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THE RELEVANCE OF CROSS-CULTURAL LEADERSHIP TRAINING:

A case study of a Finnish training program for Chinese school principals

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Tiivistelmä – Abstract

Quality leadership training has a positive effect on school leaders. Although there is an increased interest in overseas training for educational leaders in China, little is known about the leadership practices and professional development of school leaders. This study explored Chinese school principals' perceptions of leadership practices and professional development after undertaking a Finnish training program in October 2011. The data were collected by semi-structured interviews from six Shanghai principals and analyzed by inductive content analysis.

The findings showed this training has affected Chinese principals' work positively, including creating more effective leadership, handling the contradiction better, a wider understanding of the nature of education and the government's role in education, and revealing reasons behind the Finnish PISA success. However, there were some lacking aspects during the training, such as limited school visits, diversified needs of trainees, irrelevant issues, incapability of some trainers, and language barriers. Hence, the principals suggested improving program quality, addressing language issues, and including Chinese authorities in the future. Nonetheless, certain issues do not work. The reasons included contextual differences in national, cultural, educational systems, principals' tasks, teachers' capacities, and students' learning styles.

The study assists other overseas tertiary institutions conducting cross-cultural training programs for Chinese principals. The leadership practices framework may be useful to training providers when designing and implementing leadership training programs. This study was primarily interpretative and based on the interview responses. Further research is suggested to evaluate the long-term effect of these programs, through collaboration among relevant stakeholders.

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cross-cultural leadership training, leadership practices, professional development

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Tiivistelmä – Abstract

Laadukas johtamiskoulutus vaikuttaa myönteisesti koulun johtajiin. Vaikka Kiinassa on kasvanut kiinnostus ulkomaisiin kasvatusalan johtajakoulutuksiin, tiedetään vähän koulun johtajien johtajuuskäytänteistä ja ammatillisesta kehittymisestä. Tämä tutkimus tarkasteli kiinalaisten rehtoreiden näkemyksiä johtajuuskäytänteistä ja ammatillisesta kehittymisestä heidän osallistuttuaan suomalaiseen koulutusohjelmaan lokakuussa 2011. Aineisto kerättiin puolistrukturoiduilla haastatteluilla kuudelta rehtorilta Shanghaista ja analysoitiin induktiivisen sisällönanalyysin keinoin. Tulosten mukaan koulutus oli vaikuttanut kiinalaisten rehtoreiden työhön positiivisesti: he olivat kehittäneet vaikuttavampaa johtajuutta, kyenneet paremmin käsittelemään ristiriitaisuuksia sekä ymmärtämään laajemmin kasvatusta ilmiönä ja valtion hallinnon roolia kasvatuksessa ja näkemään syitä Suomen PISA menestykseen. Koulutuksessa oli kuitenkin joitain heikkouksia kuten rajalliset kouluvierailut, koulutettavien monenlaiset tarpeet, irralliset aiheet, joidenkin kouluttajien puutteelliset taidot ja kieliesteet. Näin ollen rehtorit ehdottivat koulutuksen laadun parantamista, kielikysymyksen huomioimista sekä kiinalaisten viranomaisten osallistumista koulutukseen. Kaikesta huolimatta tietyt asiat eivät toimi. Näitä ovat kansalliset, kulttuuriset ja kasvatusalan kontekstuaaliset erot, ja erot rehtorin työssä, opettajien kyvyissä ja oppilaiden oppimistavoissa.

Tutkimus auttaa muita ulkomaisia kolmannen asteen instituutioita kulttuurienvälisen koulutuksen toteuttamisessa kiinalaisille rehtoreille. Johtajuuskäytänteiden viitekehys voi olla hyödyllinen kun suunnitellaan ja toteutetaan johtamiskoulutuksia. Tämä tutkimus oli ensisijaisesti tulkitseva ja perustui haastatteluihin. Tuleva tutkimus voisi arvioida koulutuksen pitkän aikavälin vaikutuksia eri toimijoiden näkökulmista.

Asiasanat – Keywords
kulttuurienvälinen johtajuuskoulutus, johtamiskäytännöt, ammatillinen kehitys

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Finland would never have taken place without the moral and financial support of my families.

ABBREVIATIONS

BNU	Beijing Normal University
CEM	Center for Education Management Research
CEREC	The Chinese Education Research and Exchange Center
CPC	Central Committee of the Chinese Communist Party
ECNU	East China Normal University
FYPNED	The 12th Five-Year Plan of National Educational Development
ICT	Information and Communication Technology
MinEdu	The Minister of Education and Culture, Finland
MOE	Ministry of Education, China
NCSL	National College for School Leadership
NTCPSP	The National Training Center for Primary School Principals
NTCSSP	The National Training Center for Secondary School Principals
NTP	The National Training Project
ONG	The Outline of China’s National Guidelines for Medium and Long-term Education Reform and Development
PBL	Problem-based Learning
PDS	Professional Development Schools
PISA	Program for International Student Assessment
PRC	People’s Republic of China
SEC	The State Education Commission
TAP	Dispatching 10,000 Backbone Teachers of Primary and Secondary Schools for Overseas Training
UNDP	United Nations Development Program
UTA	University of Tampere
YRD Training	Outstanding Principals Training Program in the Yangtze River Delta (Shanghai, Zhejiang and Jiangsu)

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1 INTRODUCTION

Principal leadership is widely considered to be one of the most important factors in school improvement and student achievement. A principal's competency is the key element in successful implementation of educational reforms in schools (Leithwood & Jantzi, 2006, p. 206). Leithwood, Harris and Hopkins (2008, p. 28) recently concluded that, "School leadership is second only to classroom teaching as an influence on pupil learning and almost all successful leaders draw on the same repertoire of basic leadership practices". The authors highlight that while effective leadership makes a significant difference, leadership practices tend to be generic and universal.

Over the past two decades, principal leadership has become even more significant due to the increasing complexity of principals' roles and responsibilities around the world (Billot, 2003, p. 38; Stoll & Temperley, 2009, p. 13). Traditionally, principals in most educational systems throughout the world were expected to carry out commands from the educational authority and fulfill their administrative responsibilities within their schools. Today, in the era of educational reform, principals' roles have gradually changed from school manager to school leader. (Hallinger, 2004, pp. 67-71.) Principals nowadays are expected to lead change in schools to sustain school improvement and students' learning achievement (Billot, 2003, pp. 45-46). One can argue that principal leadership is a very important factor for school improvement and student achievement. However, one can ask: what added value will a cross-cultural leadership training program bring for improving principals' leadership practices and professional development?

We need to know how to develop principals' leadership qualities. It is necessary for principals to successfully implement school reforms which lead to school improvement and student achievement. For this reason, leadership training programs need to address the area of skills and knowledge required to lead today's schools (Levine, 2005, p. 66). However, the existing knowledge on how to best develop effective leaders is inadequate (Davis, Darling-Hammond, LaPointe & Meyerson, 2005, p. 1). Preparing and developing leaders cannot be just left to chance (Bush, 2008a, p. 307). Besides, it is not enough to know leadership practices. We need to find not only the most successful training programs but also the most effective ways for various stakeholders to support these programs (Darling-Hammond, Meyerson, LaPointe & Orr, 2009, p. 5). My study exploits how successful a Finnish training program is represented from Chinese principals' perspective. At the moment, this kind of knowledge is missing in the field of cross-cultural leadership training.

In this study the focus is on Chinese school principals' leadership practices after attending a cross-cultural leadership training program in Finland. The study explores the changes in their leadership practices and the implementation of appropriate educational leadership practices in their own schools afterwards. Leadership practices include core concepts, setting directions, developing people, redesigning the organization, and managing the instructional program (Leithwood, Day, Sammons, Harris & Hopkins, 2006, pp. 34-43). The term professional development thereby is embedded in leadership practices. It is understood as the result that the training program has brought to principals' professional knowledge, skills, and attitudes.

1.1 Statement of the problem

There is an increasing interest in training school principals nationwide in China. The role of educational leaders, particularly the role of school principals is identified by China's educational policymakers as key players to implement a series of educational reforms driven by tremendous changes in governance, curriculum and management (Central Committee of the Chinese Communist Party (CPC), 1985; Feng, 2003, p. 205). These educational reforms include the decentralization of administration, new curriculum reform, and quality education with equity. Of these educational reforms, developing skills for effective school leadership has been highlighted, and there has been an increasing interest in training for school principals nationwide (Feng, 2003, p. 205). Since 1980, China’s educational policies have emphasized the importance of leadership development and principal training, which are the main objectives of educational reforms and school development (Lo, Chen & Zheng, 2010, p. 95). In 2011, the Ministry of Education, China (MOE) launched the nationwide Project for *Dispatching 10,000 Backbone Teachers of Primary and Secondary Schools Overseas Training (TAP) (2011-2015)* (MOE, 2011a). Against this background, the MOE contracted the first Finnish training program with the University of Tampere (UTA) for 21 Chinese principals of upper secondary schools in October 2011.

Previous studies regarding the effect of cross-cultural training programs have been conducted in different contexts, such as in the United Nations, Australia, Canada and Finland. For example, Branine (2005, p. 459) evaluated a United Nations Development Program (UNDP) for the training of Chinese managers. He found that there was a gap between what Chinese managers could do and what they had been expected to do to meet the needs of increasing economic reforms. Wang (2006, p. 380) examined Chinese educational leaders’ self-perceived practice after taking an Australian offshore program from 2002 to 2003. Her findings showed that local contexts and cultures must be taken into consideration when accommodating Western educational ideas for Chinese leaders. Yang and Brayman (2010, pp. 240-244) investigated Chinese principals’ perceptions and interpretations regarding the role of principal and leadership development during a training program in Canada. They found that participants’ understandings of administration and leadership were not logical and systematic as planned by the training, and gender imbalance was apparent. The study conducted by Jin, Cai and Hölttä (2012, p. 3) highlighted another phenomenon: Chinese principals were generally in favor of getting in touch with their counterparts in Finland as much as possible.

Studies on the evaluations of cross-cultural leadership training programs are insufficient. In spite of the massive volume of formal leadership training that takes place globally, there is relatively limited research to assess formal leadership training effectiveness (Yukl, 2006, p. 413). Most of the current studies have been carried out in a national context focusing on formal educational leadership training, and only a few studies have systematically examined participants' conceptions and experience of Western modes of teaching and learning in the context of a cross-cultural training program. More research should focus on the link between leadership training and leadership practices in order to better understand the characteristics of leadership training that most strongly support quality leadership practices (Fuller, Young & Baker, 2011, p. 208). The Chinese government has conducted this nationwide training project almost two years, but it seems few studies have addressed the issue of the effectiveness of the training. In addition, only a few researchers have discussed the issue of cross-cultural training in the Finnish context, especially from the perspective of the participants. Research concerning training programs for Chinese principals and teachers in Finland has begun only recently, and more research should be conducted to see their impacts in China (Hölttä, Pekkola & Cai, 2009, p. 38). The recent agreement on further cooperation in teacher and principal education made by the two education ministers reflects that there is a high need for active research in this field, which could lay the basis for actual planning. Therefore, this study addresses the research gaps by investigating the influence of a Finnish leadership training program on Chinese principals' leadership practices and professional development, identifying the features of an effective leadership training program, exploring the needs of Chinese principals, and suggesting how training programs could be improved for current and future Chinese principals.

The aim of this study is to explore Chinese school principals’ perceptions of the possible effects and benefits of a Finnish training program in their practical work in schools. In other words, it aims to present participants’ perceptions of the Finnish training program in relation to their leadership practices and professional development, and to what extent they managed to implement knowledge and skills learnt from the training program. It is guided by the following research question: What kind of contribution does the Finnish training program make to leadership practices and professional development of Chinese school principals? The research is a qualitative case study and the data were collected from six general upper secondary school principals in Shanghai, China who participated in the training program at UTA in October 2011.

1.2 Significance of the study

This study is useful in the field of education. It builds upon the available body of knowledge relating to the effect of training on principals’ leadership practices and professional development. It focuses on a cross-cultural training program with its unique characteristics and challenges. Therefore, the research can provide a basis for the improvement of similar educational leadership training for all training providers in Finland. The study is significant because it investigates a relatively new aspect of leadership training, cross-cultural leadership training, from the perspective of the participants. The contribution of this study for leadership and management can be seen at least from three perspectives: Chinese, Finnish, and academic perspectives.

From the Chinese perspective, this issue is nationally important in policy, practice, and theory. First of all, training for human resource development has become a national priority during the past decades. In the area of education, the *National Training Project (NTP)* has tremendously improved the qualities of teachers and principals nationwide

(MOE, 2011b). Besides, promoting equal education for all is becoming a basic national education policy and the basis of enhancing social justice (People's Daily Online, 2010; MOE, 2012a). In addition to increasing and improving the domestic education system, overseas training was viewed as an effective way for human resources development (Hölttä et al., 2009, p. 33). For instance, *TAP (2011-2015)* (MOE, 2011a) is the first time in China's history that a huge number of teachers and principals are to be trained abroad systematically. Therefore, the entire nation is attempting to make a better, more efficient, more fair and stronger performing educational system, which would come closer to the Finnish model in terms of equality and equity.

From the Finnish perspective, the issue serves its national interest. China has recently become a priority in some aspects of Finnish international strategies, namely diplomatic, economic and educational aspects. In the field of education, China is one of the key counties for cooperation, with an objective to enter the growing educational market in China. (Hölttä et al., p. 29.) The increasing attention to China has been reflected by Finnish higher level officials' recent visits to China, i.e. the Minister of Education and Culture (MinEdu) Jukka Gustafsson's visit in May 2012. In this meeting, both countries have agreed to strengthen the further cooperation in teacher and principal education (MOE, 2012b). By conducting the research on the Tampere training program, Finnish tertiary institutions will have the opportunity to better understand the Chinese education system and Chinese school principals' needs in order to provide more targeted training in the future.

From the academic perspective, the case is unusual and of general public interest. As discussed earlier, previous studies on leadership training have mainly focused on the national context and there has been little discussion on the cross-cultural context. The profound understanding of this new phenomenon from an academic perspective is highly imperative for the future research and action. With these in mind, I believe the present study will make contributions to policymakers, scholars, and practitioners in both China and Finland.

1.3 Organization of the thesis

The study is divided into seven chapters. As already seen, Chapter 1 gives the background by presenting the background, the contribution, and organization of the study. Chapter 2 focuses on educational reforms, school principals, the development of principal training in mainland China, and training Chinese principals in Finland. Chapter 3 discusses the first key term Leadership Practices. The roles and responsibilities of principals are described. Based on six previous studies, I develop a new framework of leadership practices. The other two frameworks of leadership practices are presented as well. Chapter 4 reviews the second key term Professional Development. It includes definitions of professional development, professionalization through professional development, the importance of professional development for principals, types of professional development, features of effective professional development programs, and evaluation of professional development programs. Chapter 5 provides the philosophical worldview, describes the case study, the data collection procedures as well as the data-driven content analysis. Chapter 6 describes the research findings and the discussion with four themes: reasons for attending the training program, the value of the training program, features of effective leadership training programs, and improvements for future training programs. The last chapter is conclusions. I present the implications of the findings, review my research process and make some suggestions for future research.

2 RESEARCH CONTEXT

This chapter provides background information for the context of the study. It begins with a description of educational reforms in mainland China. The discourse surrounding the characteristics, roles and responsibilities, as well as challenges of Chinese principals is outlined. The context is a Finnish training program for Chinese principals; therefore it is equally significant to provide background information about the development of principal training in mainland China, and training Chinese principals in Finland.

2.1 Educational reforms in mainland China since the 1980s

Various educational reforms have taken place in mainland China since the 1980s. Education in mainland China was viewed largely as a political and ideological tool without its own mission and autonomy prior to the political and economic reform period, which started in late 1978 under the leadership of Deng Xiaoping. Maybe owing to over-corrective measures, the weight has altered to another extreme in the recent decades where education is regarded as a device for economic development. Locating education as serving either a political or economic purpose, nevertheless, is too society-centric and omits the humanistic value of education. The idea of human development through holistic education should be put forward. (Chu & Cravens, 2010, p. 6.)

In mainland China, excessive educational reforms have been introduced since the mid-1980s. Among these reforms has been the decentralization of administration from central government to local governments, governance arrangements change in schools giving school leaders more decision-making powers, curriculum management, and a strong emphasis on improving the quality of education for all students (CPC, 1985; State Council of People's Republic of China (PRC), 1999, 2001). Many of these educational reforms have mainly identified that the school principal is the key school officer in charge of the education policy implementation with an attempt to achieve qualitative improvements to learning in their schools. For instance, in the Principal-Responsibility System (*xiao zhang fu ze zhi*) that was first introduced in the policy document *Reform of China's Education System (1985),* school principals have been recognized as chief executives who are responsible for the main activities and essential decision making in schools. They are accountable for the overall school management, containing personnel management, financial management, teaching and learning management, and other related activities. (CPC, 1985)

The New Curriculum Reform (MOE, 2001) in primary and secondary schools has placed further demands on them since the principals are expected to play a crucial role in supervising teaching and learning activities, curriculum development, and offering support to teaching and learning activities (State Council of PRC, 1999). The reform established a system whereby the curriculum was simultaneously administrated at central, local and school levels. As a form of decentralization, the system called upon schools, districts, cities and provinces to design a school-based curriculum that would account for local needs. (MOE, 2001) Quality-Oriented Education (*su zhi jiao yu*) therefore became the symbol of the nationwide educational reform at the turning point of the 21st century (State Council of PRC, 1999, 2005; MOE, 2001). While the term *su zhi* can be broadly interpreted as "qualities" or "traits", it covers the scope of all-around development in four aspects: morality (*de*), intellect (*zhi*), physical health (*ti*), and arts (*mei*) (State Council of PRC, 2005). Quality-Oriented Education is a systemic change that includes the transformation of essentially every step of the contemporary educational process and is being extended into every section and level of the nation's educational system. (Chu & Cravens, 2010, p. 7).

There are three most significant features of *The Outline of China's National Guidelines for Medium and Long-term Education Reform and Development (ONG) (2010-2020).* First, the priority shift from quality and efficiency to a more equity-oriented balanced development. Second, the focus is no longer just an equal distribution of resources; rather, it is to promote a combination of diversity with high-quality equity. Third, the objective is not only to promise an equal access to education, but also to ensure that each child should have an equal educational process at the schools. (Yang, 2013, p. 4)

The current educational reform policy centers on "quality education with equity" or "educational equity with quality", which has become the systemic goal for Chinese education today. This is reflected by the recent policy documents. Both *ONG (2010-2020)* (People's Daily Online, 2010) and *The 12th Five-Year Plan of National Educational Development (FYPNED)* (MOE, 2012a) highlight promoting equal education for all is a basic national education policy and the basis of promoting social justice.

2.2 School principals in mainland China

In China, there are several unique characteristics of school principals. First of all, the school principal acts in the role of an educational leader while the Communist Party Secretary as a political leader supervises the implementation of the educational policies at the school level (Zhao, Ni, Qiu, Yang & Zhang, 2008, p. 2). Second, principals are expected to become resource winners, capturing funds to pay the amount of the school expenses comprising teachers' salaries and bonuses (Lee & Pang, 2011, p. 336). In some schools, school principals run factories or other businesses, lend out the school premises or charge private tuition from students (Ni, 2001, 379). Thirdly, the role of a principal is usually connected with his/her school. There is a Chinese saying "A good principal is a good school". Generally in Chinese culture the role of a principal is not directly linked with student achievement. (Yang & Brayman, 2010, p. 242.) Fourthly, principals are crucial to support teachers to implement curriculum reforms in schools in order to enhance academic learning and improve students' discipline. Finally, school principals are seen to have the responsibility of managing schools efficiently as well as leading their schools with passion, vigor and compassion. All these characteristics request principals in China to demonstrate both management and leadership skills. As a result, the trainers of school principals should bear these components in mind when providing training. (Wu & Ehrich, 2009, p. 54.)

The ongoing educational reforms in mainland China have changed the roles of school principals markedly. Unlike their roles as administrative officials before the education reforms since 1985, currently their roles as professionals have been underlined. The shifting role of school principals from administrative officials to professionals demonstrates a change in allocating power to them. (Zhong & Ehrich, 2010, p. 243) Nowadays school principals are encouraged to use their professional knowledge to affect teachers and students instead of exerting their position power over others (Qiu, 2005, p. 96). Besides, principals have more responsibilities for the long-term development of the school. They must plan the school's future ahead and learn how to do strategic planning (Chu & Cravens, 2010, p. 8). Furthermore, under the curriculum reform, school principals have the opportunities to implement less restrictive and more innovative approaches to learning and teaching. At least they have more autonomy and power to make such things happen. Consequently, their role as leaders of learning has become more important and their potential to influence somehow has increased. (Walker, Qian & Zhang, 2011, pp. 394-395.)

Due to these continuing educational reforms and role changes, school principals in mainland China face various challenges. In the first place, principals confront the challenge of balancing their education ideals and accountability realities. On the one hand, in the national pursuit of educational equity and social justice, Chinese principals are expected to first and foremost be humanists who care about every student. They must find ways that every student can be taken into consideration, and students' outcomes can be freed regardless of their socio-economic background and geographic location. (Chu & Cravens, 2010, p. 10.) On the other hand, the New Curriculum Reform pushes principals and teachers to provide visible and accountable results without systemic support and capacity building training. Nonetheless, the holistic approach for student overall development is extremely difficult to implement and measure. While such transformation is painstakingly taking place, principals are jammed in between the existing testing system (*gaokao*[1]) that measures school performance in the light of *achievement* and the enacted accountability scheme that calls for enhanced student *ability*. In addition, principals are entering into unknown waters of designing and assessing new curriculum content and instructional practices on the basis of new learning objectives. (Chu & Cravens, 2010, p. 11.) They are required to lead their schools towards student-centered classroom practice, a more applicable curriculum, meeting diverse and individual learning needs, and mostly enhancing the quality of teaching and the level of student learning outcomes (Walker & Qian, 2006, pp. 302-303).

In the second place, many principals are not well prepared for the changes of power utilization nor are they able to manage their schools strategically and independently. The decentralized and school-based management environment requires principals to have solid leadership and problem-solving skills so that they would be able to make a broad range of decisions. Nevertheless, many principals find it difficult to lead their schools with the traditional top-down management style. They have been used to depending on government's directives and to managing daily routines rather than operating a big-picture type of strategies. (Chu & Cravens, 2010, pp. 8-12)

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[1] Gaokao refers to the national college entrance examination in China. It is a test that colleges and universities use to select their students in China and thus it is the one opportunity a Chinese student has to get into college or university (Zhao, 2009, p. 49)

Against the background of education equity in China, three new expectations and challenges for school principals arise. First, principals are expected to develop a new conception of school quality. Besides cost effectiveness, they need to focus on the essential meaning of education, that is, the role played by education in promoting students' personal development and social justice. Second, this new policy shift expects principals to consider the sense of equity perceived by all the stakeholders. To what extent various stakeholders share the feeling of being equitable is essential to the success of the equity reform. The third challenge for principals is to reformulate school culture that embraces the concepts like equity and justice. (Wang, 2013. pp. 10-13.)

2.3 Development of principal training in mainland China

Principal training in mainland China has gone through different stages. Before the late 1980s, principal training in China included an apprenticeship style of training model where brilliant teachers were chosen to become school principals (Wu & Ehrich, 2009, p. 54). Su, Gamage and Miniberg (2003, p. 51) stated that "in China, formal principal training was nonexistent only a few years ago, the MOE now requires all the principals to obtain certificates of pre-service training, at least for a few months before they take leadership positions". Recognizing the significance of leader development for the fast change of educational reform, the State Education Commission of People's Republic of China (SEC of PRC, renamed the MOE in 1998) issued an important policy document entitled *Strengthening the Training for Principals of Elementary and Secondary Schools Nationwide* in 1989 (SEC, 1989). The document required local educational officials to endeavor to train all principals in the next three to five years. Furthermore, it set forward a professional training program for principals of elementary and secondary schools nationwide, which emphasized professional educational qualifications and new requirements.

In 1995, SEC issued another significant policy document, *The Training Direction for Principals of Elementary and Secondary Schools during the Ninth Five-Year Plan* (SEC, 1995). The document focused on the relation between principal training with the basic education reform and development, the implementation of universal nine-year compulsory education and improvement of school performance and management. Since then principal training has made much improvement: Policies regarding principal training have been built by both central and local government, the academic and professional level of principal training has grown with the involvement of universities in the development and provision of training programs, and more than one million school principals have participated in the professional training and recurrence training programs (Chu & Cravens, 2010, pp. 19-20).

In 1999, the central government further recognized the importance of developing serving principals and issued a new policy document, *Training Regulations for School Principals* (MOE, 1999). It regulated that all newly appointed principals were to be certified through a serious of development programs and serving principals must receive advanced training over a five-year cycle and obtain an advanced training qualification as a prerequisite. Consequently, a *Professional Development Project for One Thousand Backbone Principals* (MOE, 2000) was launched by the MOE in 2000. (Walker, Chen & Qian, 2008, p. 416; Chu & Yang, 2009, p. 183)

In 2011, the MOE issued a new policy document, *Strengthening the Training of Primary and Secondary School Teachers*. In this document, a nationwide project *TAP (2011-2015)* (MOE, 2011a) was underway. This was the first time since 1949 that the Chinese government sent such huge numbers of teachers and principals to be trained abroad. Therefore, great emphasis has been placed on the leadership practices and professional development of principals. The document of *Working Priorities for the Ministry of Education During 2012* (MOE, 2012c) stressed all-round trainings for primary and middle school teachers and principals would be promoted. The document of *Working Priorities for the Ministry of Education During 2013* (MOE, 2013) highlighted the implementation of a national training plan for the principals of kindergartens, primary and secondary schools, and a training project for outstanding principals of primary and secondary schools.

