CAN WESTERN THEORIES OF LEADERSHIP BE APPLIED TO ASIAN SETTINGS? AN EXPLORATORY STUDY OF SCHOOL PRINCIPALS IN TAIWAN

A Thesis in

Educational Leadership

by

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ABSTRACT

Within the context of school reform and high levels of hierarchical school governance in Taiwan, this study was to examine: What meaning do school principals in Taiwan attach to the concept of “leadership?” What kind of strategies will principals describe having used for the purposes of implementing reform? Will the strategies they use reflect western models of leadership? To what extent has Taiwan school reform compelled these principals to adopt western modes of leadership?

Fifteen elementary and junior high school principals in Taiwan participated in this study. Qualitative methods using semi-structure interviews and observation were used to collect the data. Related documents provided by principals were collected during the interviews. Data analysis was presented by rich descriptions.

The findings showed that the interviewed principals recognized the importance of principal leadership, and that they were influenced by western theories. Education reform has caused principals to rethink and even change their leadership practice. It has also made the principals’ job less secure and therefore, the principals rely more on teachers and parents for their professional success. The more westernized leadership or strategies used by principals were vision-building, instructional leadership, symbolic leadership, and a focus on task and relationship. Being helpful, responsible, and moral principals were viewed different to western leadership theories practices by the principals. Because of the school reform, these principals must spend more time dealing with resistance or interference from parents, more experienced teachers, politicians, and the teachers’ association.
Several implications emerged from the findings. Policy makers should take Taiwan schools’ current class arrangement and testing culture into consideration when proposing revised reform policies. To successfully carry out the reform policies, school principals need to know the importance of principal leadership, to share responsibilities with teachers, and to communicate with parents and outside school communities. To build a shared-vision, to play the role of instructional leaders, to use symbolic leadership may also be employed. The training is needed to help teachers and administrators implement the new curriculum. Finally, future studies should look at leadership behaviors of both the principals and teachers, as well as parents’ perspectives on principal leadership behaviors and strategies.
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Table 1. Principal Background and School Description 37
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Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

Over the past decades, studies have focused on the connections between principals’ leadership style, organizational structures and processes, and school effectiveness (Hoy & Miskel, 2001). Principals are identified as the key personnel in schools to carry and address organizational demands for reform and educational effectiveness (Cheng, 1994). The researcher was particularly interested in the conceptualization and application of school leadership in systems with high levels of hierarchical governance. Specifically, this study focused on the meaning school principals in Taiwan applied to the concept of leadership. In particular, the researcher examined what she saw as the peculiar tension between “western” theories and models of leadership and the reality of “leadership” as understood and practiced in Taiwan’s highly centralized educational system.

From a western perspective, leadership is increasingly viewed as a trait that can emerge at multiple points and flow in different directions within an organization. Yukl (1998), for example, expresses the view of leadership as a “social process” in which group members may influence the selection of goals, processes, and outcomes, and may even reshape the nature of power relationships within the organization. In some conceptions, the leader is a person who facilitates others in formulating a shared organizational vision (Hoy & Miskel, 2001). Both of these conceptions seem to fundamentally conflict with highly centralized hierarchical models of organization. The American military, for example, though big on the idea of “leadership,” may not
completely buy into the idea that leadership, authority, or vision may flow upward in unconstrained fashion from the bottom of the ranks.

A similar situation exists in many national school systems, especially in Asia, particularly as seen in Taiwan. When policies are determined mostly at the top levels of the organization, “leadership” may come to be viewed as mainly a matter of facilitating the flow of downward directives and ensuring teachers carry them out. An American professor who had returned from teaching in Taiwan recently related an illustrative story to me. He asked a principal, “How many leaders would you like to have in your school?” With a stiff glare in his eye, the principal raised one finger. The American professor pointed out that American principals would likely tend to give a much different response.

Some researchers have noted the lack of fit between western conceptions and “Asian” models of leadership (Wong, 2001). When discussing the principal’s role in educational reform in Taiwan, Lin (2003) called for programs that influence principals to question and reflect upon their daily practices; to develop the habit and willingness to share ideas with principals of other schools and colleagues within their own school; to become problem solvers; to increase their self-efficacy and confidence to assume challenges; to seek further learning; to know where and when to get help; and to apply ethical and critical judgment. The question, however, was whether Taiwanese principals would accept such a facilitative and collegial role. Or, would they tend to perceive and practice a form of leadership more in line with traditional Asian understandings?

This dilemma stems from several factors. For example, Taiwan has increasingly become open to both western and Chinese cultural and social understandings. Many educational scholars and school officials have earned their degree in the U.S. and have
brought what they learned back to Taiwan. At the same time, Taiwan has the root of Chinese culture. Certain values and ethical traditions, such as respect for authority, the idea of “Mein- Zi,” (what Americans may interpret as “personal pride” and a desire to avoid “shame”) and an overall hesitancy to alter social status relationships, hold major influence on educational leadership in Taiwan. It seems reasonable to ask whether the various distributive, decentralized, and transformational conceptions of leadership commonly accepted in the U.S. are manifested within Taiwan’s educational system. The researcher intended to shed light on the answer to this question by listening to the stories and opinions of Taiwan school principals.

The investigation of school principals’ understanding of school leadership should be facilitated by the fact that Taiwan has been struggling with systemic school reform for several years now. School principals in Taiwan have had to formulate strategies for implementing reform and coping with its seemingly conflicting demands. College and high school entrance policies have been changing, the teacher hiring process is not the same as before, and the traditional centralized curriculum has been changed to a localized Nine Year Integrated Curriculum (from 1st to 9th grade). In addition, collaborative teaching strategies, school-based curriculum development, parent involvement, school-community relations, and elective courses (Lin, 2000) have also become important issues within Taiwan’s education system. At the same time, confusion and frustration is often reported among parents, teachers, and students; as such their resistance to curricular change has become a problem for principals. This current situation will certainly put principals’ understanding of leadership to the test. It also facilitated my efforts to draw out their perceptions of leadership.
Therefore, the primary question of this study was as follows: what meaning do school principals in Taiwan attach to the concept of “leadership?” For example, will their own examples of leadership appear reflective of the kinds of transformational and distributive models often described in western literature? Or will they appear quite different? Will their responses reflect any differentiation in the way they refer to words such as “leadership,” “power,” and “authority?” Or, for example, will the use of power be viewed as “leadership?” What kinds of strategies will they describe having used for the purposes of implementing reforms? Will their strategies appear to reflect western models of leadership? Or will a contrasting conception emerge?

A study of the relationship between Taiwan education reform, principal leadership style, and problem solving (Chiu, 1998) revealed a number of findings relevant to the proposed study. For example, while some principals held onto the more traditional view of leadership, others had shifted toward a more distributive style in the wake of an earlier wave of education reform. Chiu’s study offers reason to suspect that Taiwanese principals have begun to view leadership differently and that the principal is no longer the only one who can show leadership in schools. Six years after her study, against the context of further curricular reform, I am curious to see if this trend has continued.

Therefore, a qualitative research method was utilized to uncover meanings and detailed information concerning the strategies employed by school principals in Taiwan. The researcher conducted a set of one-hour interviews with 15 elementary and junior high school principals. Also, one faculty meeting was observed and document analysis was used. The interviews explored principals’ reflections and descriptions of the
problems and successes they have experienced while serving as school principal at their current school, experiences related to the implementation of reform (including strategies they have used in working with teachers and parents), and their views of leadership.
Chapter 2

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK AND LITERATURE REVIEW

What do we mean by “leadership?” This question has been addressed in numerous research studies as well as in popular, professional, and academic literature. Over the decades and across the miles, “leadership” has been viewed as both a character trait and as something that arises out of a problematic situation. It has been viewed as the result of power or coercion, even trickery or treachery by some, but as a product of open, honest, caring, or religious interaction by others. Whether one starts from a western or eastern point of view, leaders are understood to be those who other people follow. For example, “Ling-Tao” (Leadership) means to guide and to govern. “Leaders” in Taiwan are often the heads of a group of people or an organization. “Kuan-Li” (management) means to be responsible for something and to deal with it. This chapter begins by describing some basic understandings of the idea of leadership, and then moves toward describing its different dimensions, styles, and complexities as presented in key studies.

The chapter finishes with a discussion of the apparent contrasts between “western” and “Asian” or “eastern” conceptions of leadership. These contrasts emerge both from classic studies of leadership as well as from traditional cultural norms and organizational structures (Wong, 2001). All the while, I will strive to highlight how these varied understandings relate to the practice of school administration in Taiwan and to the context of that nation’s ongoing systemic reform.

Basic Understandings of Leadership

Within the realm of schools and organizational theory, “leadership” is generally conceived as the ability of individuals to influence the way others think or behave with
respect to organizational goals, policies, and actions. Leadership may be distinguished from “power” in the sense that the latter conveys the idea of compelling or coercing group members to do things that they would not otherwise do. Leadership, however, conveys the idea that people are acting in new ways because they have either changed their mind about or have at least suspended their judgment with respect to new ways of thinking or behaving.

Hoy and Miskel (2001) refer to leadership as the ability to support and enable a group of people to accomplish a common task. Within this context, leadership is considered not only an individual quality, but also a social process; a “property of the organization.” The organizational actors with the most influence are considered leaders; others are considered followers. Leaders influence the followers to think and act differently than they might otherwise have done. Yukl (1998), for example, expresses the view of leadership as “a social process” in which group members may influence the selection of goals, processes, and outcomes, and may even reshape the nature of power relationships within the organization.

Gardner (1990) states that leadership is the process people use to persuade others to pursue goals that are held or shared by various organizational actors. Gardner focuses on the importance of interaction, two-way communication, and “bridge-building” between leaders and diverse constituents. He distinguished leadership from coercion and suggested that those who tend to be the least coercive are considered higher on the leadership scale. Gardner also states that people should not confuse leadership and power. Leaders may sometimes use power to gain compliance. However, many people who have
power (money, media, control of institutional machinery, etc.) do not own the essence of leadership.

These ideas are different somewhat from Asian understandings. As I mentioned before, “Ling-Tao” (leadership) means to guide and to govern. Leaders are often the heads (administrators) of a group of people or an organization. They are considered leaders because of their status and positions. Other people in the organization are seldom considered to be leaders or being discussed as showing leadership. “Followers” may expect “leaders” to “govern.”

The Relationship between Authority, Power, and Leadership

Power is a tool used by organizational actors to control people or resources within the organization (Hoy & Miskel, 2001). As mentioned above, organizational theories tend to view “power” as the process of compelling people to act in ways that they would not ordinarily act, or to prevent them from attaining their goals. School administrators may use different kinds of power in different situations. These may include reward power, coercive power, legitimate power, referent power, and expert power (Hoy & Miskel, 2001). For example, reward power comes from administrators’ ability to influence teachers by rewarding desirable behavior. A principal may allocate more resources (time, good students, etc.) to teachers who help accomplish his or her goals or who carry out his or her directives. Similarly, a principal may punish a teacher by denying or restricting resources. The power to formally or informally punish (or threaten to punish) non-desirable behavior is coercive power. Mintzberg (1983) provided another way to analyze power in or around organizations. In his model, people in different positions or roles in the school own different kinds of power. School
administrators may often need to share power with other school actors because their formal authority may not be sufficient for successful leadership.

The idea of authority shares some elements of both power and leadership. Authority has been defined in many ways, and many styles of authority have been identified by theorists. However, authority and leadership are conceptually distinct. Although authority and leadership build on “voluntary obedience” (Bolman & Deal, 2003), someone who possesses authority might not be viewed as a leader. Some types of authority may even obstruct leadership. For example, while teachers may obey their principal because of his or her status and formal authority, they may do so in a very narrow or perfunctory manner.

Barnard (1938)’s “zone of indifference” (also known as the “zone of acceptance”) represents a useful link between the concepts of leadership and authority. The zone of acceptance refers to the set of directives for which the likelihood of subordinate compliance is very high, or in other words, those directives for which a subordinate is willing to suspend his or her own judgment. When a principal’s authority is limited or mostly formal in nature, his or her followers may have a relatively small “zone of acceptance.” That is, they may suspend their judgment only with regard to a very narrow range of directives. In American public schools, for instance, teachers may not think for very long before agreeing to their principal’s request that they remain in their classrooms or hallways for 15 minutes after the end of the school day. On the other hand, they may question or debate (either internally or with other teachers) a principal’s imposition of a faculty dress code.
Thus, one way to understand principal “leadership” is in terms of the ability to expand the zone of acceptance among subordinates. From a western perspective, this task requires a principal to build a reputation for expertise, technical competency, and trustful staff relationships over a fairly long period of time. As this reputation grows, so grows teachers’ voluntary willingness to follow and so grows “leadership.” The situation in Taiwan may be somewhat different. For one thing, like that in much of Asia, a cultural norm exists in Taiwan of “automatic respect” for persons of higher status. Taiwan teachers, therefore, will likely grant their principals a wide “zone of indifference” from the start. Even in cases where a Taiwan teacher may have doubts about a principal’s directive, the social gravity associated with openly challenging such a directive may further increase the likelihood of compliance. For Taiwanese, then, “leadership” becomes more a matter of one’s formal status than one’s ability to persuade, build trust, or display technical competency.

Leadership and Management

Western theories tend to distinguish between “administrators” and “leaders.” Administrators are said to focus on stability and on efficiency while leaders grapple with change and get people to agree to accomplish it. Bolman and Deal (2003) stated that management is about goals, structures, organizing, procedures, and control. Leadership is said to be building visions, networks, and relationships. Leaders do manage organizations and people within the organization; but people who manage these things are not necessarily leaders. Gardner (1990) also argued that although leaders and managers face decision making in the same areas, leaders think creatively, think further or even outside the organization, and have political skills to cope with difficult situations. For instance,
people expect a western school principal to create vision for the school, try new things, and be good at dealing with teachers’ resistance. People do not always expect a school principal to just solve problems or maintain pre-existing organizational characteristics.

Western theories seem to promote leadership over management in organizations. However, Taiwanese principals usually take pride in being viewed as good managers. For example, principals who can “manage” a school well are often considered good leaders. One explanation for this is that because Taiwan’s Ministry of Education provides uniform standards and goals for all schools, there is less need for “vision building” activity at the school level. In addition, because of the predominant influence of the high school and university entrance exams, less uncertainty may exist as to what the goals of schooling ought to be.

Dimensions and Styles of Leadership

The following discussion will focus on the different leadership styles as presented by several key western theories. A detailed discussion of how these styles and theories might fit within Taiwan’s school system will be reserved for the next chapter.

Task Orientation and Relationship Orientation (Initiating Structure and Consideration)

The Leaders Behavior Descriptions Questionnaire (LBDQ) used in the Ohio State Studies found that initiating structure and consideration are the basic categories of leadership behavior (Hoy & Miskel, 2001). Initiating structure refers to leader behavior related to production, goal achievement, and task accomplishment. Consideration refers to leader behavior involving human relationships such as friendship, collegiality, trust, interest, and respect between the leader and followers. Yukl (1998) also developed a framework incorporating three types of behavior-- task-oriented, relations-oriented, and
change-oriented -- for measuring leadership effectiveness. For example, a western school administrator may work the relationship (consideration) side by means of friendliness, openness, personalized experiences of concern, and visibility in the school. Or the principal may focus on the task (initiating structure) side by focusing on accomplishing goals, maintaining stable process, and clarifying roles.

