

**PERCEPTION OF PRINCIPALS IN THE SOUTHERN, URBAN U.S. AND  
EASTERN, URBAN CHINA REGARDING THE SELECTION, PREPARATION,  
AND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT OF ELEMENTARY PRINCIPALS**

A Dissertation

by

JIE LIN

Submitted to the Office of Graduate Studies of  
Texas A&M University  
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

August 2005

Major Subject: Educational Administration

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Approved by:

Co-Chairs of Committee,	John Hoyle Virginia Collier
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**ABSTRACT**

Perceptions of Principals in the Southern, Urban U.S. and Eastern, Urban China  
Regarding the Selection, Preparation, and Professional Development  
of Elementary Principals.

(August 2005)

Jie Lin, B.S., East China Normal University;

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Dr. Virginia Collier

An effective principal is the catalyst for an effective school. For this reason, it is imperative that education stakeholders all over the world become responsible for addressing the selection, preparation and development of principals. The purpose of this study is to explore the similarities and differences in the selection process, preparation programs and the professional development practices as perceived by elementary school principals in urban public schools in the southern U.S and urban public schools in eastern China.

The naturalistic paradigm of inquiry was used to frame the study and acquire and analyze data. The sample consisted of fourteen elementary school principals in a southern, urban area in the U.S. and an eastern, urban area in China selected via a purposive sample. The researcher visited their campuses between September, 2004 and January, 2005. Intensive interviews and observations were used to gather information

from principals in American and Chinese urban elementary schools. Data from interviews were unitized into categories.

Some of the conclusions included:

- The American respondents indicated that current admission criteria for entrance into educational leadership programs were not sufficient for identifying a candidate's aptitude for being a successful principal.
- The Chinese principals believed that most selected Chinese principals are successful school leaders.
- The American principals were satisfied with the effectiveness of the university preparation programs.
- The Chinese principals were not satisfied with the effectiveness of classroom instruction of preparation programs.
- The American principals felt that their professional development programs were helpful for improving their practice and their schools.
- The Chinese principals were not satisfied with the effectiveness of the professional development programs.
- Similarities and differences exist between the American and Chinese respondents' perceptions of selection, preparation, and professional development.

## DEDICATION

I give my sincere thanks to my parents and my family.

Thank you to my parents, Changlong Lin and Deying Wei, who offered me the most unselfish love and constant support. Being parents is the toughest job in the world, but you did it so well. You are my best friends forever.

Thanks to my brother, Hang Lin, who has been close to me since I was born. During these days when I left home, you took care of our parents. Thank you for being such a wonderful and dedicated brother.

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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

It is acknowledged by international educators and scholars that principals make a significant and measurable contribution to the effectiveness of staff and in the learning of students in their charge (Boe, 2001; Bossert, Dwyer, Rowan, & Lee, 1982; Huber & Kiegelmann, 2002; van de Grift, 1990; Zheng, 1996). As a result, every nation embraces the importance of preparing principals for the changing world of practice (Hallinger & Bridges, 1997).

In the United States, contemporary models of school reform acknowledge the principal as the passport to school success in an increasingly complex organization (Fenwick & Pierce, 2002). The report *America 2000: Where School Leaders Stand* (1991) by the American Association of School Administrators states:

School administrators have never had a more crucial role in American society; they must be the ones who stimulate the debate and help form a vision of what our schools should become in communities across the nation (p.6).

Research also indicates that school leaders affect student achievement indirectly through their influence on school organizational conditions and instructional quality (Hallinger & Heck, 1996).

The importance of the principal's role has resulted in states and administrative groups creating many sets of standards, domains, competencies, or proficiencies for

principals in the United States. In 1983, American Association of School Administrator (AASA) published *Guidelines for the Preparation of School Administrators*. In 1985, the University Consortium for the Performance-Based Preparation of Principals joined with the National Association of Secondary School Principals (NASSP), and published a special report entitled *Performance-based Preparation of Principals: A Framework for Improvement*. In 1990, the National Association of Elementary School Principals (NAESP) published *Principals for the Twenty-First Century* (Hoyle, English, & Steffy, 1998); and the National Policy Board for Educational Administration (NPBEA) published *Principals for Our Changing Schools*, an outline of 21 knowledge and skill domains. In 1999, the Texas State Board of Educator Certification (SBEC) created nine domains of principal competencies and tested them in the new TExES Examination, which is required for certification.

Although the identified standards and skills listed above provided fundamental guidance for preparing and developing current and aspiring school principals, the critical and growing shortage of adequately prepared and certified school administrators in America still remains (Lashway, 1999; Chirichello, 2001; Fenwick & Pierce, 2001). One possible reason for this shortage may be the quality of the selection strategies and preparation programs in the United States.

Traditionally, American graduate students have come to administrator preparation programs as the result of self-selection, but program efforts to improve the overall quality of the pool of candidates through more selective admission criteria and procedures have had only limited impact on the field (Bredeson, 1996). Meanwhile,

traditional criteria like GPA, test scores, letters of recommendation, and evidence of teaching and administrative experience have disadvantaged non-traditional administrator candidates, women and ethnic and racial minorities (Bredeson, 1996). Correspondingly, the failure to maintain high standards for selecting principals for certification has resulted in such negative effects as slower program quality and non-rigorous certification and licensure (Murphy, 1993).

In addition to concern about selection of candidates, there has been increasing concern about the rigor of principal preparation programs and certification requirement (Fenwick & Pierce, 2001). A recent public agenda survey found that over 85% percent of principals and superintendents believed that overhauling preparation programs would help improve leadership (Lashway, 2003). Witters-Churchill (1991) concluded that Texas principals and assistant principals believed that pre-service preparation programs of principals should be more field-based and performance-based and should include development of practical skills. This study also urged that the principal internship be improved and extended. The weakest threads in the fabric of educational administration programs are found in the tentative university-school linkages, which Goldhammer (1983) referred to as the university field gap. Bjork & Ginsberg (1995) concluded the need for critical examination of educational administration preparation programs is obvious.

Leadership preparation has traditionally been front-loaded, with an intensive period of formal preparation and certification followed by informal, self-guided, and sporadic professional development. Increasingly, however, practitioners and

policymakers are recognizing the need to provide a seamless continuum of professional training throughout the leaders' career (Lashway, 2003). Guskey (1998) proposed that every modern proposal to reform, restructure, or transformation of schools emphasizes professional development as a primary vehicle in efforts to bring about needed change. Unfortunately, as schools approach change in a fragmented fashion, professional development of principals has often been an afterthought (Sparks & Hirsh, 1997). Traditionally, professional development for principals has been viewed as a series of weekly managerial meetings and periodic conferences (Mann, 1998). Many administrators still function according to a basic premise that once the certification process is complete, professional development is a personal choice (Mann, 1998).

In China's history, qualifications for the principalship were not clearly specified for a long time. Before 1985, political attributes were considered to be more important than educational expertise. The general role was "laymen lead experts" (Lewin, Little, Xu, & Zheng, 1994, p.205) and many principals had no teaching experience. In 1985, the Chinese central government initiated a project of principal training and professional development, which significantly influenced the reform and development of Chinese public education (Bush, Coleman, & Xi, 1998). It has become more common to invite applications and to appoint principals from within the teaching profession. However, the majority of the Chinese school principals were selected by authorities to become administrators based on their seniority and performance as teachers, whereas for the majority of the American school principals preparing to become an administrator was largely a self-decision (Su, Adams, & Mininberg, 2000). It was in 1995 that the Chinese

National Ministry of Education required all the principals to obtain certificates of pre-service training before they take the leadership positions. This change has caused educational administration to emerge as a formal teaching and research area in a few leading institutions of teacher education. Several principal centers have been established to support the preparation and development of practicing and aspiring principals. The principle criticisms of Chinese principal training programs were identified as focusing too much on theory and not placing enough emphasis on fieldwork (Su, Adams, & Mininberg, 2000).

### **Statement of the Problem**

Research about effective school principals has identified key attributes, skills, and dispositions in the United States, but many questions remain unanswered about how best to select and prepare current and aspiring principals for American schools. In the case of China, little literature is available describing the selection process, preparation programs, or professional development activities of principals. In addition, there is no consensus about the perceptions that Chinese school principals have regarding their selection, preparation and professional development. Researchers and practitioners have suggested the obvious effects principals have on the learning climate, educational programs, and performance of schools (Keeler & Andrews, 1963; Leithwood & Montgomery, 1982; Hallinger & Heck, 1998). Consequently, the need to identify current issues of selecting, preparing, and developing Chinese school administrators in order to improve school and student learning is critical.

We must prepare all principals for the changing world of practice (Hallinger & Bridges, 1997). With the increasing global context, it is imperative for the field of educational administration not only to look inward, but also to develop a broad international version (Slater, et al., 2002). Many scholars call for “educational borrowing” of policy and practice, and an “international mindset” in educational administration (Chapman, Sackney, & Aspin, 1999, Paige & Mestenhauser, 1999).

In China, the influence that Western ideals have had on education has been underscored (Yeung, 2002) by the increasing international trade and the emerging prominence of China as one of the primary trade partnerships with the United States. This has led to comparisons regarding the internal structures and national politics of the two countries (Yeung, 2002). However, cross-cultural international studies on selection, preparation and professional development of principals between the United States and China are scant.

This paper is an effort to fill in this gap on cross-cultural comparative studies. Although taking on varying forms, America and China both have a long history of principal training. How do principals in the United States and China regard their selection, preparation, and professional development processes? Do any similarities or differences exist between American and Chinese principals’ perceptions about their selection, preparation and professional development? What can American and Chinese policy makers and educator learn from each other at this point? The paper is designed to provide insight into those questions.

## **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this study is to explore the similarities and differences in the selection process, preparation programs and the professional development practices as perceived by elementary school principals in urban public schools in the southern, U.S and urban public schools in eastern, China. For this purpose, six research questions were specifically identified. These research questions were:

1. How do American principals perceive the selection process for principal preparation programs in the United States?
2. How do Chinese principals perceive the selection process for principal preparation programs in China?
3. How do American principals perceive the principal preparation programs in the United States?
4. How do Chinese principals perceive the principal preparation programs in China?
5. How do American principals perceive the principal professional development activities in the United States?
6. How do Chinese principals perceive the principal professional development activities in China?

## **Operational Definitions**

Selection is the process of choosing from an applicant pool those candidates deemed most qualified and most likely to meet identified criteria.

*Preparation* is a professional pre-service training program for public school principals leading to certification as required by national or state law. In the U.S., preparation programs are usually synonymous with the college or university master's degree programs in educational administration.

*Professional development* is a series of in-service training activities for public school principals that stimulate proactive reform and revitalization within a school environment. In the U.S., professional development that occurs after a principal is given a principalship. It should be noted that until very recently, professional development was the only training provided for Chinese principals. Preparation for the principalship prior to receiving a position did not exist in China.

*Principal* is an administrative leader who is responsible for school reform on a campus and for integrating the balance of social, cultural, educational and political needs of the total learning community.

*Urban* is both the central city and the adjacent suburbs.

*School* is a single campus under the administration of one principal.

*American principals* in this study are principals in a specific southern, urban area in the United States, namely the greater Houston area, Texas.

*Chinese principals* in this study are principals in a specific eastern, urban area in China, namely Shanghai, China.

### **Assumptions and Limitations**

This study requires the researcher to make three assumptions:

1. Differences and similarities exist between American and Chinese principals' perceptions of their selection, preparation and professional development.
2. The respondents interviewed will objectively and honestly answer the questions posed to them regarding the study.
3. The interpretation of the data collected will accurately reflect that which was intended.

The study was limited in three ways:

1. The conclusions drawn from this study are applicable only to the elementary principals who agreed to be interviewed in urban schools in the southern United States and eastern China.
2. The study is limited to the information acquired from literature reviews and personal interviews.
3. The sampling method of the study resulted in inclusion of more than normal number of principals involved in higher education.

## **Methodology**

### *Population*

This study focuses on the urban principals in the United States and China. The researcher anticipated interviewing 5-8 elementary school principals at different districts in the southern, urban U.S, and 5-8 elementary school principals at different districts in

eastern, urban China. All interviews were done face to face. The study's conclusions are based on these interviews. All interview respondents were unfamiliar to the researcher.

### *Procedure*

The naturalistic inquiry approach was selected for this study because the researcher was seeking the meaning and understanding of the social construction of everyday life for American and Chinese school principals regarding their basic beliefs regarding principal preparation and professional development. Grand tour interview questions were designed in advance (see Appendix A); however, the design of naturalistic inquiry emerges, develops, and unfolds in the field (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Questions became more and more specific as the interview moves along and as the interviewer begins to sense what is salient about the information the respondent can provide. Data derived from interviews was recorded by tape record or through taking notes. After each interview, the researcher analyzed the data immediately. The data was transferred into transcripts, and sorted by code. Finally the information obtained from the interviews was subjected to triangulation and further member checking for the purpose of establishing trustworthiness.

### *Naturalistic Inquiry Approach*

Unlike quantitative research, the conclusions of naturalistic inquiry study can't be generalized in the sense of scientific discourse; however, naturalistic "generalization"

offers a description of the multiple and different realities. Naturalistic inquiry eschews random or representative sampling in favor of purposive or theoretical sampling in order to increase the likelihood that the full array of multiple realities will be uncovered. Inquiry outcomes depend upon the nature and quality of the interaction between the researcher and the respondents. Naturalistic Inquiry allows the research design to emerge rather than to be constructed preordinately. It takes exception against conventional trustworthiness criteria, such as internal and external validity, reliability, and objectivity; and proposes substitute criteria called credibility, transferability, dependability, and conformability (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

### **Significance Statement**

An effective principal is the catalyst for an effective school (Hudgins & Cone, 1992). For this reason, it is imperative that education stakeholders all over the world become responsible for addressing the selection, preparation and development of principal.

This study was designed to broaden perspectives on the current reform issues in both American and Chinese schools regarding principal selection for preparation programs, preparation and professional development, and to develop further understanding between American and Chinese scholars and practitioners in educational administration.

These understandings are important because school principals are at the center of school improvement efforts both in the United States and China. Currently, some

research institutions are working on establishing international foundation in the preservice and in-service curriculum for educational administrators (Su, Adams, & Mininberg, 2000). It is hoped that policy makers, educational researchers, and educational reformers will draw useful lessons from this study in their efforts to select and prepare more and better principals who are committed to meeting the increasing needs of urban schools in a changing society.

## **CHAPTER II**

### **REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE**

The purpose of this chapter is to overview the public educational systems and basic role of principals in the United States and China. Further, this chapter discusses past studies regarding the selection process for preparation programs, preparation programs, and professional development of principals in the United States and China, respectively. Finally, this chapter contrasts between the public educational systems, basic role of principals, selection process for preparation programs, preparation programs, and professional development programs of principals in the United States and China as obtained from the literature reviewed are discussed.

It is important to acknowledge that the review of literature in this chapter has the following two limitations. First, formal studies of Chinese principal training are not readily available. Therefore, studies regarding Chinese principal training used in the review are limited to available Chinese-language literature, which are also scant. Since little has been written, online resources about principal training in China are also limited. The inaccessibility of Chinese literature is evident in this study. This lack of published information in China required the researcher to use personal experiences as a Chinese educator to fill in gaps in published information. Second, except for the study of Su, Adams, & Mininberg (2000) and Wu (2001), comparative studies addressing principal training between China and America were few. The lack of comparative data in the two

counties points to a gap in the literature and underscores the need for comprehensive research efforts such as this study.

## Overview of Public Education Systems

### *Public Education System in the United States*

The American public school system requires that students complete 12 years of primary and secondary compulsory education prior to attending a university or college. This schooling may be accomplished either at public or government-operated schools, or at private schools. According to the U.S. Department of Education (National Center for Education Statistics, 2002), there were 94,112 public elementary and secondary schools in the 2001-2002 school year. Table 1 presents the number and type of public elementary and secondary schools at that time.

**Table 1. Public Elementary and Secondary Schools in the United States: 2001-2002**

	<b>Total</b>	<b>Regular</b>	<b>Special</b>	<b>Vocational</b>	<b>Alternative</b>
<b>Total schools</b>	94,112	85,619	1,987	1,023	5,483

Note: Totals include the 50 states and the District of Columbia

Source: National Center for Education Statistics, 2002

Most of these elementary and secondary schools offered a comprehensive curriculum and may provide other programs and services as well. A smaller number of schools focused primarily on special education, vocational education, or alternative programs (National Center for Education Statistics, 2003). In 2002, about 48 million

students were enrolled in American elementary and secondary public schools; about 3.0 million elementary and secondary public school teachers were engaged in classroom instruction (NCES, 2003).

Basically, the public education system in the United States is governed by three different levels of authority: national, state, and local (U.S. Network for Education Information, 2005). There is no national education framework law or series of laws governing public schools in the United States. The responsibility for education is given to the states in the U.S. Constitution. However, the government does provide guidance and funding for federal educational programs in which both public and private schools take part, and the U.S. Department of Education oversees these programs. In the United States, each of the 50 states has its own laws regulating education. State boards of education are bodies of prominent citizens either elected or appointed by the state legislature or the state governor for fixed terms. These state boards conduct oversight of statewide educational policies and operations, determine budget priorities, approve new policies and guidelines (such as for curricula), approve certain professional appointments, consider requests from local education agencies, and investigate problems.

Most local education agencies in the United States are governed by locally elected or appointed school boards. Operated by local school boards, these school districts provide instructional services for students. Within these local districts, primary schools tended to be smaller than middle and high schools. The average number of students in a primary school was 441 in 2001-02 (NCES, 2003).

The structure of U.S. education includes 12 years of regular schooling, preceded by a year or two of pre-school education, and followed by a four-stage higher education degree system (associate, bachelor's, master's, doctorate). Pre-school programs generally occur in the years preceding first grade or around ages 3-5. The first year of pre-school education is often called pre-kindergarten or nursery school, while the second year is often called kindergarten or preschool.

American children enter formal schooling around age 6. Formal schooling lasts 12 years, until around age 18. Each of the school years is called a grade, so that 12th grade corresponds to the 12th year. Different schools divide the 12 years into various stages. A common arrangement of the grades is the 6-3-3 pattern, consisting of 6 years of elementary school, 3 years of middle school, and 3 years of high school. Another common plan is the 8-4 plan under which children attend elementary school through the 8th grade and the last 4 years in senior high school. Variations exist depending on the local district (NACEE, 1998). Completion of each level or stage is a prerequisite for access to the next, and a variety of assessment and evaluation tools are used to determine learning needs, academic achievement standards, and eligibility to proceed to higher levels of education. All levels are available to all students. Only the age at which they reach the next level or their own personal decision to stop attending school prevents a student from moving to the next level. Table 2 illustrates the common 8-4 structure of the public school system in the United States.

In most districts in the United States, elementary schools provide a common daily routine for all students except the most disadvantaged or gifted students.

Elementary students frequently remain in a single classroom throughout the school day, with the exceptions of physical education and music or art classes. The average class size in American elementary schools is about 20 students (Finn & Achilles, 1990).

**Table 2. The Common Structure of the Public School Education System in the U.S.**

<b>Age of entry</b>	<b>Years at this level</b>	<b>Type of school</b>	<b>Grade</b>
3-4	1	Pre-kindergarten/Nursery school	Pre-Kindergarten
5	2	Kindergarten	Kindergarten
6-7	5	Elementary	1-5
11	3	Junior High/Middle school	6-8
14	4	Senior High	9-12

### *Public Education System in China*

China has the largest population of any country in the world. The total population is 1.26 billion and 63.78 percent of the population lives in rural areas, while 36.22 percent live in cities and towns (National Bureau of Statistics, 2001). Since the adoption of a reform and “open-door” policy in 1978, China’s economy has developed rapidly. The education reform undertaking has also achieved significant results. For example, the average number of years of education of the population above 12 years old was only 4.4 years in 1982 (Third Census of China, 1982). By 1999, the average had increased to 7.5 years. According to the recent report of the Fifth Census of China in 2000, 35.7 per cent of Chinese residents had a primary education, 33.96 per cent had stage I secondary education, 11.1 per cent had stage II secondary education, and 3.61 per cent had received higher education (Fifth Census of China, 2000). In 2000, the total number of students in

all kinds of schools was 243.4 million, with 11.9 million full-time teachers (National Bureau of Statistics, 2001).

The authority of the public school system in China consists of four separate levels. In China, the central government presides over the national public school system at the macro level. The power of daily management is delegated to various divisions of local governments. The National Ministry of Education is responsible for formulating laws and determining policies and overall planning. The responsibilities of provincial-level governments, cities and municipal districts are to implement public school education in areas under their jurisdiction by making development plans and teaching plans for local primary and secondary schools; offering support and funding to poor and minority areas, and providing subsidies to counties with inadequate educational resources. County-level governments bear the main responsibility for implementing compulsory education, including the overall management of educational finance, the deployment and management of school principals and teachers. The township governments are responsible for the implementation of compulsory education in the areas under their jurisdiction (China Education and Research Network, 2001). Table 3 summarizes the administrative structure of the Chinese education system.

**Table 3. Administrative Structure of the Chinese Public Education System**

I	Ministry of Education
II	Provincial Education Commission/Bureau, City, or Municipal District Education Commission/Bureau
III	County Education Bureau
IV	Town Education Cadre

*Source:* Adapted from Si, 1997.

The pattern of public school education in most parts of China follows a consistent sequence (Bush, Qiang, & Fang, 1998). Essentially, China implements a 6-3-3 program of elementary and secondary education, which includes six years of primary school, three years of junior secondary school and three years of senior middle school (Frasher & Frasher, 1987). In urban areas, pre-school education is available for varying lengths of time. The kindergartens may offer 3 years, two years or one year of schooling and may be full time, part-time, boarding or hour-reckoned. Primary and secondary education takes 12 years to complete, and is divided into primary, junior secondary and senior secondary stages. Primary education lasts either 5 or 6 years. At junior secondary stage, 98% of students have 3 years of schooling with a tiny part taking 4 years. The 9 years of schooling in primary and junior secondary schools is compulsory education. General senior secondary education lasts 3 years (China Education and Research Network, 2001). Table 4 shows the structure of the public school system in China.

**Table 4. The Structure of the Public Education School System in China**

<b>Age of entry</b>	<b>Years in school</b>	<b>Type of school</b>	<b>Grade</b>
3	3	Kindergarten	Kindergarten
6	6	Primary	1-6
12	3	Junior Secondary	7- 9
15	3	Senior Secondary	10-12

Each school year of primary and secondary education is divided into two semesters (China Education and Research Network, 2001). A typical school day in China usually begins with class at 8 a.m. Students usually have six class sessions a day

from Monday through Friday, four in the morning and two in the afternoon. Each of the sessions is forty-five minutes long. The morning classes begin at 8 a.m. and end at noon. The afternoon classes usually begin at 2:30 p.m. and end at 4:30 p.m. In the morning class, at the end of each session except for the second, there is a ten-minute break. At the end of the second session, there is a twenty-minute break during which students are required to go out of the classroom for physical exercise (Luo & Wendel, 1999).

Like in U.S., each of the school years in China is also called a grade. Children of the same grade are divided into classes. In China, the average class size is forty to sixty students. A student usually remains in a fixed class with the same group of students throughout the whole six years in the school. Therefore, a class is viewed as a standard unit in the primary school in China.

According to the personal observation of the researcher, China's public school system has faced at least two challenges in recent years. Although the overall enrollment rates for elementary and secondary schools in central China have risen to 99 percent and 91 percent respectively, many of the county-level units do not have primary or secondary schooling. In west China, only 242 units have primary education, and only 164 units have nine-year primary and junior high schooling among 469 county-level units ("China Expands Compulsory Education", 2002). As a result, the Chinese government needs to take effective measures to improve compulsory education in rural areas, especially in the west China areas. Accordingly, it is imperative to develop distance education, and invest in educational resources, such as computer technology.

For decades, emphasis has been placed on the results of students' achievement test. Students were trained to be test-takers. Their creative thinking, self-learning ability, and problem solving skills were largely ignored. This situation has directly contributed to the decline in the number of quality laborers in China. Consequently the Chinese government is now implementing "Quality Education," also called "Education for All-Round Development," and is emphasizing moral education, creativity and hands-on learning. These requirements will cause every school to engage in significant change.

### **Basic Role of Elementary Principals**

#### *Role of Elementary Principals in the United States*

Traditionally, the role of the elementary school principal in the U.S. was primarily that of a manager or supervisor. American principals did not usually belong to the same professional organizations as teachers, were considered management rather than labor in states with collective bargaining laws, and generally exercised direct authority over teachers. They were far more likely to formally observe and evaluate their teachers than are administrators in other countries (McAdams, 1998). Recently, the role of principals has shifted from management to instructional leadership. Elementary principals are increasingly expected to provide instructional leadership by evaluating teacher classroom performance, demonstrating effective teaching techniques, and actively participating in curriculum development and implementation (Hoyle, Bjork, Collier, & Glass, 2004).

The authority and autonomy of American elementary principals is constrained by the concept of local control at the district rather than the school level. American school boards, designed to be broadly representative of the local community, have no direct equivalent in most other countries. In addition, American principals rarely have regularly scheduled teaching responsibilities. The press of administrative responsibilities is greater than those of head teachers and provides a compelling rationale for the small number of teaching principals in the U.S (McAdams, 1998).

The importance of the principal's role has been increasingly realized by American society. American policymakers view principals as linchpins in plans for educational change (Hallinger & Hausman, 1993). In the report "American 2000: Where School Leaders Stand" (AASA, 1991), this statement appeared, "School administrators have never had a more crucial role in American society; they must be the ones who stimulate the debate and help form a vision of what our schools should become in communities across the nation." (p.6)

### *Role of Elementary Principals in China*

Every public school in China is administered by a principal and one or two assistant principals. While teaching part-time, the principal is responsible for the implementation of directives passed down from above, the allocation of funds, the distribution of rewards, the monitoring and evaluation of teachers, oversight of

instructional leadership, and smooth operation of the school (Luo & Wendel, 1999; Wang & Jacobson, 1993)

Because of the centralization of educational decision-making in China, the policy and overall planning in China is basically determined by the national government. Thus, the scope within which decisions can be made by schools remains limited. Traditionally, principals in China had a limited role in curriculum decision-making, recruiting and selecting teachers, and other decision. Lewin et al. (1994) lists the following specific limitations on the principals' powers in China.

