Chapter 6

Leading the Curriculum and Instruction

6.1 Introduction

In China, instructional leadership is not a theme that has only recently emerged. In fact, instructional leadership has long been placed in the center stage of China’s school leadership and management, and it has been regarded as a key factor to promote school improvement (Chen, 1957; Jin, 1993; Han, 1996; Geng, 2004; Li, 2015). However, Chinese educators' understanding of instructional leadership is slightly different from the Western counterparts. Zongliu Xiao, the former President of the Chinese Educational Administration Research Association and professor of Central China Normal University asserted, “a principal’s obligation is to run a school well. How can we achieve this goal? I think it is very important for the principal to supervise the focal issue of school work. What is the focal issue of school work? It is teaching and learning” (Xiao, 2003, p. 260). He added, “To supervise teaching and learning, the principal should go deep into the front line of teaching and learning. What is the ‘front line’? It refers to the classrooms and teaching-study groups [in which the classroom instruction and teaching-study activities conduct]. What are the typical ways for the principal to go deep into the front line? There three basic ways to do so. First, taking the classroom observation…. Second, spending a period of time in a selected work place for investigation …. Third, taking on the teaching work by himself” (Xiao, 2003, pp. 262-263). As an experienced and successful high school principal before he served as the professor at the university, Xiao’s assertion largely represents the notion about instructional leadership that not only the most of Chinese school leadership researchers but also most of Chinese leadership practitioners upheld. As OECD report analyzed, “almost all the officers in the government education authorities, both at municipal and district levels, started as school teachers. Most of them distinguished themselves as teachers or school principals with strong track records. This perhaps explains their devoted professional attention to teaching and learning amidst all the administrative chores and political issues they normally contend with. They manage, however, to maintain this teaching focus while at the same time relying on a strategic vision that enables them to navigate a policy arena which goes well beyond education.” (OECD, 2011, p. 89). Furthermore, Xiao’s assertion suggested there are two essential beliefs underpinning the practice of instructional
leadership in China’s context. The first is that instructional leadership is the key function of school leadership as “teaching and learning” is the core business of school education. The second is that successful instructional leadership must closely associate with the solid teaching-study in which the principal personally involves. In 2017, the author triangulated the beliefs with the information from the results of CSSLM2017-principals and CSTWCE2017-teachers. In the CSSLM2017-principals, 74.0 percent of the respondents (principals) STRONGLY AGREED with “It is no doubt that a school should place teaching and learning at the centre of school work” while 19.5 percent of the respondents AGREED with the item. And 68.3 percent of the respondents (principals) STRONGLY AGREED with “The essential assurance of the success of instructional leadership is the building of good teaching-study groups and Lesson Preparation Group.” while 28.2 percent of the respondents AGREED with the item. In the CSTWCE2017-teachers, 76.5 percent of the respondents (teachers) STRONGLY AGREED with “Schools should be centered on teaching because even if moral education is mainly carried out through the vehicle of day-to-day classroom instruction” while 17.6 percent of the respondents AGREED with the same item (see Appendix A). The information from the CSSLM2017-principals and CSTWCE2017-teachers largely confirms that most of Chinese principals and teachers hold the above-mentioned beliefs at the moment. Thus, a range of key terms closely associated with instructional leadership composes the first group of selected terms of this chapter, which includes Teaching-Study System [JIAO-YAN-ZHI-DU], Teaching-Study Specialist [JIAO-YAN-YUAN] Lesson Preparation Group [BEI-KE-ZU], Five-Link-Cycle of Teaching [JIAO-XUE-WU-HUAN-JIE], Collective Lesson Preparation [JI-TI-BEI-KE], Classroom Observation and Commentary [TING-PING-KE] and Open Lesson [GONG-KAI-KE]. However, given the requirement of curriculum leadership has been emerged since the Compendium for Curriculum Reform of Basic Education (trial edition) was issued by the MOE in 2001(MOE, 2001), the instructional leadership, at the moment, is no longer an exclusive leadership factor that can significantly effect on teaching and learning. Rather, the curriculum leadership should be also included. In the curriculum reform policy, for example, the single national curriculum system is transformed into the three-level curriculum system of the national, local and school. With this regard, individual schools have to shoulder unprecedented responsibilities for curriculum development as well as curriculum management. Consequently, the curriculum leadership has become one of key components in principal development and principal
appearal since 2001. The second group of the selected terms of this chapter thereby revolves around the curriculum reform, which includes *Compendium for Curriculum Reform* [KE-GAI-GANG-YAO], *Three-Level Curriculum Management* [SAN-JI-KE-CHENG-GUAN-LI], *Curriculum Leadership* [KE-CHENG-LING-DAO] and *School-Based Scientific Research Management* [XIAO-BEN-KE-YAN-GUAN-LI].