The LBDQ has been frequently used in Taiwan to study links among principal leadership behavior and school climate, leadership and teachers’ job satisfaction, leadership and school administrators’ job satisfaction, and leadership and staff commitment. The most common findings are that school principals have both high initiating structure and consideration behaviors (Chin, 1998a). However, a different pattern of principal behaviors was noted between urban schools and nonurban schools. Principals in urban schools tended to use more consideration behaviors than those in nonurban schools. Readers should be aware of the fact that urban schools in Taiwan (e.g., Taipei and Kaohsiung) usually perform better academically, tend to serve more affluent families, and are generally considered more desirable than nonurban schools.

Transactional Leadership

Burns (1978) developed the idea of transactional leadership to describe how leaders use the exchange of rewards and “quid pro quo” to motivate followers. Transactional leadership may also involve the implicit punishment if followers fail to achieve certain goals that the leader asks. For example, teachers promote student achievement and the principal provides them better instructional equipment in return. This is a cost-benefit relationship between leaders and subordinates. Similarly, school principals in Taiwan often engage this type of social exchange. It is understood, however,
that social exchange often takes place “under the table”; that is, people tend to rely on informal or personal favors to strengthen mutual relationships.

**Transformational Leadership**

Bass (1985) developed the idea of transformational leadership to emphasize leaders’ commitment to the organizational change and the ability to empower followers to achieve the organization’s goal (Yukl, 1998). Transformational leadership, thus, works to legitimate the personal values and beliefs of individuals within the organization, as well as to encourage the building of trust and respect between leaders and followers (Hoy & Miskey, 2000). Sergiovanni (1996) argued that a good school leader should know how to promote the “right” culture and recognize the importance of mutual relationships, shared values, and innovative ideas in building a shared vision within the school. Atwater and Bass (1994) also pointed out that transformational leaders are those who become skilled in the use of inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration. In summary, the key factors for transformational leaders are creating trust, identifying shared values and needs, and inspiring teachers to create a shared school vision.

**Symbolic Leadership**

The effective use of symbols is often said to be an important component of leadership. Bolman and Deal (2002, 2003), for example, highlight this skill as one of their four major conceptual frames for understanding organizational effectiveness. The symbolic frame suggests that symbols and meanings give people direction, hope, and faith and generally help people resolve confusion. Because organizational events may often have multiple meanings, it is important for leaders to find ways to shape their
meanings. In a way, being able to manipulate symbols and meanings provides leaders with an opportunity to reshape culture; to weave a “cultural tapestry” that helps people find purpose and motivation in their work (Bolman & Deal, 2002, 2003). People expect leaders to use symbols appropriately and in ways that inspire others, and this is especially true in Taiwan. Perhaps much more so than in America, an inattention to symbols can have negative consequences for principals. I will expand on this phenomenon further in the final section of this chapter.

Instructional Leadership

The essence of instructional leadership is for the principal and teachers to work together to improve teaching and learning in schools (Hoy & Hoy, 2003). Although principals do not teach directly, it is imperative to ensure that the best instructional methods are available for teachers. When taking the role of instructional leaders, principals will spend more time observing the classroom and leading discussions with teachers about instructional matters. Principals who aim to be instructional leaders are also expected to provide professional development opportunities to help teachers improve their skills and contribute to improving the instructional climate. In short, instructional leaders emphasize academic success in school, view instruction seriously, keep working with teachers to improve student learning, and provide resources for instruction (Hoy & Hoy, 2003).

Principals in Taiwan do not play the same role as western views of instructional leadership often prescribe. Western views call on principals to be alert to the newest teaching research, observe teachers’ classroom performance, and discuss instructional matters with teachers. In Taiwan, although school principals care about teaching quality,
they usually focus primarily on maintaining order in classrooms and around the campus. They do not typically discuss instructional methods with teachers. Students’ grades and test scores are what most Taiwanese principals care about in terms of instruction. This can be explained by the rigid joint entrance exams at both college and high school levels. Historically, entrance exams guide instruction and learning in the school. They thus help reduce uncertainty regarding teachers’ instructional roles and methods.

Asian Conceptions of Leadership

Taiwan’s school system has a rigid hierarchical structure. Culturally, most people tend to follow the heads of the organization since they have been always viewed as “leaders” regardless their effectiveness. Teachers often follow the principal because he or she is perceived to have higher status and authority.

People in Taiwan perceive leadership in terms of personal characteristics, social and legal status, and interpersonal and political power (Chin, 1998a). Moreover, the use of political manipulation to accomplish goals lies inherent within the Taiwanese conception of “authority.” Exchanging personal favors is the most common example of this in our society. Principals often look at “power” as a tool for achieving goals and demonstrating leadership. Clearly, there is reason to suspect that “authority” and “leadership” may be interpreted differently in Taiwan than in the United States. If this is true, then it follows that some western theories and prescriptions regarding leadership should be examined to evaluate their fit with the Taiwan situation. This section thus focuses on the “fit” of what is perhaps the predominant framework within current leadership literature, the idea of transformational leadership.
Transformational Leadership

As discussed before, schools in Taiwan have one explicit set of goals, that is, to prepare our students to perform well on the national entrance exams at both college and high school levels. Recent efforts to develop policies to replace those rigid entrance exams have faced huge resistance. This is a good example of the general public’s desire to maintain a traditional approach. This national entrance exam might be thought of as the “DNA” of our educational system in its persistence and in the way it shapes and defines educational practice in Taiwan. Regardless of what changes appear at the surface, regardless of the opinions or intentions of educational reformers, the “DNA” endures. So, for example, if one branch of Taiwan’s Ministry of Education calls for “more creative forms of classroom learning,” another branch may be busily working to devise some way to measure “creative learning” on the standardized entrance exam. At the same time, parents may begin to wonder what questions will be included on such a test and begin to pressure teachers to be sure to tell students what “creative knowledge” they will need to know in order to score well on the test!

The bottom line is that principals and teachers are likely to be handicapped in developing a new vision, even against the backdrop of school reform. Any sort of shared vision building, the central element of transformational leadership, might seem less useful or meaningful in a Taiwan school. If “vision building” occurs, it may tend to take the shape of a principal or group of teachers seeking a working interpretation of exactly what higher level education officials expect them to do.

In an attempt to understand the leadership in different types of institutions, Lin (1995) found that school principals are less likely to demonstrate transformational
leadership behaviors when compared to leaders in private industrial institutions. His finding also suggests that school administrators in Taiwan display transactional leadership and transformational leadership at the same degree. However, Lin (1995) argued that school principals tend to use transactional leadership to ensure the smooth operation of the schools while using transformational leadership to facilitate school improvement. But, as I have discussed above, there appears to be little room for “transformation” in a rigid hierarchical school system like that of Taiwan. How might this apparent contradiction be explained?

For one thing, it should be noted that “transformational leadership” may not be interpreted among school principals as meaning the same thing as “vision building.” It is unknown whether principals in studies like Lin’s cited above attach the same meaning to the word “transformational” as do American educators. The Chinese word for “transformation” can be interpreted as “change from one stage to another.” Given the rigid educational vision, a Taiwanese principal may view himself as “transformational” simply because he viewed himself as directing his staff “to change from one stage to another.”

This is not to deny the possibility of variation across the island in terms of the possibility for change to occur at the local school level. For example, my high school English teachers used various creative teaching techniques such as drama playing, creative writing, English Film reviewing, and radio program listening to improve our English skills. Another example was my math teacher who often took students out of the classroom for hands-on activities. This is not typical, however, and my high school was one of the island’s most elite schools. Principals of this kind of high academic performing
school may be more likely to display some of the characteristics associated with transformational leadership. They may be more flexible than principals in low academic performing schools and, as I have already indicated, may be more likely to engage in the sorts of relationship building activity often associated with transformational leadership. The reason these schools and their principals are different is that because they attract higher quality and more motivated students, they need not worry so much about their students’ scores on entrance exams or other tests.

As a junior high school student in a more rural area of southern Taiwan, my experience was quite different. For one thing, my school served a much wider ranges of students in terms of academic performance. With the primary goal of getting as many students as possible to pass the high school entrance exam, homeroom teachers were more authoritarian in terms of instruction. Both the principal and teachers focused on test scores and corporal punishment was often used if we did not achieve a high enough score. In a case like this, when high school entrance exam scores are the main focus, it is understandable that principals and teachers would be less likely to demonstrate transformational behavior.

Symbolic Leadership

Principal leadership in Taiwan is quite bureaucratic. That is, the relationship between teachers and principals is formal, distanced, and detached. However, it does not mean that principals do not care about teachers’ needs and perceptions, but that they show their concerns in different ways. For example, it is expected that principals will allocate a budget to give teachers gifts on the September Teachers’ Day. That is one way for principals to show appreciation. Also, during school anniversary celebrations each year,
the principal will hold various activities and celebrations and will open the school to the community. It is a way for principals to show that people are all united as an institution. Principals who fail to recognize these important activities will likely be viewed as poor leaders.

Consider the contrast with American principals. In America, there tend to be fewer ceremonies related to teacher appreciation or recognition. When a principal wishes to recognize “a job well done,” he or she will often do it rather quickly or informally. In addition, although it is common for American principals and their teachers to socialize informally after school, even, for example, at a local tavern on pay day, it is very uncommon in Taiwan. The only time a principal might join teachers in a social activity away from school would be just before the beginning of the Lunar New Year holiday. And while this would be a happy occasion, it would tend to be quite “formal.”

**Dynamic Subordinancy**

While investigating the topic of how leadership can occur in rigidly centralized hierarchical organizations, I came across a number of Web references to a concept called “dynamic subordinancy.” The concept appears to be used in military training courses and is described on one such Web site as relating to subordinates taking some responsibility for the decisions of their superiors; to “create a win-win situation for ourselves and for our superior, to take active actions to strengthen relationship between boss and subordinate, and to enhance support in the organization” (http://www.ndsu.nodak.edu/ndsufrotc/Course-Material/Slides/300-L37.ppt). I introduce this concept here because of the way in which the Taiwan school system, with its strong hierarchy and respect for status differences, has some of the trappings of a
military organization. “Dynamic subordinancy,” as I have become familiar with it, represents a way in which lower status subordinates may display a type of leadership that amounts to much more than simple obedience to higher officers.

My understanding to this point is that “dynamic subordinancy” occurs when subordinates ask questions and make suggestions that tilt a policy discussion in a different direction than was anticipated by the superior officer, or that cause the superior officer to think twice about his or her own decision. In a military setting, this type of relationship can exist between officer and subordinate only in an atmosphere of trust, respect, loyalty, and discretion, and only when the superior officer actively encourages it. As an example, one of the major messages of the film “The Caine Mutiny” was that the chief officers of the Caine failed to lead Captain Queeg just as much as he failed to lead them.

Is dynamic subordinancy a suitable model for understanding how leadership occurs in a setting like Taiwan? Can principals signal their teachers that their critical ideas may be welcome under certain circumstances? Over time, do teachers develop the sort of interpersonal currency necessary to speak openly and frankly to their principal about matters of school policy? Ironically, this may occur more easily in an American military setting than in a Taiwan school. Consider, for example, that a Taiwanese principal may take it very personally and feel much shame if teachers become openly critical. A principal may offer his resignation over what Americans might consider to be relatively minor matters. Thus, if teachers in a Taiwan school become too open with their criticisms or suggestions, it may be harmful to the type of loyalty necessary for dynamic subordinancy to occur.
Note that within the context of dynamic subordinancy, distributive leadership becomes possible, but remains very subtle and difficult to detect. If this type of relationship existed in Taiwan schools, it might be very difficult to spot, given the lenses available to western researchers. This brings me back to the purpose of my study, to examine the meaning attached to “leadership” in the Taiwan setting and to determine the degree to which western frameworks help us understand leadership in this setting.
Chapter 3

BACKGROUND OF TAIWAN EDUCATION AND SCHOOL REFORM

In the previous chapter, I discussed basic ideas of leaderships in both western and Taiwan societies. This chapter will focus on Taiwan’s educational system as well as current public school reform efforts and its difficult issues.

Taiwan’s Educational System

As a highly centralized educational system, Taiwan’s educational system has two distinctive advantages over its U.S. counterpart. One, funding can be equally distributed across the country. Second, it is easier for the Ministry of Education (MOE) to facilitate the standardized operation of the school. However, a centralized educational system has disadvantages. First, political changes, turnover, and structural changes have a direct impact on school operation. Second, the centralized system is not flexible enough to adjust to local concerns (Chin, 1998b).

Historical Background of Taiwan’s Education Reform

Because of globalization, education innovation in Taiwan is influenced by western cultures, theories of human capital, and modernization (Yang, 2001). The idea of localization, which is popular in the U.S., has gained influence among educational reformers in Taiwan (Weng, 2003). The Nine-Year Integrated Curriculum was designed to meet the need for internationalization and localization, a way to enable future Taiwanese to be able to compete with people from all over the world and be able to understand and appreciate the culture and history of Taiwan. Not only both Mandarin and English are required, but other languages such as German, French, Taiwanese, or Hakka (one dialect of Taiwan) are encouraged. Beginning in 2000, the MOE has provided alternative ways
for students to get accepted into high schools and colleges. Teachers’ legislation, including teachers’ training, certification, and hiring processes were beginning to change in 1995. Other reform efforts call for establishing a flexible education system, creating a positive learning environment for students to learn, improving student’s mental health by improving school counseling systems, increasing educational opportunity, and adjusting allocations of educational resources (http://www.edu.tw/EDU_WEB/Web/publicFun/dynamic_default.php#). These resource allocations aimed to strengthen the vocational education system, to strengthen certification requirements and professional development programs, and to promote life long learning (http://www.edu.tw/EDU_WEB/Web/publicFun/dynamic_default.php#). Because the reform movement has placed new demands on principals, a dynamic context now exists for investigating leadership behavior in Taiwan schools.

The Nine-Year Integrated Curriculum

Traditionally, a standardized curriculum and instructional materials were used from elementary through senior high school. Several problems regarding to the unified national curriculum had been identified (Chang, 1995). First, a routine review of curriculum once every ten years would not best prepare students for today’s fast-changing society. Second, the national curriculum did not take too many individual differences into account, which tend to overlook the individualized instruction and evaluation. Third, the national curriculum seemed to produce a mismatch with the culture in local schools. Therefore, the Nine-Year Integrated Curriculum was proposed focusing more on individual differences and local cultural curriculum.
The Nine-Year Integrated Curriculum is from the first grade to the ninth grade. The Nine-Year Integrated Curriculum is designed for students to regroup traditional subjects into seven major fields of study: Language, Health and Physical education, Social study, Arts and Humanity, Mathematics, Natural Science and Technology, and Comprehensive Activities (Ou, 2001). The design of the curriculum intends to build on team teaching across different subject areas. Instead of teaching subject by subject, the new way of instruction will be expected to be combine-subjects teaching and the current subjects teaching will be replaced by fields of study.

