Chapter 7

Optimizing Internal Management

7.1 Introduction

As one of school leadership key practices, the “optimizing internal management” was initially set out by The Professional Standards for Principals of Compulsory Education Schools (MOE, 2013a) and The Professional Standards for Principals of Senior High Schools (MOE, 2015), and was more specifically described in the Management Standards for Compulsory Education Schools (MOE, 2017). According to above-mentioned RHDs, this leadership key practice consists of two prongs of requirements for school internal management. One requires the principal and leadership team to establish a set of internal policies, processes, and procedures to ensure that schools rigorously follow the statutory and government provisions concerning creating beautiful and safe school and securing student wellbeing. The other requires the principal and leadership team to exercise leadership in accordance with the key principle and work style of leadership upheld by the Communist Party of China (CPC). Given the statutory and government provisions about the first prong are rigid and inflexible, there is not much difference between schools in carrying out these provisions. It is no exaggeration to say that one can have a fair idea of the first prong of requirements for China’s school internal management by understanding the terms Management Standards for Compulsory Education Schools [YI-WU-JIAO-YU-XUE-XIAO-GUAN-LI-BIAO-ZHUN], Standards for School Construction [XUE-XIAO-JIAN-SHE-BIAO-ZHUN] and School Safety Management [XUE-XIAO-AN-QUAN-GUAN-LI] in China’s policy context. The second prong of requirements for school internal management can be associated with the routine management system in schools, in which the CPC’s leadership principle of Democratic Centralism [MIN-ZHU-JI-ZHONG-ZHI] and work style of Criticism and Self-Criticism [PI-PING-YU-ZI-WO-PI-PING] are embedded. As noted in Chapter1, the CPC’s leadership principles and work styles have had far-reaching impact on school leadership and management in the past seven decades since the founding of the People’s Republic of China in 1949. In this respect, it seems necessary to explore the term Democratic Centralism and other relevant terms at first if one needs to fully understand the second prong of requirements for school internal management. With this in mind, the author decided,
based on broaden literature review, to explore another five terms regarding “school internal management”, which are most frequently used both in Chinese government policy documents and in school leadership practice. These terms are Democratic Centralism, Criticism and Self-Criticism, Democratic Meeting [MIN-ZHU-SHENG-HUO-HUI], Routine Management System [CHANG-GUI-GUAN-LI-ZHI-DU] and Transparency in School Management [XIAO-WU-GONG-KAI].

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7.2.1 Management Standards for Compulsory Education Schools [YI-WU-JIAO-YU-XUE-XIAO-GUAN-LI-BIAO-ZHUN]

Management Standards for Compulsory Education Schools [YI-WU-JIAO-YU-XUE-XIAO-GUAN-LI-BIAO-ZHUN] is an overall and systematic rules and criteria on school management set by Chinese government for all primary and junior secondary schools (known as nine-year compulsory education schools), in which the fundamental beliefs and values, general goals and ends, essential principles and specific requirements are defined (Xu, 2015; Zhu, 2018).

In China, the nine-year compulsory education system was stipulated by the Compulsory Education Law of the People’s Republic of China in 1986. According to the law, the nine-year compulsory education covers six-year primary education and three-year junior secondary education (as an exception, Shanghai’s nine-year compulsory education refers to five-year primary education and four-year junior secondary education), which is completely free universal education for Chinese children aged 6 to 15(National People’s Congress, 1986). By the end of 2011, all provinces (autonomous regions, municipalities directly under the central government) had passed the evaluation of compulsory education conducted by the Office of National Education Inspection. It means that China has basically achieved nine-year compulsory education throughout the country. However, as the State Council pointed out in 2012 in its RHD titled State Council’s Opinions on Promoting the Balanced Development of Compulsory Education, “there are still obvious quality gaps in school education and management among regions (east, middle and west China), urban and rural areas and schools. The contradiction between the increasing demand for high-quality education and the insufficient supply of high-quality education remains prominent.” (State Council, 2012a) On the other hand, a national inspection report on compulsory education revealed
that by the end of 2016, 62.4% of counties/districts of the country had passed the evaluation of “approximately balanced development of compulsory education” whereas the compulsory education in 37.6% counties/districts still remained the condition of unbalanced development (ONEI, 2016). Moreover, the ratios of passing and failing to pass the evaluation between east, middle and west China were also “unbalanced” (see Figure 7.1). To promote the nation-wide balanced development of compulsory education, the State Council called for the establishment of a national standard for compulsory education schools’ operation (State Council, 2012).

**Figure 7.1** the respective ratios of passing and failing to pass the evaluation of “approximately balanced development of compulsory education” in east, middle and west China

Source: Office of National Education Inspection (ONEI). (2016). Report on the inspection and evaluation of the balanced development of compulsory education in 2016.

In December 2017, the MOE officially published the *Management Standards for Compulsory Education Schools* and demanded all compulsory education schools to achieve conformity to the standards (MOE, 2017). The standards are composed by six management dimensions, twenty-two tasks and eighty-eight responsibilities, in which part of the tasks and responsibilities of dimension 5 and dimension 6 are closely related to the theme “optimizing internal management”. In a sense, the internal management of a school will be optimized if these tasks and responsibilities are well fulfilled (Sun, 2018; Ou, 2018; Xu, 2018).