- they do not select the textbooks;
- they do not select their own teachers;
- they do not determine teachers' salaries;
- and they may not spend any significant sum of money without the approval of the education authority.

A second set of limitations on the power of the principal relates to internal school factors. Since 1949, the management of Chinese enterprises and the administration of schools has become a dual system of operation. Basically, decision making was split into policy and operation. Each school is a post for a branch secretary of the Communist Party. The responsibility for policy enforcement was placed in the hands of the secretary of the communist party in the school. This person wields substantial authority which has matched or exceeded the power of the principal at times. According to this researcher's personal observation, the co-existence of posts of branch secretary of the Party and of

principals often leads to conflict in school management, especially when both leaders are relatively equal level in age, qualifications, experiences, and/or charisma.

Although the power of principals within the traditional educational system in China was restricted, in 1985, new governmental policy introduced a system that gave more responsibility for school management to the principals. Under the new policy, it is assumed that the Communist party's responsibilities are more for supporting principals than for administration. Accountability for the unit is placed directly on the principal (Frasher & Frasher, 1987; Bush, Coleman, & Xi, 1998). Today, although the Party remains an important and omnipresent feature of the education system, its influence is not overt and most principals aren't unduly constrained by its presence. The power of Chinese principals is expanding. Although their role in curriculum decision-making is still limited, they can supplement teacher's salary and engage in major items of spending. They have the power to select and recruit new teachers (Bush, Coleman, & Xi, 1998).

### *Expanding Role of Principals*

The role of American and Chinese principals has been briefly introduced in the above paragraphs. It is important to note that, scholars and educators from both countries agree that the role of principals is constantly expanding (Bossert, Dwyer, Rowan, & Lee, 1982; Wu, 2001; Fullan, 2002). Schools today face a magnitude of challenges presented by the social and cultural environment. In the U.S., the principal manages a complex organization that must have direction, operate efficiently, instill confidence among employees and patrons, and promote the personal growth of all personnel and educate

students (Langlois & McAdams, 1992). At the same time, the principalship has changed from a traditional authoritarian, hierarchical position to a dynamic leadership models in which the completion of management tasks rely on adapting to contexts or challenges (Council of Chief State School Officers, 1996). Chinese government is implementing a decentralization policy and delegating the power and accountability to local government, and even to individuals schools (Bush, Coleman, & Xi, 1998). Chinese principals are feeling the need to supplement their schools' governmental allocations, which has made their role more demanding and entrepreneurial (Jacobson, 2001).

### **Selection Process for Preparation Programs**

#### *Selection Process in the United States*

Effective administrator preparation requires not only quality programs based on standards and proven practice, but also quality students who have the potential to become effective school leaders (Browne-Ferrigno & Shoho, 2002). As a first step in preparing school leaders, the selection of candidates is as critical as the preparation program itself (Creighton & Jones, 2001). The National Policy Board for Educational Administration emphasized the need of strategies for selecting students into education administration programs, and they recommended that:

...entrance standards to administrator preparation programs be dramatically raised to ensure that all candidates possess strong analytical ability, high administrative potential, and demonstrated success in teaching. (NPBEA, 1989, p.5)

Although it is acknowledged that the process of selecting and identifying students for preparation programs is important, many studies show that current selection models need to be reformed.

*The problem of self-selection strategies.* Traditionally, American graduate students come to administrator preparation programs as the result of self-selection, but at least one study charges that “self-selection doesn’t work” (Bottoms, O’Neill, Fry, & Hill, 2003, p. 4). One reason is that the traditional path to becoming a principal has been to become an assistant principal first. Many highly capable teachers avoid this path because they see the assistant principal position as being far removed from instructional leadership. The assistant principal’s job is often seen as being in charge of discipline, book inventory, cleaning supplies, and schedules; and this is not appealing to many teachers (Bottoms, O’Neill, Fry, & Hill, 2003).

Bredeson (1996) feels that the university selection processes influence negatively the quality of candidates. Murphy (1992) points out the recruitment and selection processes for entry into university programs remains “informal, haphazard, and casual” (p. 80). The practice of using admission procedures as the selection progress is damaging to the field of educational leadership (Browne-Ferrigno & Shoho, 2002). One reason is that the only criteria for entrance into an educational leadership program in the middle of the 20th century was a “B.A. and the cash to pay the tuition” (Browne-Ferrigno & Shoho, 2002, p. 10. cited in Tyack & Cummings, 1997, p. 60). The majority of universities still rely primarily on Graduate Records Examination scores, letters of recommendation, and grade point averages for admissions. These criteria may indicate whether someone will

succeed in graduate school, but can't indicate whether they have the aptitude for success as a leader in schools (Bottoms, O'Neill, Fry, & Hill, 2003). Evidence of the use of strategies focused on one's "analytical ability, high administrative potential and demonstrated success in teaching" is minimal at best (Creighton & Jones, 2001, p. 3). Meanwhile, traditional criteria like GPA, GRE test scores, letters of recommendation, and evidence of teaching and administrative experience have also disadvantaged non-traditional administrator candidates, women and ethnic and racial minorities (Bredeson, 1996). Program efforts to improve the overall quality of the pool of candidates through more selective admission criteria and procedures have had only limited impact on the field (Bredeson, 1996). Correspondingly, the failure to maintain high standards for selecting principals has resulted in such negative effects as lower program quality and non-rigorous certification and licensure (Murphy, 1993).

*Reforming the selection process.* The call to improve selection processes is becoming louder. Milstein (1992) recommends changing several elements in the selection process. First, he recommends that the purposeful selection of candidates with a focus on leadership potential be a partnership activity involving school district leaders and university faculty members. Through purposeful selection, attention can be given to the recruitment and support of minority candidates. Second, he suggests that admission processes be changed from an emphasis on selection based on academic potential to criteria establishing potential as leaders. Finally, he recommends that the quality of entering students and the placements of exiting graduates as school leaders become standards for measuring the success and effectiveness of principal preparation programs.

Creighton and Jones (2001) assert that special care in interpreting GRE scores is required especially for “students who may have had educational or cultural experiences somewhat different from those of the traditional majority” (p. 14). They find that in 450 leadership preparation programs they examined, only 40% of the programs required applicants to hold a teaching credential or have K-12 teaching experience. They believe that admitting applicants to programs with only a year or two of teaching experience is a disservice to the candidates, teachers, and students. This practice also results in an excessive number of administrator-certified candidates who remain in teaching positions.

Crow and Glascock (1995) state that there are six specific strategies for programs striving to target women and minorities. These strategies include

- nomination by superintendents with emphasis on identifying excellent teachers among women and minorities;
- rigorous application processes requiring nominees to reflect on career history, experiences as a teacher/learner, and their vision of leadership;
- reference letters from their superintendent, principal, and peers along with documentation of work with adults and children;
- first-cut selection by advisory committees consisting of college faculty and board of education staff members;
- videotaped sessions with semifinalists in small groups to assess abilities to communicate, work co-operatively, influence group opinion, and facilitate group task completion; and

- final selection by a panel of recognized experts unaffiliated with the college who viewed videotapes and read applications. (p. 27)

While it does not target women and minorities, the University of North Texas and the Dallas Independent School District joined together to conduct a program for identifying and recruiting future principals. The district and university evaluated each nominated high-performing teacher on criteria that included (1) evidence of using professional development, student achievement data and technology to improve his or her teaching; (2) evidence of working with others to improve school and classroom practices; and (3) the candidates' assessments of personal qualities that would make them effective school leaders, such as descriptions of classroom strategies, recounted risks, and evidence of their communication skills (Bottoms, O'Neill, Fry, & Hill, 2003).

#### *Selection Process in China*

In China, studies regarding selecting and identifying candidates into preparation programs are seldom found. Chinese preparation programs generally are designed to be offered to individuals who have already assumed formal managerial posts (Su, Adams, & Mininberg, 2000). Therefore, selecting candidates to enter into preparation programs in China actually represents selecting a future principal.

Whereas for the majority of the American school principals becoming an administrator was largely a self-decision (Bottom, O'Neill, Fry, & Hill, 2003), most Chinese school principals were selected by authorities to become administrators based on their seniority and performance as teachers (Su, Adams, & Mininberg, 2000).

Since the People's Republic of China was founded in 1945, no criteria for selecting principals had been made by law or regulations. In 1991, China's Education Commission, now renamed as Ministry of Education, declared that several benchmarks should be taken into consideration when selecting principals. These are: (1) The principal must be loyal to the Chinese Communist Party's goals, with specialized knowledge, management ability, and industrious merit. (2) The principal must possess bachelor's or equivalent degree. (3) The principal must have certain years' teaching experience. (4) The principal must receive pre-service training. (5) The principal must have good health (Wu, 2001). No other information identifying current issues of principal's selection strategies in China could be found.

## **Principal Preparation Programs**

### *Principal Preparation Programs in the United States*

Compared to China, there has been a vast amount of research studies investigating the university leadership preparation programs in the United States. This information is discussed in the sections that follow.

*Historical background.* The first school management course was offered at the University of Michigan in 1881, but the early university preparation programs were not formally organized (Cuban, 1988). By the early 20th century, the evolving role of the principal had become formal and important. At this point, the certification of principals became an issue. In 1932, 22 states had specific certificates for administrators, while 10

others had special standards (McCown, 2000). Since the 1950s, the “iron triangle”, i.e. state education agencies, universities, and professional associations, have collaborated in defining requirements for administrator licensure, which directly influence the principal preparation courses taught in universities. Unfortunately, most of the courses are management-oriented and unrelated (Hoyle, Bjork, Collier, & Glass, 2004).

By 1983, the National Commission on Excellence in Education released the report *A Nation at Risk*. With this report, the efforts of educational reform were crystallized (Firestone, 1990). During the remainder of the 1980s and into the 1990s, the nation sustained an educational reform debate of unprecedented magnitude and duration (Murphy, 1990). Although initial educational reform reports focused on improving curriculum and classroom instruction, a number of general education reform reports released during the mid-1980s underscored the importance of school administrators in facilitating changes (Bjork & Ginsberg, 1995). Once the educational reform spotlight was directed to the preparation of school principals, many insufficiencies surfaced, such as the lack of standards, dysfunctional training and the absence of accountability (Murphy, 1990).

As the result, educational policymakers began questioning the lack of direction in principal training efforts. Peterson and Finn (1985) pointed out that scant attention has been paid to the preparation and qualifications of those who lead principal training efforts. It has been suggested that reforming the preparation and professional development programs for principals could be a powerful way to improve schools (Hallinger & Heck, 1996).

The need for improvement in principal training programs has resulted in many professional associations concerned with school leadership have issued reform recommendations. The National Association of Secondary School Principals distributed a report *Performance-based Preparation of Principals* (NASSP, 1985) calling for universities to develop personalized performance-based programs for principals and to evaluate their current programs. The National Commission on Excellence in Educational Administration (NCEE) published their report *Leaders for America's Schools* in 1987. This report (1987) recommended at least 300 of the 500 institutions offering courses in educational administration should eliminate such programs because they were inadequate. It also suggested that a national policy board be established to provide policy leadership for the field. Accordingly, the National Policy Board for Educational Administration (NPBEA) was established in 1988. The NPBEA reform agenda advocated a reduction in the number of educational leadership programs. Subsequently, the National Commission for the Principalship was established in 1990 and the American Association of School Administrators (AASA) began efforts to improve pre-service programs (McCarthy, 2001).

At the state level, state legislators began examining research that addressed the importance of skillful leadership in shaping the goals of school improvement. By 1983, all states required from six to 20 semester hours of college credit in educational administration and some also required a M.Ed. or master's in the field along with a practicum or internship. By 1988, virtually every state mandated a master's degree in administration or its equivalent for principal certification (McCown, 2000).

During the 1990s, education leadership associations and state committees developed professional standards for the preparation, licensure, and performance of school leaders. The introduction of new professional standards for licensing school administrators required university-based programs to adopt standards-based curricula and modify program delivery formats. However, criticism continues to be directed toward school leaders and preparation, suggesting that school leadership programs are doing an inadequate job of preparing principals for the critical issues facing schools in the next century (Clark & Clark, 1996). The evidence is that the problems of educational leadership preparation programs are far from being addressed adequately.

The critical shortage of adequately prepared and certified school administrators in America appears to remain (Lashway, 1999; Chirichello, 2001; Fenwick & Pierce, 2001). Statistics show that almost 40% of the principals in approximately 93,200 public schools are nearing retirement age. In addition, many teachers are reluctant to take the job of principal (Educational Research Service, 1998). Meanwhile, the evaluation process for principals has become more rigid and high expectations have become the norm (Bradshaw, Bell, McDowelle, & Perreault, 1997). A study by the Educational Research Service (ERS, 1998) affirmed that nearly half of the districts surveyed reported a shortfall in the pool of aspiring school leaders. Other researchers (Fenwick & Pierce, 2001) expected an increase in the need for school administrators of 10-20 percent through the year 2004. The National Association of Elementary School Principals estimates that more than 40 percent of the nation's 93,000 principals will retire or leave

their position through 2010 (Chirichello, 2001). Given this situation, principal preparation and professional development programs are highly needed.

In Texas, the effort for preparing and certifying school administrators is dynamic until September, 2002, every principal was required to complete a 45 graduate credit hour program to receive a mid-management certificate (Lowe & Hademenos, 2004). The individuals who wanted to obtain the mid-management certificate had to have a Texas teacher's certificate. Mid-management certification, however, was aimed at all types of mid-management positions in the schools and was seldom effectively focused on building the knowledge and skills needed by the principal (Erlandson, 1997). Beginning September 1, 2000, SBEC ceased issuing the Mid-Management Certificate and began issuing the Standard Principal Certificate. However, individuals are not required to have a Texas teacher's certificate. The holder of the Standard Principal Certificate has to renew it every five years. The holder must complete 200 clock hours of continuing professional education during the five-year validity period of the certificate. The former Principal/Mid-Management Administrator ExCET exam was revised by practicing principals and designated as the Principal TExES (Texas Examination of Educator Standards) as of the fall, 2002. However, the content and structure of the test was not been changed (Texas Register, 2001). SBEC also approved alternative certification programs in selecting and developing quality school leaders that are aligned with the diverse needs of each school district. These programs usually are field-based, performance-oriented programs which require applicants to hold a masters degree but do

not require participation in a university program. They offer an alternative route to principal certification.

*University preparation programs.* Principal preparation programs are primarily based in university settings. Today, different preparation programs held by various colleges, universities, or institutions provide different courses and services. However, scholars (Chang, Kimbrough & Burkett, 1990) found that most university preparation programs have common elements. They basically included courses such as foundations of education and curriculum, introductions to educational administration and supervision, research, school finance, school law, school facilities, school and community relations, and a practicum. A minimum of a master's degree is required for certification as a principal. A typical preparation program at the master's degree level in the 1990s might look like that shown in Table 5 (Kimbrough & Burkett, 1990).

While universities are charged with the majority of responsibility for preparing school leaders in the United States, the university-based preparation for principals has long been criticized. Many studies and reports have demonstrated that current university preparation programs in America are not highly effective (Pitner, 1988; National Policy Board for Education Administration, 1989; Bjork & Ginsberg, 1995).

As early as 1972, Farquhar and Piele (1972) described university-based preparation programs as “dysfunctional structural incrementalism” (p.17). Pitner called some educational administration programs “zombie programs” (1990, p. 131). In 1993, National Policy Board for Educational Administration reported that principal preparation programs in our colleges and universities reflect a shopworn theoretical base and fail to

recognize changing job requirements and need a serious overhaul (National Policy Board for Educational Administration, 1993).

**Table 5. Sample of Graduate Program for Preparing School Administrators**

<b>Courses</b>	<b>Semester M.A. Thesis</b>	<b>Hours M.A. Research</b>	<b>M. Ed.</b>
Philosophy of Education	3	3	3
Sociology of Education			
History of Education			
Advanced Educational Psychology			
Elementary Curriculum	3	3	3
Middle/Junior High Curriculum			
Secondary School Curriculum			
Curriculum Development			
Introduction to Educational Administration	3	3	3
Supervision Principals and Practices	3	3	3
School Law	3	3	3
Finance	3	3	3
School Community Relations	3	3	3
Methods of Research	3	3	3
Principalship	3	3	3
Research Seminar	3	3	3
Practicum	3	3	3
Thesis	3	3	3
Electives	3	3	3
<b>Total</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>33</b>

*Source:* Kimbrough & Burkett, 1990, P. 23.

A recent public agenda survey finds that over 85% percent of principals and superintendents believed that overhauling preparation programs would help improve leadership (Lashway, 2003). Witters-Churchill (1991) concludes that Texas principals and assistant principals believed that pre-service preparation programs of principals

should be more field-based and performance-based, should include development of practical skills, and that the principal internship should be improved and extended.

Clark (1998) also addressed the current shortcomings of preparation programs. These include the fact that admission standards are often set in order to ensure quantity rather than quality, and that traditional part-time study leads to a fragmented “catch-as-catch-can” approach to learning. In addition, university faculty pay too little attention to instruction; and administrator preparation programs are often isolated from other departments, as well as the larger academic community.

Fenwick & Pierce (2001) further said that the university curricula are out of balance, and most courses are heavy on theory and light on actual practice. The weakest threads in the fabric of educational administration programs are found in the tentative linkages between university and school, which Goldhammer (1983) referred to as “the university field gap” (p. 265). The need for critically examining and redesigning educational administration preparation programs is obvious (Bjork & Ginsberg, 1995).

*Redesigning principal preparation programs.* Today’s principal preparation programs are facing so many problems that redesign has become an imperative task, but redesigning principal preparation programs is not easy (Milstein & Krueger, 1997). Redesign does not mean simply rearranging old courses but requiring a new curriculum framework and new courses aimed at producing principals who can lead schools to excellence (Bottoms, O’Neill, Fry, & Hill, 2003). Although many leadership preparation programs have been redesigned and expanded, research about the effectiveness of these program redesigns is limited (Murphy, 1993).

For more than a half-century, graduate schools of education enjoyed a monopoly in the preparation and certification of educational leaders (McCarthy, 1999). For the purpose of challenging this monopoly, universities sometimes cultivated a partnership with practitioners by either forming advisory councils or by connecting with schools in the vicinity (Daresh, 1994; Bradshaw, Bell, McDowelle, & Perreault, 1997). In order to strengthen the collaboration among faculty and practitioner and to create a balance between the clinical and academic approaches of preparing school leaders, the Southern Regional Education Board (SREB) suggested the following: a balanced program that requires principals to read research reports and scholarly works and write and reflect on ways to apply research-based practices in schools; a shift in the responsibility for developing curriculum from exclusive ownership by the university faculty to the sharing of responsibility with school district personnel; the sharing of the ownership of preparation courses among faculty members, school districts, and students; and the asking of hard questions by university faculty and school districts, such as, which field-based experiences will enable potential leaders to observe and practice leadership work with guidance from expert mentors (Bottoms, O'Neill, Fry, & Hill, 2003). University faculties need to strengthen professional relationships with practicing campus principals. These relationships would promote a dynamic dialogue and resulting change by professors and principals (Clark & Clark, 1996).

In addition to university organizations, professional associations and diverse commissions have put effort into improving preparation programs as well. The most recent effort to effect meaningful reforms targeting educational leadership preparation is

the National Commission for the Advancement of Educational Leadership Preparation (NCAELP), which was established in 2001. The purpose of this commission is to identify contextual factors influencing school leadership and preparation programs and to articulate criteria for judging the merits of leadership preparation programs (McCarthy, 2001). Few of the past efforts to change leadership preparation programs, however, have been successfully implemented. Murphy cited that “little progress has been made in resolving the deeply ingrained weaknesses that have plagued training systems for so long” (1992, p. 79). While school district leaders often report that the supply of principals is diminishing rapidly, the problem “is not a lack of certified principals but rather a lack of qualified principals. Certification, as it exists today, is not proof of quality.” (Bottoms, O’Neill, Fry, & Hill, 2003, p. 1-2)

McCarthy (2001) concludes that challenges faced by school leaders and those preparing them include the ability to: (1) produce credible evidence that informs practitioners, scholars, and policy makers regarding the effectiveness of leadership preparation programs; (2) decide whether the standards being adopted for school administrators are the right ones, and if so, how should satisfaction be assessed; (3) recruit highly qualified people to become school leaders; and (4) ensure that these leaders represent diverse backgrounds and characteristics. Murphy (1998) offers his suggestions for preparing principals: (1) pay greater attention to matters of practice in the design and delivery of educational experiences; (2) move toward a professional school model; (3) recognize the importance of field knowledge; and (4) emphasize on values, social context, core technology, inquiry and new forms of leadership.

The Southern Regional Education Board (SREB) takes a different approach from Murphy and defines six strategies that state and local leaders can use to secure an ample supply of highly qualified principals. These strategies include the following: (1) single-out high-performers; (2) recalibrate preparation programs to emphasize the core functions of the high-achieving school, i.e. curriculum, instruction and student achievement; (3) emphasize real-world training by making field-based experiences a high priority and a central focus; (4) link principal licensure to performance by creating a two-tier licensure system for school principals; (5) move accomplished teachers into school leadership positions by creating an alternative certification program that provides a high level of support for accomplished teachers who are interested in becoming principals; and (6) use state academies to cultivate leadership teams in middle-tier schools to promote effective practices that will raise student achievement and concentrate on serving middle-tier schools. (Bottoms, O'Neill, Fry, & Hill, 2003).

*Standards for principal preparation programs.* Researchers and practitioners have suggested the obvious effects principals have on the learning climate and performance of schools (Keeler & Andrews, 1963; Leithwood & Montgomery, 1982; Hallinger & Heck, 1998). As skills and competences of principals become increasingly complex, it has been necessary to develop professional standards. For years, various experts and administrative groups at the national and state level have created standards, domains, competencies, or proficiencies for principals. Table 6 shows the year of some of these reports, the publishing organization, and title of the report.

**Table 6. Reports Created by Various Organizations**

<b>Year</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Title of Report</b>
1983	the American Association of School Administrator's (AASA)	Guidelines for the Preparation of School Administrators
1985	The University Consortium for the Performance-Based Preparation of Principals & the National Association of Secondary School Principals (NASSP)	Performance-based Preparation of Principals: a Framework for Improvement
1990	The National Association of Elementary School Principals (NAESP)	Principals for the Twenty-First Century
1989	The National Policy Board for Educational Administration (NPBEA)	Principals for Our Changing Schools

As an example, Table 7 shows the 4 thematic domains and the knowledge and skill domains developed by the NPBEA.

**Table 7. Principal Standards: National Policy Board for Educational Administration**

<b>Thematic Domains</b>	<b>Knowledge and Skill Domains</b>
Functional	Leadership Information Collection Problem Analysis Judgment Organizational Oversight Implementation Delegation
Programmatic	Instruction and Learning Environment Curriculum Design Student Guidance and Development Staff Development Measurement and Evaluation Resource Allocation
Interpersonal	Motivating Others Sensitivity Oral and Non-Verbal Expression Written Expression
Contextual	Philosophical and Cultural Values Legal and Regulatory Applications Policy and Political Influences Public and Media Relations

In conjunction with the Council of Chief State School Officers, the Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium (ISLLC) has generated six standards for school principals and an examination for the state licensure of elementary and secondary principals. The ISLLC standards are regarded as “most appropriate to principal licensure” (Hoyle, Bjork, Collier, & Glass, 2004, p. 11) for they shift the focus of preparation programs from management to leadership and link leadership to student learning. Table 8 describes the six standards ISLLC adopted in 1996 (CCSSO, 1996).

**Table 8. Principal Standards: Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium**

<b>Standard</b>	<b>Definition</b>
Standard 1	A school administrator is an educational leader who promotes the success of all students by facilitating the development, articulation, implementation, and stewardship of a vision of learning that is shared and supported by the school community.
Standard 2	A school administrator is an educational leader who promotes the success of all students by advocating, nurturing, and sustaining a school culture and instructional program conducive to student learning and staff professional growth.
Standard 3	A school administrator is an educational leader who promotes the success of all students by ensuring management of the organization, operations, and resources for a safe, efficient, and effective learning environment.
Standard 4	A school administrator is an educational leader who promotes the success of all students by collaborating with families and community members, responding to diverse community interests and needs, and mobilizing community resources.
Standard 5	A school administrator is an educational leader who promotes the success of all students by acting with integrity, fairness, and in an ethical manner.
Standard 6	A school administrator is an educational leader who promotes the success of all students, understanding, responding to, and influencing the larger political, social, economic, legal, and cultural context.

Wilmore (2002) lists the ISLLC guidelines originally developed by the Council of Chief State School Officers that formed the philosophical core of the ISLLC standards and now drives the ELCC standards (see table 9). Those guidelines are to:

- reflect the centrality of student learning
- acknowledge the changing role of the school leader
- recognize the collaborative nature of school leadership
- inform performance-based systems of assessment for school leaders
- be integrated and coherent
- be predicated on the concepts of access, opportunity, and empowerment for all members of the school community (pp. 12-13)

In 2002, NCATE released the latest Educational Leadership Constituent Council (ELCC) standards to evaluate educational leadership programs which prepare campus administrators, superintendents, and other central office administrators. These standards are a synthesis of the latest versions of the NCATE, ISLLC, and AASA standards (Hoyle, Bjork, Collier & Glass, 2004). Candidates should evidence their knowledge, skills, and dispositions in the seven areas shown in Table 9 (NPBEA, 2002).