### 6.2 key terms

#### 6.2.1 Teaching-Study System [JIAO-YAN-ZHI-DU]

*Teaching-Study System* [JIAO-YAN-ZHI-DU] is a system to promote teachers to engage in study and improvement of teaching on a daily basis so as to assure the quality of teaching and learning and the continuous improvement of teachers’ professional attitudes, knowledge, and skills for teaching. Historically, the initial purpose of establishing *Teaching-Study System* (TSS) in China was to address the practical challenge in the early years of 1950s. When the People's Republic of China was founded in 1949, the enrolment rate of primary and secondary schools in China was much lower than that in industrial countries. The statistics in 1949 showed that the enrollment rate of primary schools was 20% and that of lower secondary schools was only 6% (Nie, 2010). To improve the education attainment of the Chinese people soon, the scale of primary and secondary education of the newly founded state was expanded rapidly in a very short period of time. In 1949, there were 346,800 primary schools in China, with 24.391 million students. But by 1952, there were 527,000 primary schools and 51.1 million students, the number of schools and students increased by 51.9% and 109.5% respectively (Zhao, 2014). The scale of primary and secondary education had expanded so fast that the number of qualified teachers was not adequate to meet the demand. Furthermore, due to the shortage of qualified teachers, there was a serious problem of "skills gap" among districts, schools and teachers. The TSS as one of government initiatives was to bridge the "skills gap" at the time. In 1952, the central government’s Ministry of Education published two policy documents titled *Interim Provisions for Primary Schools (Draft)* and *Interim Provisions for Secondary Schools (Draft)*. According to these two RHDs, all primary and secondary schools were required to establish the teaching-study mechanism called teaching-study conference to regularly have subject-based teacher meetings concerning the teaching schedule, improvement of teaching methods, and sharing the lessons from teaching practice (MOE,1952a; MOE,1952b). In 1955, the *People’s Education*, an organ magazine of the MOE at the time,
published an editorial titled *Education Departments and Bureaus of Provinces and Municipalities Must Strengthen Teaching-Study Work* to call for the establishment of the teaching-study office to assist provincial and local education authorities to assure the teaching quality at schools. Since then, the management system of teaching-study has been established across China (Liang, et al., 2010; Zhao, 2014; Hu & Wang, 2017). In the established framework of TSS, a subject-based *teaching-study group* at school is professionally “supervised for each of its subject areas by the *teaching-study office* in the Education Bureau (in a rural county or city district), which is in turn supervised by the relevant *teaching-study office* in the Education Department in the provincial or municipal government.”(OECD, 2011, p. 88). In 1957, the *Regulations on Teaching-Study Group’s Work of Secondary Schools* was issued by the Ministry of Education. It was the first time that the central government defined the role of *teaching-study group* as a professional group to handle the subject-based teaching-study activities at school (Liang, et al., 2010). In 1990, the State Education Commission published a RHD titled *Opinions of the State Education Commission on improving and strengthening the work of teaching-study offices* to stipulate teaching research, teaching guidance and teaching management as three major functions of teaching-study offices at all levels (SEC.1990). But in any case, the *teaching-study group* (TSG) and the *Lesson Preparation Group* (LPG) at school constitute the essential foundation and the most important part in TSS framework of China. Moreover, the roles of TSG and LPG have intensified since the curriculum reform of China was launched in 2001. Thus, it has been the foremost priority for teaching-study office at the county or district level to guide and support TSG at local schools to address the subject-based challenges at the school emerging from the curriculum reform since 2001(Hu & Wang, 2017).

With this regard, how to improve the quality of school-based teaching-study activities was regarded as the vital issue of the TSS. From then on, the term *school-based teaching-study* was widely used in China’s school leadership practice. In the three-level (provincial, county/district, and school) TSS, the county/district teaching-study office plays the key role to provide schools with subject-based technical support for county/district wide *school-based teaching-study* since the office members are usually composed of the subject-based specialists who are respectively good at mentoring teachers of all subjects of primary, junior high and senior high schools.

**6.2.2 Teaching-Study Specialist** [JIAO-YAN-YUAN]

*Teaching-Study Specialist* [JIAO-YAN-YUAN] refers to the subject-based professionals who
work at provincial or county/district teaching-study offices. Most Teaching-Study Specialists are selected from experienced and talented subject teachers of primary and secondary schools and their attitudes, knowledge and skills in teaching are recognized. Given the number of Teaching-Study Specialists had been 100 thousand by 2010, it is not a small cohort of subject-based specialists, and they have made a great contribution to China’s basic education reform in the last decades (Liang, et al., 2010; Zhao, 2014). Initially, the priority of a teaching-study office was to close the “skills gap” among schools within a county or a district. Accordingly, the role of a Teaching-Study Specialist was to supervise the classroom instruction and to convey the content pedagogical knowledge of a certain subject. The role of Teaching-Study Specialists was increasingly intensified after the curriculum reform launched in 2001 because Teaching-Study Specialists were required to provide school teachers with technical support in developing school curriculum (school curriculum did not exist in China until 2001) and to take responsibility in leading school teachers to change their teaching approach to meet the new demands of the curriculum reform (Liu, 2009; Liu & Huang, 2018). On the other hand, a survey conducted in 2013 showed that about 70 percent of Teaching-Study Specialists are also responsible for monitoring the student outcomes of all schools in their county or district (NCSCTD, 2013). Nevertheless, while it is widely recognized that Teaching-Study Specialists have made great contributions to curriculum reform and teaching quality assurance, some problems revolving around Teaching-Study Specialists are still remained to be solved. For example, there is imbalance between the professional quality of Teaching-Study Specialists who are working in the teaching-study offices of different counties or districts. As a head of a provincial teaching-study office in west part of China pointed out that a part of Teaching-Study Specialists in the province were good at inspecting and commenting on the classroom instruction (in most cases, criticizing the teachers’ performance), but they are unable to work with teachers to explore realistic ways to improve the performance of teaching and learning (Ha, 2012). There is even an absurd phenomenon in practice that some Teaching-Study Specialists have not had classes for years, yet they are busy with classroom observations and make comments on teachers’ performance almost every work day (Li, 2010). On the other side, the Teaching-Study Specialists are given too much expectation in some cases. In fact, it will be difficult for Teaching-Study Specialists to fulfill their responsibility to guide teachers’ teaching-study activities at a school if
the principal does not pay enough attention to the teaching-study activities in his/her school because Teaching-Study Specialists are not the direct superiors for teachers. After all, they only provide professional support for teachers, and they don't have administrative authority. (Liu & Huang, 2018). To address the challenges and problems emerging from practice, some local education authorities have recently tended to pay more attention to develop training programs for Teaching-Study Specialists to improve their professional quality. Meanwhile, they stipulated that principal’s ability to coordinate external technical resources (including the expertise of Teaching-Study Specialists) to support school teachers’ teaching-study activities would be one of indicators in school leadership appraisal.