**Table 7.1** dimensions and tasks of the *Management Standards for Compulsory Education Schools*
Schools

Dimension 1. Ensuring equal access

Tasks:

• Protecting equal enrollment for all students.
• Building a mechanism to control student dropouts.
• Being concerning with and managing to meet students’ needs.

Dimension 2. Fostering student all-round development

Tasks:

• Fostering the development of student personality and moral character.
• Assisting students learning to learn.
• Enhancing student physical and mental health.
• Improving student artistic literacy.
• Developing student life skills.

Dimension 3. Leading teacher development

Tasks:

• Strengthening the management of teachers and the construction of teacher ethics.
• Improving teachers' ability in teaching and educating.
• Developing a support system for teacher development.

Dimension 4. Building up higher standards for education and instruction

Tasks:

• Developing the courses suitable for student development.
• Adopting student development-centered teaching approaches.
• Establishing an assessment system for benefiting student development.
• Providing convenient and practical teaching resources.

Dimension 5. Creating a harmonious and beautiful environment

Tasks:

• Establishing a practical management system concerning safety and health.
• Maintaining safe and healthy school infrastructure.
• Carrying out the life skills-based safety and health education.
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- Creating a positive school culture.

**Dimension 6. Construction of a modern management system**

**Tasks:**

- Enhancing the ability to manage school according to law as well as by scientific way.
- Upholding and improving democratic management institution.
- Building harmonious family-school-community cooperation.

Source: the MOE (2017). *Circular of the Ministry of Education on the publication of the “Standards for management in compulsory education schools”*

### 7.2.2 Standards for School Construction [XUE-XIAO-JIAN-SHE-BIAO-ZHUN]

The standards for school construction [XUE-XIAO-JIAN-SHE-BIAO-ZHUN] refers to the State-set mandatory criteria and technical specifications for the construction of school architecture and other infrastructure, which applies to any new construction, expansion and reconstruction projects of regular primary and secondary schools in China. As far as setting standards for school construction are concerned, China is perhaps much later than Western developed countries. In the first forty-eight years since the founding of the People's Republic of China, there were no standards for school construction. According to relevant literature, a large number of school houses were rude and shabby when the founding of the new Republic in 1949 (Gao and He, 2015).

The statistics in 1956 showed that only 38% of schools were operating in qualified and quality school buildings or school houses in Shanghai. Most of these schools were former mission schools, Christian-founded modern schools and colonial schools which distributed in British, American, French, Japanese colonial settlements in Shanghai, and the traditional Chinese academies for the children from Chinese noble families. The rest of 62% schools were operation in the architectures of former local business office buildings, guild halls, warehouses, resident apartments and even abandoned temples and churches (Liu, 2002, p.5). Functionally, it was so hard for these industrial, domestic and religious architectures to meet necessary needs of school education, and there were a lot of challenges in lighting, ventilation, sound insulation, fire prevention, evacuation and so on (Liu, 2002, p.6). It was the real picture of school architecture in Shanghai known as the most

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19 A regular school refers in China to the elementary/secondary school providing instruction and education services that does not focus primarily on special education, vocational/technical education, or alternative education, or on any of the particular themes associated with gifted and talented/specialist program emphasis schools.
developed city in China in 1950s. In the following twenty years, the overall condition of school buildings in China was worse than in the 1950s, because there were not sufficient funds to support new constructional projects of school architecture and infrastructure (Liu, 2002, p.65). One of the evidences of the poor condition of school buildings in China at the time was a request report of the MOE for State Council’s instruction in 1981 titled *The Request Report of the Ministry of Education on Solving the Problem of Serious Casualties Continuously Occurring Because of the Accidents of Collapse of Dilapidated and Dangerous Building/houses in Primary and Secondary Schools*. The request report disclosed that there were a large number of dilapidated and dangerous houses out of repair in existing school architectures, and casualties often occurred. If the central government did not require local governments to take resolute and effective measures in time, the personal safety of teachers and students was not guaranteed. The MOE suggested in the request report that local governments spend two or three years or a little longer to ensure that all schools are safe, all classes have their classrooms and all students have their desks and benches so as to ensure that classroom instruction in all schools can be normally conducted (State Council,1981).