**Table 9. Educational Leadership Constituent Council (ELCC) Standards**

<b>Standard</b>	<b>Definition</b>
Standard 1.0	Candidates who complete the program are educational leaders who have the knowledge and ability to promote the success of all students by facilitating the development, articulation, implementation, and stewardship of a school or district vision of learning supported by the school community.
Standard 2.0	Candidates who complete the program are educational leaders who have the knowledge and ability to promote the success of all students by promoting a positive school culture, providing an effective instructional program, applying best practice to student learning, and designing comprehensive professional growth plans for staff.
Standard 3.0	Candidates who complete the program are educational leaders who have the knowledge and ability to promote the success of all students by managing the organization, operations, and resources in a way that promotes a safe, efficient, and effective learning environment.
Standard 4.0	Candidates who complete the program are educational leaders who have the knowledge and ability to promote the success of all students by collaborating with families and other community members, responding to diverse community interests and needs, and mobilizing community resources.
Standard 5.0	Candidates who complete the program are educational leaders who have the knowledge and ability to promote the success of all students by acting with integrity, fairly, and in an ethical manner.
Standard 6.0	Candidates who complete the program are educational leaders who have the knowledge and ability to promote the success of all students by understanding, responding to, and influencing the larger political, social, economic, legal, and cultural context.
Standard 7.0	Internship. The internship provides significant opportunities for candidates to synthesize and apply the knowledge and practice and develop the skills identified in Standards 1-6 through substantial, sustained, standards-based work in real settings, planned and guided cooperatively by the institution and school district personnel for graduate credit.

At the state level, the standards have been refined to reflect the state goals for principals. In Texas, the State Board of Educator Certification (SBEC) created nine domains of principal competencies and tested them with the TExES Examination on January 22, 1999 (Texas State Board for Educator Certification, 2003). Table 10 outlines the nine domains of principal competencies as outlined by the Texas SBEC.

**Table 10. Principal Standards: Texas State Board for Educator Certification**

<b>Competency</b>	<b>Definition</b>
Competency 001	The principal knows how to shape campus culture by facilitating the development, articulation, implementation, and stewardship of a vision of learning that is shared and supported by the school community.
Competency 002	The principal knows how to communicate and collaborate with all members of the school community, respond to diverse interests and needs, and mobilize resources to promote student success.
Competency 003	The principal knows how to act with integrity, fairness, and in an ethical and legal manner.
Competency 004	The principal knows how to facilitate the design and implementation of curricula and strategic plans that enhance teaching and learning; ensure alignment of curriculum, instruction, resources, and assessment; and promote the use of varied assessments to measure student performance.
Competency 005	The principal knows how to advocate, nurture, and sustain an instructional program and a campus culture that are conducive to student learning and staff professional growth.
Competency 006	The principal knows how to implement a staff evaluation and development system to improve the performance of all staff members, select and implement appropriate models for supervision and staff development, and apply the legal requirements for personnel management.
Competency 007	The principal knows how to apply organizational, decision-making, and problem-solving skills to ensure an effective learning environment.
Competency 008	The principal knows how to apply principles of effective leadership and management in relation to campus budgeting, personnel, resource utilization, financial management, and technology use.
Competency 009	The principal knows how to apply principles of leadership and management to the campus physical plant and support systems to ensure a safe and effective learning environment.

The standards developed by AASA, NAESP, NPBEA, and various other education organizations, universities, and state departments of education are the benchmarks that measure the criteria for successful performance in the complicated world of school leadership (Hoyle, English, & Steffy, 1998). These standards have also been utilized at the state and national levels to improve the quality of schools (Thomson, 1993). Standards also serve as a framework for certification and professional preparation purposes (National Association of Secondary School Principals, 1992).

Although these identified standards and skills provide fundamental guidance for preparing and developing current and aspiring school principals, they have been criticized. For example, in acknowledging that the ISLLC standards provide an essential foundation for the profession, researchers have cautioned that they do not systematically identify specific skills and needed knowledge nor do they explain how the standards can be learned and transferred to the school contexts (Kelley & Peterson, 2002; Hoyle, Bjork, Collier, & Glass, 2004).

#### *Principal Preparation Programs in China*

China has a long history of principal training. However, the dominant format of Chinese principal training is on-the-job professional development. The history of principal preparation programs in China is short. Chinese principals were not required to obtain certificates of pre-service training until in 1995. At that time, the Chinese National Ministry of Education (MOE) required that all beginning principals must obtain professional certification through preparation training before they take the principal position. This rule, however, does not apply to those who became principals before 1995 (Wu, 2001). As has been mentioned previously, that Chinese preparation programs are designed to be offered to individuals who have already assumed the principalship position.

China has executed “the Ninth Five-Year Plan of Economic and Social Development of the People’s Republic of China” from 1995 to 2000. Beginning in 2001, the Chinese government began implementing “the Tenth Five-Year Plan of Economic

and Social Development of the People's Republic of China". The proposals for the ninth and tenth five-year plans state that efforts will be made to perfect the system of pre-service certification for school principals. These plans illustrate the Chinese government is commitment to continuing the policy of certifying school principals.

Nevertheless, accessible research studies describing and evaluating principal preparation programs in China are inadequate. Furthermore, no professional standards have been created for principals in China. A possible reason is that principal preparation programs in China are still at the early stages of implementation. This paper is an effort to fill in the gap in research regarding principal preparation programs in China.

## **Professional Development Programs**

### *Professional Development Programs in the United States*

Like teacher training, leadership preparation has traditionally been front-loaded, with an intensive period of formal preparation and certification followed by informal, self-guided, and sporadic professional development. Increasingly, however, practitioners and policymakers are recognizing the need to provide a seamless continuum of professional training throughout the leaders' career (Lashway, 2003). Guskey (1998) proposed that every modern proposal to reform, restructure, or transform schools should emphasize professional development as a primary vehicle in efforts to bring about needed change. Leadership development should not be a front-end, one-time experience, but a lifelong process.

Over the years, three different philosophical orientations have guided the education and professional development of school administrators. The first is traditional scientific management that emphasizes training through academies, workshop, and seminar series offered by universities, professional associations, and other education agencies. Second is the craft model that operates on the premise that the principal is trained by other experienced professionals. In the craft model, the principal is the recipient of information from seasoned administrators whom she or he shadows in internships and field experiences. The last orientation is the reflective inquiry approach in which the principal is encouraged to generate knowledge through a process of systematic inquiry. In this approach, the focus is on creating principals who are able to make informed, reflective and self-critical judgments about their professional practice (Fenwick & Pierce, 2002).

Unfortunately, since schools tend to approach change in a fragmented fashion, the professional development of principals has lagged and often been an afterthought (Sparks & Hirsh, 1997). There are some inhibiting factors to providing effective professional development. The first factor is that “the staff development delivery method often employed in the past has inhibited meaningful improvement and is no longer acceptable” (Zimmerman & May, 2003, p.38). The second factor is that, despite its ineffectiveness, the traditional model of professional development workshops is sometimes easier to achieve than development activities requiring more commitment and effort. The third factor is a lack of acknowledgement that principals need professional development. Finally, external accountability requirements may limit principals’

learning. Principals may focus on compliance with requirements rather than on developing innovative and reflective practices (Kochan, Bredeson, & Riehl, 2002).

As a result, professional development for principals is often viewed as a series of weekly managerial meetings and periodic conferences (Mann, 1998). Many administrators still function according to a basic premise that once the certification process is complete, professional development is a personal choice (Mann, 1998). A reform of professional development practices is a precursor to educational reform (Zimmerman & May, 2003; Texas State Legislative Budget Board, 1994). Authors have pointed out that massive in-service training is the typical route of professional development for principals. This is not the most productive route, however, due to the impersonal touch of imparting new knowledge (Edwards, 1998). Just like the principal preparation programs, principals' professional development should also emphasize the practice of self-reflections and cooperation (Sergiovanni, 2001). It should be planned, long-term, embedded in their jobs, focused on student achievement, and supportive of reflective practice. It also needs to include opportunities to work, discuss, and solve problems with teachers, colleagues, districts, and parents (Drake & Roe, 2003).

Texas was one state that did not require principals to periodically renew their certificates. Before 1999, in Texas, once an individual met mid-management certification requirements, they were certified for life (Silhanek, 1991). There was a call to restructure the public education professional development system (Texas State Legislative Budget Board, 1994). Since September 1, 1999, the State Board for Education Certification (SBEC) has required that the principalship certificate must be

renewed every five years. Renewal requires that the principal complete 150 hours of continuing professional education (CPE) during the five-year renewal period. Principals should complete a minimum of 20 clock hours of CPE each year of the renewal period (SBEC, 1999). Types of acceptable CPE activities include:

- Participation in training, workshops, seminars, conferences
- Participation in interactive distance learning, videoconferencing, or online activities
- Independent study, not to exceed 20 percent of the required clock hours, which may include self-study of relevant professional materials or authoring a published work
- Development of curriculum or CPE training materials
- Teaching or presenting a CPE activity, not to exceed 10 percent of the required clock hours
- Providing professional guidance as a mentor educator, not to exceed 30 percent of the required hours
- Serving as an assessor for the assessment of principals, not to exceed 10 percent of the required hours
- Completion of an undergraduate course in the content area knowledge and skills related to the certificate(s) being renewed, post-graduate courses, or training programs that are taken through an accredited institution of higher education (p. 2).

Some states, like Florida and New Mexico, not only require accumulation of additional hours of university courses or state-approved staff development programs, but also look at a principal's job performance as a part of the certificate renewal process (Texas State Legislative Budget Board, 1994).

Evaluating the effectiveness of professional development is also important. The Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development (ASCD) has noted that effective professional development should be (1) directly focused on helping to achieve student learning goals and supporting student learning needs; (2) a collaborative endeavor – teachers and administrators working together in planning and implementation; (3) school-based and job-embedded; (4) a long-term commitment; (5) differentiated; and (6) tied to the district goals (ASCD, 2002).

One effort for improving principal professional development is the NASSP assessment center model which was developed in 1975. The model provides diagnostic information to principal candidates and practicing principals regarding staff development needs. It measures generic skills that have been identified as critical for success in the principalship. Table 11 illustrates the several domains and skills used by NASSP-trained assessors to observe candidates and evaluate the effectiveness of principal professional development programs (Texas State Legislative Budget Board, 1994, p. 13).

**Table 11. Domains and Skills of Principal Professional Development Programs**

<b>Domains</b>	<b>Skills</b>
Functional Domains	Leadership Information collection Problems analysis Judgment Organizational oversight Implementation Delegation
Programmatic Domains	Instruction/the learning environment Curriculum design Student guidance and development Staff development Measurement and evaluation Resource allocation
Interpersonal Domains	Motivating others Interpersonal sensitivity Oral and nonverbal expression Written expression
Contextual Domains	Philosophical and cultural values Legal and regulatory applications Policy and political influences Public relations

It is difficult to require principals to engage in continual learning. This is partly due to the fact that successful professional development takes time (Fenwick & Pierce, 2002). Principal learning must be connected with faculty learning to improve student learning and principals must devote sustained attention to the work of self-development and organizational learning. The support needed must be provided by superintendents, parents, teachers, and others who have major impacts on a principal's use of time (Kochan, Bredeson, & Riehl, 2002).

*Professional Development Programs in China*

It has been mentioned previously that Chinese principal preparation is still at the initial developing stage. According to the personal knowledge of the researcher, on-the-job training is the main method of Chinese principal training. An educational administration textbook which was extensively used by Chinese principal training programs stated that there were four phases principals must experience in their career. These phases include the pre-service preparation phase, the adaptation phase, the qualified phase, and the maturation phase (Xiao, 1988). In China, it was assumed that it would take a principal at least 10 years to be mature. On-the-job training was therefore acknowledged as the main approach for principals to take in reaching the maturation phase as early as possible.

Compared to preparation programs, the history of on-the job training in China is not brief. Since the People's Republic of China was founded in 1949, qualifications for the principalship have not been clearly specified for several decades. Before 1980, political attributes were considered to be more important than educational expertise. The general rule was "laymen lead experts" (Lewin, Little, Xu, & Zheng, 1994, p.205) and many principals had no teaching experience. On February 19, 1982, the Chinese Ministry of Education (MOE) announced its intention to strengthen the training programs of general educational administrators. The announced goal was to provide one time only, half year, one year, and two year study programs for the leaders of secondary schools and primary schools, as well as the leaders of district, city, and county education bureaus. All this was to be done within a three to five year period. After that, it was

announced that the forms of principal training should vary being diversified from short to long. The purpose of this announcement was to regulate principal training and shape it into a system. Most of the training programs, however, were half-year programs (Frasher & Frasher, 1987).

During 1990 and 1995, China entered into a phase which is called “the Eighth Five-Year Plan of Economic and Social Development of the People’s Republic of China”. During this phase, the MOE published the Proposal for Strengthening the Training for Principals of Elementary and Secondary Schools, which requires in-service training for every principal within three to five years. Since then, a series of principal training and professional development projects have significantly influenced the reform and development of the Chinese public education system (Bush, Coleman, & Xi, 1998). It has become more common to invite applications for principalships and to appoint principals from within the teaching profession. Educational administration has emerged as a formal teaching and research area in only a few leading institutions of teacher education. In addition, several principal centers have been established to support the preparation and development of practicing and aspiring principals. In 1995, China started “the Ninth Five-Year Plan of Economic and Social Development of the People’s Republic of China”. Principal professional development programs were further developed during this period. Beginning in 2001, China is implementing “the Tenth Five-Year Plan of Economic and Social Development of the People’s Republic of China”. The Proposal of the CPC Central Committee for the Formulation of “the Tenth Five-Year Plan for National Economic and Social Development” declares that great

efforts will be taken to improve the overall quality of school principals (Tenth Five-Year Plan for National Economic and Social Development, 2001). Diversified in-service and continuing education programs for the entire body of school principals will be provided. More endeavors will be made to consolidate and perfect the system of job-related training for school principals and the system of pre-service certification for them. It's the new century for the growth of professional development programs for Chinese principals.

“The Eighth Five-Year Plan of Economic and Social Development of the People's Republic of China” and “the Ninth Five-Year Plan of Economic and Social Development of the People's Republic of China” required Chinese principals to take basic and advanced in-service principal training workshops. The duration of these in-service training programs varied from half a day or one day to one or two years. Emphasis was placed on solving the problems of finance, teachers, facilities, and libraries in schools. Basically, these programs are handled by the Ministry of Education or the District Education Bureau.

Among the limited studies which address the issues of principal training in China, several have pointed out the importance of improving current professional development programs. Chinese principal professional development programs have been criticized for their singleness of content and format for training, which is predominately the traditional “instructor-centered” and “chalk and talk” lecture approach, and the disconnection between knowledge and practice (Feng, 2004; Wu, 2001; Su, Adams, & Mininberg, 2000).

Pitner (1988) concluded that endemic problems of school administrator training are prevalent internationally. She derived several pitfalls and criticisms from the literature on administrator training including:

- the problem of matching training with practitioner needs;
- the lack of evaluation of individuals holding administrative positions;
- the success of training as measured by the satisfaction of participants;
- the tension between academic versus practice-oriented content and materials and the lack of school experience of academics;
- the disparate quality of the curriculum;
- the lack of research in school administration outside of the United States, Canada, and Australia;
- the tenuous assumption that good and effective administrators are good teachers of school management;
- and the lack of a specification of qualifications and definition of duties of the headteacher of principal. (p. 80)

The literature concerning administrator training in both America and China echoes Pitner's criticism.

### **Overview Comparisons**

The review of literature in this chapter reveals a lack of Chinese studies on the subject of the selection process, preparation, and professional development of principals.

This lack of published information in China required the researcher to use personal experiences as a Chinese educator to fill in gaps in published information. However, certain similarities and differences between the United States and China are evident, and are summarized in the following paragraphs.

### *Public Education Systems*

Both the United States and China have a history of focusing on the importance of public education, and providing systems of compulsory public education. However, the public education administration systems in China and the United States differ greatly. China has a centralized public education system. The central government has the responsibility for making educational law and policy. In comparison, the United States has a highly local decision making system. While the United States public school systems mandate attendance through grade 12 or age 18, China only requires attendance in the educational system until grade 9. At grade 9, children can enter the workforce or vocational school; or can choose to take an entrance examination for the high schools in preparation for college.

The structures of American and Chinese education are similar. Kindergarten is the name given to schools in China that are similar to kindergartens and preschools in the United States. After preschool, children in both countries start attending formal schooling at age six. The common schooling pattern for both countries is 6-3-3, meaning 6 years of elementary school, 3 years of junior high, and 3 years of senior high school. While students in the U.S. usually form new classes every school year, Chinese students

remain in a fixed class with the same group of students throughout the six years in the primary school. At all levels, the size of classes in China is larger than in the U.S.

### *Basic Role of Principals*

Principals in both countries take responsibility for allocating funds, evaluating and observing teachers, and providing instructional leadership. Because of the centralization of educational decision-making in China, the scope within which decisions can be made by Chinese principals is relatively smaller than their American counterparts. While a study conducted by the NASSP found that school principals in China share more professional commonalities with American principals than differences (Flanary & Terehoff, 2000), one major difference is that American principals rarely have regularly scheduled teaching responsibilities while Chinese principals are required to teach part-time. The latest studies, however, show that the role of principals of both countries is continuously expanding.

### *Selection Process for Preparation Programs*

There is a significant difference in the principal selection process in the United States and China. While American graduate students come to administrator preparation programs as the result of self-selection, Chinese preparation programs are only offered to those who have already assumed principalship positions. Chinese principals are selected by the higher authorities, such as the municipal or district education bureaus, to take

preparation programs and become administrators based on their seniority and performance. In the United States, the selection criteria include Graduate Records Examination scores, letters of recommendation, and grade point averages, and evidence of teaching and administrative experience. There are no precise criteria for selecting and identifying the principal candidates in China. On the other hand, American selection processes for preparation programs have received a lot of attention, including both criticisms and suggestions. No studies related to the process of selecting Chinese principals were found.

#### *Principal Preparation Programs*

The history of principal preparation programs in the United States is much longer than in China. In the early 20th century, American principals were required to be certified before taking formal principal positions. Until 1995, China had not started implementing this type of policy. Another difference is that many professional standards for preparing principals have been established in the U.S., whereas there are no professional standards created for principals in China. Past studies in the United States show that although the key attributes and skills of effective school principals have been identified, many questions remain unanswered about how best to prepare current and aspiring principals for American schools. In the case of China, there are a limited number of studies addressing principal preparation programs.

*Professional Development Programs*

The importance of principal professional development programs is recognized by both the United States and China. The histories of professional development programs in the two countries are not brief. In-service training was the dominant method of Chinese principal training because Chinese principals were selected before preparation. In the United States, the professional development program means on-going training or learning after preparation. However, after taking a principalship, the Chinese and American principals face the similar professional development experiences. Criticisms of the professional development for American principals are found in China as well, such as focusing too much on theory and not placing enough emphasis on fieldwork.

### **CHAPTER III**

## **METHODOLOGY**

The purpose of this chapter is to describe the methods and procedures used to conduct this study. The methodology used in this study was primarily exploratory and descriptive, with the intent to generate a clear, accurate portrayal of the perceptions of one group in a particular context, without looking for generalizable conclusions (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). The study sought the perceptions of principals in the United States and China regarding the selection process for preparation, preparation programs, and professional development of principals.

#### **Guiding Paradigm**

This study of elementary principals' perceptions employs the naturalistic inquiry approach in order to explore the meaning and understanding of the social construction of their everyday life in a particular area (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Specifically, the researcher adopted naturalistic inquiry in order to explore "multiple realities" constructed by urban elementary principals in selected areas of the United States and China, in order to investigate and contrast American and Chinese school principals' basic beliefs regarding principal selection, preparation and professional development. The works of Lincoln and Guba (1985) and Erlandson, et al. (1993) guided the research design and methodology of the study.

## **Research Design**

### *Purposive Sampling*

Naturalistic inquiry eschews random or representative sampling in favor of purposive or theoretical sampling because such a method increases the likelihood that the full array of multiple realities will be uncovered (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). In purposive sampling, the researcher “begins with the assumption that context is critical” (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 200) and purposely selects a sample which is expected to provide a rich array of information. For this reason, purposive sampling was used to identify principals in the United States and China for this study. Respondents from urban elementary public schools in the United States and China were interviewed and asked to suggest other potential respondents.

Throughout this study, the “snowball sampling” technique of purposive sampling is used. Snowball sampling was originally introduced for analyzing social structures (Coleman, 1958) and is employed to determine subjects for the interviews (Guba & Lincoln, p. 233). As an example of the snowball sampling technique, early respondents were asked by the researcher to identify and recommend others possible respondents. In this study, the purposive sample of the principals was determined by several criteria: age and gender of principals, geographic location of schools, demographics of schools, and accessibility to the researcher.

### *Respondents*

The primary subject of this study was a particular group of principals of selected elementary schools. The sample consisted of fourteen elementary school principals, including seven elementary school principals in the southern, urban U.S. and seven elementary school principals in eastern, urban China. Among the seven American principals, three of them were from Conroe ISD and four from Katy ISD in the greater Houston area. The researcher visited their campuses during September and November of 2004. Three of the Chinese principals were working at schools in the YangPu district of Shanghai; two of the Chinese principals were working at schools in the PuDong district of Shanghai; the other two principals were from the Putuo district of Shanghai. The researcher visited the campuses of the Chinese principals between December of 2004 and January of 2005.

### *Instrumentation*

In a naturalistic inquiry, the human is the instrument of choice because imperfect as humans are, the human instrument is “infinitely adaptable” (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 193). The researcher for this study was the primary data gatherer, using her own tacit knowledge as well as intuition to enable herself to be a “powerful and perceptive data gathering tool” (Erlandson et. al, 1993, p. 82). Since inquiry outcomes depend upon the nature and quality of the interaction between researcher and respondents, the researcher’s personal background must be considered in this particular study due to the uniqueness of her experiences which are highly supportive of the work undertaken. For

example, the researcher is a product of the Chinese education system and worked as an instructor in a Chinese university with the teaching responsibility for Educational Administration and Public School Law from 2000 to 2001. For the past four years, the researcher has been studying educational administration in the United States. Therefore, the researcher's deep understanding of the Chinese system and ability to access the rich research database available regarding the American educational system add credibility for addressing the questions raised in this study.

#### *Emergent Research Design and Initial Research Plan*

The research design in this study was emergent. The naturalistic paradigm is based on grounded theory, which is theory that follows from data rather than preceding it. Thus design in a naturalistic study entails planning for broad contingencies without indicating exactly what will be done in relation to each (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). The result of using naturalistic inquiry is that the research design emerges as the study progresses rather than being constructed preordinately (Erlandson, et al., 1993). The design of naturalistic inquiry must emerge, develop, and unfold in the field (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 209). Although the discipline of naturalistic inquiry prevents a fully developed initial design, a tentative plan or a time line was developed and is presented in Table 12. This timeline was followed in regard to data collection and data analysis procedures. As the inquiry proceeded and interaction between researcher and respondents increased, the researcher became more confident about her ability to catch

the salient elements of the problems, and the design component became more clearly focused.

**Table 12. Phases of the Study**

<b>First Stage</b>	January, 2004 to August, 2004	Research proposal developed, design interview questions created, participants identified, phases of the study determined, data collection schedule developed, and recording modes decided on
<b>Second Stage</b>	September, 2004 to November, 2004	Interviews of elementary school principals in Southern, urban U. S. conducted
<b>Third Stage</b>	December, 2004 to January, 2005	Interview of elementary school principals in Eastern, urban China conducted
<b>Fourth Stage</b>	February, 2005 to April, 2005	Follow up activities, data analysis, and draft research reports completed
<b>Fifth Stage</b>	May, 2005	Final report written

### *Early Elements*

At the beginning of the study, four elements required the researcher's attention. These were making initial contact and gaining entrée to the site; negotiating consent; building and maintaining trust; and identifying and using informants (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). The following paragraphs explain how the researcher handled each of these elements.

*Making initial contact and gaining entrée.* Before the researcher started interviewing in the U. S., permission had to be obtained from official "gatekeepers" in each of the U. S. school districts in which the researcher would work. This was one of the most difficult tasks the researcher confronted. Each school district required that the researcher apply and receive permission before conducting research in that district. This

approval was in addition to the Institutional Review Board (IRB) Protocol required by Texas A&M University.

In order to contact American principals and complete the interviews, invitation letters to participate in this study were mailed and emailed to principals in different districts selected for this study. Examples of this correspondence in English and Chinese can be found in Appendix D. This letter explained the purpose of the research and the researcher asked for cooperation in this study. In addition, the approximate duration of the interviews which would be audiotaped with the consent of the participants, was set at 45 minutes. A telephone contact to those who accepted the invitation was made in order to establish the time and date for the interviews.

As a foreign student who lacks good networks and sufficient knowledge of the American school systems, the researcher had some difficulties gaining access to the principal respondents and setting up the interviews. The “snowball sampling” (Guba & Lincoln, p. 233) technique was used effectively during this period. After each interview, the respondent was asked by the researcher to identify and recommend another possible respondent. Soon it came to “the point of redundancy” (Guba & Lincoln, p. 233) at which efforts to net additional respondents could not be justified in terms of the additional outlay of energy and resources.

During the third stage of the study, as the researcher went back to her own country, gaining entrée was much easier, especially after the researcher connected with the director of the principal center at East Normal China University. The director voluntarily acted as the key for the researcher gaining access to the respondents. This

gatekeeper knew the researcher well and was very interested in the study, which saved the researcher time and energy in making contact and gaining entrée.

*Negotiating consent.* “The negotiation of consent is important in any inquiry for both legal and ethical reasons”. (Guba & Lincoln, p. 255) In the study, a fully informed consent was provided to each respondent, attested to by the respondent’s signature. The consent form contains the information such as the name, address, and telephone number of the researcher, a statement of the purpose of the inquiry, and the methods to maintain confidentiality and anonymity. A copy of the signed consent form was kept by the respondent. A sample of the English consent form and its Chinese translation are shown in Appendix B. The consent form contained information specifying: (1) the study’s purpose; (2) intent and measures taken to ensure confidentiality; (3) specification of voluntary participation; (4) notice of the right to withdraw from participation at any time; (5) agreement to allow quotation without attribution, and; (6) permission to contact later if additional clarification or information was needed (see appendix B).