Currently, there are three types of training programs for principals in China (Wu & Ehrich, 2009, p. 54; Chu & Cravens, 2010, p. 20):

(a) *Qualification or Induction Training* for principal candidates (minimum of 300 hours) that offers basic knowledge and skills development which are considered necessary for effective school leadership. All principals complete a written assignment and obtain a professional certificate if they pass.

(b) *Improvement Training* for principals (minimum of 240 hours) who have received the qualification training. It provides trainees a broad range of curricula in education and educational administration. Principals are required to take part in the improvement training and gain the qualification within five years of obtaining the qualification certificate.

(c) *Advanced Research Training* for selected principals (no time requirement) who not only have a professional certificate but also have exemplary performance in their positions. It offers trainees selected advanced topics for discussions, lectures, and visits to local schools. Principals are encouraged to live on campus for one month during the seminars and required to submit a written paper identifying their learning journey.

Administratively, principal training is provided at four levels in China (Chu & Yang, 2009, pp. 181-182). On the horizontal level, it contains four types of official training organizations: (a) the national level for selected groups of principals nationwide by the National Training Center for Secondary School Principals (NTCSSP) in the East China Normal University (ECNU) and the National Training Center for Primary School

Principals (NTCPSP) in the Beijing Normal University (BNU), (b) provincial level for upper secondary high school principals (Grade 10-12), (c) city level for lower secondary school principals (Grade 7-9), and (d) district level for primary school principals (Grade 1-6). On the vertical level, it includes four levels of education administration departments: (a) personnel division of MOE, (b) personnel division of the provincial department of education, (c) personnel division of the city department of education, and (d) personnel division of the district department of education.

The training topics impact the school leaders to gain an understanding of leadership (motivate others, create learning organization, communicate with others, influence others), management (management innovation, school strategic planning) and curriculum (curriculum reform, art education) issues. An emphasis is placed on the curriculum because in China, principals are regarded as “head” teachers, those people who have instructional leadership skills and abilities. Due to this emphasis, their knowledge and understanding of key curriculum trends and issues is critical. This is particularly the case owing to current curriculum reform initiatives that have demonstrated a change in thinking about curriculum, pedagogy and assessment. (Wu & Ehrich, 2009, p. 56)

2.4 Development of training Chinese principals in Finland

Training Chinese principals in Finland is a new phenomenon. China has become increasingly interested in the Finnish school system and school management due to Finnish students’ top performance in the Program for International Student Assessment (known as PISA study). In 2002, the MOE signed the Sino-Finnish upper secondary education cooperation and exchange projects plan with the Finnish National Board of Education (the 1st Stage) (MOE, 2002). Since then, there has been a growing number of Chinese principals visiting Finnish schools and learning the Finnish Education Model. For instance, in November 2005, the first joint training program for Chinese high school principals was completed in Helsinki, Finland (The Ameson Education and Culture Exchange Foundation, 2005), in the spring of 2010 a delegation of 15 Chinese principals visited Jyväskylä (University of Jyväskylä, 2010), and in November 2011, a group of 20 Chinese principals attended training in Finland (Jiaxing Education Bureau, 2011). In the ministers' conference in June 2012, both the Ministries of Education (and Culture) agreed to strengthen the further cooperation in teacher and principal training between China and Finland (MOE, 2012). In September 2012, 20 teacher trainers from Shanghai attended a training process in Jyväskylä and Helsinki, Finland (EduCluster Finland Oy, 2012). From this evidence, there may be some visible motivations for the Chinese government to arrange more overseas training programs for Chinese principals in Finland.

The Chinese Education Research and Exchange Center (CEREC) at the UTA provided training for a delegation of 21 excellent Chinese upper secondary school principals during the period of the 2nd - 22nd October 2011. The group was organized by The National Training Center for Secondary School Principals, MOE. The CEREC was established at the School of Management, the UTA in September 2011. The purpose of the training was to help Chinese school principals to expand their vision and to learn from their Finnish colleagues through observing and understanding Finnish school administration and leadership systems. The training program designed for the principal delegation covered a wide range of activities, including lectures, on-site learning at Finnish upper secondary schools and vocational schools, discussions with the Finnish Ministry of Education and Culture (MinEdu), the Finnish National Board of Education, and the City of Tampere. The lecture themes varied from a general introduction of the Finnish education system to school curriculum design, teaching methods and students' performance assessment to implementing Information and Communication Technology (ICT) and web-based education on the Finnish national level. (UTA, 2011.)

The Finnish universities and society gain at least three benefits from training Chinese administrative officials and school principals: (a) establishing relationships with Chinese partners effectively, (b) enhancing Finnish tourist industry directly, and (c) promoting Finnish industry, education and school systems in a cost-effective way (Hölttä et al., 2009, pp. 35-37; Jin et al., 2012, p. 16). Besides, this initiative fits the aim of promoting Finnish export of expertise for Finnish higher education institutions (MinEdu, 2009, p. 11). The *Report Strategy for the Internationalization of Higher Education Institutions in Finland (2009-2015)* (MinEdu, 2009, p. 15) stressed that higher education had a key role in creating nationally significant export and it was highlighted at the same time that the export and professional marketing of competence were still in their infancy. Furthermore, such kind of training should be perceived in a broader context as a part of internationalization, establishment of bilateral research, educational and diplomatic networks and creating personal and cultural interactions between China and Finland (Hölttä et al., 2009, p. 40).

3 LEADERSHIP PRACTICES

Leadership practices have been extensively studied by researchers internationally over the past three decades (e.g. Hallinger & Murphy, 1985; Cotton, 2003; Hallinger, 2003; Waters, Marzano & McNulty, 2003; Spillane, Halverson & Diamond 2004; Marzano, Waters & McNulty, 2005; Leithwood et al., 2006; Kathryn, 2007; Zhong & Ehrich, 2010; Walker & Ko, 2011; Kouzes & Posner, 2012). This chapter provides a theoretical framework for the study based on previous literature on leadership practices. It begins with the roles and responsibilities of principals in general. This is followed by a review of leadership practices that is closely connected with principals' roles and responsibilities. I will discuss comprehensively the framework "Four broad and fourteen specific categories of successful leadership practices" (see Appendix 1) based on six previous studies. The chapter concludes with another two leadership practices frameworks from distributed and communicative perspectives.

3.1 Principals' roles and responsibilities

The role of a school principal has been rediscovered. A growing number of literatures propose that behind every successful school there is a successful principal (Barth, 1986,

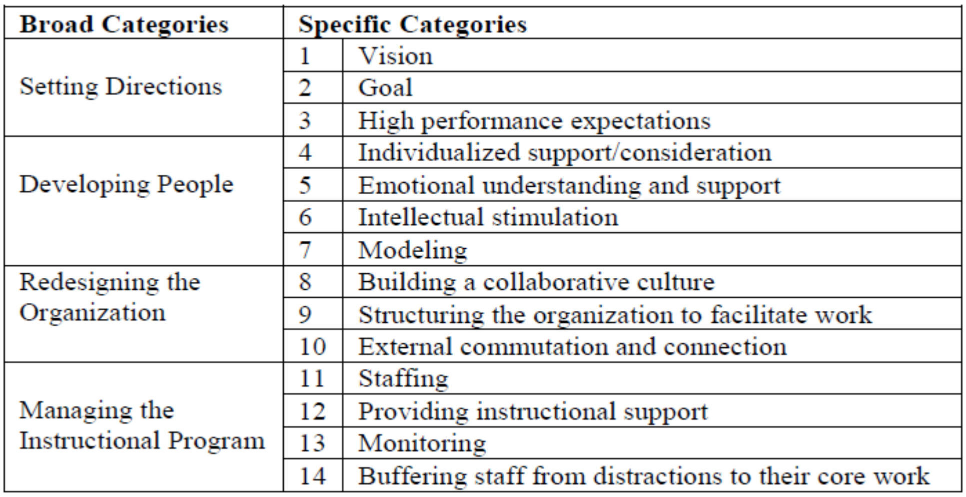
p. 156). Fenwick and Pierce (2002, p. 2) call the principal "the passport to school success", emphasizing that contemporary models of school reform acknowledge the many roles of the principal (e.g., organizational manager, team builder, resources allocator, promoter of teacher development, instructional leader, and community leader). Some of the roles include guiding the accomplishment of the goals of the organization (Leithwood & Mascall, 2008, p. 507). Others include decision making, strategic thinking, school designing, promoting professional knowledge, supporting teachers as instructional leaders, building effective teams, organizing school resources, creating ethical, results-oriented and professional school culture, leading the change process, supporting professional development of staff, managing for results (Tucker & Codding, 2002, p. 2, pp. 32-37), and developing a system of organizational learning (Senge, 1990, p. 220). In recent years, the principal has become the person that has to take responsibility for nearly everything and everyone linked to the school (Cardno & Howse, 2005, pp. 37-38).

Over the last two decades, socio-economic changes have raised the requirement for educational reforms across the world (Cardno & Howse, 2005, p. 34; Bush, 2008b, p. 9). One result was that the schools were required to increase the effectiveness of their performance (Rizvi, 2008, p. 86). Traditionally, principals were the administrators of the schools whose major responsibility was carrying out orders from the bureaucracy (Cuban, 1988, p. 184). Nonetheless, principals' roles have been changing over the same period (Billot, 2003, p. 35). Decentralisation and school-based management require principals to make decisions that used to be made by the bureaucracy (Hallinger, 2004, p. 62). Therefore, principals' roles have transformed from "order-takers" to "decision-makers". Principals' responsibilities broadened from "meeting bureaucracy expectations" to "leading the school reforms". They have to face challenges and pressures from their multiple roles and their increased responsibilities. (Hallinger, 2004, p. 67.) As the expectations of what schools should achieve have changed radically over the years, countries need to develop new forms of school leadership required by their educational challenges. To achieve this, countries first should provide support and retrain their current school principals as most of them were hired into schools with challenges different from what pertains today. (Pont, Nusche & Moorman, 2008, p. 31.)

3.2 Four broad leadership practices

This section extensively reviews the literatures on leadership practices. Based on six previous researches on leadership practices, I synthesize and develop a framework named “Four broad and fourteen specific categories of successful leadership practices”. The framework includes setting directions, developing people, redesigning the organization, and managing the instructional program. Each of these categories encompasses fourteen specific leadership practices (see Table 1).

Table 1 The four broad and fourteen specific categories of successful leadership practices (adapted from Hallinger & Murphy, 1985, p. 221; Cotton, 2003, pp. 67-72; Waters et al., 2003, p. 4; Marzano et al., 2005, pp. 42-43; Leithwood et al., 2006, pp. 34-43; Walker & Ko, 2011, p. 372; Kouzes & Posner, 2012, p. 29)



Broad Categories	**Specific Categories**	
Setting Directions	1	Vision
	2	Goal
	3	High performance expectations
Developing People	4	Individualized support/consideration
	5	Emotional understanding and support
	6	Intellectual stimulation
	7	Modeling
Redesigning the Organization	8	Building a collaborative culture
	9	Structuring the organization to facilitate work
	10	External commutation and connection
Managing the Instructional Program	11	Staffing
	12	Providing instructional support
	13	Monitoring
	14	Buffering staff from distractions to their core work

Setting directions

Vision is the first step towards being a successful principal. Instructional leaders are usually said to have a "*vision*" of what the school should be attempting to accomplish. Defining a school mission includes framing and communicating the school’s goals. These functions regard the principal’s role in working with staff to guarantee that the school has clear, measurable goals, which are concentrated on the students' academic progress. (Hallinger & Murphy, 1985, p. 221.) The principal inspires others to achieve things that might be beyond their hold and is the driving force to implement challenging innovations (Marzano et al., 2005, p. 56). Successful educational leaders support the schools to develop visions that exemplify the best thinking about teaching and learning, and inspire others to accomplish ambitious goals (Leithwood & Riehl, 2003, p. 5). Also, principals ensure the involvement of school community in this process, and strategically incorporate relevant features of policy from the social, educational and political environments into their planning for school improvement and student achievement (Walker et al., 2000, p. 6; Walker & Ko, 2011, p. 372). Similarly, exemplary leaders envision the future by imagining exciting and ennobling possibilities. They have a clear vision and dream of what could be done before starting any project, they have a strong belief in those dreams (O'Neill & Bottoms, 2001, pp. 8-9; Kouzes & Posner, 2012, pp. 17-18), and are confident in their capacities to make extraordinary things happen (O'Neill & Bottoms, 2001, pp. 8-9; Marzano et al., 2005, p. 56; Kouzes & Posner, 2012, pp. 17-18).

While visions can be motivating, action usually requires some cooperation on short-term *goals* to be achieved in order to move toward accomplishing the vision. Based on such theory, this set of practices targets not only to recognize significant goals for the organization, but also to do so in such a way that individual members come to contain the organization's goals among their own. Without such an evolvement, the organization's goals have no motivational value. (Leithwood et al., 2006, p. 35.) Framing the goals concerns the principal's role in determining the areas in which the staff will concentrate their attention and resources during a school year. The major and minor goals go hand in hand. The goals should incorporate data on past and current student performance and contain staff responsibilities for attaining the goals. Communicating the goals means the principal communicates the school's central goals with teachers, parents, and students and ensures that these goals are understood by discussing and reviewing them with staff during the school year. (Hallinger & Murphy, 1985, pp. 221-222.) Correspondingly, it is the principal's responsibility to assure that the school has a clear academic mission and to communicate it to teachers, parents and students, and which is widely acknowledged and supported in the school community (Hallinger, 2003, p. 332). An effective execution of this responsibility concerns establishing concrete goals for curriculum, instruction, and assessment practices, the general functioning of the school. These goals should be achievable for students and continually keep on improving. (Marzano et al., 2005, p. 50.) In addition, exemplary leaders enlist others in a common vision by appealing to shared aspirations. They are able to connect the vision and dream to the past and the history. Exemplary leaders achieve the commitment by inspiring instead of commanding. They fulfil a shared dream and common good by showing the way to the constituents. (Kouzes & Posner, 2012, pp. 18-19.)

The principal's expression of *high performance expectations* for students is a part of the vision that guides high performance schools and is a crucial component on its own (Cotton, 2003, p. 11; Leithwood & Riehl, 2003, p. 6). He or she builds high and concrete expectations that all students will meet (Marzano et al., 2005, p. 50). Successful leaders assist others to understand the challenging nature of the goals being sought, reduce feelings of the gap between what the school aims to and what is presently being achieved. Indeed, adequate expressions of high expectations help people comprehend that what is being expected is achievable. (Leithwood & Riehl, 2003, p. 6.)

Developing people

Successful principals provide *individualized support/consideration.* Setting up a work structure that rewards and recognizes teachers is an important part of the principal's role in creating a positive learning climate (Hallinger & Murphy, 1985, p. 224). Thus, it is the duty of the instructional leadership to coordinate the school's standards and practices with its mission and to create a positive climate that supports teaching and learning (Hallinger, 2003, pp. 332-333). Equally, successful principals build a school climate where academic achievement is the main goal. They institute policies and procedures to achieve that goal. (Steller, 1988, p. 21.) A supportive school climate is also closely linked to the principal’s efforts to maintain safety and good order, and involves such aspects as inspiring school wide communication of interest and caring for students (Cotton, 2003, pp. 68-69). Successful principals use hard work, results and performance to recognize and reward individual accomplishment (Marzano et al., 2005, p. 46).

In most cases, the improvement of education means significant levels of change for the individuals involved. Effective educational leaders demonstrate respect for staff and care about their feelings and needs. They offer motivations and structures to support changes, as well as opportunities for individual learning and proper means for checking the progress toward improvement. (Leithwood & Riehl, 2003, p. 6.) Similarly, principals build a collaborative team of teachers, set priorities and goals for effective and efficient staff management, delegate responsibility to colleagues and empower them to manage the school on a daily basis. They model and reinforce equitable, efficient and effective staff as an integral part of school improvement. (Walker et al., 2000, p. 16; Walker & Ko, 2011, p. 373.)

Successful principals give *emotional understanding and support*. Effective principals see themselves as responsible for their schools’ success and believe they can positively work through others to achieve it. They continue to seek their goals in spite of difficulties and setbacks. They are capable and caring communicators in the interpersonal domain who are aware and supportive of the personal needs of staff and students. (Cotton, 2003, pp. 68-69.) Besides, principals of high-achieving schools demonstrate an awareness of the personal lives of teachers and staff through being informed about important personal issues, being aware of personal needs, acknowledging significant events, and maintaining personal relationships (Marzano et al., 2005, p. 59). Exemplary leaders strengthen others by increasing self-determination and develop competence, too (Kouzes & Posner, 2012, p. 22).

Effective principals offer *intellectual stimulation.* They support the teachers' effort to improve instruction through staff development programs and in-service training activities, which closely link to school goals (Hallinger & Murphy, 1985, p. 223). It is the duty of the instructional leadership to coordinate the school's standards and practices with its mission and to build a climate that supports teaching and learning (Hallinger, 2003, pp. 332-333). Besides, successful principals respect teachers' skills and judgment, and allow them considerable autonomy to organize and manage their classrooms. They take risks to improve their schools and inspire teachers to do the same through being innovative and experimenting in the classroom. (Cotton, 2003, pp. 70-71.) Actually, effective principals are willing to lead change initiatives and actively challenge the status quo by systematically considering new and better ways of doing things. They adapt their leadership behavior to the needs of the current situation and are comfortable with dissent. They ensure faculty and staff are well informed about updated theories and practice and foster regular discussion of them (Marzano et al., 2005, pp. 42-45). Furthermore, successful principals provide varied professional development activities for teachers to improve their skills and secure the necessary resources, such as financial, human, time, materials, and facilities resources (Walker et al., 2000, p. 6; Cotton, 2003, pp. 70-71; Marzano et al., 2005, pp. 42-45; Walker & Ko, 2011, pp. 372-373).

Successful leaders encourage reflection and challenge their staff to examine assumptions, look at their work from different perspectives, and rethink how it can be performed (Leithwood & Riehl, 2003, p. 6; Kouzes & Posner, 2012, pp. 10-21). They deliver information and resources to help people realize discrepancies between current and desired practices. They also empower teachers and others to understand and get mastery over the complexities of essential changes. (Leithwood & Riehl, 2003, p. 6.) In addition, principals nurture the sharing of topical professional knowledge and informed practice intended to adapt the various needs of students within a general commitment to student achievement and school improvement (Walker et al., 2000, p. 6; Walker & Ko, 2011, pp. 372-373). Likewise, exemplary leaders are proactively searching for chances to upgrade and innovate as they do not want to sustain the status quo. Therefore, they listen to new ideas and seek to convert them in new products, services, or processes. Exemplary leaders are also pioneers, willing to step out into the unknown and take risks. They are continuously learning from their mistakes and failures as they experiment, check new things, and move forward. (Kouzes & Posner, 2012, pp. 10-21.)

Modeling is one important element of successful principals. Both Hallinger (2003, p. 332) and Waters et al. (2003, p. 10) claim the contribution to leader effects of sustaining high visibility around the school, a visibility associated with high quality interactions with both staff and students. Effective principals maintain high visibility on the campus and make themselves available to teachers, students, and others in the school community. They frequently visit classrooms to observe and interact with teachers and students. (Hallinger & Murphy, 1985, p. 223; Cotton, 2003, pp. 68-72; Marzano et al., 2005, p. 61.) Informal interaction offers the principal more information about the needs of students and teachers, as well as providing the principal opportunities to communicate the school priorities (Hallinger & Murphy, 1985, p. 223). Besides, principals exemplify the outlook and behavior by working with staff in professional development activities, allocating their own time to support student learning, and treating students, staff, and others with respect (Cotton, 2003, pp. 68-72; Marzano et al., 2005, p. 61). Similarly, successful school leaders set examples for staff and students to follow that are in accordance with values and goals of the school. By modeling desired personalities and actions, leaders raise others’ beliefs about their own capacities and their passion for change. (Leithwood & Riehl, 2003, p. 6.) Furthermore, Harris and Chapman (2002, p.6) found their successful head teachers “modeled behavior that they considered desirable to achieve the school goals”.

In modeling the way, leaders earn respect through their behavior rather than titles. Exemplary leaders strongly know that being models of the behavior are crucial to gain commitment and achieve the highest standards. Leaders are clear about their own guiding principles. In every team, organization and community, others also feel the principle is of great importance. Leaders demonstrate their deep commitment to their beliefs and those of the organization in the daily work. (O’Neill & Bottoms, 2001, p. 11; Kouzes & Posner, 2012, pp. 16-17.)

Redesigning the organization

Building a collaborative culture is essential to become successful principals. Principals of high-achieving schools are good communicators who share with and ask for information from all groups among the school community. They create a collaborative environment in which they and their staffs learn, plan, and work together to improve school performance. (Cotton, 2003, pp. 69-70.) Likewise, principals establish strong lines of communication with and among teachers and students through developing effective means, being accessible, and fostering shared beliefs, a sense of community and cooperation through promoting cohesion and a sense of well-being, developing an understanding of purpose among staff (Marzano et al., 2005, pp. 46-47). Such a cooperative team centers on allocating physical and fiscal resources efficiently towards the goals of school improvement and student achievement (Walker et al., 2000, p. 16; Walker & Ko, 2011, p. 373). Besides, principals utilize school rituals and ceremonies to honor tradition, inculcate pride, recognize excellence, and reinforce a sense of connection within the school. To illustrate, they make a point of recognizing achievement and improvement on the part of students and staff (Cotton, 2003, pp. 70-72; Marzano et al., 2005, p. 44; Kouzes & Posner, 2012, p. 24). Authentic celebrations and rituals build a strong sense of collective identity and community spirit which carries a group through extraordinarily tough times (Kouzes & Posner, 2012, p. 24). Recognizing student academic achievement in front of teachers and peers is particularly significant in low-income schools, where students need frequent and visible rewards (Hallinger & Murphy, 1985, p. 224). Besides, principals systematically and fairly acknowledge the failures of the school as a whole (Marzano et al., 2005, p. 44.).

Connolly and James (2006, pp. 72-79) claim that leaders contribute to productive collaboration in their schools by being skilled conveners of that work. They cultivate mutual respect and trust among those involved in collaborative activity, promote effective collaboration by being trustworthy themselves, ensure the shared determination of group processes and outcomes, help develop clarity about goals and roles for collaboration, encourage willingness to compromise among collaborators, foster open and smooth communication among collaborators, and provide adequate and consistent resources to support collaborative work (Connolly & James, 2006, pp. 72-79; Kouzes & Posner, 2012, p. 22). Exemplary leaders build trust through serving the needs of others instead of their own. The more people trust their leaders and each other, the more they are able to take risks, make changes, and keep organizations updated. (Kouzes & Posner, 2012, p. 22.)

Effective principals *structure the organization to facilitate work*. This set of practices is common to virtually all conceptions of management and leadership practice. Organizational culture and structure are like two sides of the same coin. Developing and maintaining collaborative cultures relies on putting in place additional structures, usually something demanding leadership initiative. (Leithwood et al., 2006, p. 40.) Practices associated with such initiatives include creating common planning times for teachers and establishing team and group structures for problem solving (Hadfield, 2003, p. 117). Restructuring also includes distributing leadership for selected tasks and providing opportunities for staff to involve in decision-making about issues that affect them and for which their knowledge is important (Reeves, 2000, p. 327; Leithwood & Riehl, 2003, p. 7; Marzano et al., 2005, p. 69). By doing so, leaders assist teachers to form the school in ways that can achieve shared goals and address individual concerns as well (Leithwood & Riehl, 2003, p. 7). In addition, principals provide opportunities for staff to design and implement important decisions and policies, and use the leadership team to make important decisions (Cotton, 2003, pp. 51-52). One key role of the principal is to support staff development by offering teachers with skills, materials, knowledge and resources needed for them to engage in learning activities. By doing so, principals create an enabling school environment and recognize the needs of their teachers, empower them to share the dreams they have for the school. (Kelley, Thornton & Daugherty, 2005, p. 23.)

An external communication and connection is another significant component in becoming successful principals. Muijs, Harris, Chapman, Stoll and Russ (2004, p. 163) have identified that the involvement of parents and local communities are essential for improving schools in challenging circumstances. Attention to this emphasis has been promoted by the evidence about the support of family educational cultures to student achievement in schools (Finn, 1989, p.131). Successful principals carry out active outreach to parents and community members, comprising those who are conventionally underrepresented in parent involvement programs. They pursue and support parent/community involvement in both instruction and governance. (Cotton, 2003, p. 69.) Actually, the school leader is an advocate and a spokesperson of the school with parents, the central office, and the community at large (Marzano et al., 2005, p. 58). As a result, school leaders spend a large number of times to contact with people outside of their schools seeking information and advice, staying consistent with policy changes, forestalling new pressures and tendencies possibly to have an impact on their schools. Examples of opportunities for accomplishing these purposes include meetings, informal conversations, phone calls, email exchanges and internet searches. (Leithwood et al., 2006, p. 41.) Likewise, principals establish links between the school and the local, national and global communities so that school communities can make contributions to the broader society and its development. (Walker & Ko, 2011, p. 373.)

Managing the instructional program

Even though *staffing* is not mentioned in the other five studies, it has proved to be a fundamental function of leaders involved in school improvement. The objective of this activity is to find teachers with the interest and capacity to further develop the school's efforts. (Leithwood et al., 2006, p. 42.) Recruiting and retaining skilled staff is a prime mission leading schools in challenging circumstances (Gray, 2000, p. 28).

