Macpherson et al., 1996), and having legitimacy,

credibility (Morrison, 1995), self-empathy and responsiveness (Nashashibi & Watters,

2003). Macpherson (1998) emphasised the importance of possessing professional

ethics. He reflected that teachers are more likely to engage in leadership actions when

they are confident, valued and trusted. Moreover, these individual natures are regarded

as important factors to mediate the contextual elements and seize the opportunities for

better enacting the leadership role (Macpherson, 1998). It is concluded that having

professional ethics is pivotal for TRG leaders to enact CL.

Comparatively, it is surprising that the low level of professional ethics

mentioned in the current research and the Chinese literature cannot be found in the

western literature. Different from the Chinese context in which teachers' professional

ethical level is relatively low, issues of professional ethics have been discussed and

criticised by theorists and practitioners since 1915 in the western educational context

(Campell, 2000). This partly explains why professional ethics is an immature area in

Chinese research and why there still exist problems in the construction of teachers'

ethics.

To conclude, to be empowered to enact CL, TRG leaders should be possessed of

awareness in taking on the CL role, be equipped with knowledge and skills in teaching

and management, and have professional ethics in enacting CL. The next section will

construct a theoretical model of TRG leaders' involvement in CL, based on both

principals' and TRG leaders' perceptions.

6.6 Model of TRG Leaders' Engagement in CL

A model of TRG leaders' engagement in CL was established through

integrating findings of both principals' and TRG leaders' perceptions of how TRG

leaders' enact CL at secondary schools in the Chinese context (see Figure 1).

Figure 1 illustrates this rudimentary model of TRG leaders' engagement in CL

perceived by both principals and TRG leaders. It involves four categories, namely,

framing/planning goals at the organisational level, coordinating curriculum at the

classroom level, building relationships with stakeholders at the social relationship level

and promoting individual development at the personal level. There are sub categories

under each level. It can be seen from Figure 5 that enacting CL at the organisational

level includes having autonomy in making administrative decisions and instructional

decisions. At the classroom level, enacting CL enables TRG leaders to have autonomy

in taking initiatives at the curriculum planning stage, implementation stage and

evaluation stage. Regarding TRG leaders' participation in CL at the social relationship

level, it consists of building and maintaining relationships with superiors, subordinates

and other stakeholders within and outside the school setting. Finally, being

empowered to take on the CL role, TRG leaders should have awareness of taking on the

CL role, with competent knowledge and skills related to enacting CL with professional

ethics.

On the other hand, research findings indicate that there are dynamic

connections between the four levels. First, there is a dynamic connection between the

organisational level and the classroom level. It is noted that TRG leaders' engagement

in CL at the organisational level plays a significant role in providing guidance for

teaching, learning and assessment which ultimately promotes curriculum development.

As mentioned in 5.2.1, TRG leaders' engagement in CL is a mainstay of teaching and

researching (P7). Second, the social relationship level and the classroom level connect

dynamically. Findings indicate that empowering TRG leaders to build and maintain

relations with stakeholders within and outside the school is pivotal for information

sharing and problem solving, which facilitate high-quality teaching. Third, there are

reciprocal relations between the social relationship level and the personal level.

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Particularly, sharing and obtaining information with subordinates within the schools and educational experts outside the school promote TRG leaders' individual development. It is noted by TRGL8 that collaboration enables teachers and TRG leaders to make progress together. Reciprocally, TRG leaders' individual development has an impact on establishing rapport with the stakeholders. P5 pointed out that being TRG leaders means they have gained recognition and respect from both principals and teachers. This is identical to a conclusion in the western literature review that teachers could earn credibility when their professionalism, competence and personal qualities are demonstrated by enacting leadership (e.g., Patterson & Patterson, 2004). Fourth, the individual level has dynamic connections with the classroom level and the organisational level. The quality of teaching and learning is enhanced along with TRG leaders' professional development, a situation which ultimately promotes curriculum development and school development. P7 stated that TRG leaders are the experts in the teaching field. They are the best people to assure and enhance the quality of teaching. Although there certainly were dynamic connections, the research findings did not indicate that there are two-way connections among the four levels.

The design of this theoretical model contributes to the knowledge base of how TRG leaders can take on the CL role and can provide implications to examine CL in the Chinese context. It is identified that earlier Chinese studies on teachers' engagement in CL mainly make critical evaluations of findings emanating from western studies (Hu & Gu, 2012). It is hoped that this research will provide future studies or discussions of CL

with reference to our structural and theoretical framework of CL Further, future

research could test the model of TRG leaders' engagement in CL since this research

was restricted to developing the model from the research findings. On the other hand,

the dynamic connections between the four levels can contribute to directing

researchers to probe in-depth relations connected to TRG leaders' engagement in CL

at different levels.
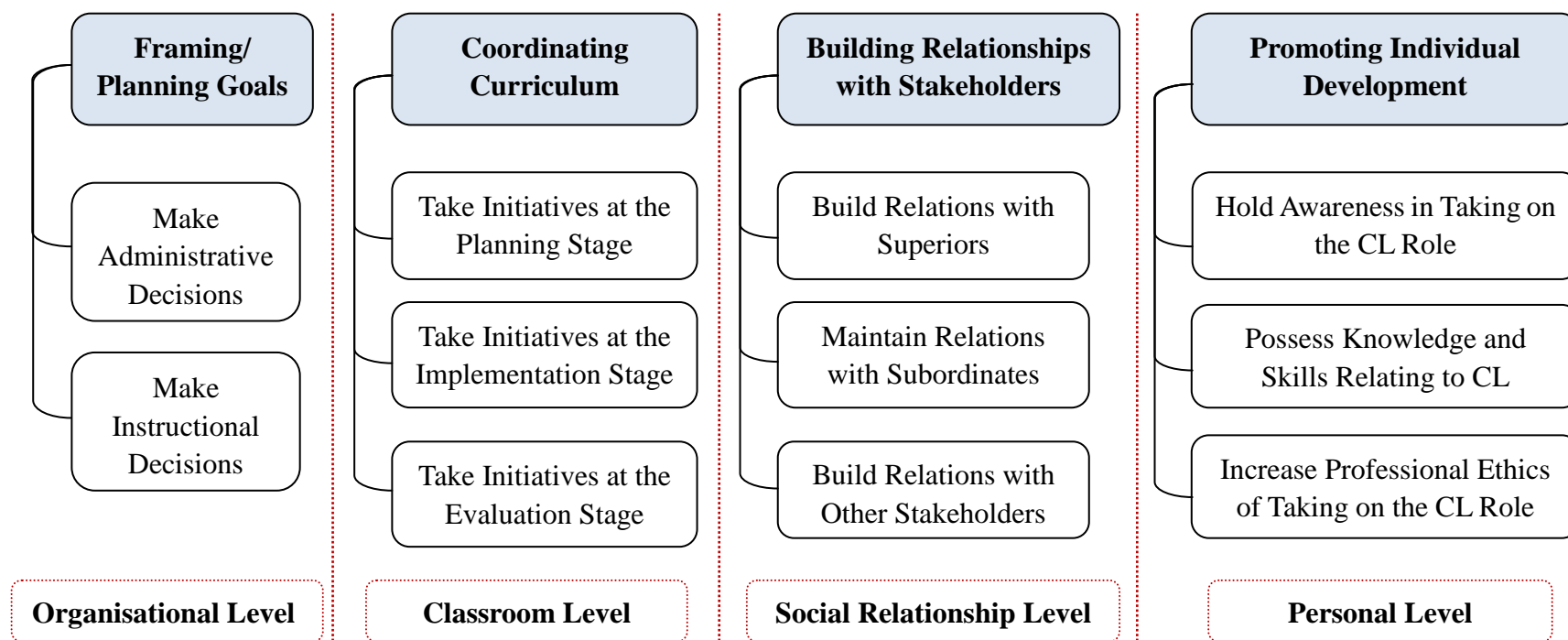
Figure 16. Model of TRG leaders' engagement in CL in the Chinese context as perceived by principals and TRG leaders

6.7 Summary

This chapter reports the primary findings and unexpected findings of both

principals' and TRG leaders' perceptions. The discussion of the findings involves

comparisons with earlier Chinese and western studies. Furthermore, the researcher

presents the rationales for the similarities and differences emanating from the analysis.