*Building and maintaining trust.* The building of trust is a developmental task. This task begins at the very first contact and continues throughout the term of inquiry (Guba & Lincoln, 1985). The researcher’s understanding of the importance of building trust was evidenced through the use of sincere and polite words in every written and verbal communication in an effort to assure the desired “good guy” image (Guba & Lincoln, 1985, p. 256). Throughout the interview process, the researcher worked to make the conversation interesting. In addition, the researcher tried not to allow interviews to go over one hour. The longest interview was 1.5 hours. After each interview, all

respondents were offered a gift which showed the gratitude of the researcher. Due to the researcher's efforts to build trust, most respondents became more cooperative and considerate as the contacts increased, and were inclined to offer more information in the follow-up activities.

*Identifying and using informants.* In this study, the informants were volunteers and were used to identify other potential informants. For instance, after each interview, a respondent was asked to offer one or two names of other possible insightful and reflective interview respondents. Due to the researcher's alertness regarding opportunities for identifying informants, most informants identified early in the study assisted in the selection of others.

## **Data Collection**

### *Interview, Observation, and Documents*

In this study, data was collected from three major sources: interviews with respondents; observations of participants during the interview sessions; and analyses of records and documents. Each of these sources is discussed in the following paragraphs.

*Interview.* According to Guba & Lincoln, "structured interviews" (p. 269) must be done face to face. This was the case with all of the elementary principals in this study. The interviews were focused, honest, and fully overt. The researcher used an open-ended interview protocol, which was expanded and revised as the research progressed. Initially, the respondent was given a chance to "warm up" and was asked some grand tour

interview questions which had been designed in advance. A sample of the interview guide and its translation to Chinese are shown in Appendix A.

As the interview progressed, the interviewer began to sense what was salient about the information the respondent could provide and the questions became increasingly specific. Throughout the interview, the talk turn was always kept with the respondent, but the researchers kept leading the direction of the interview so that specific points could be explored in greater depth. The researcher could feel her interview skills develop as the interviews progressed and was very comfortable in her role after several interviews.

Interview responses were audiotaped, and informed consent (Appendix B) was obtained prior to each interview. Consent to be audiotaped also was obtained. Appendix C presents an example of this consent, in both Chinese and English.

*Observations.* Throughout the interviews, the respondent's nonverbal cues were noted. Body language was noted by the research and interpolated into the field notes. Observations of participants were conducted at the same time as interview sessions, as well as before and after the meetings. Detailed field notes were kept throughout each visit to the different campuses.

*Records and documents.* Records and documents in the study included principal meeting agendas, minutes of meetings, school statistics, and school reports. Researchers use these records and documents both to help understand practice, and to understand the situation within which practice occurs (Jarvis, 1999). Appendix E presents examples of

documents utilized. These documents were used for triangulation and member checking, which will be discussed later in this chapter.

### *Data Recording Methods*

Data collected in the study was recorded by three methods: audio type recording interviews, field notes recording interviews and observations, and copies of documents obtained from the school.

*Audio type.* A tape recorder was utilized for later review because the researcher could not rely only on her memory. In order to avoid any mechanical failure, the researcher tested tape and battery on the day before conducting each interview.

*Field notes.* Besides using a tape recorder, the researchers took field notes during the interviews. The greatest benefit of field notes in this study was that the researcher could write down the comments onto the paper without the respondent's awareness.

*Copies of documents.* Specific data was used to verify information obtained from the tape recording and field notes in the later triangulation and further member checking.

Immediately following each interview, the researcher transcribed the audio tapes and field notes in order to prepare for subsequent analysis. The transcribed data and field notes were transferred and edited into draft transcripts, typed into word files, and saved in the computer. Finally all information obtained from the interviews was subjected to triangulation and further member checking for the purpose of establishing trustworthiness.

## **Data Analysis**

Data analysis in the naturalistic paradigm begins the very first day and is an ongoing process. “The analysis of qualitative data is best described as a progression, not a stage; an ongoing process, not a one-time event” (Erlandson, et al., 1993, p. 111). In this study, data analysis interacted with data collection. After the interview of the first American principal, collected information was used to guide the collection of information from the next principal. During the development of this study the perception and experience of each principal was crucial for developing research design. The researcher analyzed how research questions had been answered and how questions during the interviews had been adapted, and would revise the original interview protocol. According to Lincoln & Guba (1995), in the naturalistic paradigm, the design emerges as a result of a continuous data analysis and is determined by the context. This is what occurred in this study.

The process of data analysis contains the two major components of unitizing and categorizing. These two components are discussed below.

### *Unitizing*

A unit is the smallest piece of information about something that can stand by itself, that is, only a single idea found in a portion of content. Unites are the basis for defining categories (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). In this study, interview data in English and Chinese was first transcribed from audio-tapes into computer files. Secondly, the transcripts were

broken into “units” of data. Third, the units were numbered and coded by site, respondent, and date. For example, the code “III.101604.5; 8A” indicates district number III, date of the interview (October 16<sup>th</sup>, 2004), interview respondent number 5, the 8<sup>th</sup> page of the transcript, and paragraph A of the transcript. Then, data was transferred to 4x6 index cards and units were printed. Although the raw data resulted in 1524 index cards, the researcher still felt the time and effort spent at this stage was rewarded.

An example of a randomly picked data card is presented in Figure 1.

576	II.100904.2; 5E
F	I do think that it would be helpful if the people who wanted to be a principal could get the letter of recommendation to show if they had leadership potential.

**Figure 1. Example of a Data Card**

The code in Figure 1 means:

576	Card number 576
II	District number 2
100904	Date of the interview: October 9, 2004
2	Interview respondent number 2
5	Page number 5 in the transcript
E	Paragraph E in the transcript
F	Gender of the Interviewee = female

### *Categorizing*

The objective of categorization is “to bring together into provisional categories those cards that apparently relate to the same content” (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 347). The guiding categorizing method is the method of constant comparison, proposed by Glaser and Strauss (1967).

After the pile of cards was produced, the researcher brought those cards into some provisional categories, and then devised rules that described category properties. Finally the researcher justified the inclusion of each card and sorted all cards into different categories. Each category set was reviewed until all cards were used. Miscellaneous cards that did not appear related to any category were put in a separate stack. Table 13 presents the 16 categories identified through categorization of the data units.

**Table 13. Categories of the Study**

<b>Category</b>
1. Descriptive data
2. Criteria for selecting principal candidates (the U.S.)
3. Criteria for selecting principal candidates (China)
4. Perception of the selection process for preparation (the U.S.)
5. Perception of the selection process for preparation (China)
6. Suggestions for improving the selection process (the U.S.)
7. Suggestions for improving the selection process (China)
8. Perception of preparation programs (the U.S.)
9. Perception of preparation programs (China)
10. Needed knowledge and skills (the U.S.)
11. Needed knowledge and skills (China)
12. Approaches to receive professional development (the U.S.)
13. Approaches to receive professional development (China)
14. Perception of the professional development (the U.S.)
15. Perception of the professional development (China)
16. Miscellaneous

### **Trustworthiness Criteria**

Unlike the quantitative research approach, the conclusions of naturalistic inquiry studies can not be generalized in the sense of scientific discourse; however, “naturalistic generalization” offers a description of the multiple and different realities. Stake (1978, p.5) points out, “I believe that it is reasonable to conclude that one of the most effective means of adding to understanding will be approximating through the words and illustrations of our reports the natural experience attained in ordinary personal involvements”.

Although the findings and interpretations of naturalistic study are not generalizable, they still can be examined to prove they are “true” or worth paying attention to. Some naturalistic research criteria were used for achieving this goal. The naturalistic paradigm takes exception against the conventional trustworthiness criteria of internal and external validity, reliability, and objectivity; and substitutes the criteria of credibility, transferability, dependability, and conformability (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). According to Lincoln and Guba (1985), in the naturalistic paradigm, the trustworthiness of the study will be established through these four criteria.

#### *Credibility*

Parallel to internal validity in the positivistic paradigm, the naturalistic paradigm uses credibility to demonstrate that research findings display “an isomorphism” (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 294) with the multiple realities being studied. The credibility of this

study was achieved through activities such as triangulation, peer debriefing, and member checks.

*Triangulation.* The use of multiple and different sources and methods are the major tools of triangulation. Through different data collection modes such as interviews, observations, and other data sources such as interview respondents and documents; triangulation established the credibility of the study. For example, the researcher verified an interview respondent's recollection about what happened at a district principals' meeting by consulting the minutes of that meeting.

*Peer debriefing.* The second technique of triangulation is peer debriefing. It can probe the inquirer's biases, and can cleanse the mind of emotions. A peer must be "a professional outside the context and who has some general understanding of the study to analyze material...and listen to the researcher's ideas and concerns" (Erlandson et al., 1993, p. 141). During this study, the researcher found a peer, someone who knew both the research area and the naturalistic methodology and was conducting her own naturalistic research. Thus, the inquirer and the peer performed the role of "debriefers" in turn, and assisted each other to test the credibility of studies.

*Member checking.* The member checking is a crucial method of establishing credibility. This is the way to test interpretation with members of groups from whom the data was originally collected. Members of the stakeholding groups should "test categories, interpretations, and conclusions" (Erlandson et al., 1993, p. 142). During the study, each interview respondent was sent a copy of the summary of their interview. When the draft of finding report was completed, the respondents were sent the copy of

the data analysis, and were asked to review reported findings in order to ensure that they were not being misrepresented.

### *Transferability*

The naturalist's substitute for the conventionalist's external criterion is transferability. Transferability is achieved through "thick description" in order to enable those interested in making a transfer to reach their own conclusions about whether a study would be useful to them. Thick descriptions of the settings create for the reader a vicarious experience so that similarities can be detected between this context and their own. Throughout this study, the researcher provided a thorough description of the context and setting within which the interviews took place. Those consumers of this report who want to apply the research findings to their context are the ones responsible for demonstrating transferability.

### *Dependability*

Dependability is the naturalist's equivalent for the concept of reliability in the positivistic approach. A technique of inquiry audit could establish dependability claims. In this study, dependability was addressed by conducting an audit of the process of the inquiry in order to check that all findings are supported by data from the transcripts and information obtained from documents.

### *Confirmability*

In the positivistic approach, the criterion of objectivity is used to ensure that the research findings are not damaged by the researcher's biases, experiences, and dispositions. In naturalistic inquiry, confirmability is introduced to assess the neutrality of the research. In this study, the same audit used to determine dependability was simultaneously used to determine confirmability. The audit compared the study findings to the original data and information in order to ensure that data could be tracked to original sources. The researcher kept all the audit trail materials, including all field notes and interview records, all documents, all index cards, the cases reports, and drafts of research literature syntheses in order to permit an external auditor to evaluate the trustworthiness of the study.

## **CHAPTER IV**

### **DATA ANALYSIS AND RESULTS**

The purpose of this chapter is to answer certain questions in an effort to identify the interviewed principals' perception of the selection process, principal preparation programs, and professional development activities in the United States and China. The remainder of this chapter will provide answers to the six research questions individually. The data includes fourteen interviews with the principals in fourteen elementary schools in a southern, urban area in the U.S. and an eastern, urban area in China. These interviews produced data units which have been sorted into 16 categories. A list of all the categories for this data analysis was included in the previous chapter. Besides the analysis of the data from interviews, important data can be derived from an analysis of some of the documents that were handed over to the researcher. A description of those documents is included in Appendix E.

#### **Profiles of the Principals**

Interviews were conducted with fourteen principals in fourteen elementary schools, half of which are respondents from a southern, urban area in the U.S., and the other half of which are respondents in an eastern, urban area in China. A brief description of each principal's career path and school campus is presented.

*The Seven American Principals*

*Grace.* Grace has been a principal for a total of 11 years. She obtained her master's degree in curriculum and instruction in 1978. After acting in the role of an "informal leader" for several years, Grace was encouraged by her principal to pursue her mid-management certification in 1988. The school where Grace has been working as the principal for seven years serves 830 students and is in its twelfth year. It is "a very much White middle class" school located in a rich community within a large suburban district. The ethnic breakdown of the students is 85.9% White, 5.3% Asian, 6.4% Hispanic, and 2.4 % African American. Only one percent of students are economically disadvantaged.

*John.* John has been a principal for nine years. In 1991, after teaching for two years, John got a job as an assistant principal. He pursued his master's in education shortly after starting his teaching career, and got his mid-management certification in 1993. This is John's third year as the principal in a diverse school with 44% White, 38% Hispanic, 10% African American, and 6% Asian students. The school has about 460 students representing 17 countries. Thirty-eight percent of the students are economically disadvantaged.

*Linda.* Linda has worked as the principal in two different districts since 1986. She started teaching in 1976, and has worked mainly in diverse schools where the majority of the students were African American. Shortly after Linda completed her master's degree in supervision in 1984 and became a curriculum and instruction supervisor, the district's director of elementary education "saw ability" in her, and selected her as the principal of a small school. She then went back to college to get her

mid-management certification. This is different from Grace and Tom and more like many principals in China because she actually began working as a principal before she received training and full certification. Linda is going to retire from the principalship position in another year, with the intention of completing her doctoral degree and teaching at the university level. The school in which Linda is currently working has approximately 950 children, who are 45% White, 35% Hispanic, 13% African American, and 8% Asian. Thirty percent of students are economically disadvantaged.

*Mary.* Mary is in her first year as a principal. She began working in the business world. After many years as a business woman, Mary went back to school and became a bilingual teacher in 1993. She received her principal's certificate after serving as an assistant principal for two years. Mary is the fifth principal her school has had. The school has a long history and has a very good reputation in the community. It has 66 staff members and 603 students who are 56.9% White, 27.5% Hispanic, and 12.6% African American. Forty-eight percent of the students are economically disadvantaged.

*Nancy.* Nancy was promoted to the principalship of an elementary school in the spring of 2003. She had been the assistant principal at that school since 1999. Prior to that, she was an instructional coordinator at the school, and was a teacher and administrative intern in another school district. She received her master's degree, bachelor's degrees, and her principal certification from the same university. The school where Nancy is working has received recognized status on the Texas state accountability system and is striving for exemplary status. There are 60 teachers in this school, and more than 830 students. The ethnic breakdown of the students is 70.9% White, 7.3%

African American, and 19% Hispanic. Only eighteen percent of students in the school are economically disadvantaged.

*Frank.* This is Frank's second year as a principal. After teaching for six years, Frank decided to get a master's degree and "move out into administration." It took Frank a couple of years to become an assistant principal. Once he was an assistant principal, Frank's supervising principal recommended him to the superintendent as a good candidate for a principalship. Frank's school has about 700 students who are 40% Hispanic, 45% White, and 8% Black. Sixty percent of the students are economically disadvantaged.

*Helen.* Helen became a principal in 1997, but she started teaching in 1972. After teaching in several schools in different districts, she stayed home with her children for several years. She came back to the classroom and became an assistant principal in 1988. Helen had completed her master's degree many years before she obtained her supervision and mid-management certificates. Helen is working on a campus that has been open for only six months. The school has 457 students, 24 teachers and 45 other staff members. The ethnic breakdown of the students is 38.4% White, 45.7% Hispanic, and 13.3% African American. Sixty-seven percent of students are economically disadvantaged.

### *The Seven Chinese Principals*

*Qing.* Qing has been a principal for 20 years, after teaching for 33 years. At the beginning of his career, he worked at a district-level key elementary school as a teacher.

He was soon promoted to the position of teacher leader, and then obtained the principalship position. The elementary school where Qing is currently working was established in 2001. It has 900 students, 64 teachers, and 25 classes. The school has rapidly improved since Qing took over the principal's role. This year, the school participated in a district-level intermediate examination, and ranked number 1 among 56 elementary schools in the district.

*Li.* Li became a principal at the age of 30. After teaching for seven years, she was chosen as a “backbone teacher”, an honor for exemplary teachers, and was appointed to the instructional coordinator position. After that, Li worked as an instructional director in a key elementary school<sup>1</sup>. She soon was promoted to an assistant principal's position, and became a principal in February, 1999. The school in which Li works was built 124 years ago. Although it was remodeled in the 1980s, the campus, classrooms, and buildings are old. The school contains 650 students, divided into 20 classes.

*Wang.* This is the 14th year that Wang has held his principalship position. Before that, he was a teacher leader, an instruction coordinator, and an assistant principal responsible for instruction and curriculum. Wang has been teaching for 25 years. The municipal education commission gave him the “superexcellent teacher” award in the 1990s. In 2003, he was relocated from another province in order to become a principal at a key elementary school in Shanghai. His school has a long history and a good

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<sup>1</sup> The term “Key School” applies to selected schools at every educational level in China: elementary, secondary and higher. Key schools all enjoy priority funding as well as the privilege of recruiting the best students. The major criterion for identifying such school is the percentage of its graduates entering colleges and universities, especially the key colleges and universities.

reputation, characterized by “a combination of traditional rigor and modern liveliness.” The school has about 850 students.

*Yang.* Yang became a principal in 1993, but he started teaching in 1981. He once served as the branch secretary of the Chinese Communist Party<sup>2</sup> in a key elementary school. Yang has won several awards such as “star teacher” and “model educator” for his excellent teaching. The school in which Yang currently works was established six years ago. Based on student achievement in a district-level intermediate examination, the school is ranked 30th among 52 elementary schools in the district. It has approximately 600 students, 45 teachers, and 5 staff members.

*Chen.* Chen became a principal 20 years ago. He started out as a teacher in 1980, and was promoted from teacher to principal. He is working at a large, rich, city-level key elementary school. The school has 1,500 students and 130 teachers. Most of these students come from high-income families. Their parents include government officials, Internet professionals, university professors, and business men and women. Eight percent of the teachers of this school possess a bachelor’s degree.

*Gu.* Gu has been a principal since 2000. She started teaching English and math in 1986. In 1993, Gu became an assistant principal at a key elementary school in Shanghai. Five years later, she changed her role to that of the branch secretary of the Chinese Communist Party within the school. The school in which she is currently working was a district-level key elementary school when established in 1950. However, the school was rebuilt and combined with two other low performing schools in 2000. Since then, the

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<sup>2</sup> The role of branch secretary of the Chinese Communist Party has been described in the section of “Basic Role of Elementary Principals in China” in the previous chapter.

school has had difficulties retaining good teachers and improving students' achievement on standardized tests. Currently, the school has 550 students and 60 teachers. The turnover rate of teachers is high.

*Zhang.* Zhang became a principal for a city-level key elementary school in 2002. After serving 15 years as a language teacher, she also served as a lead teacher, an instructional coordinator, and an assistant principal. Her current school is a top ranked university-affiliated school, well known for its highly qualified teachers and various action research projects. This school has 60 teachers. Eight-five percent of them graduated from colleges or universities. It has 23 classes, with 890 students.

#### *Academic Preparation of the Principals*

A brief description of each principal's career path and school campus has been provided in the preceding section. The academic preparation of the principals is outlined in this section in order to bring focus to this critical component of the study. Among the seven American principals interviewed in the study, only John has earned a doctoral degree. The other six American principals hold Master's degrees. Among the seven Chinese principals, only Chen and Zhang have obtained masters degree from a university or college. The other five Chinese principals hold bachelors' degree. Table 14 provides an overview of the principals, including their gender, academic preparation and length of time in the principalship.

**Table 14. Demographic Data of the Respondents**

<b>Name</b>	<b>Country</b>	<b>Gender</b>	<b>Highest Degree Earned</b>	<b>Years as a Principal</b>
Grace	the U.S.	F	Masters	11
John	the U.S.	M	Doctor of Philosophy	9
Linda	the U.S.	F	Masters	19
Mary	the U.S.	F	Masters	1
Nancy	the U.S.	F	Masters	1
Frank	the U.S.	M	Masters	2
Helen	the U.S.	F	Masters	7
Qing	China	M	Bachelors	20
Li	China	F	Bachelors	5
Wang	China	M	Bachelors	14
Yang	China	M	Bachelors	11
Chen	China	M	Masters	20
Gu	China	F	Bachelors	4
Zhang	China	F	Masters	2

### **Perceptions Regarding Selection for Preparation Programs**

The purpose of this section was to answer the first two research questions which identify the respondents' perceptions of the selection strategies of principal preparation programs in the United States and China. It is important to note that a significant difference was found between the career paths of American and Chinese principals. In the U.S., formal preparation occurs prior to the assignment as a principal, and the assignment is made by individual school districts. The appointment of the American principals is optional, and there is no commitment for an appointment following successful completion of a preparation programs. In China, formal preparation occurs after selection. Chinese principals were selected by districts as administrator candidates and then were chosen to participate in preparation programs. The appointment of the Chinese principals is usually assured. While it depends on a candidate's personal decision as well as the universities' selection strategies to select and admit administrator

candidate in the United States, districts select and enroll principal candidates into preparation programs in China. Consequently, in this section, the researcher will address the university selection strategies in the U.S., while the district selection strategies in China will be discussed.

### *Research Question One*

How do the American respondents perceive the selection strategies of educational leadership programs in the U.S.?

*Sub question one: How do the American principals perceive the criteria for selecting principals?* The universities that these principals attended relied on Graduate Record Examination (GRE) scores, letters of recommendation, minimal teaching experience, and Grade Point Averages (GPA) as admission criteria. When asked their perceptions of these admission criteria for entrance into the educational leadership programs, all seven American respondents indicated that these criteria were not sufficient for identifying a candidate's aptitude for being a successful principal.

GRE & GPA scores. All respondents indicated that although GRE and GPA scores were the dominant selection criteria, they are only indicators of whether candidates are strong college students academically. "I think the GRE measures your IQ but cannot predict whether you will be a successful leader," Nancy suggested. Mary said:

Having a higher score doesn't necessarily mean that a person is ready to get into the program, or will be the best principal. There are some people who are test takers, and some people who have a great GPA. On the other hand, some people

are very nervous taking tests or they don't have a very high GPA, but they have a lot of leadership qualities, and will be a wonderful principal. And sometimes I think those people are getting left out of the program, when they are in fact the best candidates for the program.

The respondents implied that excessively emphasizing intellectual criterion might result in a surplus of unqualified leadership candidates. They pointed out that limited attention was given to factors associated with administrative potential, or a candidate's leadership disposition.

Recommendation letters. The principals felt that the appropriateness of recommendation letters for demonstrating a candidate's administrative capacity was limited. Linda commented that she felt that it should be helpful for the people who wanted to be principals to get letters of recommendation showing that they had leadership potential. She questioned, however, whether or not the letters were true reflections of the individuals making the recommendations. "It's very difficult because if I ask you to write a letter of recommendation, you probably will write a good letter. I don't know whether it would be a true picture of the person." Frank said that he didn't know if anybody looked at the recommendation letters. He stated:

The only thing they want to know is that my GRE and GPA scores are high enough. I had letters of recommendation, but I think they just put them into the files. Letters of recommendation are just a formality. Of course, if you can't find three people who like you, that would be big trouble, but anybody can find them.

Classroom teaching experience. Five of the seven respondents interviewed for this study pointed out that they felt that the current requirements for teaching credentials were minimal. The respondents attached a lot of importance to the K-12 teaching experience of a candidate.

Helen had a beginning teacher who was working for the principal preparation program. Helen reported that she told her, “You will not get a principal’s job before you have three years of teaching experience, and, you need more than three years to be successful, and you need to have some leadership responsibilities.” Grace expressed her concern with “someone with only three years” experience becoming an administrator “because I didn’t know anything after three years of teaching. I know it now.” She stated, “...the more you can learn about what’s going on in the classroom, the better person you’re gonna be, because you never lose a teacher’s viewpoint. That’s very important for being successful.” Mary expressed a similar viewpoint. She said:

Three years of teaching experience is not long enough to become a principal. I know I was not ready in three years. I didn’t know nearly enough of what I needed to know about student number one, about the learning process, about student number two, about teachers’ staff development, those types of things, and how to run a building.

Mary, Helen, Grace, and Frank believed the university should look carefully at a candidate’s teaching experiences. As Frank said, “A good principal must be a good teacher first.”

John had a different point of view. He thought the criterion of two year's teaching credentials was enough because "that's all I had." He was very thankful that was all he needed. But later on in the interview, he admitted that he had known that he was going to lack some experiences when he actually became an administrator.

The principals' concern about admitting candidates to educational leadership programs with minimal teaching experience is consistent with the study of Creighton & Jones (2001), who pointed out that admitting applicants to university programs with only a year or two of teaching experience is a disservice to the candidates, teachers, students, and community members.

Whether universities should raise the bar to more years of classroom teaching while the shortage of principal remains, however, is controversial. In addition, further study is needed to determine if a relationship exists between effective school leadership and a limited amount of classroom teaching experience.

*Sub question two: How do the American respondents perceive the overall effectiveness of the selection process for preparation?* All the principals interviewed felt that American universities were not doing very well in selecting qualified students into education administration programs. This is not surprising given the fact that early in 1960, the American Association of School Administrators criticized that the universities were using the practice of "admission rather than selection procedures" (p. 83). According to Creighton & Jones (2001), most program admission processes have changed little over the last several decades.

The principals claimed that universities faced a dilemma between “solving the shortage of principals” and “keeping high demands for candidates.” They felt that there were people who “very definitely should be” in the program, and there were people who probably “should not have been” in the program.

The principals realized that the urgent problem in their preparation programs had been quality rather than quantity. In fact, they pointed out that there are more certified principals than there are positions to fill. Mary used her story as an example to demonstrate that the low rejection rate in university programs could be a possible reason for an excessive number of administrator-certified candidates who cannot gain administrators’ positions. Although her first job was in the business field, Mary kept substitute teaching at a college when she came home on summer vacations, and she also taught a conversational finance class at a vocational school for adults. Due to these teaching experiences, Mary received a principal’s job after getting her principal certificate; but a classmate who “had never been in a regular classroom” did not receive one. Mary thought that the university should have been stricter in admitting those who “... did not have any concept about what it is like to fill out a report card, what it is like to do a grade book, what it is like to hold a conference.”