6.2.3 Five-Link-Cycle of Teaching [JIAO-XUE-WU-HUAN-JIE]

Five-Link-Cycle of Teaching [JIAO-XUE-WU-HUAN-JIE] reflects a widely accepted point of view of Chinese educators that the teaching quality as well as student outcomes largely depends on what and how teachers do at vital points of a teaching cycle. The five vital points, known as five links, composed by the lesson preparation [BEI-KE], classroom instruction [SHANG-KE] assignment [ZUO-YE], tutoring [FU-DAO], and assessment [PING-JIA] (see Figure 6.1). In China’s educational context, the Five-Link-Cycle of Teaching is viewed as a chain that can connect the entire teaching process in series. Thus, it is one of focal issues for school leadership to develop detailed rules to ensure all teachers to be fully commitment to every link of the cycle. By reviewing on some school regulations and rules on the Five-Link-Cycle of Teaching, it can be found that schools requirements for the Five-Link-Cycle of Teaching are generally as follows (No.1 Primary School of Northern Zhongshan Rd., 2004, pp.58-62; Yin, 2006, pp.249-252; Mingde Primary School, 2008, pp.44-47; THSAECNU, 2009, pp.1-10):

In the link of lesson preparation, teachers are usually required to prepare lessons in advance by collective way. For example, teachers should prepare lessons in advance for the first and second weeks of the semester before the semester starts by the way of Collective Lesson Preparation [JI-TI-BEI-KE] organized by the Lesson Preparation Group (LPG). The major task of lesson preparation includes, based on the analysis of antecedent learning condition of students, the arrangement of the teaching content and determination of the teaching objectives, pace of teaching, the focus in teaching and the possible difficulty in student learning.

In the link of classroom instruction, teachers are required to allocate time properly for each
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40-minute lesson, to use diversified teaching strategies in terms of individual students’ responses in the class, to provide incentives for students with learning difficulties, and to ensure student to understand the core knowledge of the lesson.

The link of assignment encompasses the steps of designing students’ homework, grading individual students' work and commenting on overall students’ work of a class. In terms of homework designing, teachers are required to design the homework by revolving around the core knowledge while considering appropriate difficulty and workload for students. In the process of grading each student’s work, teachers are required not only to mark and grade individual students’ work in time but also to write brief written feedback on students’ work book when necessary. The commenting on overall students’ work of a class usually aims at solving the common problems reflected by students’ home work. The process of the commenting is actually not a process of students listening to teachers' remarks, but rather, it is a process of the reflection and discussion between a teacher and his/her students.

The link of tutoring refers to the teacher makes additional efforts for students with learning difficulties. Teachers are required to take the responsibility to identify the knowledge flaws of the students with learning difficulties, and to analyze key reasons for their learning failure in learning motivation, antecedent knowledge and skills for learning, learning strategies and after school learning environment. Subsequently, the teacher should develop tutoring programs to provide the students who left behind in learning with one on one tutoring. However, teachers are not required, in the link of tutoring, to exclusively focus on the student cohort with learning difficulties. In some cases, the teacher may also attempt to provide tutoring for the gifted and talented students to foster their higher-order thinking skills and complex problem-solving skills.

In the link of assessment, the regular task of teachers is developing the exam paper, supervising students’ exam, marking the exam papers, analysis of the results of exam, identifying major problems in students learning and summarizing the quality of teaching and learning in a period of time. In the five links, the lesson preparation and the assessment are usually carried out as team work organized by the LPG.
Figure 6.1 Five-Link-Cycle of Teaching

6.2.4 Collective Lesson Preparation [JI-TI-BEI-KE]

Collective Lesson Preparation [JI-TI-BEI-KE] refers to the timetabled meeting of the teachers in a Lesson Preparation Group (LPG)\textsuperscript{18} in which teachers of the LPG work collectively to “draw up very detailed lesson schemes for a particular topic the following week. Teachers are expected to teach according to the scheme, which is then translated into more detailed lesson plans by and for individual teachers [after the meeting]” (OECD, 2011, p. 88). Therefore, the lesson scheme, as the result of Collective Lesson Preparation (CLP), serves as a guide for teachers when they prepare specific lesson plans for their lessons. The intention of CLP is to ensure teachers exercise classroom instruction in accordance with the professional requirements for teaching, while there is still room for teachers' individual autonomy and creativity.

Although neither the central government nor the local governments in China have ever made policy provisions on CLP, the CLP regulations have been set in all primary and secondary schools in China without exception (Chen, 2006). Historically, the CLP was created in 1950s to address the challenge of the “skills gap” among teachers in the time of qualified teacher shortage. At the

\textsuperscript{18} Both subject-based Teaching-Study Group (TSG) and the Lesson Preparation Group (LPG) play key roles to ensure the quality of teaching and learning at school on a daily basis. Given the LPG is the professional group of lowest level at school in which the teachers of same subject at the same grade (they usually share one office) communicate and interact directly almost every school day, the professional influence of a LPG on teachers is, in most instances, more frequent and stronger than that of a TSG.
time, the first priority of the CLP was “unification”, i.e. unification of objectives, content, emphases, didactics, pace and student home work for every lesson delivered by different teachers in the same LPG (Chen, 2003; Zhu, 2011). Consequently, the "unification" indeed guaranteed the base line of classroom instruction, but individual teachers’ personal style and features in classroom instruction were constrained. However, the CLP has gradually become one of the vehicles for school-based teacher development since the shortage of qualified teachers in China was gradually alleviated in 1990s, especially after the beginning of curriculum reform in 2001. Since then, "unification" has been no longer the core mission of the CLP. Rather, sharing of peers' professional experience and discussion of teaching innovation have been the dominant themes in CLP (Chen, 2003). Nowadays, the frequency of the CLP in numerous schools is also declining, from once a week to once every other week. Of course, the specific purposes and ways of the CLP vary from school to school in practice. Yet, in some schools where teachers are still weak, "unification" is still the focal issue in their CLP. Concomitantly, it is helpful for beginning teachers to accelerate them to meet their job requirements by participating in the "unification-centered" CLP (Xue, 2013; Zhou, 2016). As far as the CLP is concerned, the main function of instructional leadership in most schools is to promote a positive climate for the CLP, which includes establishing regulations, allocating internal and external resources, maintaining leadership visibility, providing incentive for LPGs, etc.