More specifically, this research has achieved its original purpose of examining both

principals' and TRG leaders' perceptions of TRG leaders' engagement in CL. The

discussion of the findings reveals that TRG leaders' are entailed with more autonomy in

taking on the CL role at the school level. Furthermore, focusing on the Chinese context,

the results highlight the importance of empowering TRG leaders to enact CL, but also

articulate some challenges faced by TRG leaders when taking on the CL role. Last but

not least, the categories and theoretical model derived emerging from this research

provide information for future studies on how CL is implemented by teachers. The next

chapter will conclude the research by presenting a summary of the findings,

implications and some suggestions for future research.

Chapter 7 Conclusions

The final chapter has two purposes. First, it summarises the overall research

process. Second, it uses the empirical findings to exemplify the importance of

empowering TRG leaders to enact CL, and then suggests some implications for future

research.

The chapter consists of four sections. Section one provides an overview of the

research process. Section two summarises the major findings. Section three discusses

the implications of the research findings from theoretical, methodological, practical and

political perspectives. Section four outlines the limitations and recommendations for

future research in the area of TRG leaders' engagement in CL.

7.1 An Overview of the Research Process

The purpose of this research was to identify both principals' and TRG leaders'

perceptions of TRG leaders' engagement in CL in secondary schools in a Chinese

context. Based on the four major research questions, a qualitative approach was utilised

to probe: (1) how principals perceive TRG leaders' engagement in CL, (2) how TRG

leaders perceive TRG leaders' engagement in CL, (3) what are the similarities in

participants' perceptions, and (4) what are the differences in participants' perceptions.

Data were collected from multiple sources. The major data source drew on

semi-structured interviews with 10 principals and 20 TRG leaders selected through

convenience and purposive sampling. To improve the validity and reliability of the

research, the data were also collected through meeting observations and documents.

Four types of meetings were observed and video recorded. These included a meeting

held at the beginning of the school semester, monthly meetings, meeting for team

building activities and meetings for mentoring younger teachers. The researcher

collected 10 job descriptions which depicted TRG leaders' responsibilities of being in

charge of curriculum matters and 10 performance summaries related to TRG leaders'

accomplishment of taking on the CL role in the target schools. To ensure validity and

readability, back-translation and member checking were adopted. In this research, all

data were transcribed verbatim for content analysis. Through data analysis, five

categories emerged and these constituted the major findings of the research.

7.2 Summary of the Major Findings

This study identified five major categories relevant to TRG leaders'

engagement in CL in Chinese secondary schools, namely, general understanding of CL,

enacting CL at the organisational level, enacting CL at the classroom level, enacting CL

at the social relationship level, and enacting CL at the personal level.

7.2.1. Being rather unfamiliar with the term CL. Research findings indicated

that principals were more familiar with the concept of CL than the TRG leaders

themselves. It was interesting to note that all TRG leaders could depict the concept

when paraphrasing the term CL into the phrase 'being in charge of curriculum matters'

(such as curriculum plan, curriculum development or curriculum implementation). This

finding is in line with earlier Chinese literature that the concept of CL was rather new to

teachers who assumed the role of CL (e.g., Fan et al., 2007). In contrast, CL is not an

unfamiliar concept in the western studies (e.g., Wiles, 2009).

Although principals and TRG leaders defined CL differently in this research,

they shared a common understanding that enacting CL mainly involved taking

instructional initiatives at the school level and/or the classroom level. This commentary

is also affirmed in both the Chinese and western literature, i.e., that engaging CL

reflects responsibilities or instructional initiatives taken by the leaders (e.g., Dong,

2008; Ylimaki, 2011).

7.2.2 Having autonomy to make administration and instructional decisions at the organisational level. Research findings indentified that TRG leaders have autonomy in making both administrative decisions and instructional decisions at the school level when taking on the CL role.

Table 24 summarises the major findings and discusses these in relation to TRG leaders' engagement in CL at the organisational level. As can be seen in Table 24, principals and TRG leaders acknowledged that TRG leaders have autonomy in making administrative decisions, such as providing suggestions, making appraisal performance for teachers, arranging cleaning tasks and taking records of attendance for peer class observations and meetings. Table 24 also illustrates that the statement 'provide suggestions' is identical to the Chinese literature (e.g., Wang & Zheng, 2013). However, there are dissimilarities in the way that Chinese and western participants viewed taking administrative decisions mainly involving cultural building (Chen, 2009; Nashashibi & Watters, 2003), vision building (DeMatthews, 2014; Fu & Yu, 2014) and allocating resources (Cummings, 2011; Li, 2004). On the other hand, TRG leaders were found to have power in making instructional decisions, such as guiding curriculum development, monitoring and supervising curriculum implementation. This result is identical in the Chinese literature and western literature, namely, that enacting CL involves empowering leaders with autonomy in creating curriculum plans (Li, 2004), coordinating curriculum development (Luo & Xia, 2011; Wiles, 2009) and monitoring

curriculum implementation (Lee & Dimmock, 1999). In particular, it was identified

that TRG leaders are empowered with more autonomy in making instructional

decisions for school-based curriculum (see Table 24). This result echoes the Chinese

literature that teachers have no/less autonomy in making decisions for the national

curriculum at the school level (e.g., Wang, 2008).

In conclusion, empowering TRG leaders to enact CL enables them to have more

autonomy in taking both administrative decisions and instructional decisions at the

whole school level. The next section will summarise findings related to how curriculum

and CL interact at the classroom level.

Table 24

Summary of Findings and Discussion Related to Enacting CL at the Organisational Level

	This Study		Chinese Literature	Western Literature
	Principals' perceptions	TRG leaders' perceptions		
Administrative	Provide suggestions	Provide suggestions	Provide suggestions	--
	Make appraisal performance	Make appraisal performance	--	--
	--	Take other administrative affairs	--	--
	--	--	Build school culture; build shared-vision; allocate resources	Build school culture; building shared-vision; allocating resource
	--	--	--	Modify school structure
Instructional	Take curriculum planning (S)	Take curriculum planning (S)	Take curriculum planning (S)	--
	Guide curriculum development	Guide curriculum development	Lead curriculum building	Coordinate curriculum development
	Monitor/Supervise curriculum implementation	Monitor/Supervise curriculum implementation	--	Monitor/review/develop curriculum
	Organise teaching & researching	--	--	Make curriculum exploration

Note. S=School–based curriculum, -- = Absence

7.2.3 Having less autonomy in national curriculum and more autonomy in school-based curriculum at the classroom level. Findings about coordinating curriculum at the classroom level formed three categories: taking curriculum initiatives at the curriculum planning stage, taking curriculum initiatives at the curriculum implementation stage, and taking curriculum initiatives at the curriculum evaluation stage (see Table 25).