The principals agreed that the requirements universities hold for their candidates were not rigorous enough. They suggested that self-selection might not be an appropriate way to move highly capable teachers into administration. The point was raised that someone with little potential to be a successful principal could get administrative certification because they wanted to receive more pay and keep their options open. Linda

perceived that, “There are some principals that are selected who should not be principals, no matter what degree they got. And, there are some teachers who should be principals right now who don’t have a principal’s degree.”

On the one hand, Linda thought anybody who wanted to go into the program should get a chance to do so because they would learn something. She said:

They may never be selected to be a principal, but they will grow in a way that helps them in their profession. So I’m ok with more people getting into the selection. I think that would be natural selection whether or not they actually get chosen for that role.

Her comments mirrored a controversial thread about whether the bar for recruiting candidates into preparation programs should be raised. This researcher believes that the university ought to work harder on screening a selected candidate whose ability has been proven to raise academic performance in a school. At the same time, the university also needs to stress how students use the knowledge and skills they learned in the programs. Some accreditation agencies, such as the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE), have already helped preparation programs assess student competence when they complete the preparation programs. Universities need to develop programs that maximize a student’s time with the university and fully prepare them for the job market.

All respondents offered diverse suggestions for improving selection practices. The core message was that universities should select persons who are high-performers, who have demonstrated that they can improve student achievement and the school,

rather than selecting persons who have no experience with raising academic performance. The principals' suggestions for improving the selection process fell into three categories. The categories are non-cognitive factors, assessment tools, and the involvement of local school districts.

Non-cognitive factors. The principals suggested that rather than using screening criteria like GRE and GPA scores that prevent some excellent teachers from entering preparation programs, universities should place more emphasis on dispositions, leadership potentials, interpersonal skills, and successful teaching of candidates. These are more subjective attributes and are difficult to measure using numerical test scores. Helen suggested that program participants be expected to show their ability to work with others to improve student achievement in schools. She cited:

As a teacher, they should have committed leadership. And they must get along with their peers. It's more than just getting a degree. If they are on a team, and they can't get along with their team, how can they get along with the whole school? What is their disposition? I had to look at their attitude, their commitment, their quality of work, and how they get along in relationships to evaluate their disposition.

The principals stressed that candidates should show a tremendous knowledge of curriculum and instruction. Frank stated:

Maybe twenty years ago or more, you could just be a manager, but starting about the 1990s, with the introduction of TAKS, the principals couldn't just be a few good old boys. They had to be intelligent people who know about education.

There isn't a day that goes by that I don't do something with curriculum, whether it's talking to teachers, aligning staff development, or looking at scores, whether they are in-house scores or state scores. There is always something about curriculum, it's never just twiddling my thumbs, or anything like that.

Assessment tools. There were many diverse ideas regarding appropriate assessment tools. For example, John, Grace, Frank, Nancy, and Linda recommended that a university use writing samples, teaching and leadership records, personal interviews, and portfolios as tools to evaluate and select candidates.

Nancy suggested that the criteria for selecting principals include a master's degree, demonstrated leadership, and a record of raising achievement among diverse students. Frank proposed that a copy of a candidate's past teacher appraisals would be helpful. "If I'm applying for a mid-management program, but my teacher appraisals were poor, that might account for something, because I know some people in the program that could not wait to get out of the classroom," said Frank.

John used his previous learning experiences to prove that a leadership portfolio could really "become a big deal." He also cited that a portfolio should be tried to leadership objectives listed in principal professional standards, like the ISLLC standards:

Not only when we apply for admission, but as we go through the programs, there should be portfolios, so we have to take courses that are in our programs, and end up with those objectives and put them into our portfolios. That will be helpful.

Linda suggested universities ask candidates to write an essay describing classroom strategies they have used to overcome barriers to student achievement. The

essay would allow candidates to present evidence of their writing skills and their personal qualities:

You can tell by their writing which people are more intellectually capable, or are thinking the right way that a principal should be thinking. And you can read some papers and think that person maybe shouldn't even be a teacher.

The principals felt strongly that there definitely should be an interview to determine that a candidate is applying for the right reasons.

It is interesting to note that while writing essays, personal statements, and face-to-face interviews were lacking in most respondent's master's degree or mid-management programs, they were usually required when these principals pursued degrees on the Ph. D. level. For instance, Grace specifically mentioned:

I don't remember having to write any kind of essay or to do any presentation (in my mid-management program at another university). But to go into our doctoral cohort, we had to do a presentation and be interviewed to be accepted at Texas A&M University.

Involvement of the local school districts. A principal said that local school systems should identify potential leaders and provide some resources for teachers to attend preparation programs. The respondents suggested that the universities and the districts work together to move accomplished teachers into school leadership positions. Specifically, districts should take more responsibility for selecting qualified candidates. The principals also suggested that principals themselves nominate high-performing teachers for possible admission into school leadership preparation programs. Linda said:

I have a teacher right now that I'm training to be a leader. And I try to encourage my assistant principal and give him opportunities to become a principal. I have a teacher in this building, and I just told her "you must go back to the university and you must become an administrator." She just has all the talent needed for this job. So maybe the school and the university could cooperate with each other to select the better principals.

The principals indicated that districts that are actively involved in recruiting individuals into preparation programs tend to have a larger pool of principal candidates than districts that do not have recruitment plans. Their suggestions regarding partnerships between universities and districts in selecting potential school leaders corresponds with past studies (Griffiths, Stout & Forsyth, 1988; Bottoms, O'Neill, Fry, & Hill, 2003). However, in order to allow school districts to select candidates for administrative preparation programs, universities should make their philosophies and program goals known. Districts could then recruit candidates that not only match district objectives, but also meet university preferences.

It is interesting to note that major suggestions mentioned by the principals highly matched those recommendations made by many earlier studies, such as the American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education (AACTE) (Shibles, 1988). Achilles's concluded (1994) that many similar recommendations have been made over and over, but "30 years after they have shown their value," (p. 18) few have been successfully implemented. McCarthy (2002) ascribed this lack of implementation to "the process of gaining consensus on recommendations among professional associations and diverse commission members." (p. 204)

It is worth mentioning that while five of the seven American respondents are female, all of them are white. The need to get minority candidates that have come from scholars such as McCarthy (2002) was not echoed by the principals in this study. However, the effort of recruiting and selecting more qualified minority candidates into administration preparation programs should not be ignored. On the contrary, the low representation rate of minority principals illustrates the importance of this mission.

In sum, all the principals interviewed in this study felt that university preparation programs fail to maintain high standards for selecting principals. This failure not only results in negative effects such as lower program quality and non-rigorous certification as described by Murphy (1993), but also results in principals themselves underestimating the knowledge, skills, and disposition that a principal should possess as a professional. Principals themselves may begin to believe that “anybody can get in as long as they pay the tuition,” as one respondent said during the interview. Their perceptions about the limitations of selection strategies supported the studies conducted by Ceighton & Jones (2001), Keedy & Grandy (2001), and Browne-Ferrigno & Shoho (2002).

### *Research Question Two*

How do the Chinese respondents perceive the selection strategies of educational leadership programs in China?

Chinese preparation programs generally are designed to be offered to individuals who have already assumed formal managerial posts (Su, Adams, & Mininberg, 2000).

While most American school principals make their own decisions to receive preparation training and try to become principals, most Chinese school principals were selected by authorities as administrator candidate, and then were chosen to participate in preparation programs. In the study, the interviewed Chinese principals perceived that selecting candidates to enter into preparation programs in China actually represented selecting a future principal. Therefore, strategies adopted by the higher authority to select and identify school principals in China replace the selection process of the colleges and universities in America. In truth, the Chinese process is a combination of the selection process of the colleges and universities and the individual American school districts. The critical difference is when the preparation program is entered. In China, formal preparation occurs after selection. After the individual completes the preparation program, he or she will be assigned to work as a principal. In the U.S., formal preparation occurs prior to the assignment as a principal, which is made by individual school districts. It is possible for the American principal to be fully prepared and never receive a position, even though he or she was successful in their preparation programs. This would not be usual in China.

*Sub question one: What is perceived by Chinese principals as factors impacting appointment as a principal in China?* The People's Republic of China was founded in 1945, but there were no criteria for selecting principals made by laws or regulations until 1991. China's Education Commission (now renamed the Ministry of Education) declared that several benchmarks should be taken into consideration when selecting principals. The first benchmark is that principals must be loyal to the Chinese

Communist Party's goals, have specialized knowledge and management ability, and demonstrate industrious merit. The second benchmark is that principals must also possess bachelor's or equivalent college degrees. In addition, principals must have a certain number of years of teaching experience. Finally, principals must receive pre-service training and be in good health (Wu, 2001). The Chinese principals interviewed in this study, however, commented that these criteria are invalid because they can be translated in many ways and are not rigidly measured in the world outside of education.

In the study, the Chinese principals identified teaching skills, knowledge of curriculum and instruction, leadership capacity, a personal relationship with their direct supervisor, and obeying orders from higher authority as key factors to determine who should be selected to be a principal.

The career development of the seven interviewed Chinese principals had followed similar paths. They all started as teachers. After teaching for several years, their teaching excellence and leadership potential were recognized by their direct supervisors, usually their principals. Subsequently, the supervisor promoted them to be teacher leaders or instructional coordinators. If the supervisor was satisfied with their job performance, they were recommended to a higher authority, such as the District Education Bureau. The Department of Personnel of District Education Bureau then appraised the performances of these eligible candidates, and selected the most outstanding individuals to be assistant principals in either their current school or a different school. Eventually, they were assigned to fill an open principal's position.

Teaching skills, knowledge of curriculum and instruction. When asked why they thought they were selected to be a principal, the Chinese principals viewed excellent teaching skills and a solid knowledge base of curriculum and instruction as the most important factors. These were the factors that first distinguished them from other mediocre teachers. All Chinese principals interviewed in the study had won various awards for their teaching excellence. Before starting their first job as principal, all principals had worked as a teacher for at least 10 years. For example, Qing stated the main reason the district selected him was because he had rich teaching experience and solid knowledge in instruction and curriculum. He had taught almost every subject in elementary education. In Qing's word:

Thirty years ago, teaching as a profession was not that specialized in our country. A teacher may have had to teach several subjects. As for me, I've taught almost every single subject, such as Chinese, math, science, music, painting, even sports. Qing said he was so familiar with curriculum and instruction that he could mentor every teacher well and help them improve their teaching, "In my school, no teacher dares to teach in a perfunctory way, because I know every merit as well as every shortcoming of their teaching."

Wang regarded his being a principal as one result of the "superexcellent teacher" award he won in 1990. Only two teachers in the whole city won this award. It brought him to the attention of City Education Bureau.

All interviewed principals were very proud of their experience and knowledge in teaching. Yang said, "In my opinion, a good principal must be a good teacher. During

his whole career life, he cannot leave the classroom and forget how to teach.” Although Chinese principals have busy schedules and endless meetings, they are required by the Ministry of Education to teach at least one or two classes in the classroom. All interviewed principals supported this regulation. Zhang said she insisted on teaching some non-major subject, like history, simply for the purpose of “keeping in touch with students.” Even though, she felt her teaching skills “are poorer than before,” she hoped to spend more time in the classroom with students in the future.

Leadership capacity. The Chinese principals felt teaching skills and experience were the main indicators that should be considered in selecting future principals. They did not think that leadership potential had been ignored by the higher authorities when choosing principals, however. All interviewed Chinese principals had already had administrative responsibilities, such as serving as teacher leaders, before they became principals. Their performance as teacher leaders was viewed as a necessary indicator for promotion. For example, Gu was once the branch secretary for the Communist Youth League. She was committed to working with students and other teachers to improve the school and actively organized many activities which impressed the principal and other officials. After serving one year in a leadership role, she was promoted to assistant principal.

It’s important to note that while the study of leadership has been fully developed in Western society such as North America, it is still a new academic area in China. In this study, the interviewed Chinese principals basically identified “leadership capacity” as the ability to supervise teachers and students, having interpersonal skills, the ability to

understand educational goals, the ability to work out a good school policy, possessing skills to motivate others, etc. Hallinger (2002) pointed out that when Asian school leaders receive formal administrative training, they generally learn Western-derived frameworks. The knowledge base on which to build leadership for school is simply “borrowed” from the Western ones without comparing intercultural contexts and creating indigenous knowledge, therefore it lacks “even the mildest forms of cultural validation” (Hallinger, 2002, p. 372). Fundamental research projects examining the indigenous perceptions of the “leadership” of Chinese principals are needed.

Personal relationship with supervisor. It is interesting to note that in responses to the questions that address “how to assess leadership capacity,” the principals answered that there was no fixed standard for evaluating the leadership capability of candidates. Appraisal for the job performance of candidates largely depends on the supervisor’s likes and dislikes. Furthermore, the Chinese principals pointed out that if the supervisor strongly supported a candidate, the appraisal from the Department of Personnel in the District Education Bureau was only a “formality.” In many cases, supervisors will nominate teachers whose instructional skills are excellent, who are committed to working with students and other teachers to improve the school, and who are demonstrating leadership potential. However, they sometimes nominate teachers simply because they personally like them. The principals placed great importance on a strong personal relationship between a candidate and the direct supervisor in situations where there is no selection criterion to follow and where a supervisor’s personal nomination plays a vital role in selecting candidates. Li said that:

If you are smart enough to build up good relations with your principal, it's quite possible that you will become the new principal of that school after his or her retirement, or be recommended by him or her to the principal position of another school. Actually, your management skills are less important than your relationship with your principal.

The principals felt the personal relationship with a supervisor was indeed a double-edged sword. On the one hand, they felt a school leader should have strong social ability. This is indispensable for the principal's future success in acquiring support and resources for the school. They pointed out, however, that there were a few unqualified principal candidates who have benefited from the support of their supervisors. Wang commented that during the 1980s, the widely advocated "all-round leadership capacity" was misleading. "It actually fostered a harmful tendency that Guanxi [personal relationships] has placed too much emphasis on. Those pure bootlickers got more chances to be promoted." He noted that professional knowledge has increased in value today and receives more consideration.

In fact, it is true to a degree that personal considerations are arguably more important in the Chinese culture, where they often override the law. However, "rule of law" has become basic governmental policy in China in recent years. China promulgated an astounding amount of new legislation in the 1990's. In 1999, the National People's Congress (NPC) included the concept of "rule of law" into China's constitution. This researcher believes that the cases of "rule of man" that the principals are talking about will be reduced dramatically in coming years.

Obey orders from higher authorities. The principals said it was crucial for candidates to obey and implement orders from the top leaders. As Gu remarked, “The District Education Bureau likes those capable but obedient candidates the most. Competency and the quality of being obedient are equally important for selecting principals.” Wang said respect for authority was formed by the official ideology which emphasizes conformity and obedience. He also felt that it was rooted in Chinese traditional values and culture that originated with Confucius, who emphasized the importance of favoring order and a stable hierarchy. Confucianism also advocated the avoidance of friction and disharmony in working relationships. The principals commented that being obedient was helpful for “the tightness and stability of the holistic structure of the public school system,” but “it did no good for developing the individuality of school and students.”

Nevertheless, since the policy of “Quality Education,” which attempts to cultivate individual personality and fulfill individual aspirations, has been widely promoted in the nation recently, it is expected that traditional Chinese culture, in which children are taught to be unquestioningly obedient to authority, could be altered. The next generation of Chinese children may become more courageous in challenging authority.

*Sub question two: How do the Chinese principals perceive the overall effectiveness of the selection process for preparation?* Generally, the Chinese principals described the principal selection strategy as effective and rigorous. Although they suggested that meaningful criteria or performance-based standards should be established

to measure and select principal candidates, the principals in this study perceived that a majority of principals appointed by the higher authority proved to be successful leaders. As Chen said, “Selected principals are usually capable and smart. They are outstanding teachers, they have management experience, and they often are much more excellent than those who have not been selected. Otherwise, they would not get identified and selected from countless candidates.”

The Chinese principals spoke in particular of using criteria that emphasizes the importance of teaching skills, and knowledge of curriculum and instruction. Zhang said, “Our students will profit from it indirectly, because a principal who is familiar with the classroom understands students’ needs, and often makes the right decisions in school planning.” However, the principals indicated that to select principals solely through the appointment of higher authority was essentially a sort of crippling “elitism,” which excluded many capable teachers and other candidates from entering into administration. It’s not helpful for an open-minded, liberal, and fun school climate; and, finally, it hinders the development of individuality in the school.

### **Perceptions Regarding Principal Preparation Programs**

The purpose of this section was to answer two research questions in an effort to identify the respondents’ perceptions of the principal preparation programs in the United States and China.

### *Research Question Three*

How do the American respondents perceive the principal preparation programs in the United States?

*Sub question one: How do the American principals perceive the effectiveness of administrator preparation programs?* Almost all American principals interviewed in this study indicated that their university preparation programs were “basically” successful at developing the knowledge and skills they needed to perform their jobs. Frank said, “Generally speaking, my master’s program was helpful except that there are some classes I would trade out.” Mary said she didn’t want to “take anything away from the program,” but she also wanted to give credit: “Generally speaking, I think that it prepared me to be a principal.”

Helen enjoyed her mid-management program because “it was fun to meet people from different districts, like a class.” She felt that her professors were knowledgeable. “I had some that I enjoyed more than others, but they were all knowledgeable.” On the other side, Helen thought candidates could never get fully prepared for the first day they start their job as a principal. “There is no way that a university can prepare you for the interruptions of people and paper work.”

Grace had a similar point as Helen. She said she had the strongest program in the world. On the other hand, she didn’t believe mid-management programs teach people how to be a principal because they do not necessarily give the tools for the day-to-day operation of the school.

That has to be learned on the job. The program gives you some background, however, I think you don't make the connection between the background, or the philosophy, or the theory for two or three years on the job. You are just trying to figure out who do I call when this happens, or what do I do for this.

While the principals expressed high satisfaction with the effectiveness of their university preparation programs in general, they mentioned certain limitations that exist in these programs. Seven issues were identified.

The first issue was the time lapse between completion of the preparation programs and moving into the job. Among the seven American respondents, three principals (Grace, Linda, and Helen) completed their master's degrees or licensure programs in the 1980s. They were aware of gaps as large as 15 years between preparation and obtaining the job. Some respondents said they had anticipated this problem and tried to compensate by "learning new things" through pursuing higher degrees. Others did not attempt to address the issue. It raises the question of whether principals who experience large gaps between preparation and actual performance possess the knowledge and skills relevant to present school circumstances.

The second issue concerned the need of programs to be focused around standards, such as those enumerated in NCATE's standards. Many institutions have adopted higher standards and have done an excellent job of refocusing the discourse by placing student learning at the center of the administrator's role. For example, John remembers that his preparation program did a "very good job" of aligning every single syllabus with those standards, and integrating every single objective of the leadership into "all classes."

However, the interviewed principals indicated that other colleges or universities did not modify their programs and continued to prepare future principals in the old way. In other cases, the institutions “redesigned” their programs by matching course titles and content with the adopted standards. Institutions with less standards based programs are felt to have limited or no doctoral offerings, and their programs are pretty much consumer and profit driven. This concern echoes Shipman’s work (2002) when he pointed out that from 1997 to 2002, less than 5% of the institutions preparing administrators willingly submitted to the rigorous national recognition process of NCATE standards. Some programs refuse to adopt higher standards because they apparently don’t want to take the risk of competing with the faster and easier programs. Therefore, state licensure and accreditation systems have to be based solidly on standards so that preparation programs will become more rigorous to meet those standards.

The third issue was that, for many principals, choosing which institution to attend for their principal preparation program was determined partly by the distance from that institution to their home. As one respondent said “I wanted to take courses and be a good coach and husband at the same time.” Practitioners have families to support, and are usually in low-paying teaching jobs. They have to carefully consider the cost and convenience of taking a program. Comparatively, the quality of the programs was a less important factor to them than location. This practical consideration by candidates when selecting a preparation program indicates that high-quality programs located in relatively remote areas may need to develop supplementary means of attracting candidates in order to be competitive.

The fourth issue concerned the importance of the faculty in determining the quality and efficiency of the preparation curriculum. The respondents evaluated most university faculties in preparation programs as “knowledgeable” or “did a good job.” However, they showed concern that some faculty members lacked active involvement in instruction, ignored students’ needs, were weak on follow-up mentoring and support, and were excessively focused on their research and tenure.

Helen said:

There is a lot of busy work. For the instructional leader in my school who was in the preparation program last year, some courses were just too much work. She stayed up until two or three in the morning, trying to take care of her baby and get her work done.

The principals complained that a lot of the presentations in the classroom were done by students rather than by teachers or professors. Helen stated:

The professors were talking a little, but mainly the students were doing all the presentations. I think that’s good, but I don’t think every class needs to have a presentation without enough teacher input. It’s okay to dig out some information, but you would think they could give us some wisdom. We want a lot of input by professors.

Mary had a similar unpleasant learning experience. She remembered a lot of professors in her preparation program letting students teach the class. “You know, read chapter 11 and you’re gonna teach it the next time. I would prefer the professor teach the class. That’s why they are paid, that’s why they are there. That’s their area, their expertise.”

The principals pointed out that university faculty excused themselves from teaching responsibilities under the umbrella of claiming “faculty as facilitator and student as learning center.”

Linda suggested that university faculty could do a better job of mentoring. She thought her university failed to really connect students with mentors.

I was fortunate to have a good mentor. But that was due to my job, not to the university. My mentor was an administrator, and that was really helpful. He mentored me in my role before my principalship, which is probably why he realized that I had the ability to become a principal. I had advisors in my mid-management program, but you never saw them unless you called them. If you call them, you get help, but if you don't call them, they don't call you. It wasn't a strong connection. Maybe it depends on different people, different universities, and different departments. It's better if you feel that connection with your university.

The principals also reflected the concern that their recommendations regarding what should be taught in preparation program courses were rarely sought by faculty. They felt more faculty should be hired from experienced practitioners because the practitioners brought a deep knowledge of effective school practices, and understood principals' needs better.

The fifth issue was focused on addressing real problems in schools and merging the theoretical knowledge base with practice. The American principals felt that some university preparation programs have done better jobs than others. This researcher was

excited to find that there was an increasing shift away from traditional lectures to the problem-based teaching and learning practice in some university preparation programs. In the study, some of the principals perceived that they have been expected to be more responsible for their own learning through meaningful, collaborative, reflective, and authentic assignments and projects. For instance, John felt that his preparation program prepared people “both academically and practically extremely well.” The program encouraged students to create action plans, which he found to be very useful in resolving real school issues. John recalled that he never understood action plans and he hated doing them because they were a lot of work. But,

As I sit here as a principal, that is all that my campus improvement plan is. It’s a thick action plan. And it’s set up identically to what I did in college. It’s everything I’ve done. For some people, that may be difficult to do. But for me, it’s just like second nature because I did so many of them in college, and it’s paid off.

In this kind of preparation programs, the principals reported that they did a lot of group work, seminars, case studies, collaborative activities, small group research, reflective research, and other classroom projects. “We went way beyond the books.”

However, lecture and discussion methods remained dominant in some institutions. The principals who have attended those programs felt that the programs needed to improve and extend opportunities for field experience. Linda suggested that there needed to be “more practical applications” in her preparation program. She acknowledged, however, that the program was helpful in learning subjects “like law,

budgeting, and management.” Linda said learners could have obtained better experiences than just “sitting and reading a book” if they had been shown what’s happening in schools. Frank felt that a more self-reflective approach should have been adopted in his preparation program.

At some point, each of the principals brought up the need for collaboration between universities and districts again. They said districts could help improve problem-based learning and field experiences for university preparation programs by participating in advisory councils of the universities and selecting and paying stipends to support mentors for practitioners in preparation programs. There were no intent examples given to limit the involvement of districts in university preparation programs.

The rigor of the coursework was the sixth concern and all the principals believing that rigor should be increased. The principals felt that most courses in preparation programs were “not strenuous.” Linda indicated that her university did not grade students in a discriminating manner, even those who “shouldn’t be a school leader.” Mary felt the classes were too easy. She said she did not find anything particularly difficult even though she studied “very little.”

I just feel it was like, oh, one more paper to do, or ok, I have to do this report, or I have to interview this person. The classes that I enjoyed the most was the one with lots discussion, and the one in which I had to LEARN certain laws and factual information.

The final issue was that the principals felt that internships in preparation programs needed to be enhanced. Although an internship or practicum is now a part of

preparation programs, they usually are short-term, part-time, unpaid, independent of previous coursework, or isolated from a principal's core task--supervision. Grace felt that, basically, her internship program for mid-management didn't give her a feel for "what was going on in the administration."

For the principalship, it was in the school where I was teaching. But it's set up like, ok, do so many hours of this, so many hours of this, and at the same time, you're trying to teach. So you are seeing different pieces.

John could not even recall a specific internship in his master's program. He looked it up on his master's transcript and finally found a course called "workshop on education," which might have been an internship.

The principals recommended that students be paid interns, be released from classroom responsibilities, and do their internship full time so that they would be able to be there day after day in the administrative role, and get more feeling for the flow of what was going on. The principals also stressed the importance of mentorship from both the university and the district. Grace said she had five principal interns working with her. They were going through the mid-management and teaching at the same time. As their mentor, Grace understood how difficult this was, and tried to "really let them see what goes on." Linda and Grace suggested that it would be helpful to make these interns come back and do some reflecting together, doing some connections with theory. "So that they really truly can be using whatever theory is prevalent at that moment, and sometimes whatever was popular or distinguishing at that moment."

Wilmore (2002) stated that the ideal situation for an internship was a “full-time, year-long, paid internship conducted under a trained mentor with joint supervision from school district and university personnel.” (p.105) His opinion is in accord with the recommendations of the interviewed principals in this study regarding how to improve internships of university principal preparation programs.