The existing education system does not appear to be flexible to meet the needs of the new curriculum. The Nine-Year Integrated Curriculum expects teachers to use team teaching as a strategy and to combine different subjects together. Not enough proper in-service training or workshops are provided to assist the transition, however, and one of the major complaints among teachers was that nobody knows how to effectively combine subjects together. Principals’ curricular decisions often get caught between addressing teachers’ complaints and adhering to school reform initiatives. The reforms have increased the pressure on principals to become instructional leaders, a role that principals had tended not to assume in previous years.

Teachers’ Declining Morale

Morale has said to be a function of three components---rationality, identification, and belongingness (Hoy & Miskel, 1991). Morale may be threatened, if teachers see a lack of fit between their own professional needs and organizational goals. It may also be threatened if teachers fail to see a fit between organizational goals and policies. After the MOE proposed the new curriculum and allowed alternative ways for
students to get accepted to high schools and colleges, the organizational goals were set to enhance students’ learning with up-lifting atmosphere, and encourage creativity and problem-solving skills in everyday life. Under the current educational reform, teachers in junior and senior high schools still have to prepare the students for the existing standardized academic assessment to get students accepted in high schools or colleges. Teachers are limited in terms of creative teaching style. As such, it is hard for teachers to identify themselves with the organizational goal (i.e.: preparing students for the tests) and see a stronger link between the goals and their professional needs (i.e.: creative teaching style). Teachers’ sense of belongingness declines. This may increase the risks to teacher morale, thus handing principals one more problem with which to grapple.

The manner in which Taiwan principals face these new and evolving problems is of key interest to me and is also important in understanding the extent to which reform efforts will be successful. I am determined to find out how these new problems and demands may have changed understandings of leadership in Taiwan. Has the practice and meaning of “leadership” changed to become more “western” in nature? Or will traditional practices and meanings remain in place?
Chapter 4

METHOD

This chapter will discuss the design of this qualitative study. Using criterion based purposeful and convenience sampling this study involved face-to-face interviews and one faculty meeting observation.

Design of the Study

Qualitative methodology utilizing interviews and observations was the selected research strategy. Morse and Richards (2002) mentioned that some research purposes and some specific questions are better answered by qualitative methods. Following their suggestions, qualitative methods seemed appropriate for this study’s research questions. First, the study’s purpose was to understand the congruency between western leadership theories and Taiwanese principals’ perceptions of leadership. Because the study was an exploratory and descriptive study, one that aimed to tease out the beliefs, attitudes, and perceptions of Taiwanese principals, a qualitative method was the most appropriate. Second, the researcher wanted to understand the leadership strategies school principals used within the context of Taiwan school reform, and this would not have been easily obtained through closed ended survey questions. As a result, I chose qualitative methodology to explore the following questions:

(1) What meaning do school principals in Taiwan attach to the concept of “leadership?”

(2) What kinds of strategies will principals describe having used for the purposes of implementing reform?

(3) Will the strategies they use reflect western models of leadership?
(4) After reviewing and analyzing the data, an additional issue emerged suggesting a fourth question for examination. Specifically, to what extent has Taiwan school reform compelled these principals to adopt western modes of leadership?

The semi-structured interview has been identified as a valuable tool in qualitative research (Janesick, 2004), and such interviews were used in this study. Interviews can provide a great deal of information and data for the researcher, especially when the interview is about “two people talking, communicating, and constructing meaning” (Janesick, 2004, p. 72). The interview questions used in this study (see Appendix A and B) contained a variety of conceptual and experience-based questions aimed at gleaning information about principals’ opinions and behaviors. Although a semi-structured protocol was developed and used, the researcher also deviated from the protocol where necessary to pursue details unique to particular subjects.

A researcher may use observation to look at participants’ body language, affection, and behaviors, as well as to sense the physical environment where a specific event takes place (Rossman & Rallis, 2003). Observation “helps you discover complexity in social settings by being there” (Rossman & Rallis, 2003, p. 194). In this study, the researcher observed one faculty meeting in an elementary school at the beginning of the school semester in September, 2004. The purpose of the observation was to better understand the school principal’s leadership behavior, interaction between the principal and teachers, interaction among teachers, and the decision making process during the faculty meeting.
Although document analysis was not a formal part of this study, the principals who participated in the interviews often provided documents such as information about the vision of the school, principals’ letters to parents and teachers, information about the Nine-Year Integrated Curriculum design, and general information to the school. As a result, parts of the documents concerning principals’ leadership were utilized in the data analysis.

Sample Participants and Procedures

When dealing with sampling issues, the researcher had to consider “when, where, who, and what” (Maxwell, 1996, p. 69). The sampling used in this study was criterion based purposeful sampling, which involves the researcher selecting people, settings, and time periods that can help answer the questions of the study. For this study, the researcher used purposeful sampling to increase the general representativeness of the participants and settings. Specifically, I selected 15 Taiwanese junior high and elementary school principals to be interviewed. In July and August, 2004, these principals were identified by known educational experts in southern Taiwan, e.g., faculty members at National Pingtung Teachers College (NPTTC)\(^1\) and its Graduate Institute of Elementary Education. The criteria for the sample selection were to choose both male and female principals and those with varying years of experience. Also, the experts were asked to choose principals from both central city and outlying areas and those who carried out reform policies successfully as well as those who struggled in some way. Convenience, of course, also influenced the sampling, as the selection of principals depended on how well

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\(^1\) “NPTTC” is the acronym used by this institution as its name, as “Pingtung” is often written as “Ping-Tung.”
known they were to the experts. Though there could be external validity risks involved in convenience sampling, the researcher selected the principals carefully so as to avoid the introduction of any systematic bias.

Data Collection Procedures

Step 1. Design Interview Protocols

After reviewing the related literature, interview protocols were designed (see Appendix A & B). To increase the content validity of the questions, I relied on the expertise of my dissertation committee and also considered suggestions made by educational experts at NPTTC, as they were highly familiar with the local school personnel and settings. Questions were designed to elicit information, both directly and indirectly, regarding the research questions of the study.

Step 2. Contact the Educational Experts Known by Researcher

In order to conduct the research in Taiwan and to identify principals who were willing to participate, the researcher contacted the educational experts from NPTTC during the summer of 2004, who assisted the researcher in identifying and contacting possible participants. The experts identified three principals from northern Taiwan and twelve principals from southern Taiwan. Six of the principals were junior high school principals and nine were elementary school principals leading to a total of 15 elementary and junior high school principals participating in this study. Two principals were chosen from small schools (under 12 classes), four were chosen from middle-size schools (between 13-24 classes), and nine were chosen from large schools (above 24 classes). Two principals were from schools in outlying areas, which were similar to rural schools in the United States. Thirteen principals were from schools in central city areas of Taiwan.
Of the fifteen principals interviewed, ten were males and five were females. In addition, the work experiences of the principals ranged from 1.5 to 18 years.

**Step 3. Contact Participants and Obtain Their Permission and Participation**

After identifying 21 possible participants, the researcher contacted the principals. Finally, 15 principals had time and agreed to participate in this study. Then the researcher set up the interviews, which took place in Taiwan during July and August 2004. Since every school in Taiwan starts the semester and most hold faculty meetings on September 1, 2004, one observation of faculty meeting then was set up in one school on that day.

**Step 4. Open-Ended, Semi-Structured Interviews**

The interviews lasted about one hour for each principal. Before each interview, participants were informed of the general topics to be addressed so that they might think about their responses in advance. Informed consent forms were signed by both the participants and the researcher before the formal interview began and a copy was mailed to each participant after all the interviews were completed. Interviews were conducted at the principals’ schools. As describe earlier, the interview used semi-structured and open-ended questions in order to get a representative picture of principals’ views of leadership and education reform, as well as their perceptions about teachers, parents, and students’ concerns.

The interviews began with an introduction of the researcher and purpose of the study. This was followed by a review of the informed consent form with participants, which outlined their rights as voluntary participants in the study. After the participant signed the informed consent acknowledging participation in the study, the researcher
signed the form and then started the interview. All principals agreed to be tape-recorded.

All fifteen interviews were conducted in Chinese. Notes from the interviews were written in Chinese and later translated into English. The interview protocol consisted of 10 questions related to the study’s research questions (see Appendix A & B). The semi-structured interview questions were developed to allow the themes of leadership to emerge from the participants without leading participants to state answers that the researchers wanted to hear. At the same time, semi-structured interview questions were to enhance objectivity of data collection and to minimize the potential of researcher bias.

Participants were thanked for their time and participation at the end of the interview. Besides interviews, many participating principals often provided documents during the interview so that the researcher collected some documents at the same time.

Step 5. Observation

One observation was scheduled on September 1st, 2004. It was a faculty meeting of an elementary school and the meeting took place in the conference room. It lasted from 2:00pm to 5:00 pm. 53 people were in the meeting, which included 43 people from the elementary department, four kindergarten teachers, and six intern teachers. The meeting was about general reports of each office, professional development, and decision-making for some school events. The researcher was briefly introduced by the principal to everyone before the meeting started and took notes during the observation.

Step 6. Data Analysis ---Qualitative Data Analysis

All interviews were tape-recorded. Tape-recording has some advantages and disadvantages. The advantage was that everything was recorded, and I could go back to
any part to review and clarify. However, it was very time-consuming for the transcription and translation (from Chinese to English).

After I started my data analysis, as Creswell (1998) suggests, I created and organized different files for the data. Computer files were also used in managing my interview and observation data. I read through the whole text and material, made notes, and formed initial codes (open coding). Further, I identified themes and grouped statements into units (axial coding) by hand and by computer. Additionally, in order to get a more comprehensive picture of the collected data, the responses of the principals were organized into two ways, one by participants and one by research questions. For data interpretation, the researcher developed a description of leadership concepts that emerged from data analysis and compared those concepts with western leadership theories. Also, the researcher identified strategies that principals used for implementing education reform in Taiwan schools. The interpretation was based on what Taiwan principals said in the interview. In the process of identifying themes and interpretations, I also looked at deviant cases. These strategies enabled me to draw findings and conclusions from interview data. Then, I used narratives and rich descriptions, including original quotes from the interviews, to present the findings.

Reliability Issue

Silverman (2001) describes reliability issues and one issue is reliability of the interviews. He provides some suggestions for increasing reliability of interviews. In order to address reliability, the researcher gathered interview data through standardized procedures and used a standard interview protocol to guide the questions. When the researcher presented the data, she presented long extracts of data in the report. Being a
single researcher may pose difficulties for inter-rater reliability checks. However, the committee members served in a supervisory role to guide the analysis and interpretation of the data.

Validity Issue

In order to make this study trustworthy, it is important to consider issues related to both external and internal validity. External validity involves the extent to which the results may be generalized to some larger population. An important factor to consider here was the size and representativeness of the sample. I had interviewed 15 principals. I believed that this was sufficient size for this kind of qualitative study. However, the number of interviews was not so important, if I had only interviewed principals who differed in some significant way from general tendencies within the overall population. To protect against this risk, I advised the local experts to search not only for principals who were regarded to be successful in meeting the challenges of leadership and reform, but also to search for those who were struggling in some way. I also asked the experts to identify principals serving schools in both central city and outlying areas. Furthermore, triangulation of data and method were used in the study (Mathison, 1988). First, I interviewed several principals, not only one principal. Second, I collected memos and documents from the school and I also collected data of the existing policy.

Internal validity relates to the extent to which the results were not influenced by the research method and design, the way in which I carried it out, or the way I interpreted the data. Promoting internal validity called upon the researcher to understand his or her own values and opinions and to strive to screen them out of the data interpretation. But how could one know one’s interpretation was influenced in some inappropriate way?
Though it is impossible to eliminate or even completely ignore one’s values and expectations, the researcher must be careful about what he or she brought to the study. In this case, I am a PhD student from the department of Educational Leadership in The Pennsylvania State University. Although the course work and the previous experiences as an intern school counselor in Taiwan might influence how I interpret principals’ responses; I had not really formed strong positions on the topics covered by my dissertation. Rather, I approached them in a spirit of inquiry, seeking to understand a problem, not necessarily to find a solution. Nevertheless, I sought to use appropriate methods to avoid this kind of validity threat such as getting feedback from participants and using a “member check” strategy (Maxwell, 1996). In addition, I used “comprehensive data treatment” to analyze the data (Silverman, 2001). This meant that I treated all data seriously and I was not satisfied until the analysis could cover every single relevant data I collected. I believed my treatment of the data enabled me to describe leadership in Taiwan precisely and comprehensively. Furthermore, I asked advice and confirmation from other people familiar with leadership concepts, such as the committee members. The researcher believed their comments and feedback were valuable to this study.

**Limitations of and Special Challenges Related to the Study**

Language issues might be a limitation of this study. As a result, the researcher carefully translated the interview data from Chinese to English as accurately as possible. Additionally, there were cultural differences between Taiwan and the United States that affected how interviews were conducted. For example, it was common to offer a small gift or drinks to the participants in Taiwan. It was one kind of “relationship building”
strategy in Taiwan. It might in some way affect formality of the interview. Another thing was that I needed to observe status differences between the principals and me. I was aware that the status differences might affect how principals responded to the interview questions or affected how open and frank I was in the interview. Or the principals might not be telling me exactly what their views were because what they said would be in this paper and in print. They might only tell me the positive side of the answer and avoid the negative explanation. In order to avoid this, I ensured them confidentiality and expressed clearly the purpose of study. Additionally, I used “emotive questions” such as interview question two and three:

2. You have a very nice school here! You must be very proud of your students.
   It must be very difficult to build a good school.

2a. What advice would you give to a new principal about how to build a good school?

2b. What is “the secret of your success?”

3. (after getting the answer above) But still, it must be very difficult. What are the greatest challenges you have faced as principal of this school? Can you give me some examples?

These Questions enabled principals to talk freely about their success and challenges so that their stories contained both positive and negative explanations.
Chapter 5

DATA ANALYSIS

The purpose of this qualitative study was to find out to what extent western leadership theories and concepts are reflected in the beliefs, attitudes, and behaviors of school principals in Taiwan. Particularly, I sought to understand the meanings that a sample of Taiwan school principals attached to the idea of leadership and the relationship of these meanings to current school reform policies. The primary data collection technique used in this research was the semi-structured interview, though observations and document analysis were also utilized when possible. This chapter presents the data obtained by using these procedures. It begins with descriptions of the school sample and the principals’ professional backgrounds. Following that, the chapter organizes and presents the data along the lines of the key themes that emerged from the principals’ responses regarding leadership and the influence of education reform.