Apparently, there was no way for Chinese government to take into account the issue of the standards for school construction since the aim of the MOE at the time was just to ensure that “no more people will be killed [in the accident of school buildings/houses collapse], so as to reassure students, parents, teachers and school leaders after 1981.” (State Council,1981). However, with the rapid growth of China's economy in 1990s, new construction, expansion and reconstruction projects of primary and secondary schools have greatly increased across the country. During 1996 to1999, for instance, eleven high-spec boarding schools was built in Shanghai, most of which occupied more than 10 hectares, and the largest campus occupied over 18 hectares (Liu, 2002, p.97). Nevertheless, in rural and remote areas, it was almost impossible to build such high-spec schools in 1990s. In order to avoid the imbalance in the construction of urban and rural schools, the State Education Commission (renamed the Ministry Education in 1998) developed and issued in 1997 the first standards for school construction in China, *Standards for the Construction of Rural Regular Primary and Secondary Schools (for Trial Implementation)*. After 10 years of trial implementation, the MOE officially issued the *Standards for the Construction of Rural Primary and Secondary Schools* in 2008. Given the constructional standards for city schools, particularly for the schools in the metropolises is usually higher than
that for rural schools (cf. MOE, 2002a; SMEC, 2004), the *Standards for the Construction of Rural Regular Primary and Secondary Schools* can be regarded as the State-set technical base line of school construction in China, through which one can see China’s school leaders are fulfilling their function of “optimizing internal management” with what campus infrastructure. With this in mind, the author lists the State-set mandatory requirements for the construction of regular rural primary schools in Table 7.2 and 7.3 in order that readers can get a glimpse of the *standards for school construction* in China.

**Table 7.2 the standard for usable floor area of instructional room and auxiliary space of rural regular primary schools**

|                | 270 pupils in six classes | 540 pupils in twelve classes | 810 pupils in eighteen classes | 1080 pupils in twenty-four classes |
|----------------|---------------------------|------------------------------|--------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| Number of rooms|                           |                              |                                |                                   |
| Ordinary classroom | 7                         | 13                           | 20                             | 26                                |
| floor area (m²)  | 54                        | 54                           | 54                             | 54                                |
| subtotal (m²)    | 378                       | 702                          | 1080                           | 1404                              |
| Music room      | —                          | 1                            | 1                              | 2                                 |
| floor area (m²)  | —                          | 80                           | 80                             | 80                                |
| subtotal (m²)    | —                          | 80                           | 80                             | 80                                |
| Music storage   | —                          | 1                            | 1                              | 1                                 |
| floor area (m²)  | —                          | 25                           | 25                             | 25                                |
| subtotal (m²)    | —                          | 25                           | 25                             | 25                                |
| Art room        | —                          | 1                            | 1                              | 1                                 |
| floor area (m²)  | —                          | 80                           | 80                             | 80                                |
| subtotal (m²)    | —                          | 80                           | 80                             | 80                                |
| Art storage     | —                          | 1                            | 1                              | 1                                 |
| floor area (m²)  | —                          | 25                           | 25                             | 25                                |
| subtotal (m²)    | —                          | 25                           | 25                             | 25                                |
|     | Science room |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
|-----|--------------|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
|     | 1            | 80| 80| 1 | 80| 80| 1 | 80| 80| 2 | 80| 160|

|     | Science auxiliary room |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
|-----|------------------------|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
|     | 1                      | 39| 39| 1 | 39| 39| 1 | 39| 39| 1 | 39| 39|

|     | Computer room         |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
|-----|-----------------------|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
|     | 1                      | 80| 80| 1 | 80| 80| 1 | 80| 80| 2 | 80| 160|

|     | Computer auxiliary room |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
|-----|-------------------------|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
|     | 1                      | 25| 25| 1 | 25| 25| 1 | 25| 25| 1 | 25| 25|

|     | Multi functional room  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
|-----|------------------------|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
|     | 1                      | 107| 107| 1 | 107| 107| 1 | 134| 134| 1 | 189| 189|

|     | Multi functional auxiliary room |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
|-----|---------------------------------|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
|     | 1                               | 25| 25| 1 | 25| 25| 1 | 25| 25| 1 | 25| 25|

|     | Distance |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
|-----|----------|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
|     | 1        | 39| 39| 1 | 39| 39| 1 | 39| 39| 1 | 39| 39|
### Table 7.3 the standard for construction land area of rural regular primary schools

| School size (m²) | Building land (m²) | Sports space (m²) | Green area (m²) | Total land area (m²) | Per pupil land area (m²) |
|-----------------|--------------------|-------------------|-----------------|----------------------|-------------------------|
| subtotal        | play               | athletics         | basketball      | volleyball           | sports                  |

Source: the MOE. (2008). *Standards for the construction of rural regular primary and secondary schools*. Beijing: China Planning Press. p.15.
7.2.3 School safety management