At the curriculum planning stage, both principals and TRG leaders agreed that implementing CL for the national curriculum must be in accordance with the requirements stipulated in the national curriculum standards. In particular, TRG leaders cannot make any change in the teaching content, teaching materials or teaching hours. Table 25 demonstrates that the finding echoes the commentary in both Chinese literature and western literature that taking instructional initiatives should ensure compliance with the curriculum standards (e.g., Macpherson & Brooker, 2000; Qi, 2011). In contrast, findings indicated that TRG leaders have more autonomy in making decisions for school-based curriculum; these involve making instruction plans, teaching pedagogy, hours distributions and arrangement of quizzes. It is to be noted in Table 25 that this result is identical to the Chinese literature in that teachers' autonomy in the school-based curriculum has some flexibility (e.g., Feng, 2006; Yang, 2012). Further, it is confirmed in the western literature that teachers have autonomy in building instructional plans for the curriculum (Macpherson et al., 1996) and tailoring teaching materials to match the teaching context (Wiles, 2009; Macpherson et al., 1996).

Table 25

Summary of Findings and Discussion Related to Enacting CL at the Classroom Level

	This Study		Chinese Literature	Western Literature
	Principals' perceptions	TRG leaders' perceptions		
Planning Stage	Follow curriculum standards: teaching content, teaching hours, textbook selection (N)	Follow curriculum standards: teaching content, teaching hours, textbook selection (N)	Compliance with the curriculum standards: content of teaching, plans of instruction, textbook development (N)	Compliance with the curriculum standards
	Make instruction plans; select materials, arrange teaching schedule, teaching hours, quiz, examinations (S)	Choose teaching content; make instruction plans; select textbooks; arrange teaching hours (S)	Formulate teaching plan/unit plan; choose teaching materials (S)	Build up a holistic view of curriculum; prompt curriculum design; select textbooks
Implementation	Make teaching arrangement: adjust the sequence of teaching knowledge points; maintain learning pace; choose teaching approaches	Make teaching arrangement: adjust the teaching content, teaching approaches; control pace of teaching, selecting knowledge points	Make teaching arrangement	Enact constructivist activities in the classroom
Evaluation Stage	Take teaching and researching initiatives: hold workshop, peer class observation; discuss and evaluate teaching and learning; guide and organise activities	Take teaching and researching initiatives: evaluate teaching performance; evaluate learning achievements; hold workshops to reflect teaching practice; conduct research project	Make assessment and evaluation of curriculum and teaching quality	Evaluate learning achievements; write assessments or reviews of the curriculum implementation; evaluate curriculum activities
	Have no evaluation criteria	Have no evaluation criteria	Have no evaluation criteria	--

Note. N=National curriculum, S=School-based curriculum, -- = Absence

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At the curriculum implementation stage, it was noted that TRG leaders are empowered and have considerable autonomy in classroom teaching, not only for the national curriculum, but also for the school-based curriculum. The findings showed that TRG leaders are mainly responsible for adjusting the teaching content, teaching approaches, controlling the pace of teaching, and selecting knowledge points. This result is congruent with findings in both Chinese literature and western literature where the emphasis in on enacting CL in classroom teaching (e.g., Luo & Xia, 2011; Wiles, 2009). Further, it is interesting to note in Table 25 that principals and TRG leaders provide more detailed information on articulating TRG leaders' initiatives when compared with findings in earlier studies (e.g. Zhang & Fu, 2013).

At the curriculum evaluation stage, TRG leaders were found to have extensive autonomy in taking teaching and researching initiatives. In particular, these initiatives consist of evaluating teaching performance after class observation, evaluating academic achievements after tests or examinations, and holding workshops to reflect teaching practice. Table 25 illustrates that this result strongly supports the findings in earlier Chinese studies and western studies that taking on the CL role enables TRG leaders to have power and autonomy in making assessment and evaluation for teaching and learning (e.g., Liu, 2007; Henderson & Hawthorne, 1995; Wiles, 2009; Ye & Zhu, 2013). What was unexpected is that there are no criteria for curriculum evaluation according to TRG leaders. Since the research contexts are the same, it is not surprising that this result echoes Zhou and Zhu's (2007) commentary that there are no detailed

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criteria for curriculum evaluation in China.

In summary, TRG leaders' autonomy in taking on the CL role at the classroom level depends on the type of curriculum. TRG leaders have more autonomy in taking initiatives for school-based curriculum when compared with their autonomy in the national curriculum. The following section will summarise findings concerning how TRG leaders enact CL at the social relationship level.

7.2.4 Having autonomy in building and maintaining relationships with stakeholders at the social relationship level. To shed light on the findings of TRG leaders' engagement in CL at the social relationship level, this section summarises the major findings from three perspectives: relationships with superiors, relationships with subordinates, and relationships with stakeholders outside the school. Table 26 demonstrates the major findings related to enacting CL at the social relationship level.

Concerning the relationships with superiors, findings indentified that TRG leaders have autonomy in building relations with principals, deputy principals, and administrators of the Teaching and Researching Centre and Office of Academic Affairs. As can be seen from Table 26, although there are more detailed descriptions of the relations with superiors in this research, this finding still echoes notions presented in the Chinese literature and the western literature that TRG leaders are responsible for retaining relationships with superiors to reflect problems and to receive orders (e.g., Cummings, 2011; Wu, 2003). Further, the finding 'get insufficient support' in this research is also confirmed in both earlier Chinese studies and western studies (e.g.,

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Chval et al., 2010; Hu & Gu, 2012; Ye & Zhu, 2013). In addition, Table 26 illustrates

that only TRG leaders complain that they get pressures from their superiors, which

supports Dong's (2008) commentary that there is tension between principals and

teachers. In contrast, some researchers (Qian & Walker, 2013; Qian et al., 2017) have

found that teachers do get supports from principals for professional development. It is

possible that the research contexts in these studies differ from the present research

context, which leads to the dissimilarities.

Regarding the relations with subordinates, the findings demonstrated that TRG

leaders take more responsibility for building relationships with colleagues at the social

relationship level. Table 26 indicates that TRG leaders have autonomy in guiding

teaching, mentoring teachers, sharing experiences and solving problems. The results

strongly support findings in both Chinese and western studies that teachers take more

responsibilities for maintaining relationships with subordinates (e.g., Cummings, 2011;

Luo & Xia, 2011). Particularly, the finding of being responsible for building up a

positive climate for peer communication and collaboration is identical to the Chinese

and western literature (Jin & Zhao, 2004; Ylimaki, 2011). One striking finding

emanating from this research is that TRG leaders are faced with an uncooperative

environment and atmosphere among peers when enacting CL. Table 26 shows that this

result is congruent with the findings in earlier Chinese literature that there is less

collaboration between leaders and teachers (Li & Wang, 2010; Xiong & Zhong, 2010).

Nevertheless, the climate is active and collaborative in the western context (Ritchie et

al., 2007).

Referring to relationships with stakeholders outside the school, principals and TRG leaders hold different perceptions (see Table 26). In principals' viewpoints, TRG leaders are responsible for building relationship with other schools or experts outside the school. TRG leaders' perceptions, however, focus on explicating that they always communicate with the local educational bureau for attending training programmes. As illustrated in Table 26, this research is disparate from both Chinese views and western views since the literature rarely provides commentary on maintaining relations with stakeholders outside school.

It can be concluded that TRG leaders serve as a bridge for the upward flow of inquiry and the downward flow of information within and outside the school. The next section will make a summary of findings related to enacting CL at the personal level.

7.2.5 Being rather weak in awareness, knowledge, skills and professional ethics. Findings related to enacting CL at the personal level fell into three major domains: TRG leaders' awareness of taking on the CL role, TRG leaders' knowledge and skills related to enacting CL and, TRG leaders' professional ethics of enacting CL.