6.2.5 Classroom Observation and Commentary [TING-PING-KE]

Classroom Observation and Commentary [TING-PING-KE] is one of regular teaching-study activities in China’s primary and secondary schools, in which peer teachers as observers observe the observed teacher’s performance of classroom instruction in a 40-minute lesson, listen to, after the lesson, the observed teacher’s explanation about what his/her initiate ideas, objectives, strategies, methods and procedure designed for the lesson in his/her lesson preparation and how he adjusted his/her original lesson plan in terms of students’ responses during the classroom instruction, and make evidence-based commentary on the strengths and weaknesses of this lesson and make suggestions accordingly (Zhou, 2016; Ding, 2018). The role of the Classroom Observation and Commentary (COC) in China’s school context is composed by three aspects. The first aspect of COC’s role is regarded as an effective vehicle to promote the renewal of teaching ideas, the sharing of teaching experience, the exploration of effective teaching strategies, and to
improve teachers’ teaching skills, and ultimately make students benefit more from the classroom instruction (Hu & Si, 2014; Fu, 2017). As a high school principal, Shen pointed out that the primary purpose of COC did not encourage teachers imitate each other's specific behavior in their classroom instruction, but that teachers should have a deeper understanding of the key factors that contribute to a successful classroom instruction (Shen, 2018). In this respect, the Teaching-Study Groups in many schools have been engaging in identifying shared characteristics of a qualified classroom instruction in the past decades. For example, the high school principal Li worked with his teachers to gradually identified a shared protocol of a quality classroom instruction through many times of COC. These included (Li, 2015),

- Clear instructional objectives.
- Reasonable teaching design.
- Pre-set teaching scenarios together with necessary on-site adjustment.
- Flexibility and diversity of teaching methods.
- Concerned with all students.
- Embodying the notion of learner-centered.
- Achieving the instructional objectives efficiently.
- Being able to control the order in classroom.
- Good interaction between the teacher and students.

However, there are no universal protocol of a quality classroom instruction in practice. There is no doubt that the so-called shared protocol is school-based as well as subject-based. In another words, the protocol of a quality classroom instruction is exclusively shared among the teachers in the same subject at the same school. Moreover, the shared protocol is not fixed, but change with the deepening of teachers' understanding of classroom teaching. The second aspect of the COC’s role is to act as an instrument to evaluate teachers’ performance since the COC is often used as a lens through which to examine teachers’ professional quality. As described in an OECD report, “in many cases, teachers are observed by the school principal or by district education officers when they are being considered for promotions or awards. In short, a Chinese teacher sees a lesson more as a show or a performance, and puts in many hours of preparation to cover the standard 40-minute period.” (OECD, 2011, p.88). Finally, the COC is viewed as one of major means to exercise instructional leadership. Most schools in China have established regulations on the COC,
which set the timetable and regular procedure of the COC, and stipulate the minimum times of the COC attendance per semester for school leaders and middle managers, particularly the director of the Office for Curriculum & Instruction (OCI). Concomitantly, the records of the COC in each subject will be collected at the end of semester by OCI as one of fundamental information about teaching and learning in school data base. By doing so, the school leaders can make informed decision regarding the quality improvement in classroom instruction and the foci of teacher development. Moreover, there is a consensus in Chinese principals that the principal attending the work place of the COC in person can inspire teachers’ commitment to the improvement of classroom instruction, thereby principals can play an important role in instruction leadership (Zheng, 2009; Lu, 2012; Qu, 2017). Because of such a consensus, most principals in China maintain a high frequency of attending the COC. A high school principal, for example, claimed that he managed to organize his schedule to make one to two periods of classroom observation every weekday so as to keep linking leadership with classroom (Li, 2015). Another high school principal claimed that he usually made over 60 times classroom observations in each semester and attending the COC had become the habitual behavior of his instructional leadership (Qu, 2017). But for most principals, their frequency of COC attendance is not as high as that of these two principals. Although the positive role of the COC has been generally acknowledged for a long time, the effect of the COC is not always positive for all teachers. A questionnaire survey of Physical Education teachers of primary and secondary schools in Beijing showed that teachers with less than five years of service had the highest enthusiasm for the COC. With the increase of their working years, teachers' enthusiasm for the COC gradually declined (Zhou, 2016). This result suggests that the inexperienced teachers, compared with experienced teachers, are likely to benefit more from the COC.

6.2.6 Open Lesson [GONG-KAI-KE]

Open lesson [GONG-KAI-KE] refers to the lesson that open to internal colleagues or external audience (e.g. teachers from other schools, teaching-study specialists from district teaching-study office, officials of local education authority, researchers in the field of subject-based education from universities, etc.) and provide internal colleagues or external audience with the opportunity to observe and comment upon. The Open lesson (OL) in practice can be largely divided into three types so-called Exemplary Lesson [SHI-FAN-KE], Demonstration Lesson [ZHAN-SHI-KE], and
Exploring Lesson [YAN-JIU-KE] in terms of specific purposes of the OL. The Exemplary Lesson is the type of lesson that the instructor shows the benchmark of a qualified lesson to the classroom observers who are mostly student teachers from universities and inexperienced or even less qualified serving teachers. The primary purpose of the Exemplary Lesson is to train observers (as learners) to be qualified teachers. In other cases, however, an Exemplary Lesson taught by a renowned teacher to show how a teacher can give an interesting and vivid lesson for students, in which the observers can witness state-of-the-art didactics and on-the-spot wisdom of the instructor. In this context, the Exemplary Lesson is also called Model Lesson (Han, 2011). The Demonstration Lesson is often used as the instrument of observation and judgment to evaluate the qualification of beginning teachers at the end of their probation. In this case, the instructors of the Demonstration Lesson are beginning teachers whereas the observers are their mentors, middle managers and school leaders as well as the subject-based teaching-study specialists from local teaching-study office. Sometimes, the Demonstration Lesson is also used as the platform to display some innovative didactics. Teachers at a Mathematics Teaching-Study Group of a primary school, for example, may share the collective outcomes of their efforts in Mathematics didactics improvement with the Mathematics teachers from neighboring primary schools by giving a couple of Demonstration Lessons so as to get feedback from peer teachers and to pursue their further improvement in Mathematics didactics. The Exploring Lesson as a type of OL became popular after the China’s curriculum reform in 2001. Schools and teachers have met a range of new challenges since 2001 because of the change of curriculum structure, contents and objectives. The teachers, even the teaching-study specialists are often not sure if they have fully understood and truly implemented new curriculum standards when they try to conduct classroom instruction in accordance with the new curriculum standards. In the circumstances, local teaching-study offices tend to organize Exploring Lessons to explore and examine the possibility or feasibility to implement certain strategies as well as specific methods of some pilot programs to address the challenges emerged in the curriculum reform. The instructors of Exploring Lesson are usually the teachers who are engaging in a pilot program (Xiao & Lin, 2013; Shao & Qin, 2014). The observers of Exploring Lesson are most probably the teaching-study specialists who are leading the pilot program, other teaching-study specialists in the same subject, the highly regarded teachers in the subject and subject-based teaching researchers from universities.
Today, the OL in China’s school context is regarded as not only the platform to conduct intra-school as well as inter-school COC, but also one of major vehicles to promote the school-based teacher development. In China, almost all experienced teachers have had the experience of giving OL, and the most of distinguished teachers’ talents, expertise and wisdom in teaching are highly recognized by peers because of their inter-school, inter-district and even inter-province OL (Liu, 2010; Li, 2014; Shi, 2017; Wang, 2018). The teaching protocols of their OL “are present throughout China, from remote villages to prosperous cities” (OECD, 2011, p. 89). Compared with the Routine Lesson (RL) [CHANG-TAI-KE], OL usually differ in preparation time, topic selection, design focus, classroom environment and students' performance (Shi and Li, 2016).