Effective principals *provide instructional support.* This set of practices, encompassed in Hallinger's (Hallinger & Murphy, 1985, p. 222; Hallinger, 2003, p. 332) model on "supervising and evaluating instruction", "coordinating the curriculum", Cotton's (2003, pp. 67-68) model on "Safe and orderly school environment", Waters' et al. (2003, p. 4) research on "Establishes set of standard operating procedures and routines", "Provides materials necessary for job", and "Directly involved in design and implementation of curriculum, instruction and assessment practices". The intermediate effect of an achievement oriented school climate, labelled as an ‘‘academic climate’’ makes significant contributions to students' achievement (De Maeyer, Rymenans, Van Petegem, van der Bergh & Rijlaarsdam, 2006, p. 132). Indeed, this framework assumes that the development of the academic core of the school is a fundamental leadership responsibility of the principal (Hallinger & Murphy, 1985, p. 224).

Instructional leaders actively coordinate curricular objectives of schools which are closely aligned with both the content taught in classes and with achievement tests (Hallinger & Murphy, 1985, p. 222). This is a key difference between highly effective and less effective principals (Cotton, 2003, p. 70). Also, instructional principals directly involved in the design and implementation of curriculum, instruction and assessment practice knowledge about current curriculum, instruction and assessment practices, and are knowledgeable about these issues (Marzano et al., 2005, pp. 54-55). They make sure that all students receive a comprehensive, balanced and related curriculum through formal, informal and extra-curricular activities across the school communities (Walker et al. 2000, p. 6; Walker & Ko, 2011, p. 372). Furthermore, effective principals facilitate discussion among staff about curriculum and instruction, and involve in these discussions themselves (Cotton, 2003, p. 70).

Monitoring is a crucial element in becoming successful principals. This set of practices is labelled "monitoring student progress" in Hallinger's (2003, p. 332) model. Waters et al. (2003, p. 4) examine related leadership impacts on students with the leader monitoring and evaluating functions, particularly those emphasizing student learning.

Gray (2000, p. 36) reports that keeping track of student progress is a fundamental task for school leaders in challenging circumstances.

Effective principals frequently visit classrooms, observing instruction and offering feedback to teachers in the spirit of coaching as well as evaluation. They ensure that systematic procedures for monitoring student progress exist at both school wide and classroom levels. They guarantee that data are clarified to monitor the progress of specific groups. They also recognize how to interpret student performance data and use it in planning for curricular and instructional improvement. (Cotton, 2003, p. 70-71.) Similarly, successful school leaders measure how well the school is acting along many indicators and utilize that information when developing and reviewing aims. This requires smart skills to gather and interpret information, as well as a tradition of inquiry and reflection. They inquire critical and constructive questions, highlight the usage of systematic evidence and inspire careful monitoring of teachers' work and pupils' progress. (Leithwood & Riehl, 2003, p. 6.) What is more, principals construct quality assurance and accountability systems in cooperation with their school communities that offer feedback to students, teachers and others with the purpose of securing school improvement. These systems fulfil the information requirements of external agencies regarding school performance. (Walker et al., 2000, p. 6; Walker & Ko, 2011, p. 373.)

Finally, effective principals *buffer staff from distractions to their core work*. According to Hallinger and Murphy (1985, p. 223), teachers' classroom management and instructional skills are not utilized optimally if instruction is frequently interrupted by delayed students and requests from the office. Hence, it is the duty of the instructional leadership to coordinate the school's standards and practices with its mission and to build a climate that supports teaching and learning (Hallinger, 2003, pp. 332-333). Principals of high-achieving schools protect instructional time by keeping loudspeaker announcements, other administrative intrusions, and non-instructional activities from taking excessive school day (Cotton, 2003, p. 71). They protect teachers from issues and influences that would detract from their teaching time or focus

(Marzano et al., 2005, pp. 48-49). It is of great value for organizational effectiveness that leaders can avoid staff being hauled in directions contrary to agreed goals. This buffering function recognizes the open nature of schools and the continuous attack of staff with expectations from parents, the media, special interest groups and the government. (Leithwood et al., 2006, p. 43.)

3.3 'Hybrid' and communicative leadership practices

This section discusses leadership practices from other two perspectives. The first one is the 'hybrid' leadership practice framework, which focuses on the interaction among the leaders, the followers and the situation. The second one is the communicative leadership practices framework that states leadership is a social strategy to secure action in the service of interests claimed by a community. I choose these perspectives in that they enrich the understanding of leadership practices.

3.3.1 'Hybrid' leadership practice framework

Spillane et al. (2004, pp. 3-11) designed the 'hybrid' leadership practice framework from the distributed perspective (see Figure 1), comprising: leaders, followers, and their situation. In this view, *activity* was produced by the actor's understanding, beliefs and behaviors through specific social, cultural, and material contexts. Their views on school leadership practice emphasized on leaders' thinking and action. According to them, the proper component of analysis was leadership *activity* rather than leaders or what they did. They argued that leadership *activity* was constructed in the interaction of leaders, followers, and their situation during the implementation of particular leadership tasks. It did not depend on any one of these elements, and each was a necessity for leadership *activity*. They viewed leadership practice in the interaction of all three. In other words, instead of seeing leadership practice as merely a function of an individual's ability, skill, personality, and understanding, they contended that it was best understood as a practice distributed among leaders, followers, and their situation. Attending to a situation as something more than a background or container for leaders' practices, they considered the sociocultural context as an essential element of leadership practice, a compressive defining element of that activity.

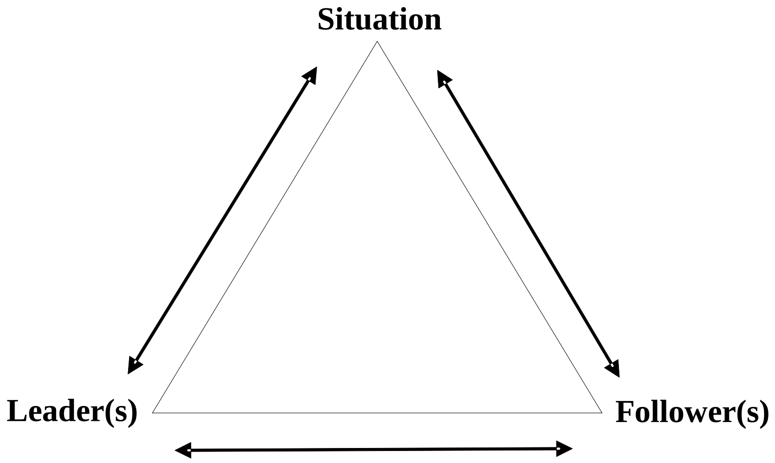
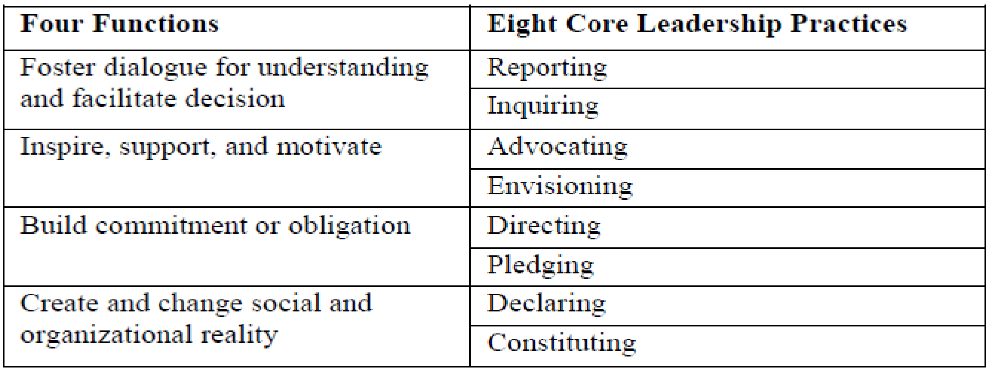


Figure 1 Constituting elements of leadership practice (Spillane et al., 2004, p. 11)

3.3.2 Communicative leadership practices framework

Kathryn (2007, p. 139) developed a communicative framework of leadership practices to complement and connect the large number of leadership research. The theory is postulated on a philosophical view that leadership is a social strategy to secure action in service of interests claimed by a community. The definition serves as a basis to develop a framework of four functions of leadership and eight central communicative leadership practices. These central practices emerge as four pairs. Each pair shares the similar function of leadership while it attains that function in a different way. They are essential to starting and engaging in leadership. They include reporting and inquiring, advocating and envisioning, directing and pledging, and declaring and constituting (see Table 2).

Table 2 Description of core leadership practices (Kathryn 2007, pp. 76-77)



Four Functions	Eight Core Leadership Practices
Foster dialogue for understanding and facilitate decision	Reporting
	Inquiring
Inspire, support, and motivate	Advocating
	Envisioning
Build commitment or obligation	Directing
	Pledging
Create and change social and organizational reality	Declaring
	Constituting

Reporting – Inquiring: Fostering Dialogue for Understanding and Facilitating Learning and Decision-Making for Action. These two practices build dialogue for understanding, learning, and decision making in service of interests claimed by or for a community. Reporting provides information in order to be understood while inquiring invites information in an effort to understand. (Kathryn 2007, p. 72.)

Advocating – Envisioning: Inspiring and Motivating Action. The role of the practices of advocating and envisioning is to inspire and motivate action in service of interests claimed by or for a community. Advocating contains impact attempts in relation to what is or what will soon be while envisioning comprises effect attempts in relation to what should or ought to be. (Kathryn 2007, p. 72.)

Directing – Pledging: Building Commitment and Obligation to Act. The practices of directing and pledging cultivate commitment or obligation for action in service of interests claimed by or for a community. Directing requires others to act while pledging means we obligate ourselves to act. (Kathryn 2007, p. 73.)

Declaring – Constituting: Using Language to Create and Change Social Reality. The role of the practices of declaring and constituting is the usage of symbolic behavior to build and change social and institutional reality which enables and supports action in service of interests claimed by or for a community. Declaring depends on formal power and pre-existing institutional structure to build and change social reality. Constituting supposes power without a pre-existing institutional structure to build and change social reality. (Kathryn 2007, p. 74.)

The present research is not interested in leadership practices in general, but in the practices of Chinese principals that are influenced by the Finnish training program they received and how they manage to implement appropriate educational leadership practices in their own schools afterwards.

4 PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

The main purpose of this chapter is to review the range of literature on professional development. The chapter begins with a review of the literature surrounding definitions of professional development, followed by professionalization through professional development, the importance of professional development for principals, and types of professional development. The features of effective professional development programs are also reviewed. The chapter concludes with an evaluation of professional development programs.

4.1 Definitions of professional development

There are different definitions of professional development. Guskey (2000, p. 16) reports that professional development refers to "processes and activities designed to enhance the professional knowledge, skills, and attitudes of educators so that they might, in turn, improve the learning of students." This definition means that staff development consists of a broad range of processes and activities that contribute to the learning of educators. The author also considers that professional development is a process that is intentional, ongoing and systemic (Guskey, 2000, p. 16). Mizell (2010, p. 3) asserts that professional development can be types of educational experiences relating to an individual’s work. He highlights that professional development is the only strategy with which school systems have to strengthen educators’ performance levels as well as the only way educators can learn to better their performance and improve student achievement. Odden and Wohlstetter (1995, pp. 32-34) further address that professional development and in-service training must be available to help principals and teachers strengthen their competencies of management, problem-solving and decision making to meet the needs of diversified stakeholders.

4.2 Professionalization through professional development

Professional development is a means to achieve professionalization. Professionalization refers to a process and a development that a profession passes through to establish standards and norms, gathering specialized and distinctive skills, and eventually gaining well-recognized legitimacy (Chu & Cravens, 2010, p. 3).

Professionalization of principalship could be approached at two levels. At the collective level, it can be interpreted as the joint and additive effort to reach eight aims for professional recognition: (a) extensive specialized training, (b) comprehensive knowledge structure, (c) respected ethic code, (d) clear practice standards, (e) rigorous qualification requirements, (f) professional autonomy, (g) high social respect and salary level, and (h) recognized professional organizations. At the individual level, professionalization is principals’ efforts to obtain professional knowledge, skills, and aspirations for on-going personal growth and career advancement. Both collective and individual efforts are essential, in which individual professional development is the basis of collective occupational progression toward professionalization. (Chu & Yang, 2009, pp. 7-8; Chu & Cravens, 2010, p. 4.)

Principals’ professional development is indispensable to professionalization. From the individual point of view, it is a route for personal pursuit of professional growth intentionally and constantly. From the societal point of view, it is the major mechanism that systemically constructs an educational leadership force in reaction to new societal changes. (Chu & Yang, 2009, pp. 7-8; Chu & Cravens, 2010, p. 4.)

4.3 Importance of professional development for principals

There have been few studies on professional development for principals. The majority of research concerning professional development merely places an emphasis on teachers, and there is little empirical research on what constitutes effective practice in the professional development arena. There is even less evidence about effective development practices for principals. (Nicholson et al., 2005, p. 19) Professional development for principals has been a “wasteland”, characterized by various courses at universities or periodic in-service activities in school districts, incoherently planned and designed by state departments, large school systems, and some universities (Barth, 1986, p. 156). Researchers agree that traditional professional development activities are not able to affect student achievement in a positive way, are grounded in simply the most superficial manner in what we know about offering quality professional development experiences, and are too often based on “whims, fads, opportunism and ideology” (Corcoran, Fuhrman & Belcher, 2001, p. 80).

There is also, nevertheless, a noticeable level of consensus regarding what constitutes meaningful professional development for leaders: it should be focused directly on student learning and achievement instead of the hot topics, be job embedded instead of centralized, and be ongoing instead of episodic. These features are consistent with the systemic reform recommendations for building capacity to improve school performance as well. (Nicholson et al., 2005, p. 20) The education system should also provide leaders with more continuous learning opportunities that help develop their career stages and link their needs (Davis et al., 2005, p. 12; Peterson, 2002, p. 216).

Evans and Mohr (1999, pp. 531-532) have proposed seven professional development beliefs that seem to summarize the needs of school principals: (a) principals' learning is personal, yet takes place most effectively when offered in collaborative groups, (b) principals foster more powerful teacher and student learning by emphasizing on their own learning, (c) pushing principals to move beyond their assumptions is needed while honoring their thinking and voices, (d) focused reflection is central to learning, (e) strong leadership is needed to have truly democratic learning, (f) rigorous planning is an absolute necessity for effective professional development, and (g) new learning depends on protected dissension. The authors assert that principals should associate with other principals to create mutual understandings and participate in intellectual dialogue and debate about their work.

Professional development for principals is highly significant. A sizable amount of research supports the argument that principals need continuous professional development to support their efforts toward school improvement and to renew their commitment to sustaining positive learning communities (Barth, 1986, p. 156; Neufeld, 1997, p. 490; Evans & Mohr, 1999, p. 531; Scherer, 2002, p. 5; Sorenson, 2005, p. 63).

Acknowledging principals as key persons in the effort to improve student learning is significant to understand the special professional development needs of principals. Principals are essential to creating conditions which lead to effective schools. (Nicholson, Harris & Schimmel, 2005, p. 17) A number of studies show that in schools with high achievement and a clear sense of community, components indispensable for school improvement, principals make the difference (DuFour, 1995; Hallinger & Heck, 1998, p. 159; Institute for Educational Leadership, 2000, p. 6; Walters et al., 2003, p. 5). Improved professional development provides principals not only with the confidence to take on their leadership roles, but also the capability to be successful and motivated through satisfaction with their work (Howley, Chadwick & Howley, 2002, p. 180).

Professional development for principals assists them to recognize the main elements of school capacity and how professional development can improve, neglect or even reduce areas of school capacity (Newmann, King & Youngs, 2001, p. 292).

4.4 Types of professional development

The model for professional development of principals may encompass a variety of activities. Mizell (2010, p. 5) points out that professional development and learning is a multilayered phenomenon, which can take place in various settings: (a) a formal procedure such as a conference, seminar, or workshop, (b) collaborative learning among members of a work team, (c) a course at a college or university, and (d) informal learning such as discussions among work colleagues, independent reading and research, observations of a colleague’s work, or other learning from a peer. Reitzug (2002, pp. 12.2-12.4) contends that professional development involves four types of learning: (a) training, such as workshops, presentations, and other types of in-service activities, (b) an embedded learning process, such as inquiry, discussion, evaluation, consultation, collaboration, and problem solving, (c) a network, namely collections of educators from diverse schools who interact regularly to discuss and share practices around a particular focus or philosophy of schooling, and (d) Professional Development Schools (PDS), meaning university faculty, PDS teachers, and student teachers work collaboratively to promote student teaching experience and to enhance the professional development of the PDS teachers and staff.

Yukl (2006, pp. 386-387) claims that leadership competencies can be developed by: (a) formal training, conducted away from the leader’s work by training professionals in a certain time, (b) development activities, such as coaching, mentoring, and special assignments, and (c) self-help activities, including reading books, viewing videos, listening to audiotapes, and using interactive computer programs. In this study, I am interested in a principals’ professional development course at a university – i.e. a formal in-service principal training program taking place at the UTA in October 2011 that offered professional learning for Chinese school principals – and further, how this training has contributed to their leadership practices and professional development.

Training is the most typical model of professional development and the one that educators have the most experience of. It usually includes a presenter or a team of presenters that share the ideas and expertise through a variety of group-based activities. The formats involve big group presentations and discussions, workshops, seminars, symposiums, presentations, role-playing, imitations, and microteaching. Training is the most efficient and cost-effective professional development way to share ideas and information in a large group. It offers all participants a mutual knowledge base and a communal vocabulary. However, the weakness of training is that it provides few opportunities for selection or individualization. So it might not be suitable for the different levels of educators' skills and expertise. Additionally, training sessions must be long-standing, properly spaced, or complemented with supplementary follow-up activities to provide the comment and coaching required for the successful employment of new ideas. (Guskey, 2000, pp. 22-23.)

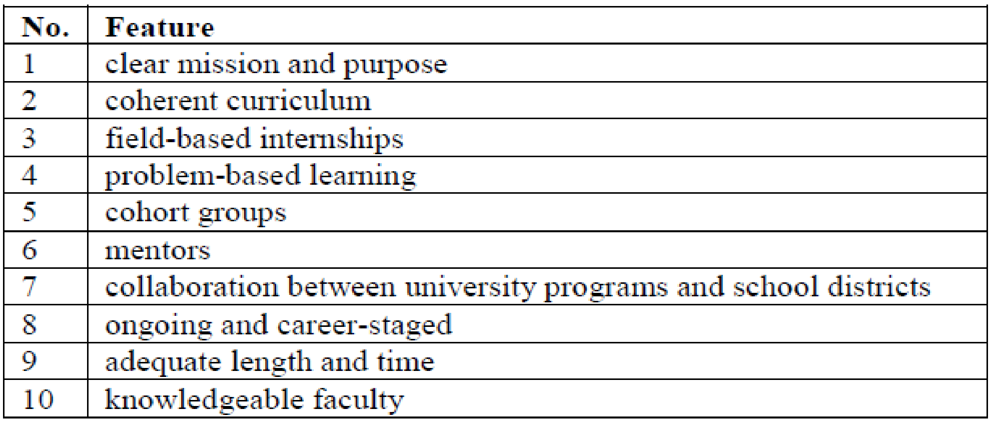
Continued learning for principals is emerging as a vital element of successful school improvement. If principals are to be held accountable for building successful learning communities, schools in which both teaching and learning prosper, they will need opportunities to learn how to create those environments and how to support them. Preparing principals for those responsibilities will require corresponding changes in the content and delivery of professional development. (Nicholson et al., 2005, p. 19)

4.5 Features of effective professional development programs

This section summarizes current research on effective professional development programs. It provides a checklist for training providers to use when designing learning opportunities for school leaders. There are ten characteristics altogether (see Table 3): clear mission and purpose, coherent curriculum, field-based internships, problem-based learning, cohort groups, mentors, collaboration between university programs and school districts, ongoing and career-staged, adequate length and time, and knowledgeable faculty (Bush & Chew, 1999; Barnett, Basom, Yerkes & Norris, 2000; Guskey, 2000;

Scribner & Donaldson, 2001; Fenwick & Pierce, 2002; Jackson & Kelley, 2002; Peterson, 2002; Guskey, 2003; Davis et al., 2005; Levine, 2005; Hannum & Martineau, 2008; Dyer & Renn, 2010; Orr & Orphanos, 2011).

Table 3 Ten features of effective professional development program



No.	Feature
1	clear mission and purpose
2	coherent curriculum
3	field-based internships
4	problem-based learning
5	cohort groups
6	mentors
7	collaboration between university programs and school districts
8	ongoing and career-staged
9	adequate length and time
10	knowledgeable faculty

All organizations should have a *clear mission and purpose* to drive their decision making. Some programs lack a clear emphasis and provide a parade of popular current topics, while others have a distinct focus on particular skills needed for leaders to improve student learning. Some programs are narrowly focused, whereas others have a broad view on leadership development. Therefore, it is indispensable to explicitly express the purpose of the program and ensure its coherence. (Peterson, 2002, p. 215)

Professional development efforts in highly effective programs focus clearly on issues linked to learning and learners. Setting clear aims on the basis of student learning makes it easier to identify measurement processes by which progress can be assessed and success proved. Besides, centering on students helps keep administrators and teachers on task and avoids disruption by irrelevant issues that waste vital time and shift energy. All efforts should address this fundamental goal. (Guskey, 2000, pp. 36-37)

A highly *coherent curriculum* of programs provides a sound and successive array of coursework, learning activities and program structures which link theory and practice and are outlined around the principles of adult learning theory (Davis et al., 2005, p. 8). A coherent curriculum should be adopted in a way that combines pedagogy effectiveness, organization improvement, change management as well as parallels with state and professional standards (Orr & Orphanos, 2011, p. 22). Learning may become more successful if there are consistent theoretical models across workshops, opinions of leadership and management embedded in curricula. There should be a consideration to link the certification program curricula and professional development. Finally, evolving a consistent language for the programs can enhance the whole learning process. (Peterson, 2002, p. 215)

Field-based internships is an essential component to make a program effective. A number of studies have found that most adults learn best when they are exposed to conditions demanding the application of taught skills, knowledge, and problem-solving strategies within realistic situations, and when guided by critical self-reflection (Davis et al., 2005, p. 9). Strong internships provide candidates with intensive, extended developmental opportunities to apply leadership knowledge and skills under the watchful eye of an expert mentor (Orr & Orphanos, 2011, p. 22).

Problem-based learning (PBL) is recognized as one feature of an effective program. Most educators agree that effective training programs are featured by instructional activities and measurements which emphasize practical issues and encourage effective problem-solving and reflection. PBL activities imitate complex real-world problems and predicaments, promote the combination of theoretical and practical knowledge, develop problem-solving capacity, and support candidates' self-concepts to be future school leaders. Through attending difficult and related imitations, students develop new attitudes and skills, play with different leadership roles, and, preferably, practice their self-reflections. PBL approaches also offer opportunities for candidates to examine newly acquired leadership skills and obtain feedback through reliable exemplifications and evaluations. (Davis et al., 2005, pp. 9-10)

The next feature of an effective program is *cohort groups*. The combination of placing administrative candidates and experienced school leaders into cohorts has become increasingly common (Jackson & Kelley, 2002, p. 196; Davis et al., 2005, p. 10). The advantages of cohort-structured learning experiences contain developed feelings of group belonging and acceptance, social and emotional support, motivation, persistence, group learning, and mutual assistance. Cohorts can support each other to build group and individual knowledge, think creatively, and restructure problems from various viewpoints (Davis et al., 2005, p. 10). Being part of ongoing cohorts provides supports for moving from content knowledge to action, between program sessions and after the formal development program. Fellow participants can share views of what worked and what did not work in their own context, reference each other's expertise, and encourage investigation and sustained improvement. (Dyer & Renn, 2010, pp. 186-187) There is also evidence that cohort groups can develop strong social and interpersonal relationships, increase contact with faculty members, better integrate into the university, foster improved academic learning and higher program completion rates, greater cohesiveness, and the development of professional networks (Barnett et al., 2000, pp. 258-259; Scribner & Donaldson, 2001, pp. 606-607).

Mentors help to make the program effective. Mentoring has been generally recognized as a form of professional development with the potential to benefit both individuals and organizations (Bush & Chew, 1999, pp. 48-49). It usually contains connecting an experienced and successful principal with a less experienced colleague (Guskey, 2000, p. 28). A mentor is a professional colleague and critical friend that helps the principal understand professional norms and job expectations, and provides useful suggestions on professional challenges and career advancement (Fenwick & Pierce, 2002, p. 4). Mentoring as a means of learning enhances the professional development of educational leaders. Mentoring could be of relevance regardless of the levels of application: in-service future school leaders, pre-service preparation training to assist aspiring school leaders, or a part of professional induction training for new educational leaders. (Lee Hean, 2003, p. 219) One of the three functions of mentoring is to promote the professional development function, which means facilitating others to learn the knowledge, skills, behaviors and values of the leader's role (Mulford, 2003, p. 38). Mentoring relationships should work to decrease the distance between a learner's independent problem-solving abilities and his/her potential developmental level attained through problem solving with the guidance from an expert. The major function of the mentor is to guide the learner in his/her search for strategies to figure out the problems, to increase self-confidence, and to build a broad range of leadership skills. (Davis et al., 2005, p. 10)

Collaboration between university programs and school districts is seen as another feature of an effective program. Davis et al. (2005, p. 11) found that traditional principal training programs fail to build interdisciplinary connections within the university or to use potential outside resources from schools and other organizations. The strong need for clinical training has stimulated many universities to collaborate with schools and other organizations as partners to design, implement and measure principal training programs. Dyer and Renn (2010, p. 195) shared the same view that intensive leadership development programs require close collaboration among program providers, funders, school systems, and the participants themselves. This kind of close collaboration promotes program consistency and helps develop shared purpose and a common vocabulary between universities and districts.