Principal Background and School Sample Description

Fifteen principals (ten male and five female) participated in the study. Six had college degrees. Three had master’s degrees, five had diplomas equivalent to a master’s degree, and one had a doctoral degree. Their professional experiences as principals ranged from 1.5 years to 18 years. The schools chosen to participate varied in size, with two principals serving in small schools (under 12 classes) four in medium-sized schools (13-24 classes); and nine in large-sized schools (above 24 classes). Twelve schools were located in southern Taiwan and three were located in northern Taiwan. Thirteen schools were in central city areas and two were in outlying areas in Taiwan. Table 1 provides a summary of principal background and school descriptors.
Table 1: Principal Background and School Description.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Principal</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Education Background</th>
<th>Years as Principals</th>
<th>School Size</th>
<th>School Location</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Principal 1</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>University Graduate</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>Small</td>
<td>Southern Taiwan outlying area</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Principal 2</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>College Graduate(^2)</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Small</td>
<td>Southern Taiwan outlying area</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Principal 3</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Master Degree</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>Large-size</td>
<td>Southern Taiwan Central City area</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Principal 4</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>College Graduate</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>Medium-Size</td>
<td>Southern Taiwan Central City Area</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Principal 5</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Master Degree</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>Large-Size</td>
<td>Southern Taiwan Central City Area</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Principal 6</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>College Graduate</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>Large-Size</td>
<td>Southern Taiwan Central City Area</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Principal 7</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Master’s equivalent</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>Large-Size</td>
<td>Southern Taiwan Central City Area</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Principal 8</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Doctoral Degree</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Medium-Size</td>
<td>Southern Taiwan Central City Area</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Principal 9</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Master Degree</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>Large-Size</td>
<td>Southern Taiwan Central City Area</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Principal 10</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Master’s equivalent</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Medium-Size</td>
<td>Southern Taiwan Central</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\(^2\) Teacher colleges between 1964 and 1986 simultaneously offered 5-year, 3-year, and 2-year programs. This was different from a normal university (4-year) because those who went to normal universities had to have a high school diploma while those who went to teachers colleges needed a middle school diploma. After 1986, teachers college graduates and normal university entrances must have graduated from high school. However, only teachers college graduates teach in elementary school and University graduates teach in Middle schools. No principals in this study attended teachers college after 1986.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Principal</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Degree</th>
<th>Years</th>
<th>Size</th>
<th>City Area</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Principal 11</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Master’s equivalent</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>Large-Size</td>
<td>Southern Taiwan Central City Area</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Principal 12</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>College Graduate</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>Medium-Size</td>
<td>Southern Taiwan Central City Area</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Principal 13</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Master’s equivalent</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Large-Size</td>
<td>Northern Taiwan Central City Area</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Principal 14</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Master’s equivalent</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>Large-Size</td>
<td>Northern Taiwan Central City Area</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Principal 15</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>University Graduate</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>Large-Size</td>
<td>Northern Taiwan Central City Area</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Principals’ Training**

Fourteen of the 15 principals interviewed indicated that they received their undergraduate degree from one of Taiwan’s Teachers’ Colleges or Normal Universities. The one principal who differed had earned a major in educational administration. The discrepancy results from the fact that all educators in Taiwan were trained only in Teachers’ Colleges or Normal Universities until 1994. Many of the principals indicated that they were proud of their education background and some pointed out that they had studied western leadership theories. One principal explained that many professors studied in the U.S. and brought back western points of view. All principals had prior experiences as school administrators before taking the principal’s exam in Taiwan. Under the Taiwan school system, there are four offices under a principal. They are office of teaching, student affairs, general affairs, and library. Each office has a dean who is in charge of the office. Many of the principals stated that their experiences as school administrators had
given them training and prepared them to be school principals. For example, principals usually were deans of the office of instruction, guidance, general affairs, or student affairs before they participated in the principal’s exam.

Many of the principals indicated that they had participated in a required eight to ten week principal training program. From the descriptions of these principals, training program topics included education reform, educational administration, crisis management, and leadership theory. Experts from the Ministry of Education and from the department of education in different universities give lectures for the training program. Experienced principals are also invited to share their experiences with the new principals. One principal pointed out that not all the training was useful for her. She considered the most useful part to be the advice passed on by those experienced principals.

Besides participating in the training programs, a few principals said that they had attended to some private leadership training programs or read books related to leadership in order to acquire more knowledge and skills. In short, these principals cited their training experience as coming from their education, prior experience as school administrators, the required principal training program, and some private professional development programs.

**Principals’ General Views on Leadership**

The main interview questions were designed to understand principals’ basic conceptions, beliefs, and behaviors related to the idea of leadership. These questions covered areas such as their “secrets” or advice about building successful schools, major challenges and accomplishments, views on teacher leadership, views on school reform and its influence on leadership practice, and understandings of leadership and
management. The interview questions were intended to evoke principals’ insight concerning the concept of leadership, how it is distinguished from management, how it relates to western leadership theories, and how school reform influences their leadership practice. The data presentation is organized along several themes: importance and meaning of leadership, principals’ tasks, instructional leadership, symbolic leadership, task vs. relation orientation, principals’ perception on teacher leadership, and major challenges principals had encountered.

Importance and Meaning of Leadership

Six of the principals interviewed specifically cited the importance of principal leadership to the making of a successful school. “I think principal leadership and shared-vision are the keys to school success,” said one principal. Another principal stated, “I think good communication and principal leadership are critical elements for a good school.” Principals’ expressions were consistent with the results of past studies (Cheng, 1994). Thus, as in the United States, the word and idea of leadership is a salient concept for many of these principals.

Several principals highlighted the importance of personality traits with regard to leadership. Whether or not people trust the principal might depend on the principal’s personality. One principal, for example, mentioned, “I don’t see challenges as difficulties. I think the problems come from a principal’s problematic personality.” Another principal echoed that she could “see” someone who could never be a good principal even if the person passed the principal’s exam. She stated that, “I think personalities of the principal are important. I know some people they passed the principal’s exam and become principals. However, I can predict they will not make successful principals because their
personalities. They are self-centered. They do not know how to socialize with other people or they just don’t have the charisma of being a good leader.” Other principals used words such as “being responsible,” “energetic,” “courageous,” “creative,” and “charismatic” in referring to important personally traits.

One strategy used to tease out the meaning these principals attach to leadership was to ask about the differences (if any) between being a “good leader” and a “good manager” and about how they would like their teachers to think of them. The results indicated that all but one of the principals in the sample considered leadership and management as distinct concepts. Many principals pointed out, for example, that leadership is distinguished by an attempt to build a shared-vision, emphasize relationships, communicate goals, “know the direction,” “look further,” “lead people’s heart,” create “followers” and have powerful influence upon them, have good communication skills, share leadership with other school personnel, have high moral standards, and have a commitment to the task of running the school. Some of the principals described leadership as an “art.” Management, on the other hand, tended to be viewed as relating to “following the policy,” being effective, focusing on the results, task completion, and fixing problems. In short, management appears to be viewed as more technical, rational, and even impersonal, while leadership was understood as having emotional and social aspects.

Some concrete examples can better explain these principals’ points of view. One principal differentiated leadership from management saying, “I think to be a good manager is only to finish what should be done. A leader, instead, has followers, has a vision, and has his styles. If there is no follower, then there is no leader.” This is much
like a western point of view on leadership, expressive of the social or communal
dimension of leadership. Another principal asserted that the biggest difference is that
leadership is about people while management is about things. Highlighting the
importance of democracy and human relationships, he stated,

For me, management is about things and is scientific. Leadership is about
promoting, arousing, and improving. I don’t want to “manage” people.
Leadership is about the harmony of an administrative organization. And it
focuses on partnership. All groups need a good leader. I guess the teachers
think I am pretty democratic and not so directive. I don’t think I am the only
“leader” because all teachers are my partners. I pursue the harmony of the
organization. I create an environment for people to work together. I would like
to treat people as real human beings.

Another principal combined the concept of leadership and management.

I think I would like to be a leader who has goals and knows the direction. But I
also leave room for teachers to work toward the goals with their own methods.
It is like playing a ball game. I draw the line and create the rules for the ball
game. However, people should feel that they can play the ball freely.

Releasing the power to followers is also mentioned by principals. As the principals
indicated, principals need to insist on some good philosophy and good educational
policies. However, some principals mentioned that they usually would not be too
authoritative and would release power to other school administrators (e.g., dean of
instruction, general affairs, guidance, or director of student affairs). A few of the
principals even mentioned that being a principal is to “serve the school and the
community,” not simply “hold the power.” It seemed that at least from these preliminary
responses their views on leadership do not reflect a highly authoritative understanding of
leadership. This is a repeated theme and is discussed further in later sections.

In line with much western literature on school administration, some principals
tended to promote leadership over management. A leader influences the followers,
encourages the followers to work together with him, and does the “right thing” (Bennis & Nanus, 1985). A manager seeks to do “things right” and focuses primarily on the technical aspects of the job. One principal mentioned,

I think leadership means the leader has a powerful influence on the follower and the followers are willing to follow with their hearts. It is like an art and should be efficient. Leadership (benevolent rule) means that everyone works together. A good leader should use formal and informal communication to communicate with the followers. Furthermore, a good school leader should always encourage the teachers spiritually and encourage them to participate in school activities. Management is like the technical part. A good manager asks only for the results and do things fast. The teachers will think that they “have to listen to the principal” if the principal tries only to be a manager. Leadership focuses on the function, not only the results. Management is peremptory. So, I would like my teachers to think that I am a good leader.

Again, leadership here seems to be understood as a social process involving interaction between leaders and followers. A leader influences followers’ hearts and behaviors to participate and work together. It involves people’s interaction and communication. Leadership exists because of people, not because of things. A leader motivates the followers to do things without coercion. Following this idea of leadership as social process, it would appear that principals are very dependent on teachers because they need to communicate with teachers more than before and really need them to participate in decision-making. The interviews suggest that these principals do not view management in the same way. Instead, the most important matter for a manager is to efficiently finish a required task, regardless, to some extent, to look at people’s ideas and needs.

Some principals viewed leadership and management as equally important, as two sides of the same thing. “A good leader has followers and looks further. A good manager is very organized and has plans and strategies,” stated one principal. And four principals mentioned the idea of “walking management.” That is, they suggested that
management is not only about sitting in the office and handing down directives, but also to go out of the office, look around the campus, and understand what is going on in the school. It also provides principals an opportunity to make personal connections to the teachers. One principal gave an example of using walking management in his school. He stated,

I think walking management is important. I often walk by the classroom to see how teachers teach and then check for school utilities such as teaching equipments, lights, or water fountain at the same time. I believe to have contacts with teachers is crucial.

While sometimes walking management is task-oriented, other example illustrates a more human-relation side of walking management. Another principal stated that,

Walking management is my strategy so that I can understand teachers more. I often go to teachers’ office, sit there, talk to them, and ask for their needs and opinions on certain things. At first, teachers hesitate to talk to me. Gradually, they talk to me a little bit. It is also another time to supervise teachers. They would be more on time to their class because some of them would say that “sorry! I cannot talk to you now and I have to go to my class and teach.”

Walking management thus appears to be not only about getting jobs done but also about making connections to followers and understanding their needs. It is similar to the western concept of “management by walking around” (MBWA) as discussed by Peter and Waterman (1982). These researchers found that MBWA enhanced communication between managers and employees, and allowed communications to be more personal. In the schools studies here, however, a principals’ walking around sent out a more symbolic message, one suggesting that teachers’ activities were always visible.

Principals’ View on Their Most Salient Tasks

Several interview questions are related to principals’ identification of their most salient tasks. Again, the purposes of these questions were to help elicit some concrete
examples of how they viewed leadership and what they believed leaders were supposed to do within the context of Taiwan education. Themes emerging from the interviews and data analysis include “knowing the culture of the school community,” “vision” and “culture” building, dealing with the outside community, being responsible and helpful, and carrying out the country’s educational reform policies.

**Knowing the Culture of the School Community.** Knowing the culture of the school is viewed as one of the main tasks for school principals, especially when principals start a new school. Several principals had mentioned that it is important for principals to know the existing culture of the school community in order to operate the school more effectively. Principals used the term “culture” in a way perhaps different from how a sociologist or anthropologist might use the term. They appear to use it to refer to feelings, attitudes, or the atmosphere they sense when they enter a school. The term “culture” is thus perhaps used the way American school researchers use the word “climate.” The term “culture” also seems to be used to describe the physical environment of the school and students’ performance. But the principals also used the term to refer to values and beliefs such as the expectations of the teachers, parents, and external stakeholders. Although all schools serve the same purposes and hold similar education beliefs-- to educate students and prepare them for life, several principals stated a belief that each school has its “own culture” related to both the outside and inside school community. For example, principals reported a need to understand the average social-economic status (SES) of their students, the idea that parents’ expectations and demands might differ according to their SES. For example, one principal asserted that students from low SES families tend to have less stable home environments.
Such factors appear to influence the way principals respond to the parents and the students, and understanding such social dynamics appears to be of major importance to them. For example, one principal stated that, “First of all, a new principal should observe the existing school culture—teachers’ attitudes, the expectations of the community, and the students. After that, the principal can start to develop his idea about how to build the school.” Another principal echoed that, “I think ideas should be created upon the framework of reality. Reality means the community and the existing school culture.” With knowledge of the particular school environment and culture, the principals suggested that they could then shape their relationships with teachers and the community accordingly in order to create a shared vision.

Vision/School culture building. When asked about how to build a good school and the elements of a good school, many principals mentioned the importance of building a shared-vision or “creating the culture,” ideas related to the western idea of transformational leadership. Other elements of transformational leadership such as the importance of relationships, trust building, as well as the importance of consideration of individual needs were mentioned several times by the principals. For example, one principal stated

I think the secret of my success is to build a shared-vision. The Ministry of Education in Taiwan is pushing the school to have a shared-vision now. Many people think it is hard. However, I felt that my teachers and I can really create this vision together.

Other principals expressed similar views reflecting the idea that they cannot always serve as the “authority” as to what the vision ought to be. As one put it, “…a shared-vision is the most critical element. The vision is created through everyone’s effort; it is not based
on only the principal’s personal idea.” Another principal reconfirmed that, “I always tell teachers to think about what they want the organization look like and to go for it.”

Other than creating a shared-vision, some principals work hard on cultural changes. Here, principals seemed to use the word “culture” in reference to a set of norms, beliefs, or philosophies in regarding what kind of schooling was best for children. A principal provided some documents to me during the meetings. The documents contained a vision of the school, culture building process of the school, and the letters he wrote to the parents and teachers regarding vision and culture building. According to the documents, they also indicated that the deeper meaning for the school culture building process is to foster a better school via an appropriate educational philosophy. One principal, for example, expressed a belief in creating a “humanistic platform” for students to “develop their full potentials,” to “learn happily,” and to “pursue their dreams.”

That the problem of vision and culture building came up so often in response to the question about salient tasks may suggest that the problem is not only important but also quite difficult. Some principals indicated that it is often difficult to reach teachers. As one principal put it, “to make a teacher feel touched is usually the hardest thing in the process of leading.” As difficult as this task was perceived, however, the principals who mentioned creating shared-vision and culture appeared to believe strongly in their importance. I could feel their passion while they were talking and their eagerness to show me what they have tried to accomplish in their schools. They expressed a fountain of ideas and energy. During my interviews, some principals showed their files to the researcher on the issue of building a shared vision and culture. Many of them hang
important words and slogans related to vision and culture on their office walls, visible to all that enter.