• Time for preparation
Preparing for OL often takes several times as long as preparing for RL because the instructor tends to deliberate over the lesson plan and to revise it over and over again during his/her OL preparation.

• Topic choice
When choosing the topic of an OL, the instructor tends to avoid topics that they are not familiar with, or are not suitable for the "wonderful performance" in his/her classroom instruction, but choose the topics that he/she is most familiar with and good at. In contrast, it is impossible for teachers to deliberately choose a topic for a RL.

• Focus of design
The focus of the teaching design of RL is the students learning results. That is how to help students to acquire knowledge, to learn skills, and to develop positive values towards the world. Besides the focus of the teaching design of RL, there is another focus of OL teaching design. That is to consider how to display the teaching accomplishment and art of the instructor in front of the observers as much as possible in the process of the OL.

• Environment and atmosphere
For the physical environment, a RL conducts in a regular classroom whereas an OL has to be taught in a larger space, and even move to the theatre sometimes because too many observers participate in. The change in physical environment will inevitably have an impact on the mentality of the students and the classroom atmosphere.
• Student performance

In an OL, the performance of the students who are surrounded by “stranger audience” is most likely to be better than their performance in most RLs because the students want to win glory for their teacher and the class collective.

Revolving around these above-mentioned differences between OL and RL, there have been critiques of the OL in recent years. Arguments include that people can learn little from the teaching protocols of OL because an OL is primarily concerned with the instructor’s “show” rather than students’ learning; or that the marrow or the highlights of an OL can be hardly replicated in a RL because the OL’s output-to-input ratio is too low (Zhang, 2009; Wang, 2012; Shi and Li, 2016). In an extreme case, for example, it even took a teacher three months to prepare a 40-minute OL (Zeng, et al., 2011). Nevertheless, most educators of China are the proponents of the OL though there are critiques of it. In China’s instructional leadership practice, the OL has been viewed as one of effective ways to promote school-based teacher development. Maybe that's why the OL is still widely adopted in teaching-study activities of primary and secondary schools in China at the moment (Han, 2011; Li, 2014; Wang, 2018).

6.2.7 Compendium for Curriculum Reform [KE-GAI-GANG-YAO]

Compendium for Curriculum Reform [KE-GAI-GANG-YAO] here exclusively refers to the Compendium for Curriculum Reform of Basic Education (trial edition) issued by the MOE in 2001, in which the policy framework and relevant requirements of the curriculum reform are set out.

Figure 6.2 The timeline of the first seven times curriculum reforms in China after 1949

The curriculum of basic education in China had experienced seven reforms between 1949 and 2000 (see Figure 6.2), but the changes before 2001 had never been as comprehensive and profound as this most recent one (Zhong et al., 2001, p.3) because the momentum for the curriculum reform policy set out by the Compendium for Curriculum Reform (CCR) results from the changed social context of China. As noted in earlier chapters, Chinese government decided to adopt the system of market economy to replace that of planned economy in 1993. Moreover, China became the member state of the World Trade Organization (WTO) in 2001. Obviously, it was imperative for China to prepare human resource that fitted for the market economy system.
and globalized economy. To reach the goal of the human resource preparation, curriculum reform was seen as a vehicle for holistic reform of education (Feng, 2006; Wang, 2011). Although policy framework of the CCR consists of eight components, the component 1 and 2 have had the greatest ongoing impact on the leadership practice of primary and secondary schools. In the CCR, one purpose and six objectives of the curriculum reform are set in the component 1. The purpose is articulated as educating students by implementing the quality-oriented education while the six objectives are (MOE, 2001):

1. Shifting from a narrow perspective of knowledge delivery in classroom instruction to a perspective concerned with learning how to learn and fostering positive learning attitudes and values
2. Shifting from isolation among subjects to a balanced, comprehensive, and selective curriculum structure
3. Shifting from out of date and extremely abstruse curriculum content to essential knowledge and skills in relation to students’ life-long learning
4. Shifting from students learning passively to students developing capacities to proactively process information, obtain new knowledge, analyze and solve problems, and communicate as well as cooperate with others
5. No longer viewing the exclusive functions of curriculum evaluation to be identification and selection, but adding the promotion of student growth, teacher development, and instructional improvement as additional functions of curriculum evaluation
6. Shifting from centralization in curriculum control to leaving room for local and school curriculum.