Successful professional development is *ongoing and career-staged.* Almost all of the recent study on professional development demands professional development that is sustained over time (Garet et al., 2001, p. 921). Successful professional development is an ongoing activity intertwined into every principal's professional life rather than an event that is isolated from one's day-to-day professional duties (Guskey, 2000, p. 38). Likewise, Hannum and Martineau (2008, p. 10) considered that effective leadership development initiatives connect various learning opportunities and occur over time instead of a single event. Fenwick and Pierce (2002, p. 4) recommend that effective professional development be career-staged, with specialized training for aspiring, new, and experienced principals, something that is not often actualized. Peterson (2002, p. 230) identified that preparation training programs could be designed to offer the primary learning for new principals with the knowledge that ongoing, career-stage appropriate learning would continue through various levels of programs. In addition, preparation programs and professional development program curricula should be connected and coordinated to increase learning and decrease repetition.

Effective professional development needs an *adequate length and time*. Principals, like their teachers, benefit from professional development that examines the best school practices, affords coaching support, encourages risk-taking spirit to improve student learning, fosters team relationships and delivers quality time for reflection and renewal. (Fenwick & Pierce, 2002, p. 4) While the most common professional development programs for leaders are in the form of one-shot workshops, a more fruitful method is to engage all-day and multiple-session meetings over the whole year. The longer experience a cohort group study together, the greater impact it will have on learning and the development of professional networks among leaders. This also helps to minimize the disruption of school activities and principal leadership. (Peterson, 2002, pp. 216-230) Principals need sufficient time to deepen their understanding of the professional development program, analyze students' work, and cultivate new approaches to instruction (Guskey, 2003, p. 749).

A knowledgeable faculty of training providers is required to provide an effective training program. They should be dedicated to continuous improvement to combine course work and field work, using an investigative and reflective approach. (Orr & Orphanos, 2011, pp. 22-53) The faculty comprises academics and practitioners, ideally the same individuals, who are experts in school leadership, abreast in their field, intellectually productive, and thoroughly rooted in the academy and the school (Levine, 2005, p. 13).

4.6 Evaluation of professional development programs

There are various definitions of (program) evaluation. Guskey (2000, p. 41) stated that "evaluation is the systematic investigation of merit or worth." More (2004, p. 52) claimed that the definition of evaluation covers the effect of training as a whole and includes two broad areas, namely, the evaluation of training programs and the evaluation of the training process. Rossi, Lipsey and Rreeman, on the other hand, defined that program evaluation is the employing of social research approaches to thoroughly explore the effects of social intervention programs in ways that are adjusted to political and organizational contexts and are designed to improve the social circumstance through informing social action. They further report that program evaluation usually includes assessing one or more of the five areas: (a) the need for the program, (b) the design of the program, (c) program implementation and service delivery, (d) program impacts or outcomes, and (e) program efficiency. (2004, pp. 16-18.) Lingham, Richley and Rezania (2006, p. 347) found that evaluating leadership training should comprise both content and application aspects. The former refers to obtaining of knowledge while the latter means the utilization of knowledge.

Evaluation serves certain purposes and can be used in various contexts. The overall purpose of evaluation is to inform social action, contributing knowledge for planning and future policy, showing whether certain innovative approaches to community problems are worth pursuing, or representing the efficacy of some principle of professional practice (Rossi et al., 2004, p. 21). Therefore, evaluation is a valued tool in the procedure of leader development and its results may be used for improving program and curriculum, demonstrating an impact to support decision making, and communicating results to create consciousness whenever possible (Martineau & Patterson, 2010, p. 281).

According to Guskey (2000, pp. 56-58), there are three types of evaluation: *planning, formative,* and *summative* evaluation. *Planning evaluation* occurs ahead of a program or activity, even though certain phases may be continual and ongoing. It helps decision makers to know whether efforts are commanded in the right direction and are likely to produce the desired outcomes. It also serves to identify and redress early on the difficulties that might bother later evaluation efforts. Additionally, planning evaluation helps to guarantee that other evaluation objectives can be achieved in an efficient and timely way. *Formative evaluation* takes place in the process of the program or activity. The aim is to offer those responsible for the program continuing information on whether things are going as planned and if expected progress is being made. *Summative evaluation* is conducted after completing a program or activity. The purpose is to offer program developers and decision makers with judgments on the program's overall performance. It expresses what was achieved, what were the consequences (strength and weakness), what were the final outcomes (intended and unintended), and whether, in some cases, the benefits validate the costs.

Hannum and Martineau (2008, pp. 7-10) stated that in order to design a focused evaluation, it is imperative to understand the context where the leadership development and evaluation are taking place. The authors further consider that there should be a clear purpose of the initiative and evaluation and it is important that the stakeholders[2] have a shared understanding of that purpose. Likewise, Rossi et al. (2004, p. 34) considered three most important features of an evaluation context that must be taken into account when developing an evaluation plan: (a) the purpose of the evaluation, (b) the structure and circumstance of the program being evaluated, and (c) the resources available for the evaluation.

Hannum and Martineau (2008, 16-19) also studied expectations for leadership development at all levels (individual, group, team, organization, community, foundations, systems and governments), which reflects a comprehensive evaluation design. One impact of the evaluation means that individuals will better perform their leadership roles after the initiative. However, the impact can vary due to the content and design of the training and the diversified needs of individual participants. Martineau and Patterson (2010, p. 259) developed a three-step tool to design the evaluation:

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[2] Stakeholder means people who are or will be affected by the training being evaluated and/or by the outcomes of the evaluation

Step 1: Stakeholders should *identify the purpose of the evaluation*. In my case, the purpose is to improve the future similar training programs based on the findings of my study.

Step 2: The evaluators i*dentify specific evaluation questions.* It is a duplicated process to identify evaluation questions. In this study, the evaluation questions are my research questions. I worked with my supervisors over time to design two research questions.

Step 3: The evaluators *choose specific evaluation methods.* Some methods may be more proper than others for certain types of questions due to cultural differences. My methods to assess individual impacts comprise of two aspects: Expectations-benefits comparison and interviews. The former refers to surveys used to acquire participants' expectations prior to the program and the perceived benefits after the program. The comparison data offer insights on whether the program met the participants' expectations. The latter means semi-structured interviews conducted by Skype or in person to obtain qualitative data from the participants on their experiences within the program at any point before or after the program. They are both covered in my interview questions.

My research will look at one aspect: the evaluation of training programs. It focuses on the perspective of application. And it is a summative evaluation.

5 RESEARCH DESIGN

Creswell (2009, p. 5) states that a research design involves the intersection of philosophical worldviews, strategies of inquiry, and specific methods. This chapter outlines the methodological approaches used to conduct the study. Because the methodological choices and the implementation of the study are closely interwoven, the structure of this chapter is based on both elements. The main emphasis is on how the methodological choices and analyses have been driven by the research questions. The framework in conducting the research design is presented in Figure 3.

5.1 The aim of the study and the research questions

The rationales for exploring Chinese principals' conceptions on the Finnish training program in this study arose from two issues. The first issue concerned the relative absence of empirical studies about cross-cultural training situations, particularly from the Chinese students' perspective. China is one of the key countries for cooperation in the field of education for Finland, with an objective to enter the growing educational market in China (Hölttä et al., 2009, p. 29). An in-depth investigation about how Chinese participants perceive the Finnish training program is timely and has the potential to enrich transnational education research. Chinese leaders have conceptions which are highly shaped by leadership traditions as well as the social, economic and cultural contexts in China. Leadership traditions in China largely focus on hierarchy, directive leadership styles, and the moral development of individual leaders (Wong, 2001, pp. 309-317). More participative, strategic and visionary approaches of leadership are needed in the changing context (Feng, 2002, p. 36). Current Western leadership theories mostly underline shared vision and distributed leadership (Lakomski, 2001, p. 70). Hence, there is a need to explore how Chinese leaders in a cross-cultural leadership training program perceive Western leadership and relate different perspectives to their leadership practices. It seems that this issue has not been well studied in Finland. Therefore, this study will systematically examine a cross-cultural leadership training program in Finland from the perspectives of participants.

The second issue arose from an increasing awareness of the internationalisation and globalisation of educational policies, without adequate attention given to cultural differences and diversity. It is recognized that leadership is a value-laden concept (Sergiovanni, 2001, p. 4), which is constructed within a social milieu consisting of multiple, overlapping, and constantly shifting contextual factors (Walker, 2006, p. 1). The importation of substantive ideas from one cultural context to another can be beneficial but should be undertaken with sensitivity and care (Ribbins & Gronn, 2000, p. 30). While the exchange of information among educational leaders is more widespread in this global world, understanding intercultural exchange is becoming increasingly needed. The complete application of Western educational leadership theories, policies and practices into non-Western countries without adjustment to the contextual elements is problematic. It is thus judicious to utilize a culturally sensitive and mindful perspective, and to be careful about cultural imperialism (Cheng, 1998, p. 12; Dimmock & Walker, 1999, p. 104). As argued by Walker (2006, p. 2), “The transportation of leadership development across cultures moves beyond surface concepts and their too-neatly attached content and focus more on the processes that place these in context and, thereby, respect deeply embedded cultural norms." Therefore, it is unwise to presume that theories and practices of leadership adopted in Western cultures are universally applicable to Chinese culture. It is imperative to explore intercultural interaction and understand how national and indigenous cultures affect and modify the application of ideas and practices imported from Western countries.

In light of these two issues discussed above, this study explored the conceptions and personal experiences of a group of Chinese school principals who attended a leadership training program at the UTA in October 2011. The study targets to increase and deepen the current knowledge concerning cross-cultural training programs and the effective ways of organising them. The main aim of the study is to explore Chinese school principals' perceptions of the possible effects and benefits of a Finnish training program in their practical work in schools. It also has two sub-aims. The first sub-aim is to exploit the features of effective professional development programs. The second sub-aim is to identify the needs of Chinese school principals.

The *main research question* of this study is: What kind of contribution does the Finnish training program make to leadership practices and professional development of Chinese school principals?

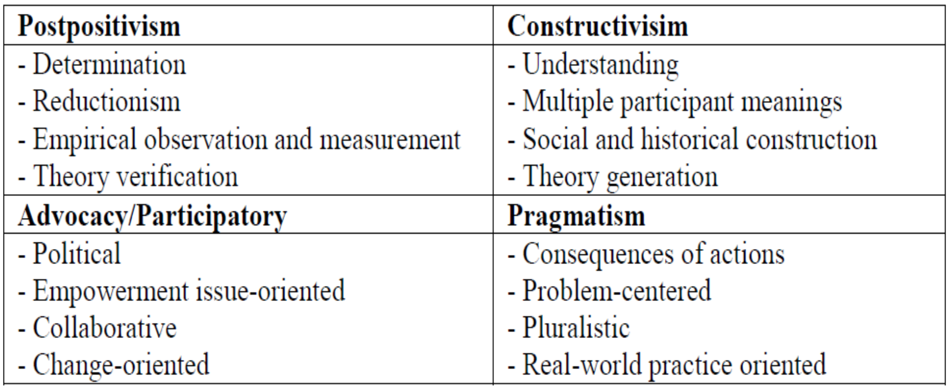
The *more specific sub-research questions* are:

1. How useful is the Finnish training program for Chinese principals?
2. What are the features of effective leadership training programs?

5.2 Philosophical worldview

Creswell (2009, p. 6) defined the *worldview* as an overall orientation about the world and the nature of research that the researcher uses. Other researchers call them *paradigms* (Lincoln & Guba, 2000, p. 164), or *epistemologies* and *ontologies* (Crotty, 1998, pp. 3-10). He developed a matrix of four different worldviews: postpositivism, constructivisim, advocacy/participatory, and pragmatism (see Table 4).

Table 4 Four worldviews (Creswell, 2009, p. 6)



Postpositivism	**Constructivism**
- Determination - Reductionism - Empirical observation and measurement - Theory verification	- Understanding - Multiple participant meanings - Social and historical construction - Theory generation
Advocacy/Participatory	**Pragmatism**
- Political - Empowerment issue-oriented - Collaborative - Change-oriented	- Consequences of actions - Problem-centered - Pluralistic - Real-world practice oriented

By utilizing the hypothesis testing, the researcher can practice the *postpositivist worldview* to observe and measure the reality and situation with rational behaviors from an objectivist perspective. Through using open-ended questions to gather information, the *constructivist worldview* helps the researcher engage, understand, and interpret the context and meaning from a subjective view. The researcher, who wants to bring change to improve participants' lives in politics and political agenda, tends to emancipate the social constraints and empower people by adopting the *advocacy and participatory worldview* lenses. Finally, the *pragmatism worldview* is a tool applied by the researcher who looks at *what* and *how* research was based on actions, situations and consequences. (Creswell, 2009, pp.7-11.)

The present study is based on the social constructivism (often combined with interpretivism) worldview for understanding the nature of the world in which people live and work. The ideas on the nature of reality have gained ground in the human sciences since the 1960s (Creswell, 2009, p. 8). The main ideas of social constructivism can be summarized as follows: (a) taking a critical stance toward taken-for-granted knowledge, (b) perceiving that the understanding of the world is historically and culturally relative, (c) recognizing that knowledge is constructed and sustained by social processes and through daily interactions among people, and (d) seeing that knowledge and social action go together (Burr, 2003, pp. 2-5). This means that the world and the place of people in it are not tacit "there" for participants; instead, participants actively construct the world of their daily life.

Since in this study my aim was to *understand* and *interpret* the effects of a Finnish training program on Chinese principals' leadership practices and professional development, the foundation for understanding this phenomenon lies also within the *hermeneutic* tradition. The hermeneutic approach characteristically claims that the human sciences differ vitally in nature and purpose from the natural sciences, and that human sciences intend to understand human action. This means that – owing to the creative, meaningful, and complex nature of social and human life – human actions and social life cannot be explained by natural laws, and can be understood merely through an interpretive approach (Schwandt, 2000, p. 191). Therefore, in studying social and human life, hermeneutic thinking highlights the importance of an interpretative understanding, rejecting the idea of understanding as an objective or classified activity of human beings.

In summary, my worldview assumptions depend on the *constructivism* approach, in the sense that I understand knowledge as socially constructed, contextual, historical, and relative (Burr, 2004, pp. 3-4). Due to the above I use an interpretive perspective in trying to understand the perceptions from the individual's viewpoint. Hence, the research is *hermeneutical*.

5.3 Case study

Qualitative research is defined by Creswell (2009, p. 4) as a method to explore and understand the meaning individuals or groups attribute to a social or human problem. The research procedure includes emerging questions and processes, data collection usually conducted in the participant's situation, data analysis inductively structured from specific to general themes, and the meaning of the data interpreted by the researcher. The objective of qualitative research is to discover individual or situational perspectives and to gain a thorough understanding of personal feelings and experience

(Davies, 2007, p. 191).

Creswell (2009, pp. 175-176) identified nine key characteristics of qualitative research. First of all, qualitative research takes place in a natural setting. Researchers collect data in the field at the site where participants experience the issue or problem. Secondly, the researcher is the key instrument. They gather data themselves through examining documents, observing behavior, or interviewing participants. Third, qualitative research uses multiple sources of data. Researchers rely on several sources, such as interviews, observations, and documents rather than a single one. Then, this type of research usually applies to an inductive data analysis. Researchers use a data-driven method to build patterns, categories, and themes from the bottom up. Fifthly, participants' meanings, namely the focus of the researchers is learning the meaning that the participants hold about the issue or problem. Next, an emergent design, meaning all phases of the process may change after researchers begin to collect the data. Seventhly, qualitative researchers often use a theoretical lens, such as culture, ethnography, gendered, racial or class differences to view their studies. Moreover, qualitative research is fundamentally interpretive. Researchers make an interpretation of what participants see, hear, and understand. Lastly, qualitative researchers attempt to design a complex picture of the issue or problem under study holistically.

Qualitative research provides a platform where not only multiple views from the participants are presented, but also perceptions and feelings from the researcher are acknowledged. The involvement of reflexivity in qualitative research offers a healthy manner for the release of the unavoidable subjectivity and allows the inquirers to contribute to the findings in a positive way. (Patton, 2002, p. 495; Flick, 2006, p. 16.)

There are different definitions of case study. Yin (2003, p. 13) claims case study is an empirical inquiry that explores a contemporary phenomenon in a real-life context, particularly when the phenomenon and the context are not clearly distinguishable. Gall, Gall and Borg (2003, p. 436) define it as the profound study of examples of a phenomenon in the natural context and from the viewpoint of the participants included in the phenomenon. Creswell (2009, p. 13) argues case study is a strategy of enquiry in which the research discovers a program, event, activity, process or individual (s) thoroughly.

Case study involves an all-inclusive method, covering the design logic, data collection techniques, and specific approaches for data analysis (Yin, 2003, p. 14). One of the aims when conducting case study is to generate comprehensive descriptions of a phenomenon, to acquire possible explanations of it, or to assess the phenomenon (Gall et al., 2003, p. 439). The typical feature of case studies is that the data concerns a specified period of time - an hour, a day, a week, a month, a year or more (Davies, 2007, p. 204). Qualitative case study is an invaluable opportunity for the researcher to see what others have not yet seen, to reflect the uniqueness of the researcher's styles, to engage the best of inquirer's interpretive powers, and to make a support for those things the investigator values (Stake, 1995, p. 136). Additionally, case study has a distinctive role in evaluation research (Guba & Lincoln, 1981, p. 372). One of the applications of case study is to explore those situations in which the involvement being evaluated has no clear and single set of outcomes (Yin, 2003, p. 15).

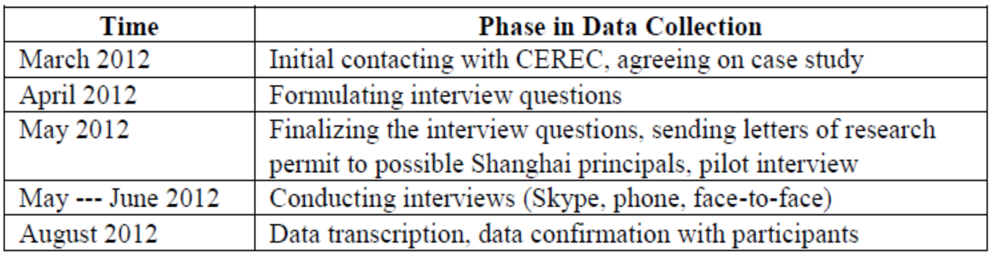
Patton (2002, p. 10) defines that program evaluation is the organized gathering of information about the activities, features, and results of programs. The aim is to adjudicate about the program, improve program effectiveness, and/or advise decisions about future programs. It is worthwhile to comprehend the program's and participants' stories, because they enlighten the processes and outcomes of the program for those who must make decisions about the program.

My research is a qualitative case study that concentrates on a Finnish training program for 21 Chinese school principals who attended the same training program at the UTA in October 2011. I chose 6 Shanghai participants out of 21 as my data. One associated purpose of the case study is to evaluate the effects of this training program from the participants' perspective.

5.4 Data collection procedures

This section presents the procedures to collect the data. It begins with the introduction of the research instrument employed. This is followed by a description of the participants involved and their profiles, and the pilot test. A description of conducting the interviews is provided at the end of this section (see Table 5).

Table 5 Data collection procedures



Time	Phase in Data Collection
March 2012	Initial contacting with CEREC, agreeing on case study
April 2012	Formulating interview questions
May 2012	Finalizing the interview questions, sending letters of research permit to possible Shanghai principals, pilot interview
May --- June 2012	Conducting interviews (Skype, phone, face-to-face)
August 2012	Data transcription, data confirmation with participants

5.4.1 Research instrument

Interviewing is the most common way of data collection in qualitative research (Lichtman, 2006, p. 116). It enables participants – be they interviewers or interviewees – to discuss their interpretation of the world in which they live, and to express how they regard situations from their own point of view. Therefore, the interview is a flexible tool for data collection, enabling multi-sensory channels to be used: verbal, non-verbal, spoken and heard. The order of the interview may be controlled while still giving space for spontaneity, and the interviewer can press not only for complete answers but also for responses about complex and deep issues. In short, the interview is a powerful instrument for researchers. (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2007, p. 349.) The purpose of interviewing is to gather information from participants through listening to their stories, feelings, intentions and thoughts (Lichtman, 2006, p. 117). In case study, listening means getting information through multiple modes, such as using the auditory sense, making observations, or sensing what might be going on. Being a good *listener* means being able to acquire a huge sum of information without a bias. (Yin, 2003, p. 60.)

The research instrument for this study focused on a semi-structured interview schedule. The interview schedule was utilized to record the responses of school principals who took the same training program in Finland. Also, a research diary was used in order to record and document all interactions related to gaining entry to the sites, finding participants who were willing to participate in the study, and any issues regarding the data collection. Most importantly, it was used as a self-reflective tool. In other words, I recorded my self-reflective processes as a research, and documented some of the changes needed by some unanticipated circumstances in the field.

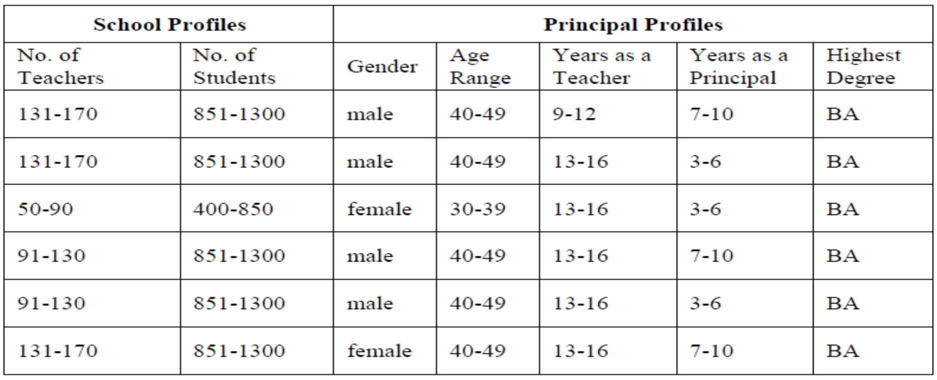
The interview questions were formulated by three phases: pre-training phase, training phase, and post training phase. The pre-training phase included the selections of the participants, challenges, expectations, and reasons for choosing Finland. The training phase involved principals' evaluations of this training program and features of effective training programs. The post training phase contained comparisons of overseas and domestic training programs, and aspirations for the future training programs. During the interviews, I looked into the participants' work experience, their perceptions on the training program, their relation to the Finnish training program, leadership practices and professional development, what leadership practices they could implement in their own schools afterwards, and what they saw as important for the future training. Although some of the interview questions were not directly related to my research questions, they served as a kind of background information to help answer the research questions. All in all, these interview questions enabled the researcher to collect the data so as to answer the research questions.

5.4.2 Participants of the research

Criterion sampling refers to choosing cases that meet a certain criterion. The advantage of criterion sampling is that it is particularly worthwhile in field tests of educational programs so that it can produce rich information about the positive and negative aspects of the programs. (Gall et al., 2003, p. 179.) In this study, the criterion sampling meant all the respondents had to be current Shanghai principals who had taken the same training program at the UTA. Six participants were selected from the whole of the 21 Chinese principals.

During the process of contacting the informants, I visited the CEREC to discuss my ideas of a master's thesis with the staffs. They were quite interested in my topic and were willing to take this research as an evaluation report to the training program. The agreement was thereby made. Naturally, the CEREC acted as a gatekeeper for me, making the initial contacts through phone calls and emails. Firstly, the CEREC staff sent the letter of the research permit request to the Shanghai school principals in May 2012 (see Appendix 4-5). They provided me with the names and contact details of these school principals. This information helped me to the extent that I could make the appointments with the school principals according to their schedule. Then I continued to contact the potential participants with another letter. They indeed fulfilled the criteria I had set out. This made the interview arrangements easier. Even though some principals were not available to be interviewed (due to sickness or busy work) when I was in Shanghai, I managed to interview six school principals in the end (see Table 6). I used the group size to protect the confidentiality and identity of the respondents.

Table 6 Profiles of schools and principals



School Profiles		**Principal Profiles**				
No. of Teachers	No. of Students	Gender	Age Range	Years as a Teacher	Years as a Principal	Highest Degree
131-170	851-1300	male	40-49	9-12	7-10	BA
131-170	851-1300	male	40-49	13-16	3-6	BA
50-90	400-850	female	30-39	13-16	3-6	BA
91-130	851-1300	male	40-49	13-16	7-10	BA
91-130	851-1300	male	40-49	13-16	3-6	BA
131-170	851-1300	female	40-49	13-16	7-10	BA

Note: The size range of teachers is 40: Small-size (50-90), mid-size (91-130), big-size (131-170). The size range of students is 450: Small-size (400-850), mid-size (851-1300). The age range is 9: Young principal (30-39), middle-aged principal (40-49). The teacher career range is 3: Experienced teachers

(9-12), selected teachers (13-16). The principal career range is 3: Mid principals (3-6), experienced principals (7-10).

The above table showed the profiles of schools and principals. They were all city schools. Three of them shared the same feature: They had big-sized teachers and mid-sized students. Another two had both mid-sized teachers and students while the last one had both small-sized teachers and students. Regarding principal profiles, four were males and two were females. All the participants were in the age group of 40-49 except one was in the age group of 30-39. All of them had undergone preparation teacher training in the same university, the Shanghai Normal University with a Bachelor’s degree qualification. They had also gone through various in-service teacher trainings at teacher training institutions in the district and the municipality.

All the principals in the study had experiences in one or all of the positions in school leadership (assistant principal, vice principal), and spent considerable time in these positions before becoming principals. The years they stayed in the teaching profession ranged from 9 to 16 years, with a median of 14 years and a half. Therefore, the principals in the study had been in the education profession for quite a long time and had substantial experience.

I only chose Shanghai principals for two reasons. First, the participants coming from Shanghai made it easier to collect the data. Second, it would have been expensive and time consuming for me to travel across many parts of China to collect all the data.

The issues of translations and the pilot interview were also taken into consideration. Two teachers at the Institute of Educational Leadership helped me modify the letters and translations. Then a pilot interview was conducted with one of my teachers as proposed by Yin (2003, pp. 78-80). This helped to refine the content, structure and the procedures to be followed when I was in the field. As a novice researcher, it was a valuable learning process for me because it provided me with the opportunity to examine the data collection techniques needed in the field. Besides, I was able to make some modifications and polish my language through the discussion that followed.