The principals often expressed a desire to “invite” teachers to think about and contribute to that vision. The majority expressed openness to new ideas and to the use of democratic communication. One principal even addressed her vision to students. She stated that,

I believe in democratic communication and continuously reminding. I talk to every homeroom teacher and go to each classroom to talk to students about my education philosophy. I do this at the beginning of every school year. I hope to promote teachers’ identification with this school and feel that school is another home. I use meetings and try to build a shared-vision with everyone in the school.

Although these principals did not use the term “transformational leadership (i.e., its Mandarin equivalent)”, it seemed clear that the concept informed their leadership practice.

Notwithstanding these “western style” expressions of belief, other interview data suggested some inconsistencies. One of the more obvious themes seemed to be that some Taiwan principals seek to create and sell their own vision, regardless of whatever beliefs their teachers may have. When reviewing the interview data, the researcher noticed words like “telling my vision” or “teachers listen to my words.” As suggested above, the idea of transformational leadership is also about “inviting” everyone to help create the shared-vision. Yet, some principals suggested that their strategy is not always so “inviting.” Instead, their responses indicated that they may often try to tell the teachers what their visions ought to be. For example, one principal stated

After I came here, I always let teachers know my goals if there is a chance. Of course, everyone has different values. Gradually, they start to identify with these goals.
Another principal mentioned a possible explanation for this phenomenon, the past tradition of Taiwan’s administrative culture. She said,

In the past, teachers usually participated less in the decision-making process. Maybe the administrators always decide everything for the teachers in the old days.

Along similar lines, one principal expressed the frustration that “…I think during the meetings, teachers usually just listen to what I say…” The implication being that many teachers simply wish to be informed of a vision or policy rather than contribute to shaping it. It seemed clear that some principals experienced similar frustration in shift from traditional Asian’s top-down leadership to the western idea of transformational leadership.

**Dealing with Outside Community.** To communicate with the outside community is not always an easy job. Although “parents’ involvement” in school activity is widely considered a positive attribute of schools, parent involvement might become an obstacle for principals in operating the school or carrying out education policy. Several principals discussed this problem during the interviews. Sometimes the problem relates to an individual parent while in some instances it relates to parent associations. For instance, one principal said that “Sometimes parents’ expectations are different from ours. I feel that non-professional parents will try to influence school management.” Another principal described the following situation:

Sometimes, parents will come to the school and make comments to teachers about their teaching. Parents might try to tell the teachers about what they think should be taught or what material and topics to focus. Furthermore, some parents even try to tell teachers how to teach. Parents no longer think that teachers are always right.
Another principal had other pressure from parents. He stated,

First, when new students enter the school, many of the parents would like to select their homeroom teachers, especially those who are of high socio-economical status. Or sometimes parents would like their kids to go to school even if the kids are not old enough. Parents will ask city councilors to interfere with the enrollment process. This has given me lots of pressure because sometimes many parents ask for the same homeroom teachers and there is not always enough room for students. And if I do not do what the county councilor asked, sometimes they would give me a hard time during the interpellation of a parliament session.

It becomes clear that parent interference might also involve political factors and thereby makes the principal’s task more complicated. Other times, challenges might occur during a national crisis. One principal stated

…when the problem of SARS was serious, the school had to deal with it especially since many of the parents work in the nearby hospital (about 200 students). Some parents did not want children of the hospital staff to come to school.

Many schools encountered the same challenge when SARS became an island-wide infectious disease in 2003. Some parents protested outside of their school or tried to block the children of doctors or nurses from going inside, afraid their children might get the disease from children of these health professionals.

Since it is hard to deal with parents’ interference, principals may need to do more than hold meetings in order to communicate effectively. Some principals took actions to invite parents or other community members to participate in the decision making process. As one principal said,

First, I communicated with the community and let them know that what the school tries to do is going to help the kids in the community. Also, I told them that what everyone does in the school should be student-centered. Whatever is good for students, we will do it.
One principal mentioned that parents increasingly want the school to respond to their inquiries immediately. With the development of technology today, some principals chose to use e-mail or post results of the meetings on the website to communicate with parents, teachers, and other people.

Except for dealing with parents and people from the community, Taiwan principals also experienced pressure from political actors such as city or county councilors. “Political involvement can be an obstacle for school operation,” said one principal. The city or county councilors might give the principal some pressure to do certain things. One principal gave a concrete example that,

…when the school recruits new teachers, some councilors will ask the school to hire certain people. Also, the councilors will interfere with school affairs such as purchase or the restaurant chosen of the school lunch. As a principal, I feel a lot of pressure from it. If I did not do things as the councilors wanted, the councilors started to made things hard on me and were picky on my school. I think political interference on school affairs really have a bad influence on the school. Sometimes teachers or the principal will stop doing the right things only because they are afraid of the politics. This had made teachers’ morale pretty low for the past year. Sometimes it made me want to quit.

This example illustrates a clear picture of principal stress as well as the negative influences of political involvement on teachers’ morale and school operation. Principals who mentioned political involvement as their challenge revealed that they did not like the pressure from city or county councilors. For example, one principal described how the county councilors might try to interfere with the purchasing of school lunches and, although they resent such interference, it seemed that there is nothing they could do to change the situation. Unlike the emergence of increased parent influence, the political interference from city or county councilors is not a new issue. However, it should be noted that parents’ nowadays might be more likely to use political means to influence
school affairs. For example, one of my principal interviews was interrupted when a parent brought a city councilor with her to the principal’s office. They tried to persuade the principal to let the child transfer from one class to another class because the parent did not think the original homeroom teacher handled her daughter’s personal problems effectively.

Although it is hard to deal with outside communities, it is beneficial for the school if it results in good community relationships. People or organizations in the community can provide schools a lot of resources, especially under the current curriculum reform. The Nine-Year Integrated Curriculum reform policy asks each school to develop its own local culture curriculum making use of materials or people from the nearby community. The “community” can be as small as the neighborhood or as big as the city or county the school belongs to. Some principals, therefore, sought to maintain good relationships with the community in order to use the community resources in the curriculum. For example, one principal mentioned, “I will invite people from the community to help students learn the culture of the community. Teachers and outside school people work together to develop the new curriculum.” Thus, the data indicated that principals are sensitive to the benefits and importance of building a good relationship with outside communities.

Being Responsible, Helpful, and Moral. The need to “be responsible” and “helpful” is another theme emerging from the interviews. One principal gave an example, stating “I promote a young teacher to be the director of student affairs. At first, she was afraid of offending someone else whenever she does things. I helped her and discussed with her regarding the strategies to solve difficult problems.” So, principals are being
helpful to teachers. Many of the principals mentioned the idea of “being a role model to teachers.” As one principal suggested,

I think a principal should be a role model to all teachers and students whenever there is a chance. I like the idea that if teachers can be role models to students, the students will learn things fast and have good behaviors.

In some ways, it seems that principals may often need to play the role of a “wise uncle” or even a parent when it comes to interacting with teachers. A principal stated that,

Principals and administrators can use their experiences and wisdom to help teachers. It is important to pass their good experiences to teachers.” Another principal mentioned that, “...the principal should not be afraid of any difficulties.” This example gave the impression of the principal being a father figure. The idea seems to be that by helping teachers settle problems, either professional or sometimes even personal, they may help teachers realize a sense of belonging to the school.

Some principals emphasized the specific characteristics a principal should have and moral standards a principal should hold. In particular, many commented that they considered leaders to “show fairness” and have “high moral standards.” For example, one principal mentioned that, “A principal should be honest about everything. A principal should not be involved in graft. And it is important that a principal treats teachers and things fairly in the school. Then teachers will respect the principal.” Being moral is apparently quite important for these principals. It is their way of establishing respectful relationships with teachers and of becoming a strong role model for them. These principals seem to express the belief that winning teachers’ respect and admiration is a key means of increasing their authority with teachers.
Carrying Out Educational and School Reform Policy. Several principals indicated that another important task for them was to implement the nation’s education policies and school reform. Two interview questions were directly related to this, and it is discussed later in the section of “reform influences on principal leadership.”

Principal as Instructional Leader

Another important theme that came across the interviews is the idea of instructional leadership. Principals mentioned it frequently, especially when they spoke about how they help with teachers’ professional development. Seven of the 15 principals gave explicit reference to the idea of instructional leadership and all of the principals gave implicit reference (i.e., they described how important it was for them to help teachers improve their professional ability).

Several types of instructional leadership were described in the interviews. First, several principals emphasized their practice of often walking by classrooms to observe and make mental notes of teachers’ performance. It should be noted that most of the classrooms in Taiwan have large windows on both sides because the weather is hot and humid. Thus, principals can easily see the activities in the classroom from outside. Most of the principals, however, did not go into the classroom unless a serious problem appeared. Apparently, many of these principals do not want teachers to feel that they are “losing face.” One principal stated,

Usually I won’t go into the classroom to see how teachers teach because I think this will frustrate teachers. However, I will often go by the classroom to observe the situation from outside. Particularly, I will look at the atmosphere in the classroom.

This practice of “walking around” was the most common type of “instructional leadership” identified by principals. The one (female) principal who mentioned actually
going into the classroom stated, “I tell teachers that I will go into the classroom to see how the teaching is going. And I will provide methods for teachers to use when they teach.” Several principals mentioned the importance of being an instructional leader following by giving the example of walking around the classroom and doing the observation. One principal gave an example that “It is really important to be an instructional leader. I supervise the committee of teaching and research. I supervise teaching. I often walk by the classroom and look at students’ reaction.” Thus, it seemed clear from the interviews that many principals viewed their supervision (walking by the classroom and observing teachers’) as a type of leadership. Based on my own experience in schools, I would say that “walking around” is a very traditional practice among principals in Taiwan. Teachers expect that the principal is watching, although the principal usually does not say anything or interrupt teachers’ teaching. It may be asked, however, if this is really a form of “leadership.” Or, is it simply a form of “supervision?” Although principals play the supervisors’ role, they still hesitate to go into the classroom directly because of the issue of “saving face.” If there is really a problem, the principal will talk to the teacher in private. Thus, it seems that principals would try to keep a peaceful relationship with teachers and avoid conflicts as much as they can. It is possible, of course, that “walking around” is important symbolically and that this type of instructional leadership may serve a larger purpose beyond its surface function of improving teachers’ teaching and students’ learning.

A second type of instructional leadership identified is related to teachers’ evaluation of instruction and curriculum design. Teachers are encouraged to evaluate each other’s teaching and share ideas about their methods. Though this is not under the
principal’s direct supervision, the principal initiates it. If a principal does not require, persuade, or guide the teachers to participate in the evaluation of each other’s teaching, teachers might not do it automatically. Thus, it really depends on principal leadership to initiate this kind of instructional evaluation. Again, in order to avoid strong resistance from teachers, principals who used teachers’ evaluation in their schools usually started with younger teachers or intern teachers. Ideally, those principals would like to encourage older teachers to also participate in this type of evaluation. One principal highly valued the teaching evaluation system. He commented,

I think evaluation can help teachers to improve teaching. The current evaluation system is not enough and I suggest the school to develop small group evaluation, too. There are a few schools that have the teacher evaluation system. In my school, I ask teacher to observe each other. Teachers in my school have to observe at least four other teachers’ teaching and learn from others within one school year.

Other principals also pointed out the advantages of this sort of teacher professional collegiality in terms of teachers’ professional improvement. One principal stated that, “I encourage teachers to share their curriculum and observe each others’ teaching. The purpose is to see the good side of a teachers’ teaching and share this with other teacher. Collaboration is promoted in the school. The teaching quality will become better as teachers learn more from each other.”

The third type of instructional leadership involves principals providing instruction directly to the students or directly to the teachers. In the environment of school reform, some principals will model how to teach or assist teachers with ideas for possible teaching topics. One principal mentioned she actually taught and attempted to become a role model for teachers. She used a period called “story telling by the principal” to help children improve their language skills. This did not happen in the classroom but
under the biggest tree on campus. Her idea was to allow students at different grade levels to attend and to allow her teachers to observe and model what she was doing. She said, “I, as a principal, also teach my student during called ’Story telling by the principal.’ It is under a biggest tree on campus and students with all grade level can attend the session. This has helped students improve their language ability. This has also set a role model for teachers.” Another principal tried to help teachers with the curriculum reform by selecting a topic every month so that teachers had a specific theme to follow in the integrated curriculum. He also taught teachers strategies related to how to conduct the new curriculum. The principal stated, “Sometimes during the workshop, I will show teachers some strategies to use. For example, I taught teachers about how to teach creatively. They can use multiple intelligences theory. I also showed them what I have learned from other workshop or conferences.” Such practices seem closer to the heart of western discussions of instructional leadership. It is not only a symbolic form of leadership, but also quite concrete in that teachers are shown some ways of implementing the new curriculum or some new teaching techniques. It seems quite likely that the school reform has pushed some principals to show instructional leadership in a more direct way than in the past.

Besides what was discussed above, most of the principals mentioned that they encouraged teachers to pursue further studies or participate in conferences or workshops in order to help improve school instruction.

Symbolic Leadership

The use of symbols and meanings are found in the interview data. Not all principals mentioned the word “symbol” or “symbolic.” However, their descriptions of
strategies and behaviors indicated the importance of symbols and meanings in these Taiwan schools, an issue highlighted in Chapter 2. One principal specifically mentioned the term “meaning” during the interview, stating, “…what I did in the school always has meanings behind it. Providing the opportunity for teachers to feel proud and recognizing their accomplishments also help me build the school.” This echoes the idea of western idea that the symbolic leader shapes meanings of the events and helps people find a sense of purpose in their work. Celebration and ceremony also appear to be ingredients of symbolic leadership. Some of the principals interviewed strive to attach meanings to important events as a means of overcoming some difficult challenges. The same principal quoted above described an event held in her school.

… I wanted to have a special event for these new first grade students. I would like them to celebrate the first day in the school and wanted to give them an impression that they were welcomed and make them feel that going to school was a good thing. The director did not think it necessary. However, many of my teachers supported and parents also supported me in action. Many parents came to the school on that day and celebrated with their kids. The director started to feel that these activities were good for students.

Ceremony is an important feature of Chinese and Taiwanese culture. Perhaps more so than in American schools, Taiwan principals use frequent ceremonies to show their care and respect for teachers, students, and the community. Every school holds a formal ceremony at the beginning and end of each semester. Also, there are events or ceremonies on Teachers’ Day (Confucius’ Birthday), graduation day, the schools’ birthday, the first day of first graders (as described above), and on the school’s anniversary. In most elementary schools, at least one morning each week is spent raising the flag, singing the national anthem, and listening to the principal speak. Such activities help ensure that
everyone in the school will have an opportunity to develop cohesion with each other. One principal serving in an outlying area school gave the following example:

This is the only school in town and the new building of the school was just built. So, I held a completion ceremony for it. No teachers or people in the community supported my goal and ideas. I used a chance to change people’s view about me and they started to support me. Before the ceremony, I invited parents, people from the community, and the school teachers to the pre-ceremony meetings and explained how I would use the budget to help the school and the students. I also told them about my educational philosophy—to help my students to have the same opportunity as students have in the city and to improve students’ reading ability. I want to close the gap between city schools and outlying schools. It was amazing that after the ceremony, people started to say that the principal really cared about our students and the community. Gradually, people started to work with me and people from the community would come to me and provide resources for the school to use.