*Sub question two: What perspectives do the American principals hold regarding additional knowledge and skills critical to their success as school leaders?* The interviewed principals’ suggestions for improving their preparation programs fell into six categories. These are areas they felt were missing from their own programs. Each of these six areas is discussed in the following paragraphs.

Skills in organizing schools for teacher learning. In order to help children engage in complex thinking and problem-solving, teachers themselves have a lot to learn. Little (1999) stressed the importance of school leaders mobilizing teacher learning through instructional vision and management practices. The principals in the study emphasized that preparation programs ought to develop their skills for motivating teacher learning. As Grace stated:

More and more, our piece is to make it possible for our teachers to continue to learn and grow. That’s a piece that was not in my mid-management program, so I would really to look at some adult learning. How do you help adults learn? There is a whole lot of difference between motivating adults to learn and motivating elementary kids. I don’t think as the principal, we know that. If we are going to

get our teachers to grow and be more responsive, we gotta be able to first model that, and then be able to create a school culture to enable that to happen.

Knowledge of best practices for curriculum and instruction. The principals felt that university programs should emphasize curriculum development and good instructional practices in order to prepare principals to lead high-achieving schools. Grace, who obtained her mid-management certification in 1991, said she was fortunate that she already had her master's degree in reading and curriculum before getting her principal certification, because she only "had 6 hours in curriculum and instruction in the mid-management program, and those courses dealt with topics in theory, not practice...That has to be really strengthened." The principals also desired to acquire some specific knowledge of curriculum practices which are recommended in the various fields. Nancy said "There is something in curriculum issues that I'm absolutely gonna improve in my preparation programs. What is the best practice in teaching math, science, and English ... Probably that is the most important, the most usable and practical thing to know."

Knowledge of special education and special population. The principals in the study felt that because of the federal No Child Left Behind Act as well as the significant demographic changes facing school leaders in the United States, knowledge regarding special education populations has to receive increased importance in the university preparation program. During the interview, Frank, Linda, Nancy, and Mary said students of color were the majority, not the minority, in their schools and their districts. The critical increase of English as a Second Language (ESL) students brought many new

problems to schools. In Linda's school, for example, it caused a drop in the rank of standard achievement test scores. Linda recalled:

My school was academically acceptable when I got here. We moved it to the exemplary and we won a national award. This is the only school in our district that has won the award two times. We're very proud of that. But the neighborhood changed, and we became more ethnically diverse with a higher number of economically disadvantage children. When the last TAKS scores came, when the TAKS changed, we didn't. And our scores dropped. Now we are back to acceptable again. We're really working hard to get those scores up.

Mary constantly looks for more and more information about special education because she feels that it is important and changes rapidly. She said, "I'm very hesitant to make decisions in this area just because I'm not an expert in special education or special populations." The principals felt that it is critical for university preparation programs to create courses centered on helping candidates understand and accommodate rapid social demographic change.

Specific job related skills to solve real problems. Facing various pressures and job responsibilities, the principals, especially the beginning principals, emphasized the importance of learning about communicating with teachers and parents, dealing with student discipline, handling textbooks, leveraging resources, etc. However, some university preparation programs deal with those topics in theory or on the surface. For example, Frank related the following:

I needed at least one psychology course talking about how to deal with angry parents and angry teachers. We need counseling resolution skills to talk about it. Miscommunication is probably 90% of the problems. One job that principals are dealing with is discipline. There is no one class on discipline. Another job that principals are dealing with is textbooks. There is no class on textbooks. Some of the practical issues are not in there.

Mary stressed the importance of helping candidates understand the budget process in preparation programs. She said a lot of her colleagues “have never known what budget code meant” and “are afraid of the word ‘finance’.”

Skills in self-reflection. A principal’ self-assessment and reflection skills are key in school improvement for reflection is key to understanding one’s beliefs and actions (Brown & Irby, 2001), and for improving one’s leadership (Marcoux, 2000). In this study, the principals stressed that principal preparation programs must incorporate self-assessment throughout the coursework to meet the various standards. Frank stated that one important part of class in preparation programs is “coming out and looking at your self.”

Am I somebody that could be a principal? Am I a good teacher? Many elementary teachers will never teach high school, many high teachers will never teach elementary. I’m the same way. I never want to become a high school principal because I don’t know what they do. I know my own limitations. I think the preparation programs should be something that requires students to start reflecting.

Skills in data analysis. It is necessary to prepare principal candidates to recognize the importance of data analysis in fostering school improvement and alleviating the achievement gap (Leithwood & Aitken, 1995). In Texas, the State Accountability System is based on the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS) curriculum framework, with students tested through the Texas Assessment of Academic Skills (TAKS). Frank said he took a measurement class in his master's program, but that was just general statistics. "There was nothing on minority students like that." He suggested the ability for data analysis could let principals target those low performing students and help bring them up. Helen commented:

As you know, TAKS and the No Child Left Behind Act are currently very popular, so I think people going to the program now will need a lot more on state testing, and how you read reports and get data. I would think that would be something that people would need to know when they get out now.

The principals believed that university preparation programs ought to enable students to "analyze the data appropriately" because "data is an indicator to measure the success of a school."

In conclusion, today's principals are required not only to perform management responsibilities, but also to be steeped in curriculum and instruction in order to supervise the process of raising student performance. They also face the challenge to meet the needs of an increasingly diverse K-12 student body. Stimulated by the standards movement, the coursework design of preparation programs placed more emphasis on the learning and teaching process, as well as on school-based problems. However, for those

principals who merely possess two or three years teaching experience prior to taking their principalship position, one or two curriculum and instruction courses may not be sufficient to prepare them to be a successful instructional leader capable of improving student learning.

Furthermore, for those programs that aligned their curriculum and instruction with standards, there is no evaluation designed to assure that the results of preparation programs meet those standards. It is not clear whether the standards are satisfied. Frank pointed out that “looking at the SBEC proficiency, I would think that they are so broad. You can put anything in it and make it work. So it’s up to the colleges to make sure that they are providing adequate classes.” Recently, the ETS developed the School Leaders Licensure Assessment (SLLA), a performance-based instrument for school leaders based on the ISLLC standards. However, the concerns regarding whether testing is a good way to determine the nature of preparation programs remains (McCarthy, 2002).

Lately, the question has been raised about the necessity of graduate level leadership preparation. Colorado considered eliminating the principal licensure (Orr, 2002). This study determined that the interviewed American principals were satisfied with their preparation programs, by and large. The principals indicated that the preparation programs did offer them the knowledge base for their future job. Daresh noted “there are values in these forms of learning” (2002, p. 141). However, do principal leadership programs make a real difference to student learning in practice? So far, there is no convincing research which assures us that the reform of preparation programs is indeed related to producing capable leaders who can enhance children’s learning

(McCarthy, 2002). Future study is needed which clearly identifies the impact of school leader's preparation programs to student achievement, directly and indirectly.

#### *Research Question Four*

How do the Chinese respondents perceive the principal preparation programs in China?

The dominant format of Chinese principal training is on-the-job professional development. The history of principal preparation programs in China is short. Since 1995, the Chinese National Ministry of Education has required that all the beginning principals must obtain professional certification through preparation training before they take the principal position. This rule does not apply to those who became principals before 1995 however. Accordingly, only three young principals (Li, Gu, and Zhang) in this study have obtained principal certification.

After being identified and recommended to the District Education Bureau by their supervisor, principal candidates are sent to a comprehensive college-style preparation program which includes one-year of part-time classroom learning and a half-year full-time internship. The three young principals in this study are examples that preparation programs generally "are designed to be offered to individuals who have already assumed formal managerial posts" in China. Gu had been an assistant principal and branch secretary of the Chinese Communist Party, Zhang served as a lead teacher

and instructional coordinator, and Li as a “backbone teacher” and an instructional coordinator.

*One year of part-time classroom work.* The three principals who have taken preparation programs (Gu, Li, and Zhang), viewed classroom learning as “not effective,” “too much focus on theory,” “not helpful,” and “making little sense to the real world.” Gu critiqued, “Lecture is the most frequently used method. Students rarely get a chance to discuss. All we have to do is take notes.”

For the one-year classroom study, the classroom instruction was provided by the Institute of Education, led by the District Education Bureau. Li commented,

The faculty members of the Institute of Education District are not as good as professors of normal universities. They rarely do research. They are not knowledgeable. Their ideas are often outdated. They teach us the same courses as 10 years ago. We actually don’t expect to get a sufficient knowledge base from them.

The Chinese principals suggested that high-quality normal universities collaborate with the districts to prepare principals. As Li said, “The professors at East China Normal University, one of China’s top three normal universities, have more wisdom and research experience than the faculty members of the Institute of Education District. The university should be given the main responsibility for formally preparing principal candidates.” It was suggested that universities could help districts by taking over the teaching responsibilities of the preparation programs and by providing researchers and resources for conducting the collaborative research.

According to the principals, the content of the one-year program includes political philosophy, the history of the Communist Party of China, the foundations of education, educational psychology, public school law, educational administration, Chinese and foreign educational history, and special topics. A course relevant to school finance was missing, possibly because “teacher leaders or assistant principals would never be authorized to manage financial affairs until they were chosen to be principal. It has to be learned on the job.” The principals took about four or five classes each week. At the end of the entire classroom study, they were asked to take final examinations on each subject. The format of the examination could be either essay or test.

The three principals criticized the content of the one-year programs as being totally focused on theory and ignoring the practical skills and realistic issues that principals were facing. “It doesn’t connect theory learning with our job. We seldom do case studies of principal’s work.” Zhang said she did not feel “any link between the contents of the course and the affairs of our school” either.

I never have used any knowledge or skill I learned from my preparation program later in my job. I think it wastes our principal’s precious time. I was sitting there just for the certificate because that’s the only way I could get it.

She also pointed out that “mentoring by faculty was missing in our one-year classroom study.”

*Half-year internship.* After finishing the one-year classroom study, the principal candidates were then assigned a half-year internship by the Education Bureau in their district. They were asked to assist the director/superintendent in supervising local public

schools, or were appointed to a large school to shadow and help the principal. When candidates finished their internships, their job performances were appraised by their supervisors as either exceeding expectation, achieving expectation, or not achieving expectation. Whether or not they would be assigned to a principal position depended on their evaluation results.

Li, Gu, and Zhang thought the half-year internship of preparation programs enhanced their field-based experiences. The field-based experiences prepared them better than “simply sitting in the classroom” as they had in their one year of theory learning. Gu said, “We do learn something from shadowing and observing experienced site administrators.” A concern, however, was expressed that internship positions were usually randomly assigned, without specific purpose. Consequently, some candidates were sent to learn in settings irrelevant to their future role. For instance, Li was assigned to the Office of Supervision and Inspection of the district, and practiced how to monitor and supervise the entire public school system of her district, which she did not feel helped her in her subsequent principalship job.

Generally, the three Chinese principals felt that the process of getting a certificate was not complex or strenuous and that the demands of Chinese principal preparation programs were not high at all. Li said, “As long as you follow the procedure of taking classes and doing an internship, you are sure to get the certificate. No one failed to get it.” The difficult thing was to get into the preparation programs because only those who have already assumed principalships are selected. Certainly, there was no guarantee that the candidates would be employed as principals rightly after their preparation programs.

Gu said, “It depends on your fortune and some sort of opportunity, like your personal relationship with top leaders, to decide when you will be finally assigned a principal position.”

The principals felt discontented that the Chinese principal preparation programs are not aligned with degree programs, such as a master’s program, which means principals will not earn any degree after preparation. But they were happy with the fact that the Chinese preparation programs, including classroom study and the internship program, are totally supported and funded by the district. “We don’t have to worry about time and money at all.”

### **Perceptions Regarding Principal Professional Development**

The purpose of this part was to answer two research questions in an effort to identify the respondents’ perceptions of the principal professional development activities adopted in the United States and China.

#### *Research Question Five*

How do the American respondents perceive the principal professional development activities in the United States?

*Sub question one: How do the American principals perceive the effectiveness of professional development activities?* In the current dynamic learning climate, principals found they could not afford to overlook their own need to learn and grow professionally

and personally (Fenwick & Pierce, 2002). It has been mentioned in the previous chapter that American principals in this study are required to complete 200 hours of continuing professional education every 5 years and to have follow-up assessments to renew their principal certificates.

As with preparation programs, the American principals in this study indicated that their professional development programs were helpful in improving their practice and their schools in general. The study found there were usually three different approaches adopted by the interviewed American principals to receive their continuing professional education: Ph. D. education; academies and workshops/seminars; and mentorship relationships. In the following paragraphs, the principals' comments are discussed according to these three approaches for continuing professional development.

Ph.D. education. The principals made a personal decision to pursue a Ph. D level degree in educational administration or a related major at a college or university. Among the seven principals interviewed in the study, John already held his Ph. D degree. The other four principals, Frank, Grace, Linda, and Nancy, are working toward their Ph. D's in education. Only two principals, Mary and Helen, were not working to earn their doctorates. Certainly, due to the sampling method of the study, this ratio cannot represent the national profile of elementary school principals. The national data indicate that 9.6% of the elementary principals in the United States hold doctoral degrees (NCES, 2000).

Linda and John said they wanted to teach at the university level in the future. Frank pursued a doctorate for the purpose of self-actualization. He wanted to be the best

in the education field, and the doctoral degree is “the highest you can get.” He also stated that more opportunities could come with it because districts prefer principals with high levels of education. “It does take you up to the next level... when you see your name in the list, with a ‘Dr.’ before your name, you do stand up a little higher.” Grace did it for herself, for the learning, and for the teachers in her school. She believed she was a lifelong learner, and she wanted to grow again in a different way. She said the Ph.D. study deepened her understanding of how to be a principal, and that “it’s a good role model for your teachers, and they need to see us learning.” Linda also tried to provide the example of a constant learner to her staff and the students.

Despite a recent view that schools, not universities, are the proper training grounds for future school leaders because they offer practical, job-oriented training based on solving real school problems (Keller, 2002), the principals in this study celebrated their decision to work for their doctoral degrees. They even wished they had entered this program 10 years ago. They felt that the doctoral programs were “very beneficial” for them and helped them to be better principals, to make the better decisions, and to “immediately do a better job of serving all children.”

Frank made this comment concerning his master level study, “You were just memorizing, giving back to the scantron test.” All the courses he took in his doctoral program were practical, so “the level of satisfaction was right up there.” Linda stated, “Believe me, the doctoral program has made me think and grow and I appreciate that. It has been a good change for my mind to think in different ways and to learn different

things.” Grace believed her conceptional thinking had been strengthened and deepened through doctoral study. She stated:

I really truly believe that the doctoral program at my university gives you the ability to think in a way that you can make connections. And, I see a whole lot of difference between my conceptions of doing adult learning than the principals who have not been through this experience. It’s not that they are doing bad things, it’s just different.

The principals realized, however, that the effectiveness of a Ph. D. education might vary in different universities and programs.

Academies, workshops and seminars. The second way principals develop themselves professionally is through participating in principal professional development academies, conferences, conventions, workshops, and seminars created by school districts, professional associations, and other education agencies.

The principals thought that compared with theoretical and classroom-oriented university-based continuing education programs, these academies, seminars, and workshops are commonly more client-driven. The content of these academies, workshop, and seminar series is usually based on needs assessments administered to participants. For instance, Grace described the professional development activities in her district as “tailored very much, very specifically for the district. It is different from gaining generalized knowledge in a university setting.”

The principals said the duration of these sessions is short-term, “lasting for a couple of hours, one day, or several days.” While such sessions are usually required by

school districts and earn credit toward the required 200 hours of professional development in Texas, Daresh (2002) found that involvement in these types of learning activities normally comes from a principal's personal motivation and desire to learn and grow professionally, not from a need to meet certification or degree requirements.

In the study, the principals give a lot of credit to the academies, conferences, conventions, workshops, and seminars offered by their school districts, other education agencies, or professional organizations. They responded that these academies and workshops "focused on the real work of principals." The principals were quite impressed by the magnitude and variety of information these professional activities offered. As Helen cited,

I usually go to TEPSA (Texas Elementary Principals and Supervisors Association) every summer. There are a lot of sessions. You also get a lot of information from other people. We have principal meetings in the district twice a month. We get updates from all the different departments. We may have a principal book study. We have a lot of things going that way.

The principals applauded the multiple options they possessed to "choose whatever you want to specialize in."

The principals said these workshops and academies were helpful to the central activities of the schools: teaching and learning. Linda stated, "Because of those workshops, when I am going into the classrooms, I know a couple of things that teachers should be doing, and how we can reach all children and make all children successful." Helen and Frank were using the "thinking maps" that they learned in a workshop as they

work with the teachers in the classrooms of their campus. Frank also demonstrated that he had utilized the data collection tools that he learned in another workshop in his analysis of data for accountability purposes.

The principals commented that many professional development activities, such as principal meetings, book studies, and team training, supported their reflective practice. These activities also provided opportunities to work, discuss, and solve problems with peers. This was particularly helpful for those new principals who were eager to learn and communicate with others. For example, in District A, all K-12 principals were asked to meet together as a whole group at the beginning of the year. Then they were divided into elementary and secondary principal groups in order to discuss their “own stuff.” The common groups increased the chances of discovering and solving some critical problems collaboratively.

To offer readers a better illustration, Appendix E is attached at the end of this paper. These appendices contain samples of different levels of principal meeting agendas which were obtained from two districts. Part I outlines the 2004-2005 year plan for the K-12 principals’ vertical team meetings in a district. Part II lists the one-day activities of K-12 principals’ meeting in another district. Part III describes the one-day activities of two elementary principals’ groups in the same district.

Mentoring relationships. The third way for principals to develop professionally is to be mentored by other experienced professionals. In this way, as Fenwich & Pierce noted, “the principal is the recipient of knowledge from seasoned administrators whom she or he shadows in internships and field experience” (2002, p. 2). Beginning

September 1, 2002, all principals employed for the first time as campus administrators in the districts involved in this study were required to participate in a one-year induction period with mentoring support (Texas State Board of Educator Certification, 2003). It were shown by the principals that the mentoring relationships was found to normally occur between an experienced and a less experienced principal. The principals reflected that in a mentoring relationship, new principals shadow their senior mentor to learn such things as how to schedule meetings, and how to interact with the public, etc. They think, talk, and reflect together.

In the study, the American principals affirmed that the mentoring relationships between principals were a main approach to acquire job-specific skills and competencies, which was particularly important for those first-time principals. The interviewed principals like Grace, Frank, Helen, Nancy, and Linda said they were fortunate to have a good mentor principal when they first started their career as school leaders. The principals expressed that this type of learning occurred in real school settings. It offered them “frequent opportunities” to share problems, to discuss issues about the quality of teaching and learning in their individual school, and to share pressures with their mentors, which was different from a university setting study. One principal concluded that “mentorship makes me more confident about leading our schools.” They felt that new principals really needed someone working with them, giving them feedback, and assisting them in trying new practices.

*Sub question two: What suggestion do the American principals offer to improve professional development activities?* The American principals expressed that they were

getting realistic, practical information and assistance in their professional development programs. However, some further recommendations were provided for these programs.

First, while the goal of group learning was achieved through team discussion and group activities, professional development programs failed to match their activities with an individual's needs.

According to the interviewed American principals, although most professional development activities usually were customized for the district, they were not tailored specifically enough to meet the needs of schools and participants individually. The principals described their professional development programs as "everybody sitting in the same room, hearing the same thing. Some of us are going, 'Ok, heard that,' but others are going, 'wow, that's a new idea, let's try it!'" In this study, it was indeed found that the beginning principals were more easily satisfied by various topics of professional development activities than their experienced counterparts.

As a seasoned principal, Grace suggested that universities, districts, and other agencies should look at the educational level of participants. She said that there was very much a difference between a principal who has a doctoral degree and one who has a master's or bachelor's degree. "I'm going through my doctoral experience. People that haven't been through what I've been through don't necessarily have the same viewpoint as me." Similarly, Grace stressed that universities and districts ought to look at the age and administrative experiences of participants. The needs of principals who were at entry level were different than senior principals who had been in the principalship for several

years. “I have 13 years of experience behind me and I’m looking at things a whole lot differently than a principal who has half that experience.”

Linda also suggested differentiating the instruction in the classroom. “We might have very different elementary schools even if we are in the very same school district. It should be recognized that all schools are not the same. They should look at what your school needs.” Using herself as an example, Linda stated that she hoped to attend workshops on how to retain teachers and keep them satisfied and happy. As a seasoned principal, she didn’t need help in special budgets that “a very new principal probably needs.”

Second, it was suggested that in-service workshops and academies put more effort into engaging school leaders in well-planned, long-term, career-long learning. The principals said that although the workshops and academies offered them a lot of new information, the topics of these workshops were not normally arranged in any particular sequence, nor were they designed on the basis of some type of adult learning theory. The principals particularly brought up the fact that, as a main type of professional development activity, the district principals’ meetings were not “really developing people.” These meetings failed to bring people into a learning mode. Most of the time, these principals’ meetings were full of routine practices or updated information. As one principal said, “We only hear what programs are there, what’s happening, or speakers come in from the district office to say ‘this is what is going to be happening in my department’.” Part IV of Appendix E, attached, is the minutes from a principals’ meeting which has been described in Part III of Appendix E. It is not hard to see that the meeting

mainly focused on policy upgrades or job reports from various divisions of the district. There is no conceptual framework to tie subjects together.

Third, the principals demonstrated that workshops and academies were not related to rigorous evaluation. Mary said:

There was no follow-through evaluation. We go to the workshop and then there is nothing else. We don't need to discuss again what we have implemented, or what didn't work for us, or anymore suggestions. I wanted to pick up the phone and call somebody and say, "I tried this, but it didn't work on my campus. What else can I do?"

Clearly, field-based learning and university setting learning each have limitations. A number of principals, like Mary, are rejecting the university-based continuing education programs because they are too theoretical and classroom-oriented, and they are demanding more active learning related to the practical problems principals face on the job each day. According to Daresh (2002), people are calling for practical job-oriented training based on solving real school problems. On the other hand, field-based programs serve to prepare people only for what presently is, and what it was in the past, but not what it might be in the future. It is quite possible that principals could be better prepared by a combination of formal learning and on-the-job learning.

### *Research Question Six*

How do the Chinese respondents perceive the principal professional development activities in China?

*Sub question one: How do the Chinese principals perceive the effectiveness of professional development activities?* It has been mentioned that on-the-job training is the main method of Chinese principal professional development. It was found in the study that similar with professional development programs in the United States, the Chinese principals in this study indicated that there were also three different approaches to receive their continuing professional education: master's education; academies, workshops, and seminars; and mentorship relationships.

Master's education. Although a bachelor's degree is enough for the principalship in China, there were two respondents in this study, Chen and Zhang, who have obtained master's degrees at universities and colleges. According to them, the courses of the master's study included educational administration, educational science and research methods, school psychology, educational measurement, school management studies, etc. The program was to be completed in approximately two to three years. However, the principals' satisfaction level with the master's study program was not very high. Chen commented that the content of these courses resembled the courses universities offered in their bachelor's programs.

I've taken my bachelor's and master's study in the same university and have been taught the same courses by the same group of faculty members. I didn't feel the bar had been raised a lot in terms of instruction and curricula.

Zhang pointed out the weak link between theory learning and practice in existing master's programs.

There were some professors in my master's study who were excellent speakers and deep thinkers, and they offered us wisdom and perspectives which emphasized realistic problems that a principal may face. But, many others just repeated the theories in the old text books and displayed little interest in the real and timely issues in schools.

Zhang also said mentoring from the university faculty was limited.

Other two principals, Li and Gu said they had no interest in applying for master's study in the future. Li said, "I believe that I can do a better job than some university faculties if given a chance to teach a group of principals, because I will talk about something that happens daily in our schools." In fact, even if the principals were very willing to pursue their master's degree, some of them, especially the senior principals, did not get the opportunity to enter into the master program as a result of university admission requirements for a second language, namely English. Qing stated that the requirement for candidates to pass CET-6 (College English Test Band Six) was "unreasonable" because most aged principals never had a chance to learn English in their lifetime. Qing said:

You know, English as a secondary language is now required for the whole new generation to learn in China. But back in the 1950s and 1960s, Russian was the only second language that was taught in school. We never got a chance to learn English later on the job either.

Wang remarked that although he had rich experiences in management and schooling, the limitation in English became his biggest barrier for getting into the university and pursuing a master's degree. "I feel it's not fair for people in my age group."

Academies, workshops, and seminars. The seven Chinese principals interviewed in this study have attended various academies, conferences, conventions, and workshops or seminars. All of them have taken the basic in-service principal training workshops and the advanced in-service principal training workshops required by "the Eighth Five-Year Plan of Economic and Social Development of the People's Republic of China" and "the Ninth Five-Year Plan of Economic and Social Development of the People's Republic of China." Additionally, Chen and Wang have participated in a national-level elementary school principals' improvement training program which is held every spring and fall. This national-level program only had about 30 vacancies for attendees in each term. Each province or city was to send the most distinguished principals to the program. Gu, Li, and Zhang have taken the city-level young backbone principals' training program which lasted for half a year. In this program, young principals met every two weeks. Every three months, Qing and Wang attended the district-level forum of the "Three-Famous Training Academy," which aimed to develop "famous schools, famous principals, and famous teachers." Gu and Yang also took part in the experts symposium where the most outstanding educators, experts, and university professors in Shanghai delivered a series of lectures concerned with educational reform and school change.

The seven interviewed Chinese principals considered the professional development programs to be "helpful" in providing them with necessary information

concerning up-to-date educational reforms. However, the programs were far from adequate in terms of developing principals' skills and knowledge to improve school operations and student achievement. The principals were generally not satisfied with the effectiveness of the professional development programs that the government and districts offered them. They stated that these programs were commonly "a formality," "not well established," "context free," "trainer focused," "had little or no mentorship," and "could not meet job needs."