5.4.3 Conducting the interviews

Based on the research criterion, I chose the interview questions as my research instrument to fulfill my research goals. All six interviews were carried out from late May to early June 2012. The interviews were conducted in two locations: one in Jyväskylä and five in Shanghai. Two were interviewed by Skype and four were carried out face to face. This ensured minimum disturbance although we were interrupted once during two interviews. Among these four, one principal did not accept recording, consequently I had to take notes. Later I sent the notes to the principal via email so that he/she was able to check the answers.

I had to interview two principals by Skype, because one principal was abroad, the other lived quite far from the Shanghai City center at that time. Luckily, I could see them on Skype. Another principal agreed to be interviewed at the beginning. However, I could not make it as he/she was sick during my stay in Shanghai. I tried to contact this principal again in August 2012; unfortunately I did not succeed due to the same reason.

Depending on their willingness, availability and compliance with the criteria for participation in the study, I provided them with the Interview Questions Form (see Appendix 6-7) prior to the commencement of the interviews. They were also asked to fill in the background information and get familiar with the interview questions.

Each in-depth interview lasted 30 to 60 minutes. I started with the questionnaire in Section A, then we proceeded to the interview questions in Section B. For those who had filled the form of Section A, we went directly to Section B. During the interviews, the principals were encouraged to recount their professional development history and recall important key training experiences during their career development. In this way, a more accurate profile of principal training could be constructed and their professional development path could be observed.

5.5 Data analysis strategies

Data analysis as defined by Creswell (2009, p. 184) is an ongoing procedure including constant reflection about the data, inquiring analytic questions, and writing memos though the research. This activity involves collecting open-ended data on the basis of probing questions and developing an analysis from the information provided by the respondents. The process of qualitative data analysis needs a skillful interpretation and management of the data, and depends on a systematic and strict method (Srivastava & Hopwood, 2009, p. 77). Yin (2003, p. 137) identified four major principles for high-quality analysis in case study: (a) the analysis should express that the author attended to all the evidence, (b) the analysis ought to report all major rival interpretations as much as possible, (c) the analysis should address the most important aspect of the case study, and (d) the researcher ought to use his/her own previous and expert knowledge in the case study.

5.5.1 Content analysis

Qualitative content analysis is defined by Hsieh and Shannon (2005, p. 1278) as a research method to interpret the content of text data subjectively through the organized cataloguing process of coding and identifying themes or patterns. The text data might be in various forms such as verbal, print, or electronic ones and might have been acquired from narrative responses, open-ended survey questions, interviews, focus groups, videography, observations, or print media such as articles, books, or manuals (Kondracki & Wellman, 2002, pp. 224-225). The purpose of content analysis is to capture the core consistencies and meanings of qualitative data and to provide an understanding of the phenomenon under study (Patton, 2002, p. 453). Hsieh and Shannon (2005, p. 1278) have identified three different approaches which can be classified as qualitative content analysis, i.e. conventional, direct, and summative. In this study I utilized the conventional content analysis.

In conventional content analysis, coding categories are derived directly from the text data with a view to describing the phenomenon under study. Pre-existing theories and categories are avoided, and the focus is on allowing the categories to emerge from the data (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005, p. 1279). As a process, conventional analysis includes the following stages: reading all the data repeatedly, deriving codes, making notes of first impressions and labeling the codes, sorting the codes into categories and sub-categories, and developing definitions for each code, sub-category, and category. Finally, in conventional content analysis, the theoretical notions and previous research findings are intergrated in the discussion chapter of the study. The goal is to contribute to an area of research interest through comparing and contrasting the findings with prevalent theory (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005, p. 1279). The strength of this approach is to gather direct information from informants without forcing predetermined categories or theoretical views. Therefore, knowledge is constructed on participants' distinctive perceptions and grounded in the data. (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005, pp. 1279-1280.)

5.5.2 Content analysis in present study

Creswell (2009, p. 185) designed a six-step approach from the specific to the general to analyze the data (see Figure 2). In the present study I followed the guideline of this approach. I also utilized Hsieh and Shannon's approach to Creswell's approach (see Appendix 8). Hence both approaches are correlating to each other.

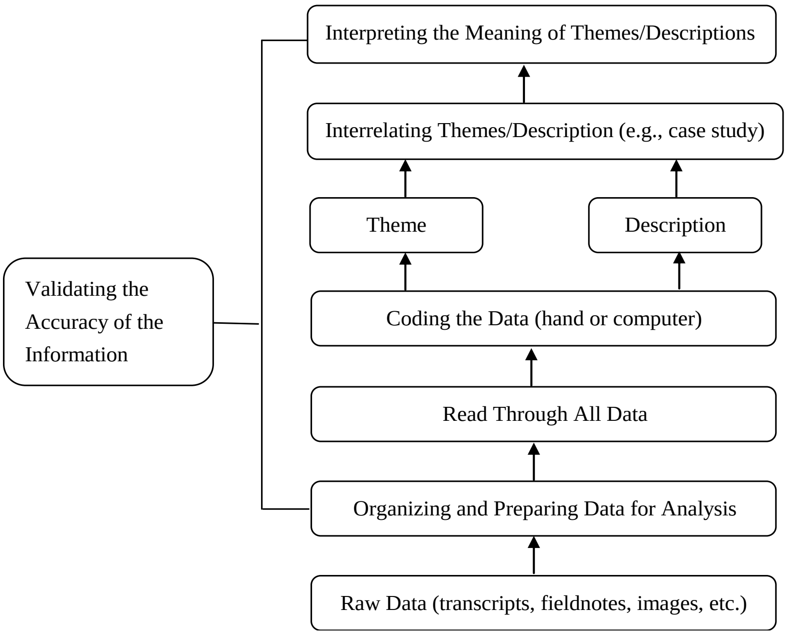

Interpreting the Meaning of Themes/Descriptions
Interrelating Themes/Description (e.g., case study)
Theme
Description
Validating the Accuracy of the Information
Coding the Data (hand or computer)
Read Through All Data
Organizing and Preparing Data for Analysis
Raw Data (transcripts, fieldnotes, images, etc.)

Figure 2 Data analysis in qualitative research (Adapted from Creswell, 2009, p. 185)

Step 1. The researcher *organizes and prepares the data for analysis.* In this study, the data gathered from the interviewees were in the form of tape recording and filed notes. I spent one month transcribing the interviews and translating them into English. During this process, the names of the participants were replaced by letters A to F so that the confidentiality and identity of respondents could be protected. Then I put all the answers under the umbrella of each interview question respectively with an excel form. By doing so, it was easier to check the data later. Besides, I typed up the field notes into the computer after the interview, and saved the transcriptions in three different places to avoid losing the documents.

Step 2. The investigator *reads through all the data.* I explored all the transcriptions carefully and repeatedly to achieve immersion and obtain a general impression of the data. Then I thought about the ways of organizing the data. At this stage, I tried to collect the overall ideas of the participants.

Step 3. The researcher *starts a detailed analysis with a coding process.* An inductive approach was employed in my research, namely letting the data guide the research. After studying several data analysis methods, I chose the *conventional content* *analysis* in my study. To start it in a simple and correct way, I picked up one interview question as a pilot test. After completing this task, I made a list of all topics and clustered together similar topics and formed them into columns. Meanwhile I used different colors to mark the data. Later I did the similar process in the Chinese version as I was afraid of losing some important findings. Actually I did have some new findings. Having realized that analyzing in the Chinese version is much easier than in the English one, I analyzed the rest of the data in the Chinese version.

Step 4. The investigator *uses the coding process to generate a description of the setting or people as well as categories or themes for analysis.* The advantage of using a small number of themes is that it is best to write a qualitative report providing detailed information (Creswell, 2009, p. 239). At this stage, I employed the coding to generate four themes in order to answer the research questions: (a) reasons for attending the training program (selections, challenges, expectations, and reasons for choosing Finland), (b) value of training program (positive and negative aspects), (c) features of effective leadership training programs, and (d) improvements for future training programs (overseas and domestic training programs). These sub-titles display multiple perspectives from the participants and were supported by diverse quotations and specific evidence.

Step 5. The researcher *advances how the description and themes will be represented or reported in the qualitative narrative.* At this stage I used some narrative texts to convey the findings of the analysis. They functioned as evidence to support the main descriptions. I also created tables to make the findings visible.

Step 6. The researcher *makes an interpretation or meaning of the data.* The interpretation was based on my own culture and experience.

In sum, the present study utilizes the social constructivist worldview. The strategy of inquiry is qualitative case study. My data collection method is the interview and the data analysis strategy is content analysis. The following figure (see Figure 3) explains how these components are interconnected in my study.

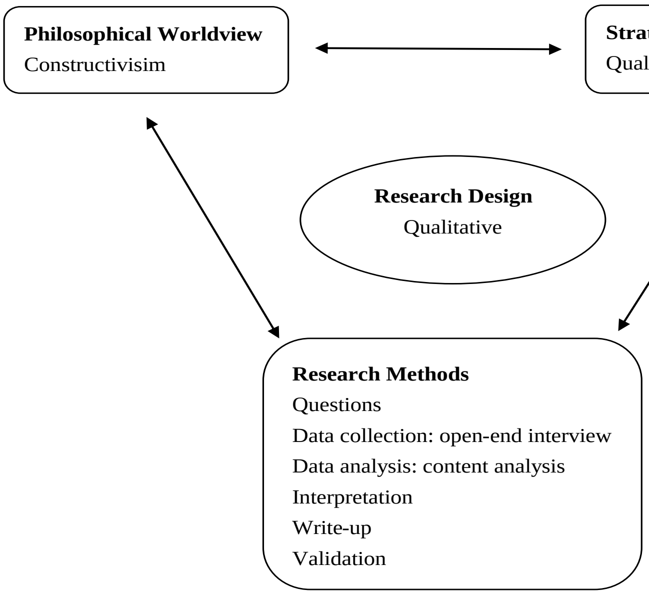

Philosophical Worldview
Constructivisim
Strategies of Inquiry
Qualitative case study
Research Design
Qualitative
Research Methods
Questions
Data collection: open-end interview
Data analysis: content analysis
Interpretation
Write-up
Validation

Figure 3 A framework for designing the interconnection of worldviews, strategies of inquiry, and research methods (Modified from Creswell, 2009, p. 5)

6 FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

This chapter presents and discusses the data collected after the training program. Four themes resulting from this investigation are: (a) reasons for attending the training program, (b) value of the training program, (c) features of effective leadership training programs, and (d) improvements for future training programs. These themes are guided by three phases: the pre-training phase, the training phase, and the post training phase. As mentioned in Chapter 5, although themes (a) and (d) are not directly related to my main research question, they serve as a kind of basis to answer the research question. Theme (d) also provides constructive suggestions to both overseas and domestic training programs from principals' perspectives. By taking trainees' suggestions into consideration, the quality of the training programs will be enhanced. The framework and literature reviewed for the study have been taken into consideration when writing this discussion.

In the citation the (...) marking means that the citation is preceded by a phase expressed by the interviewee. Brackets [ ] refer to a part of the citation that has been clarified in details. The language in the citations has been modified slightly by omitting some colloquial expressions and repetitive connecting words. In the quotations the six participants have been referred to with letters A, B, C, D, E and F. The name of country X means the training program attended in another country besides Finland.

6.1 Reasons for attending the training program

The first phase of the interview was designed to form a general background on how the principals were selected, what were their challenges, expectations, and why they chose Finland. In summary, the aim was to identify the reasons for attending the training program.

The principals were first asked to comment on the selections that they had gone through in China. All participants reported that they had undertaken the same selection procedure in Shanghai to attend the Finnish training program: candidates' applications, district recommendations, and city interviews. They attended the same training *Outstanding Principals Training Program in the Yangtze River Delta (Shanghai, Zhejiang and Jiangsu) (YRD Training)* in China, which consisted of one part of overseas training. Afterwards, the whole group applied for the training country through the MOE.

6.1.1 Challenges faced by principals

Principals were asked about the challenges they faced in the changing social and economic landscape. Four principals reported that the biggest challenge they confronted was *the contradiction between ideal and reality*. The ideal was students' overall development (both academic and non-academic outcomes of students) whereas the reality was the upward testing system (*gaokao*). It was extremely challenging for them to find a balance between them. On the one hand, principals had their educational ideals and know how to implement these ideals in their own schools. On the other hand, they confronted the external pressures to achieve consistently good results in the *gaokao,* which was regarded as the single most important predictor of success for students and schools in China. They explained that the whole society, parents and superintendents, continue to judge schools in terms of their performance in the *gaokao*.

> Now I am experiencing a career "bottleneck" that needs to be broken. I think the education environment is significant, especially in China. Honestly, the current education environment

> in China is not good and an obstacle for the self-development of myself. It is crucial to see the value of my work: do I work for cultivating good students or for achieving good score? It is a contradiction. The system and evaluation of schools emphasize too much on *gaokao* results. Schools must show good result in enrolment rates of the *gaokao* and undergraduate level admission, otherwise it is meaningless how good they are in other fields. (Principal D)

> I am very clear how to develop my school. (…) We feel the elective system in Finnish schools is very good. (…) It is a future direction for us. (…) However, the reality is the *gaokao*, a baton that controls all the schools in China. We have to return back to the *gaokao* in the end. (Principal E)

The present findings are consistent with some previous results. Firstly, they corroborate the ideas of Walker et al. (2011, pp. 392-393), who state that China had a more than 2000-year-old history of depending on high-stake examinations to select qualified people. Under such long-standing exam culture, all teaching and learning is organized around exams. Secondly, the results confirm the importance of principals as instructional leaders in Chinese schools (Wu & Ehrich, 2009, p. 54). Thirdly, the findings are in line with those of Chu and Cravens (2010, p. 11), showing that Chinese principals are blocked between the *gaokao* and the enacted accountability scheme. Finally, the responses partly support the view that the holistic approach for student overall development is extremely difficult to implement and measure (Chu & Cravens, 2010, p. 11; Walker et al., 2011, p. 400).

Students' wellbeing was part of students’ overall development. According to interviewees’ views, it included two areas: mental and physical health. Mental health referred to enjoyment of learning and school life while physical health meant a healthy body and enough time for physical exercise. One participant stated, “*How to motivate students to enjoy learning and school life is a challenge for me.*” Another mentioned Chinese students were filled with all kinds of homework. They had very little time to take physical exercise every day. In addition, another reported that Chinese principals and teachers were reluctant to open the physical education class[3] freely due to the absence of students’ sports accident insurance. They were afraid of handling troubles of students’ accidents and explained there was no such insurance in Chinese schools ensured by the government, and parents would charge for schools if such accidents happened.

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[3] Yao and Jin (2005, pp. 176-177): Physical education has become an indispensable part of school education, and an important means to promote people’s overall development with the development of modern Chinese society. It usually lacks school leaders’ interest in China.

> Now the government has lots of investment on education. (…) We have great emphasis on fire safety. But we do not have students’ sports accident insurance, which is also important. (Principal F)

The present result indicating that a lack of student accident insurance is the main reason that the principals are reluctant to open the physical education class is, however, somewhat unexpected. Previous studies have indicated that the physical education class was not the interest of school principals due to many exams and homework (e.g. Yao & Yin, 2006, p. 177). Therefore, the result of the present thesis adds to previous research by showing that a deeper reason hinders principals to freely take actions for the students’ wellbeing in China.

The second challenge most principals encountered was the *faculty development*, including teachers' qualification, professional dedication, staff capacity building (e.g., motivate teachers, staff growth, pass on experience from senior teachers to younger ones) and teacher appraisal. They agreed that teachers were the real people to implement their ideas in daily work and it was very essential to get the qualified teachers. However, they felt lacking in sufficient numbers of qualified teachers to implement the school-based curriculum. For instance, one participant reported in his/her school some experienced and senior teachers were approaching the age of retiring and some newly recruited teachers were lacking adequate teaching experience. Therefore, the challenge for him/her was to let the senior teachers pass on their experience to younger ones so that the quality of teachers could be ensured.

> The most two envious and impressive things we have for Finnish peers are teachers' qualification and professional commitment. First, the entry requirements for being a teacher are very high in Finland. All the teachers must have a master's degree. Second, Finnish principals do not have to think about teachers’ professional dedication. People choose to be a teacher in that they love this career. Actually, these are most two headache things for Chinese principals. (Principal A)

One participant claimed that Chinese principals had to figure out to improve teachers' qualities all the time. The reason was the uneven levels of teachers in Chinese schools. Some were high while others were low. He/she pointed out that some people were not fitting to the teaching occupation. They were good at some areas but unsuitable to be teachers. They became teachers due to certain historical reasons.

> The Chinese principals have great abilities. The teachers given to us are in different levels and we have to learn how to train them to become qualified and efficient teachers continuously. It is a very challenging task. (Principal E)

Importantly, another principal claimed that *faculty development* was the biggest challenge he/she confronted.

> The biggest challenge is how to motivate teachers' enthusiasm so that they can really realise their potential and reflect their effectiveness in class. Perhaps it is the biggest challenges that principals of my area encounter. (Principal C)

This result is quite new and has not been covered in former literatures. However, it seems to be a very important issue from the perspective of participants. Hence, it adds to our understanding of Chinese principals' challenges by showing that finding proper ways to develop the skills of staff and enhancing the overall quality of teachers are their essential concerns.

The challenge of the curriculum reform included the principal's curriculum leadership, school curriculum reform, reform implementation, classroom teaching, teaching paradigm, and educational reforms. The second phase curriculum reform in Shanghai consisted of three types of courses: basic, extended and research courses. This was proposed to provide students with more choice, cater to diverse student needs, and enable more innovative study in schools. Principals were given power to develop and design extended and research courses. However, there were not clear instructions or sufficient support for principals to implement curriculum reform in practice.

> How to develop curriculum leadership? How to improve the efficiency of the classroom through classroom methods reform? How to meet the needs of students' overall development, personality development, and life-long development through curriculum? How to make curriculum more diversified and selective? These are challenges I am facing. (Principal B)

My data is consistent with what Chu and Cravens (2010, p. 11) claim that the New Curriculum Reform pushes principals and teachers to provide visible and accountable results without systemic support and capacity building training.

Two participants commented on the *challenge of school strategy planning and implementation* as they determined the future directions of the school. They felt lacking in enough skills to formulate the school vision and lead for the future. Another two participants agreed that their schools were in good positions at the moment, and the next challenge was how to further develop the school and become a high-quality school in their districts.

> How to formulate and implement school vision effectively? Where should this school develop and how to develop it? They are challenges for me. (Principal A)

This finding partly confirms that many Chinese principals are not well prepared for the changes of power utilization nor are they able to manage school strategically and independently (Chu & Cravens, 2010, p. 8). The authors (2010, p. 8) explain that Chinese principals have been used to depending on the government's directives and to managing daily routines rather than operating a big-picture type of strategies. It also supports the notion that more strategic and visionary approaches of leadership are needed to develop leaders in the changing context in China (Feng, 2002, p. 36).

One principal mentioned the *challenge of balancing rapid development of district and school.* Sometimes he/she felt puzzled and uneasy about the school future, especially as the leader of this school. He/she thought education should be conducted slowly, but the fast development of economy required fast development of education. This finding is in line with Gamage's (2006, p. 32) claim that the major challenge faced by principals today is to appreciate the changing contexts of educational leadership. To tackle this challenge, principals have to properly understand the magnitude of the changes in order to lead and adjust their leadership practices accordingly (Gamage, Adams & McCormack, 2009, p. 6).

Another participant claimed that he/she *lacked management and leadership theory,* and his/her understanding of leadership and teaching practices was superficial. He/she felt “ability panic” and needed proper training.

6.1.2 Expectations of the training program

The principals were enquired about their expectations of the training program in terms of leadership practices and professional development. The most striking expectations concerning *school development* were about strategic leadership, including strategic planning and implementation of Finnish schools. Four participants reported that developing a strategic vision for the school future would help them better understand the big picture of an organization and implement similar planning and vision afterwards.

> I hope to further develop my professional vision and expand my horizon. (Principal A)
>
> I expect to expand my horizons and stand on a higher level to see school development. As a young school principal, I hope to conduct education not just with enthusiasm or passion, but with professionalization. (Principal C)
>
> How can I develop this school further? I have lots of confusions. It just happened that there was a training program in Finland and I attended it. I would like to see what issues that Finnish principals consider and how they develop these issues. (Principal E)
>
> I expect to learn how Finnish school principals manage schools and formulate school vision (Principal F).

The responses agree with the claim that successful principals develop a strategic vision for the school future (Walker & Ko, 2011, p. 372) which exemplifies the best thinking about teaching and learning, and inspires others to accomplish ambitious goals (Leithwood & Riehl, 2003, p. 5). The results also support the ideas that effective principals have a clear vision and dream, have a strong belief in those dreams, and are confident in their capacities to make extraordinary things happen (O’Neill & Bottoms, 2001, pp. 8-9; Kouzes & Posner, 2012, pp. 17-18).

One participant expected to implement a student-oriented principle of educational philosophy through the training program in Finland.

> I expect to formulate the concept of students’ development oriented and find ways to promote students’ overall development, personality development, and life-long development (Principal B).

The second part of school development identified by the principals was *curriculum development*, particularly in the context of the challenges that the principals had expressed with regards to curriculum reforms in the form of *gaokao*. For instance, one principal stated, “*I desire to learn high mobility of students' academic in Finland.*” In other words, how Finnish schools conduct extended courses in such a systematic and successful way.

This finding is partly in line with some previous studies. For example, instructional leaders actively coordinated curricular objectives of schools which were closely aligned with both the content taught in classes and with achievement tests (Hallinger & Murphy, 1985, p. 222), directly involved in the design and implementation of curriculum, instruction and assessment practices knowledge about current curriculum, instruction and assessment practices (Marzano et al., 2005, pp. 54-55). Effective principals make sure that all students receive a comprehensive, balanced and related curriculum through formal, informal and extra-curricular activities across the school communities (Walker et al., 2000, p. 6; Walker & Ko, 2011, p. 372).

The third part of school development was *quality-oriented education and inclusive education*. For example, two principals expected to learn how Finland conducts balanced and qualified education. In addition, one participant sought to learn inclusive education in Finland.

The present finding on quality-oriented education is consistent with their reasons (balanced and qualified education in Finland) for choosing the Finnish program. However, the result of inclusive education was somewhat unexpected. It seems that the well-known inclusive education in Finland attracts the participant’s interest.

Curiously, half of the respondents talked more about *school development* when asked about their *personal development*. They expected to expand their professional vision and horizon for personal development. For instance, two principals shared the same view that school and individual were closely inter-related.

> Talking about my professional development, I think more where should this school go and

> how to develop it. I have not thought about myself. There is a saying that "a good school has a good principal, and vice versa." So they are interconnected. (Principal E)

This finding is related to the concept of achieving harmony in a collectivist society in which individual achievement is not a priority (Hofstede, 1980, p. 16). It also supports the view that expectations for leadership development exist at different levels (Hannum & Martineau, 2008, 16-19), and the role of a principal is usually connected with his/her school in China (Yang & Brayman, 2010, p. 242).

One participant defined three areas of expectations: professional vision, professional knowledge, and professional wisdom. According to his/her understanding, professional vision had to deal with strategic leadership, which was reported earlier. "*My eyes will become limited if stay at my school without communicating with outside world*." Professional knowledge referred to knowledge on school leadership and management. He/she felt such knowledge was quite insufficient. "*The previous university preparation training was only to deal with classroom and student management, while rarely related to school leadership and management.*" Professional wisdom was a kind of intuitive and tacit knowledge that combined theory with practice. He/she hoped that the training program would equip him/her with the wisdom to better combine theoretical knowledge and practical ability. Another participant commented that he/she wanted more advanced theoretical knowledge and teaching philosophy in Finland.

The last expectation expressed by the participants was concerned with *students' overall development*. One respondent commented that "*learn Finnish way of cultivating students' abilities.*", and the other stated "*learn how Finnish schools get students to love reading."* This finding is consistent with my former data that enhancing students' overall development is one of principals' challenges.

It should be noted that the expectations of *school culture and faculty development* were not mentioned until principals evaluated the training program. For instance, four participants claimed that there were too many diversified needs to make everyone satisfied, and listed these needs. The present finding partly agrees with the view that one challenge for Chinese principals is to reformulate school culture that embraces the concepts like equity and justice (Wang, 2013. pp. 10-13).

6.1.3 Reasons for choosing Finland

Regarding reasons for choosing Finland, all the participants commented on the *success of Finnish students in PISA*. They perceived that the PISA success had been very influential and attractive throughout the world during the past decade. And Finland had a worldwide recognized reputation in basic education. Even though the Shanghai students did quite well in some areas in 2009, they felt there was still a gap compared with the Finnish students. They had heard the successful stories of Finnish education for many years in China. Nevertheless, they did not have the real opportunities to explore and experience Finnish schools until this training. In that sense, the training in Finland provided the principals with a great opportunity to see how the Finnish education system was carried out in such a successful way and to draw from some lessons.

> We had several countries to choose. I chose Finland due to its worldwide recognized reputation on basic education. (Principal A)

This finding is in line with that by Jin et al. (2012, p. 11), showing that, both the Chinese government and educational institutions are eager to learn from Finland due to Finland’s success in PISA. This also agrees with the claim by Sahlberg (2011, p. 136) that many countries would like to borrow or transfer models of schooling from Finland due to its PISA success. As Hargreaves and colleagues (2008, p. 92) stated, “Finland contains essential lessons for nations that aspire, educationally and economically, to be successful and sustainable knowledge societies”.

Similarly, one participant said *balanced and qualified basic education* in Finland was acknowledged worldwide. This finding partly agrees with the view that Chinese school leaders need to learn new skills to promote diversity and high-quality equity under the new shift of *ONG* (Yang, 2013, p. 6).