Several of the principals indicated their use of symbols and meanings to motivate teachers. One principal strongly believed that “…once teachers feel the success of their actions, they will try to copy the success next time.” Another principal indicated that he wrote birthday cards to every teacher every year. Although this is not a school-wide event, the little cards gave the principal opportunities to show his appreciation to teachers and helped him make connections to teachers. Other examples would be that principals participate in teachers’ or school activities such as competitions with teachers from other schools. One principal pointed out that he participated in every practice and in the final competition. He felt that this could show teachers how he supported them and then later on they identify with his ideas and work to realize them.

I had some experiences of how principals used symbols and ceremonies while conducting the interviews for this study. Most of the principals provided tea and sometimes fruit as a way of showing care and respect. One principal asked two of her directors to talk to me before the interview regarding current education issues and
differences between a Taiwan school and an American school. After the interview, she
even asked a teacher to take a picture of the principal and me. Six of the principals gave
me a tour of the school and introduced me to the campus and the specialties of the
schools. All of these indicated principals’ care about the school and my visiting. Although
such behaviors represent formalities to some extent, they also serve as a way for
principals to express the importance they attach to the interview and to convey a sense of
pride or gratitude to me for having selected them for the study. This behavior directed
toward me is in many ways reflective of the manner in which principals will occasionally
treat their staffs, parents, and other community members.

Task Orientation and Relationship Orientation (Initiating Structure and Consideration)

The interview data suggest that these principals focus on both the task and the
relationship side of leadership. For example, one principal stated,

The most important tasks for me are to help my students pass the basic ability
tests and then go to senior high schools. I want my students to score high on the
tests…I still emphasize the results and work more than verbal encouragement
to teachers.

The principal focused on the task--- to help students score higher. And another principal’s
first suggestion to a new principal is to “understand the newest educational policy so that
he or she knows what to follow.” Or the other principal stated that, “I think the teachers’
association and the school should work together and not argue with each other. The
school does what the policy says and it makes no sense that teachers’ association argued
with the school on those subjects.” While these words seem reflective of task orientation,
another principal expressed a more relationship orientated point of view stating, “… the
first thing is to deal with people and relationship so that you can have good school,
teachers, and community.” For this principal and the others who expressed similar
feelings, to deal with people and relationships means that the principal and other school actors (teachers, parents, and people from the community) can help each other. The principal must learn teachers’ needs in order to help them and lead them. Later on, the principal may need to rely on the teachers to provide help as well, in the form of providing extra effort or resources. This is related to western idea of transactional leadership. Relationships are built, authority is expanded, and goals are attained through the “exchange” of things.

In Taiwan, “good relations” mean that everyone works harmoniously in the school. Relationship building occurs slowly, however. “A new principal does not need to be in a hurry to do things,” said one principal. Some other principals gave the same advice. This indicated that some principals might use the “not in a hurry” period to observe school cultures, to know teachers, and make connections with them. One principal mentioned that he tried to remember all teachers’ names at the beginning of his principalship. There are more than 200 teachers in his school and he was proud that he could remember all the teachers’ names in just two months so that he could call them by name and become closer to them. He mentioned that because of taking time to know teachers, it became easier for him to build relationships and obtain their support.

While some of the principals lean toward either task or relationship orientation, others reveal a mix between the two dimensions. As one principal suggested,

… the principal should clearly communicate with the teachers about his or her expectations and should be a role model himself or herself. Also, the principal should be sincere to the teachers so that the principal can win teachers’ trust.

Another principal explicitly mentioned that he is high in both initiating structure consideration. He mentioned that, “I cared about a lot about teachers’ feeling and needs.
At the same time, I am pretty firm regarding to what the education policies ask. Everyone should work hard to fulfill the requirement or what was decided during the meeting.” Task-orientation and relation-orientation is thus revealed at the same time.

Several other principals indicated that they used different approaches when they were in schools of different sizes. In a smaller school, they would try to focus on the relationship side because “a small school is like a family,” said one principal. The principal explained it further that, “A medium-sized school needs rules. And the principal in a big school needs to create a good operation system first and then he or she can start to focus more on human relationship. If a principal of a big school does not build the rules and make sure everyone knows it, the school will be difficult to operate.” For these principals, apparently striving for effectiveness in both task and relationship dimensions, the idea of leadership appears to be viewed as more flexible and even dynamic.

**Communications**

In every interview, “communication” was mentioned as being a key to understanding teachers’ needs as well as a way for teachers to understand principals’ ideas. “The principal should clearly communicate with the teachers about his or her expectations,” mentioned one principal. Another stated that “The principal should be sincere to teachers and really cares about teachers so that the principal can win teachers’ trust.” For most of the principals, the “meeting” is the most common arena for communication with teachers to occur. Other ways include parent/teacher conferences, the school newspaper, newsletters, or other written forms, or the use of special events. Some principals emphasized that they “invited” or “encouraged” teachers to talk about their needs during the meetings. Another mentioned that she would go into teachers’
offices to listen or talk to them. The same principal also emphasized the importance of “listening.” She stated,

I think a principal and the teachers will influence each other. I always sincerely listen to my teachers and discuss ideas with them. Sometimes they will provide ideas of the activities.

Communication can be difficult, however, even in “informal” settings. One principal mentioned that when she dined out with teachers, they would automatically sit at a table away from the principal and the administrators. Although the atmosphere was easy and light, teachers still viewed principals and administrators as different, as having a higher status. During one occasion when I had the opportunity to dine out with a principal and several teachers, although not a lot of people were there and the principal kept telling everyone to “eat happily,” the teachers and one administrator still behaved very carefully, somewhat reserved in their behavior and conversation. Sometimes they would stand up and serve the rest of people. It seemed that even in a setting outside of the school, people still act according to their positions in the school. It reflected again that the relationship building can be quite formal in Taiwan schools. It seems clear from the interviews that most of these principals express a desire to have free and collegial communication with teachers in order to build good working relationships. However, the examples above reveal the difficulties involved. Getting teachers to speak freely, either at a banquet or at a staff meeting, might still be a problem for many principals.

Principals’ Conceptions of Teacher Leadership

The interview questions are not only about Taiwan principal’s perception of their own leadership, but also about their views of teacher leadership. First of all, one theme across the interview data is that principals appear to view teacher leadership
largely in terms of “moving up the ranks.” When asking principals about how teachers
show leadership in the school, they usually did not give a direct answer about teacher
leadership. Instead, principals said things like “I will encourage teachers to be
administrators and they can show leadership in administrator positions,” or “I think
teachers can show leadership in many positions. For example, homeroom teachers,
chairperson of each subject-development committee, and chairperson of curricular
development committee give teachers a good chance to show their leadership. Those
teachers are leaders.” These teachers are either pointed by the principal or selected by
other teachers. The examples listed above suggest that these principals consider
leadership in terms of formal status. Being an administrator in the school means taking
the leadership role. However, how do teachers’ signal the principals to let the principals
detect teachers’ leadership? Do teachers talk to the principal in private about their ideas?
Or do teachers take the lead voluntarily to show leadership? Not many principals
discussed it. The few things principals mentioned about teacher leadership concerned
classroom management or teachers’ professional areas.

For example, some principals indicated that teachers can show leadership
through classroom management, in their professional area (by good teaching or choosing
the textbooks), or during staff meetings. Classroom management is one common theme
that principals frequently mentioned when talking about teacher leadership. One principal
stated that, “If teachers cannot be good at classroom management, I do not think he or she
can be a good leader.” Thus, it seems that teacher leadership is viewed by these principals
as simply doing their jobs well. In terms of teacher leadership in their professional areas,
one principal commented that, “Teachers can show leadership in their professional areas.
And they have started to contribute their ideas in curriculum design and school activities.” Some other principals referred to teacher leadership as “participating in the decision-making process.” These principals mentioned that they would encourage teachers to actively participate in decision-making in the school, not only focus on the classroom management. Principals expected teachers to express their opinions during meetings or other occasions. For them, it is necessary to give teachers chances to lead. However, according to the interview data, how teachers show leadership really depended on both principal and teachers’ perception of leadership. For example, principals might have difficulty to detect teacher leadership because, in the words of one principal, “… only a few teachers will speak up during the meetings. Teachers still think that I am a superior to them.” Another principal also mentioned that when she was a dean of the office of instruction in an elementary school and had some good new ideas, the teachers were not willing to follow her because “the principal did not ask for these ideas.” Here, the teachers still think that a principal is the only boss.

The problem of, what might be called, the “appropriateness of teacher leadership” is captured by the following remarks of one principal, who stated that,

… I won’t feel bad if teaches see further than me. I will use any good ideas that are good for the school and the students. I always told the teachers that I will feel afraid if they only listen to me and do not have their own ideas. If they only listen to me, I think the school will stop here. I think many school principals still like the teachers to only listen to them. These principals do not like teachers to say too much or have too many opinions. But I think teachers and principal should be the same. Although I have encouraged teachers to do so, I don’t think it is good enough. Maybe because of the influence of Chinese culture, teachers respect the principal. Again, I tell my teachers that only the most stupid organization will be like that---teachers only do what the principal says. If teachers have better ideas, why should they listen to the principal?
This story illustrated a principal’s belief in a more western style of leadership, one that views teachers more as colleagues than as subordinates. But it also reveals the uncertainty that many teachers may face in deciding whether to offer their views or even to accept their principal’s invitation to do so. I observed one faculty meeting taking place in an elementary school. Most of the time, teachers were quietly listening to the administrators speaking. Teachers did not ask a lot of questions or address their opinions unless they were asked. It seemed that the principal, the administrators, and teachers were still learning “how to do” two-way communication because it did not happen a lot during the meeting. The principal did not talk much about his ideas during the meeting, either. The other administrators spoke most of the time. The only time the principal said something and made a decision was when a particular issue required it. Teachers seemed to resist participation and waited for the principal to tell them what to do. When I spoke with the principal about this after the meeting, he agreed that teachers were still passive during the meetings. He said it takes time for teachers to change. He also mentioned that teachers might talk more during other kinds of meetings such as those focusing on curriculum design.

**Difficulties Principals Encounter**

One of the questions asked principals to reflect upon the challenges they face. For example, more experienced teachers, parents, or teachers’ association sometimes make things more challenging for principals. Following are the analysis of those difficulties that Taiwan principals have encountered.

**More Experienced Teachers Made Things Hard to Change.** It is a good thing that schools have many experienced teachers. However, as one principal described,
When people are in an environment for a long time, sometimes people will become lazy. There are a small number of teachers are like that. I think it also relates to how old the teachers are. The longer the teachers are in the school, the more difficult for them to change.

Several other principals also mentioned that “teacher group” is a very stable force in schools and that the government guaranteed teachers so many benefits that many teachers lost the motivation to change or improved. Some of these principals seem to believe that more experienced teachers have many old habits that need to be changed. They may become passive and it makes it harder for principals to reach their goals. One principal stated that the problems teacher passivity or resistance may cause for organizational change may be large or small. A small change (like moving classrooms to another space) or a larger change (like reassigning responsibilities to different positions in the school) needs everyone’s cooperation. Similarly, one principal complained, “I would say that my biggest challenge is that I have a dean who has stayed here for 40 years. He does not like new changes and would often say no when I want to try some new things.” Thus, Taiwan principals have to make efforts to get those seasoned teachers going, help more experienced teachers find their motivation and passion in education, as well as help these teachers to understand and follow the reform policy.

Interference of the Teachers’ Association. Other than parents’ interference with school affairs, teachers’ associations might also make things hard. A principal who had an unpleasant experience with the teachers’ association, revealed that,

… the teacher’s association is against this idea of a major change in this school. It was the policy mandating the school to change. However, the teachers’ association was not satisfied and I had meetings with the association over and over again. … Another example is many teachers are against the curricular reform. I was pretty firm on this and asked teachers to do what the policy said because it is the policy and is from the government.
This principal tried to be strong enough to carry out the two major policies in his school. While some teachers’ associations may have different opinions about certain decisions from the school officials, some had good relationships with the principals. These principals explained that they would always tell the associations that their best role would be to support the school and try to make education better through rational communications.

Reform Influence on Principals’ Leadership

Two interview questions directly asked principals about school reform, including the most recent Nine-Year Integrated Curriculum reform. The questions focused on how principals carry out these policies and about how reform influences principal leadership practice. The purpose of asking these questions is to find out whether or not principals’ leadership practice has changed because of school reform. The Nine-Year Integrated Curriculum changed the traditional method of subject teaching from first through ninth grade to a more integrated and combined-subject method, something that is quite new to schoolteachers. The reform also required teachers to design their own curriculum including one focusing on local indigenous cultures in order to show the special nature of each school community. In addition, teachers are asked to be more creative in terms of curriculum design, teaching, and evaluation of students’ performance. Elementary schools and junior high school teachers now need to choose appropriate textbooks. As was mentioned previously, implementing school reform is one of the major tasks principals face. The majority of the principals in this sample expressed the opinion that reform had influenced on how they did their jobs. For example, one principal stated that, “…the content of school reform usually changes when we have a new Minister of
Education. The constant policy changes make the school hard to follow.” And one principal pointed out that the situation is confused for some principals because they did not know what to choose--- care only about their own future as principals or care about education. Only a few principals downplayed the impact of reform, mainly because they believed they were already creative and learning and practicing the latest information about leadership and education. As one principal stated,

I think teachers support me and support the reform. Also, I think I am not like these principals who only follow what is asked from the upper level. I am creative and looking further. So, I think reform is just an accomplishment of my dream.

This principal seemed to be positive about the reform and did not worry about reform’s influence on his leadership.

Two principals pointed out that one major impact of the reform is the way it has changed the principal selecting process. In the past, if a principal had passed the principal’s exam and was then appointed to a school, he or she could serve as principal until retirement (though not necessarily in the same school). The reform all principals have to be regularly reevaluated. According to the documents of the Law of Education provided by one principal, a principal stays in a school in a period of four years. One can only stay in the same school for the maximum of eight years. When the principal’s term is up, he or she will return to be teachers or apply for new schools as principals. The city or county bureaus of education will announce job vacancies and principals who have served in other schools have the first priority to apply. The principal selection committees need to include parent representatives with the number of no less than 20% of the committee members. One principal gave an example regarding the impact of the new principal selection process. He stated,
Yes! I think education reform has influenced how I do my job. I do not totally agree with process of principal selection right now. In the past, principals are appointed to the school by the Ministry of Education or city bureaus of education. Now, the principal’s selection process has changed. Principals have to be evaluated every 4 years and the experts in the principal selection committees have the right to vote. If the principal is not good enough, he or she has to go. I think the past system is not too bad if the city BOE really does a good job in evaluating the principal. However, what if a principal is not reselected? Where should he/she go? I think a principal will think that he/she lose his or her face and it is hard for him or her to stay in the same school. An elementary school principal is not like the college president. If a college president is not selected again, he/she can still work as a professor.