Table 26

Summary of Findings and Discussion Related to Enacting CL at the Social Relationship Level

This Study		Chinese Literature	Western Literature
Principals' perceptions	TRG leaders' perceptions		
Report emergent/important issues to principals; reflect problems/ achievement to deputy principal; report teaching and researching affairs to Teaching and Researching Centre; report working plan to Office of Academic Affairs	Report emergent/important issues to principals; reflect teaching issues or other issues to deputy principal; report teaching and researching affairs to Teaching and Researching Centre; report curriculum matters to Office of Academic Affairs	Report working arrangements, reflect problems to administrators in Curriculum Development Committee	Seek collaboration; provide a vision for school-wide programs, seek support to administrators
Provide insufficient support	Get insufficient support	Provide insufficient support	Get less support
--	Get pressures	Get pressures	--
Guide teaching, share experiences/knowledge/skills, Solve problems, support/assist teaching, prompt teacher development	Guide teaching, share experiences/knowledge/skills, solve problems, support/assist teaching, prompt teacher development/mentor young teachers	Share resources, information, experiences, knowledge; solve problems and provide assistance; mentor/prompt individual development	Support teaching and researching; assist teacher and team development; mentor teachers
--	Build up culture/climate for communication/collaboration	Nurture positive climate for communication/collaboration	Develop a supportive working environment
Face uncooperative climate	Face uncooperative climate	Face uncooperative climate	Have active collaboration
Connect other schools/experts	--	--	--
--	Connect the local educational bureau for trainings programmes	--	--

Superiors (row group label for first three data rows)
Subordinates (row group label for next three data rows)
Others (row group label for last two data rows)

Note. -- = Absence

Firstly, both principals and TRG leaders acknowledged that TRG leaders lack awareness of taking on the CL role. Particularly, TRG leaders were found to be inactive in enacting CL, unclear about their responsibilities and unwilling to be empowered. As can be seen from Table 27, this result partially echoes the Chinese literature and western literature that TRG leaders are less enthusiastic or motivated in enacting CL (e.g., Handler, 2010; Mao, 2009).

Secondly, findings demonstrated that TRG leaders are not equipped with enough knowledge related to communication skills or management skills of enacting CL. It is noticeable in Table 27 that this finding supports the Chinese literature findings that teachers lack substantial knowledge of how to take on the CL role (e.g., Fan et al., 2007; Lu, 2005). Comparatively, this result is disparate from the western literature since there seem to be no findings related to discussing teachers' lack of professional guidance and knowledge of enacting CL. Furthermore, Figure 7.4 shows that TRG leaders are competent in teaching. This finding supports both the Chinese literature and western literature contention that teachers possess specialised knowledge of curriculum issues and competencies in teaching (e.g., Fu & Yu, 2014; Handler, 2010).

Thirdly, it was found that TRG leaders lack professional ethics when taking on the CL role. TRG leaders were found to be irresponsible, aggressive, selfish and not persistent. Table 27 illustrates that this finding is identical to Chinese views that TRG leaders have a low level of professional ethics (e.g., Lin & Feng, 2007; Ye & Zhu, 2013).

Table 27

Summary of Findings and Discussion Related to Enacting CL at the Personal Level

	This Study		Chinese Literature	Western Literature
	Principals' perceptions	TRG leaders' perceptions		
Awareness	Have lack of awareness of CL	Have lack of awareness of CL	Have lack of awareness/inactive of CL	Have less ambition/desire of CL
	Have lack of related knowledge, skills and experiences of CL	Be without related knowledge and skills of exercising CL	Have lack of substantial and professional knowledge of CL	--
Knowledge & Skills	Be competent in professionalism.	Have ability to perform/lead research; have future foresight for curriculum development; have extensive knowledge and experience in teaching.	Have substantial knowledge and skills in teaching	Have specialised knowledge and competencies including curricular design, taking instructional practice and curriculum implementation, have global understanding, researching ability; be familiar with educational theory, policy; be competent in classroom teaching; be analytical in educational documents
Ethics	Have lack of professional ethics, irresponsible, aggressive, selfish and not persistent	Have lack of professional ethics, irresponsible, aggressive, selfish and not persistent	Have low level of professional ethics, be lack of responsibilities, be selfish.	--

Note. -- = Absence

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In contrast, the phenomenon of a low level of professional ethics cannot be found in the western literature (e.g., Cummings, 2011). To conclude, at the personal level, findings indicated that TRG leaders are not prepared to take on the CL role since they are not fully equipped with sufficient awareness, knowledge, skills, and professional ethics.

7.2.6 The model of TRG leaders' engagement in CL. A conceptual model of TRG leaders' engagement in CL was established in this research through integrating both principals' and TRG leaders' perceptions. It pictures the TRG leaders' engagement in CL from four dimensions: (1) framing/planning goals at the organisational level, (2) coordinating curriculum at the classroom level, (3) building relationships with stakeholders at the social relationship level, and (4) promoting individual development at the personal level. Furthermore, the model demonstrates more specific categories at each level. For example, framing goals involves making administrative and instructional decisions. Coordinating curriculum consists of taking initiatives at the planning, implementation and evaluation stage. Building relationships is composed of maintaining relations with superiors, subordinates and other stakeholders. Promoting individual development includes having awareness, possessing knowledge and skills, and possessing professional ethics. This model is one of the striking findings emanating from this research. In contrast, earlier Chinese studies mainly critically evaluate findings emanating from western studies (Hu & Gu, 2012).

In conclusion, this research explored how TRG leaders enact the CL role at the organisational level, the classroom level, the social relationship level, and the personal level. By drawing on both principals' and TRG leaders' perceptions, this research attests that there are similarities and dissimilarities in their understandings. Further, this research confirms the differences with earlier studies or the literature review on TRG leaders' engagement in CL, such as TRG leaders having little autonomy, there being less collaboration, there being an expectation of maintaining relations with stakeholders outside schools, TRG leaders lacking related knowledge and skills of enacting CL, and there being a low level of professional ethics. Thus, this research could contribute to reconceptualising how TRG leaders take on the CL role in the Chinese context. The next section will explore the implications of this research.

7.3 Implications of the Research

The discussion of the research findings highlights some significant issues by which principals and TRG leaders could understand more about how TRG leaders enact CL in the Chinese teaching context. This section addresses some of the implications of the study in regard to the CL knowledge base and the practice of enacting CL, and future research in relevant areas.

7.3.1 Implications for CL knowledge base. As shown in Chapter 3, earlier western studies and Chinese studies related to TRG leaders' engagement in CL are rather limited, as opposed to studies about principals' engagement in CL (e.g., Hu & Gu,

2012; Jenkins & Pfeifer, 2012; Law et al., 2007). Thus, the empirical findings of this research will contribute to global and Chinese conceptual understandings of the nature of TRG leaders' engagement in CL. There are four main theoretical implications which are listed below and discussed further.

Firstly, this research highlights the importance of empowering TRG leaders with the autonomy to make curriculum decisions. On the one hand, the devolution of authority to teachers complies with the requirement of the three-level curriculum management policy. On the other hand, the research fully attests to the significance of the empowerment. Although the authority devolved to TRG leaders is rather limited, the research showed that empowering TRG leaders still plays a pivotal role in curriculum development, staff development and the improvement of teaching, learning and research. This research thus contributes to directing researchers' attention to probing issues related to empowering teachers with more autonomy or issues related to the influence of teachers' engagement in CL.