School Safety Management [XUE-XIAO-AN-QUAN-GUAN-LI] is one of key aspects of school internal management in China, which encompasses the school leadership efforts in protection, response and recovery of school violence and bullying incidents, school bus transportation accidents, athletic injury accidents, food hygiene accidents, fire accidents, personnel injury accidents in school-organized events (e.g. student spring excursions), student wrongful deaths, violent assaults from outsiders, and other on campus crisis incidents. For decades, it has been one of essential requirements set by relevant laws and policies for school education in China to provide a safe, secure and peaceful school setting for all students. For instance, the Article 24 of the Compulsory Education Law of the People’s Republic of China (the first edition) stipulates that "[A] school shall establish a sound safety system and emergency response mechanism, offer its students safety education, intensify the management and eliminate the potential risks in a timely manner so as to prevent the occurrence of accidents" (National People’s Congress, 1986). Given the primary and secondary schools in China have traditionally had fences and the access control system, the challenges for school safety were not salient until the 1990s. With the increase of social mobility and the complexity of social security in 1990s, multi-hazard emergencies and a variety of safety challenges for schools were gradually increased. Consequently, the condition of school safety became one of the issues highly concerned by the society (Lin, 2011). Former Chinese Minister of Education, Yuan Guiren once admitted frankly at a meeting of Educational
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Sector of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference (CPPCC), “[If] you ask me, what's the biggest pressure on the Ministry of Education right now, I'll tell you, it's [school]security” (Zhao, 2016). Several surveys regarding the status quo of school safety showed that most school safety accidents were closely related to the unsatisfactory condition of School Safety Management. Such as the defects in school security system, insufficient security equipment, unqualified security staff, without necessary security training for teachers and students, lacking of security and threat assessments and so on (Shen, et al., 2009; Li, 2015; Rao, 2017). With regard to the improvement of School Safety Management, dozens of central government RHDs relating to School Safety Management have been released since 2000 (Lin, 2014), in which nine of them have had a high impact on the practice of School Safety Management (see Table 7.4). These RHDs require, in terms of various aspects of School Safety Management, schools to provide all students with a physically and psychologically secure learning environment and school setting by improving the practice of safety management (MOE, 2002b, 2002c, 2006, 2013b; MOE and MoH, 2002; State Council, 2007, 2012b; CTSMC, MOPS and MOE, 2010; MOPS and MOE, 2015; MOE, CTSMC, SPC, SPP, MOPS, MOCA, MOI, CCCYL and ACWF, 2016 ).

Based on review of the policies and regulations of the Chinese government on School Safety Management in recent years, three key characteristics can be identified. First, school principals are regarded as chief responsible person of school safety. On the one hand, the role of "the chief responsible person" imposed to the post of principal brings high stress on principals. On the other hand, it also facilitates principals make efforts to improve safety management in their schools. In fact, nowadays in China, a number of principals are collaboratively working with school staff, students, parents as well as other school stakeholders in school safety, and working on crisis preparedness planning, detailed risk-reduction measures, regular safety drill and training, building school-based incident command system and crisis team, and other proactive strategies and practical measures to ensure their school environments remain safe and secure (Yang, 2012; Li, 2016; Sun, 2018).

Second, the focus of government policies concerning school safety over a period of time is often closely related to emerging school safety incidents highly concerned by society. For instance, the school bullying and violence incidents have been recently highlighted in China because the video clips about the bullying or violence between students of primary and secondary schools have been exposed by social media one after another. Forty-three serious bullying incidents were revealed by
social media and mass media between 2014 and 2015, in which some victims were beaten to death or committed suicide (Zhao, 2016; Yao, 2017). These high-profile school bullying and violence incidents shocked the government and society. Chinese Premier Li Keqiang repeatedly expressed concern about bullying and violence in schools on various occasions in 2016. Consequently, the *Guiding principles on preventing the violence and bullying among primary and secondary school students by the Ministry of Education and other nine State institutions* was published in the same year (Wang, 2017; Yao, 2017). Third, in terms of policy and practice in China’s *School Safety Management*, more attention has been paid to the “prevention” of school safety accidents than to the “response to” and “recovery from” the school safety accidents. One of typical cases is what Zhu Zhiwen (the Vice Minister of Education in charge of primary and secondary school education) emphasized that "safety first, prevention first" when he talked about school safety at a national conference concerning the *Management Standards for Compulsory Education Schools* (Zhu, 2018). Indeed, the “prevention” ought to be the “first priority” in the *School Safety Management* compared with “response” and “recovery”. Nevertheless, good safety management needs to simultaneously take into account the prevention, response and recovery since the complete chain of *School Safety Management* is composed by these three ones. Perhaps it is one of very meaningful research themes of *School Safety Management* in China in the future.

| Title and Year | Main points | Promulgator |
|----------------|-------------|-------------|
| Measures for arbitration of student injury incidents (2002) | • Defining a variety of student injury incidents and liabilities. | MOE |
| | • Setting the procedures for reporting, negotiation and arbitration. | |
| | • Provisions on compensation for victims. | |
| Regulations on hygienic management of school canteen and student group dining (2002) | • All schools should: | MOE |
| | a) set a post of food hygiene supervisor under the leadership of vice-principal of hygienic management. | |
| | b) establish safety management system of food hygiene. | |
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- c) have a hygienic license issued by health administration
  - Setting out the mandatory response procedures to food hygiene accidents.

• Measures for school safety management in primary and secondary schools (2006)
  - The content of school safety management.
  - The respective responsibilities of school and relevant public administrations.
  - The daily routine of campus security.
  - Safety education and training.
  - School surrounding security.
  - The response procedures to safety accidents

• Guidelines for public safety education in primary and secondary schools (2007)
  - The guiding principles of public safety education
  - Six modules of public safety education:
    a) Prevention and response to social security accidents.
    b) Prevention and response to public health accidents.
    c) Prevention and response to wrongful injury incidents.
    d) Prevention and response to natural disasters.
    e) Prevention and response to harmful information from the internet.
    f) Prevention and response to other incidents affecting student safety.