According to the Chinese principals, like the preparation programs in China, the opportunity to attend all the professional development activities they wanted was not available to all the principals. High-performing principals had better chances of being selected into certain "advanced" training programs, such as the national-level elementary school principals' improvement training program, or the "Three-Famous Training Academy" mentioned above. The participants perceived being selected more as "an honor" or a chance to expand their network, or get to know people from a higher authority, than as a good opportunity to learn. The principals commented that most training workshops planned by municipal or district education bureaus were stereotyped by repetitive themes and tedious lectures. Gu said:

The content and format of the workshops I've taken part in followed the same routine. You go to that room every week and listen to those meaningless theories. The most confusing part for me is that every time we finish the workshop, we are asked to produce a "research essay" even though we never research anything in the workshop.

Li stated that most training programs were not “developing” principals.

You are supposed to feel flattered to be selected into those programs because they are not available for every principal. It’s a kind of honor that you get involved. But after several workshops, I just feel tired and like I am wasting my time because most topics are empty and repeat the same thing. Look at the title and you will know what they will talk about this time. I need some innovative, realistic ideas about how to improve my school specifically.

Yang recalled that some workshops/seminars he has taken didn’t have any specific theme and principals simply arranged to visit other schools and observe exemplary principals. Chen said what the Education Bureau cared the most about for those workshops was not the quality, but the attendance rate. “You can take a nap or deal with your own thing in the classroom as long as you are there.” Chen chose to sit in the first row when attending the workshops because he wanted everybody to see he had been there.

I have no choice. They will “have a serious talk” with you if you have been absent several times. I just want to show my respect for the effort they put into planning the workshop. Actually, the Education Bureau also felt embarrassed about the low attendance rate, but they obviously hadn’t done much to improve the situation.

The principals said most training workshops and seminars passed on information about current changes in educational policy and curriculum reform, but they failed to meet the individual and realistic needs of the schools and participants.

The Chinese principals noted that mentorship from the district educational institutions was missing. They also criticized the fact that collaborative and reflective approaches were seldom adopted in training programs. For example, Zhang said she has participated in so many workshops on the topic of making school plans that she could train others on the same topic herself. But, making plans is not that simple when it involves the unique and complicated context of each school, and none of these workshops have taken these factors into consideration.

I have revised my three-year school plan at least five times, but I'm still not satisfied with the draft. These workshops didn't require us to make real plans for our schools. None of the instructors helped us to create or develop our plans, and none gave us feedback on them.

Mentoring relationships. The Chinese principals in the study stated that some kind of mentoring relationships between principals were required by some districts. For example, Li said that her District Education Bureau asked for a "one-help-one" mentoring relationship which occurs between a senior and a young principal. Gu illustrated that it's not unusual for Chinese principals to peer mentor each other. Like their American counterparts, the Chinese principals also perceived the mentorship relationships was "very important" for them to develop job-specific skills. It's specifically helpful for the first-time principals.

*Sub question two: What knowledge and skills do the Chinese principals perceive need to be emphasized and enhanced in professional development?* In the study, the Chinese principals suggested that future programs be organized in a more structured and

comprehensive manner, with more emphasis on practice and real issues in schools. They enumerated the following seven aspects as significant knowledge and skills for developing them professionally: knowledge of contemporary public policy and reform issues in education, knowledge of conducting individual school restructuring project, knowledge of cultivating interests and developing potentials of each individual student, specific skills in organizational management, skills in building a learning organization for teachers, English, and computer skills.

Knowledge of contemporary public policy and reform issues in education. The principals showed their increasing concern for educational policy and reform issues in China. Over the past two decades, China has been going through enormous reforms in education, responding to economic and political changes including moving from a socialist economy to a “socialist market economy.” The principals listed many educational projects which China’s government is implementing. Chen said that recently, the Ministry of Education of China (MOE) released a report entitled “Action Plan for Rejuvenating Education 2003-2007,” which identifies the direction, tasks and objectives of educational development in China. MOE also published “The Program for Strategic Breakthrough in the Universalization of Nine-Year Compulsory Education and Eradication of the Illiteracy among Middle-aged and Young Groups in the West.” He also mentioned that China now is implementing a Program on Teaching Quality and Teaching Reform in higher education institutions. Qing emphasized that today, all schools in China are carrying out experimental projects on “Quality Education” so that the overall development of students can be promoted and so a solid foundation for their

life-long sustainable development can be established. Li mentioned that the Chinese government is planning a program on education information to accelerate the pace in infrastructure construction, resource construction, and talent production, and to improve the overall application of Internet in educational systems.

The Chinese principals in the study believed that the implementation of these innovations will play an important role in improving overall quality of education nationally, and in pursuing the cohesive and sustainable development of the economy and society. They were looking forward to more training programs which “help us understand the foundation, process, outcomes, and impact of these innovations, and to make plans to meet the detailed requirements for restructuring our own schools.”

Knowledge of conducting individual school restructuring project. The recent education reforms require each school in China to be involved in a restructuring project which demands that principals construct a vision for school changes. In the study, the Chinese principals were expected to participate in more workshops which would help them see approaches and develop a vision to create a better school environment. They indicated that school leadership in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century required more than new knowledge; it required new ways of thinking. They hoped training workshops would help them cultivate new ways of thinking regarding how to plan, implement, and evaluate individual action research projects. Zhang said:

We are searching for the way to turn schools to the places where every student develops his or her learning capacity. We are trying to do some research on how to relieve students of the examination burden, and are stressing quality-oriented

education. However, as principals, we don't have many full-time research experiences.

The principals emphasized that they wanted to work closely with outstanding university faculties in this direction. They expected that faculty members who were experienced in educational research would offer them new visions and new approaches for school improvement--useful information such as "large-scale survey data and advanced experience from other schools." They also expected that faculty would help them to widely disseminate the proven successful experiences of their own schools. All the principals interviewed in the study earnestly anticipated fostering a university-school partnership which provides resources for conducting collaborative research and enhancing the quality of education.

Knowledge of cultivating interests and potential of each individual student. Since the 1990s, a new and fashionable concept has come to dominate the Chinese debate on educational reform. "Quality Education" has been officially promoted throughout the country, which aims to develop the all around competencies of students. The principals pointed out that the traditional patterns of education, particularly exam-oriented teaching and learning that focuses on centralized textbooks and exams, have greatly restrained the creativity and potential of students. As Gu said:

We are rethinking education and reforming our educational system. Our past education system failed to develop students' potential and made them remain ill-equipped for adulthood and working life after finishing school education. In the past, we kept cultivating 'elites' for society and have ignored the needs of

ordinary children. But, the system today must ensure that each student enjoys an equal opportunity to fulfill their educational hopes and dreams, and education should be tailored to individual needs and abilities.

The principals reflected that the Chinese school system has sought to deviate from the pattern of exam-oriented teaching and learning to develop creativity, problem-solving skills, and lifelong learning attitudes in students, and to turn tedious study into a pleasant experience. Principals like Chen argued that the quality of education largely rests on the reform of the examination system. He said, “As we all know, exams still guide how we teach and learn in school. I think we should reform our examination system to improve the quality of education.” Qing stated that test scores were previously considered as indispensable to the assessment of a student’s academic performance. To gain the highest score possible, most students are expected to do homework for several hours each day. They also have to attend extra courses during holidays to pass the mock examinations. Therefore, children are often overloaded with homework, and have no time to develop their own interests and potential talents. Qing stressed, “The mindset of valuing academic achievements as most important for children has to be changed.”

Currently, many experimental programs on “Quality Education” have been carried out in many cities in China, particularly concerning the efforts to decrease academic pressure on students in schools. All the principals in the study emphasized that they longed to take some training programs on the subject of improving the “quality the education” in their school.

Specific skills in organizational management. Like their American counterparts, the Chinese principals also claimed that they needed specific job-related administrative skills to solve day-to-day school problems. According to their clarification, these skills included the ability to establish good working relationships with staff and parents, the ability to make “data-driven” decisions, the ability to understand the legal aspects of school management, and the ability to self-reflect, etc. The principals pointed out that most classroom-based training programs in China often focused too much on empty leadership theory without helping principals reflect on their practice or developing their authentic leadership skills. Like the American principals, they suggested these programs should create a clinic model that develops their problem-solving competence.

Skills in building a learning organization for teachers. The Chinese principals said the traditional role of principals as “taskmasters” was far from sufficient to address the complexities of life in modern schools. They stated that principals should shift their focus from managing day-to-day problems to take a broader view. For example--focus on the human dimensions of organizations. As much attention should be paid to the individual interests and development of teachers as has been paid to students. Qing explicated that:

The teacher is a flowing fountain. To students, teachers are an infinite source of wisdom. They should be able to analyze a student’s work to identify ways to close achievement gaps between groups of students. They should be able to reflect on whether their instructional practices are working.

The principals asked for training workshops to develop their skills for creating a school environment where teachers can learn. Yang illustrated that:

So far, we try to offer teachers a variety of learning sources: frequent grade-level meetings, outside consultants, workshops, as well as the expertise and experience of the internal faculty and staff. But, we don't know whether what they learned supports student learning; whether these sources help teachers understand the subject matter deeply and flexibly so that they can help students relate ideas to one another and address misconceptions. As principals, we need to learn new ways of thinking to help teachers grow, to obtain an understanding which provides a foundation for pedagogical content knowledge.

English. Five principals out of the seven in the study, Chen, Li, Gu, Yang, and Zhang underscored that they expected to improve their English capability through specific workshops. Enthusiasm for learning English is currently sweeping through most cities of China, boosted by Beijing's successful bidding for the 2008 Olympics. Some of the principals were prompted to study English because of their plan to pursue a higher degree in a university, while others were making preparations for learning experiences in developed countries, or for communicating with educators overseas. Zhang explained that studying English has been listed as one of her professional development plans because her school was carrying out several international partnership projects with schools from other countries, like New Zealand and Britain. "If I speak good English, it will increase my opportunities to co-work with educators all over the world." Li has decided to become a research-oriented principal in the near future, "someone who is

good at not only taking charge of the administrative job of school every day, but also in describing and analyzing complex phenomenon in schools.” She aspires to improve her English in order to be able to browse research journals and literature in English. The Chinese principals’ enthusiasm for learning English expressed their high willingness to incorporate the best ideas and knowledge produced in other settings and cultures into their own contexts, which echoes a recent call from many scholars in this field for internationalizing educational administration (Chapman, Sackney, & Aspin, 1999; Paige & Mestenhauser, 1999).

Computer skills. The principals expected to increase their knowledge in the use computers to become more qualified for their jobs by taking part in certain workshops and training programs. Most of the principals acknowledged their lack of basic computer knowledge and skills, and realized that this lack could make them unqualified for the job sooner or later. One principal said,

Knowing how to create words and pictures with a computer has become a must.

We encourage our children to learn and benefit from computer skills, but we need to learn at least a few of those ourselves. It’s required by this society.

The principals were aware of the fact that computer technology introduces a view of lifelong learning which is highly demanded by the information age.

## **CHAPTER V**

### **SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

The previous chapters covered the introduction, statement of the problem, purpose of the study, significance of the study, the literature review, methodology and procedures used in the study, and the presentation of the data and findings answering each research question. This chapter presents a summary of methodology and findings of the study. Conclusions of the study are drawn from the comparison of similarities and differences between the American and Chinese principals' perceptions of their selection, preparation and professional development. Recommendations for further studies close this chapter.

#### **Summary**

This study was undertaken to identify the perceived selection strategies for preparation and the professional development practices experienced by principals in the southern, urban area in U.S. and eastern, urban area in China. In addition, the perceived effectiveness of Chinese and American principal preparation programs was explored.

The sample consisted of fourteen elementary school principals in a southern, urban area in the U.S. and an eastern, urban area in China selected via a purposive sample. The purposive sample of respondents was determined by deploying several criteria, including the age and gender of the principals, demographics of the schools, and

accessibility to the researcher. The researcher visited their campus between September, 2004 and January, 2005.

Intensive interviews and observations were used to gather information from principals in American and Chinese urban elementary schools. The human instrument was primarily used in this study for data collection purposes. The data was collected via the use of structured interviews. Observations of respondents during interviews, document reviews and analyses are all activities that assisted the researcher in exploring and assembling a contextual foundation sufficient for accurate interpretation.

Data collected in this study was subjected to qualitative analyses. Data analysis interacted with data collection, because information from the first respondent interview was used to guide the collection of information for the next respondent.

As a result of the analyses of the data the researcher identified categories of information. These categories provided answers to the research questions and prompted suggestions for further studies. In subsequent paragraphs, a summary of the data for each research question will be provided.

### *Research Question One*

How do the American respondents perceive the selection strategies educational leadership programs adopted in the U.S.?

The American respondents indicated that current admission criteria for entrance into educational leadership programs, such as GRE and GPA scores, recommendation

letters, and minimal teaching experience, were not sufficient for identifying a candidate's aptitude for being a successful principal. The American principals suggested improving the selection process in three ways:

- Emphasizing non-cognitive factors: Universities should place more emphasis on the knowledge, dispositions, leadership potentials, interpersonal skills, and successful teaching of candidates.
- Using assessment tools: Universities should use writing samples, teaching and leadership records, personal interviews, and portfolios as tools to evaluate and select candidates.
- Involving the local school system: Universities and districts should work together to move accomplished teachers into school leadership positions.

### *Research Question Two*

How do the Chinese respondents perceive the selection strategies educational leadership programs adopted in China?

In China, formal preparation occurs after selection. Chinese school principals are selected by districts as administrative candidates and then are assigned to participate in preparation programs. The Chinese principals interviewed in this study commented that no precise quantitative criteria were followed in order to identify and select principal candidates in China. Teaching skills, knowledge of curriculum and instruction, leadership capacity, personal relationships with direct supervisors, and obeying orders

from higher authorities were described by the Chinese principals as key factors in determining who would be selected as a principal. Although the Chinese principals perceived that the principal selection strategies in China heavily rely on the “rule of man” and embody an exclusive “elitism”, they were optimistic and believed that most selected Chinese principals are successful school leaders.

### *Research Question Three*

How do the American respondents perceive the principal preparation programs in the United States?

The American principals expressed their satisfaction with the effectiveness of the university preparation programs, but, they identified the following seven aspects in current preparation programs which needed to be improved:

- Principals who are certified many years before receiving a principalship should be required to renew their certification upon receiving a position.
- Preparation programs need to be built around standards.
- Preparation programs located in remote areas need to figure out supplementary ways to win candidates.
- The instruction and mentorship of faculty in preparation programs needs to be improved.

- The leadership preparation programs need to be upgraded by expanding job-related skills, by using a problem-based learning approach, and by field experiences.
- The rigor of coursework of preparation programs needs to be strengthened.
- Internships in preparation programs need to be enhanced.

The American principals identified the following six important skills and knowledge as essential practices for preparing school leaders: skills in organizing school for teacher learning, knowledge of best practices for curriculum and instruction, knowledge of special education and special populations, specific job related skills to solve real problems, skills in self-reflection, and skills in data analysis.

#### *Research Question Four*

How do the Chinese respondents perceive the effectiveness of principal preparation programs in China?

Chinese principal preparation programs include one-year part-time classroom learning and a half-year, full-time internship. The Chinese principals were not satisfied with the effectiveness of classroom instruction, which mainly relies on the “chalk and talk” lecture approach and focuses on theory which is not connected to the participants’ realities. The half-year internship of preparation programs was perceived by the Chinese principals as helpful for enhancing their field-based experiences. The Chinese principals

felt discontented that the Chinese principal preparation programs are not rigorous or aligned with degree programs.

*Research Question Five*

How do the American respondents perceive the principal professional development activities in the United States?

The American principals felt that their professional development programs were helpful for improving their practice and their schools. The respondents supported three approaches for receiving continuing professional educations. These three approaches were Ph. D. education; academies, workshops, and seminars; and mentorship relationships. They viewed the doctoral programs as beneficial for developing their skills. They are satisfied with the magnitude and variety of information offered by academies, seminars, and workshops. They also thought that mentoring relationships between principals helped them to acquire job-specific skills and competencies. The respondents acknowledged the need for differentiating instruction in the professional development programs. They also suggested that professional develop programs should not be viewed as a series of weekly managerial meetings and periodic conferences, which echoes the work of Mann (1998). In addition, workshops and academies should put more effort into engaging school leaders in well-planned, long-term, career-long learning; and emphasize rigorous follow-through evaluation.

*Research Question Six*

How do the Chinese respondents perceive the principal professional development activities in China?

Although the Chinese principals recognized that professional development programs were “helpful” in providing them with updated information, they were not satisfied with the effectiveness of the professional development programs. The Chinese respondents also received their continuing professional education through three approaches: Master’s degree education; academies, workshops, and seminars; and mentorship relationships. The principals’ satisfaction level with the master’s study program was not very high. They considered academies, workshops, and seminars as far from adequate in terms of developing principals’ skills and knowledge in order to improve school operations and student achievement. However, they perceived that mentorship relationships were helpful for them in developing job-specific skills. The Chinese principals suggested that future professional programs focus on the following seven aspects. These are knowledge of contemporary public policy and reform issues in education, knowledge of conducting individual school restructuring projects, knowledge of cultivating interests and developing the potential of each individual student, specific skills in organizational management, skills in building a learning organization for teachers, English, and computer skills.

## **Conclusions**

Conclusions of this study were drawn from the comparison of similarities and differences between the American and Chinese respondents' perceptions of selection, preparation, and professional development.

### *Similarities in Principal Perceptions*

Although the cultural milieu and contextual variables of perceptions between the American and Chinese principals differ, many similarities exist between their perspectives on selection, preparation and professional development. These similarities provide a foundation for educators in different parts of the world who are seeking solutions to similar issues using knowledge generated by research and practice elsewhere. This coincides with Paige & Mestenhauser's premise that the production of knowledge important to educational administrators is a global phenomenon (1999).

There are three similarities of the principal perceptions of their selection, preparation, professional development as a whole.

First, all the principals realized that America and China both emphasized the importance of the training, development, and selection of principals. The American principals perceived that the concern was created by the shortage of qualified principals. The Chinese principals, however, believed that desire to improve Chinese education was the main reason for focusing on principals.

Second, the principals in both countries highlighted the importance of redesigning leadership selection, preparation, and professional development programs.

They pointed out the limitations in the current systems.

Third, the American and Chinese principals both recommended establishing a partnership between universities and districts to enhance selecting, preparing, and providing staff development for principals. The American principals noted that districts could help universities in terms of collaboratively implementing a discriminating selection system, funding site-based projects for students, selecting practitioners as mentors and facilitators for university preparation programs, joining the advisory councils of university preparation programs, and also collaboratively devising and supporting a substantive internship system. In China, principal selection, preparation and professional development programs are mainly handled by districts. It was suggested by the Chinese principals that universities could assist districts by taking over the teaching responsibilities of the preparation program, and providing researchers and resources for conducting the collaborative research.

Specifically, the similarities in the principals' perceptions of the selection, preparation, and professional development are presented respectively in the bullets in the following sections.

*Similarities in the selection process for preparation programs.* The similarities in the principals' perceptions of the selection process for preparation programs include:

- Both the American and Chinese respondents supported knowledge of curriculum and instruction, and the teaching credentials of candidates in the selection process for preparation programs. Both the American and Chinese respondents stressed that effective administrators must be good teachers. They emphasized

the importance of the multiple roles of teachers such as classroom organizer, counselor, and social worker, and viewed their earlier teaching experiences as a crucial source of knowledge and skill for their present roles as school leaders.

- Both the American and Chinese respondents emphasized leadership potential in the selection process for preparation programs. The American and Chinese respondents both expected candidates to show their ability and commitment in leading schools and improving student achievement in schools prior to selection.

*Similarities in preparation programs.* The similarities in the principals' perceptions of preparation programs include:

- The Chinese and American principals suggested that the central task of an improved system would be preparing principals who know how to lead schools to the highest levels of student performance. The American and Chinese principals emphasized the importance of school quality and student learning. They had high expectations regarding the principals' ability to improve curriculum and instruction. The principals in both countries spent time in classrooms observing, scrutinizing teachers' lesson plans, counseling, and helping teachers. They believed that improving the principal leadership programs would result in an improvement in student learning.
- The principals agreed that there was a growing necessity to redesign the practices of current school principals, as well as to redesign the training and development of potential school leaders. They felt that although academic training will continue to be an important part of the foundation for all school leaders,

academic preparation itself cannot sufficiently prepare and develop the skills and dispositions necessary for principals to effectively meet the challenges of achieving student success in a complex school environment. Practicing principals rely on experiential learning to develop and refine their knowledge and skills.

- All respondents said that the leadership preparation programs should be upgraded by expanding job-related skills, by using a problem-based learning approach, and by field experiences. The respondents, especially the Chinese respondents, criticized many preparation courses as heavy on theory and light on actual practice. They suggested that these programs shift from the traditional classroom-based model to a clinical model with problem-solving assignments, performance assessments, and extensive field experiences. They also suggested these programs be mentored by expert school leaders,
- The American and Chinese principals agreed that the process of obtaining principal certification was actually easy and the failure rates were low. None of the principals in this study had a strong belief that the preparation programs alone would foster capable and successful principals.
- The need for recertifying principals in both countries was found. It has been mentioned that some American principals had earned their certification over 10 years before becoming principals. In China, although young principals have been asked to be certified since 1995, there are a lot of senior principals who were authorized certification without any pre-training or preparation. Recertification of both American and Chinese principals is needed.

- The American and Chinese respondents indicated that the quality and efficiency of preparation curriculum heavily depends on faculty, and they showed their concern for faculty being weak on mentoring and support and excessively focusing on their research and tenure. They indicated that faculty hired from the ranks of experienced practitioners often had more energy and enthusiasm for preparing school principals.

*Similarities in professional development programs.* The similarities in the principals' perceptions of professional development programs include:

- The American and Chinese principals received their professional development through similar approaches. These approaches were pursuing a higher level degree education; participating in various academies, workshops, and seminars; and building a mentorship relationships with other principals. The satisfaction levels regarding the effectiveness of these approaches between the American and Chinese principals differed. However, they agreed that the mentoring relationships between principals were an effective approach for acquiring job-specific skills and competencies, especially for the beginning principals.
- The American and Chinese principals expressed their desire to actively participate in professional development based on their belief in long-life learning. Many of them believed that they were lifelong learners. They stated that the mindset of active, continuous learning and the determination to upgrade their skills and knowledge motivated them to attend supplementary professional development activities. These principals endeavored to serve as role models for

learning for their students and teachers.

- The American and Chinese principals mentioned the failure of matching professional development activities with individual needs. They suggested that districts tailor their professional development activities to meet the needs of individual schools and practitioners. For example, both pointed out that the needs of principals at entry level were very different from those of senior principals who have been in the principalship for 10 or more years. The need for differentiation in professional development programs was raised by both the American and Chinese principals.
- Although the perceived needs for professional development programs were different for American and Chinese principals, these needs could be commonly classified into seven domains of the knowledge base for educational administration developed by the University Council for Educational Administration (UCEA). These seven domains are societal and cultural influences on schooling, teaching and learning processes, organizational studies, leadership and management processes, policy and political studies, legal and ethical dimensions of schooling, and economic and financial dimensions of schooling (Hoy, 1996). This shows that even though the relevance of the knowledge bases for educational administration in different culture is not apparent, it does exist.

*Differences in Principal Perceptions*

More differences than similarities were found among the perceptions of the principals regarding the selection, training, and development of the principals in their respective countries. These major differences demonstrate the difficulty of disseminating common knowledge important to global educational administrators, and the significance of intercultural comparative study. Each of these differences is discussed in the following paragraphs.

Generally speaking, there are three differences between the American and Chinese principals' perceptions of their selection, preparation, professional development.

First, from selection to professional development, the Chinese principals felt that their training was operated within a "top-down" bureaucratic system. For example, the Chinese principals described that they were usually assigned to become principals by a higher authority, while the American principals said they had used a self-selection strategy. Also, the classroom study and internship practices of the Chinese principals were supported and funded by the districts, which was quite different from the self-supporting American principals. Because of the hierarchical bureaucratic system in China, the Chinese principal training is centralized, uniform, and stable. However, it is also characterized by the "dysfunctions of bureaucracy" described by Max Weber (1921). It is biased, not responsive to needs, ignores the wishes of the public, is depersonalized, and is ambiguous in its messages.

Second, there are no professional standards for selecting and preparing principals in China. Chinese principals are selected from classroom teachers. The central

government only recently began issuing the principal certificate. These facts are evidence that while the principalship has been a specific profession for many years in the United States, China is in the initial stages of professionalizing the principalship.

Specifically, the differences between the American and Chinese principals' perceptions of their selection, preparation, and professional development are presented respectively in the following paragraphs.

*Differences in the selection process for preparation programs.* The differences in the principals' perceptions of the selection process for preparation programs include:

- It was found that the Chinese principals are required to hold a bachelor's degree in order to be assigned to a principalship position. This appears to be a lower standard than the master's degree that their American colleagues are required to earn.
- An important difference was found between the career path of U.S. and Chinese principals. In the U.S., formal preparation occurs prior to their assignment as a principal, which is made by individual school districts. Certification does not guarantee that a principal will receive a position. In China, formal preparation occurs after selection. Chinese school principals are selected by districts as administrator candidate and then chosen to participate in preparation programs. Since appointment generally occurs prior to certification, there are very few certified principals in China who are not serving as principals.
- In the United States, there has long been a belief that people can be trained to serve as school administrators before they step into those positions for the first

time. In China, the traditional view has been that the managers of schools move directly from the ranks of classroom teachers into managerial roles by the appointment of a higher authority. This difference of perception demonstrates the fact that in the U.S., leadership preparation has been viewed as skills and abilities which could be developed via training. In contrast, in China, leadership preparation is perceived mainly as “the accumulation of experiences”. This difference also helps to explain why the principalship is recognized as an independent profession in the United States and is still confused with the concept of “exemplary teacher” in China.