Two participants reported it was a top-down task that was not chosen by them.

> It was chosen by NTCSSP and we were arranged to take the Finnish training program. (Principal C)

This finding agrees with the claim by Hofstede (1980, p. 84) that power is held by few people and there is little discussion on decision-making in large power distance societies (e.g. China).

Crucially, another respondent reported that Finland was known as a welfare state in terms of education, health and social services. However, it was not so international compared with other developed countries, such as Britain, Canada, and the USA.

6.2 Value of the training program

In this phase, the principals were asked how they considered the value and usefulness of the Finnish training program. In other words, how participants evaluated the training program, how they had been able to use the training aspects to overcome challenges and implement appropriate leadership practices afterwards, and how the training program contributed to their professional knowledge, skills and attitudes. The principals reported both positive and negative aspects of the training program. They also mentioned certain issues that could not work in China.

6.2.1 Positive aspects of the training program

The most striking finding to emerge from the data was about *more effective leadership*, including curriculum leadership, strategic leadership, and humanistic leadership. Five principals reported that the school-based curricula in Finland were highly rich, selective and flexible. They were impressed that Finnish schools had very detailed guidelines to explain how the curricula were designed and implemented. The Finnish examples gave them insights that well-designed curricula could make a difference to students' learning.

More importantly, they learnt some skills to make real curriculum improvement happening in their own schools.

> We can make our school-based curricula more diversified in that schools do have some autonomy in China. From this view, Finnish experience gives me lots of inspirations. We start to consider how to make curricula richer and more selective so that students have more options to choose. (…) Unlike Chinese schools, Finnish schools have built a comprehensive system for students to choose extended courses. (Principal A)

> We can make a difference in curricula improvement. (…) Through curriculum improvements, school can prepare for students' studies, life growth, and future career. (…) Now we are trying to open more extended and research courses which are in line with students' demands, as well as the school's philosophy. (…) I give all the available resources to support these improvements. For instance, I recruit part-time teachers to teach these courses. (Principal C)

The finding of Principal C confirms that successful school leaders provide adequate and consistent resources to support collaborative work (Walker et al., 2000, p. 16; Connolly & James, 2006, pp. 72-79; Walker & Ko, 2011, p. 373).

One respondent commented that the training opened his/her eyes by understanding how the civic education was conducted in Finnish schools.

> We were very interested in the civic education in Finland and took some pictures of the content from textbooks. After coming back to China, I translated them from Finnish to Chinese with the help of Google translation and used them as discussion materials. Everyone was so excited to learn how civic education was conducted in Finland generally. We do not have this course in China, but it is definitely needed in Chinese schools in the future. (Principal E)

The results partly reflect previous research that has been done in the field (e.g., Hallinger & Murphy, 1985, p. 222; Marzano et al., 2005, pp. 54-55; Leithwood et al., 2006, p. 42). They also correlate with my former data that curriculum reform is one of the challenges for principals.

Two principals claimed that the training program expanded their visions and horizons. They were more future-oriented in their leadership practices. The training helped them understand the big picture of the schools. They were able to stand on higher levels to look at a specific school issue afterwards. This finding confirms the study that training on the theme of strategic planning, not only equipping school leaders with knowledge and skills needed to succeed in challenging circumstances (Alava, 2007, p. 45), but also helping them to be future-oriented enables the principals to make adjustments in time to suit the circumstances at hand, therefore overcoming turbulent challenges which confront them every day (Gamage, 2003, pp. 8-9).

Conversely, one participant reported the issue of strategic planning could not be answered in that it did not exist in Finnish schools. He/she was answered by several Finnish principals, "*No, we do not have school strategic planning. Why do we have to think about it?*" One possible explanation for these contradictory results may be due to the different contexts they were talking about. The former result may suggest the situation when participants talk about the training courses in the university. The latter result may indicate the situation when participants visit Finnish schools.

One participant commented that he/she was able to implement humanistic leadership in his/her school. "*I learnt to pay more attention to individual needs at my school and try to support these needs within available resources.*" He/she added that principals must take overseas training programs if they sought to achieve the goals of student-oriented and humanistic leadership.

Several principals reported that they were able to *better tackle the contradiction between ideal and reality* afterwards. For example, one participant attached more importance to fostering students' abilities of learning, practicing and cooperation. He/she started to improve students' overall development steadily on the condition of ensuring good scores. He/she also used a metaphor to describe the situation of Chinese principals in quality-oriented education vividly.

> Previously, I only focused on examination-oriented education. Now I should change it a bit and work towards quality-oriented education. It cannot be done overnight. I plan to have small improvement each year and several steps forward in a couple of years. It has to be done step by step, not be aggressive. (…) Chinese principals are "*dancing in fetters*" [trying to move about while arms and legs are bound]. We need to work towards quality-oriented education, but we do have a heavy burden. (Principal B)

In addition, one principal gained a deeper understanding of students' overall development. He/she gave the example of students specialized in sports in both countries. In Finland, students were equally good in sports and academic study. In China, those students were quite good in sports but very poor in academic study. Consequently universities had to admit them with low academic scores. He/she claimed that "*Chinese way of educating students is a bit biased.*"

Another participant utilized effective networking to enhance students' overall development after training. For example, his/her school cooperated more with one university in many areas, such as conducting small joint research projects, organizing students' association activities, giving career lectures, recruiting teachers, co-designing curricula of extended courses, having some experimental classes together. Compared with a few years ago, the school now had more extended courses for students to choose. Through such collaborations, they both learnt many good things from each other.

> Previously, universities and secondary schools were separated and blaming each other. (…) Now my school has the real collaboration and cooperation with one university. We are trying to help each other and grow together. The university is considering what they can do for the school, and vice versa. (Principal C)

My data is in accordance with the finding showing that successful leadership practices encourage willingness to compromise among collaborators, foster open and smooth communication among collaborators, and link school with external communities (Walker et al., 2000, p. 16; Walker & Ko, 2011, p. 373).

Two interviewees commented that the training enabled them to have a *broader understanding of the nature of education*. One interviewee expressed the view that the training program promoted his/her ideals of education and educational philosophy. After the training he/she became more appreciative of the remarkable achievements of Chinese education with a large population. As he/she, "*I do not look down on our education after training overseas. Instead, I become more appreciative of our extraordinary accomplishments. As the largest population in the world, it must not be easy for China to achieve the basic education for all.*" The other stated "*I must take care of my school so that parents feel public schools better than private ones.*" Another claimed that "*Education should be intensively cultivated and slowly nurtured*" afterwards.

Two principals reported they were able to promote education cultures of respect, trust and cooperation among teachers and students in their own schools straightaway. They were impressed that trust was everywhere in Finland. It was the same in the area of education. The society trusted schools, principals trusted teachers and students, and vice versa.

> Distrust is a big problem in China now. I tell teachers that regardless of social atmosphere, we must have a pure land inside school and educate students to have integrity. (…) More importantly, I show trust to teachers and students by giving example. (…). If the principal says one thing and does another, he/she will definitely lose integrity. So I feel it is the Finnish education culture that we can apply directly into my school. (Principal E)

This finding agrees with the claim that effective principals contribute to productive collaboration in their schools by cultivating mutual respect and trust among those involved in collaborative activity (Connolly & James, 2006, pp. 72-79), and by serving the needs of others instead of their own (Kouzes & Posner, 2012, p. 22). It also supports the view that teachers are trusted to do their best as true professionals of education in Finland (Välijärvi et al. 2007, p. 49).

Several interviewees agreed that the training helped them gain *increased understanding of the role of government in education*. For instance, half of the respondents were impressed by the collaboration between general and vocational upper secondary schools in Finland. They reported the Finnish government built the two-track system to ensure general and vocational upper secondary schools were open access to each other. There were very few obstacles between the two school systems. Students could freely choose courses in both schools and get two diplomas if they want. More importantly, the Finnish society is built on the principle of equality in terms of gender, salary and occupation. As one stated, “*There is no high or low to be an academician or a carpenter in Finland.*” Thus everyone could choose the career he/she liked.

> The design of Finnish education system is great. Fairness has a good connection with its social system. The other supporting systems are well engaged in the society. This is much related to concepts of society and people. (Principal E)

> I was surprised to see female students learning painting, carpentry, and wallpaper paste in Finnish vocational schools. Students were very happy. It is so different from us. In China, we have a very big discrimination to vocational education. Vocational schools are usually the last choice for students who are poor in academic performance and cannot study in general upper

> secondary schools. Most graduates want to be civil servants. (…) The key reason is differences in the concepts of society and people. (Principal D)

Remarkably, one participant claimed that the roots of society and concepts of people were so strong even though the Chinese government had good policies.

> Although the policy nowadays encourages graduates to study in both general and vocational upper secondary schools, few students choose vocational education. There is such strong public opinion that studying vocational education will be end in nothing, and the only way to success is to study in the university. (Principal E)

The result is supported by a previous research finding that an intrinsic part of Finnish pedagogical philosophy is the principle of equity, on which Finnish education policy has been largely premised (Välijärvi et al. 2007, p. 38). Conversely, the Chinese way of thinking is quite hierarchical compared to Finnish thinking (Hölttä et al., 2009, p. 38), which is deeply rooted and influenced by Confucianism in the Chinese culture (Branine, 2005, p. 466).

Half of the participants were impressed that all teachers had Master’s degrees in Finland. Teaching was a prestigious profession and many young students aspired to be teachers. One was surprised that teachers in vocational upper secondary schools also held a Master’s degree, which was very rare in China. Therefore, it was the responsibility of the Chinese government to break the system obstacles, build such cooperation and collaboration, and increase teachers’ qualifications. The results reflect previous research that has been done in the field. For example, Välijärvi et al. (2007, pp. 48-49) stated that the teaching profession was regarded as one of the most important professions in the Finnish society, and all Finnish teachers had to complete a Master’s degree to start their teaching careers.

One interviewee claimed Finnish principals and teachers were very free to open all kinds of physical education classes in that the Finnish government bought students' accident insurance. The Finnish government also built hospital schools for those who were sick for a long time. As mentioned earlier, Chinese principals and teachers were reluctant to open physical education classes. Teachers sacrificed their private time to make up missing lessons for those students who were sick at home. The reason was such insurance was not covered by the Chinese government, not to mention hospital schools. Therefore, it was the responsibility of the Chinese government to buy students' sports accident insurance at least to ease principals and teachers' worries.

Besides, most participants *better understood the reasons of the Finnish PISA success* after training. As was shown earlier, the reasons include well-designed and functioning systems, highly qualified teachers, and trust.

The participants recorded mostly positive comments about the *overall program organization*. They agreed that the training achieved their aims of general understanding of the Finnish basic education system, especially upper secondary schools. The training program included theory and practice: lectures (including group discussions) were given by different experts; visited schools were representative (general and vocational upper secondary schools, and arts specialized schools). One respondent pointed out that the main issues were covered, such as staff growth, curriculum, respective, trustful and cooperative teacher-student relations, highly qualified and balanced education. Another claimed the Chinese organizer had selected a good country, Finland, where they had not been. He/she also added, "*The service of Finnish training institution was good*."

It was also interesting to note that the *Finnish principals and students were happier than their Chinese peers* in general. This was identified by four participants afterwards. They reported that Chinese students' enjoyment and happiness of learning was lower than that of Finnish students in general. As one stated, "*In contrast to Finnish students, Chinese students are not enjoying their school life.*" Some students in China were forced to study at school even if they did not like it. They had to study for exams, but not for their own interest. On the contrary, Finnish students chose the courses they were interested in. They explained that the main reason was more pressures in China than in Finland.

> I felt Finnish principals were happier than us due to less pressure. There was no such inspection in Finnish schools whereas there are so many inspections here [in China] that I cannot handle. (Principal D)

In addition, Chinese principals seemed to have their unique ways to overcome challenges. For instance, four respondents stated that their ways to overcome challenges were to compromise exams and students’ overall development and find a balance.

6.2.2 Negative aspects of the training program

Despite all the positive sentiments expressed by a number of principals about how the Finnish training program had influenced on their leadership practices and professional development, there were participants who gave critical feedback of the training program. For example, one participant stated, “*The Finnish training program cannot be regarded as a very professional principal training. It was primarily meant to expand principals’ version and learn more about the Finnish education system.*” The other claimed the Finnish training program was nothing new and pretty the same as domestic training. As he/she stated, “*They both include lectures and school visits.*” One possible explanation for this result may be that the participant compared the format between the Finnish training and domestic training programs.

> My understanding of Finnish education can only stay at this level. It is impossible to gain deeper understanding in such a training mode. (Principal D)

Four participants reported that *school visit time was too tight*. They did not have sufficient time to discuss some planned issues with the Finnish peers.

> The school visits time was too short. We wanted to see and understand the Finnish schools deeply, and it took time. (Principal C)

> The most regretful thing was so little time to visit Finnish schools, especially upper secondary schools. We spent most of time discussing with professors and education officials in the university. (Principal E)

This finding partly agrees with the challenge raised by Hölttä et al. (2009, p. 38) how to harmonize and compromise between the Chinese flexible working habit and Finnish rigid working traditions when organizing a training program for the Chinese. This study does not have the answers here and leaves this question for the readers to consider.

Four principals reported that some parts of the training program matched their demands while others did not. For example, one participant commented that there were *too many different needs to make everyone satisfied*. As he/she said, "*Some wanted to learn school culture while others wanted to learn faculty development.*" Another claimed they were stuck in some issues and wasted time due to *language barriers*. Some training *issues were irrelevant* to school development.

> It took Chinese experts 1-2 hours to explain the issues while a whole day for Finnish experts to clarify the same issues. Sometimes we spent half an hour making clear of basic concepts. The reason was language barriers. It was a waste of time. (Principal B)

This result of Principal B is in accordance with the finding showing that intensive overseas training programs for the Chinese require language translations due to insufficient English skills of participants (Hudson & Andy, 2006, p. 8).

The participants also gave reasons for such mismatching. The main reasons lay in the differences in the national contexts, such as culture, the educational and school system, evaluations of principals, teachers and students, principals' tasks, teachers' qualifications and dedication, and students' ways of learning. Some questions could not be answered for two reasons. First, one principal mentioned these issues did not exist in Finnish schools, such as faculty development and school alumni. Finnish principals could not understand the Chinese peers' questions, "*Why do we have to think about school alumni? It is students' own things.*" According to his/her opinion, Finnish principals seemed not to pay attention to these issues. Second, another participant reported some of the participants' questions could not be answered because the trainers were not practitioners.

In addition, other two participants said they had enjoyed attending the program and learnt quite a lot. However, they were unable to put what they learnt into practice due to many national, institutional, and cultural constraints. They concluded that it was a well-designed and functional system in Finland, but it would be difficult to work in China.

> It is a matter of national contexts and systems. We cannot copy it. We cannot use it either here [in China] even we copy it from Finland. (Principal D)

> Many things do not work in China. We do not have such systems [equality, two-track system, etc.] in China. (Principal E)

6.3 Features of effective leadership training programs

In this phase principals were enquired to identify the features of effective principal training programs based on their training experiences in China and abroad.

Half of the principals declared that effective principal training programs *could not be done overnight*. It took time to make training programs successful, which should be accumulated in practice step by step. In their opinions, there was no such perfect training model that fits everyone. What they understood, the effective leadership training programs were just an ideal. This result supports the view that effective professional development takes time (Fenwick & Pierce, 2002, p. 4).

> It is a luxury and not realistic that principal's ability improves immediately after taking a training program. In my opinion, an effective principal training program has two dimensions. From the narrow scale it can be one program; from the broad scale it can be a long-term program. (Principal A)
>
> Is there any perfect training model existing? Effective training program requires continuously exploring and engaging from trainers and trainees. We can always give some advice to make it better. (Principal D)

The finding of Principal A is partly in accordance with Peterson's (2002, pp. 216-230) claim that engaging all-day and multiple-session meetings over the whole year is a more fruitful method than the form of one-shot workshops. However, they have different focuses. The former result may suggest that both types of training can be effective. The later claim, on the other hand, may imply that a longer time of studying will make the training program more coherent and effective.

The result of Principal D indicating that an effective training program is a collectivist process which requires opinions and efforts from both trainers and trainees is, however, somewhat unexpected. The present study does not have the explanations for this result. It will serve as a direction for future research.

Besides, one of these participants mentioned that an effective training program should be *systematic*. It included two aspects. First, the overall training program design should be *comprehensive*. It should cover theory and practice concerning the principal as a leader, manager and educator. It appears that previous studies have not been able to address this issue. Therefore, this finding adds to our understanding of the components of an effective leadership training program by seeing the role of principal from three perspectives. Second, the training should be *career-staged*. This meant training programs would need to address the demands of different career stages of the diverse principals, and arrange specialized training programs for them accordingly.

> The training I am taking at NTCSSP is quite good. It is very systematic and available for principals at different career stages. The highest level is advanced research training [educator training]. Selected principals were asked to sum up their leadership thoughts and education philosophies. (Principal A)

My data agrees with the recommendation by Fenwick and Pierce (2002, p. 4) that effective professional development should be career-staged, with specialized training for aspiring, new, and experienced principals. It also partly confirms that effective professional development is an ongoing activity intertwined into every principal’s professional life (Guskey, 2000, p. 38), connects various learning opportunities and occurs over time (Hannum & Martineau, 2008, p. 10).

Four respondents reported that effective training should have *targeted and personalized content*. Two of them said that a training program should enhance practical ability and address practical training. They agreed that training on practical skills was more useful to help them solve school problems, and having specific school cases would make training programs more effective. For instance, one principal claimed that “*It should be down-to-earth, and teach principals how to do things*.” The other two considered that effective leadership training programs should have a comprehensive understanding of principals’ needs. One participant stated, “*Effective leadership training programs think what principals would like to think.”* The other said, “*It would be more effective if the training program is more personalized, be able to match principals’ demands and realize principals’ ideas and needs*.”

In addition, one participant claimed effective leadership training programs should be able to assist the principal to *learn theoretical knowledge and draw the practice of schooling*. He/she defined an effective training program as a "*practical application of theory and theoretical application of practice*". The practical application of theory meant theory supported practice through training. He felt it was essential to have theory if principals desired to do things in a good level. The theoretical application of practice referred to applying what principals had learnt into school practice.

> There is no such absolute effective training program. As long as it helps principals cultivate theoretical knowledge and practice of schooling [be able to employ something into school practice through training], it is effective. (Principal D)

The present results confirm that effective training programs emphasize on practical issues, and encourage effective problem-solving and reflection (Davis et al., 2005, pp. 9-10).

Unfortunately, "*Many training programs I have taken do not know principals' demands and are lacking in substance*." as stated by another principal. This finding explains that principals are forced to "feel their way" through the early years of their career due to a lack of practical training (Simieou, Decman, Grigsby & Schumacher, 2010, p. 2).

Half of the participants commented on *field-based internships* as they helped them learn how other school principals managed schools and solved real problems. They agreed that the YRD Training addressed this issue well and they drew many useful lessons from such internships.

> The practical training phase (*field-based internships*) during the YRD training was very helpful. Principals were sent to different schools among three provinces and municipality. I did my practical training at four schools. Each one lasted two weeks. During this time, I fully immersed myself into that school and worked hand in hand with the school principal. I observed classrooms, talked with different teachers and students, attended school meetings. It was really a useful learning experience. (Principal D)

The present result fits the claim that most adults learn best when they are exposed to conditions demanding the application of taught skills, knowledge, and problem-solving strategies within realistic situations (Davis et al., 2005, p. 9), and strong internships provide candidates with intensive, extended developmental opportunities to apply leadership knowledge and skills under the watchful eye of an expert mentor (Orr & Orphanos, 2011, p. 22).

Besides, principals claimed that staying in one school for an *adequate length and time* would allow them to understand practical issues about school leadership and management, and curriculum. It was difficult to learn such knowledge just by a short school visit. This finding is supported by previous studies. For instance, effective professional development takes time (Fenwick & Pierce, 2002, p. 4), and principals need sufficient time to deepen their understanding of the professional development program, analyze students' work, and cultivate new approaches to instruction (Guskey, 2003, p. 749). It is also very similar to Peterson's (2002, pp. 216-230) view that the longer experience of studying together will have a greater impact on learning and the development of professional networks among school leaders.

Four participants highlighted the *importance of interaction* during the training program. For instance, one principal considered that interactions existed among trainers and trainees. As he/she stated, "*Interactions help trainees understand the content of the lectures*." He/she further underlined that experienced principals (*mentors*) were valuable training resources. Another two emphasized that sharing and learning from other principals (*cohort groups*) by exchanging reflections was equally fundamental for an effective training program. It was great that interaction and discussion brought mutual inspiration.

The above findings vindicate what have been found in previous studies. For instance, mentors facilitate others to learn the knowledge, skills, behaviors and values of the leader's role (Mulford, 2003, p. 38), and guide the learner in his/her search for strategies to figure out the problems, to increase self-confidence, and to build a broad range of leadership skills (Davis et al., 2005, p. 10). Besides, cohort groups support each other to build group and individual knowledge, think creatively, and restructure problems from various viewpoints (Davis et al., 2005, p. 10), share views of what worked and what did not work in their own context, reference each other's expertise, and encourage investigation and sustained improvement (Dyer & Renn, 2010, pp. 186-187), develop strong social and interpersonal relationships, increase contact with faculty members, and develop professional networks (Barnett et al., 2000, pp. 258-259; Scribner & Donaldson, 2001, pp. 606-607).

The interaction was also mentioned when principals were asked to compare the training difference between domestic and overseas training programs. For instance, two participants reported overseas training was more interactive than domestic training. Trainers always provided some time for discussions, which enabled participants to make the questions clear.

> The training I am taking in country X is highly interactive and experimental. Almost every student has the chance to express his/her understanding and reflection. It does take different needs into consideration. Trainers ask us to play roles as students from country X. It attaches great importance to interactive experience. (…) It is not only rational, but also emotional. (Principal A)

My data confirms that Chinese models of management development and training are teacher-centered which differs fundamentally from the learner-centered approach of Western countries (Branine, 2005, p. 468).

Another interviewee gave the definition of an effective training program as "*Having reflection*". It meant getting thoughts and reflections through exchanging ideas with other principals during the training. By doing so, he/she was able to gain a better understanding of some phenomenon or find answers to some confusion. As he/she stated, "*The more reflections I have, the more effective the training program is*." This reflection is partly consistent with what Davis et al. (2005, pp. 9-10) claim that PBL is an effective way to develop students' new attitudes and skills and practice their self-reflections.

> You cannot just copy something from other schools due to different contexts. (…) I need more practical experience. Exchanging perceptions and ideas with other principals help me have reflections. (…) It is impossible to find all ready-made answers, but at least I can get some ideas to improve my former leadership practices. (Principal E)

It should be noted, however, that effective leadership training programs were important to principals; they were just external forces. This was reported by three principals. As one stated, "*What makes a difference is principal's internal forces*." Similar comments included "*One does not necessarily need a training to be an effective principal*." and "*The key lay in the attitude.*"

> I think principals need training, which is a part of experience in their career development. But I do not think it make a successful principal. Principals need more practice to improve their abilities, and the real growth takes place in the school life. The experience has to be accumulated step by step. In my opinion, training is just a boost. (Principal C)

6.4 Improvements for future training programs

In the last phase of the interview, the respondents were enquired to suggest how training programs could be better improved and organized, and report their needs for future training programs. Having attended various training programs in their career lives, principals made a number of constructive suggestions for both overseas training and domestic training programs.

6.4.1 Improvements for overseas training programs

Regarding the *program organization,* four interviewees suggested improving this program by "*Increasing the number and time of school visits*" in order to "*Fully discuss the issues with Finnish peers*". As practitioners, they wanted more communications with Finnish principals, teachers and students. For example, one principal suggested first visiting Finnish schools, then attending lectures. By doing so, they would have visual impressions of Finnish schools and would attend the lectures with questions. These responses indicated previously suggest that *increasing school visits* was a high priority and would better assist Chinese principals to understand the implementation and practices of schools in Finland, which may assist to enhance their leadership practices in their schools.

One participant suggested *organizing panel meetings* for all stakeholders[4] to discuss the issues they were concerned with. As he/she advised, "*We had discussed with Finnish people separately, but it would be more useful if we had such opportunities to gather these people together and discuss some common issues from different perspectives*."

Several participants advised training institutions to *enquire questions from trainees* by distributing questionnaires in advance. As one suggested, "*List a training menu for us to choose*" By doing so, trainers could collect the needs of trainees and address more relevant training issues. Another principal suggested "*More coordination*." In his/her opinion, there should be enough time to communicate with the Finnish partner (training provider) ahead of training. As he/she stated, "*We could learn more if everything was coordinated well in advance*."

Several principals made suggestions on the *program quality and teaching methods* when comparing the overseas training program with the domestic training program. For example, half of the principals agreed that *specific school cases* were needed for the future training in order to understand how practical problems were solved in Finnish schools. One suggested "*Involve experienced Finnish school principals by giving lectures to trainees*." The other advised "*Reduce lectures in the university*." The present finding supports the idea that rigorous planning is an absolute necessity for an effective professional development program (Evans & Mohr, 1999, p. 532)

Two principals made suggestions on addressing *language issues*. They agreed that the English and Finnish languages were barriers for some activities. The fact was most participants had minimal English skills, and the program relied mainly upon translation from English to Chinese.

> Everyone took a booklet about school curricula, which explained how the curricula were organized and implemented in Finland. However, we did not understand in that they were written in Finnish. (Principal E)

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[4] In the Finnish context, stakeholders include trainers, trainees, Finnish principals, teachers, and students.