This example provides a picture of some principals’ attitudes about the new selection process. It suggests that principals’ power might be more limited than before because teachers in the school can decide whether they want this principal to stay or not.

While some principals felt fine with the changes, some principals expressed complaints. One principal stated that,

I felt principals’ power has been taken too much away in this reform. Principals cannot do this or that. If a principal does not make some adjustment within the reform context, he or she might not be able to do his/her job.

It seemed that some principals experienced more difficulties after the school reform. They felt that their powers were taken away. In addition, some principals expressed that it is hard for them to carry out the reform policy because principals “have to deal with all kinds of problems that come from education reform. For example, principals now have to face the new textbook choosing, teacher’s hiring, combined-subject teaching, new curriculum design, teachers and parents’ complaint and resistance, or other difficulties” said one principal.

The other important issue here is how principals carry out the reform. Principals dealt with reform differently. Some of them actively involved reform in their school. Some viewed reform as a difficult task and some of them did not appear to care
much about it. First of all, when asked about whether or not teachers understand the Nine-Year Integrated Curriculum reform, most of the principals described their teachers as not understanding the reform completely. Only one principal said, “I think teachers understand it pretty well.” Although the reform is mandated by the Ministry of Education, principals are implementing the policy case by case. Some principals indicated that they did what the reform policies asked. One principal mentioned that he did not care about the policy and all he cared was students’ grades. Other principals might follow half of the policies. For example, one principal stated that,

Well, the policy asked the teachers to do combined-subject teaching. The school really has difficulties to actually do it. So, the school changed the name of the subject to look “combined” while in fact, teachers still teach the subjects individually.

Some principals believe that the reform should be implemented to the school with flexibility. As one principal commented,

In order for the schools to follow the reform, the MOE and the BOE create some regulations. Then people will think that these regulations “ARE” school reform. But the regulations are not suitable for every school. If schools only follow the regulations, teachers will have a lot of complaints.

Most of the principals interviewed suggested they would encourage teachers to talk to each other about the new curriculum and most indicated that they worked hard on communication with the teachers and parents about the essence of the reform. In addition, some principals take actions to help teachers with the reform requests. One principal said that,

The reform focuses on local culture. People from the Bureaus of Education (BOE) thought that it should start from the teachers. So, teachers should be able to speak fluent dialects. And the BOE would like to see the results from some competitions. I try to help my teachers as much as I can. For example, when one of my teachers was required to participate in a competition of
Taiwanese-speaking speech, I invited the export and helped the teachers to prepare for the competition.

Also, many of the principals formed committees for curriculum development and teaching and research to help teachers learn and develop the new curriculum. One principal pointed out that, “My school has a committee for curriculum design and a committee of teaching research. Also, the school uses subject grouping and teachers also are grouped according to the grade level. These helped teachers to adjust to the reform. And sometimes I will teach teachers strategies to use.” It seems that principals served a teaching and leading role in the curriculum reform.

**Summary**

The data presented in the whole chapter illustrate the basic concepts of leadership held by principals interviewed. It seems obvious that the interviewed principals recognize the importance of principal leadership. Additionally, many principals viewed that being responsible, energetic, courageous, creative, and charismatic are important personalities of a successful principal. Principals viewed leadership and management as different concepts. They considered that leaders have followers, have good communication skills, lead people’s heart, look further than the followers, and share responsibilities with the followers. Principals viewed management differently. Most of them did not want to be viewed only as managers because managers only finish what they are told to do. At the same time, many principals also mentioned the importance of using “walking management” as a strategy to operate the school. Walking management enabled the principals to know what is happening in the school and to know teachers needs.
The evidence indicated that the new principal selection process and the Nine-Year Integrated Curriculum reform have made the principal’s job less secure. Consequently, evidence suggests that although many principals still view teacher leadership in terms of formal status or successful classroom management, many have gradually begun to expect teachers to participate more in the decision making process and to initiate ideas or changes.

As to principals’ strategies of implementing school reform and whether or not these strategies appear to be similar to western leadership concepts, the data showed that some leadership practice were similar to western leadership concepts and some were not. The more westernized leadership or strategies used by principals were vision-building, instructional leadership, symbolic leadership, and a focus on task and relationship.

Three different types of instructional leadership emerged from the principals’ responses. One, a more westernized style, encouraged teachers to evaluate each others’ teaching. Other approaches, less highlighted in western literature, included supervising teaching by walking around the school and directly showing teachers how to teach the new curriculum. Symbolic leadership, an idea highlighted in western leadership theory, also emerged as an important characteristic for these principals. Principals interviewed often used this type of leadership to add meaning to school events and to encourage teachers and students. Task oriented and relationship oriented type of behaviors were also found during the interview. The data suggests that principals view that being helpful, responsible, and moral are important professional characteristics. Finally, the data indicated that these principals now must spend more time dealing with resistance or even interference from parents, more experienced teachers, politicians, as well as the teachers’
association. School reform appears to have placed these principals in a difficult role. The next chapter will focus on a discussion of the findings from this chapter.
Chapter 6

DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS

This research is an exploratory study of principal leadership in Taiwan school settings using qualitative interview and observation methods. It begins with the assertion that, traditionally, Taiwan’s rigid and hierarchical system of education led to a situation in which principals adhered tightly to the policies of the Ministry of Education, tended to act authoritatively with teachers, and in which teachers and parents seldom questioned the overall functioning of the school. During the past decade, however, Taiwan began a series of ambitious educational reforms calling for new curriculum, more creative forms of teaching, and increased parental involvement. The overarching question of this study, thus, was whether these reforms had significant influence on school principals’ administrative and leadership behavior. Would traditional social expectations regarding principals’ power and authority be strong enough to survive and mute the impact of these reforms? Or might principals’ practices begin to change, to become more congruent with western ideas such as distributive or transformational leadership?

To shed light on this question, this study used interviews from 15 Taiwan elementary and junior high school principals. Its goal was to gain some understanding of the meanings these principals attach to “leadership” within the context of Taiwan of school reform and to gauge the degree to which these meanings meshed with “western” views, theories, and strategies.

In general, the data reveal that these principals tend to express views about leadership that are in some ways strikingly western. In other words, the view among these principals about what it takes to become a successful school leader seems to be much less
authoritative than expected; understandings appear to have shifted toward the acceptance of a more flexible model of shared vision and shared-leadership. At the same time, however, while school reform may have prompted principals to change their leadership styles, principals may be paying a price. Their professional position has become much more vulnerable and their work has become much more uncertain than in the past. The present chapter discusses these findings and implications of this study.

Western Leadership Theories in Taiwan School Settings

The research findings indicate that some western leadership concepts have become salient for these principals. These include the notion of “transformational leadership” and vision building, instructional leadership, the importance of symbolic leadership, and the issue of balancing task and relationship orientations. The principals also recognize a difference between the ideas of leadership and management that parallels the differences often described in western literature. Finally, reflected within their responses is the notion of leadership as an activity that requires principals to be helpful, responsible, and moral. The following paragraphs discuss each aspect mentioned above.

Transformational Leadership on Vision Building

The interviews suggest that these principals perceive vision building and culture building as two important tasks they face. While most of the principals view the Ministry of Education’s reform policies as important to their schools, it seems significant that they rarely applied the language of “goals and objectives” to these when speaking about their own school. Instead, the principals appeared to believe that MOE reform policies could only be implemented through the creation of a new shared vision or culture within their school. It is important for these principals to help create a shared-vision so
that teachers may start to identify themselves with the school reform gradually. Also, different ways of vision building were mentioned. Some principals invited everyone in the school to create a shared-vision with principals serving more the role of a facilitator, similar to that associated within the western idea of transformational leadership. In contrast, some principals had their own vision and were trying to transmit their ideas to teachers, a somewhat less “transformational,” more traditional “top down” strategy. Thus, though not all the situations could be said to be examples of principals inviting teachers to help build a vision or culture, this is probably not so different from many schools in the United States--principals doing “vision telling” as a means to create change. Overall, however, the western idea of vision building now can be observed in school campuses in Taiwan.

Instructional Leadership

The “instructional leadership” mentioned by principals in this study can be divided into three different types. The first and most frequently mentioned one is for principals to serve as a symbolic instructional leader. (The idea of “symbolic instructional leadership” is related to, but differs somewhat from the “symbolic leadership” discussed in a latter section.) Symbolic instructional leadership refers here to the idea that principals consider themselves as supervising teachers’ instruction by being “ever present,” that is, by walking past classrooms, observing from the outside, and generally letting teachers know that they are watching and listening. While it is unusual and unexpected for Taiwan principals to drop into teachers’ classrooms unannounced, teachers understand (and school building designs ensure) that their lessons and manner of teaching are transparent to the strolling principal. Although western literature highlights the symbolic importance
of principals “being visible” within schools, from a leadership perspective this is more for the sake of morale than for instructional supervision.

A second type of instructional leadership, as perceived by these principals, concerns teacher evaluation. While stressing this, several principals suggested that responsibility for this task should be shared with teachers in the school. In other words, these principals supported peer evaluation, something becoming more popular in the United States, especially among more progressive school districts.

A third kind of instructional leadership involves a principal actually “taking the reins” and showing teachers new methods, even sometimes teaching directly to students. This appears to be a direct result of national reform. Principals were expected to know how to conduct the new curriculum and to be able to give teachers skills and tools to use it with their students. Overall, it appears that while principals still maintain characteristics of “authority” when it comes to instructional leadership, their instructional relationships with teachers also seem to be becoming more collegial.

Symbolic Leadership

As discussed in the literature review, symbolic leadership was expected to be found in Taiwan schools, though perhaps in ways much different than those found in American schools. Specifically it should be noted that Taiwanese society has a tremendous amount of symbol and ceremony built into its everyday culture, and much of this structure is infused into patterns of school organizational life. In general, Taiwan schools and their principals (including those interviewed here) attach great importance to school events such as anniversaries, opening and closing weeks, holidays (especially Teachers’ Day), and even to teacher’s birthdays. There are ceremonies, assemblies, and
other formal activities that reinforce everyone’s attachment to school, town, and country. Principals use this kind of activity to build relationships and cohesion with teachers, students, and even to the members of the surrounding community. It is similar to, but much more frequent and formal than what typically occurs in western school organizations.

For the principals interviewed, it seems that ceremony and celebration offer them an opportunity to speak to members of the school about school reform, to shape the meaning of the new demands placed upon them, and help teachers identify with the purpose and motivation of their work. It is tempting to speculate that kinds of formal symbolic interactions found in Taiwan schools may help principals and teachers mitigate the great uncertainty they face in carrying out the demands of school reform. (More on this in a later section).

Task vs. Relationship Orientation

Another key idea of western leadership theory that seemed evident in the responses of these principals relates to task and relationship orientations. The data showed that most of the principals try to be both task orientated and relationship orientated, thus confirming Chin’s (1998a) discussion that principals in Taiwan use high initiating structure and high consideration. Though only a few principals were either obviously task-orientated or relationship-oriented, several spent quite some time talking about relationship building and communication as a way to strengthen their relationships with teachers. This appears to pose a considerable challenge for many of these principals. Despite their attempts to open communication with teachers, teachers continue to view
their relationships with principals in formal terms, largely bound by status and authority. Many teachers still view principals as “superiors” in a very real sense of the word.

Thus, although the principals in the sample do reflect an interest in building personal relationships with teachers, the task may be more difficult than in American schools, where egalitarian norms may be more readily accepted by teachers. This helps us further understand the importance of principals’ formal, more ceremonial efforts at engaging teachers at a personal level.

Leadership vs. Management

Similar to the discussion in Chapter Two concerning western distinctions between leadership and management, the majority of principals in this study see leadership and management as two different concepts. The principals interviewed suggest that a good leader has a vision or direction, looks further than teachers, is personally and professionally committed to the organization, and is able to motivate and persuade teachers to follow them. Some principals referred to leadership as an art, as opposed to the “science” of management. For many sampled principals, management refers to efficiently finishing a required task regardless of subordinates’ ideas and needs; to focus on procedures and results; and to maintain a system rather than to change it. Along the lines of many American principals, principals in this study tended to highlight leadership over management and wanted their teachers to view them as “leaders,” not just as “managers” or “authorities.” For these principals “leadership” is more than simply “telling people what to do and when to do it.” In addition, several of the interviewed principals have begun to wrestle with and attempt to apply the idea of distributive leadership in their schools. In other words, they seem to realize that they are not, and
probably ought not to be, the only “leader” in their school. This awareness pushes them to become less authoritarian and to invite greater participation from their teachers, very much like the communal and collegial ideas of leadership typically advocated in western research.

Though the data presented here do not allow for strong inference, they raise the question as to whether such beliefs and behaviors reflected among these principals represent a change from the era prior to school reform. Do they mainly represent a greater interest among Taiwan principals (and among Taiwan professors of education) in western views of leadership? Or, do they represent a response to school reform by principals, perhaps a recognition that they cannot—or do not know how to—implement the reforms on their own?

**Principals being Helpful, Responsible and Moral**

Several of the participating principals spoke of the importance for them as leaders to be helpful, responsible, and moral individuals. The principals interviewed here comment that they would like to help their teachers as much as possible; not just as problem solvers within the context of the school, but also to give personal advice, even serve as father or mother figures for teachers with personal problems. In order to play this role properly, principals expect themselves to be moral leaders, to be fair and honest, especially when it concerns money and budgets. The idea of principals being moral might be somewhat different from the western theories of moral and ethical leadership, which have become quite popular recently in the field of educational leadership. In western theories of ethical leadership, being a moral leader means “to do the good” (Starratt, 2004). A moral leader may use the ethics of justice, critique, care, and the profession to
make a decision to meet the best interests of the student (Shapiro & Stefkovich, 2001). This involves school principals examining their own personal codes of ethics, that of the community, and that of the professional. School leaders’ responsibilities are to create a moral school and make moral decisions. In Taiwan, however, at least among these principals, the idea of “being a moral principal” relates more to the personal level. In other words, it emphasizes the need for principals to have virtue and to behave morally. The importance of being a moral leader is that it reinforces, authenticates, and personalizes the formal respect of teachers. It is also a way for them to become a role model for their teachers. With this kind of respect from teachers, a principal might be able to run the school more easily, for example, to obtain teachers’ support, participation, and loyalty; in short, to enrich and expand their authority.

**Problems Linked to School Reform**

In sum, the responses of these principals indicate that Taiwan principals may be working to apply western leadership theories in attempting to solve the puzzles of Taiwan school reform. Although interesting differences were found in this study, many concepts of leadership theories mentioned by the participating principals are very similar to western leadership theories. It seems that although Taiwan’s national school system remains organizationally hierarchical; its principals face new problems that force them to work in non-hierarchical, non-authoritarian ways. This tension may be working to tear down the wall between Asian and western leadership theory.

But at the same time, the responses of these principals suggest that school reform has placed them in a very difficult position. The words used by these principals, such as “challenges,” “difficulties,” “uncertainties,” and “frustrations,” reveal a
somewhat negative image associated with the impact of school reform. The reform placed new and intense demands on principals’ responsibility, while at the same time triggering new resistance from teachers and parents. In addition, many principals pointed to structural (e.g., the distribution of teachers and students across classrooms; the dominance of high stakes tests), educational (e.g., the lack of effective teacher training), and cultural (e.g., teachers’ fear of “loss of face” in team situations) barriers, which they believed made key aspects of school reform very difficult to implement.