Secondly, the results reveal that there are difficulties in enacting CL. It was found that TRG leaders are empowered to take initiatives for curriculum matters apparently. However, their autonomy is very limited. In particular, TRG leaders have no autonomy in making decisions about the national curriculum. For example, they cannot make autonomous decisions regarding book selection, teaching hours and even teaching content. Interestingly, the research also found the underlying reason behind

this phenomenon. It is mainly because principals have limited power, thus ultimately they cannot devolve more authority and provide more platforms for TRG leaders to enact the CL role. Further, in the Chinese studies there is not enough empirical data related to how teachers enact CL since many of the earlier studies focused simply on making critical evaluation of the western studies (Hu & Gu, 2012). Consequently, this research makes a contribution by offering empirical data to fill this research gap in earlier Chinese studies. Most importantly, the findings of the challenges faced by TRG leaders in the Chinese context, being supported by empirical findings, add to those Chinese studies which provide solutions to problems emanating from western studies.

Thirdly, this research builds a model of TRG leaders' engagement in CL. It presents a picture of enacting CL, which involves taking curriculum initiatives at four different levels (the organisational level, the classroom level, the social relationship level and the personal level). Furthermore, the model illustrates specific categories at each level. It has been identified in the western literature that there is no unified definition of CL (Law & Wan, 2006). This model, thus, contributes to advancing the literature of CL both locally and globally. In particular, it provides insights into defining CL and examining engagement in CL from the above mentioned four levels and the subcategories in each level. The conceptual model also functions as a checklist for researchers to evaluate initiatives of enacting CL. On the other hand, the dynamic connections found among the four levels can assist the understanding of TRG leaders'

engagement in CL. Enacting CL at each level affects or changes other levels. Although the findings did not show that there are fully reciprocal two-way relations between various levels, it still has implications for future research probing issues related to connections or relations among the four levels.

Fourth, this research reveals the discrepancies in principals and TRG leaders' perceptions of TRG leaders' engagement in CL. TRG leaders show more understanding compared to principals. For instance, principals define CL as the ability to control teaching quality while TRG leaders depict it as the ability to organise classroom teaching and maintain expertise. Concerning the expectations, principals expect TRG leaders to have more autonomy in building relations with other schools whereas TRG leaders show no interest in that. TRG leaders, however, are inactive in taking on the CL role. There are few studies related to making comparisons between principals' and TRG leaders' perceptions of TRG leaders' participation in CL (e.g., Wang, 2008). Examining issues from different perspectives (e.g., principals' and TRG leaders') contributes to more in-depth and empirical data regarding how TRG leaders enact CL in the Chinese context. On the one hand, the results indicate that although most TRG leaders have not heard of the concept of CL, they are still the implementers of CL and they have more experience in taking on the CL role. On the other hand, the differences might imply that principals do not know exactly how TRG leaders enact the CL role in practice, and what authority TRG leaders really need. Thus, the research shows the necessity for probing

how teachers enact the CL role from different angles.

In conclusion, this research contributes to broadening the knowledge base of teachers' engagement in CL through providing more empirical data and examining issues from different angles.

7.3.2 Implications for practice. In comparing the Chinese literature and the western literature, it is surprising to notice that results emanating from this research differ from the earlier literature. As such, this has practical implications for principals, TRG leaders and policy makers.

Firstly, this research has practical implications for principals when they attempt to empower TRG leaders and can enrich principals' understanding of to what extent autonomy or power should be devolved to TRG leaders and how to support TRG leaders to enact CL. Lin and Feng (2007) pointed out that the schooling system in China is still hierarchical so that TRG leaders are followers in decision-making. Indeed, it was identified in this research that TRG leaders still have little or no autonomy in taking administrative decisions or instructional decisions, especially at the organisational level, even though they are assigned to take on the CL role. Thus, the findings could inform their superiors, especially principals, to entail teachers with more autonomy. Moreover, the discrepancies in principals' and TRG leaders' perceptions indicate that principals may not understand how TRG leaders see their role and what TRG leaders need. Therefore, principals might reconsider their expectations regarding TRG leaders and

communicate more with TRG leaders for better understanding their needs and their

difficulties in enacting CL. Furthermore, the findings demonstrated that TRG leaders

should have more awareness in taking on the CL role, be knowledgeable, and

experienced in enacting CL, and possess professional ethics. Therefore, the study may

provide principals with standards for selecting TRG leaders, such as taking age or

work experience into consideration and cultivating TRG leaders to support

management mechanisms for schooling and thus strengthen the school improvement

process.

Secondly, this study has implications for TRG leaders' preparation and

professional development. It has been demonstrated in the literature that individuals

who are equipped to enact CL are required to have professional skills, specialised

knowledge, competencies of teaching, and communicative ability (e.g., Cummings,

2011; Chval et al., 2010). In this research, it was identified that TRG leaders lack

awareness, related knowledge, and skills of enacting CL. Particularly, findings

demonstrated that TRG leaders have a low level of professional ethics. Thus, this

research contributes to TRG leaders who are eager to obtain knowledge and be trained

to take on the CL role. It indicates that those taking on the CL role should be aware of

taking on the role, be equipped with related knowledge and skills and possess

professional ethics of how to enact CL.

Thirdly, the findings of this research provide implications for policy makers

which reflect the significance, and challenges of decentralisation at the school level.

The NCR and the three-level curriculum management policy aim at putting the

teacher's role in a higher position in decision-making (Chang & Li, 2007; Huang & Zhu,

2015; Lu, 2005; Wang & Zheng, 2013). However, findings of this research have

demonstrated that the autonomy and the power to make decisions theoretically granted

to TRG leaders is constrained. Particularly, both principals and TRG leaders

acknowledged that TRG leaders have no autonomy in decision making for the

national curriculum and have limited autonomy for the school-based curriculum. Thus,

this research contributes to assisting policy makers to refine and improve policies of the

three-level curriculum management which gives schools, principals and teachers more

autonomy, and ultimately prompts the implementation of NCR. In addition, the

research identified that TRG leaders lack related knowledge and skills to enact CL. It

also found that TRG leaders seldom have been trained in these competencies although

they have participated in middle-level training programmes held by the local

educational bureau. Thus, the findings might help policy makers in the local

educational bureau to put more focus on designing the training programmes for

improving TRG leaders' competency in enacting CL, such as communication skills,

collaboration ability and CL theories. Furthermore, the findings of this research provide

substantial implications for the job descriptions of TRG leaders. It was found that there

is no unified definition of CL (Law & Wan, 2006). In this research, both principals and

TRG leaders defined and depicted CL variously, which supports the literature.

However, our conceptual model of TRG leaders' engagement in the Chinese context

provides implications for depicting CL more concretely.

7.3.3 Implications for future research. There are five implications for future

research in the area of teachers' engagement in CL.

First, the research sites could be extended to other contexts. It has been

identified that contextual factors have influence on enacting CL (Macpherson &

Brooker, 2000). However, all the participants in this study were selected from Taiyuan

City so the findings might not reflect whether school location has an impact on

participants' perceptions and the enactment of CL. It is recommended that an area for

future research would be to expand this study to include additional districts in the

Chinese context, such as Shanghai and Shenzhen which are advanced in terms of

educational development. Further, it would be interesting to make a comparison of

TRG leaders' autonomy in these districts.

Second, a relatively larger sample size could be employed with more principals

and TRG leaders in future studies. Other sampling strategies could be adopted, such as

deploying simple random sampling to ensure a high degree of representativeness

(Thompson, 2012). The resulting quantitative data could be collected for future

research. The structural model identified in this research not only demonstrated that

enacting CL involves taking initiatives at the four levels, but also illustrated

subcategories in each level and specified the responsibilities. Thus, it could provide

future research with a reference for framing a questionnaire in quantitative research.

Third, it is recommended that other data sources could be used to investigate

different educational stakeholders' perceptions of TRG leaders' engagement in CL.