• Opinions of the OCTSMC, MOPS and MOE on further strengthening the safety prevention of schools and kindergartens, and establishing and improving a long-term working
  - School principal/kindergarten head is the chief responsible person of school safety.
  - Building the team of professional security guards in every school/kindergarten.
  - Establishing daily safety duty system with security patrol at night.
  - Equipping with 24-hour CCTV monitor system on campus.
mechanism (2010) • Exercising school-based safety education and training.

• Regulations on safety management of school bus (2012)
  • Technical pre-requisite for school bus.
  • Safety requirements for school bus driving.
  • Safety rules for school bus riding.
  • Legal liability for violation of the Regulations

• Guidelines for safety responsibilities of a variety of posts in primary and secondary schools (2013)
  • Aiming at specifically defining who, what, and how to fulfill school safety duty.
  • Respectively defining the safety responsibilities of 40 types of staff posts (from principal, Party secretary, vice-principal of curriculum and instruction,…to ordinary teacher, school nurse, bus driver, etc.)

• Code for safety and crisis preparedness of kindergartens, primary and secondary schools (trial implementation edition)”(2015)
  • Reasserting that school principal/kindergarten head is the chief responsible person of school safety.
  • Setting out the code for school safety and crisis preparedness, including code for physical security, code for security equipments, and code for the duty of school security officers and guards.

• Guiding principles on preventing the bullying and violence among students by citizenship education, psychological consultation, themed training on bullying and violence prevention, rigorous day-to-day safety management, and comprehensive management of school surrounding.

Ministry of Education and other nine State institutions (2016)
• Responding to student bullying and
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violence incidents according to law and regulations.

- Pooling up the resource from school,
- parents, local authorities, and wider community
- to collaboratively prevent the bullying and violence among students.

Note: ACWF=All China Women's Federation; CCCYL=Central Committee of the Communist Youth League; OCTSMC=Office of Comprehensive Treatment of Social Management Committee; MOCA=Ministry of Civil Affairs; MOE= Ministry of Education; MoJ=Ministry of Justice; MoPS= Ministry of Public Security; SPC=Supreme People's Court; SPP=Supreme People's Procuratorate.

7.2.4 Democratic Centralism [MIN-ZHU-JI-ZHONG-ZHI]

Democratic Centralism [MIN-ZHU-JI-ZHONG-ZHI] is one of key principles underpinning leadership practice of CPC. Democratic Centralism does not a simple combination of “democracy” and “centralism”, but rather, it emphasizes on the interdependent, inter-restrictive and reciprocal relationship between them (Zhang, 2018; Li and Wang, 2018). Since the CPC has been the ruling party in China for the past 70 years, inevitably, the Democratic Centralism has been embedded into the school leadership system and the practice of school internal management. The typical case of using Democratic Centralism in school leadership and management is the four basic norms of the decision-making for school major issues. The first norm is called collective leadership [JI-TI-LING-DAO] which means that any school major issues must be decided by the leadership team rather than by one member of the team. The second norm is democratic centrality [MIN-ZHU-JI-ZHONG] which means that before the decision-making on school major issues, possible alternatives must be fully discussed at a meeting by the leadership team and then summarized by the head of the team (usually, the school principal) to focus on one or two feasible options. The third one is individual consultation [GE-BIE-YUN-NIANG] which means that the head of the leadership team canvasses for views of leadership team members individually on what option is the best one the process of after the democratic centrality. The fourth norm is decision by meeting [HUI-YI-JUE-DING]. It is that after the steps of democratic centrality and individual consultation, the decision concerning a school major issue must be finally made, based on the
proposal prepared by the head of the leadership team, by voting through all members of the leadership team at the School Affairs Meeting [XIAO-WU-HUI-YI] (ODSMPC, 2010). As the head of leadership team and the chairperson of the School Affairs Meeting, the principal still plays a chief role in the school decision-making under the four norms of democratic centralism anyway. Of course, a good principal under democratic centralism should be a leader who not only fully promotes democracy, but also is good at centralization and unification (Zhang, 2018).

What is the correlation between democratic centralism and school performance? So far, there has been little sophisticated empirical studies on this theme. However, the information drawn from some surveys of school staff may provide useful reference about the theme. For example, the result of a school staff survey covering 300 primary and secondary schools in eight districts of Beijing showed that 94.72% of the respondents believed that “it is necessary for school principals to carry out the principle of democratic centralism [in leadership practice]” (REDBMEC,1997). It largely means that the majority of Chinese educators acknowledge the legitimacy of democratic centralism in school education context. The result of the survey conducted in Beijing also revealed that the schools with good implementation of democratic centralism have a variety of mature rules and procedures of decision-making, and the performance of these schools usually higher than that of others (REDBMEC,1997). It suggests that the democratic centralism is likely to have some positive effects on school performance.