Given the phenomenon of chalk and talk instruction and rote-learning was very common in Chinese schools at the time, these objectives of curriculum reform would trigger off a significant transformation of China’s school education, and thereby would indirectly impact on school leadership practice. Concomitantly, according to the component 2 of the CCR, the single-level curriculum structure, which existed between 1949 and 2000, would be replaced by a new curriculum structure with three levels of curriculum ranging from national curriculum to local curriculum and school curriculum. This change meant that schools would take unprecedented responsibilities for curriculum development as well as curriculum management. With this big
change, Curriculum Leadership as an emerging term began to be used in government policy documents concerning requirements for school leadership (Ye, 2008; Zheng, 2013; Chen and Liu, 2018). However, the realization of the purpose and objectives CCR depends largely on the influence of school leaders on school teaching practice.

6.2.8 Three-Level Curriculum Management

As noted in 6.2.7, there were seven times curriculum reforms of basic education in China between 1949 and 2000. However, the focus of the first seven reforms were mainly on the increase or decrease of subjects and the change of subject syllabus and textbooks. The centralized curriculum system borrowed from the Soviet Union had not changed since 1949 (Zheng, 2005; Wang, 2011). Compared with the previous curriculum reform, one of the most remarkable changes in the latest curriculum reform is the change of curriculum system from centralization towards decentralization, although the degree of this change is still limited. The core of this change is marked by establishing the three-level curriculum structure and system of three-level curriculum management.

In the RHD of the CCCPC and the State Council released in 1999, establishment of a new system of three-level curriculum (national, local and school curriculum) as one of reform goals in China’s basic education was proclaimed (CCCPC and the State Council, 1999). On May 29, 2001, the State Council issued the RHD titled The Decision of State Council on the Reform and Development of Basic Education and officially proclaimed to carry out the system of three-level curriculum for basic education (State Council, 2001). Ten days later, the MOE was released Compendium for Curriculum Reform, in which the responsibilities of the MOE, the provincial education department and school to curriculum management was defined respectively (see Table 6.1). This is the first time since the founding of the People's Republic of China in 1949 that the central government has substantively shared curriculum management power and responsibilities with local governments and schools (Zhong, et al., 2001, p.347; Li, 2010).

Table 6.1 The curriculum management responsibilities shared by three levels

| Levels      | Responsible Body | Management Responsibilities                                                      |
|-------------|------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| National level | MOE              | - Formulating general plan for basic education curriculum;                     |
|             |                  | - Formulating the basic education curriculum management policy;               |
|             |                  | - Setting the subjects of national curriculum categories                      |
| **Province level** | **PEDs** | - Developing a plan for the implementation of the national curriculum in the province; Planning the curriculum for basic education in the province; Developing, with the MOE’s approval, the curriculum standards used in the province; Supervising the implementation of national and local curricula and providing guidance for local and school curricula development. |
| **School level** | **Schools** | - While implementing national and local curricula, developing or selecting suitable curriculum in terms of the characteristics of local community, combining the traditions and advantages of the school and the interests and needs of students. |

Note. MOE=Ministry of Education; PED=provincial education department.

Source: MOE, 2001.

Eighteen years after the implementation of the three-level management policy, curriculum leadership at the local and school levels has been developed to a considerable extent. Because of the vast territory of each province and the large number of schools under the jurisdiction of the provincial education department, almost all provincial education departments tend to delegate parts of power and responsibility of curriculum management to the county education bureaus (CEBs) in rural areas and the district education bureaus (DEBs) in city areas. Thus, the curriculum leadership capacity of CEBs and DEBs has significantly developed and improved in recent years through their efforts to coordinate local resources, to provide school leaders and teachers with training programs, and to establish curriculum evaluation and incentive system (Han, 2014; Sun, 2019; He & Yue, 2019). The curriculum leadership capacity of school leaders, meanwhile, has developed in the practice of school curriculum management in past eighteen years. The curriculum leadership at school level will be discussed in detail in 6.2.9.
6.2.9 Curriculum Leadership [KE-CHENG-LING-DAO]