Therefore, they suggested overcoming language barriers by two means. On one hand, trainees should improve their English proficiency. As one suggested, "*Those who will attend overseas training in the future should have good English skills.*" On the other, training institutions should translate the layout in Chinese ahead of training. As one suggested, "*Translate the training materials into Chinese, and distribute to us earlier so that we have time to prepare questions.*" More importantly, the competent translators who had understandings of topics were essential to provide accurate translations. They should be education professionals capable of understanding the terms in education areas, preferably those who are familiar with the school systems in both countries. This finding correlates with the previous result that a language barrier is an obstacle of the overseas training programs.

Two respondents expected *more learning opportunities* in the future to develop their skills and to stay abreast with contemporary changes in education. For instance, one wanted a systematic learning opportunity to gain a degree. "*I want to escape from work for a certain time and immerse myself to a comprehensive theoretical study*." Besides Finland, he/she expected to attend training programs in other countries to further expand his/her horizon. The principal described himself/herself as a lifelong learner. Another looked forward to the training program next time in Finland.

Two participants suggested *including the Chinese government and education officials in the Finnish training program*. As one stated, "*We need to start from top-down if we want to change our education system.*" He/she recommended that the Chinese government should take education as an industry like Finland. The other shared the similar opinion that it was the Chinese government's responsibility to break the education system obstacles and design a fair education system that would be well integrated with other social systems. In this sense, Finland was a good example. These results correlate to my former data about the reasons for choosing Finland and the role of the Chinese government in education. In a society with a large power distance, it is possible to have bigger changes if the decision-makers first change their ways of thinking.

6.4.2 Improvements for domestic training programs

In addition to improvements for overseas training programs, the interviewees made some suggestions on domestic training programs when comparing overseas and domestic training programs. For instance, one participant suggested *democratic decision-making* and involvement of other stakeholders[5] in decision-making prior to the training program. He explained that the failure of previous training programs was attributed to the top-down task without any consultation of principals. The present results indicating that a shared decision-making process is needed for the domestic training program, however, is somewhat unexpected.

One principal expected to receive *more mentoring and personalized guidance* to support his/her school work. This kind of training would guide him/her leadership practices and enhance his/her leadership thinking. Another advised future training programs to address real-school situations and actual problems that principals encounter on a daily basis. He/she also stated, "*Practical issues are applied to both domestic and overseas training programs.*"

Finally, the training program can be summarized in a concept map (see Figure 4) consisting of three phases: pre-training phase, training phase, and post-training phase. Similarly to the research instrument in Chapter 5, the pre-training phase includes selections of participants in China, challenges faced by principals, expectations for the training phase, and reasons for choosing Finland. The training phase involves the value of the training program and features of effective training programs. The post-training phase comprises improvements for the future training programs. All the factors in pre-training phase lead to the training program provided by the Finnish training institutions. Principals have their own ideals of effective training programs which affect the Finnish training institutions, training modes and programs. The outcome of the training program is divided into three: positive, negative and odd aspects of the training program. The positive aspects refer to the sides of the training program that enable them to overcome challenges, implement proper leadership practices afterwards. The negative aspects mean sides of the training program that are not addressed well but can be improved. The odd aspects mean the certain issues that cannot be changed. Based on these outcomes, some suggestions are made by principals to improve the future training programs, as well as the Finnish training institutions and training modes. The training program in turn assists to develop better training modes provided by the Finnish training institutions.

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[5] In China's context, it means trainers and trainees (educational officials, professors and principals).

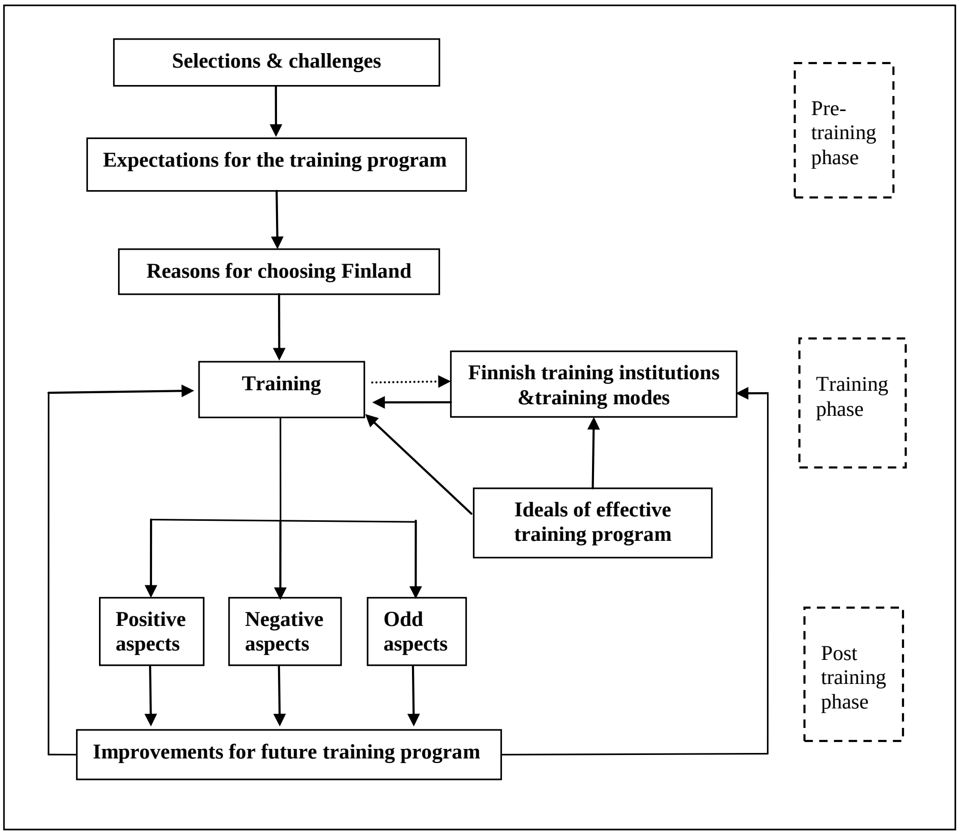

Selections & challenges
Expectations for the training program
Reasons for choosing Finland
Training
Finnish training institutions &training modes
Ideals of effective training program
Positive aspects
Negative aspects
Odd aspects
Improvements for future training program
Pre-training phase
Training phase
Post training phase

Figure 4 Concept map of the study

7 CONCLUSIONS

This chapter reflects on the previous chapters to summarize and integrate the major findings and implications of the overall study. It starts by examining how the research questions have been addressed by the research outcomes described in Chapter 6. These are then related to the literature described in Chapters 3 and 4, underlining this study's contribution to the further understanding of both the value of the training program and features of effective leadership training programs in a cross-cultural training context. This chapter also includes the methodological evaluation of the study regarding trustworthiness, ethical considerations, and limitations. It ends with some directions for future research.

7.1 Implications of findings

This study has explored the contribution of a Finnish training program on Chinese principals' leadership practices and professional development. The value of this training program and features of effective leadership training programs have been investigated. It has addressed the following issues regarding program evaluation: (a) the need for the program, (d) program impacts or outcomes, and (e) program efficiency (Rossi et al., 2004, pp. 16-18). Research with this focus can be the first step towards enhancing our understanding of the effects of cross-cultural training on Chinese principals. Based on the research findings, the following conclusions can be drawn.

Chinese principals were selected to participate in the Finnish training program through a multi-stage procedure based on their applications, district/city recommendations, municipality/province interviews, and group application to the MOE. The principals were motivated to participate in the Finnish training program due to two main reasons: the success of Finnish students in the PISA, and the worldwide acknowledged reputation of Finnish basic education in terms of equality and equity.

Evidence shows that Chinese principals are facing serious challenges today. The challenges include the contradiction between ideals (specified in students' overall development) and reality (indicated by actual test results), the challenge of faculty development, the challenge of curriculum reform, the difficulty of planning and implementing school strategies, the challenge of balancing the rapid development of society and school, and lacking in management and leadership theory. Therefore, they had various expectations and needs for the Finnish training program. The expectations comprised two perspectives: school development and personal development. School development included strategic leadership, curriculum development, quality-oriented education and inclusive education, school culture, faculty development, and students' overall development. Personal development seemed to be embedded in school development.

Chinese principals gave a lot of positive feedback when they were asked to evaluate the Finnish training program. Principals felt that in general their expectations were met. The training program had prepared them to respond more effectively to the challenges they were facing in China. More specifically, the positive impacts of the training program include more effective leadership, better strategies to tackle the contradiction between ideal and reality, a broader understanding of the nature of education, and an increased understanding of the role of government in education. After the training program, the principals understood that the Finnish PISA success lay in a well-designed basic school system which provides fair education for every student.

Nevertheless, the principals also mentioned some negative aspects in their evaluation. They included limited school visit time, the diversity of needs to be addressed, irrelevant training issues, insufficient knowledge of some of the trainers, and language barriers. This means that there is still room for improvement in the program. However, certain issues did not work. For example, one participant claimed it was a well-designed system in Finland, but it would be hard to transfer the system to China. The reasons for this are the differences in the national contexts, such as culture, the educational and school system, evaluations of principals, teachers and students, principals’ tasks, teachers’ qualifications and dedication, and ways of students’ learning.

However, some key features of effective leadership training programs seemed to emerge from the data. The features involved a systematic structure (comprehensive and career-staged), targeted and personalized content (sound understanding of trainees’ needs), collaboration between theory and practice (field-based internships), adequate length and time, interactive learning (mentors and cohort groups), and “*having reflection*”.

Finally, the participants made some suggestions for the improvement of future training programs. Suggestions for improving overseas training programs included better organizing of the training, improving program quality and teaching methods, addressing language issues, providing more learning opportunities, and including the Chinese government and education officials in the Finnish training program. Suggestions for improving domestic training programs involved more mentoring and personalized guidance and democratic decision-making.

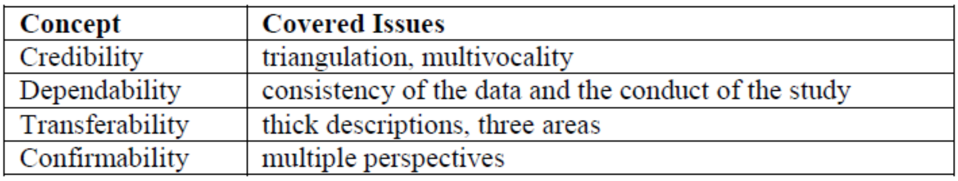
The research findings are important in at least three areas: theoretically, heuristically and practically (Tracy, 2010, p. 846). Theoretically, my study has resulted in a framework of “The four broad and fourteen specific categories of successful leadership practices” designed for training effective school leaders. It identifies the areas of school leadership training that have a strong effect on leadership practices and professional development. It also provides new knowledge and enriches the existing literature on school leadership training. Heuristically, the data analysis released weak sides of the training program that matter for the Finnish training providers, and therefore, need further investigation and action. Practically, the findings help Finnish training institutions recognize the Chinese education system and the Chinese school principals’ needs. It also assists them to better understand the features of a leadership training program that strongly support quality leadership practices (Fuller et al., 2011, p. 208). Finnish training institutions can use these findings to improve the program and curriculum (Martineau & Patterson, 2010, p. 281), and design more targeted and effective leadership training programs for prospective Chinese school leaders. In addition, the findings might be of interest to policymakers, scholars, and practitioners in both China and Finland. Further, the study may be useful for training institutions and researchers in other countries that organize similar training programs for Chinese school leaders.

7.2 The trustworthiness of the study

The concepts used for assessing research quality and trustworthiness vary in quantitative and the qualitative research traditions. In qualitative research, the traditional ways of evaluating the trustworthiness of the research along the dimensions of validity, reliability, and replicability have been challenged, and replaced by concepts such as *credibility, dependability, transferability,* and *confirmability*. The study followed the fundamental constructivist worldview belonging to the qualitative tradition. (e.g. Lincoln & Cuba, 1985; Schwandt, 2000; Patton, 2002; Shenton, 2004)

The quality and trustworthiness of qualitative research rely on the coherence and cohesion of the overall research process. This is closely related to the research methods chosen by the researcher, including the aim of study, the selection of participants, the instruments of data collection and the methods of data analysis (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 300; Tracy, 2010, p. 848). This indicates that the issue of trustworthiness should be addressed throughout the research process when reporting the study. The previous sections have discussed the research design of the study. Nevertheless, in this section I will focus on the issues of credibility, dependability, transferability, and confirmability, which are the most relevant in evaluating the quality and trustworthiness (see Table 7).

Table 7 Concepts of trustworthiness in present study



Concept	**Covered Issues**
Credibility	triangulation, multivocality
Dependability	consistency of the data and the conduct of the study
Transferability	thick descriptions, three areas
Confirmability	multiple perspectives

Credibility is an all-encompassing concept that includes different aspects. Patton (2002, p. 542) claims that the quality and credibility of the study are connected, and that judgments of quality constitute the foundation for understanding credibility. This means recognizing that there are certain philosophical foundations or theoretical orientations for qualitative research, which create different criteria for judging quality and credibility. In qualitative research, credibility refers to whether the findings of the study make any sense (Miles & Huberman, 1994, p. 278), and whether the readers feel confident enough to act and make decisions (Tracy, 2010, p. 843). According to Lincoln and Cuba (1985, p. 301), it is the responsibility of the researcher to conduct the study in such a way that it improves the probability so that the findings will be credible. One strategy they mention is *triangulation*.

Triangulation is a widely recognized concept in acquiring quality and credibility. The idea of triangulation is to provide different viewpoints and to see the same phenomenon from various perspectives (Silverman, 2005, p. 212). The importance of triangulation is emphasized by the argument that research findings based on only one way of data collection may result in some shortcomings (Patton, 2002, p. 556; Tracy, 2010, p. 843). Triangulation can be implemented by using more than one method, data source, theory, or researcher (Patton, 2002, p. 556). In this study, I utilized triangulation to interpret the data by multiple theories and perspectives.

The credibility of case study interpretations will increase if the researcher demonstrates openness to the possibility of *multivocality* (Gall et al., 2003, p. 462). *Multivocality* refers to the fact that in many circumstances, the interviewees have different perspectives and interests instead of speaking a unified voice. Therefore, I opened my mind to both positive and negative answers from the participants. For instance, I presented negative or discrepant findings that run counter to the themes as well. By presenting contradictory evidence, the research becomes more credible.

Although I was a novice researcher, I received adequate education and training in qualitative research methodology that equipped me with the essential skills and confidence to conduct this study (Patton, 2002, p. 552). Besides, reviewing the whole thesis by my peers, supervisors, external auditors, and proof-reading by an English language expert added to the credibility of this study. Moreover, the research diary offered a mirror for documentation and self-reflection. All the questions, discussions and comments from others were carefully documented in my research diary. I utilized the research diary to develop my thinking and reflection during the whole research process.

Dependability as an aspect of reliability means whether the whole research process is consistent and whether it has been conducted carefully enough (Miles & Huberman, 1994, p. 278). In other words, dependability comprises all the research methods that the researcher makes during the data collection and analysis. Lincoln and Cuba (1985, pp. 316-318) stated that in order to ensure dependability, attention should be given to elements including instability, phenomenal or design induced change. The previous sections have presented some details of conducting the research including the chosen methodology. However, I shall discuss the issues that might have affected the consistency of the data and the conduct of the study.

In a sense, I was an “outsider researcher and external evaluator”. I did not know the principals before the interviews, nor did we work in the same organization. This can be seen as both a weakness and a strength of this study. The nature of the interviews definitely would have been different if the researcher had been an “insider” from the same organization. It has also been underlined that it is a positive element from the perspective of constructing a shared understanding of the issues discussed that the researcher and participants know each other and share similar backgrounds (Garton & Copland, 2010, p. 548). Likewise, being an “internal evaluator” from the same organization has the benefit of having a deep understanding of the context of the program and evaluation. They may have developed a trusting relationship enabling them to gather data that is more relevant and candid than data gathered by an “external evaluator”. (Hannum & Martineau, 2008, p. 2.)

In spite of these factors, I felt that the interviews were quite open in nature. The principals discussed their work and the relevance of the training openly and honestly. The atmosphere in each interview was fairly relaxed and comfortable. I was able to collect all my data in Shanghai in a limited time, due to the fact I had a gathering with most interviewees one day earlier. This speeded up getting to know each other and familiarizing ourselves with the research, and served as a preparatory phase. Therefore, the principals were open to my research and arranged sufficient time for the interviews. One participant even agreed to make an interview at the school during the weekend. Although one participant did not want to be recorded, he/she provided very valuable data. In fact, the time when I made the interviews was the busiest time for most principals, as they were preparing for the coming *gaokao*. It is also possible to suggest that it might be easier to talk to an unfamiliar researcher. For example, some principals mentioned negative issues honestly; one could ask whether this would have happened if the researcher had been a familiar person or had been working in the same organization. Besides, being an external evaluator has the advantage of exploring more thoroughly and challenging assumptions. If an evaluation requires asking sensitive questions, an external evaluator may be a better choice in that respondents are usually more willing to share confidential information with someone from outside. (Hannum & Martineau, 2008, p. 2.)

Transferability means the extent to which the findings and conclusions of the research can be transferred to other settings and contexts (Miles & Huberman, 1994, p. 279; Tracy, 2010, p. 845). In qualitative research, it is impossible for the researcher to make exact statements whether the findings can be generalized in other contexts or even in the same context at a different time. Whether the findings are transferable to other contexts is an empirical issue, and it will rely on the similarity among the contexts in question. To measure transferability, there must be maximally thick and rich descriptions in the qualitative analysis and reporting (Patton, 2002, p. 584; Tracy, 2010, p. 843). The researcher should offer as thick descriptions as possible to enable anyone in a parallel situation to determine whether transfer is possible (Lincoln & Cuba, 1985, p. 316). Obviously, thick descriptions are a matter of cautious and detailed reporting, and it is the responsibility of the researcher to provide thick descriptions.

The findings of this study may be to some degree transferable to four areas. To begin with, the findings may be transferable to other Finnish tertiary institutions conducting professional development programs for Chinese principals. The reason is principals mostly come from the same type of schools. Their concerns for educational issues are more or less the same in China. In the second place, the results may be applied to Finnish tertiary institutions conducting professional development programs for Chinese educational administrators and teachers. The reason is that they all share the same learning traditions and background. Moreover, the findings may apply to cross-cultural training programs for Chinese adult learners in other countries. Finally, the framework designed by the researcher might be considered by training organizations in that it covers the main international literatures on leadership practices during the past three decades.

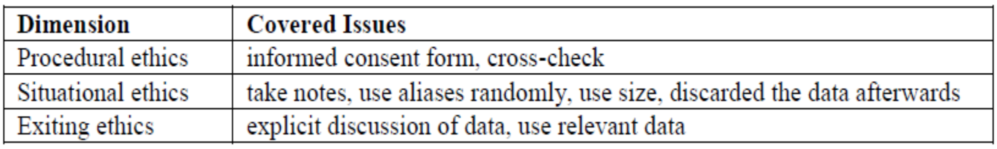
Confirmability means the neutrality and objectivity of the research. Lincoln and Cuba (1985, pp. 318-319) recommend that in qualitative research the neutrality should focus on the data instead of the researcher. In other words, the emphasis should be on the characteristics of the data and on how provable it may be. Miles and Huberman (1994, p. 278) also highlight the standpoint of the researcher and how self-aware she/he is regarding personal assumptions, values, and biases. This means ensuring that the research findings are the result of the experiences and perceptions of the respondents, rather than the characteristics and preferences of the researcher (Shenton, 2004, p. 72). Therefore, for the purpose of achieving confirmability, the researcher must be aware of her/his standpoint and give thorough and accurate descriptions of her/his experiences and assumptions. Besides, he/she must carefully describe the methods, procedures, and data relating to the study, reflect on these critically during the research process, and report fully on the overall conduct of the study. According to Lincoln and Cuba (1985, p. 319), confirmability will be achieved if credibility and transferability have been accomplished first.

In this study, the commitment to a constructivist approach has produced an understanding of reality as containing multiple perspectives instead of a single truth. The aim has been to gain a deep understanding of a phenomenon in a particular context, rather than to hypothesize about generalizations that might exist across time and space (Patton, 2002, p. 582). Apparently, my own perceptions and previous experiences have affected the whole research process. Nevertheless, I have striven to be critically aware of these, and to make them visible to readers. I have attempted to achieve this by providing precise and thick descriptions, discussing theoretical and practical notions, providing a detailed description of the methodology of the study, making an in-depth analysis and interpretation of the results, and abandoning some of my cultural bias (e.g., losing face for the Chinese).

7.3 Ethical considerations

In conducting this study, ethical concerns were properly addressed through *procedural,* *situational*, and *exiting* dimensions of ethics (Tracy, 2010, p. 847; see Table 8)

Table 8 Three dimensions of ethics in present study



Dimension	**Covered Issues**
Procedural ethics	informed consent form, cross-check
Situational ethics	take notes, use aliases randomly, use size, discarded the data afterwards
Exiting ethics	explicit discussion of data, use relevant data

Regarding *procedural ethics*, an informed consent form (see Appendix 4-5) was sought from all participants prior to conducting the interviews. The forms clearly stated the aim of this study and who would have access to the data collected. I also assured that their information would remain anonymous. The participants were made aware that their participation in the study was voluntary. By doing so, I aimed to ensure that my study would not cause any harm to the principals involved (Tracy, 2010, p. 847). Previously, I planned to use cross-checking by sending back the transcribed data, findings, and interpretations to all my interviewees. They could have given comments as to whether they reflected exactly their views or not, and whether they wanted to make any corrections. However, this plan could not be achieved because they did not understand English well.

In terms of *situational ethics*, I did not expect that my first interviewee in Shanghai would reject data recording. It was my first field interview, and I had not thought about this issue earlier. However, at that moment, I realized it was ethically important to respect the interviewee’s choice, and I decided to take notes. Afterwards, I sent my notes to him/her for checking the accuracy of answers. Besides, I addressed the issue of confidentiality through the use of aliases (A, B, C, D, E and F) instead of the participants’ names and schools where they worked. The similar means was applied when it comes to the names of the training program in another country (X) besides Finland. These aliases were used randomly during the research so that readers could not find out which principal comes from which school. The neutral gender (he/she) was used to report the findings. Information about schools (the number of teachers and students) and principals (years as teacher and principal) was reported in the form of size although the researcher knew the exact number. The history of schools has been removed to avoid identifying the participants easily. After completing the research, I discarded the data so that it would not get in the hands of other researchers who might misappropriate it.

The aspect of *exiting ethics* requires that the research report does not lead to developments that are biased and redundant (Tracy, 2010, p. 847). In this sense, I tried as much as possible to discuss my findings in an explicit and specific manner in order to reduce the probabilities of any controversies. Even though there were many other interesting data, I did not use them in that they were not answering my research questions.

In short, I think I took enough care to address the ethical concerns and I attempted to keep the general principle of research ethics.

7.4 Limitations

This study clearly has a number of limitations. The most obvious shortfall lies in that it focuses only on the city of Shanghai, to the exclusion of principals from the other five provinces in China. Finnish trainers (university professors and lecturers), Chinese training organizers (education officials), and teachers (members of leadership team) were not interviewed either. Therefore, one of the design pitfalls is the reliance on self-referential reports from school principals. In fact, the inclusion of all these stakeholders would enable me to gain more comprehensive data. The Shanghai principals were chosen as they represent the majority of trainees in this group. Hence, it was easier to access the data. As a student, it was expensive and time consuming to collect all these data in a limited time, especially when they would have come from different places and organizations.

Given this focus on a small sample size, the findings of this study need to be regarded with caution in that they may not be generalized to all participants’ opinions on this training program. This, however, does not weaken the significance of the study or its findings. The reason is that students in all upper secondary schools have to attend *gaokao* in China, which is the major criterion used to evaluate the performance of schools and principals. Hence, some perceptions of Shanghai principals may represent principals' general feedback to the Finnish training program. The main objective of the research was not a focus in terms of numbers, rather, an attempt to gather the perspectives of a sample of school principals who have undergone a training program in Finland.

Secondly, the study could have been smoother and more effective if the framework of leadership practices had been designed earlier. The researcher did not complete the design of this comprehensive framework until the later stage of the thesis. If this framework had been designed earlier, it could have been used throughout the whole process, including guiding the interview questions, analyzing the data, and discussing the findings.

Thirdly, the interview questions could be better organized. For example, the researcher could ask both challenges in professional development and leadership practices instead of only one. Another better question would be like this, "How do you use the Finnish training program to overcome challenges?" or "What did you learn from the Finnish training program that was able to equip you to deal with challenges?"

Next, the notes storage could be better organized. I did not know it was a good way to type the notes and check the accuracy with the participants after completing the transcription. As I mentioned in Chapter 5, one principal rejected data recording. I only did so after two months; therefore, both of us might have forgotten some important points about the interview. The data would be more accurate if we both had checked it immediately, as we remembered the issues that we had discussed better .

In terms of data analysis, it was not necessary to translate everything from Chinese into English. It was a time-consuming task for me. It was easy and convenient to analyze the data in the mother tongue. I did not fully realize this point until one discussion with my supervisor in November 2012. At that time half of the data analysis had been done. In that sense, I made some mistakes at the beginning, doing some unnecessary work. Nevertheless, this made the later data analysis much easier and smoother. By doing so, the credibility of the research has been improved as well.

Finally, the study is solely a *summative* evaluation of a training program. To some extent, it comes too late to be much helpful for the training program itself. In future research, the importance of *planning* and *formative* evaluation should be raised. The reason is that such evaluations help to redirect time, money, personnel, and other resources in more productive directions. Consequently, they help improve the program's efficiency and effectiveness. (Guskey, 2000, p. 60.)