7.2.5 Criticism and Self-Criticism [PI-PING-YU-ZI-WO-PI-PING]

Criticism and Self-Criticism [PI-PING-YU-ZI-WO-PI-PING]is regarded, in China's leadership context, as one of key methods to adjust the relations between members of an organization, resolve the contradictions within the organization and improve the performance of individual members as well as whole organization. It was created by late Chinese supreme leader Mao Zedong (formerly spelt as Mao Tse-Tung) during the time of Chinese revolutionary war and has been advocated by the CPC over past 80 years (Han, 2007).In some other contexts, it is also viewed as a cherished tradition or unique work style of the hallmark distinguishing the CPC from all other political parties in the world (Zhou and Li, 2018; Hu, 2018; Liu, 2018).

Mao Zedong put forward in the Resolution of Gutian Conference in 1929 that the “criticism” within the Party was the means to strengthen the Party's organization and increase its fighting capability. He also proposed in the Resolution that critics should not use criticism as a weapon to
attack others, nor should criticized persons be allowed to treat critics with a retaliatory attitude (Han, 2007). It could be the first time that the use of criticism was described and explained in an official document of the CPC. In 1935, at the Zunyi Conference, one of the most significant meeting in CPC’s history, a part of senior CPC leaders criticized the previous wrong leadership policy of the Party and took the initiative to admit the personal fault in it. It could be the first practical case within the Party that the criticism was linked with the self-criticism (Hu, 2018). In 1937, Mao Zedong elaborated the term criticism and self-criticism in his paper On Contradictions, and argued that contradictions within the Party should be solved by means of criticism and self-criticism (Mao, 1991, p. 311). In 1945, the criticism and self-criticism was officially named as one of the three work styles of the CPC at the 7th National Congress of the CPC, and Mao argued the significance of the criticism and self-criticism at the Congress, “Conscientious practice of self-criticism is still another hallmark distinguishing our Party from all other political parties. As we say, dust will accumulate if a room is not cleaned regularly, our faces will get dirty if they are not washed regularly. Our comrades’ minds and our Party’s work may also collect dust, and also need sweeping and washing. The proverb ’Running water is never stale and a door-hinge is never worm-eaten’ means that constant motion prevents the inroads of germs and other organisms. To check up regularly on our work and in the process develop a democratic style of work, to fear neither criticism nor self-criticism, and to apply such good popular Chinese maxims as ‘Say all you know and say it without reserve’, ‘Blame not the speaker but be warned by his words’ and ‘Correct mistakes if you have committed them and guard against them if you have not’—this is the only effective way to prevent all kinds of political dust and germs from contaminating the minds of our comrades and the body of our Party. ” (Mao,1966, pp. 259-260). For more than seventy years since 1945, criticism and self-criticism has been one of the work styles advocated by the CPC. Particularly, after the founding of People’s Republic of China in 1949, a general consensus has gradually emerged in all walks of life in China that the criticism and self-criticism is one of the helpful ways to improve leadership and management performance. In the current practice of school leadership, criticism and self-criticism is most commonly used for collective reflection of leadership team and individual reflection of team members, particularly for the reflection of the head of leadership team (the principal), in order to continuously improve leadership performance. In practice, the criticism and self-criticism between the members of
school leadership team specifically exercises through the way of the *democratic meeting*.

### 7.2.6 Democratic Meeting [MIN-ZHU-SHENG-HUO-HUI]

*Democratic Meeting* [MIN-ZHU-SHENG-HUO-HUI] is a special meeting attended by members of a leadership team, through which the *criticism and self-criticism* between leadership team members is exercised. The *democratic meeting* is usually held every six months (at the end of semester), but it can also be held at any time in terms of actual needs. According to the rule of the *democratic meeting*, the meeting should be accordance with following procedure (CCCPC, 2016):

- **Before the democratic meeting**, the meeting attendees (leadership team members) should extensively collect opinions on leadership team from school staff and make heart to heart talk between attendees to share ideas and perspectives on leadership performance.

- **At the democratic meeting**, the meeting attendees should carefully identify the defects and drawbacks in leadership practice in the past, profoundly analyze the subjective and objective reasons and clearly define the focal issues to be improved, and should take pertinent measures.

- **After the democratic meeting**, the meeting attendees should proactively take action to address the challenges resulting from the identified defects and drawbacks and improve leadership performance.