Enacting CL involves maintaining relationships with various stakeholders (e.g.,

principals, administrators, peers, parents and students) within and outside the school

(Elliott et al., 2005). In this research, other stakeholders that teachers enacting CL had

relationships with were identified (educational experts). Thus, future empirical

research could investigate other stakeholders' perceptions of how TRG leaders enact

the CL role.

Fourth, it would be desirable if other constructs were included, such as the

common measures of TRG leaders' beliefs or students' achievements. CL reflects

personal inherent qualities such as self-awareness, personal beliefs, and experience in

their professional context (Elliott et al., 2005; Ylimaki, 2011). Not only the previous

literature, but also the findings of the research indicated that CL played a vital part in

students' achievements (e.g., DeMatthews, 2014). If the research could build up the

associations between teacher beliefs or academic achievements and the effectiveness of

enacting CL, this would produce more enhanced contributions. Furthermore, other

constructs such as innovative leadership qualities could be taken into consideration in

future research for exploring whether TRG leaders' are innovative leaders, and how

they promote innovative schools.

Fifth, this study is one of the few attempts to investigate teachers' engagement in secondary schools in the Chinese context. Hu and Gu (2012) have indicated that Chinese studies of teachers' engagement in CL mainly make critical evaluations of western studies. However, the research findings of TRG leaders' engagement in CL were dissimilar to the descriptions of teachers' involvement in CL in western studies. Thus, it is recommended that future research make cross-cultural comparisons of how teachers enact CL, which ultimately will contribute to understandings of CL in the international domain.

In summary, the findings of this research have significant implications for theory building, how teachers and principals practise CL, and how this can be improved, how policy makers conceive and implement policy in schools and also for future research. Despite the contributions of the study it is acknowledged that it has some important limitations, which help point to possibilities for future research.

7.4 Limitations of the Research

The study has at least four limitations which are listed and discussed in the following section.

The first limitation lies in the generalisability of the research. The principals and TRG leaders in this research were limited to 10 secondary schools in Taiyuan City, Shanxi Province, China. The choice of a specific geographic site limits the

generalisability although the findings could provide implications to the contexts. This could also explain why some findings of this research are different from the findings of previous Chinese studies.

The second limitation concerns the number of participants involved. This small-scale study only interviewed 10 principals and 20 TRG leaders although efforts were made to ensure that principals were selected from all school types and to ensure counterbalance by the subject that TRG leaders taught. Such limited numbers cannot be generalised to cover all the phenomena of TRG leaders' engagement in CL in secondary schools in the Chinese context. Bryman (2004) pointed out that "…even when a sample has been selected using probability sampling, any findings can be generalised only to the population from which that sample was taken" (p. 104).

The third limitation is the researcher's potential biases in data analysis. This study adopted a qualitative methodological approach to probe principals' and TRG leaders' perceptions. Although the research adopted member checking and back translation to ensure the quality of translations, and used peer review to test the accuracy of the coding, bias might occur in the process of data analysis. Creswell (2010) suggested that searching for convergence among multiple and different sources of information enhances the validity of the research.

The fourth limitation is that this research only investigated how TRG leaders are empowered to enact CL. Both the previous literature and the findings of the

present research indicated that CL plays a vital role in students' achievements (e.g.,

DeMatthews, 2014). Thus, probing how TRG leaders are involved in CL should not be

limited to data of principals' and TRG leaders' perceptions.

In summary, although there are limitations of this small-scale study, it provides

a glimpse of how TRG leaders are empowered and how TRG leaders enact CL at

secondary schools in China.

7.5 Summary

Principals' and TRG leaders' perceptions of TRG leaders' engagement in CL in

this research are multidimensional. There are many similarities in their conceptions of

CL. The structural model of TRG leaders' engagement in CL demonstrates that TRG

leaders are being empowered with autonomy in taking initiatives at the organisational

level, the classroom level, the social relationship level, and the individual level.

However, this research found that the level of autonomy is relatively low, especially for

the national curriculum. This phenomenon is because the three-level curriculum

management as implemented in Chinese secondary schools restricts TRG leaders'

autonomy. Regarding the differences in the perceptions, this research found that TRG

leaders are more familiar with their responsibilities and can provide more information

about enacting CL compared with principals,   whereas principals have more

expectations about TRG leaders' engagement in CL when compared with TRG leaders'

perceptions.

This research prompts some rethinking of how to empower curriculum leaders with autonomy for better leading curriculum development. Contributions from this research may aid the development of CL in the Chinese context, but also heighten international awareness of granting more powers to teachers across a range of settings.

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Appendix A

Interview Questions for Principal

I. General Background Information:

1. How many years have you been the TRG leader?

2. What is your teaching subject?

3. What is your highest academic degree?

II. Perceptions of TRG Leaders' Engagement in CL

● General understanding of CL

4. Have you heard the concept of CL?

5. Could you give a general description of CL?

6. Do you have any conception of participating issues related to curriculum matters?

7. Who has the power or autonomy in curriculum matters?

8. Who is mainly in charge of implementing the curriculum matters?

9. Do you have any experience in taking on the CL role? Could you describe your

main responsibilities as a TRG leader?

● Characteristics of TRG Leaders' Engagement in CL

10. Do you have any autonomy in enacting CL?

1) What autonomous decisions can you take at the school level?

2) What autonomous decisions can you take in classroom teaching?

3) What autonomous decisions can you take for building the relationships with

stakeholders (e.g., superiors, subordinates within and outside the school)?

4) What autonomous decisions can you take for personal continual professional

   development?

- Significances of TRG Leaders' Engagement in CL

   11. Could you explicate the significances of being empowered to enact CL?

      1) What are the significances for school development?

      2) What are the significances for teaching and learning?

      3) What are the significances for building social relationships?

      4) What are the significances for individual development?

- Challenges of TRG Leaders' Engagement in CL

   12. What challenges have you faced when enacting the CL role?

      1) Could you explicate the difficulties or challenges in enacting CL at the

         school level?

      2) Could you explicate the difficulties or challenges in enacting CL at the

         classroom level?

      3) Could you explicate the difficulties or challenges in enacting CL at the

         social relationship level?

      4) Could you explicate the difficulties or challenges in enacting CL at

         individual level?

- Expectations of TRG Leaders' Engagement in CL

   13. What did you expect TRG leaders' enactment of CL would be like? What are

the reasons for your expectations?

    1) What are your expectations of TRG leaders' engagement in CL at the school

       level?

    2) What are your expectations of TRG leaders' engagement in CL at the

       classroom level?

    3) What are your expectations of TRG leaders' engagement in CL at the social

       relationship level?

    4) What are your expectations of TRG leaders' engagement in CL at the

       personal level?

- Reflection of TRG Leaders' Engagement in CL

    14. How do you perceive your role as a TRG leader?

    15. How do you perceive being empowered to take on the CL role?

访谈问题（校长）

I. 基本背景信息:

  1. 您当教研组长多少年？

  2. 您教授的科目是什么？

  3. 您取得的最高学位是什么？

II. 对教研组长课程领导力的认知

●   对课程领导力的总体认知

  4. 您有听过课程领导力这个说法么？

  5. 您能对课程领导力做一个概括性的描述么？

  6. 换句话说，您对课程事务的领导这个说法有什么认知？

  7. 在课程事务方面，谁有自主权呢？

  8. 课程事务的实施主要由谁负责？

  9. 您能描述下教研组长执行课程领导力时承担的主要职责是什么？

●   教研组长执行课程领导力的特点

  10. 您能描述教研组长在执行课程领导力时候有哪些权力么？

    1) 在学校层面他们有什么权力？

    2) 在课堂层面他们有什么权力？

    3) 在建立人际关系上他们有什么权力(如：同上级、下级以及校外)?