7.5 Directions for future research

The thesis suggests the following directions for future research. Firstly, the leadership practices framework developed by the researcher may be used to guide future training programs for school leaders in national or cross-culture training contexts. The issues presented in the framework might be of interest to training providers when designing and implementing training programs for school leaders. The framework may also be applied in research studies collecting feedback on training programs. I hope the future data will be gathered from various stakeholders, including trainers, trainees, and organizers in order to test and improve this framework. The framework is valid in that it is based on extensive international literatures during the past three decades. Some of these categories might be overlapping and different researchers might have different categories. The context of this framework may also vary. However, the main idea is more or less the same. Researchers may justify this framework according to their own contexts and needs.

Secondly, in the future, it might be useful for both partners to receive some pre-training of its counterpart culture, education and school systems before the program commences. By doing so, the relevance of a training program could be maximized and the mismatches could be avoided or reduced. To my impression, many questions of Chinese principals could not be answered by Finnish experts due to cultural and educational differences. If both partners were well aware of these differences and prepared for intercultural dialogues, the training program would be more targeted and matched. Besides, receiving pre-training may enhance the sustainable development of these cross-cultural training programs. Issues such as cross-cultural pedagogy, cultural sensitivity and awareness, cultural dissonance and intercultural understanding should be addressed in all international programs (Tsolidis, 2001, p. 108).

Thirdly, it would be important to investigate the long-term influence of this leadership training program upon participants. It is advisable for the Chinese policymakers to conduct a systematic evaluation of all these cross-cultural training programs while carrying out this nationwide project. It is useful to know whether the tax money is well spent and whether overseas training programs are effective or not. On a wider level, such evaluations are needed to generate more extensive data from which certain features of program quality may be identified and promoted. The evaluations should focus on *planning* and *formative* evaluation that helps redirect time, money, personnel, and other resources in more productive directions. It is recommended that such evaluations be cooperated between Chinese training organizers and foreign training institutions. The evaluations could also involve a review of program documents, an articulation of the impact theory embodied in the program’s logic. Multiple measures may be used to reflect multidimensional outcomes and to correct possible weakness in one way of measurement. (Rossi et al., 2004, p. 231.)

In conclusion, a cross-cultural training program can play a limited but positive role in expanding Chinese principals’ leadership practices and professional development. The study underlines the importance of critical reflection and adaptation on the part of practitioners when importing Western educational ideas to non-Western countries. It helps readers better understand characteristics of an effective leadership training program, as well as assisting overseas training institutions to determine Chinese principals' needs. In the context of cross-cultural training, some efforts need to be made to tailor program provision to adapt to the local culture and nature of the learners.

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APPENDICES

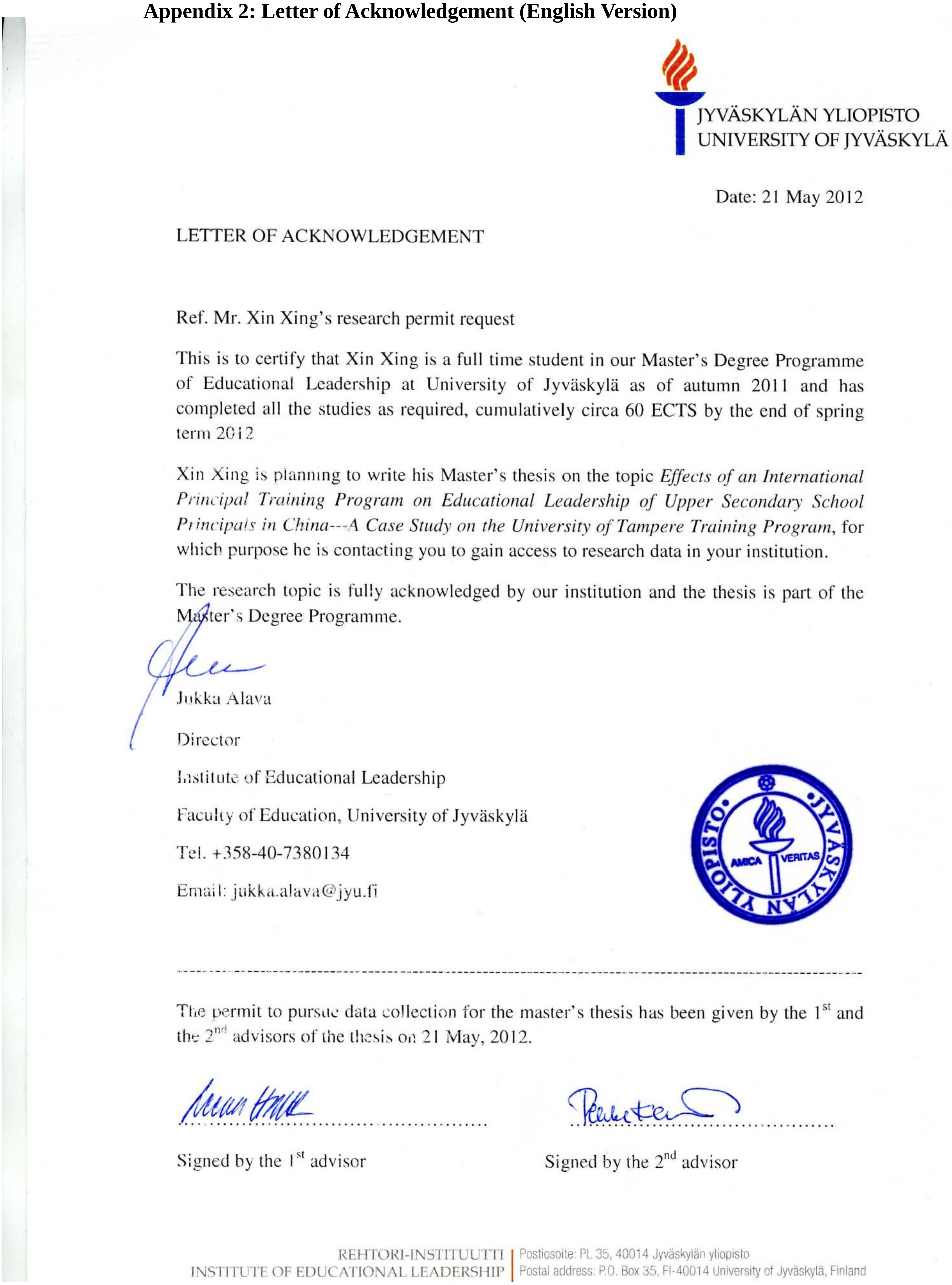
Appendix 1: The four broad and fourteen specific categories of successful leadership practices

Core Leadership Practices	**Hallinger's Model of Instructional Leadership (1985)**	**Cotton's 25 leadership practices (2003)**	**Waters et al. 's 21 responsibilities (2003, 2005)**	**Waters et al. Meta-analysis (2003, 2005)**	**Leithwood et al.'s successful leadership practices (2006)**	**Walker & Ko's 7 leadership practices (2011)**	**Kouzes & Posner's 10 commitments (2012)**
Setting Directions							
Vision	Developing a clear mission	2. Vision and goals focused on high levels of student learning	Optimizer	Inspires and leads new and challenging innovations	1. Building a shared vision	Strategic direction and policy environment	3. Envision the future by imaging exciting and ennobling possibilities
	Focused on students' academic progress						
Goal	Framing the school's goals	14. Ongoing pursuit of high levels of student learning	Focus Optimizer	Establishes clear goals and keeps them in forefront of attention	2. Fosterin the acceptance of group goals		4. Enlist others in a common vision by appealing to shared aspirations
	Communicating the school's goals	15. Norm of continues improvement	Focus Intellectual Stimulation				
High performance expectations		3. High expectations for student learning	Focus		3. High performance expectations		
Developing people							
Individualized support/consideration	Providing incentives for teachers	6. Positive and supportive school climate	Contingent Rewards	Recognizes and rewards individual accomplishment	4. Providing individualized support / consideration	Staff management	8. Strengthen others by increasing self-determination and developing competence
Emotional understanding and support		4. Self-confidence, responsibility, and perseverance 8. Emotional and interpersonal support	Ideals/Beliefs Optimizer Relationship Visibility	Communicates and operates from strong ideals and beliefs about schooling Demonstrates awareness of personal aspects of teachers and staff			
Intellectual stimulation	Promoting professional development	18. Support of teacher autonomy 19. Support of risk taking	Flexibility Change Agent	Adapts his or her leadership behavior to the needs of the current situation and its comfortable with dissent Is willing to, and actively challenge the status quo	5. Intellectual stimulation	Leader and teacher growth and development	5. Search for opportunities by seizing the initiative and by looking outward for innovative ways to improve
		20. Professional development opportunities and resources	Intellectual stimulation Resources	Ensures faculty and staff are well informed about updated theories and practice/fosters regular discussion of them Provides teachers with professional development necessary for job			6. Constantly generating small wins and learning from experience
Modeling	Maintaining high visibility	5. Visibility and accessibility 25. Role modelling	Input Visibility Knowledge of Curriculum, Instruction, & Assessment Involvement in Curriculum, Instruction, & Assessment	Has quality contacts and interactions with teachers and students	6. Providing an appropriate model		1. Clarify values by finding your voice and affirm the shared values 2. Set the example by aligning actions with shared values

Appendix 1: The four broad and fourteen specific categories of successful leadership practices (continue)

Core Leadership Practices	Hallinger’s Model of Instructional Leadership (1985)	Cotton's 25 leadership practices (2003)	Waters et al. 's 21 responsibilities (2003, 2005)	Waters et al. Meta-analysis (2003, 2005)	Leithwood et al.'s successful leadership practices (2006)	Walker & Ko's 7 leadership practices (2011)	Kouzes & Posner’s 10 commitments (2012)
Redesigning the organization							
Building a collaborative culture		7. Communication and interaction 12. Collaboration	Communication Relationship Culture	Establishes strong lines of communication with and among teachers and studesnt Fosters shared beliefs, sense of community.	7. Building collaborative cultures	Staff management Resources management	7. Foster collaboration by building trust and facilitating relationships
	Providing incentives for learning	10. Rituals, ceremonies, and other symbolic actions 24. Recognition of student and staff acheivement	Contingent Rewards Affirmation	Recognizes and celebrates school accomplishments and acknowledges failures			9. Recognize contribution by showing appreciation for individual excellence 10. Celebrating the values and victories by creating a spirit of community
Structuring the organization to facilitate work		11. Shared leadership, decision making, and staff empowerment	Input Communication	Involves teachers in design and implementation of important decisions and policies	8. Restructuring		8. Strengthen others by increasing self-determination and developing competence
External communication and connection		9. Parent and community outreach and involvement	Outreach	Is an advocate and spokesperson for school to all stakeholders	9. Building productive relations with families and	External communication and connection	
					10. Connecting school to its' wider environment		
Managing the Teaching Programme							
Staffing					11. Staffing the program		
Providing instructional support	Supervising and evaluating instruction	1. Safe and orderly school environment	Order	Establishes set of standard operating procedures and routines Provides materials necessary for job	12. Providing instructional (teaching and learning) support	Learning, teaching and curriculum	8. Strengthen others by increasing self-determination and developing competence
	Coordinating the curriculum	13. Instructional leadership 16. Discussion of instructional issues	Involvement in Curriculum, Instruction, & Assessment Knowledge of Curriculum, Instruction, & Assessment	Directly involved in design and implementation of curriculum, instruction and assessment practices Is knowledge about current curriculum, instruction and assessment practices			
Monitoring	Monitoring student progress	17. Classroom observation and feedback to teachers 22. Monitoring student progress data for program improvement 23. Use of student progress data for program improvement	Monitoring/Evaluating Involvement in Curriculum, Instruction, & Assessment Focus	Monitors the effectiveness of school practices and their impact on student learning	13. Monitoring school activity	Quality assurance and accountability	
Buffering staff from distractions to their core work	Protecting teaching time	21. Potecting instructional time	Discipline	Protects teachers from issues and influences that would detract them from their teaching time or focus	14. Buffering staff from dsotrations to their work		

Appendix 2: Letter of Acknowledgement (English Version)



JYVÄSKYLÄN YLIOPISTO
UNIVERSITY OF JYVÄSKYLÄ

Date: 21 May 2012

LETTER OF ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

Ref. Mr. Xin Xing's research permit request

This is to certify that Xin Xing is a full time student in our Master's Degree Programme of Educational Leadership at University of Jyväskylä as of autumn 2011 and has completed all the studies as required, cumulatively circa 60 ECTS by the end of spring term 2012

Xin Xing is planning to write his Master's thesis on the topic *Effects of an International Principal Training Program on Educational Leadership of Upper Secondary School Principals in China---A Case Study on the University of Tampere Training Program*, for which purpose he is contacting you to gain access to research data in your institution.

The research topic is fully acknowledged by our institution and the thesis is part of the Master's Degree Programme.

Jukka Alava

Director

Institute of Educational Leadership

Faculty of Education, University of Jyväskylä

Tel. +358-40-7380134

Email: jukka.alava@jyu.fi

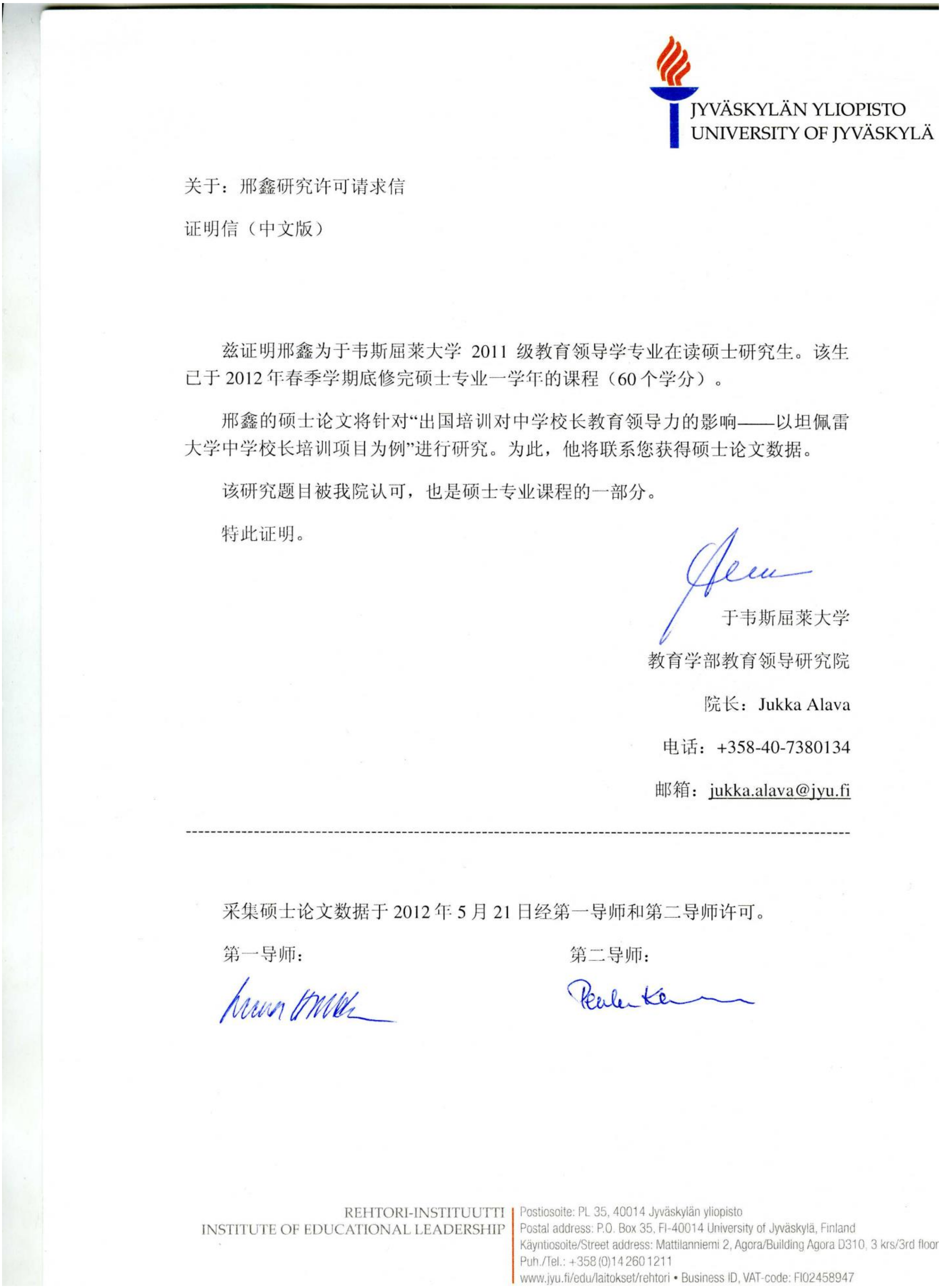
The permit to pursue data collection for the master's thesis has been given by the 1st and the 2nd advisors of the thesis on 21 May, 2012.

Signed by the 1st advisor

Signed by the 2nd advisor

REHTORI-INSTITUUTTI | Postiosoite: PL 35, 40014 Jyväskylän yliopisto
INSTITUTE OF EDUCATIONAL LEADERSHIP | Postal address: P.O. Box 35, FI-40014 University of Jyväskylä, Finland

Appendix 3: Letter of Acknowledgement (Chinese Version)



JYVÄSKYLÄN YLIOPISTO
UNIVERSITY OF JYVÄSKYLÄ

关于：邢鑫研究许可请求信

证明信（中文版）

兹证明邢鑫为于韦斯屈莱大学 2011 级教育领导学专业在读硕士研究生。该生已于 2012 年春季学期底修完硕士专业一学年的课程（60 个学分）。

邢鑫的硕士论文将针对“出国培训对中学校长教育领导力的影响——以坦佩雷大学中学校长培训项目为例”进行研究。为此，他将联系您获得硕士论文数据。

该研究题目被我院认可，也是硕士专业课程的一部分。

特此证明。

于韦斯屈莱大学
教育学部教育领导研究院
院长：Jukka Alava
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采集硕士论文数据于 2012 年 5 月 21 日经第一导师和第二导师许可。

第一导师：

第二导师：

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www.jyu.fi/edu/laitokset/rehtori • Business ID, VAT-code: FI02458947

Appendix 4: Research Permit Request (English Version)

May 2012

Dear Principal,
Thank you for your participation in the three-week *Training of Excellent Chinese Upper Secondary School Principals* in Oct. 2011 at the University of Tampere! We were honored to receive and arrange your visit and study in Finland. This is the first time the Chinese Ministry of Education is entrusting a Finnish University to provide training to upper secondary school principals. Although we tried to do the work well, we realized that the training would need to be improved. To this end, the Chinese Education Research and Exchange Center (CEREC) works actively with Finnish experts and scholars to sum up the experience as well as design more targeted training courses and activities. One of the important tasks is to investigate the opinions of the participants towards the training program, especially towards the effects of the training.

To this end, Xin Xing, the current master student at the Institute of Educational Leadership, University of Jyväskylä will conduct interviews for the trained principals in early June 2012 in Shanghai. This is a research investigate project of our center, as well as an important research data for Xin Xing's master thesis.

The topic of Xin Xing's master thesis is *Effects of an International Principal Training Program on Educational Leadership of Upper Secondary School Principals in China---A Case Study on the University of Tampere Training Program*. The purpose of the study is *to explore how the principals who participated in the training program perceived the training based on their experiences and how the training abroad affected their leadership practices and professional development, and to provide an assessment report of it gleaned from one group of participants.*

In order to assist us to complete the research successfully and improve training, we sincerely urge you to accept Xin Xing's interview. One interview is expected to last around 30-40 minutes. Before the interview each interviewee will be asked for permission to allow the interviewer to take notes on and record the interview.

We assure you that the school name and the interviewee’s name will remain anonymous in the study. The interviewee’s personal data will be used only for research purposes. In the case of any comments or questions, please, do contact me, Xin Xing, either by phone (+358 41 700 6968) or email (xin.x.xing@student.jyu.fi).
Thank you for your participation and help!

Sincerely,
The Chinese Education Research and Exchange Center (CEREC),
University of Tampere
Institute of Educational Leadership, University of Jyväskylä
Xin Xing

Appendix 5: Research Permit Request (Chinese Version)

尊敬的 XXX 校长:

您好！

感谢您参加 2011 年 10 月坦佩雷大学组织的为期三周的中国优秀中学校长培训！我们非常荣幸能够在芬兰接待和安排您们的访问和学习。这次培训是中国教育部首次委托芬兰大学进行的中学校长的培训项目，尽管我们尽力做好各项工作，但是我们意识到该培训还有很多地方需要改进。为此，我们中国教育研究交流中心（CEREC）协同芬兰的专家和学者正在积极地总结经验、设计更加有针对性的培训课程和活动。其中，很重要的一项工作是了解参加培训的校长对去年培训项目的看法，特别是培训后对工作带来了哪些影响。

为此，芬兰于韦斯屈莱大学教育领导研究院的硕士在读生——邢鑫将于今年 6 月上旬到上海对参加培训的校长进行访谈，这既是中国教育研究交流中心的一个调研项目，也是邢鑫的硕士论文的重要数据。

邢鑫的硕士论文题目是“出国培训对中学校长教育领导力的影响——以坦佩雷大学中学校长培训项目为例”。该研究的主要目的是探索“培训后的校长如何看待培训对自身专业化发展和领导力实践的促进作用？校长对学习和领导力的新理解如何影响他们的领导力实践？校长培训理论与教育实践如何相结合？”

为了帮助我们顺利完成调研工作，改进我们的培训，我们诚挚恳请您接受邢鑫对您进行访谈。访谈预计持续 30-40 分钟，在访谈前会征得您的同意，看是否可以做笔记及录音。

我们向您保证贵校的名称及您的名字将以匿名形式出现，您的个人信息仅作为研究使用。如有疑问，请与邢鑫电话（+358 41 700 6968）或邮箱（xin.x.xing@student.jyu.fi）联系。

非常感谢您的参与和帮助！

坦佩雷大学 中国教育研究交流中心
于韦斯屈莱大学 教育领导研究院
邢鑫
2012 年 5 月

Appendix 6: Interview Questions (English Version)

Topic of Master's Thesis: Effects of an International Principal Training Program on Educational Leadership of Upper Secondary School Principals in China---A Case Study on the University of Tampere Training Program

Section A Career Life of the Principal **School Statistics**

1. Name of participant______ Gender_______ Age of school______
Age range: 30---39________ 40---49_________ Number of teachers____
50---59___ 60 and above_____ Number of students____

2. Were you a teacher before you became a principal/assistant principal? Yes/No: ___

3. How many years have you taught before taking on leadership position (Assistant Principal/Vice Principal/Principal/Communist Party Secretary)?

4. How many years have you worked in the current position (as a principal)?

5. Where did you do you teacher training in China (Including teacher education training and in-service teacher training)?

6. Where did you do you leadership training in China?

7. What kind of training have you taken since you become a principal?

Section B Interview Questions:

1. How did you get interested in the training program in Finland?

2. How were you selected to take the training program in Finland?

3. What were your expectations in terms of professional development and leadership practices before taking training?

4(a). As the school principal, what are the challenges you are facing in your professional development?

4.(b) How do you define an effective principal training program?

4.(c). How do you evaluate the training in Finland?

4.(d). Do you think the offered training matched your demands of professional development and leadership practices?

4.(e) What did you learn in Finland that you have put in action in your school?

5. What are the similarities and differences between domestic training and training abroad?

6. What are your aspirations for future training programs?

7. Is there anything you would like to say but I have not asked you?

Appendix 7: Interview Questions (Chinese Version)

论文题目：出国培训对中学校长教育领导力的影响——以坦佩雷大学中学校长培训项目为例

A 部分 校长职业生涯 **学校信息**

1. 姓名_____ 性别_________ 学校年龄______

年龄阶段：30---39_________ 40---49_______ 教师人数____

50---59______ 60 岁及其以上_____ 学生人数____

2. 您在成为校长（校长助理）前是一名教师吗？ 是/不是____

3. 您在成为领导者之前教了多少年书（校长助理/副校长/校长/书记）？

4. 您当了多少年校长？

5．您在中国哪里进行的教师培训（大学教育和教师在职培训）？

6. 您在中国哪里进行的领导培训？

7. 您成为校长之后参加过什么培训？

B部分 访谈问题

1. 您是如何对芬兰的培训项目产生兴趣的？

2．您是如何经过筛选而参加培训项目的？

3. 您参加培训前对专业化发展以及领导力实践的预期是什么？

4(a). 作为学校校长，您在专业化发展中遇到的挑战是什么？

4(b). 您是如何定义一个高效的校长培训项目？

4(c). 您是如何评价芬兰的培训项目?

4(d). 您觉得芬兰提供的培训和您对专业化发展及领导力实践的需求相吻合么？

4(e). 您在芬兰学到的哪些东西使您能够应用到学校的日常管理中？

5. 您觉得国内与国外在培训方面的相同点和不同点是什么？

6. 您对未来的培训计划有什么期待？

7. 有什么您想说的或者想提供的信息是我没有问到的？

Appendix 8: Features of Effective Principal Training Program

(Example of Data Analysis)

Cannot be done overnight	need to be accumulated in practice
	narrow scale: one program broad scale: a long-term program
Systematic and coherent	include theory and practice
	specialized trainings for different career stages of principals
Targeted and personalized	address demands of different career stages of the diverse principals
	enhance practical ability(address practical training)
	need specific school cases
	help to realize principal's thoughts and needs
	think what principals would like to think (a sound understanding of principals' needs)
	down-to-earth, teach principals how to do things
Interactive	help to understand content
	interactions among trainers, trainees
	experienced principals are good training resources
	sharing and learning from other principals by exchanging reflections
Learn theory and draw practice	*Practical application of theory and theoretical application of practice*
	support practices with theory
	apply what have learnt into practice
Having reflection	get thoughts and reflections
	practical experience is from reflections
	exchanging perceptions and ideas
	know where and how to improve previous leadership practices after training
Program structure	list a training menu for principals to choose in advance
	distribute layouts in advance
	various methods of learning, e.g., lectures, group works, role playing, school visits, internship as well as mentoring
	adequate time for training