As noted above, the purpose and the objectives of curriculum reform set out by the CCR in 2001 triggered off a significant transformation of China’s school education. However, the realization of the purpose and objectives depends largely on the influence of school leadership on school teaching practice. At classroom level, the intended objectives of curriculum reform may be altered and even ruined by the teachers without motivation to change their chalk and talk teaching format, or “the teachers who have found the new curriculum difficult to handle when preparing their students to do well in public examinations” (OECD, 2011, p.91). That is, “educators jokingly describe the situation as follows: ‘High-sounding appeals to promote quality[-oriented] education, down-to-earth preparation for examinations’” (OECD, 2011, p.90). Furthermore, the MOE required schools that “While implementing the national curriculum and local curriculum, schools should develop or select appropriate school-based curriculum in terms of the specific situation of local social and economic development, combining the school's traditions and preponderance, students' interests and needs.” (MoE, 2001). For school principals, it was undoubtedly the unprecedented challenge for principal leadership. Yet, many principals, as the Chief Officer of Basic Education of Shandong Province pointing out, were not good at leading their schools to carry out the curriculum reform policy at the time because the principals in most schools had depended on, for a long time, the vice-principal in charge of curriculum and instruction to deal with routine instructional management affairs (Zhang, 2011). On the other hand, a deputy director of one of district education bureaus of Beijing revealed in 2008 based on the results of investigations regarding curriculum reform at schools level that the most teachers could neither fully understand new curriculum standards nor handle classroom instruction well in accordance with the requirements of curriculum reform (Ye, 2008). Obviously, both the provincial chief officer of education and the leader of a district education bureau from the capital city, Beijing suggested that it is necessary for curriculum reform at school level to develop principal’s curriculum leadership capacity. Thus, in the years following the beginning of the curriculum reform in 2001, Curriculum Leadership as a term was emerging. Shanghai, compared with other provinces and municipalities, was the first city to draw up clear roadmap for Curriculum Leadership development. In 2007, the Shanghai Municipal Education Commission (SMEC) set out three paths simultaneously to aim at enhancing principal’s Curriculum Leadership within three years. The first path was to improve the principal’s capacity of curriculum planning by requiring
all schools to develop school-based curriculum plan. It was proposed that the curriculum plan might consist of school vision, school tradition, curriculum expectations of students and parents, curriculum objectives, curriculum structure, curriculum implementation and management, curriculum evaluation, curriculum resources, and mechanism of quality assurance (Yin, 2010; Zhang, 2018). Through curriculum planning, principals would learn how to keep linking central government intention in curriculum reform with school characteristics and specific needs of students and parents, so as to ensure that the general purpose of curriculum reform would be coupled with the school-based curriculum reform objectives. The second path was to enhance principal’s capacity of curriculum implementation by requiring principals to work with other members of school leadership team, middle managers and backbone teachers to translate the national curriculum standards into a range of subject-based specific criteria for classroom instruction and other learning activities, so as to put the school-based curriculum plan into practice (Yin, 2010). The third path was to develop principal’s capacity to coordinate school-based research by requiring principals to construct learning organization and to encourage teachers to engage in the school as well as subject-based scientific research, so as to solve the problems and to address the challenges emerged in the practice of curriculum reform as far as possible (Yin, 2010; WE, 2015). The SMEC published in 2010 a three-year action plan for Curriculum Leadership improvement subsequent to the “three paths” of enhancing principal’s Curriculum Leadership proposed in 2007. It was actually another three-year project to further enhance principal’s Curriculum Leadership, in which over 50 district-wide or school-wide pilot programs were exercised. Secondly, the content of the term Curriculum Leadership was further expanded in this official document of SMEC in 2010. For example, it was called on in this action plan to create the culture which fostered curriculum reform (SMEC, 2010). Subsequently, the National Center for School Curriculum and Textbook Development (NCSCTD) made a special trip to Shanghai to conduct an in-depth study on the pilot programs of Curriculum Leadership in Shanghai since policy and practical exploration of Curriculum Leadership strengthening and improvement in Shanghai had received considerable repercussions across the country. In 2013, the NCSCTD set up six pilot zones of Curriculum Leadership exploration in which thousands of schools involved (WE, 2015). Since then, the Curriculum Leadership as a term has been widely used in China’s school leadership practice. However, given Curriculum Leadership as a term in China’s context
arises from practice and there is not a clearly defined definition, the practices in different provinces and cities lead to different definitions, which can be slightly confusing for international researchers. By reviewing a variety of different definitions, the term *Curriculum Leadership*, broadly speaking, encompasses a range of functions of curriculum planning, school-based curriculum development, curriculum resources allocation, curriculum implementation and management, curriculum evaluation, research team building for curriculum reform and creation of the culture fostering curriculum improvement (Zhang, 2011; Chen, 2013; Liu, 2014; Wei, 2015; Gao & Tan, 2016; Li & Zhou, 2018). On the other hand, *Curriculum Leadership* as an area of leadership practice, which has been on-going development. One of recent developments is that the distributed perspective is introduced into the practice of *Curriculum Leadership*. It is recognized that *Curriculum Leadership* is not an exclusive role of the principal, or other members of school leadership team. Rather, *Curriculum Leadership* is probably best conceived as a set of functions which must be carried out by both school leaders as well as teachers (Ding, 2015; Zhang, 2018; Cao, 2018). Nevertheless, challenges are emerging in the practice of *Curriculum Leadership* in China, which are identified as unbalanced development of *Curriculum Leadership* between coastal cities and inland of China (Gao & Tan, 2016; Yang, 2016), unbalanced performance in different functions of *Curriculum Leadership* (Zhu, et al, 2017), the school-based action of curriculum reform, in some cases, exclusively reflects the principal’s personal preference rather than students’ real needs (Wei, 2015), and the research methodology concerning *curriculum leadership* is not sophisticated (Chen & Liu, 2018).

### 6.2.10 School-Based Research Management

School-Based Scientific Research Management is an assembled term, which is gradually developed from the practice of China’s school education after the curriculum reform launched in 2001.

Although the Central Institute of Education Sciences (renamed National Institute of Education Sciences in 2011) had been set up in 1957 by Chinese central government, it was not until the early 1980s that China’s education practitioners got chance to have access to the term *educational research*. For China’s education practitioners, the significance and the promising future of *educational research* were initially discussed in the late years of 1970s in Shanghai by a group of school teachers who were all with the personal interest in *educational research* and got
together voluntarily to discuss research issues regularly. Interestingly, among these teachers who were keen to promote educational research at grass-root level, most of them were actually amateurs (even laymen) in educational research. With their enthusiastic and persistent lobbying, they finally persuaded the leadership of Xuhui District Education Bureau of Shanghai to set up in September 1978 a formal team of educational research which is said the first official unit of educational research at local level (Feng, 2005, p.1). Four years later, Shanghai Institute of Educational Sciences (renamed Shanghai Academy of Educational Sciences in 1995) was set up as one of the earliest provincial institutions of educational research in the People’s Republic of China. By October 1982 (that was the time when Shanghai Institute of Educational Sciences was founded), educational research in Shanghai had gone through a process from “individual educators’ interest” and “voluntary group of amateurs” to “institutionalized practice”. In the following years, provincial and district/county-level institutions of educational research were established one another throughout the country. The primary role of institutions of educational research at the time was to disseminate the knowledge of scientific research by training programs and to introduce the research progress in education sector through relevant publications. Since then, the term educational research has gradually been widely used by China’s school educators. In 1984, the founding director of Shanghai Institute of Educational Sciences argued at a conference that the research themes of educational research conducted by local research institutions and primary and secondary schools should mainly focused on practical issues at schools rather than the themes of theoretical research. “We should identify research themes from the problems in school practice that need to be studied and solved urgently” he proposed (Feng, 2005, p.16). His view was widely accepted at the time and reinforced later in curriculum reform after 2001(Xing, 2000; Liu, 2004; Zhou, 2005; Chen, 2009). A high school principal even asserted that the problems that arisen in the course of school-based curriculum reform were, of course, the research themes of the school, and the solutions to them would be based on the educational research conducted at school (Huang, 2018). Perhaps, that's why nowadays school leaders and teachers prefer using the term school-based research to using the term educational research.

With the curriculum reform gradually gaining ground after 2001, China's local authorities and school leaders recognized that it was imperative to foster the scientific research ability of teachers because the implementation of curriculum reform would not solely rely on the
teaching-study convention, but should step up efforts to build a *school-based scientific research* team to energize their schools (Liu, 2002; Fang, 2004). The *scientific research* here refers to the research highlighted by the data-based and evidence-based methodology because there has been an emerging consensus in last ten years that the complex task of school-based curriculum reform needs the support from empirical research (Liu, 2017; Chen & Liu, 2018). Thus, the term *school-based research* has been recently replaced by *school-based scientific research*.