In short, school reform has handed them a tremendous amount of new responsibility, but has also undercut a good deal of their formal authority. The result appears to be increased uncertainty and vulnerability for these principals.

Increased Vulnerability and Uncertainty

A major issue discovered in this study is that Taiwan principals appear to have become much more vulnerable than in the past and that much of this new vulnerability results from recent national school reform. In Taiwan, the sampled principals had indicated that how principals or others viewed leadership has changed. In the past, principals were the only leaders of the schools. Teachers and parents usually followed the ideas of principals and other officials’ ideas. Things have changed, however, in the wake of Taiwan school reform. The new principal selection process, influences from western educational theory and philosophy, new ways of teachers’ preparation, and the Nine-year Integrated Curriculum changed the situation. School principals are indeed facing more challenges than before. Principals now need to show more leadership and negotiation skills to persuade and expend teachers’ zone of acceptance in order to successfully carry out the reform policy. A principal’s success now appears to depend much more on the
evaluations of teachers and other school stakeholders. This phenomenon is similar to Dan Lortie’s (1975) observation that the American principalship is marked by high responsibility and low authority. Lortie’s argument highlighted American principals’ dependency on teachers for their own success because principals do not control students’ success directly. What makes Taiwan principals even more vulnerable than in the past (and more vulnerable than their American counterparts), however, is the fact that Taiwan teachers and other stakeholders now have much more influence over whether or not a principal will remain in his or her school position. The new principal evaluation and selection process, though not part of the curriculum reform, also leads principals to rethink their leadership practices. There is no guarantee that they will stay their positions until retirement, and many principals are afraid of losing face if they are not reselected.

Historically in Taiwan, it was traditional for school principals to maintain a good deal of power and responsibility, as well as a good deal of job security. They were free to act, or refrain from action, based on their own needs and judgments, and were generally able to act in a more authoritative fashion than today, at least as evidenced by the data from this study. Prior to Taiwan education reform, not only did teachers tend to follow the instructions of their principals, but the work of teaching was much more clearly defined; teachers taught the way they themselves were taught, the way the community expected their children to be taught, with little or no demand for innovation.

Thus, while principals maintain the trappings of formal authority, school reform may have increased the demand on principals to demonstrate expertise and instructional leadership. But because there is no clear “road map” that explains how to implement the key aspects of school reform, such demonstration has become a much more daunting
problem, one which power and formal authority alone cannot solve. It is tempting to speculate that these principals turn to decentralized leadership as a way of seeking help.

The Problem of Teacher Leadership

The sampled principals’ expressions revealed that traditionally, principals tended to view teacher leadership in terms of “moving up the ranks.” Teachers who took on formal or informal administrative tasks or positions were, and apparently still are considered to have demonstrated “leadership.” However, more principals seem to be recognizing the possibility of other forms of teacher leadership after school reform. Although some principals tended to perceive teacher leadership in terms of classroom management and growth in their professional areas, others have begun to encourage teachers to participate in the decision-making process. It seems that more principals might expect teachers to show leadership by expressing their opinions during the meetings, being more creative in solving problems, and taking a leading position when asked to conduct school activities or curriculum design. It is also noted, however, that principals still perceive teachers as wanting to wait them to make decisions and to initiate discussions and ideas. According to many of the principals interviewed, most teachers still tend to keep silent during faculty meetings, especially on issues of curricular policy. Even though the reforms seem implicitly to call for more equal and collegial relationships between principals and teachers, it remains very difficult for them to overcome cultural norms related to their perceived status differences.

Principal Leadership Becomes More Important

Despite the nation’s rigid hierarchical education system, Taiwan’s education reform appears to have placed the greatest demand for change near the bottom of the
organization, at the feet of principals more so than teachers, for principals are held more responsible than teachers for the overall success of the reform. Principals literally have to lead more than in the past. Yet, they cannot simply pass down new policies, for the demands of school reform are quite complex, and teachers may not possess the capability to implement them without guidance. The importance of principal leadership is thus reconfirmed in this study.

The school reform policy required elementary schools and junior high schools to change curriculum and instruction. When the reform actually occurs, it needs principals to encourage teachers to show teacher leadership. Principals thus need to be stronger leaders to communicate with teachers about reform policy; to be instructional leaders to show teachers how to conduct the new curriculum; to be transformational leaders to build a shared-vision; and to be symbolic leaders to motivate and build morale for everyone in the school. Leadership becomes critically important undergoing the school reform. At the same time, they need their teachers to become more willing to help lead the way to successful change. There in lies a key conflict and key challenge for school reform.

**Increasing Pressure from Parents**

The study suggests that principals are becoming more sensitive to parents and more influenced by their interaction with them. It is fair to say, based on news stories and anecdotes, that Taiwan parents are taking a more active stance with respect to school curricular and instructional practices. Part of this may stem from concerns as to how school reform might affect their children’s readiness for qualifying exams, and part may stem from the general increase in political and ethnic mobilization and polarization.
occurring throughout the island. Regardless of the cause, principals may need to direct more time and energy than in the past to communicating with parents and responding to their needs and expectations.

Implicit in the responses of these principals (and evident from stories in national media) is the idea that Taiwan parents are more demanding and active than in past generations. In the past, parents tended to express open and tacit admiration and respect for the school and its teachers and would seldom express much doubt about education policy or how the school and teachers handled their children. However, within the context of current school reform, parents have begun to express such doubts about the reform policy, the school, and even teachers’ instructional approaches. Parents may fear that their children might not get enough education from the school or might not receive the kind they need to perform well on future high stakes tests. So, parents might try to interfere with school affairs in order to get what they think is best for their children. Parents may try to tell teachers how to teach their children and they might also ask city or county councilors to pressure the school in order to get what they want.

For principals, therefore, communicating with parents becomes a more important issue than before. Principals cannot just pass down policies from the Ministry of Education and expect everything will work smoothly. Instead, they increasingly need to talk explicitly with parents about things going on in the schools, which include educational policy, curriculum, teaching, and even school safety. Parents have become one more group that principals must persuade and the need for principal leadership grows accordingly.
Implications

Generally speaking, this study might only provide the first-step toward understanding the changing situation of principal leadership in Taiwan school settings. The findings of this study provide several implications for policy makers, school principals, teacher preparation programs, as well as principal preparation programs. Also, suggestions for future studies are discussed in this section.

Implications for Policy Makers

For policy makers, the findings suggest that the reform should take Taiwan schools’ current class arrangement into consideration when proposing revised curriculum. The Nine-Year Integrated Curriculum adopted many concepts from western countries and indeed had good intentions. However, it seems that in reality, current classroom structures and teacher preparation programs might not facilitate successful reform. As a result, it is important for policy makers to consider such problems when they design future curriculum changes. Furthermore, policy makers need to consider the special “testing culture” in Taiwan when making new changes in school reform. It seems that although policy makers had attempted to introduce some flexibility into the national tests, these tests still represent a dominating feature of Taiwan’s educational system. Taiwan school officials may need to find some way to mitigate the perceived need for having high stakes testing with the perceived need for having more creative forms of instruction.

Implications for School Principals

For school principals, the finding suggest that in order to successfully carry out the reform policies principals need to know the importance of principal leadership, to share responsible with teachers, and to make efforts to communicate with parents and
outside school communities. Being authoritative and doing whatever the principals want to do may no longer be the best way to lead the schools. Instead, it is suggested that principals approach to the teachers personally and professionally to build more collegial relationships. Additionally, principals may use more westernized approaches to implement the reform policy such as to build a shared-vision and to be more actively play the role of instructional leaders (not only walk by the classroom). Of course, the traditional forms of symbolic leadership may be equally important as westernized leadership styles for principals as a way to stimulate people’s motivation and sense of belongingness in the schools. Also, school principals ought to be aware that their successes now depend more on teachers. They need to encourage and train teachers to show their leadership so that the principal and teachers can work together to carry out the reform policy and to make education better. Furthermore, both school administrators and policy makers may need to consider new forms of class arrangement that facilitate combined-subject teaching and team teaching.

**Implications for Teacher and Principal Training Programs**

The third kind implication made by this study is for teacher and principal training programs. As mentioned previously, teachers and principals may not be receiving adequate training needed for the instructional reforms mandated by the Nine-Year Integrated Curriculum. Specifically, training is needed to help teachers and administrators implement combined-subject teaching and team teaching. Additionally, the training programs may help future teachers to overcome the fear of losing the face by evaluating each others’ teaching. The training programs may also aim at helping teachers and
administrators to rethink their roles in the schools. For example, teachers may not always
need to be the listeners. They can also be active partners.

Implications for Future Research

This study interviewed only school principals and attempted to understand the basic meanings principals attached to the concepts of leadership. Future research is needed to understand the full range of organizational tension currently operating within Taiwan’s educational system. In reality, it may be very difficult or even impossible to fit high stakes testing together with flexible and creative instruction. Studies may be needed which, instead of being “empirical” or “prescriptive,” describe the peculiar tensions of Taiwan’s system and how they may limit successful reform. For example, future studies may look at leadership behaviors of both principals and teachers. In particular, studies are needed which examine teachers’ reactions and interpretations of the new demands being placed upon them. Even more, future studies may also focus on parents’ perspective of principal leadership behaviors and strategies, as parents are increasingly involved in school affairs. Perhaps the most important kind of “action research” would be that done by principals and teachers in Taiwan, working together to help each other find ways to implement portions of the reform and help them “find their voice” necessary for rejecting other parts. It should be noted that although further “academic research” may help everyone “understand” the organizational tension in Taiwan, it may be unlikely to help “solve” the problems it creates.
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Appendix A - Interview Protocol (English)

*Introduction*: Hi! My name is Kuan-Pei. I would like to talk to you about your perceptions of leadership and the strategies you use to implementing the Nine-Year Integrated Curriculum reform. Besides, I would like to ask you about your concerns of education reform in Taiwan. Before we start the interview, I would like you to read the informed consent first and sign it if you agree to participate in this study. I will use tape recorder to record our interview. The recording is for data collection and analysis purposes. If you do not want to be taped at certain time, please let me know so I will turn it off. Your name and school information will remain confidential. No one except me will know what you said today. Here is the form and please read it.

(After sign the informed consent, I will start the formal interview.)

*Opening Questions:*
To begin with, I will start from some personal and school information. Can you tell me a little bit about yourself?

*Main Part:*

1. Please tell me about your professional background and experience as a principal and as a teacher. Can you tell me about your experiences of any professional development relate to leadership?

2. You have a very nice school here! You must be very proud of your students. It must be very difficult to build a good school.
   2a. What advice would you give to a new principal about how to build a good school?
   2b. What is “the secret of your success?”

3. (after getting the answer above) But still, it must be very difficult. What are the greatest challenges you have faced as principal of this school? Can you give me some examples?

4. Can you tell me what you think are some of your best accomplishments – the things you are proudest of – over the past few years?

5. In your opinion, what makes a good school? What makes a good teacher? How do you know if a teacher is really excellent? (probe for “inside the classroom” and “outside the classroom,” e.g., in the school generally)
6. What kinds of things do you do to help teachers improve themselves, to become better teachers? What are some things that teachers do to help improve the school?

7. Do teachers ever show “leadership?” How? Do you ever learn new ideas from your teachers?

8. Taiwan has been in the process of school reform for several years. Has school reform changed the way you work as a principal? If yes, how? Is it more difficult to be a principal now than before the reform? Can you give some examples?

9. Do you think your teachers understand how to carry out curricular reforms? Or do they look to you for guidance?

10. Do you see a difference between being a “good manager” and a “good leader”? What is the difference? How would you like your teachers to think of you?

Closing Questions
1. It seems that we are closing to the end of this interview. Do you want to add something that you think is important but we do not talk about in previous questions?

Thank you very much for your participation. I am glad to have this conversation with you! Wish you have a wonderful day.
Appendix B - Interview Protocol (Chinese)

自我介紹: 您好! 我是官蓓，我想要請教您有關推動九年一貫課程的一些想法。除此之外，我想請教您對教育改革的觀點。在我們開始訪談之前，我需要您先讀一下一份同意書。假設您同意參與這次的訪談，請在同意書上簽名。我會使用錄音機錄下我們的訪談，錄音是為了解收集資料與資料分析，如果您不想被錄音，請告訴我，我會將錄音機關掉。您的姓名與學校名稱是保密的，不會有除了我以外的人知道我們今天談話的內容。這兒是同意書，請您看一下。(在簽完同意書之後，我會開始正式的訪談)

開場白:
我們先開始談一談您的背景與學校資訊，可以請您介紹一下您自己嗎?

主要訪談內容:

1. 請談一談您的專業背景，以及您當老師與校長的資歷。請您談一談有關曾經參與過有關領導方面的專業訓練。

2. 您的學校看起來很棒！您的學生一定讓您很驕傲，要建立一個好學校一定不容易，
   2a. 您會怎麼告訴一位新校長如何建立一所好的學校
   2b. 您可以談一談您成功的秘訣嗎?

3. (得到上一個問題的回答後)，不過，那應該還是蠻不簡單的，身為校長，您所遇到過最大的挑戰是什麼？可以舉一些例子嗎？

4. 可以請您談一談過去幾年來，您的成就，與您認為最驕傲的事情嗎？

5. 就您的觀點看來，成就一所好學校的要素是什麼？一個好老師的條件又是什麼？您如何評估一位老師的好壞？(可以從在教室裡外，或者從學校整體觀點來談)

6. 您如何幫助教師個人成長？幫助他們成爲更好的老師？老師做了些什麼事幫助學校整體進步？

7. 老師們曾經表現出領導能力嗎？如何表現呢？您曾經從老師們身上學到任何新的想法嗎？
8. 在過去幾年來，台灣正經歷教育改革的過程。請問教育改革是否改變您如何當一位校長？如果有？是怎麼樣的改變？在教育改革之後，校長是否遭遇更多困難？能否請您舉例說明？

9. 您認為教師們是否清楚明白如何進行課程改革？或者，老師們依賴您的引導？

10. 您認為一個好的管理者與好的領導者有何分別？您認為老師們怎麼看您？

尾聲
1. 我們的訪談已經接近尾聲，有什麼事是您認為很重要，而我們沒有談到的？

非常感謝您參與這次的訪談，我很高興有這個機會能跟您聊聊，祝您順心愉快！
VITA

Kuan-Pei Lin

Kuan-Pei Lin was born on November 29, 1976 in Taiwan. She graduated from National Taiwan Normal University in 1999 with a Bachelor of Education in Educational Psychology and Counseling. From 1999 to 2000, Kuan-Pei worked as an intern guidance teacher in Taipei Municipal Zhongshan Girls High School. Kuan-Pei continued her study in Indiana University---Bloomington in 2000 and graduated with a Master of Science in Counseling and Counselor Education in 2002. Kuan-Pei started her doctoral program in Educational Leadership program at the Pennsylvania State University in 2002.