- A strong criticism of the American self-selection process is that individuals are prepared who are not good principal candidates because they have self-selected themselves into preparation programs. This self-selection can result in an abundance of certified principals but a shortage of qualified principals. On the other hand, the Chinese principals felt that the selection strategy in China was not strong enough for creating and developing the individuality of schools due to the elimination of many good candidates for political reasons.
- While the requirement of teaching experience is minimal for selecting principals in the U.S., it is viewed as the most important selection criterion for Chinese principals. Principals in China tend to have several more years of teaching experience than their American counterparts prior to their first full-time administrative assignments. In addition, Chinese principals are required to teach at the same time that they are serving as principals. American principals don't

have to do that. This is a possible reason why a great majority of the interviewed American principals mentioned a strong need for professional development on instructional leadership, while the Chinese principals demonstrated less anxiety about playing the role of instructional leader.

- As for the criteria of selecting and identifying principal candidates, the American principals suggested that rather than using criteria like GRE and GPA scores, which can be measured by points, factors such as depth of knowledge, personal dispositions, leadership potential, interpersonal skills, and successful teaching ought to be emphasized. On the contrary, the Chinese principals felt that no precise quantitative criteria could be followed to identify and select principal candidates. Teaching skills, knowledge of curriculum and instruction, leadership capacity, personal relationships with direct supervisors, and obeying orders from higher authorities were described by the Chinese principals as key factors in determining who would be selected as a principal. These indicators are difficult to measure and show that the selection process in China heavily relies on the “rule of man.” The Chinese principals hoped this situation could be changed when China’s government tried to implement the policy of “rule of law,” and they look forward to laws or regulations which would precisely define the criteria, and operational details for selecting and identifying principal candidates.
- While the American principals felt that American universities admitted students into principalship programs who were not qualified, the Chinese principals in this study perceived that the higher authority successfully selected qualified persons

to be principals. Those selected in China were perceived as having superior talent and ability which helped them stand out among many candidates. However, it was pointed out that the Chinese selection process results in candidates having the same strengths and ultimately limits the creativity which would come from candidates with more diverse views and strengths.

*Differences in preparation programs.* The differences in the principals' perceptions of preparation programs include:

- While preparation programs are generally available to all teachers in the United States, these programs generally are designed to be offered to individuals who have already assumed formal managerial posts in China. The history of preparation programs in China is brief. Preparation is less important than the long-established in-serving training in China.
- The American principals interviewed in this study indicated that their university preparation programs were “basically” successful at developing the knowledge and skills they needed to perform their jobs. Compared to the United States, Chinese preparation programs were perceived as not very effective and not well-established. It was pointed out that leadership training institutions in China mainly rely on the lecture or “chalk and talk” approach (Feng, 2004) to prepare principals.
- While administrative preparation programs in the United States are primarily delivered by universities, the job of preparing principals in China is conducted mainly by lower quality educational institutions in local districts. These local

programs are not considered adequate by most candidates.

- The preparation programs in China are usually short-term training and accomplished within one year. In the United States, the preparation programs tend to be aligned with degree programs. In fact, in the urban southern area studied, the certification program and the masters' degree are exactly the same in most institutions. The preparation programs in China are not aligned with degree programs.
- While many professional standards have been established for preparation programs in the United States, no professional standards for principals have been developed in China. China has not implemented a standards-based approach for principal preparation programs. Again, it shows that the principalship has not been fully professionalized in China.

*Differences in professional development programs.* The differences in the principals' perceptions of professional development programs include:

- The American principals are proud of the variety of workshops and seminars they can select to attend. In China, the opportunity to participate in professional development activities is not available to every principal. High-performing principals get more chances to participate in high-level professional development activities than their colleagues. Participation is seen as an honor rather than a good chance to learn. In China, topics are selected by the district, and the principals have few choices.
- Compared to the United States, Chinese professional development programs are

perceived as less well developed. While the American principals display their willingness to develop themselves through pursuing doctoral degrees, the Chinese principals don't believe that working on a master's degree will be beneficial for them or help them to be a better principal. The Chinese principals' satisfaction level with professional development activities appears lower than their American counterparts.

- The perceived professional development needs of the Chinese and American principals are different. This seems to be largely due to the change in focus that is occurring for both systems at the national level. For decades, Chinese schools have been driven by national exams for university entrance and have emphasized academic achievement as indicated by standardized test scores. American schools, however, traditionally focused on the uniqueness of each school and its students. In recent years, the focus of both countries has changed. American principals are focusing on standardized tests, rules, expectations, and student achievement outcomes due to federal and state legislation such as the federal law called No Child Left Behind. On the contrary, Chinese principals are aspiring to create individuality for schools and students. Chinese educators have started to focus on students as individuals and to cultivate each individual student's interests, potential, and creativeness. This is an aspect largely ignored by traditional Chinese education systems. Su, Adams, & Mininberg (2003) suggest that Chinese and American policymakers draw useful lessons from each other's experiences in constructing and deconstructing standards.

- The Chinese principals show more interest in international perspectives, especially Western knowledge and practice, in the area of educational administration. Almost every Chinese respondent mentioned that they hoped they could get more international views to upgrade their knowledge. They hoped to learn more ideas about educational reform from Western countries. They hoped to learn English because they want to communicate with more and more foreign educators. However, only one American principal in the study felt districts and universities in the United States are “too focused on standardized tests” and suggested “let’s see what’s going on in the rest of the world, get a little different viewpoint.” This echoes the work of Hampden-Turner and Trompenaars (1997) regarding the fact that East Asian managers, including school leaders, are more adaptive than those in the West. According to Hampden-Turner and Trompenaars, East Asian managers tend to learn Western values and to utilize Western technologies, and even seek to reconcile their own cultural values with those of the West.

### **Recommendations for Future Study**

Based on the information in this study, the following recommendations for future study are outlined for consideration.

- Future studies should extend this study by expanding the scope of the geographic region being studied. The contextual differences that the different geographic areas in the United States and China present suggest the importance of evaluating

the present situation with all its regional particularities. Future research which includes data from other states or provinces of the United States and China would result in a more solid analysis.

- Further research should extend this study by considering prolonged engagement and a more longitudinal approach. A more accurate analysis could be done over a period of time by observing how American and Chinese principals deal with a variety of training activities.
- Although it was found that preparation programs offer principal candidates the knowledge base for their future job, this study could neither deny nor confirm that principal preparation programs are indeed related to producing capable leaders who can enhance student learning. Future study is needed that clearly identifies the relationship between a school leader's preparation program and student achievement.
- The study of leadership is still a new academic area in China. Future research identifying the perceptions of the "leadership" and "leadership capacity" of Chinese principals is needed.
- The focus of this study was on principals in the United States and China. Future research might extend this study by investigating principals' perceptions of selection, preparation, and professional development in other countries, and analyzing differences and similarities among these countries.

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**APPENDIX A**  
**SAMPLE OF INTERVIEW GUIDE AND INTERVIEW QUESTIONS**  
**(ENGLISH AND CHINESE)**

## **Interview Guide**

**By Jie Lin**

### **I. Preface**

1. The interview will be pre-arranged so participants know in advance when and where they will be interviewed, and for how long.
2. Introduce basic information about myself and the study.
3. Thank the subjects for their participation and briefly explain the purpose of the interview. Explain they can stop and ask for clarification of a question in any time. They may choose not to respond to a question, or they can stop the interview at any time.
4. Ask subject to sign the Informed Consent Documents.
5. Ask permission to the interview to be taped; explaining it will serve as a means of recalling the interview information. Ask subject to sign the audio-type consent form.

### **II. Interview Questions**

1. Q: Please introduce some background information about you and your school.
2. Q: Why did you become a principal? What factors in your life motivated you to become a principal? Is there anyone played an important role in selecting you as the principal?

3. Q: Traditionally, American graduate students have come to administrator preparation programs as the result of self-selection, in your opinion, what's the benefit and disadvantage about this self-selection process?
4. Q: On the one hand, school district leaders often report that supply of principals is diminishing rapidly, on the other hand, there is a excessive number of administrator-certified candidates who still remain in teachers positions, what do you think of this conflict and the solution?
5. Q: What are criteria for selecting principals in to preparation programs? (Do you think they are appropriate criteria? Why? What do you think is the most important factor in selecting a candidate into principal preparation programs? Why?
6. Q: What will you suggest to improve the selection process?
7. Q: Describe the preparation programs you have participated in. What were they like? What did they mean to your career?
8. Q: List courses that you've taken in preparation program. Please rate the importance of them and explain why. Are there any other courses you are interested but have no chance to take? Why?
9. Q: What improvement do you want to see in your skills and competencies?
10. Q: How do you evaluate effectiveness of principal preparation programs which you took? What do you think are good and bad experience in principal preparation? What do you think is the shortcoming and excellence of principal preparation program you've participate in?

11. Q: Is there any advisor mentoring your study in your preparation program? How do you evaluate their job? Did they increase the likelihood of your success of career?
12. Q: If there is a need to redesign the preparation program, what suggestions would you give to institutions?
13. Q: Are you pursuing for Ph. D degree? Why? Is this required for being a principal?
14. Q: Describe professional development activities you have done. Are they required by state? What did they mean to your career?
15. Q: List and describe in order of favorites (excellence) of workshops you've taken. Explain why.
16. Q: How do you evaluate effectiveness of professional development activities you participate in?
17. Q: Will you continue to participate in professional development activities during your career? Why?
18. Q: What advice would you give regarding institution how best to develop principals?

### III. Closure

1. Ask if there is any question about the interview.
2. Thank them for their participation and their time to this study.
3. Give them a small gift for gratitude.

4. Ask if there is a possibility to contact them again in case in case I need additional information.

## 访谈纲要

林捷

### I. 开始

1. 被研究者已经知道访谈的时间和地址。
2. 简要介绍研究者和研究的基本情况。
3. 感谢被研究者，介绍研究的目的。向被研究者解释回答出于自愿，他们可以随时决定不回答某问题或者终止访谈。
4. 要求被研究者在同意书上签名。
5. 解释访谈需要使用录音机的原因。征求被研究者的同意。要求被研究者在使用录音带同意书上签名。

### II. 访谈问题纲要

1. 问：您何时成为一名校长？
2. 问：影响你成为校长主要的人物是谁？
3. 问：你怎么看待校长的责任？
4. 问：你怎样理解校长培训和预备项目的理论模型、实践、以及问题？
5. 问：请描述你所参加的校长培训项目。它们对你的校长工作起了什么作用？
6. 问：请描述你所参加的校长职业发展活动。它们对你意味着什么？

7. 问：你如何评价你所参加的校长培训项目，你认为它们的优缺点在于哪里？
8. 问：你如何评价你所参加的校长职业发展活动？
9. 问：你所参加的培训项目中，你心目中最好的是哪一次？请予以解释。
10. 问：你对于选择、培训、发展校长有什么建议吗？

### III. 结束

1. 询问对于访谈是否还有其他问题。
2. 感谢被研究者的参与。
3. 赠送小礼品表示感谢。
4. 询问如果有需要，是否还可以联系被研究者。征求被研究者的同意。

**APPENDIX B**  
**SAMPLE CONSENT FORM**  
**(ENGLISH AND CHINESE)**

## CONSENT FORM

- I have been asked to participate in a research study entitled “Perceptions of Principals in the Southern, urban U.S. and Eastern, urban China regarding the Selection, Preparation and Professional Development of Elementary Principals”.
- Approximately a total of 15 people have been asked to participate in this study.
- The purpose of this study is to investigate and compare the selection, preparation and the professional development practices as perceived by elementary schools principals in public schools in greater Houston area, the United States and Shanghai, China.
- If I agree to be in this study, I will be asked to be interviewed. My participation is strictly voluntary and that I may refuse to answer any of the questions on the questionnaire if I find it uncomfortable.
- If I agree to be interviewed in this study, my answer will be audio taped.
- I understand this study will take approximately 45 minutes to complete the interview.
- I understand there are no foreseeable risks or benefits from my participation.
- I understand that my responses will be anonymous and that my name will not be mentioned in any reports of the research. The records of this study will be kept private. No identifiers linking me to the study will be included in any sort of report that might be published. Research records and the audio tapes will be stored securely and only Ms. Jie Lin will have access to the records. The audio tape will be erased after 12 months.
- My decision whether of not to participate will not affect my current or future relations with Texas A&M University. I can withdraw at any time with out my relations with the university, job, benefits, etc., being affected.
- I can contact the principal investigator: Ms. Jie Lin, Phone: 979-5749086, Email: linjy@tamu.edu  
I also can contact: Dr. John Hoyle, Phone: 979-8452748. E-mail: jhoyle@tamu.edu with any questions about this study.

This research study has been reviewed by the Institutional Review Board- Human Subjects in Research, Texas A&M University. For research-related problems or questions regarding subjects' rights, I can contact the Institutional Review Board through Dr. Michael W. Buckley, Director of Research Compliance, Office of Vice President for Research at (979) 845-8585 (mwbuckley@tamu.edu).

I have read the above information. I have asked questions and have received answers to my satisfaction. I have been given a copy of this consent document for my records. By signing this document, I consent to participate in the study.

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Investigator: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**同意书**  
(中美小学校长选择、预备和培训的比较研究)

- 我自愿参加“中美小学校长选择、预备和培训的比较研究”的调查研究。
- 约有 15 人参加该研究。
- 该研究的目的是为了调查和比较中美小学校长选择、预备和培训方面的实践。
- 我同意为了参与该研究被访谈。这种参与是自愿的，如果遇到我感到不适的问题，我将拒绝予以回答。
- 我同意对我的回答予以录音。
- 访谈的时间大约在 45 分钟。
- 我的参与不会带来风险，或任何效益。
- 研究者会为我保持匿名。研究纪录不会公开，任何能够揭示我身份的信息将会在研究结果中被隐匿。只有研究人员林捷才能获知研究记录和录音带的内容。录音带在 12 个月后会删除。
- 我是否参与研究的决定不会影响我目前或将来与 Texas A&M 大学的任何关系。我随时可撤离研究，这不会影响我在 Texas A&M 大学的工作机会、利益、和关系。
- 若对研究产生问题，我可以通过以下方式联系该研究的主要研究人员：  
林捷，电话: 979-5749086。Email: linjy@tamu.edu  
我也可以联系: Dr. John Hoyle, 电话: 979-8452748. E-mail: jhoyle@tamu.edu

该学术研究已通过 Texas A&M 大学学术审查委员会(Institutional Review Board-Human Subjects in Research)的审查。我可联系通过以下方式联系学术审查委员会:

Dr. Michael W. Buckley, Director of Research Compliance, Office of Vice President for Research 电话: (979) 845-8585 (mw Buckley@tamu.edu).

我已经认真阅读过以上信息。我的问题也有效地被解答。研究人员将会给我这份同意书的复印件以便保存。我在下栏中签名，表示我同意参与该研究的调查。

我的签名: \_\_\_\_\_ 日期: \_\_\_\_\_  
研究人员签名: \_\_\_\_\_ 日期: \_\_\_\_\_

**APPENDIX C**  
**SAMPLE CONSENT TO BE AUDIO-TAPED**  
**(ENGLISH AND CHINESE)**

## Video/Audio Tape Release Form

### Consent to be Taped \*

I voluntarily agree to be audio/videotaped during the experiment being conducted by Ms. Jie Lin. I understand that the tapes will be used only for research purpose and only Ms. Jie Lin will have access to them. These tapes will be identified by subject numbers. The tapes will be kept for 1 year and will be stored in Ms. Jie Lin's office. After data is collected the tapes will be erased.

Signature of the Subject \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Signature of Investigator \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

### Refusal to be Taped #

I do not agree to be audio/videotaped during this experiment conducted by Ms. Jie Lin. I understand I will not receive compensation, course credit, etc. by such a refusal. By refusing to be audio/videotaped, I understand that I may continue to participate in the study.

Signature of Subject \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Signature of Investigator \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

\* Consent must be obtained during the debriefing.

# In case a subject does not wish to be audio/video taped in a deception study, the PI must erase the tape and give the test subject a chance to determine that the A/V tape was properly erased.

Email [irb@tamu.edu](mailto:irb@tamu.edu) or call (979) 458-4067 with any questions regarding this form.

### 使用录音带声明

#### 同意被录音

在林捷进行的学术研究中，我自愿同意被录音。我理解使用录音的唯一目的是进行学术研究。我知道只有林捷才有资格听这些录音带，得知它们的内容。录音带将被林捷保留一年的时间，随后即将被删除。

我的签名: \_\_\_\_\_ 日期: \_\_\_\_\_

研究人员签名: \_\_\_\_\_ 日期: \_\_\_\_\_

#### 拒绝被录音

在林捷进行的学术研究中，我不同意被录音。我拒绝录音的决定，不会影响我的任何个人利益。尽管拒绝被录音，我仍愿意参与该项学术研究。

我的签名: \_\_\_\_\_ 日期: \_\_\_\_\_

研究人员签名: \_\_\_\_\_ 日期: \_\_\_\_\_

若对该表有任何问题，可随时电邮 [irb@tamu.edu](mailto:irb@tamu.edu) 或 致电 (979) 458-4067 寻求解答

**APPENDIX D**  
**SAMPLE INVITATION LETTER TO PRINCIPALS**  
**(ENGLISH AND CHINESE)**

<<Date>>

<<First>> <<Last>>  
Principal <<Elementary School>>  
<<Address>>  
<<City>>, <<St>> << Zip>>

Dear <<First>> <<Last>>:

I am a Ph. D candidate in Educational Administration and Human Resource Development Department at Texas A&M University under the supervision of Dr. John Hoyle and Dr. Virginia Collier. I'm working on a research study entitled "Perceptions of Principals in the Southern, urban U.S. and Eastern, urban China regarding the Selection, Preparation and Professional Development of Elementary Principals". The study is a part of my dissertation. The purpose of this study is to compare the selection, preparation and professional development practices as perceived by elementary schools principals in public schools in Houston, the United States, and Shanghai, China. I will be interviewing principals in Shanghai in the spring. This comparison should increase understanding and hopefully assist in improving programs in both countries.

You have been selected as one of seven elementary school principals in Conroe ISD to participate in this study. If you agree to be in this study, I will need to conduct an interview of approximately 45 minutes with you. Your information will be confidential and your name will not be mentioned in any reports of the research.

We understand your job keeps you quite busy; your participation is voluntary. We would greatly appreciate if you could take some time and help us in conducting this research. If you are willing to help us, please contact:

Jie Lin, Phone: 979-574-9086, Email: linjy@tamu.edu

Or

Dr. John Hoyle, Phone: 979-845-2748. E-mail: jhoyle@tamu.edu

Dr. Virginia Collier, Phone: 979-862-1336. Email: vcollier@tamu.edu

Please give us your response via email by <<Date>>. Interview will be conducted on your campus at your convenience. Your participation will be deeply appreciated.

Yours truly,

Jie Lin  
Ph. D. Candidate  
EAHR Department  
Texas A&M University

<<日期>>  
<<姓名>>  
<<学校名>>  
<<地址>>  
<<邮编>>

敬爱的校长：

本人是德州A&M大学教育管理和人力发展系的一名博士生。我正在从事一项关于中美小学校长培训和发展得比较研究。该研究是我的博士论文主题。该研究的目的是为了调查和比较中美小学校长选择、预备和培训方面的实践。我将分别于休斯敦和上海地区采访部分小学校长。该研究的中美比较将会有助于增强两国在该主体上的理解。

您被该研究选为上海地区的七位小学校长中的一名。如果您同意接受参与该研究，本人将会对您进行大约 45 分钟的访谈。会为我保持匿名。您的信息将会隐匿，您的姓名不会被公开。

我了解您工作的繁忙。你的参与将完全出于自愿。我非常感谢您的帮助和参与。如果您愿意接受访谈，请联系：

林捷，Email地址：linjy@tamu.edu

或者

吴志宏教授，Email地址：wzh552003@yahoo.com.cn

请在某日前给与答复。访谈将在你校举行。再次感谢您的时间和参与！

此致

敬礼

林捷

**APPENDIX E**  
**SAMPLES OF SCHOOL DOCUMENTS**

## **I. Sample Principals' Vertical Team Meetings Agenda of Independent School**

### **District A**

#### Session Topics

- Professional development introduction, structure and process and the use of student data to improve student achievement
- Teachers planning for learning – Part I
- TAKS from a deconstruction view
- Student work – Part I
- Looking into the classroom
- Teacher-designed assessments
- Teacher planning for learning – Part II
- Student Work – Part II
- Authentic Leadership & Communication Barriers
- The year in review
- The continuous improvement process
  - ILD continuous improvement process
  - Campus action planning
  - Formative assessment
  - Summative assessment

## **II. Sample Principals' Meeting Agenda of Independent School District B**

8:00 a.m.

- Welcome
- Review of last board meeting
- State compensatory education

8:30 a.m.

- DLP & DM committee election
- Campus improvement plans
- 2005-2006 calendar waiver
- Information: United way: campus contact person list
  - Equipment use for non-campus/district functions
  - Web pages for teachers and campuses
  - Exceptionally yours for parents of students with disabilities
  - Parent information centers: brochures
  - PDAS domains I, II, III

9:00 a.m.

- Teacher supply/Reimbursement grant

9:15 a.m.

- SDAA/LDAA rosters

9:20 a.m.

- Break

9:30 a.m.

- ARD committee decision-making process (required training)

10:15 a.m.

- TAKS tracks overview

10:30 a.m.

- Break

10:45 a.m.

- Divisional meetings

### **III. Sample Elementary/Intermediate Principals' Meeting Agenda of Independent School District B**

- TAKS
- Provisional enrollment for immunization
- Grading guidelines: The one-minute review
- Professional paper work
- Staffing allocations
- Breakout session – Electronic report card
- Handouts – Provisional enrollment for immunization & Professional paper work flow
- Thinking maps
- Transportation
- Textbooks
- Non-violent crisis training
- Construction and/or improvements to the building by the campus
- Anniversary/celebrations

- Fire prevention/calling in emergencies/notables walking the building
- What's happening calendar
- Gift cards
- Absence from duty/vacation days
- 70 make-up rule/board policy
- Handouts – Parent letters, Enhancing leadership effectiveness survey, Balanced leadership, & Managing and protecting PTO & PTA funds

#### **IV. Sample Principals' Meeting Notes of Independent School District B**

##### Campus Improvement Plans

- Campus Improvement Plans (CIPs) will be due to the appropriate assistant superintendent on December 3, 2004. All CIPs will be presented to the Board of Trustees at the January 18, 2005, Board Meeting.
- The CIP Checklist and CIP forms were distributed to each principal. The form/format to be used for all Campus Improvement Plans will be emailed as an attachment to all principals.
- The district's 2002-03 Annual Performance Report, including the ISD Blueprint to Excellence, and the C&I Department's Improvement Plans were distributed and reviewed.

##### 2005-2006 Calendar Waiver

- ISD's District Level planning and Decision-Making (DLPDM) Committee voted unanimously to apply to TEA for a waiver to begin the 2005-06 school year prior to the week in which August 21 occurs.
- Including in your handouts are two draft calendars for you to provide to your staff. Calendar A reflect the first day for teachers as Thursday, August 4, 2005, and the student's first day as Thursday, August 11, 2005. Also included on Calendar A is a five-day holiday for Thanksgiving.
- The difference between Calendars A and B is the placement of the Staff Development days and the Inclement Weather Days. Calendar A has all four Staff Development days in August, with the Inclement Weather Days on April 14 and May 26. Calendar B has three Staff Development Days in August and one Staff Development day in January. Inclement Weather Days are February 17 and April 16. Calendar B also has teacher workday on Monday, May 29.
- Please gather staff input (email preferred).

**Information:**

## United Way Contact Person

- Each campus designated one person to coordinate the United Way Drive for their faculty.

## Equipment Use for Non-Campus/District Functions

- If there is a student organization involved in a non-ISD event, then the student organization's sponsor can request through their principal or custodial to use

equipment/tables/chairs that the student organization would use at its own 3 booths. Not all equipment will necessarily be available for use as the principal may determine that the equipment is too costly and not suitable for use outside of the campus setting. If the sponsor gets permission to use the equipment, he/she is responsible for returning it in proper condition. The principal will charge any loss or damages to the group.

- ISD does not rent/loan ISD equipment, tables or chairs to non-ISD organizations or groups.

#### Web Pages for Teachers and Campuses

- Beginning October 15, all teachers (general ed, special ed, bilingual, ed, etc.) will have an active web page where parents and others can obtain relevant information about their coursework, assignments, scope and sequence and other information.

#### Exceptionally Yours for Parents of Students with Disabilities

- All campuses will hold informational meetings for parents of students with disabilities this school year.

#### Parent Information Centers: Brochures

- Brochures for the newcomer Center and the Parent Resource Center are available for staff, parents, and community members.

#### PDAS Domain I, II, III

- Teachers who qualify for less than annual appraisals under Local board Policy DNA are not required to complete PDAS I-II in the years they are not being

appraised. Principals may always conduct “walk-through” evaluations of teacher regardless of whether or not they are being formally appraised under PDAS that year or not. Additionally remember that principals and/or teacher have the right to request a formal appraisal during the year the teachers is exempt from formal evaluation under the criteria set out in Local Board Policy DNA, by giving written notice to the other party.

#### Teacher Supply Reimbursement Grant

- Guidelines and procedures for reimbursement of teachers for classroom supplies are distributed.

#### SDAA/LDAA Rosters

- A copy of the rosters will be maintained on campus and at the central testing office.

## VITA

Jie Lin

Department of Educational Administration and Human Resource Development  
Texas A&M University  
College Station, TX 77843

### EDUCATIONAL BACKGROUND

- Sept. 2001 – Aug. 2005      Ph.D., Texas A&M University  
Major: Public School Administration
- Sept. 1997 – Aug. 2000      M.S., East China Normal University, China  
Major: Educational Administration
- Sept. 1993 – Aug. 1997      B.S., East China Normal University, China  
Major: Education

### PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

- Sept. 2001 – Aug. 2005      Graduate Assistant-Research  
Department of Educational Administration and  
Human Resource  
Texas A&M University, College Station, Texas
- Sept. 2000 – Aug. 2001      Instructor  
East China Normal University, Shanghai, China
- Sept. 1997 – Aug. 2000      Research Assistant  
East China Normal University, Shanghai, China