    4) 在追求自身提高上他们有什么权力？

●   教研组长执行课程领导力的意义

11. 您能描述一下授权教研组长执行课程领导力的意义是什么？

    1) 对学校发展有什么意义？

    2) 对教学有什么意义？

    3) 对建立人际关系有什么意义？

    4) 对教研组长自身提高有什么意义？

- 教研组长执行课程领导力遇到的困难

12. 您能描述下教研组长在执行课程领导力时遇到了哪些困难？

    1) 在学校层面遇到哪些困难?

    2) 在课堂教学上遇到哪些困难?

    3) 在建立人际关系上遇到哪些困难?

    4) 在教研组长自身发展上遇到哪些困难?

- 对教研组长执行课程领导力的期望

13. 对教研组长执行课程领导力您有什么期望？期望背后的原因是什么？

    1) 在学校层面对他们有什么期望?

    2) 在课堂层面对他们有什么期望?

    3) 在建立人际关系上对他们有什么期望?

    4) 在教研组长自身提高上对他们有什么期望?

- 对教研组长执行课程领导力的反思

14. 您如何看待这些教研组长的课程领导力？

15. 您怎样看待授权给教研组长更多的课程领导力？想授予哪些权力？

Appendix B

Interview Questions for TRG Leader

I. General Background Information:

   1. How many years have you been the TRG leader?

   2. What is your teaching subject?

   3. What is your highest academic degree?

II. Perceptions of TRG Leaders' Engagement in CL

●   General understanding of CL

   4. Have you heard the concept of CL?

   5. Could you give a general description of CL?

   6. Do you have any conception of participating issues related to curriculum matters?

   7. Who has the power or autonomy in curriculum matters?

   8. Who is mainly in charge of implementing the curriculum matters?

   9. Do you have any experience in taking on the CL role? Could you describe your

      main responsibilities as a TRG leader?

●   Characteristics of TRG Leaders' Engagement in CL

   10. Do you have any autonomy in enacting CL?

     1) What autonomous decisions can you take at the school level?

     2) What autonomous decisions can you take in classroom teaching?

     3) What autonomous decisions can you take for building the relationships with

        stakeholders (e.g., superiors, subordinates within and outside the school)?

4) What autonomous decisions can you take for personal continual professional

development?

- Significances of TRG Leaders' Engagement in CL

11. Could you explicate the significances of being empowered to enact CL?

1) What are the significances for school development?

2) What are the significances for teaching and learning?

3) What are the significances for building social relationships?

4) What are the significances for individual development?

- Challenges of TRG Leaders' Engagement in CL

12. What challenges have you faced when enacting the CL role?

1) Could you explicate the difficulties or challenges in enacting CL at the

school level?

2) Could you explicate the difficulties or challenges in enacting CL at the

classroom level?

3) Could you explicate the difficulties or challenges in enacting CL at the

social relationship level?

4) Could you explicate the difficulties or challenges in enacting CL at

individual level?

- Expectations of TRG Leaders' Engagement in CL

13. What did you expect TRG leaders' enactment of CL would be like? What are

the reasons for your expectations?

1) What are your expectations of TRG leaders' engagement in CL at the school

level?

2) What are your expectations of TRG leaders' engagement in CL at the

classroom level?

3) What are your expectations of TRG leaders' engagement in CL at the social

relationship level?

4) What are your expectations of TRG leaders' engagement in CL at the

personal level?

- Reflection of TRG Leaders' Engagement in CL

14. How do you perceive your role as a TRG leader?

15. How do you perceive being empowered to take on the CL role?

访谈问题 (教研组长)

I. 基本背景信息:

   1. 您当教研组长多少年？

   2. 您教授的科目是什么？

   3. 您取得的最高学位是什么？

II. 对教研组长课程领导力的认知

●   对课程领导力的总体认知

   4. 您有听过课程领导力这个说法么？

   5. 您能对课程领导力做一个概括性的描述么？

   6. 换句话说，您对课程事务的领导这个说法有什么认知？

   7. 在课程事务方面，谁有自主权呢？

   8. 课程事务的实施主要由谁负责？

   9. 您有承担课程领导力的经验么？请描述下您作为教研组长的主要职责。

●   教研组长执行课程领导力的特点

   10. 您在执行课程领导力时候有哪些权力么？

     1) 在学校层面您有什么权力？

     2) 在课堂层面您有什么权力？

     3) 在处理人际关系上您有什么权力(例如：同上级、下级以及校外)？

     4) 在追求自身提上高您有什么权力？

●   教研组长执行课程领导力的意义

11. 您能描述一下担任教研组长执行课程领导力的意义么?

   1) 对学校发展有什么意义?

   2) 对教学有什么意义?

   3) 对建立人际关系有什么意义?

   4) 对教研组长自身提高有什么意义?

● 教研组长执行课程领导力遇到的困难

12. 您在执行课程领导力时遇到了哪些困难?

   1) 在学校层面遇到哪些困难?

   2) 在课堂教学上遇到哪些困难?

   3) 在建立人际关系上遇到哪些困难?

   4) 在自身发展上遇到哪些困难?

● 对教研组长执行课程领导力的期望

13. 您在执行课程领导力上有什么期望? 这些期望背后的原因是什么?

   1) 在学校层面您有什么期望?

   2) 在课堂层面您有什么期望?

   3) 在建立人际关系上您有什么期望?

   4) 在自身提高上您有什么期望?

● 对教研组长执行课程领导力的反思

14. 您对担任教研组长执行课程领导力有什么感想?

15. 您对被授予执行课程领导力有什么感

Appendix C

Brief Information of Meeting Observation

Code	Meeting Themes	Attendees	Time	Duration	Agenda
MO1	Reporting the work arrangement for the whole semester	TRG leader, teachers	At the beginning of the semester	53 minutes	1. Checking the attendance records 2. Introducing the performance appraisal and standards 3. Introducing the arrangement for meetings of the whole semester 4. Announcing job-specific requirements for the new term 5. Arranging cleaning tasks
MO2	Arranging routine issues	TRG leader, teachers	Monthly meeting	35 minutes	1. Reporting requirements obtained from superior department 2. Arranging daily tasks 3. Working out a plan for the collective lesson preparation 4. Solving problems in teaching, or in daily life
MO3	Taking team building activities	TRG leader, teachers, experts outside school	Weekly meeting	85 minutes	1. Classroom observation 2. Class evaluation
MO4	Mentoring young teachers	TRG leader, teachers	Monthly meeting	42 minutes	1. Preparing for Teaching Competition 2. Outside training programme 3. Sharing teaching experiences

Note: MO=Meeting Observation

Appendix D

Consent Form (For Principal)

THE EDUCATION UNIVERSITY OF HONG KONG

Department of Education Policy and Leadership

CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH

Principals' and Teaching Research Group Leaders' Perceptions of Teaching Research Group Leaders' Engagement in Curriculum Leadership in Chinese Secondary Schools

I _____ hereby consent my school, my staff, and myself to participate in the captioned project supervised by Dr. Chen Junjun, Prof. Allan Walker and conducted by Shan Yiming, who is the student of the Department of Education Policy and 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 school, my staff, and myself 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. Our participation in the project is 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

THE EDUCATION UNIVERSITY OF HONG KONG
Department of Education Policy and Leadership

Principals' and Teaching Research Group Leaders' Perceptions of Teaching Research Group Leaders' Engagement in Curriculum Leadership in Chinese Secondary Schools

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The introduction of the research

Recently, in line with the decentralisation of curriculum decision-making, TRG leaders have been empowered to have more opportunities to take central and leading roles in decision-making of curriculum matters. However, research on curriculum leadership is limited with only a few studies examining the issues of principals' behaviour in curriculum leadership as opposed to the TRG leaders' engagement. Furthermore, only a few Chinese journal articles have focused on teachers' engagement in curriculum leadership. Therefore, this study will focus on exploring principals' and TRG leaders' perceptions of TRG leaders' involvement in curriculum leadership in secondary schools in the Chinese context.