For the attendees of the *democratic meeting*, four basic principles for the *criticism and self-criticism* at the *democratic meeting* are usually required to follow. Firstly, the *criticism and self-criticism* should be proceeding from the fundamental interests of the public. As Mao Zedong said, “If we have shortcomings, we are not afraid to have them pointed out and criticized, because we serve the people. Anyone, no matter who may point out our shortcomings. If he is right, we will correct them. If what he proposes will benefit the people, we will act upon it.” (Mao, 1966, p.265) This well-known quotation in Mao’s article *Serve the People* written in 1944 has been repeated countless times at the *democratic meetings* of leadership at all levels in all walks of life in China since the CPC came into power and became the ruling party of China in 1949. Secondly, the *criticism and self-criticism* at the *democratic meeting* should follow the principle of *seeking truth from facts* [SHI-SHI-QIU-SHI]. Chinese President Xi Jinping elaborated the principle in 2013 as, “Criticism should be based on public good, sincere attitude and appropriate ways. It should seek truth from facts, distinguish right from wrong, and distinguish between truth and falsehood. It should not treat people from the standpoint of personal grievances, gains and losses,
interests, and intimacy or alienation.” (Xi, 2013). Thirdly, the criticism at the democratic meeting should be aimed at helping those criticized to improve their performance because one of the ends of the meeting is to make the leadership team more united in fulfilling leadership core missions (Liu, 2018). Finally, the head of a leadership team (e.g. the principal in a school leadership team) should take initiative role in criticism and self-criticism at the democratic meeting. Deng Xiaoping, late Chinese leader and chief designer of China’s reform and opening-up policy in 1978 stressed in 1983, “all CPC members, no matter who they are or what posts they hold, should be prepare to criticize others and themselves” (Deng, 1993, p.38). Deng’s this remark was actually aimed at senior officials of the CPC at the time. Since the attitudes and behavior of the head of a leadership team at the democratic meeting have exemplary effects on other members of the leadership team, it is crucial that the head of a leadership team to take initiative role in criticism and self-criticism at the democratic meeting (Zhang and Jia, 1999; Chen, 2018).

7.2.7 Routine Management System [CHANG-GUI-GUAN-LI-ZHI-DU]

Routine management system [CHANG-GUI-GUAN-LI-ZHI-DU] refers to the school-set system for internal management to maintain school working order and day-to-day operation. Given the routine management system is one of three key systems in a common framework of China’s school internal system (see Figure 7.2), it is regarded by Chinese school leadership practitioners as one of most fundamental preconditions to run a school successfully (Xu, 1991; Xiao, 1994, p.95).

In the framework of school internal system, the school charter works as a school’s constitution, the job responsibility descriptions respectively defines responsibilities for all posts of the school staff, the job performance appraisal system sets the performance appraisal criteria and procedure for all staff posts, while the routine management system sets rules and regulations for seven areas of routine management in a primary or secondary school. As shown in Figure 7.3, the routine management system covers the systems of transparency in management; school regular meetings, personnel management, the management of scientific research projects conducted by teachers, the management of moral and citizenship education for students, curriculum & instruction management, and the logistics management & ancillary services, in which the transparency in school management, in a sense, is one of the routine management systems with most distinguished characteristic of China (see Figure 7.3).
7.2.8 Transparency in School Management

In China’s school management context, the Transparency in School Management [XIAO-WU-GONG-KAI] is regarded as a type of democratic form in school routine management through which school staff, students, parents, and other stakeholders have the right and the means to have free and easy access to the school information about the decisions on school major issues (e.g. school strategic plan, enrollment policy, staff salary and benefit program, etc.) as well as the data on school budget, finance, audit and fees paid by parents except for the information of state secrets, personal privacy or endangering campus security. The key purposes of the transparency in school management are to create democratic management environment, encourage all school staff and other stakeholders being their commitment to school development and improvement by the way of participatory management, and hold school leadership accountable and fighting against possible corruption (Yin, 2006, p. 258; Luo, 2008; Cheng, et al., 2013).