In another development, the recognition of the significance of *scientific research* became one of the driving forces to promote principals to consider how to ensure the research in their school to be exercised “scientifically” by establishment of a specialized office to manage school-based research projects. Consequently, the term *school-based scientific research management* was naturally accepted by principals. This development has yielded a prevalent trend that more and more schools have tended to establish the Office for Scientific Research & Teacher Development (OSR&TD) over past nineteen years since the launch of curriculum reform. The OSR&TD as one of middle management of a school performs management functions concerning school-based research and takes responsibility in improving teachers’ knowledge and skills on scientific research by relevant training programs. More specifically, the OSR&TD usually fulfill the following roles (Wu, Feng, & Wei, 2008, p.258):

- To assist school leadership to identify emerged as well as emerging challenges in implementation of curriculum reform, and to prepare consultation paper for leadership decision making when necessary.
- To deliver scientific research knowledge to teachers by teacher training.
- To develop school scientific research plan in terms of leadership decision, and coordinate teachers to apply for the research projects at school, district and provincial levels.
- To supervise the progress of granted projects and the condition of funds usage.
- To organize an expert meeting for project appraisal upon completion of each project.
- To release newsletters of school scientific research regularly.
- To be responsible for collection and filing of school research data.

Now that the OSR&TD has been set up at a school, what role should the principal play in the management of school-based scientific research? In terms of successful cases, the roles of the principal in *school-based scientific research management* basically include (Xing, 2000; Wu,
6.2 key terms

Feng and Wei, 2008, p. 261),

• To aware of the value of school-based scientific research to the development of schools and to see it as one of the priorities of school leadership.
• To make decision on the orientation and purposes of school-based scientific research and to guide the process of the school research planning.
• To establish an effective management agency (e.g. the OSR&TD) of school-based scientific research.
• To provide incentives for teachers to be research educators.
• To create a school climate that can foster the school-based scientific research.

6.3 Summary and Discussion

After the key terms revolved around instructional leadership are explored and interpreted in this chapter, the features of the instructional leadership in China’s context have risen to the surface. For instance, there is a three-tier Teaching-Study System at provincial, district/county and school level. The subject-based Teaching-Study Specialists from district/county teaching-study office closely work with the Teaching-Study Group as well as the Lesson Preparation Group at schools to provide district/county wide schools with technical support on daily basis. Not surprisingly, one of the dimensions of instructional leadership in China’s context is to coordinate and to make best use of external professional human resource to maximize school effectiveness in teaching and learning and, at the same time, to improve the professional quality of teachers. A second instance is that the unique teaching-study convention and format (e.g. Five-Link-Cycle of Teaching, Collective Lesson Preparation, Classroom Observation and Commentary, etc.) are highly valued in China’s school context. Moreover, one of the beliefs underpinning the convention and format is that successful instructional leadership must be based on the solid teaching-study in which the principal personally involves. So, it is hard to imagine that a principal who is ignorant of classroom instruction being respected by teachers. By the same token, it is hard to imagine that a principal exercises instructional leadership well without maintaining high visibility at the work place of teaching-study activities.

Apart from the terms around instructional leadership, we also examined a set of terms regarding the curriculum reform, through which the status quo of Curriculum Leadership in China’s context has been presented. There is no doubt that the curriculum reform in China has
made great achievements since the reform was launched in 2001. Concomitantly, the curriculum reform has also brought some challenges to school leadership. The biggest challenge for *Curriculum Leadership* in many schools is the standards of the national curriculum are not flexible. Although the curriculum system consists of national, local and school curricula, the high-stakes testing subjects (e.g. Chinese language and literature, Mathematics, Foreign Languages) are all categorized into the domain of national curriculum. China is a country with a large population of school-age children. According to the statistics in 2017, there were 186 million students and 12 million teachers (non-teaching staff not included) at two hundred and fifty thousand primary and secondary schools distributed in different parts of the country under different economic levels of development (MoE, 2017). As many high performing teachers choose to move to the schools in coastal cities, it is hard for teachers in small towns and rural areas of mainland China to fully change their teaching approaches in accordance with the new requirements of curriculum reform because they lack the capacity to ensure their students’ test scores to be higher enough in high-stakes test if they abandon the traditional teaching methods they have been familiar with. This situation has resulted in the problems in the practice of *Curriculum Leadership* in China, which are identified as unbalanced development of *Curriculum Leadership* between coastal cities and inland of China (Gao & Tan, 2016; Yang, 2016). Secondly, teacher workloads have excessively increased accompanied with the progress of curriculum reform. With the implementation of curriculum reform, the requirements and expectations for the role of a teacher are accruing. In traditional Chinese culture, the primary responsibility of a teacher is not only to teach students the knowledge and skills of subjects but also to guide the process of socialization for students. Therefore, the term “educator” is quite different from “instructor” in the Chinese cultural context because an “educator” is not only an “instructor” but also a “moral guide.” If a teacher only acts as an “instructor,” he or she will be seen as an unqualified teacher. In this sense, when the question of “who is a qualified teacher?” is raised, the traditional answer is very simple: A qualified teacher is an educator. Recently, the answer has changed to “not only an educator but also a learner” because for teachers in the era of curriculum reform, they have too much new knowledge to learn. Even more recently the answer has become “an educator, learner, innovator, facilitator, researcher....” Consequently, teacher workloads have been rapidly increasing with the endless requirements and expectations from the reform. This raises serious questions for school
leadership: What is the peak load for a teacher? Will a number of teachers collapse or even burnout some day? Can a fatigued teacher work well? Will the intended new teaching approach required by curriculum reform be altered and even ruined by a fatigued teacher in classroom instruction? Such questions still remain to be answered though some principals are aware of this challenge and are trying to take measures to deal with it. (Feng, 2003; Feng, 2007; Li, 2009; Wang, 2017).

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