The methodology of the research

The research instrument will be distributed to 10 target secondary schools, involving a total of 10 principals, 20 TRG leaders in Mainland China that are easy to approach through personal connections. In the interview, 10 principals and 20 TRG leaders will be interviewed at their school sites using a semi-structured interview which will last for approximately 40 minutes. Being an unobtrusive observer, the researcher will be present at the school's regular scheduled meetings, which usually last for 30-40 minutes. The field notes for the interviews will be done after the interview. The field notes for the meeting will be done during and after the observations. Conducting this research will enrich participants' understanding of what the TRG leader's role is in curriculum leadership, and how to place the TRG leader in a better position to support his/her transition into the curriculum leadership role, but will also assist them in obtaining related knowledge and skills.

The potential risks of the research

The study involves no potential risk. Please understand that your participation 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 disseminated
Information about the results of the research will be provided in the form of a copy of a journal article/book/chapter or oral presentation.

If you would like to obtain more information about this study, please contact Shan Yiming at telephone number ▆▆▆▆▆▆▆▆ or her supervisor Dr. Chen Junjun at telephone number (852)2948 7637 or Prof. Allan Walker at telephone number (852)2948 6595 .

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@eduhk.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.

Shan Yiming

香港教育大学
教育政策与领导学系

参与研究同意书（校长）

校长和教研组长对中学教研组长参与课程领导力的认识

本人 _____ 兹此同意本校、本校员工以及本人参加由陈君君博士和汪雅量教授负责监督，单意茗负责执行的研究计划。他们是香港教育大学教育政策与领导学系的教员和学生。

本人理解此研究所获得的资料可用于未来的研究和学术发表。然而本人有权保护个人隐私，其个人资料不能泄露。

本人对所附资料有关步骤已经得到充分的解释。本人理解可能会出现的风险。本人是自愿参与这项研究。

本人理解本人及本校教研组长皆有权在研究过程中提出问题，并在任何时候决定退出研究，更不会因此引致任何不良后果。

本人同意让香港教育大学学生于本校进行与上述研究项目有关之研究。

签署：
校长姓名： _____ (教授/博士/先生/女士/小姐*)
职位： _____
学校名称： _____
日期： _____
(*请删去不适用者)

有关资料
香港教育大学
教育政策与领导学系

校长和教研组长对中学教研组长参与课程领导力的认识

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研究计划简介

近年来，随着课程管理权力下放，教研组长在课程参与上被赋予了更多的权力。然而，大多关于课程领导力的研究都着眼于校长。此外，关于教研组长课程领导力的中国文献相对有限。因此，本研究将着重探究校长和教研组长对中学教研组长参与课程领导力的认识。

研究方法

本调查将分布于十所国内中学，参与者包括十名校长和二十名教研组长。研究者将对参与者意义进行长约四十分钟的访谈。此外，研究者将以非介入性方法来观察时长为三十到四十分钟的学校日常会议。现场记录会在访谈结束后，观察进行中和观察结束后进行。此次研究有助于加深校长和教研组长对教研组长课程领导力的理解。

潜在研究風險

该研究不存在任何风险。贵校校长的参与纯属自愿性质。所有参与者皆享有充分的权利在研究开始前或后决定退出这项研究，更不会因此引致任何不良后果。凡有关贵校校长的资料将会保密，一切资料数据只有研究院得悉。

发布研究结果

本次研究结果或将以期刊、书籍、章节或演讲形式发表。

如阁下想获得更多有关这项研究的资料，请与单意茗联络，电话 ▇▇▇▇▇▇▇▇ 或联络她的导师陈君君，电话 (852) 2948 7637 或汪雅量教授，电话 (852) 2948 6595。

如阁下对这项研究有任何意见，可随时与香港教育大学<u>人类实验对象操守委员会</u>联络（电邮：hrec@eduhk.hk；地址：香港教育大学研究与发展事务处）。

谢谢阁下有兴趣参与这项研究。

单意茗

Appendix E

Consent Form (For TRG leader)

THE EDUCATION UNIVERSITY OF HONG KONG

Department of Education Policy and Leadership

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Principals' and Teaching Research Group Leaders' Perceptions of Teaching Research Group Leaders' Engagement in Curriculum Leadership in Chinese Secondary Schools

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I acknowledge that I 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.

Signature: _____

Name of TRG Leader: _____(Prof/Dr/Mr/Mrs/Ms/Miss*)___

Post: _____

Name of School: _____

Date: _____

 (* please delete as appropriate)

INFORMATION SHEET

THE EDUCATION UNIVERSITY OF HONG KONG
Department of Education Policy and Leadership

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Thank you for your interest in participating in this study.

Shan Yiming

香 港 教 育 大 学
教 育 政 策 与 领 导 学 系

参 与 研 究 同 意 书（教 研 组 长）

校 长 和 教 研 组 长 对 中 学 教 研 组 长 参 与 课 程 领 导 力 的 认 识

本 人 ＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿兹 此 同 意 本 校、本 校 员 工 以 及 本 人 参 加 由 陈 君 君 博 士 和 汪 雅 量 教 授 负 责 监 督，单 意 茗 负 责 执 行 的 研 究 计 划。他 们 是 香 港 教 育 大 学 教 育 政 策 与 领 导 学 系 的 教 员 和 学 生。

本 人 理 解 此 研 究 所 获 得 的 资 料 可 用 于 未 来 的 研 究 和 学 术 发 表。然 而 本 人 有 权 保 护 个 人 隐 私，其 个 人 资 料 不 能 泄 露。

本 人 对 所 附 资 料 有 关 步 骤 已 经 得 到 充 分 的 解 释。本 人 理 解 可 能 会 出 现 的 风 险。本 人 是 自 愿 参 与 这 项 研 究。

本 人 理 解 本 人 有 权 在 研 究 过 程 中 提 出 问 题，并 在 任 何 时 候 决 定 退 出 研 究，更 不 会 因 此 引 致 任 何 不 良 后 果。

本 人 同 意 让 香 港 教 育 大 学 学 生 于 本 校 进 行 与 上 述 研 究 项 目 有 关 之 研 究。

签 署：
教 研 组 长 姓 名： ＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿（教授/博士/先生/女士/小姐*）
职 位： ＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿
学 校 名 称： ＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿
日 期： ＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿
(*请删去不适用者)

有关资料
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教育政策与领导学系

校长和教研组长对中学教研组长参与课程领导力的认识

诚邀贵校参加陈君君博士和汪雅量教授负责监督，单意茗负责执行的研究计划。他们是香港教育大学教育政策与领导学系的教员和学生。

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潜在研究風險

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发布研究结果

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如阁下想获得更多有关这项研究的资料，请与单意茗联络，电话 ▇▇▇▇▇▇▇ 或联络她的导师陈君君, 电话 (852) 2948 7637 或汪雅量教授，电话 (852) 2948 6595。

如阁下对这项研究有任何意见，可随时与香港教育大学人类实验对象操守委员会联络（电邮：hrec@eduhk.hk；地址：香港教育大学研究与发展事务处）。

谢谢阁下有兴趣参与这项研究。

单意茗