Traditionally, there was little transparency in decision-making of China’s schools. It was quite common in China’s schools that decisions were made behind locked doors and the school staff and outsiders have fewer possibilities to have access to such information. However, with the increasing requirement of the Chinese government on the democratic management for schools and the rapid development in the use of the Internet, the expectations of school stakeholders for the transparency in school management have emerged since the late of 1990s. In 1999, National
Education Trade Union (NETU), in its document titled *Opinions on exercising the transparency in school management*, called on exercising the transparent management in schools and required the trade unions at school level to proactively involve in the promotion of the transparency in school management (NETU, 1999). The MOE and All-China Federation of Trade Union (ACFTU) required local education authorities in 2002 to take the transparency in school management as one of indicators in school evaluation (MOE and ACFTU, 2002). In the following years, local education authorities in China developed and released the local detailed measures to promote the policy document issued by the MOE and ACFTU in 2002. Consequently, the transparency in school management has gradually become one of basic requirements for school internal management in China. According to the government policies on transparency in school management, publicity of the information about school major decision-making, except for the information of state secrets, personal privacy or endangering campus security, should release not only about the results of decision-making but also about the process and procedure of decision-making. Moreover, schools must file and archive the minutes of decision-making meetings (Zhou, 2007; Cheng, et al., 2013). In practice, schools have created a variety of concrete measures to implement the policies on transparency in school management since 2002. Examples include establishing a steering group headed by the principal to lead the practice of transparency in school management, establishing a task group to develop specific school policy to ensure the implementation of transparency in school management, establishing a inspect group headed by the Chairman of School Trade Union, creating a special column on school web-site to release the information about decision-making, setting a bulletin board for the publicity of relevant information and data, setting a “suggestions & complaints box” to collect the feedback of the public opinions concerning school decisions, and so on (Cheng, et al., 2013; Yin, 2006, p. 260). Although there are various ways to convey the how and why information of a major decision of school, the most important way, at present in China, is the School Staff Congress anyway according to relevant policies (NETU, 1999; MOE and ACFTU, 2002). The School Staff Congress is usually held twice a semester, listens to the principal's report and votes anonymously on major decisions. Apart from the School Staff Congress, some theme-specific hearings are usually held prior to the decision associated with stakeholders' interests, in which the representatives of staff, students, parents or other relevant stakeholders are invited to participate (Yin, 2006, p. 100; Zhou,
In this chapter, eight key terms revolving around school internal management in China were explored and interpreted, through which the government requirements and societal expectations for “optimizing internal management” would be understood. To interpret the term *Management Standards for Compulsory Education Schools* [YI-WU-JIAO-YU-XUE-XIAO-GUAN-LI-BIAO-ZHUN], the author paraphrased the term and gave the definition of the term in China’s school leadership context based on literature review, and analyzed the policy background and the government intention to develop and set the standards. Since part of dimensions in the framework of the standards (e.g. the dimension 5 and 6) are closely connected to school internal management, the standards can be viewed as the policy basis of “optimizing internal management” in China. The second term of this chapter is *standards for school construction* [XUE-XIAO-JIAN-SHE-BIAO-ZHUN]. Given China’s construction standards for urban schools have been higher than those for rural schools thus far, it is helpful to understand the baseline of China’s construction standards for schools through the State-set mandatory criteria and technical specifications for the construction of rural schools showed in Table 7.2 and 7.3, and to get a general profile that China’s schools are operating in what physical environment. The fourth term *School Safety Management* [XUE-XIAO-AN-QUAN-GUAN-GUAN-LI] is concerning one of key aspects of school internal management in China. Based on review of the policies and regulations of the Chinese government on *School Safety Management* in recent years, it can be found that the Chinese government’s requirements for *School Safety Management* are gradually expanding to a broader range of content. For example, in the past, bullying prevention was not included in the scope of *School Safety Management*, and the discretion to deal with bullying was authorized to the class form teacher. But now the issue of preventing and addressing bullying has been included in the scope of safety management at school level. In terms of the status quo of *School Safety Management* in China, several challenges still remain to be addressed in the future. For instance, largely, the existing government policies and regulations on *School Safety Management* are developed and formulated on the basis of considering the urban school settings. In many cases, however, they may be not suitable for the settings of some rural schools since the settings of rural schools is more diversified than those of urban schools (Li, 2015). The
fourth and fifth terms explored in this chapter reflect the influence of the CPC, the ruling party over the past 70 years, on school leadership. The specific meaning of democratic centralism [MIN-ZHU-JI-ZHONG-ZHI] and its application in the practice of school internal management, especially in decision-making processes were examined. By doing so, the democratic centralism which has been regarded as a cherished tradition of the CPC is likely to be fully understood by outsiders. The criticism and self-criticism [PI-PING-YU-ZI-WO-PI-PING], as one of unique work styles of the CPC created by Mao Zedong nearly 90 years ago, is often used in school leadership practice as a strategy or a specific method used in leadership reflection and improvement. Over the past decades, some Western scholars have been interested in the term criticism and self-criticism, although they have not fully understood the exact meaning of the term in China’s leadership context. For example, when he commented on the forms of "total quality management" (TQM) in 1994, American scholar Robert Joseph Thomas, the professor at Massachusetts Institute of Technology, wrote, “TQM has been adopted in two distinctly different forms in U.S. industry. One form is consistent with the broad philosophy of its advocates and emphasizes continuous improvement and learning at both the individual and the organizational levels. Although advocates of this approach don't use these terms, their conception of TQM is one of unrelenting scrutiny, criticism, and improvement—a conception that is reminiscent of Mao's ‘self-criticism’ (cf. Mao Tse-Tung, 1976; Schurmann, 1970). The intent is to prevent the institutionalization and ossification of any organizational process. The other form involves routinization of TQM in narrow (and in some cases ridiculous) activities: for example, the tightening of quality standards without any change in or greater understanding of the processes that lead to quality problems; increased penalties for defects; and the application of both tighter standards and higher penalties to activities for which they have little apparent meaning or benefit (such as typing errors per page). In the first form, TQM techniques are intended to facilitate change; in the second form, they are used to prevent change” (Thomas, 1994, p. 209). However, if one would like to fully understand the term criticism and self-criticism, he also needs to understand the sixth term of this chapter, democratic meeting, because the democratic meeting is a typical platform for leadership reflection in China, through which the criticism and self-criticism is usually exercised. Following the sixth term, the term routine management system [CHANG-GUI-GUAN-LI-ZHI-DU] was explored. From the Figure 7.2 and 7.3, the routine management system in framework of school internal
management and the seven sub-systems which compose the routine management system were clearly showed. The last term explored in this chapter is the transparency in school management [XIAO-WU-GONG-KAI]. As a part of school routine management system, it is a latest product in the implementation of school democratic management advocated by Chinese government. The government's policy on transparency in school management and the specific practices of transparency in school management at schools were reviewed and examined in this chapter. The author believes that the international audience can understand, through the interpretation of the above eight terms, the context in which China’s school leaders strive to fulfill their key leadership practice of "optimizing internal management".

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